

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of writing this chapter is to present the summary of conclusions and findings, which can be called the generalisations and can be taken up for further research by other scholars.

We have selected three village panchayats namely Bangarh, Klari and Nichar in three different districts i.e. Una, Shimla and Kinnaur. We have selected these panchayats for the study basically for the following reasons:

(I) Bangarh panchayat from Una district is in low hill areas. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people. The village is situated near the state highway and well connected with other parts of the district. Literacy rate of Una district is high 50.5 per cent as compared to Shimla 42.74 per cent and Kinnaur 36.84 per cent. But the literacy of Bangarh village is low. This panchayat is a developing panchayat.

(II) Klari panchayat of Shimla district is situated in high hills. Horticulture is the main occupation of the people. This panchayat is economically, politically and culturally advanced. This panchayat is acting as popular institution with a good deal of success. The literacy rate of this panchayat is also highest of all the three panchayats. The people are influenced by Devata System. This panchayat is a highly developed panchayat.

(III) Nichar panchayat of Kinnaur district is situated in a tribal belt and in interior of the district, cut off from urban centres. The majority of the people in this panchayat is illiterate. This is an underdeveloped but horticulture in terms of apple is slowly boosting the economy. The economy of this panchayat is mixed of agriculture and horticulture. The people are not so rich. They are economically, politically and culturally underdeveloped. Nichar has inherited religious tradition. They are basically influenced by Buddhist religion and believe in "Tantric", "Ghosts" and other various types of superstitions but they are to some extent influenced by Humanistic rituals and traditions like caste.

Both the panchayats (Bangarh and Nichar) have failed to discharge even the elementary functions of the panchayat, whereas Klari panchayat has been active in this respect.

There are various important factors which influence the panchayat politics in general and elections in particular in Himachal Pradesh, particularly in three villages, Bangarh, Klari and Nichar. First of all, the younger respondents are more in Klari and Nichar than in Bangarh. But the respondents of middle age group and aged group are more in Bangarh as compared to Klari and Nichar. The males are more in Bangarh than the other two panchayats. But the females are comparatively more in Klari and Nichar. Religion is not an important factor in the village panchayat politics because in the three panchayats Hindus are in predominant majority. But customs play an important role in Klari and Nichar, for example, the custom of Devata even today influences the voters of Klari and Buddhist customs influence the voters of Nichar. Bangarh in this respect is different. Here such customs simply do not exist.

The respondents of upper castes are more in Klari and Nichar than in Bangarh. The respondents of backward and scheduled castes are more in Bangarh than in Nichar and Klari. But in the three panchayats majority is of upper castes. The profession of a person also influences the voting behaviour. In Klari and Nichar more respondents are in service as compared to Bangarh. Majority of the respondents is engaged in horticulture in Klari and horticulture and agriculture in Nichar. Whereas a majority of respondents is engaged in agriculture work in Bangarh village. More daily wagers are found in Bangarh and Nichar. But in Klari panchayat, there is no such person who is working as a daily wager. In this village, the outsider Gorkhas work as daily wagers.

There are rich landholders in Bangarh and Klari. But marginal landholders are more in Nichar. In landholdings, upper castes are the dominant class. The Klari village is economically very rich. The income of the respondents of Klari panchayat is more than the income of the respondents of two panchayats. But in Bangarh and Nichar, those respondents are in majority who have a low income. The respondents of three panchayats are very keen to take part in politics. The supporters and active members of different parties are more in Bangarh and Klari as compared to Nichar. In the three panchayats, the most important factor which influences the voters besides caste and class is the personality and honesty of the candidate. At the time of panchayat elections in Bangarh wine and money was used to influence the voters. But in Klari and Nichar there was no such practice. They do not give preference to money. They see the qualities and ability of the candidate.

Power structure is controlled in the three panchayats by the socio-economically dominant castes and classes. In the three panchayats, the most important factor is family background and ritual status in terms of caste as an instrument of maintaining, retaining and gaining power. Second most important factor to gain power is the financial resources of an individual or a group. The third is the political factor which means affiliation with political parties. Apart from these three factors, the personality, popularity, honesty, education and ability of the candidate is also important. Muscle power upto some extent helps a group to control the power structure.

Therefore, there is a close relationship between caste, class and power in rural Himachal. So far as the caste is concerned, the panchayat leadership is controlled by upper castes in the three villages. Majority of the respondents and panchayat members is of upper castes. Rajput caste has dominated the three panchayats. Members of other castes are negligible in number. The scheduled caste members who are elected by virtue of the reserved seats are not given position of authority by the dominating castes. There is no instance in the three panchayats, of a scheduled caste member being given the opportunity to act as a pradhan and up-pradhan. If the facility of reservation is withdrawn, there is hardly any possibility of a member getting elected even as a panch. It is because of their low numerical strength and also because of their socio-economic backwardness and illiteracy.

