

PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION IN A DEMOCRATIC PERSPECTIVE: ISSUES AND STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Most of the Third World countries face the common problem of making towards twin goals of nation building and rapid social economic progress. Poverty, illiteracy, corruption, low level of agricultural and industrial productivity pose a formidable challenge of development to the governments of these nations. The idea of development administration as a direct state engineered effort to intervene in the process of socio-economic transformation was therefore, born and adopted. Development administration is the administration of policies, programmes and projects to serve development purposes. It is a post second world war emergence. The contents of development administration are still evolving. During the last few decades, development was virtually identified with economic growth. But the question is 'can we remove poverty without the involvement of human resources or can we achieve the objectives of development administration without the people's participation. People's participation is a typical subject which has engaged the attention of the developing as well as developed countries. Why it has become so important today and what are its inherent characteristics in a democratic polity has been analysed in this paper. We have also mentioned in brief factors of effective participation and the strategies involved in this process.

Key Words: Development Administration, Bureaucracy, Governance, Good Governance, Lokpal, Jan Lokpal, Participatory Democracy, Representative Bureaucracy, Debureaucratisation, etc.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of people's participation in Governance is deeply rooted and intrinsically related to the democratic form of government. Democracy may still be called a popular idea in the sense that everybody talks about it; but, in as far as it is associated with Parliamentary Government, it is regrettably discredited. It is at once the hope of the workers and their despair. The idea is worshipped and the fact deplored. There is a widespread feeling that everything is wrong and an equally widespread uncertainty as to why it has gone wrong. And we are faced as a result with a paradoxical situation in which the more blunders we, of the nominally democratic countries, make, the more do we call upon the name of democracy.

One thing at least is obvious. The word has come to mean anything; or rather it means so much that it means nothing at all. Exactly, the same trouble has arisen with certain other terms like Development Administration etc. People argue for hours about such a phrase or concept which is hardly difficult to dissect. We believe that the state exists because of the individual and for the

individual but often swallows him up and destroys him. Generally, democracy is being condemned to suffocation. Our attention is to show what democracy, stripped clean of its false clothing does imply. Democracy is constructive when the system is admirably designed and put on firm foundations. People's Participation only, gives a precise content to its phraseology. Thus, our sincere attempt is defining the terms of 'people's 'participation' and 'development' and arguing about their dimensions.

Democracy is a transliteration of the Greek word 'demokratia' which was a combination of two other Greek words – 'demos', the people, and 'kratia', power. Democracy means that, by derivation, people's power. Democratic state is a community in which the masses are powerful. That seems to be a perfectly plain statement. Democracy is a delicate form of government which rests upon conditions which are rather precarious. Under right conditions and favourable circumstances, democracy is undoubtedly the best form of government, and secures the most satisfactory and enduring results. In the absence, however, of a certain level of political maturity and proper conditions, democracy cannot withstand forces of disruption. Despite all those infirmities, democracy is still

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the most acceptable form of government. There are, it is said, seven positive advantages or specific values of a democratic system of government. They are:-

1. Democracy has been described as an institutionalized peaceful settlement of disputes, making provision for ballots and not for bullets and for counting instead of cracking of heads.
2. Democracy ensures peaceful change in a changing society.
3. Only democracy provides for the orderly succession of rulers.
4. A high degree of political tolerance is an essential attribute of democracy.
5. Democracy provides for an atmosphere of diversity.
6. Democracy ensures the most favourable conditions for the supremacy of the rule of law. It contains essential safeguards against arbitrariness and provides effective machinery for redress of grievances.
7. Democracy promotes political freedom and projects such freedom into other spheres.

It is equally true that the quality of democracy in a country depends upon the quality of its people. Democracy is threatened not so much by the power hunger of the people as by lack of avenues of sharing and exercising power. A decentralized polity is supposed to ensure the sharing and exercise of political power by the people. While it can succeed in decentralizing functions of the state and increasing popular participation in them, it does not automatically improve popular control over decision-making processes. In fact, in the absence of an appropriate system of checks and balances, a decentralized polity merely helps in making tyranny more effective. In a democratic system, political power must be shared at every level. In other words, vertical decentralization of powers and functions must be accompanied by a sort of horizontal decentralization. This involves the concept of 'participatory democracy.'

