INTRODUCTION
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Participatory development is a critical concept in the contemporary development debates. It has also gained considerable prominence in the international development arena. Global financial institutions like the World Bank have realised the enormous potential of the concept as well as the practice/strategy of participatory development. Both professional development workers and local people, who have become the instruments/targets (as also the intended beneficiaries) of various development projects, are now aware of the significance of participation in the success and sustainability of them. It has been claimed that local/grassroot level involvement and participation in projects would promote the social and economic development of communities. Advocates of this development strategy say that participatory approach would bring in greater pay-off from projects and programmes with fewer resources. It is also argued that people's participation generates more information on local resources and issues, economises the cost of service provision through decentralised governance, promotes local resource mobilisation, increases administrative efficiency by facilitating better coordination and integration of development
activities and, above all, fosters a culture of 'self-help' among people. In brief, participatory development is projected as a panacea for the problems confronting the Third World.

**Conceptual Definition**

Viewed as a paradigm, participatory development has its own vocabulary and language. It may be used to describe a broad range of activities, functions and relationships in society. The broadening of the concept and its growing popularity under the current scenario of capitalist development - with an increasing number of international and indigenous organisations and Third World governments subscribing to the participatory discourse - have given it a measure of ambiguity and lack of consistency in the very use of the term. A glance at the large volume of literature on participatory development reveals that there is hardly any agreement on what it exactly means. Obviously, this does not impinge on the attractiveness of participatory development either as an analytic or as a normative concept. Hence, to propose one secure and neat definition of participatory development is problematic.
Notwithstanding such difficulties, participatory development has long been in use to denote such diverse activities as "self-help," "community development" and specific institutional arrangements such as village councils, citizen groups and voluntary associations. Defining participatory development in terms of alternative concepts such as mobilisation, decentralisation, conscientisation, people's power, praxis, and empowerment is also common. Each of these mutually interrelated concepts is useful for understanding and conceptualising participatory development. Further, depending on the practices, forms and levels of participation, it can be nominal, passive, consultative, active and empowering. In this scheme, the degree of participation increases as people's involvement shifts from lower to higher levels culminating in the empowerment dimension of participation.

In the current scenario of capitalist development, which is often seen in terms of the ascendancy of neoliberalism,¹ there has been an expansion in the participatory dimension - from participation in

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¹ Neoliberalism is the dominant ideology of the contemporary capitalist economic order. It unfolds itself in the policies and programmes well under way across a broad spectrum of countries, institutions and political forces. With the rise of neoliberalism, the welfare agenda of capitalism, which had prominence under Keynesianism, has been thoroughly revised, and the "welfare state" itself is being rolled back. All developed and developing nations are in the process of formulating and implementing these neoliberal policies, envisaging a minimal role for the state in economic life. The state in the neoliberal paradigm is concerned only with 'efficiency' and 'productivity' and questions of 'welfare' and 'social justice' hardly matter. This new political economy paradigm seeks deregulation of everything that reduces profit, favours privatisation of state-owned enterprises, goods and services, advocates eliminating the concept of "public good" pressurising the poorest people in a society to seek remedies to their basic problems all by themselves.
microlevel projects to that in the formulation and implementation of plans and programmes at the macro terrain. To convey this new trend in the thinking on participatory development and to emphasise the conceptual shift, the term participatory is now prefixed with various other concepts such as "participatory planning," "participatory democracy," "participatory budgeting," "participatory management," "participatory research," "participatory action," "participatory evaluation" and so on.

However, the most widely accepted definition in the mainstream discourse on participatory development is the one provided by the World Bank itself. The Bank's Learning Group on Participatory Development defines the concept thus: "Participation is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them." As this definition implies, the World Bank upholds the participation of not the broad masses but only of the relevant stakeholders who by their actions can influence the outcome of projects and programmes.2

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2 Such a stakeholder participatory approach, according to the World Bank, may provide: information on people's needs, priorities and capabilities as well as more reliable feedback on the impact of programmes; adaptation of programmes to meet local conditions so that scarce resources can be employed more efficiently; lower cost of the public for social service; delivery of better quality and demand-responsive services; improved utilisation and maintenance of public facilities and services; cooperation in new programmes; and increased legitimacy of social programmes.
Today, it is this World Bank formulation of participatory development which has come to represent the official version and which acts as the guideline for various participatory practices at the global level. The present study seeks to analyse the theoretical undercurrents of participatory development in a political economy perspective as conceptualised in this definition.

