CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
There is a shift of paradigm in the developmental literature. The traditional preoccupations of the scholars engaged in rural development have brought in 'bottom-up' theory as the appropriate mechanism to that of 'top-down' one. Development and nation building are the top most priority of to-days India. A nation cannot be called developed if the grass-root level is not paid due attention. For the upliftment of the lower level of the nation, the government of India introduced various community – development schemes, Panchayati Raj system, decentralization of power and participatory system of democracy. Rural development is a global concept and multiple efforts are required to make it successful of it. For proper development, efforts at the level of government machinery, non-governmental organizations as well as people’s participation are equally important. The involvement cum participation and also cooperation of the people is needed in developmental activities of any society. The conscious persons of the society are required to use their capacity and capability to meet the needs of their society. As a consequence, the rural elites at the grass-roots level assumed significance and created a space for themselves as important component in the process of rural governance for development.

The key issue is that many of the basic entitlements that people need is order to improve their lives (e.g. primary education, child vaccination, safe contraception, clean water) depend to varying extent on some form of positive government activity. The positive role of the state is
thus, potentially quite extensive. Hence, the role of the state in uplifting the socio-economic condition of the rural mass is very significant. For proper management of the local public facilities, it is essential to have credible institutions for local governance. It is much easier to know the various problems faced by the rural people; but remedial action for the challenging problem requires strong local governance.

But, it is common knowledge for us all that "local democracy is a highly neglected institutional base of political participation in India" (J. Dreeze & A. Sen, 1995). The inherent weakness of local democracy, rooted in centralized political institutions and deep social inequalities, has played a major role in the comprehensive backwardness of the rural India. The importance of local democracy is not confined to the basic issues of public services only, rather has intrinsic value for the quality of life and ensures elementary freedom.

The varieties of ills that inflict the local governance have several casual relations. First and foremost, it is related to the long tradition of centralized governance. This dates back to the colonial period. Secondly, the possibility of effective function of local participatory politics is affected by low levels rural literacy and basic education. Last, but not the least, it is often being diluted due to acute social inequalities.

The main focus of this dissertation is to find out the developmental role perception and role performance of the rural elites in Assam. The empirical data have been analysed in the preceding chapters. This chapter is an attempt to present the summary of the findings of the study and to shed more light on aspects such as traits of rural elites, their socio-
economic background, political acumen-ship, contribution towards social change, the influence base of the rural elites etc. which are considered as the essential elements for rural development.

The analysis of the socio-economic and political situation of Assam indicates that the state is facing multifarious problems in recent years. Rapid increase in population is creating certain socio-economic problems and in turn affecting the development of the state. Despite Assam being endowed with several varieties of natural resources, the economy of Assam is failing to develop accordingly. The socio-political situations like insurgency, different kinds of movements and agitations, natural calamities etc. also have became a regular hindrance of economic growth of the state. Due to lack of proper industrial development combined with certain other factors as mentioned above the economic condition of the state is gradually declining. Again if we will have an x-ray analysis of political back ground, Assam has been facing a lot of turmoil. Right from the re-organization of the state to present days, the state has been experiencing several agitations, movements, which at times caused political instability in the state and affected the developmental process. Most of the communities of the state became conscious for their identity and demanded separate homeland to protect their politico-cultural identity. Again secessionist groups spearheaded their movements regularly. These were not only hampering the economic advancement, political instability and unity, but also in all-round development of the state. The issue of illegal migrants and related fallout of it, is becoming an important factor in the state politics.
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Economically strained and socio-politically turmoil nations, have to face several problems in the direction of development and that is exactly happening in the case of Assam. The rural elites of the society are yet to play innovative role for the development of the society. No doubt, the elites of the state are aware of socio-economic problems of the state, but their effort to tackle the problems is very negligible.

An analysis of the rural elite’s structures indicates that the "other backward castes" (O.B.C & M.O.B.C.) elites have dominated the rural scene. Majority (57.68%) of the rural elites are emerging from socio-economically well establish sections of that caste. Their annual income is comparatively high having more than one source of income and holding adequate movable and immovable properties. The study also reveals that majority of the rural elites are male. Although there are some women elites in the district under study, but their representation in elite structure is minimum. Their ratio is expected to increase, when the 73rd Amendment is implemented in the state. Again, majority of the rural elites belong to the aged group. The older generation is respected due to age-old tradition by the common people of the society and due status is being given to them. They are also influential persons. It is in fact true that, elites are also emerging from the younger generation of the society, but it is found from the study that elites belonging to the aged category are more useful to the society than the younger ones. In social activities aged elites are involved themselves in the developmental activities sincerely than the younger elites. It is also to be noted that Education and social status has been given an important place for achieving the elite status. Further, it could be
ascertained that more and more elites from professional background are gradually being recruited into the elite structure.