The upper castes by and large constitute the dominant class because of their ownership of basic means of production. Leadership in the three villages is dominated by the agriculturists and horticulturists because of the ownership of land. These leaders can conveniently meet the voters in the village as they have plenty of leisure time. The scheduled castes, backward caste or the marginal landholders, on the other hand happen to be dependent, by and large, on the agricultural land owned by the upper castes, for their livelihood. The poorer sections of the village work in the fields of the agriculturists and generally it is difficult to vote against their masters in the elections. But in three panchayats, all the panchayat members almost belong to the middle class in terms of their income and landholdings. But as a matter of fact they belong to upper castes and are supported by the richer sections of the caste. In other words ultimately the power structure is controlled by economically dominant castes and classes because the panchayat leaders belonging to middle class have to act according to the wishes of the richer members.

Thus, the entire rural power structure is totally dominated and controlled by the upper castes because of their occupation of key positions of power and privilege, particularly in police, bureaucracy and higher political leadership and the linkages of the panchayat leaders with these bodies. These linkages are used for the fulfilment of their own vested interests. Actually the phenomenon of caste also helps in further strengthening these linkages because majority of the officials in police and bureaucracy also belongs to upper castes and are related to upper castes panchayat leaders in one way or the other. These linkages further help them in consolidating and expanding their power, authority and influence over the backward and scheduled castes. However, the linkages with higher political leadership are the two way traffic. The panchayat leaders get concessions from state and central level political leaders but they have to extend their support during State Assembly and Parliamentary elections. One of the conclusions is that they breed corruption and this results in the mismanagement of panchayat funds. The panchayat leaders are better educated and have greater mobility, of course within the state.

Political parties are very active in the three villages under study. Out of the total 300 respondents in the three villages, a majority of respondents (206) is the supporters and another 52 are sympathisers and 42 are active members. Out of the total 25 panchayat leaders in the three panchayats, 13 are active members and 12 are supporters. These respondents have their support and sympathies with the Congress(I) and Bhartiya Janata Party. In Klari almost every member is a supporter of Congress (I) whereas in Nichar Congress (I) and B.J.P. dominate. A very interesting and revealing feature of Himachal rural society in terms of three villages is that the common masses are very aware of different national political parties. The panchayat leaders in the three panchayats are also affiliated directly or indirectly with political parties.

It has been observed that the popularity of a political party is not because of its programmes or functions or manifestoes, but because of their respective top level leaders or chiefs who are favourite or ideal leaders of the villagers. It may be said that liking of a political party depends more upon the popularity of its national leaders. The panchayat elections of three villages have never been fought on party basis. Majority of the respondents in the three panchayats favours that these elections should not be contested on party basis. This has further been confirmed by the respondents while asking the questions related to 64th Amendment Bill, as to whether the panchayat elections should or should not be held on party basis. The responses were predominantly in favour of contesting the panchayat

elections on non-party basis. The panchayat leaders play a marginal role as "vote banks" in the State Assembly and Parliamentary elections. Therefore, the party system and panchayat system in Himachal are also inter-related.

The panchayat system also performs the functions of political socialization and political mobilization. Though the panchayat elections have been contested on non-party basis, yet the political affiliation of the candidates contesting elections at panchayat level is very well known. Through their informal conversations about different political parties, the panchayat leaders socialize the residents of the village into politics. The political orientations are, thus formulated through this process. But the half-hearted participation of people in panchayat affairs is also a shortcoming.

In the three villages, there is a tendency to elect young and active leaders at the panchayat level. Though the leaders of panchayats are educated, yet all the leaders and respondents in the three villages stressed on the need of educational qualification and some training for the membership in the panchayati raj institutions. The respondents of three panchayats are not satisfied with the functioning of the panchayat. The majority of the people are not aware about the 64th Amendment Bill. Only a few educated people knew about it.