Profile of Participatory Development

The international debate over participatory development can be traced to the evolution of Third World development strategies in the context of decolonisation in the post-war period. The economic philosophy of John Maynard Keynes, which came to be called Keynesianism, was at the centre of these development strategies in which the (interventionist) state was assigned a key role in both economic development and social welfare. A quarter century of Keynesianism that followed since the Second World War witnessed the rise and consolidation of nation-state as the dominant actor in the theory and practice of development. Together with industrialisation and agricultural modernisation which were key to self-reliant national development, there was a general recognition on the importance of social development/social welfare in the whole process of development. In a broad historical perspective,
development strategies led by the state emphasised economic growth and redistribution of wealth. Attention was also given to the basic human needs.

This simultaneous targeting of economic growth and social welfare necessitated some form of people's participation in socio-economic projects during the Keynesian era. This was due to the setbacks of the belief that the pay-off from development would eventually trickle down to the masses. Initially, participatory development implied the organisational and institutional arrangement for involving people in the management of common property resources such as land, water, minerals and forests and in the accomplishment of projects in agriculture, education and health. The objective was to ensure the people's participation and community orientation as an essential dimension of development. As such, the declared intention of numerous rural development initiatives and community development projects led by the donor agencies during the 1950s and 1960s had been to ensure popular participation at the local level. In conformity with the unified approach to development – the idea that economic growth and social development are intertwined – put forward by the UN through its Development Decades, these participatory experiments that directly targeted the poor and oriented to their basic needs became
inalienable components of the development paradigm of the welfare state. In general, the participatory approach added a community dimension to the development strategy of the welfare state which, at the same time, acted as the major provider of the basic social services to the people.

The 1970s marked the end of the post-war boom in world capitalist economy and its eventual transition to a crisis-ridden phase. This economic crisis, coupled with a number of related political and ideological trends, led to the collapse of Keynesianism and the advent of neoliberal political economy. Starting with the monetarist policies in Britain and the United States (often identified as Thatcherism and Reaganomics), the period since 1980s has witnessed the spread of neoliberalism in the Third World through liberalisation and globalisation. A significant feature of this strategy as manifested through the structural adjustment programme has been the rollback of the state from development and social welfare. The collapse of the welfare state led to the end of 'developmentalism' as a project of the nation-state and the rise, at the ideological level, of 'post-development' or 'anti-development' thinking. While the earlier development strategy accorded a significant role for the state in economic growth and social transformation, neoliberalism began to treat it as a hindrance for both.
The emergence of participatory development as a key component in development strategy is directly related to this declining legitimacy of the 'developmental' state under neoliberalism. The need to downsize public sector and encourage private capital initiatives prompted donor agencies to call state-led, planned and centralised model as a barrier to both democracy and development. Attempts have also been made to redefine development as a participatory/people-centered process, linking it to the cultural imperatives of a society. Here civil society has emerged as an autonomous expression capable of carrying out a whole set of development and welfare functions. Civil society activism and building up individual capabilities (social capital) have been projected as essential aspects of developing an alternative to a planned economic system. The notions of collective welfare and shared identity as citizen and the objective of achieving an egalitarian society are to be replaced by market-driven values and individualistic ethos. There is also a tendency to favour a participatory form of democracy as against the present representative model of democracy.

Though the concept of participatory development has long been part of development thinking, it is under globalisation that Western funding agencies insist on 'participatory' framework as a key condition in development assistance. International development institutions such
as the World Bank - which until the 1970s were using the idea of people's participation to supplement the developmental initiatives of the welfare state - added a new dimension to participation in the process of transforming the state from the position of an 'initiator'/'provider' to that of 'facilitator.' In the current scenario, considerable attention is being given to building up participatory development as an exclusive domain requiring widespread people's participation in national development activities in aid receiving countries. Third World governments have been entrusted with the task of establishing necessary institutional arrangements which make this conceptual shift in participatory development workable at the macro plane. As a reflection of this, participatory development has become the buzzword in the whole set of strategies for development now being put forward by international lending institutions such as the World Bank, UNDP, USAID, OECD and so on. These agencies have launched important research programmes on participatory development and, as a natural corollary, global NGOs and foreign consultants involved in development work have sought to incorporate the idea in their expanding activities.
Review of literature

Studies pertaining to participatory development are vast and varied. Yet, seldom does one come across a serious study on the subject linking the political economy of participatory development and the emerging concerns of social theory. There are, however, some isolated attempts to have an evaluation of certain aspects of participatory development. Rahnema (1997), for instance, though from an anti-development or post-development perspective, has made a critique of the concept of participatory development. He identifies six reasons for the unprecedented interests of governments and development institutions in the concept.

