PREFACE

With the announcement of Bihar Government's Irrigation Policy in 1993, on the lines of national water policy, stating that farmers organisation would be set up and management of the irrigation system would be handed over to them, participatory irrigation management became an official policy of the state government. This study aims to examine empirically whether the policy of the state government is a reality or rhetoric.

People's participation is now increasingly being advocated as the core of any development planning and Water User's Association is being seen as leading to equity and equality in water distribution and efficiency in the management of irrigation systems. In this context, the approach of this study can be said to be the bottom-up approach or people-centred approach.

Organisation of Study:

This study has been divided into six parts including the introductory and the concluding segments. The first is the introductory chapter and enumerates the importance of the study, the area of study, a background of the field area, review of literature, research questions and methodology.

The second chapter pertains to the theoretical background. The concepts of development, rural development and its changing perceptions have been highlighted here in order to have a broad understanding before embarking on the study of irrigation organisation and farmer participation. This segment deals with the fact that rural development in general and agricultural development in particular, with timely and adequate supply of irrigation water, has to be the core of development planning in a country like India and can only be brought about if the planning process adheres to the 'felt-needs' of the people.
The third chapter talks of people's participation, in general and the importance of farmer participation in water management and the viability of water user's association, in particular. In order to study participatory irrigation management, it is important to understand why people's participation has become the buzzword of modern development thinking. And to understand the increasing interest in people's participation it is a must to understand the concept of bureaucracy and its dysfunctions. This chapter highlights the growing inability of bureaucracy to play its expected role especially in a country like India paving the way for democratic decentralisation and alternative or people-centred development.

The fourth chapter is the case study of Sone Command Area. The fifth chapter is the case study of Kosi Command Area.

The sixth segment is the conclusion, a broad analysis of the present study.

Field Problems:

The irregular publishing of government reports and documents and CADA reports posed some problems for a comprehensive research work. The annual reports were not published in time and at times dated couple of years back. This created some problems in getting the latest data.

Some of the officers were not very keen to give time for interviews and questionnaires and were generally unenthusiastic about it. Some gave half-baked answers. Some officers were apprehensive about answering some questions as they were afraid of getting into some trouble.

It was invariably observed that there was an over-riding concern among farmers about the utility of the study and how they were going to benefit from them.
In terms of infrastructure facilities, there was the usual problems of bad roads or no proper roads, security and law and order concerns for the surveyor and so on in Bihar.

Principles of an effective approach to extension work and the concept of people's participation, right from initiating the programme to turn over may be summarised in the works of Lao-Tse C, 700 BC:

Go to the people
Live with them
Learn from them
Love them
Start with what they know
Build with what they have
But with best leaders
When the work is done
The task accomplished
The people will say
'We have done this ourselves'.