CHAPTER 3

DECENTRALISED PLANNING: CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Development Planning- Centralised or Decentralised?
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- Decentralised Planning in India - Background
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Planning is generally accepted in many developing countries as an indispensable means to promote development. The need for it arose out of the circumstances prevailing on the eve of their political independence. These countries were under colonial rule for a long time which was a period of exploitation. The motivation behind the freedom struggle was to end exploitation, misery and suffering. The sole objective of these independent nations was to attain economic progress and prosperity to promote human welfare. As this gigantic task was beyond the capacity of poor societies the state accepted the responsibility of development and so the idea of planning took shape.

**Development Planning - Centralised or Decentralised?**

The planning system, till recently was highly centralised which gave little consideration to the realities existing in different regions of a country. Now, development being centered on man, planning is directly connected to him and his problems, which are both social and economic in nature. Therefore, planning should shift from economic planning to “development planning”. Development planning is not only an attempted state control of certain sectors and variables, but an attempted compulsory transformation of man and his society. Development is essentially a human problem and planning means changing man. Planning should, therefore, bring about a fundamental change in human attitudes, institutions, values and aspirations on the one hand and promote growth in production and income on the other.
Planning system should overcome its urban bias and centralised tendency. It should divert the attention to the backward and rural areas. The absence of regional or spatial dimension is an important gap in the Indian planning system. This is because plans have been prepared at the centre and state levels. They consider the problems, and realities in a region, it is necessary that planning should come down to area level. A multilevel planning set up should be established in which plans at different territorial levels should be prepared and integrated with those at higher levels. Planning should involve active participation of the people in the process. It should go close to the people and understand their way of life, values, customs and traditions, and seek solution to their problems.

Public participation in planning process has a strong base in a democratic society, where the individual has a right to be informed and consulted on matters that affect him and his personality. Public participation in the plans at the top level is neither possible nor desirable. But planning at lower levels may be expected to provide full opportunity for public participation in planning process and there by ensure popular support to the plans. Amartya Sen¹ considered development as freedom of choices. To him the standard of living of a society should not be judged by GNP per capita and the supply of particular goods, but by people’s

capabilities. That is what a person can or cannot do, or can or cannot be. The expansion of these capabilities implies freedom of choices-political, social, economic and cultural freedom.

Planning in India

The planning process in India started in 1951 with the launching of the first five year plan. Since then India’s planned development has been guided mainly by two objectives-1. to build up a democratic, a rapidly expanding and technologically progressive economy, and 2. a social order based on justice and offering equal opportunity to every citizen. Keeping in view these objectives massive investment programmes have been launched in successive five year plans. Development programmes were directed towards relieving the masses from misery and suffering caused by the existence of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

No doubt, India has made great progress in different fields in spite of the internal and external problems. But there have been some fundamental failures also. Centralised planning for nearly five decades has created islands of affluence, leaving major parts of the country in penury and neglect illiteracy, ill health and poverty continue to plague the country with no perceptible improvement in spite of specific mentions in the constitution and repeated declarations to remind them to mitigate some of the problems faced by the country in a time bound manner.
Even though it has been possible to bring down substantially the ratio of people below poverty line the absolute number of people below poverty line remains more or less at the same level. There is something which one cannot boast of a planned development of such a long time close to five decades. Obviously, the planners have not been able to address the issues and problems faced by the countryside and the masses. The most alarming tragedy is that the planners wanted the benefits of development to trickle down to the poor, but that did not happen. Nearly 30 crores in the country is still living below the poverty line. The past experience of the “top down” planning not produced the desired results. The development process bypassed the poor man and his rural society and got centralised in urban industrial sector and in the upper social class.

As the “trickle down” does not work automatically, redistributive programmes and policies became necessary, especially to ensure the poor a share in the fruits of development. Today development is looked upon from a new angle as a human problem, and it is directed towards the transformation of man and his traditional social set up. Its basic goal is to attain the satisfaction of basic human needs. This radical change in approach to development has created an urgent necessity for

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2 The notion that development is purely an economic phenomena in which rapid gains from the overall growth of gross national product and income per capita would automatically bring benefits (trickle down) to the masses in the form of jobs and other economic opportunities. The main preoccupation is therefore to get the growth job done while problems of poverty, unemployment and income distribution are perceived to be of secondary importance.
The satisfaction of basic human needs through mass participation in development process and bridging the gap between rich and poor regions is possible only if planning comes down to the grass roots level. To this end, the move to strengthen planning at the local level is a welcome development. It was in this context that the ideas of grass root level planning, gained ground and the necessity of strengthening the system of governance at that level and empowering the people in the development process were recognised.