1. The concept is no longer perceived as a threat by official agencies who need people's participation for cost-effective and productive strategies;

2. It is an alternative slogan by 'developmentalists'-capable of easing tension and resistance on the part of their victims;

3. Participation is an economically appealing proposition for the long-term sustainability of projects;

4. It is a good fund-raising device;
5. Participation is a new source of resource mobilisation and a new form of investment; and

6. An expanded concept of participation encourages private sector to directly involve in the development process.

Sharing common cause with postmodernism's development pessimism, which visualises the whole project of development as negative, Rahnema warns that participatory development "runs the risk of acting as a deceptive myth or a dangerous tool for manipulation" in the hands of politicians and development planners who try to co-opt the concept for their own ends. According to him, the political function of participation was to provide development with a new source of legitimisation. Backed by an anti-development orientation, Rahnema would not concede success for participatory approaches as they "serve only as band-aid operations to give a new lease of life to an aging institution," that is development. Here, it may be noted that in spite of his post-development thinking, Rahnema fails to grasp the close affinity between participatory development and post-development. While serving the legitimising requirements of dominant development strategy, participatory development identifies itself with the anti-state discourse of neoliberalism. It is this close affinity between participatory development and the current anti-state
discourse of postmodernism which provides the ideological basis for dismantling the state-led national development structure in the Third World. Escobar (1995), another post-development theorist, claims that participatory grassroots orientation is disrupting and destabilising the modern development process in the Third World.

Another study by Khan (2001) shows that people’s participation is oriented towards the creation of a local support base for ruling regimes at the centre. His critique of participatory local approaches says:

i. they are commonly sabotaged and usurped by rural elites;

ii. parochial and non-egalitarian and serves to further embolden the exploitation built in local and national power structures;

iii. often used as a means of recentralisation or reinforcing central control over local affairs;

iv. used to develop and promote a political support base for central ruling regimes;

v. a means of capitalist accumulation; and

vi. may lead to overlook the contextual realities in the field.
Obviously, though based on a political economy perspective, this critique remains only at the formal level; it does not go behind the apparent contradictions of participatory development. The theoretical and conceptual issues involved in the formulation of participatory development are not the concern of this study.

Mohan and Stokke (2000) interpret the trend towards participatory development as part of the move in development debate away from a holistic theorisation to more localised and empirical approaches. The heavy focus on the local, they agree, tends to underplay both local inequalities and power relations as well as national and transnational economic and political forces. However, their approach to the rediscovery of civil society and rise of participatory development in terms of “a recent shift within neoliberal development strategy from a singular emphasis on market deregulation to an additional emphasis on institutional reforms and social development” tends to be problematic. This interpretation of participatory development as a retreat from neoliberalism to what they call “revisionist neoliberalism” is at variance with the widely held understanding on neoliberal globalisation as an ever-intensifying process. As against this, implicit in the present study is the position that participatory development is a
logical corollary of neoliberalism and that the former can be pursued without recourse to a reversal of the major trends in the latter.

In a similar study, Jayasuriya (2001), quoting the works of Amartya Sen, also notes a major shift from the orthodoxy of the “Washington Consensus” to a “post-Washington” framework of development strategy which puts issues of participation and good governance on the political agenda with notions of civil society and social capital. Here, it may be noted that evidences of a genuine rethinking are not yet visible within official neoliberalism. In the recent debate on the political economy of participatory development, the study of John Harriss (2001) is all the more significant. For him, the “depoliticising rhetoric of participatory discourse is fully supportive of neoliberal orthodoxy.” The World Bank realises this objective by poising the concepts of participation and empowerment in close alliance with civil society and social capital as the “missing link” in development. Based on an analysis of the emergence of the concept of social capital at the World Bank, Harriss explains how the overwhelming importance to social capital, civil society and participatory development obscures class relations and power conflict which are essential features of modern societies. According to Harriss, the participatory discourse which constitutes “the armoury of the anti-politics machine” evolved by neoliberal agencies is not only in tune with the strategy of downsizing the role of
the state in favour of civil society and NGOs, but "against movements of the political left for progressive socio-political and economic change that do identify the roots of poverty and social deprivation in class differences."