Since administration is "the accomplishing side of the government" the question of the values that should permeate the administrative working assumes great importance. It is not only in the developing countries but also in the developed countries that the need for attuning the administration to the democratic imperatives is frequently discussed. The debate centres around ideas, such as, representative bureaucracy, debureaucratisation, humane bureaucracy, bureaucratic responsibility, the philosophy of democratic administration, and so on. While no adequate device to reconcile the democratic norms and administrative practices has been evolved, there is a growing disenchantment with the formal

institutions of democracy in many parts of the world. People feel that political parties, interest groups, legislatures, elected executives, adult suffrage and periodical elections do not provide the necessary democratic ethos. As a writer puts it, "The recent renewed interest in participatory democracy has been described popularly as citizen participation".

Further, other observers maintain that the renewed stress on participation is grounded in the recognition that citizens have vital contribution to make to the betterment of public policy. Citizens as customers of government are often more sensitive to public needs than are governing elites. Participatory democracy, however, is emerging as a powerful engine of people's aspirations. It is very closely related to the dynamism of changing environment. It is in the context of changing society that the administration is to function and fulfill itself.

Democracy is a slow and at times highly unsatisfactory process, but it is the best of all forms of government known to mankind so far. The main problem of administration in developing societies is to reconcile an authoritarian colonial administrative legacy based on a notion of passive political participation to the needs and demands of a goal-oriented administration which needs active public cooperation and support to fulfill main targets of the developmental plans and programmes of the government. Without such a support even a well-conceived plan of development is likely to fail. Development administration is administration for the socioeconomic development of the people, by the people and for the people. Their active cooperation and participation in the planning and implementation process is vital for its success.

Participation may be direct or indirect, formal or informal; it may be political, social or administrative in nature. The effectiveness of mobilized or institutionalized citizen participation in public administration depends on three factors:

- a) With what degree of seriousness the participant body or agency asserts itself;
- b) Whether public administration consults the body ; and
- c) Whether public administration delegates certain functions to that body.

During the colonial period, the maintenance of 'law and order' and revenue raising were the prime considerations of administration. The administrative apparatus and functions were then, to a great extent, autonomous and unaccountable to the public. Public participation neither existed nor was solicited by the government.

After independence with the adoption of the goals of a social welfare state, the key responsibility for rapid socioeconomic progress and modernization was undertaken by the state, which sought to implement them with the help of public bureaucracy. With the beginning of the process of planned development in India, the planners and administrators have repeatedly stressed the need to involve the masses and solicit their cooperation in the tremendous challenge of development administration.

Extensive empirical studies on the nature and degree of citizens' participation in India have revealed that the colonial legacy, social diversity, poverty and illiteracy and the peculiarity of the political process combine to greatly restrict popular participation in the public administration in India.

The major components of citizen perceptions of administration which are generally considered essential for widespread public participation in development administration are:

1. Adequate citizen knowledge of administrative norms and practices
2. Genuine public support for the goals, policies and programmes of the government
3. Positive evaluation of the job performance of governmental officials by the public
4. Perceptions of the administrative system as sensitive and responsive to the public
5. Belief in the integrity and honesty of the administrative cadre, rather than a tendency to view it as corrupt or corruptible
6. Perception of administrators as committed to egalitarian goals and practices
7. Feelings of efficacy and optimism about citizen action in the political system generally and in the administrative subsystem particularly: and
8. Motivational orientations emphasizing cooperative action with administrative officials in the implementation of developmental goals.

All these components are essential for the evolution of a balanced citizen-administration relationship, that is, to prevent the dominance or subservience of administration as well as to minimize the ignorance, apathy or helplessness of citizens. Unfortunately, in the present Indian context the major components of this relationship are conspicuous by their absence, which in fact is proving to be the main hurdle in widespread and effective public participation in the public administration in India.

