CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to understand whether or not the governance processes at the local level have empowered the rural marginalized groups to participate in the decision making process and access to their right to development. And that the degree of participation of these marginalized groups in the governance processes is structured by local development actors: state (political, administrative), non-state (N.G.Os), local elites (traditional, non-traditional).

As we have seen, it is believed that participation of citizens in the decision making processes of the government would lead to a changed picture of state-society-citizen relations. However, certain sections of the society eventually get marginalized due to poor participation in development and governance processes. These category of citizens are constitutionally equal participants in the democratic polity but disadvantaged in terms of exercise of equal citizenship. Cultural differences, inherited social inequalities, economic discrepancy, inaccessibility to the welfare provisions such as education, health etc., are some social conditions that undermine the exercise of equal citizenship.

As discussed in chapters two and three, attempt was made to provide an account of the constitutional provisions that aimed for providing equality of opportunity, justice and recognition to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the social and political sphere. The concept of equality included the legal and social dimensions that necessitated the elimination of arbitrary advantages in a social and economic system, irrespective of the cause whether the inequality has resulted from one's choice or that of another. Challenge was to integrate the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes into society and politics through the constitution and the legislative process, as well as the representative bodies that would set right the social and economic injustice. Departing fundamentally from the individualist premise of the equality principle it was proposed to have rights as legal entitlements that would also be obligations on the members of civil society. As a result within the constitution, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes had a set of rights and the state a set of duties, to eradicate discriminatory practices.
Other than these provisions, the intervention of state was also discussed through various policy measures. The Directive Principles of State Policy mention state's role in providing education, work, food, and health services etc. But these principles are non-justiciable. Till recent past, citizens could not demand access to such public good as a right. It was noticed that this lacuna caused a major impediment in the implementation of various policies and schemes meant for the socially and economically backward sections of the society. Remedy to these impediments was seen in devolving power to the local bodies and empowering the citizens to as to make the service delivery more effective, transparent and accountable. As a result panchayats became a potential foreground for effective implementation of schemes as well as participation of the people. According to one view¹, "Citizenship is, in part, about equality of status and respect". The concept of status is identified with recognition, and is derived from Hegelian philosophy, specifically the philosophy of consciousness. Nancy Fraser² views that, "In this tradition, recognition designates an ideal reciprocal relation between subjects in which each sees the other as its equal and also as separate from it. This relation is deemed constitutive for subjectivity; one becomes an individual subject only in virtue of recognizing, and being recognized by, another subject. Thus, "recognition" refers to the Hegelian thesis, often seen as opposed to liberal individualism and claims that social relations are prior to individuals and inter subjectivity is prior to subjectivity. The right to participation as a link between the two main traditions of citizenship: the (social) liberal rights and civic republican traditions, which respectively cast citizenship as a status and a practice. In the latter, the essence of citizenship is active participation in governance and politics for the good of the wider community.

To understand the participation of marginalized groups in governance processes and the role of local development actors mentioned three schemes were selected. The schemes, National Rural Employment Generation Scheme (NREGS), Mid Day Meal

Scheme (MDM) and Anganwaadi (ICDS) are the ones in which the people and local development actors are simultaneously involved.

The purpose of the study was that the citizens should not receive benefits from the state just as beneficiaries but participate in the implementation process. If it is so, then what are the reasons for this success? If it is otherwise, then why aren't the citizens able to demand for it as their right? The result is not one dimensional, in the sense that it's not just the bureaucrats or the caste factor or poverty or illiteracy alone that prevents or enhances such a situation. It is a combination of various factors.

While understanding the implementation of schemes from the beneficiaries various issues were pointed out. For e.g. in NREGS less wages, delayed wages, unawareness, corruption etc were pointed out. Involvement of the women in NREGS work in Kerala was a positive input. This involvement was for three reasons: first, it is not any private work but 'panchayat' work which is near to their home; second they earn extra ten to twelve thousand rupees in a year; third and most important, the money is transferred in their bank account which enables them to get larger loans for their SHGs. However in Bihar, situation was exactly the opposite. Women generally kept away from the NREG work.

Serious caste discrimination and lack of facilities (such as room, educational material etc) have crippled the pre school education in the anganwaadis. Caste discrimination was rampant in Bihar and was reported in some districts in Karnataka too. The examples from the field such as demarcation of residence, panchayat elections, pre-determined jobs etc point out that discrimination is embedded in the world of ideas.

In Kerala provision of more anganwadis and lack of funds in the panchayat have affected efficient functioning of the anganwadis. Lack of inclination among the Scheduled Tribes in sending their children to the anganwadis was also noted during the field work.