Though this study by Harriss provides sharp insights into the political motives of participatory discourse, it is conspicuous in its reluctance to see the post-Marxist and postmodern underpinnings of participatory development. It also fails to examine the theoretical convergence between neoliberal and the post-Marxist positions in conceptualising participatory development. Therefore, when it comes to the case of the People's Plan Campaign (PPC), the participatory experiment in Kerala, Harriss is constrained to apply a different yardstick for praising it. This theoretical limitation is more glaring in the work by Isaac and Franke (2001), which postulates the PPC of Kerala as the most radical among the various participatory experiments in the whole world. As is the case with Harriss, Isaac and Franke remain silent on the ideological and theoretical issues of participatory development which embolden them to project the PPC as a project of the left. Thus, a comprehensive critique of participatory development which takes into consideration its different dimensions is yet to emerge. In fact, the present study is an earnest attempt to offer a critical-theoretical framework for
understanding the participatory discourse as well as various experiments under way in a political economy perspective.

**The Problem of the Study**

Participatory development is one of the most widely used terminologies in development discourse. The concept has become popular and gained considerable attention and respectability among policy-makers and academics (as also the theorists and practitioners of development). International donors and grassroots activists have characterised it as a panacea for the problems confronting the Third World. Accordingly, participatory development is presented as a kind of magical ingredient which would guarantee success irrespective of the political and economic conditions, both national and global. In popularising and using the concept, while funding agencies may have their neoliberal objectives, even scholars who are in search of an alternative paradigm to the mainstream model of development also have become its adherents. The latter tend to see participatory development as "people's praxis" as against "elite's praxis." Since participatory development takes people's involvement (rather than centralised planning as the starting point), it also conforms to the ideological positions of radical political economists who wish to see a reduction, rather than an increase, in the role of the paternalistic state. In short, the uncritical
acceptance of the concept is so pervasive that even repressive regimes in the Third World have also become adherents of it.

The advocates of participatory development span a wide range of the ideological and political spectrum from the Right to the Left. It is accepted as a form of received wisdom and there is hardly any public debate about the ideology and assumptions behind it. Participation has always been an ideal and on account of its inherent goodness, nobody could take an open position against it. As such, the concept has become a convenient tool with the neoliberal agencies and those governments which sustain such neoliberal policies. In fact, the emergence of the participatory discourse in development thinking reflects a lack of sensitivity to the wider political economy and socio-cultural process which lay down the condition for development. The paradigm of participatory development is conspicuous in its silence on the existing non-viable and unsustainable structures within which participation is attempted. On the other hand, the increasing obsession with the ‘local’ and ‘grassroots’ could provide the neoliberal state with an opportunity for abdicating its social obligations - by shifting the burden on the people at the lower level. Thus, participatory development has been the outcome of an ingenious neoliberal move to off-load the tasks performed by the erstwhile
welfare state on the shoulders of people lower down. It is a policy rationale which, as an alternative to the welfare state, accommodates new forms of social service provision within a neoliberal framework. Pursuing a stake-holder approach in which the cost and maintenance of social services would be the responsibility of their end-users who act in partnership with interests in civil society, the neoliberal agencies strive to establish autonomous self-financing delivery systems to fill the gap created by the state's rollback from welfare provision. In this sense, the paradigm of participatory development is a corollary of neoliberal globalisation, rather than an alternative to the mainstream development.

The scenario of participatory development, thus, calls for an objective evaluation of the concept as well as its practice in a historical setting. What needs to be analysed is the process, which has transformed the erstwhile welfare agenda into the paradigm of participatory development under neoliberalism. This necessitates a reexamination of the concept with respect to the post-war evolution of development trajectories with particular stress on the political and ideological trends, which lay behind the reversals from state-led development and collective welfare to the emphasis on marked-led growth, individual capabilities and local diversities. It invariably involves an
enquiry into the theoretical streams which impart legitimacy to civil society and related aspects such as participatory development. Since the adherents of participatory development include both the Right and the Left in the political sphere, an analysis of their ideological convergence with respect to the participatory discourse is also envisaged in this enquiry.