People's participation in the development process means active cooperation and involvement of the general masses

and the targetted public in the various interfaces of the decision-making process in development administration. This calls for their active interests, enthusiasm and cooperation in planning, implementation and evaluation of development programmes at all levels, particularly, at the grassroots level. Public participation must become a mass movement, for, it is not only a means to development but in itself a development goal. Public participation is integral to the very process of development, particularly the development of a developing democracy like India. It calls for both political and administrative decentralization.

Elimination of the sense of injustice which may be caused by administrative arbitrariness, capriciousness, discriminatory and fanciful actions – is the 'sine qua non' of good governance. If, in prosperity of the people lies the strength of a government, in their contentment lies the security and stability of democracy. Hence, people's participation in governance is gaining increasing support and legitimacy to ensure responsiveness and responsibility of administration towards its citizens. The idea of participative management and Bhagidari system is now being strengthened and strategies are being devised to make the system more purposeful and effective. Development is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which cannot be achieved, unless the community itself is involved. Thus, the community participation is most widely seen as a way to mobilize resources, for that would otherwise not be available. Community participation involves members of communities in planning, implementing and monitoring of activities.

The needs for people's participation is endemic in a developing society where time bound plans are implemented within the constraints of a shoestring budget and a not so efficient and sensitive bureaucracy.

NEED FOR PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

1. People's participation makes the policies more cost-effective. This has been seen in policies of Watershed Management, digging wells, joint forest management, forestation, protecting pasturelands and building roads.
2. People's participation protects democracy. Karl Friedrich [1950:240] said, 'democracy must begin at home and its home is the community in the neighbourhood.' The Chipko and Appikko movements against corrupt and apathetic bureaucracy, Anna Hazare's campaign against corruption in village administration at ralegaon Siddhe, People's movement at Ajmer and Pali districts of Rajasthan and the Gandhchiroli women's protest against the bureaucracy protecting the liquor mafia behind the

cover of developmental projects are few such examples where the tables were turned against the corrupt administration and people took over. The face of their local areas has undergone a total metamorphosis since then.

3. People's participation makes people more responsible. The participatory sense enables them to discover their ability to transform and improve the lives of their community. Anna Hazare's Ralegaon Siddhe experiment has inspired more than fifty neighbouring villages to govern their resources through their own local institutional devices.
4. People's participation unites people. People have common local problems and if they get a chance to solve them with a little support from the government then they unitedly with a sense of belongingness put in their best efforts together. In the decade of eighties when the failure stories about the government policies became an open fact several village level agencies of VLAs took the initiative to substitute the bureaucratic offices.
5. People's participation controls Bureaucracy. Bureaucracy in India continues to misappropriate funds behind the steel frame. They tend to become unjust and aggressive to the highest degree. Recently, Anna Hazare's team has stirred the conscience of the masses on the rapidly growing problem of corruption in bureaucracy. It has forced the government to pass the 'Jan Lokpal' bill to contain the growing menace of corruption.
6. People's participation helps eradicate poverty better than the government. The enormous administrative structure for poverty eradication has led the government to decide at the top level in hierarchy and then impose it upon people. Wherever people have been allowed to decide problems are better resolved. In Ralegaon Siddhe the scientific water conservation techniques has converted the dry and parched village into a prosperous one with a bank deposit exceeding 23 lacs in 1994. The Bhusadia village which was in a state of miserable poverty now yields vegetation worth Rs. 20,000 per ha. per year.

People's participation in development administration is thus, a basic political process for promoting public bureaucracy's representativeness, responsiveness and accountability to the ultimate sovereign of the land, namely the people. Yet, the fact is that participation is inevitably coloured by the political perspective. This may occasionally create tensions for day-to-day administration. It is, therefore, necessary to have a sharper and deeper understanding between the public

and the officials. Woodrow Wilson, acclaimed as the father of the discipline of public administration in the U.S.A., has rightly observed in this connection as early as in 1887:

'The problem is to make public opinion efficient without suffering it to be meddling. Directly exercised, in the oversight of the daily details and in the choice of the daily means of government, public criticism is of course, a clumsy nuisance, a rustic handling of delicate machinery. But as superintending the greater forces of formative policy alike in politics and administration, public criticism is altogether safe and beneficent, altogether indispensable. Let administrative study find the best means for giving public criticism this control and for shutting it out from all other interference.

