POLITICS AND ADMINISTRATION IN HARYANA: A STUDY OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LEADERS AND OFFICIALS OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS

(SUMMARY)

Man has travelled a long way from savagery to civilization, and in this long journey he realized a need for some socio-political institutions for nurturing social order, progress and harmony through an institutional mechanism of effective governance. Since time immemorial, philosophers like Plato in Republic and Bacon in his New Atlantis have suggested various modes of governance. With the advancement of time, there emerged a plethora of ideologies suggested by various eminent philosophers. But in our post-modern age of globalization and multi-culturism, the relations between ruling elites who happen to be at helm of affairs have become complex not only in social milieu, but also in the political institutions.

This study is an attempt to explore the relationships between leaders and officials of PRIs – the oldest institutions in our country. These relationships have been explored in the light of forces of caste, gender, education, political affiliations etc. with special reference to the two districts of Haryana – Sirsa and Panchkula.

The universe of the study includes both the Zila Parishads, two Panchayat Samitis and four Gram Panchayats each from both the districts. The survey includes 175 PR leaders and 69 PR officials selected purposively
for conducting the empirical investigations with the help of pre-structured interview schedules.

The following were the objectives of the study:-

1. To study the socio-economic background of the administrative officials and leaders at all the three levels of PRIs in the state.
2. To study the impact of the variables of caste, gender, education, political affiliations (in terms of political party etc.) on the relationship between leaders and officials.
3. To study the relationships between leaders and officials particularly while discharging the role of planning and financial allocations for the development projects.
4. To study the impact of political intervention on the morale, motivation and efficiency of administrative officials of PRIs.
5. To find out the ways and means to reform and improve cordial relationships between leaders and administrative officials.

The review of literature was carried out by taking into consideration various studies, thematic articles and comments published in books, journals and magazines as discussed in the thesis. To understand the research problem deeply and broaden the theoretical background in the light of norms and rules governing the patterns of relationship between PR leaders and officials, the following hypotheses of study were framed:-

1. There is not any significant difference in socio-economic background of leaders and administrative officials of PRIs in the state.
2. There is not any impact of caste, educational achievement, political affiliations on the relationships between leaders and officials.
3. There is no significant difference of opinion between leaders and officials in the matter of administrative issues such as planning and allocation of finances for development projects etc.

4. There is no significant dominance of administrative officials on the leaders in PRIs.

5. There is no significant impact on the efficiency, morale and motivation of administrative officials due to political intervention in the functioning of PRIs.

The present thesis is divided into seven chapters but for the sake of brevity, only precised versions of these chapters have been presented here.

The introductory chapter surveys the history of Panchayati Raj Institutions and the circumstances which led to the passing of 73\textsuperscript{rd} Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. The chapter discusses the major provisions of Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 which provided for the constitution of Gram Panchayats at village level, Panchayat Samitis at block level and Zila Parishads at district level for better administration of rural areas. It also discusses the theory on politics and administration and points out that politicians and administrators have their separate universe of role sets. When they interact, only a part of their role universe becomes relevant for their relationships. The chapter highlights the diverse aspects of relationships between leaders and officials that need further exploration.

The second chapter ‘Profile of the Area selected for the Study’ deals with the etymological history of Haryana and the two districts – Sirsa and Panchkula and also emergence of the districts as an administrative unit, penetrating the geography and occupations of the people of the state. The chapter includes the data from statistical abstract of Haryana about the area,
population, sex ratio as well as literacy rate of Haryana and the districts selected for the study.

**The third chapter** ‘Socio-Economic Profile of PR Leaders and Officials’ sorts out the socio-economic background of leaders and officials working in these institutions. These indicators such as age, caste, family size, educational qualifications, income etc. have a significant impact in shaping their role, behavior and orientations. It illustrates that younger and middle aged leaders are becoming more successful in the rural power structure. The traditional pattern of social hierarchy is gradually weakening as the scheduled castes and backward castes leaders are coming upto dominate the authority structure in villages as is proved by their increasing number in PRIs. Although the educational qualifications of elected leaders are increasing yet the officials are educationally and technically superior to the elected representatives. About two-third of leaders reported that their families or they themselves possess land holdings of varied sizes further, the data indicates that more than half of land owning leaders are either average sized or big farmers indicating that big farmers are still very active in PRIs. The economic status of officials of PR is better than the PR leaders.

It is revealed that both elected PR leaders and officials are similarly situated in terms of their age, caste, religion and family size; and dissimilar in terms of gender, residential background, educational qualifications, size of land holdings and gross annual income.

**The fourth chapter** ‘Relationships between Leaders and Officials in PRIs’ illustrates the existing relations between the two functionaries of PRIs in both the districts. It underlines the fact that majority of leaders and officials have cordial relationships with each other. However, a sizeable percentage of leaders and officials admit that their relationships are not
harmonious or cordial due to some factors like caste, literacy and gender differences. The chapter further underlines the fact that the belonging to the ruling political party is the major factor to determine the relationships between the two. The BDPO and other officials behave friendly to the leaders belonging to the ruling party.