**Decentralised Planning**

Decentralised planning is a system through which planning process is brought close to the people, who are the ultimate target for the development. It is a multilevel planning system in which planning is attempted at different political, administrative and executive levels. So that there is greater integration between the development needs and priorities of smaller areas and different socio-economic classes with the regional, state and district level.

Decentralisation involves planning for all sectors or types of activity within a geographical area. It lays emphasis not only on decentralisation of the decision making process but also on increasing participation by the people at all stages of planning. These would enable full utilisation of resources according to the needs of the local people by making them
actively involved in the formulation as well as execution of plans at the grass root level.

Decentralisation implies a movement away from the centre. It implies an even distribution of power among all agents in the social, political and economic spheres. It facilitates the articulation of people’s needs and demand. Through decentralisation, a state move towards the avowed goals of development principal among which is an addition to the entitlement of the deprived³.

“Decentralised governance, from capital cities to towns and villages, is the best way to involve people in development activities and for increasing efficiency. Local officials and politics will be better scrutinised and their activities better monitored. They will be more accountable to the communities which they are supposed to serve. Decentralisation by empowering people from the grass root level helps to generate a sense of belongingness among them and they get more deeply involved in development works.”

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Democratic Decentralisation

In the present context of parliamentary democracy, decentralisation means “the transfer of functions and not transfer of powers”\textsuperscript{4}. It is a process of transfer of responsibility, authority and functions from a superior government unit to a lower government unit.\textsuperscript{5}

The basic idea of decentralisation is sharing the power of decision-making with lower levels in the organisation. But this power can be shared within the system at a lower level or by creating new mechanisms in the system. Power can also be shared with outside organisations or agencies. Depending on the extent and means by which power can be shared with the lower levels, Rondinelli (1984)\textsuperscript{6} and other have recognised four types of decentralisation.

Deconcentration

Passing down of administrative discretion to local authorities in a system where few decisions can be without reference to the central authority is called deconcentration. It results in some dispersal of power. Decentralisation entails some shifting of workload in the form of

\textsuperscript{5}  K.N. Raj, “Planning from Below”, \textit{Working Paper-}No.1 Center For Development Studies, Trivandrum, 1971
administrative responsibilities from central offices of the executive to regional offices. Yet, this does not give these latter offices discretionary freedom to take decisions. Authority and powers of central offices remain with the centre. Therefore, it is also called geographic decentralisation or administrative decentralisation.

**Delegation**

It is a form of decentralisation in which powers of decision-making and management is given to local institutions or organisations. It implies transfer or creation of ample responsibility, to plan and implement decisions, concerning specific activities or a variety of activities within specific boundaries, to an organisation that is technically and administratively capable of carrying them out, without direct supervision by an administrative unit. In such a system, the central authority can take away the powers of the local authority at any point of time.

**Devolution**

It is the most desirable form of decentralisation. It grants decision-making powers to local authorities and gives them the freedom to take full responsibility, without referring back to the central authority. The devolved powers include financial powers and authority design and execute projects and programmes. In case of devolution, the local levels of government are allowed to act in a more or less autonomous fashion, with the centre taking a supervisory role.
Privatisation

In this form, Government hand over some of its responsibilities and public functions to provide non-governmental or voluntary organisations. Such voluntary organisations could be industrial associations, professional groups, co-operatives and the like.

A semantic problem\(^7\) has been introduced by the widespread currency, of the term “democratic decentralisation”\(^8\), which in fact is often used with reference to programmes and tendencies which are neither democratic, nor decentralised, except in form. By democratic decentralisation, we mean the transfer of some of the responsibilities of central government to subordinate agencies which are elected by geographic or functional constituencies and which requires at least some of their powers not by delegation from higher administrative authority, but by legislative and perhaps constitutional provisions.

Decentralised planning process is a systematic approach to identify and formulate specific programmes and projects leading to the achievement of development goals stipulated for an area within the specific time period. It is not an exclusive bottom up process of planning. It is a two way of planning process starting from the top (national and state) and the bottom

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\(^8\) Thapliyal, B.K. “Decentralised Planning Scope and Methodology” Journal of Rural Development (Hyderabad, Vol.9, No.6 November 1990, pp.995-996)
(grass root level) simultaneously. The two processes merge with each other at a point below which centralised planning become irrelevant and unmanageable and above which micro planning is not possible. This point can be identified at the district level and it is the cutting edge of development administration. The prime objective of decentralised planning is the growth and distributive justice of the whole economy by suitably linking up local needs and priorities with avowed goals of development.