From our investigation, it is also found that all the (100%) rural elites are born and brought up in the rural areas and majority of them got their education in rural schools. It also indicates that there is no migration of urban born and brought up elites to the rural society. Majority of the elites under study are having dual occupations i.e., Agriculture cum service. It indicates that their economic condition is satisfactory. During the time of survey, it was found that most of the Panchayat members are engaged in single occupation and so their economic conditions are poor in comparison to other elites.

Our data related to the elite's exposure to communication media, indicate that the utilization of mass-media is not quite satisfactory. Hence, they are having low level of over all awareness. While analysing the media exposure of the elites it is also observed that not a single elite has exposure to national news. At the same time majority of the rural elites are not having exposure to the electronic media like T.V. and Radio for informative knowledge. Most of the elites read newspaper (local) without going in to the details. It indicates their low level of curiosity towards information and indicates their casual approach to understand the events and incidents at the national level.

From the stand point of political socialization of the elites, it could be concluded from the study that majority of the elites are having better political socialization due to the emergence of some important personality (65.54%) from their family or having active political members (48.69%) in
their family. But majority (65.72%) of the elites despite being affiliated to one or the other party, are not sufficiently active when the question arises regarding the participation in party meetings or other party activities. Our findings on the political socialization of the rural elites also indicate that their motivation for joining politics is multiple in nature. Our data indicate that 25.5 percent of the elites joined politics to serve the people, where as 22.45 percent got motivated due to persuasion of the village people. Another factor is that 40.82 percent of the respondents revealed that they entered into politics due to their party advice and only 8.16 percent expressed about the inspiration they got from important personality. The analysis indicates that the percentage of the elites, who voluntarily joined in to politics, is not high. Hence, self-motivation is lacking among the elites. Party influence over the elites entry into politics is one of the major reasons. Hence, it could be stated that most of the elites do not join politics voluntarily with a determination to serve the people. Rather, the party leaders become the main motivating force behind the entry into politics.

The analysis of the role perceptions and performance of the rural elites in rural development reflects dichotomous in character. The study indicate that majority of the rural elites are aware of their rural problems. The data reveals that 83.15 percent of the elites understand the rural problems through personal experience, where as 72.97 percent are being informed by others. At the same time the study also reveals that elites are very active in decision-making process regarding rural development and organize meetings to solve the rural problems. But their initiative, self-efforts, cooperation as well as over all role performance towards the
solution of their problems is not encouraging. The data shows that majority (73.78%) of the rural elites depend on the government for the solution of their rural problems. Hence, Majority of the elites (59.55%) prefer to inform about their problems to the concerned government departments. The study also revealed that majority (88.71%) of the rural elites were not taking initiative for public work, such as construction of rural road and public utility buildings with their own village people. This over-dependence on the government and lack of interest to innovate the ways and means to solve the problem could be referred as the root cause of all the ills in the rural areas. Hence, instead of constructive effort for solution of the problem the elites are often resorted to registering complaints.

Moreover, the study also shows that the elite's cooperative role in the implementation of the government sponsored programmes is also not satisfactory. Although majority (88.01%) of the rural elites considered that the rural developmental programmes were not properly implemented and most of the developmental programmes were not succeeded in real sense, yet their supervisory role in their own area, on developmental schemes is negligible. The study reveals that majority (61.29%) of the elites have never supervised the implementation of rural developmental programmes in their own area. Again majority (53.36%) of the rural elites have never taken initiative to report higher authority regarding improper implementation of the developmental programmes. It indicates that they like to remain a silent spectator without any re-action even if the programmes are not properly implemented. Only a few elites have reported to the local authority about the non implementation or wrong implementation of the programmes.
Interestingly, the study also shows that most of the rural elites are not aware of the various programmes related to the rural development. Only a few elites have information about selective schemes of rural development. Again, the irony is that the elites who have no information about rural developmental programmes are also not interested to know the programmes of development. It reflects their low interest and curiosity towards rural developmental activities and sincerity in their approach towards the developmental activities for the rural masses. This apathetic attitude of the elites probably facilitates corruption at the level of bureaucracy.

From the role perception and performance of the elites, it's clear that though they are conscious about the various problems of the villages, but their performative role is not quite encouraging. They know their problems but try to alienated themselves from the practical field of the problem solving. Instead, they are mostly dependent on the government for the solution of their rural problems. Individual effort is quite negligible.

The analysis of the perception of the elites about the problems and obstacles of rural development, indicate that majority of the elites are conscious and understand the sources of the obstacles. In this regard a significant chunk of the elites (46.44%) consider that concerned governmental departments and their employees are the major source of obstacles, because they are not taking due care and interest for proper implementation of government sponsored schemes. In fact, it is true that if in governmental sponsored schemes, their employees themselves become obstacle, than it is not possible to run the programmes properly. Again, the
study also reveals that lack of consciousness of the political leaders and the rural people is to sum-extent responsible for failure of the developmental programmes.