Wilson correctly pointed out when he observed: 'In order to make an advance at all we must instruct and persuade a multitudinous monarch called public opinion. As we all know public opinion is a constraint and a stimulus for a large number of administrative actions'.

Development administration is the administration of policies, programmes and projects to serve development purposes. The content of development administration is still evolving. Its first and foremost concern was with poverty. In the initial period of independence, the concern of development administration was economic, that is, concerned with raising the people's standard of living. Its foremost concern was to promote economic growth and to increase production. During the 1950s and 1960s, development was virtually identified with economic growth – with the increase in GNP. The exclusive emphasis on economic growth however, gave birth to imbalances and other hardships in the developing countries. The evaluation of these growth-oriented plans disclosed that economic growth increased alongside increasing poverty and unemployment among the masses. The inequalities between the rich and the poor were increasing. In recognition of such anomalies, the goal of development came to be redefined as growth with justice. That is, the objectives of development became reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality and unemployment within the context of a growing economy.

Nor was development to overlook the task of nation-building, i.e. to achieve national unity and to weld together people with diverse cultural and racial backgrounds so that they feel one with a commonly shared destiny. A sense of nationhood was to be developed. Getting India independent was not enough: the task has since been to make Indians out of us, who are basically Punjabis, Bengalis, Biharis etc.

Today, the concept of development has become more

encompassing and humanistic, its latest concept being 'sustainable development'. There is, thus, a broadening of the concept of development. To recall, in the 1950s and even the 1960s, development was interpreted in purely economic (GNP) terms. This definition proved sadly deficient and inadequate. Economic growth was supplemented by social justice. Other dimensions were also gradually added. Development is now to take care of the total human being who has his social and cultural dimensions too. No longer a Mother Earth to be plundered in the name of development; Pollution must be controlled, forests must be preserved, wildlife is to be protected. In other words, development must be environment friendly. The needs and requirements of posterity must be equally protected. Development today is being defined in holistic terms. The accent of development administration is on change or on planned change. John Montgomery defines development administration as carrying our planned change both in the economy and in the social services.

As George Gant has aptly said, 'Development administration is characterized by purposes, its loyalties and its attitudes. The purposes are of change, progress and innovation as contrasted with purposes of maintaining the status quo. In terms of loyalties, development administration has to be goal-oriented, client-centered, accountable and responsive to public wishes and demands rather than to any vested interests, king or empire. In terms of attitudes, development administrators have to be flexible, adaptable and result oriented. Pai Parnandikar and Kshirsagar, 'In their study of administrative behaviour in development, propose four behavioural prerequisites, (i) Change orientation, (ii) result orientation, (iii) citizen participation orientation, and (iv) commitment to work,

Development administration, to succeed, involves production of planned results in close association with clientele. It calls for serious restructuring of administration to facilitate people's involvement in all aspects of development. Inherent in development administration has to be on the basis of actual results achieved. It is not merely efficiency that is sought but effectiveness that is desirable.

OBSTACLES IN PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION

1. Education and knowledge – education and knowledge play a vital role in development. The people of rural areas are not well informed about the schemes and policies of the government for development. This is because of illiteracy and poor means of information. They do not know the benefits of the schemes and collective efforts towards success of development programmes.

2. Effective Leadership - The effective leadership can guide and motivate the rural people to participate in development process.
3. Reluctant Bureaucracy – In rural areas the residents are less privileged, deprived and less educated. The bureaucrats, so called elites, are reluctant to share and listen to the villagers. They do not want to appreciate the views to rural poor. Bureaucrats feel themselves experts in problem solving. This reluctance on the part of bureaucracy is the major hurdle in popular participation.
4. Political Will – The will of political leaders should be considered important in achieving wholehearted people's participation in development programmes. But its human nature that no one wants to share once in authority or power.
5. Financial viability – The fund allocation to rural development in each successive budget is not appropriate. The allocation of funds is not sufficient for rural development.