Decentralised planning can be successful where demands of local people and supply of resources from the Government and other sources meet the equilibrium point. Here the demand means the needs and desires of the people raised at rural local self governments (RLSG) and village assembly whereas the supply comes from the Government grants, loans, external sources, locally mobilised resources and contributions.

**Decentralised Planning in India- Background**

The concept of decentralised planning was accepted even before the beginning of the planning era. Vishveshwarayya\(^9\) who was a pioneer of Indian Planning visualised a four tier planning structure for his scheme of planned development of Mysore. However, the concept of decentralised planning in the country as a whole has emerged gradually over the five

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decades since independence with variations in theory as well as practice across states.

Democratic decentralisation is a part of India’s hoary cultural heritage. It is the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi\textsuperscript{10}. It was one of the important planks of India’s historic struggle against colonialism. Gandhiji conceptualised Grama Swaraj as the most effective weapon in common man’s struggle against colonial exploitation. Gandhiji’s vision of village panchayats is expressed in the following cords “my idea of a village swaraj is that it is complete republic, independent of its neighbours, of its own vital wants, and yet independent for many others in which dependence is a necessity…………….the government of the village will be elected by the adult village males and females possessing minimum prescribed qualifications.” According to Gandhiji, real India is to be found in villages and not in towns and cities. So he suggested the development of self-sufficient, self dependent villages. “Village Swaraj” was his idea: Gandhiji said, “Indian independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or Panchayat, having powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self sustained and capable of managing its own

affairs, even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world\(^{11}\). Gandhiji wanted not mass production but production by the masses. He believed that “an ideal constitution for India must be based on the organisation of well knit and co-ordinated village communities with their positive and direct democracy, non-violence cottage economy and human contact.

Gandhiji was conscious of the evils of centralisation and large scale production. Hence he advocated decentralisation. His ideas of “Grama Swaraj” were a landmark in establishing Panchayat Raj system in the country, which meant all-round and integrated development of villages. However, the mainstream of planning in the post-independence period moved away from Gandhian ideas, and planning became centralised.

The Ripon Resolution of 1882 laid the foundation of modern local self government, institutions in this country. It proposed the establishment of rural local boards for which non-official members would be elected. However, nominations in place of elections became the practice. The work of these boards, was not satisfactory in the final analysis. The Royal Commission on decentralisation (1909) pointed out the inadequacy of funds and excessive official control as the prime reason for the

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\(^{11}\) “Managing the Earth” introduces the reader to the inclusion of sustainable development with issues of consumerism, equity, business leadership, and international law. See *Managing the Earth: the Linacre Lectures 2001*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
unsatisfactory functioning of the Boards. The boards functioned very badly in many states and were on the verge of closing down.

The Indian constitution has inserted the concept of decentralisation in the Directive Principles of State. Article 40 of the Directive Principles of State Policy states that the state shall take steps to organise villages and panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government. The division of power and functions enshrined in Article 246, read with the seventh schedule of the constitution, made multilevel planning almost a necessity.

The first five year plan document referred to the need for decentralised planning. The first five year plan does refer to the planning process at national, state, district and community levels. Needless to add, these references had little operational significance. The official recognition for integrated area development came only with the Community Development Programme, following the successful pilot project in Mahela District. Starting with the second five year plan, all subsequent five year plan documents re-emphasised the glories of decentralised planning ritualistically, but the idea could not be put into practice in its essential form by any state in India. However, charmed by the recommendations of the team, many state governments have experimented with different models of decentralised
planning. But all these attempts were partial both at the level of formulation and implementation, without real devolution of any administrative or financial powers to lower levels. In most cases decentralisation was only departmental, not democratic.

All along, the issues of decentralisation of planning remained in the focus of Government Policy concern. Several committees and commissions have celebrated on the issue and made policy recommendations. In 1969, Planning Commission issued guidelines regarding the preparation of district plans. It also offered to meet half of the expenditure that states may incur to strengthen planning machinery at state and district levels.

During the second five year plan period, the Balwant Rai Mehta\(^\text{12}\) committee was set up in 1957 to go into the issue of “democratic decentralisation” as the key to mobilising peoples’ participation in planned development. The issue before the committee was not only the revitalisation of the Panchayat Raj system but also identification of its possible linkages with the rural development structures and programmes that were being introduced in the five year plans. It recommended a three tier local system with powers and functions in the place of existing advisory bodies-- Grama Panchayat at the village level, Jilla Parishat at the district level and the Panchayat Samitis at the intermediate level. The

\(^{12}\) Balwant Rai Mehta (Chairman) Report of the Team for the Study of Community Development Projects and National Extension Services, Committee on Plan Projects, Ministry of Agriculture, New Delhi, 1957.
mechanism for decentralisation of authority and functions at the local levels was thus created. The Government accepted the recommendations and by 1963, legislations were formed by many states for establishing these Panchayats.