Regarding the prescription to overcome the problems and obstacles of rural development, the study reveals that most of the elites (42.70%) have emphasized on generation of consciousness of the people and active participation of the people in rural developmental activities. Most of the rural elites have faith on the people because village people could play an important role to overcome the developmental problems.

The analysis of the linkage network of the rural elites with various levels, clearly unfolds one important aspect that over all levels of linkage of the elites are very weak. So far as inter-party and intra-party interaction of the rural elites are concerned, it is seen that the rural elites are comfortable in interacting with their local level counterpart. But interaction with higher level political leaders for developmental purposes is very low. Again, the interaction and link across the party line, for various community issues, and issues related to the rural development is very poor. The study reveals that although rural elites of the district under study have link with different level of political leaders related to various activities yet their interaction for developmental purposes is very insignificant. Further, regarding the elites link with bureaucrats and government officials, as our data shows, that majority of the elites know the concerned departmental officials only. But their link with bureaucrats in other departments is almost negligible. Again, elites' link with block level government officials happens to be very high in comparison to the district and state level. Further, the study indicates that
although majority of the elites know the officials of the government, they rarely approach them, specially to interact for development works.

Our findings on the linkage network of the rural elites clearly indicate that the horizontal link is not effective but vertical link is supposed to be good. The political leaders at the upper level, like MLAs & MPs, with the help of the rural elites spread their influence in grass-root level and gain benefits. But the rural elites hardly are able to convince the upper level leaders for developmental purposes. From the linkage network of rural elites with political leaders and government officials, the society is rarely benefited. It could be so, due to the inability of the rural elites to influence the leaders and officials at the high-up.

At the same time, analysis of data do not provide positive indication about the sincere efforts and attitudes of the rural elites to serve their rural community. The study also reflects the attitude of dependence on the part of the elites for developmental activities in their own areas. The data regarding the role performance of the elites reveals a gloomy picture. Further, it shows that the rural elites were not sincerely carrying-out developmental efforts in their own areas. Their participation and initiative role in rural development is not satisfactory. It could be stated that neither the elites do have the necessary aptitude to take initiative nor are dedicated in performing their role as the link pin between the rural masses and the government.
Suggestions

The relevance and importance of rural elites for rural development is well accepted, not only among the researchers and scholars at the national level, but also among the international scholars and agencies devoted towards rural development. Rural development has been an important aspect for national economic planning, right from the beginning of the first plan period. Nehruvian policies gave due importance to rural development. But it has been observed that expected changes have not taken place in the rural society. The major cause is traced to the application of top-down planning in our country. The policies which were formed earlier, did not have the necessary input of understanding of the peculiarities of the problems of rural India.

However, as multiple efforts are being directed from various agencies both national and international, a paradigm shift has taken place in the developmental discourses. New approaches have come into being to tackle the problems in the rural society. The emphasis is being laid on the bottom-up approach. It is expected that through this approach the rural masses will have adequate opportunity to decide upon the necessities they actually need. It is also believed that the rural folk will have access to the resources and will decide upon how to utilize the same. Through this they also can prioritise their needs and will be the decision makers for themselves. It needs decentralization of power to the rural elites to seek maximum participation from the people to make the plans and projects successful.
The government of India, exactly with this in mind introduced the 73rd constitutional amendment through which power is being decentralised and the autonomy is being handed over to the people.

The following suggestions are being made for attaining success in rural development:

➤ Rural elite need to be given actual power for decision making;

➤ Better acquaintance of the rural elites to the various central government sponsored schemes is required;

➤ The rural elites’ level of awareness should be enhanced through supply of newspapers and other media of information. The same could be made available in the village community-hall and the panchayat offices.

➤ Mass participation should be ensured to facilitate the successful working of various plans and projects.

➤ The rural elites’ opinion should be taken into account inviting them to participate directly while the various plans and projects are charted out.

➤ The various developmental schemes should be made available both to the elite as well as the public to enhance the awareness in the rural areas. This could be done through organisation of meetings at the village level, ensuring active participation from the people.

➤ The panchayat should have the actual power in decision making and utilising the fund. Hence, both the people and the institutions need empowerment.
➢ The panchayat should have sufficient fund and should be encouraged to have their own resources.

➢ The attitudinal development of the rural elite needs to be developed. It could be done so provided adequate attention is being given to their opinions, making them realise that they are the real stakeholders.

➢ Both the elite and the mass should be given the feeling that the development is for them of them and by them only.

If there will be a concerted effort from all corner – the State, the bureaucracy, the institutions of rural governance, and the people – it will not be very difficult to eliminate the disparities that exists in the rural areas and rural development could have the real people centric development for enhancement of the socio-economic condition of the rural mass and ensure social justice and good governance.