In this regard we may suggest some ways to promote effective participation, people-centered development means to enhance people's capabilities in terms of their skills, productivity and self reliance. Implementation of rural development programme is a challenging job. The developmental agencies have to deal with the deprived, less educated and less privileged sections in the rural community. As far as the rural problems and their solutions are concerned, the local people who are facing the problems are the most appropriate ones to find out the solutions. So these people should be involved in formulating and implementation of rural development programmes. To achieve an effective people's participation particularly in rural areas is a difficult task. Here are some suggestions for effective participation:-

1. Educate and enlighten citizens about the development process. They should be able to express their views freely. People should be adequately informed of the matters in which they participate. The information should be clear and precise.
2. Spontaneous support of the local leadership should be there in motivating people to take part in the developmental programmes. An effective leadership can motivate local people to participate wholeheartedly in implementation development programmes.
3. Attitude of bureaucracy should be changed from regulatory approach to participatory approach. Administration has to play a curial role in promoting

people's participation in rural development. Development administration is characterized as "people-client oriented". So the target group or community should be motivated. The bureaucracy has to be flexible to achieve full co-operation of local people in developmental projects.

4. To achieve an effective people's participation, the rural development agencies should share the intended programme at early an stage with the people of that area. In other words the development authorities should consult the matter of the intended development programme with the local people of that area and should take care of their opinion about problems in decision making. With this the locals will be willing to participate in the implementation of the programmes.

In short, development has been the dominant theme of the international community, particularly in developing societies. In the contemporary world, alleviation of poverty, eradication of illiteracy and ignorance, preservation of human dignity and culture in rural areas have become issues of brain-storming for the governments, economists and policy makers in India, we have adopted a planned development strategy. Each successive plan document stresses on poverty alleviation, education, health provisions, housing and other benevolent schemes for deprived, excluded poor and less privileged under different rural development programmes.

Though, since 1950, the government has been implementing rural development programmes but could not get success up to the mark. These programmes have been implemented in the authoritative environment with less or nil people's participation. The concept of people's participation emerged as the need of the hour. For effective result of development programmes, people's participation in their implementation should be encouraged. In rural areas, the local people should be enlightened and well informed about the benefits of the schemes for development. They should be motivated to co-operate with the authorities for development and vice-versa.

Participatory approach should be made a mass movement involving the active voluntary participation of rural people. Government has to take a step ahead for this, by imparting special training to the employees of development agencies. Suitable amendments have to be incorporated in the central and state laws to make true local self governments. To achieve the accepted success of

the plan document aiming at development or rural development, people's participation is must. This has become sice-qua-non of present public administration.

Based upon our earlier observations, let us mention the important purposes that can be served by encouraging people's participation:-

1. Creating will and determination among the members of the community for improvement in their present and future life.
2. Identification and development of the local resources, thereby generating self-reliance among the community.
3. Achieving integrated area co-ordination among various agencies interested in community welfare.
4. Mobilizing the available manpower for productive and useful activities.
5. Keeping the members of the community constantly informed about the developments in the area.
6. Arranging functional literacy programmes which can help them in understanding new technology.
7. Organising various clubs of youth, women, to serve as centres of discussion and development.
8. Providing an open forum for the community to discuss its problems and find indigenous solutions which may be efficient and economical.
9. To develop local leaders who can further educate and mobilize the people in the area.
10. Encouraging the people to adopt modern changes which can accelerate their socio-economic development.
11. Arranging extra-curricular activities to generate social awareness through well designed publicity.

Though people's participation is a pre-condition for success of development programmes i there must be an inbuilt mechanism to involve people in their conceptualization, planning, implementation, monitoring and management of resources (funds). This may increase the efficacy and acceptance of the programme on one hand and reduce the operational and administrative costs on the other.

Let us now discuss the techniques of People's Participation.

STRENGTHENING PUBLIC RELATIONS THROUGH MASS MEDIA

The creation of awareness is integral to social and economic development. The possibility for the power to critical awareness is real in every field linked to human development, and generation of public will hinges on effective communication of information and ideas that relate to people's needs, aspirations and capacities for progress in thought and action. In this sense, getting development process started is largely the task of information, education and communication through public relations.