During the third plan period, the idea of district plan was mooted by the planning itself in 1969. The Ashok Mehta Committee (Gol. 1978)\(^\text{13}\) which was appointed in 1977, to review the problems of Panchayat Raj system, recommended that the task of district planning should be that of the Zilla Parishad with the help of technically qualified people. It also recommended a two-tier Panchayat Raj system below the state level at the district level and at the Mandal Panchayat level.

The working group appointed by the Planning Commission, on block level planning headed by Prof. Dantwala (GOI, 1978 a)\(^\text{14}\) which submitted its report in 1978, stated clearly that the existing district level planning machinery was not able to undertake the task and identified the block as the appropriate unit to identify the poor and their needs. Dantwala Committee was asked to look into the issue of achieving full employment and uplift of weaker sections, building up of social overheads etc. It cited the case of Command Area Programme of West Bengal as justifying the

\(^{13}\) Report of the committee of Panchayat Raj Institution (Chairman Ashok Mehta) Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Government of India, New Delhi 1978

choice of “Block” as a proper unit for planning. Block level antipoverty programming and planning was sought to be introduced in some selected 3500 blocks throughout the country. The Report also said that the State Government could seek the assistance of universities and research institutions in drawing up the block plans. One important thrust of the report was its assertion that block level planning should not only concentrate on local development activities for asset creation and employment generation, but should also be geared towards institutional reforms and organisation. It was suggested by the committee that initially 100 blocks should be chosen for block level planning which would gradually cover 500 blocks by the end of the plan period. Thus the 6th five year plan placed considerable emphasis on block level planning essentially to alleviate poverty.

The report of the working group on District Level Planning under the Chairmanship of C.H. Hanumantha Rao\textsuperscript{15} in 1984, marks a departure from the earlier documents. To quote “The experience gained in the country during the last more than 30 years of planning has demonstrated that merely wishing for decentralised planning would not be enough to be successful. It has to be backed up by sociopolitical practices”. The Committee emphasised that there should be necessary technical and administrative

changes including attitudinal changes among the bureaucrats and politicians. The committee admitted that this would take time, but the process should start from clear thinking, determination and dedication. The Hanumantha Rao Committee Report (1984) emphasised the need for strengthening the district level planning in a phased manner and they proposed three phases—“initiation”, “limited decentralisation and complete decentralisation.”

First phase “initiation” consisting, putting up adequate planning machinery at the district level and breaking up of the state plans into district components. In the second phase “limited decentralisation” a limited sector of activities like agriculture, target oriented programmes, minimum needs programme etc. and also extensive delegation of financial powers. The final phase, “complete decentralisation” will push location to district sector decision making in all activities.

The G V K Rao Committee\(^\text{16}\) stressed the significance of Zilla Parishad. It proposed some transfer of planning functions to the district. It also stressed the need for a Panchayat Samithi to take the responsibility of the “block level integrated Area Planning” under the guidance of Zilla Parishad. Zilla parishad may operate through various committees and it

\(^{16}\) GOI/1986 BGVK Rao Committee, 1985, The Committee was jointly set up by the planning commission and department of rural development, under the chairmanship of GVK Rao.
will prepare the plan for the district. The committee also stressed the need for a “Panchayat Samiti” to take the responsibility of the block level integrated area planning under the guidance of the Zilla Parishad. The L.M. Srighvi Committee (1986) recommended “Grama Sabha” as the seat of democracy. It also recommended regular elections to the local self government.

The various committees were widely debated upon and the debates culminated in the passing of the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the constitution. These Amendments have brought a complete change in the existing state of affairs. Without any constitutional sanction, the decentralised planning process and people’s organisation like Panchayat were at the mercy of politicians. Elections to Panchayat were not held in many states. The 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution have made it mandatory for all states to hold elections for the Panchayat. Thus the Amendments led to the setting up of a decentralised democratic local self-Government system in the country. Guided by the recommendations of the different committees and the occasional policy guidelines issued by the planning commission, most of the State Government initiated experiments in decentralised planning. Gujarat was the first state in India to initiate decentralisation of planning. Later on Rajasthan, Karnataka, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Kerala initiated decentralised planning.
Decentralised Planning in India- Need

As early as in 1966, Gadgil was critical of the over centralised nature of Indian Planning and opined that the absence of proper planning at the state level has reflected in the relatively slow and patchy progress in agriculture, rural industry and related fields and hence the solution for the problems of planning in agriculture lies only in the appropriate organisation of state and district development planning.