The study seeks to comprehend the essential characteristics and underlying notions about participatory development in a political economy perspective. The objectives of the study are to:

- historically situate the concept of participatory development by surveying the intellectual initiatives and perspectives, as also various institutional efforts, rendering the Third World development a community orientation;
- differentiate some of the indigenous people's initiatives from externally sponsored participatory experiments;
- elucidate the conceptual shift in participatory development in the wider political economy context pertaining to the transition in development strategy from Keynesianism to monetarism or neoliberalism;
• explicate the dialectical link between globalisation, on the one hand, and localisation and participatory development, on the other: the latter being related to the new international division of labour and flexible specialisation arising from new possibilities of localising production at a global level;

• examine the recent trends in social theory pertaining to the plea for plural cultures, multiple histories and fragmented visions as indicators of 'better democracy' and analyse how they have provided a legitimising space for participatory discourse;

• bring out the theoretical and ideological underpinnings of participatory development as arising from the close articulation between neoliberal political economy and cultural postmodernism;

• explain the extent to which the neoliberal notions of civil society and social capital have played a key role in the conceptualisation of participatory development;

• illustrate participatory development as a flexible discourse, which is being pursued by very different ideological persuasions ranging from the radical political school to the neoliberal Right; and
- throw light on the operationalisation of participatory development by locating relevant participatory sites, in particular the Kerala experience, by applying the analytical insights derived from the study.

The above issues are investigated as interconnected and mutually reinforcing processes so as to locate the current conceptualisation of participatory development within the neoliberal development paradigm itself.

**Hypotheses**

The study keeps in perspective the question of alternatives in development thinking and planning. The central hypothesis of the study places participatory development as a logical corollary of neoliberal development strategy, rather than being a political alternative. The concept has been an ideological and political construct, which is apparently backed by neoliberal political economy and postmodern social theory. As an adjunct of the neoliberal development strategy proposed for the Third World, participatory development seems to serve the legitimising requirements of neoliberalism. It has become a flexible discourse
which appears amenable to be used by different ideological persuasions across a wider political spectrum. This is evident from the experience of many Third World countries, including the people’s campaign for decentralisation in Kerala. The conceptualisation of participatory development apparently favours the downsizing/rolling back of the state in the realms of development and social welfare putting a market-driven regime at the centre of social dynamics.

**Chapter Scheme**

The basic parameters of the study are laid down in the Introduction. This is followed by Chapter 1 which provides historical antecedents of participatory development by analysing the intellectual origins and various institutional attempts in the Keynesian welfare era. It also tries to distinguish the Third World people's initiatives associated with the name of Mahatma Gandhi and Paulo Freire from the top-down participatory initiatives of the First World donor sources. The Gandhian and Freirean contributions are particularly relevant as symbols of indigenous resistance against colonialism and domination both in the pre and post-war periods. These efforts are presented as expressions of an indigenous sensitivity
that runs counter to the top-down participatory experiments tried by Western donor institutions during this period. As a background to the ensuing discussion, this chapter also offers a brief review of the Community Development Programme (CDP) in India to reveal the cold war imperatives behind similar participatory efforts.

Chapter 2 situates participatory development in the wider political economy context. It examines the conceptual shift in participatory development as integrally linked with the transition in the dominant development strategy from Keynesianism to monetarism. Elucidating the mutually reinforcing and wide-ranging trends in international political economy, including the changes in the organisation of work and decentralised division of labour arising from post-Fordist development, the chapter brings out the dialectical relation between globalisation and localisation or participatory development. It also analyses the neoliberal institutional processes through which the erstwhile welfare programme is being transformed into the agenda of participatory development.

From an analytical perspective, the essential theoretical inputs underlying the conceptualisation of participatory development are presented from the broad array of social theory in Chapter 3. It
examines how the participatory discourse draws sustenance from an eclectic theoretical and ideological combination whose roots are embedded in such diverse sources as post-Marxist, postmodernist and poststructuralist critiques of development. The chapter also elucidates how the paradigm of participatory development draws intellectual resources from ideas and concepts such as social capital together with the redefinition of civil society emanating from Western cultural and historical contexts. The chapter, in the main, tries to grasp participatory development as a political and social construct originating from the close articulation between neoliberal political economy and postmodern discourse on social transformation including the latter's rhetoric of grassroots.

Chapter 4 sets forth an empirical dimension of participatory development. It offers a random survey of certain specific participatory sites in the light of the analytical insights evolved from previous chapters. A major section of this chapter is devoted to an evaluation of the PPC of Kerala which is being projected as the most radical among similar other experiments. The concluding Chapter summarises the findings of the study.
Methodology

The study is set within a political economy framework. The specific methods of investigation employed in the study are historical, analytical and empirical. The theoretical dimensions of participatory development, including its political economy, are unfolded through a process of interdisciplinary theorising. The source materials for the study are both primary and secondary. Primary sources include speeches and writings, official documents, reports and published works of international and national institutions as well as those of Central and State governments. These are supported and supplemented by information from various web sites. The secondary sources include books and articles published in journals, magazines and other periodicals which cover a variety of disciplines.