The fifth chapter ‘Operational Parameters of Relationships between Leaders and Officials in PRIs’ deals with the relationships between the two functionaries while discharging the day-to-day functioning and preparing the development plans for their area. It further explores the capabilities of PR leaders regarding the finalization of places and categories of the beneficiaries. The study points out that majority of leadership at gram panchayat level have the courage to express their viewpoints regarding the development work in their area as more than half of leaders responded that they refuse to accept the suggestions of PR officials if it is not in the large interest of the people.

The chapter further reveals that more than half of leaders in both the districts use their power to spend the money on the development works in their area. Although a sizeable percentage of leaders expressed the view that PR officials put hindrance in the execution of their power to spend the money on the development works. A simple majority of leaders at all three levels feel that bureaucrats do not interfere in the functioning of PRIs. It indicates that local autonomy is maintained in the functioning of PR institutions to a great extent. About one-third PR leaders at all the three levels admitted that bureaucrats interfere in the functioning of PRIs.

It is explored on the basis of study that there is a certain degree of difference of opinion between leaders and officials in the matter of administrative issues such as planning and allocation of finances for the
development projects. It is further explored that about half of sampled leaders admitted that a certain degree of supremacy is shown by the officials. There are two factors which make both actors (leaders and officials) powerful or powerless in terms of domination. These are power to distribute funds which makes officials dominating and affiliations with ruling political party which makes leaders strong to bow down officials in allocating benefits in their area or village.

The sixth chapter ‘Leaders vis-à-vis Officials: Impact of Political Intervention’ deals with the political intervention and its impact on the officials working in PRIs. The data reveals that majority of leaders and officials supported the proposition that there is political intervention in the working of PRIs. It further indicates that political intervention is affirmed by leaders as well as officials is found to be greater in Sirsa as compared to Panchkula. The reason for such intervention might be closeness of people with the mainstream political system of the state. Further it was seen that political intervention, as confirmed by officials and leaders, is more by the MLAs and ministers as compared to MPs. Majority of officials accepted that they have to face political pressure of the frequency ranging from frequently to rarely. More than half of leaders admitted that their work is accomplished by putting political pressure on the officials and this is also confirmed by the same number of officials.

Majority of PR leaders and officials agreed that work is done by the pressure of influential people at higher levels. Further, more than half of PR leaders agreed that their work gets done easily if they meet PR officials in a group. A large majority of PR leaders supported that there is political intervention and agreed that officials are transferred on political grounds. More than half of officials also agreed that they are transferred on political
basis and have to fall a prey to political leaders if their demands are not fulfilled.

The data specifies that a large majority of leaders agreed that frequent transfers weaken the morale of PR officials. Less than half of the leaders negated the statement. In case of officials, more than half of them stated that frequent transfers adversely affect their morale and efficiency. About one-fourth of officials replied that it does not affect them in any way. A sizeable number of officials maintained silence on this issue. The cordiality of relationship was probed from both PR leaders and officials and a large majority of leaders responded that they have harmonious relations with the PR officials even after exerting political pressure, about one-third of leaders felt that their relations do not remain the same after pressurizing the officials. In case of officials, nearly half of them agreed that there relations remain the same even after leaders’ exerting political pressure. Almost the same percentage of officials felt that their relations do not remain cordial after the exercise of political pressure on them.

Thus, the hypothesis that there is no significant impact on the efficiency, integrity, morale and motivation of administrative officials due to political interference in the functioning of PRIs is not proved by empirical study. Alternatively, it is stated that frequent political intervention for personal and party workers’ benefits hampers the proper functioning of PRIs and there is noteworthy impact of political intervention on the efficiency, morale and motivation of officials working in PRIs.

The researcher has also observed that if any leader of ruling party or opposition party happens to be President of any tier, especially Zila Parishad, then officials become submissive and do not create any unnecessary hindrance in sanctioning the funds for developmental projects
because power lies in the sphere of politics. The extent of closeness of elected leaders of PRIs to ruling party or opposition party makes them assertive and they, due to their political clout and articulating skills, generally dominate the officials in the matter of sanctioning infrastructural facilities in their villages or blocks or Zila Parishad areas.

The findings of the study reveal the factors affecting the relationships between PR leaders and officials which need to be addressed forthwith for strengthening the institutions of local self government. Thus, the present study forwards certain measures to develop better understanding and reciprocal respect between PR leaders and officials. The thesis incorporates the suggestions for improving official-leader relationship in the state.

The research problems, findings and suggestions pertaining to this study are not conclusive but indicative whose application and implications, to greater extent, depend upon socio-political and cultural milieu of the area undertaken for the research. Still, there are various variables which need to be explored to establish links between research problems and findings. There is an emerging need of another empirical research to investigate the implications and patterns of relationships between Panchayat Samiti leaders and sarpanches of the Gram Panchayat and Zila Parishad leaders and Panchayat Samiti leaders. It is hoped that the researchers in the future may take up this emerging venture to bridge the gap of knowledge in this area so that sound policies are formulated to reinvigorate the edifice of rural local governance in India.