Another important finding of our study is that the panchayat system has fragmented the rural society in Himachal. It has created cleavages and generated tensions leading to casteism, groupism and factionalism. This leads to bitter infightings, allegations and counter-allegations, mutual suspicious and rivalries which generally result in clashes leading to long drawn out litigations. The factionalism starts with different groups among panchayat leaders. The ex-leaders and defeated panches, pradhans and up-pradhans play an important part in forming groupism. This generally happens within the members of same economically dominant castes and classes. Interestingly when there is a conflict between upper castes and lower castes, the different factions of the upper castes join hands in terrorising the lower castes. But at the same time the people said that these tensions leading to casteism, groupism and factionalism are for only a temporary period. After sometime the situations becomes normal. But on the basis of our observation we found that this rivalry results in almost permanent enmity between the warring factions of the upper caste and dominant class. The pradhan blames the panches of opposition camp for non-cooperation whereas the opposition panches charge the pradhan of high handedness and authoritarian attitude. They say that the pradhan does not take

them into confidence, does not give them proper notice of panchayat meetings and does not circulate the agenda of meetings. They allege that the panchayat funds are mismanaged and the pradhan uses the panchayat funds only for the development of that part of the village where he lives or where the members of his group live. The auditing of the accounts is only a formality, which the pradhans manipulate through their linkages.

The most important fact about the panchayat system in Himachal Pradesh, particularly in the three villages is the apathy and non-involvement of ordinary gram sabha members in panchayat affairs. One of the main reason of this is that the gram sabha members are not properly acquainted with the statutory provisions of the Act about the two compulsory meetings of the gram sabha in one year. If by chance these meetings are called, the people are not interested to attend these meetings. Therefore, the political education of the common masses is the urgent necessity of the time because without the real and effective involvement of the masses, the concept of the grass roots democracy and rural government is nothing but a vision and a dream.

So, far as the women panches are concerned, they are members of panchayat because of a statutory provision of co-option. No woman is a panch by virtue of her victory in election. Women do not play any active part. Thus, panchayat politics is a domain of male sex. In village panchayats, if a woman enters into politics, she is taken as an exception. They do not attend the panchayat meetings. The pradhan signs the register after the meetings and show their presence. He blames the opposition panches for creating problems of quorum in panchayat meeting by their boycott.

One of the important conclusions is this that the panchayat members do not visit the villagers after the elections. They come only at the time of elections for votes. Another finding is that the funds given to the panchayats are not adequate. The government should give more funds for the development of the villages. The real democratic decentralisation is not functioning at the panchayat level in Himachal Pradesh. The fruits of power are far away from the reach of the landless and the poor. The rural power structure is still heavily controlled by young and middle age groups, upper economic classes, upper castes and good educational status. On the basis of our observation we found that whatsoever little funds are given to the panchayats for village development are generally pocketed by the pradhan and his group and they manipulate the audit of these accounts through their influence. Thus, the common villagers are deprived of even the little developmental work which could have been

done by the panchayat leaders, if they had utilised the funds for the purposes for which these funds are sanctioned. However, there is an acute shortage of funds in the panchayats and panchayats should be given more finances to make them effective but at the same time it must be ensured that these funds must be properly utilised and the accounts should be honestly audited. The panchayat members should be honest, so that they may spend the funds with honesty for the development works. Besides it, the common people of the village should also co-operate with the panchayat leaders. The people should participate actively in village panchayat affairs.

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APPENDIX

Appendix I

QUESTIONNAIRE-CUM-INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

(For Gram Sabha/Gram Panchayat Members)

Part-I

Background data

1. Code No. _____
2. Age _____
3. Male/Female : _____
4. Caste : _____
5. Married/Unmarried : _____
6. What is/was your father's profession/Occupation ? _____
7. What is/was his monthly Income ? _____
8. What is your profession/occupation ? _____
9. what is your monthly Income ? _____
 - (a) Below Rs. 500/-
 - (b) Between Rs. 500/- -1000/-
 - (c) Between Rs. 1000/- Rs. 1500/-

(d) Between Rs. 1500/-2000/-

(f) Above Rs. 3000/-

10. What are your liabilities dependents ?

(a) Sons/daughters

(b) Brothers/Sisters

(c) Mother/Father

(d) Parents

(e) Any other (Please Specify)

11. What is your monthly expenditure ? _____

12. No. of dependents in job _____

13. No. of dependents in education _____

14. Are you educated ? If yes, upto which class?

a. Primary

b. Matric

c. Graduate

d. Post-graduate

c. Illiterate

15. Have you permanent property such as land, shops etc. If yes, how much land?

- a. Up to 5 acres
- b. Between 1 to 10 acres
- c. Between 10 to 20 acres
- d. Between 20 to 30 acres
- e. Between 30 to 40 acres
- f. Above 40 acres.

Part -II

Data about Political Orientation

16. Is/was your father associated with any political party?

If Yes, In what way ? As a _____

- a. member
- b. supporter/sympathiser
- c. an office bearer
- d. In any other way

17. Is / was your father associated with a political party? Yes/No.

a. Did he ever contest panchayat elections?