UNDERSTANDING NEEDS AND VALUES OF THE COMMUNITY

The first important step in public relations is to understand the community. Every community is different and there are differences between each local community in the same country in terms of their work culture and living standards, family life, social structure, population structure and attitudes. Besides, values, beliefs and customs, religious practices, etc. differ in different areas. Public relations needs to understand the need of the people based upon this diversity before launching any field options. How to learn about the people and the community? Some of the important methods are:

1. Discussions with the People
2. Study of Newspapers, Magazines and other Published Literature
3. Complaint and Suggestion Boxes
4. Surveys

CREATING INDEPENDENT AND ATTRACTIVE MASS MEDIA

Democracy without free media is a contradiction in terms. Mass media should be the watchdog of democracy, and not the poodle of the establishment. The media has a greater responsibility today than they ever had to guide the nation and make every citizen conscious of his fundamental duties enshrined in the Constitution.

Public relations are carried out through many ways. Let us discuss some of the important ones.

1. Press
2. Radio and Television
3. Films
4. Songs and Dramas

Public-relation programmes need to be fair, honest,

truthful, impartial, open, authoritative and responsive. They must be conducted in the public interest. It should attempt at lubricating Government and public relationship based on trust and confidence.

EMPOWERING THE PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY THE DISADVANTAGED SECTIONS OF THE SOCIETY

The poorer groups, who are generally the most affected of the development process, are the least endowed and least powerful. The poor are automatically excluded from the participation process.

Decision-making is the first step in the development process. Therefore, a key objective of participation is to find out ways to include the hitherto impacts of development, in the decision-making process. There should not be mere participation but empowerment should be entrusted to poor people.

Strengthening NGO's Voluntary Agencies and Ensuring their Accountability

Voluntary agencies have a long history of active involvement in the promotion of human welfare and well-being. Lord Beveridge called them "a private enterprise for social progress". Voluntary agencies came into existence spontaneously, voluntarily and without any compulsion or control to fulfill the particular needs of some groups of people. These agencies are flexible and possess the virtues of human service with dedication. Voluntary action involvement of the people from policy making to implementation, is the life and blood of democracy.

According to Dharma Vira "Work of voluntary organizations and citizen participation are two sides of the same coin. Citizens work in organizations but on their work depends the quality of the service the organizations render. Voluntary Organizations provide a frame for citizen participation. Without effective citizen participation, the organization would only be empty forums".

The success of the developmental tasks depends to a great extent upon the harmonious relationships between the citizens and administration. Administration should not function as machinery but in a humane and purposeful way.

Considering people's participation in development administration from a democratic perspective we have discussed the dilemmas and dimensions of this topic. In this reference we also mention that this idea is intimately related to the concept of 'good governance.'

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Good governance has suddenly entered the vocabulary of Public Administration since 90s. Good governance is like a dream flower which has remained elusive even after completion of more than half a century of India's independence. Although, the effort to realize the dream, in the Indian context, has progressively turned out to be nightmarish over the decades for obvious social, political and economic reasons, yet the urge therefor has persistently grown undimmed and even got sharpened at an intellectual level. Good governance, as a concept, is applicable to all sections of society.

The foremost test of Good governance is the respect for rule of law. All its actions must uphold the rule of law and any effort to take the law in one's own hand or to undermine the law by anyone, however high and mighty he may be, must be dealt with speedily, decisively and in an exemplary manner. It is unfortunate that even after sixty years of independence, one cannot say with confidence that the governance in most states is based on rule of law.

It has to be admitted that the governance in India has not changed much, though over half a century has elapsed since independence. We have certainly made some gestures and 'noises' such as adoption of citizen's charter, passing of (retrograde) laws on right to information, mounting the platitudes of downsizing of the government and promoting the mantra of public accountability and transparency. But, the impact of these measures is hardly perceptible to the common person.

The public image of the bureaucracy, it is candidly confessed, was one of inaccessibility, indifference, procedure-orientation, poor quality and sluggishness, corruption-proneness and non-accountability for results. The need of the hour is, therefore, "to assure the people of India of an efficient, open, responsive, accountable, clean and dynamically adjusting administration at all levels." Urgent steps should be taken to restore people's confidence in the capacity and fairness of administration.

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