Mid Day Meal Scheme has been imbibed in the system in Kerala and Karnataka. Issues of caste do not hamper the provision of meals and there is effective participation of the parents through PTA in Kerala in the implementation of the scheme. In Karnataka though the scheme is functioning well, yet the undercurrent of caste discrimination exists. In some places, people do have objection towards the food being cooked by a Scheduled Castes cook. In some other the meals were being
boycotted by the upper caste children. However, these were not such big issues as to affect the proper implementation of the scheme. SDMC plays an important role in the implementation of the scheme. From selecting cooks to preparation of food, the responsibility is shared by the SDMC with the school authorities. However, it was reported at some places that the ‘politics’ at the local level hampers the effective functioning of the SDMC. In Bihar the situation is quite grim. In many places meals are not being provided due to many reasons such as lack of funds, lack of transportation, lack of coordination between various branches of the government, lack of staff etc. In many places, the condition where the food is cooked is quite unhygienic. Caste discrimination is extensive and the involvement of parents especially from Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes families is clearly missing. Thus one can say that, discrimination pattern is determined by local levels of development deficits. In case of acute distribution of resources, discrimination is more. In both the extremes of access, discrimination is more

Let us now briefly look at the role played bureaucrats in effective implementation and delivery of the services

The perception of state especially in the bureaucratic sphere includes all organizations and officials engaged in policy formulation and implementation and in regulation and delivery of services. At the theoretical level the proponents of ‘rolling back of state’ advocate curtailing the size and responsibilities of the bureaucrats however at the empirical level it was found that there is a serious crunch of staff in departments responsible for the implementation of the selected schemes. While the legal -rational structure of bureaucracy calls for clarity in process and rules of the job, various officials at the village level are vague about the process. In such a situation how can the illiterate, reluctant participants of the rural local government be informed about their roles? At the village level, the officials who are supposed to work the most are paid the least for eg the anganwaadi teacher and helper (ICDS), Rozgar sevak (NREGS). Although the money they are paid comes under the head of honorarium yet the work they do is full time.

Implementation of schemes is primary responsibility of the bureaucrats. Their day-to-day interaction with the beneficiaries and the other sections of rural population gives rise to new issues other than accountability and transparency.
The three schemes selected for the study have a list of officials responsible for the effective implementation and delivery of the services. The officials selected for the study were mainly bureaucrats at the panchayat and block level. The reason being that the citizens’ direct contact with government is with first-level bureaucrats responsible for processing requests for services and assistance.

The bureaucrats were asked about the constraints that they face in service delivery.

First constraint was **lack of any effective input channel** through which suggestions for effective delivery mechanisms can be conveyed at higher levels. Structuring the policy formulation and implementation process such that government operations can benefit from the advice of professionals is supposed to be an important issue affecting bureaucratic performance. However, there is no mechanism in which the input from the local, first-level bureaucrats can be taken into account.

Second constraint was **lack of staff**. The CAG report finds that 19 states had not appointed these officers in 70 per cent of the blocks it surveyed. The existing block development officers (BDOs) had been appointed POs and given “additional charge” of NREGA. In Bihar, in most cases, BDO is the program office (NREGS), CDPO and Circle officer. Functioning of the anganwaadis is seriously hampered by lack of staff especially in Bihar and Karnataka.

Another constraint was **difference in the quality of services** being provided. It differs from one area to another. Many other factors are responsible for it e.g. inaccessible locations (whether border or jungle area), floods, or naxalite problem etc. This constraint was faced by the officials involved with the anganwaadi or mid day meals scheme (provision of ration etc).

Issue of caste and corruption was another problem.

To understand their participation in Grama Panchayats as to “who is participating?” and “How is this participation occurring?”, the respondents were questioned on five issues: information (about panchayat elections, candidates, gram sabha meetings and schemes), voting, attendance (in gram sabha meetings), decision making (with regard to Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes candidates) and dispute resolution.

While analyzing the factors that came up while probing the participation of the people in Grama Panchayats, it was found that there was dominance of Caste in rural local governance. Whether as ‘upper-caste-dominates-lower-caste’ or as stratification
within the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. There is pre-acceptance of social order. Discrimination is considered to be a part of life as long as there are options of survival. New schemes are looked upon by many Scheduled Caste individuals as snatching away their right to their traditional professions. One can thus conclude that, the pattern of discrimination at social, political and economic levels is determined by contextual factors.

As for the elected representatives in the panchayats, reservations have not proved to be effective in promoting their decision making capabilities. In Kerala the political parties play an important role in selection, nomination and election of the candidates. In Karnataka, castes domination along with party support is responsible for making things work for the candidates. In Bihar though the presence of political parties is completely missing, the caste plays an very important role on the issues of information, voting, attendance (in gram sabha meetings), decision making and dispute resolution.

Factors such as caste, education, unawareness, poverty etc play a very important role in restricting the participation of the marginalized groups (SC, ST and Women) in the gram sabhas, realizing the benefits of the services being provided (NREGS, Anganwaadi and Mid Day Meals). Due to these factors the role of the traditional elites (who generally come from the dominant caste of the village) and bureaucrats becomes very pivotal and important. As it has been discussed in the previous chapter, local elites play a significant role in nomination of candidates, mobilization of people, and maintenance of harmonious relations or resolutions of conflicts among villagers. Any devolution of powers without taking into account the influence of local elites would not be much successful.