If, Yes, When ? _____

Did he win or lose ? _____

18. Are you associated with any political party?

If yes, in what way? As a _____

i. member iv. an office bearer

ii. supporter v. In any other way.

iii. sympathiser

19. Are you associated with a political party,

(a) Yes (b) No. If Yes

i. Did you ever contest panchayat election?

If Yes, when? _____

Did you win or lose? _____

If you won the election, did you contest for Pradhan,

M.L.A. and M.P. ?

20. Do you read Newspapers? If Yes, which newspaper do you read?

a. The Tribune b. Indian Express

c. Punjab Kesari d. Veer Pratap

e. Times of India f. Dainik Tribune

g. Jansatta h. Any Other (Please mention)_

21. Do you read newspapers regularly or casually?

- a. Regularly
- b. casually

22. Do you subscribe any newspaper ?

23. What type of news interest you most?

- a. Sports
- b. Political Centre, State, Local
- c. News about Punjab
- d. Any Other type of news

(please mention).

24. Some people say that caste, religion, language and regionalism play an important part/role in politics, what is your opinion ?

- a. Caste
- b. Religion
- c. Language
- d. Regionalism

25. Which political party exercises greater influence in your area?

- a. Congress(I)
- b. Bhartiya Janta Party
- c. Janta Dal
- d. Communist Party
- e. Janata Party

f. Any other

26 What is your opinion about panchayat leaders of the area? Do they come to you only at the time of election or they visit to you afterwards also?

a. Come only at election time

b. Visit afterwards also.

27. Do the panchayat leaders do something for Public Welfare? Yes/No

28. what is the role of panchayat leaders in Parliamentary/Vidhan Sabha elections ?

a. Very important role

b. Ordinary role

c. No role.

29. Are you interested in ;

a. National politics

b. State Politics

c. Local politics

d. In all

e. In none

30. Some people believe that politics is controlled by money. Some say that poor people are also important. what is your opinion?

a. controlled by money

b. Poor people are important.

c. Don't know

31. Some people say that elections are won by money only, some say money is not important.
what is your opinion?

- a. Won by money only
- b. Money not important
- c. Don't know.

32. what is the role of caste in the politics of your village?

- a. Very important
- b. important
- c. Marginal
- d. No role
- e. Don't know

Data About Research Problem

33. The Govt. has enacted Legislation about land Ceilling, according to which surplus land will be given to the landless,

Is it a right step of the Govt. ?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Don't know

34. What is the Impact of this Land Ceilling Act to the utilization of land to the landless people?

35. What is the role of land holding in politics?

a. Small holdings _____

b. Medium holding _____

c. Big holding _____

36. Who play the role of pressure groups/interest groups?

a. Agriculturists

b. Horticulturists

c. Kishan Sabha.

37. What are the minimum wages of landless?

38. Is there any association of SC/ST?

39. Which party/Parties plays/play an important role for landless SC/ST? _____

40. Did you vote in last panchayat elections.?

A. Yes b. No

If not why?

41. Do you know the name of those who contested for Pradhan Up-Pradhan and Panches?

42. What according to you, were the reasons of their victory ?

43. Do you vote for the candidates who belong to your _____

a. Caste b. Community c. religion Yes/No

44. What were the various factors which determined your choice for a particular candidate?

The candidate:

a. was honest b. was rich c. had linkages with higher political leadership.

d. belonged to your caste. e. party affiliation of the candidate.

f. Any other.

45. Did you vote with your _____

a. Free choice

b. Influence/pressure

46. Was the election free and fair?

a. yes b. No c. Don't know

47. Was Govt. influence/pressure used in elections?

a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

48. Were votes purchased by money or other sources?

a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

49. What in your opinion were the reasons of defeat of defeated candidates?

50. It is heard that the downtrodden and economically backward voters are not permitted their free choice, What is your opinion ?

- a. Correct b. Incorrect c. Don't know

51. What were the various factor which influence the voters to cast their votes for candidates who won the election?

Because of _____

- a. Land, property and wealth of the candidate
b. Linkages with police, bureaucracy and higher leadership
c. Majority of the caste of candidates
d. Groupism in the village
e. All these factors

52. Do the panchayat members of your area campaign during Parliamentary/Vidhan Sabha elections?

- a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

53. Do the panchayat members of your area have formal/informal relations with state or centre level leaders?

54. Do the panchayat members of your area exploit the down-trodden through their linkages with the higher political leadership ?

- a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

55. Have the high caste people in Himachal Pradesh monopolised the rural power structure?

a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

56. Has the Panchayat System helped in socialization and politicization of rural masses?

a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

57. Do the panchayat leaders act as "Vote Banks" during Parliamentary / Vidhan Sabha elections?

a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

58. Are the panchayat leaders affiliated with different political

parties?

a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

If Yes

Do they use their affiliation to increase their influence in village ?

59. It is also believed that the panchayat leaders have fragmented and disintegrated Himachal's rural society through favouritism, Nepotism and groupism etc. Is it correct ?

a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

60. Is it correct that panchayat leaders have their hold on social, political and economic life of the village?

a. Yes b. No. c. Don't know

61. Is it correct that at the time of panchayat election the poor and down trodden are compelled to vote for high caste candidates through money, power, physical coercion or other pressures?

- a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

62. Do the panchayat leaders from scheduled castes work freely in the panchayat or they are forced to work according to the wishes of high caste leaders?

- a. Work freely
b. Forced to work according to the wishes of high caste leaders
c. Don't know

63. Has the panchayat system resulted in the welfare of common masses?

- a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

64. In your opinion whether the power and finances given to the panchayats are

- a. Adequate
b. Inadequate
c. Don't know

If inadequate, what reforms do you suggest? _____

65. Whether the two meetings of Gram-Sabha regularly held in village panchayat area?

- a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

If no, why? _____

66. Does the panchayat system create groupism and factionalism in the village.

a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

If Yes, what are the reasons ?

67. Do the panchayat undertake development work in the villages?

a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

If no, what are the reasons ?

68. Does the Pradhan favour the Panches of his group only?

a. Yes b. No c. Don't know

If yes, how can this be removed?

69. Has the panchayat system created democratic consciousness among the rural masses?

a. Yes b. No

70. What in your opinion has been the role of panchayats in developing grass roots democracy? _____

71. Are you satisfied with the functioning of panchayat of your area ?

Yes/No

Has your panchayat done something for education at village level

Yes/No

72. Has your panchayat done anything in providing loans etc. from rural banks to the people?

Yes/No

73. Do you think that Panchayat System should be _____

a. Retained b. Abolished

74. What are your views about the functioning of the gram-sabha of

your village ? _____

75. It is believed that the women in rural areas have no choice of voting. They vote according to the wishes/instructions of their male counterparts. Is it correct ?

a. Yes b. No

Question related to 64th Amendment Bill

76. Is the 64th Amendment an emotive slogan for short term political gain in an election year(1989)?

a. Yes b. No.

77. Is panchayati raj a sentimental throw back to the days of Mahatma Gandhi?

78. Is it a step in the direction of decentralization or further centralization ?

79. Will it bring true democracy at grassroots level or erode the existing limited democracy?

80. Are the powers given to panchayats under 64th Amendment real or cosmetic?

81. How the central institutions like Election Commission/CAG affect the working of the panchayat Raj.

82. What are the short term/long term gains/losses for decentralization & democratization at village level? _____

83. Should the Election-Commission be authorised to conduct panchayat elections although the panchayat is a state subject?

Yes/No

84. Should the CAG of India be empowered to audit the panchayat accounts ?

Yes/No

85. Should the powers related to panchayats be entirely left to the states ?

Yes/No

86. Should 30 per cent reservation to women be given or not ?

Yes/No

87. Should the panchayat election be contested on party basis?

Yes/No

88. Will the decentralization of powers lead to disintegrationist tendencies and centrifugal forces of the country ? Yes/No

88. Will it put the powers in the hands of local vested interest coming from the dominant class/caste? Yes/No

90. Will decentralization be achieved without changing existing

socio-economic structure? Yes/No

91. Can decentralization be achieved without changing existing socio-economic structure?

92. Can we have decentralization without a fully operating federal system ?

93. Is decentralization possible without adequate distribution of power and resources down from the centre to the lowest level? Yes/No

94. Can decentralization be achieved simply by holding elections at various levels? Yes/No

95. Can decentralization be achieved without structural reforms aimed at redistribution of economic power and opportunities?

Yes/No

96. Should the panchayat election be held regularly ?

Yes/No

97. Can the present system of control by the Centre over the mass media and other information agencies serve the purpose of decentralization of power and decision making? Yes/No

98. Should the panchayats system cover the local level Nyaya Adalats? Yes/No

99. Is it perfectly possible that through this Bill, the Sarpanches and their like may further legitimize their role and sanctify their authority over the weaker section, without feeling the needs for public accountability?

Yes/No

100. How to create an atmosphere in which the panchayat raj institution can function effectively and as a mechanism for overall rural development ?