As a supporter of planning in India, Anil Kumar Jain\(^{17}\) has the merit of covering the entire period of 35 years of Indian Planning. Jain makes a critical appraisal of the various aspects of economic planning in India in non technical style and opines that most of the problems can be overcome, or at least significantly reduced through better implementation of development plans.

Anand Sarup and Sulabha Brahme\(^{18}\) argue systematic and carefully co-ordinated planning has to be undertaken at many levels, within the framework of well-defined goals and objectives. Without this it is impossible either to progress towards a socio-economic order based on justice and equality of opportunity or prevent the squandering of non-renewable resources and the degradation of the environment. Planning at the center, state, district, block, and village levels will have to be made for

\(^{17}\) Anil Kumar Jain, *Economic Planning in India*. Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi 1986

the development of regions, towns and cities, growth of service center and also for particular sectors of development. An important pre-requisite for this would be the decentralisation and democratisation of planning.

Kamta Prasad\(^{19}\) in his “Planning at the Grassroots” supports Decentralised Planning for development and says, a country of the size and diversity of India, must have effective planning at the grass roots levels. It is also obvious that this planning should have an adequate degree of peoples’ participation. He argues that peoples’ participation in the planning, management and decision-making process is the foremost element in decentralised policies and programmes. The Panchayat Raj Institutions play major role in the preparation of plans for rural development.

Decentralised Planning – empirical findings

There are a number of studies conducted at international, national and local levels, concentrating on decentralised planning and the resultant developmental activities in the state.

International Studies

Arturo Escobar,\textsuperscript{20} in his article ‘Reflections on Development’ discusses various grassroot movements and social movement, which appeared in the so-called ‘Third World’ or ‘Developing’ countries, in the 1980 and 1990s. He observes that these movements have contributed to redefine the nature of politics and social change. The emergence of such movements had posed a number of questions. He analysed the discourses on development by a number of third world scholars who are interested in local knowledge and culture as the basis for redefining representations, which is a critical stance with respect to the defense and promotion of localised, pluralistic grassroots movements.

B. C. Smith\textsuperscript{21} in his book “Bureaucracy and Political Power” analyses bureaucratic power in various social setups. He says the bureaucratisation of modern society has created considerable hostility towards it. This caused some social reformers to think about some alternatives to organisation itself. Some others believe that the advanced countries are entering a new era of democratic industrial authority, which will cause the demise of the legal form of legitimating and its bureaucratic administrative structures. This new era will create problems, one of which is tension between legitimacy of expertise and competence and the

legitimacy of democratic rights. Smith says that the search for alternatives is mainly limited to the private sector in the capitalist societies. In such societies, the concept of industrial democracy is supposed to be workable in the industrial enterprises and not in the government agencies. In contrast, in some socialist countries, (now extinct) democratisation of collectivised production and public services were attempted on a large scale. The purpose of the search for alternatives is to find ways of democratic functioning instead of hierarchical functioning in organisation. Decentralisation of power has come to be regarded as an antidote to the over concentration of power in the hands of large bureaucracies because it can restore autonomy and initiative to the decision-making procedures. And decentralisation is defined as the devolution of power to units of democratically organised governments at the local level.

A Piffner\textsuperscript{22}, in his studies on “Administration, Organisation”, says that decentralisation has in recent time become a sort of ‘gospel’ of management, for the following reasons:

1. Decentralisation has come to be regarded as a way of life, which should be adopted in faith, partially at least.

\textsuperscript{22} For more details Piffner A.: \textit{Administration, Organisation}, (Prentice Hall International, London, p. 190-191)
2. Decentralisation is an idealistic concept. It has ethical roots in democracy.

3. Decentralisation is a more difficult way of life, in the beginning stage.

   The reason is that there should be a change in behaviours against the culture patterns of mankind which are rooted in history.

   Piffner explains the reason why writings on the subject of decentralisation deal with organisational behaviour and how to change that behaviour. He gives a list of difficulties with regard to behaviour changes in organisations, such as difficulty to delegate authority and power from the top to bottom, difficulty to listen to the subordinates instead of always giving orders to them, difficulty to think in terms of abstracts regarded by long term. Planning has difficulty to evaluate other people and this works on the basis of result.

   Cheema and Rondinelli\(^\text{23}\) mentions five reasons for decentralisation of the political system, they are briefly the following.

   1. By giving more power to the common people through decentralisation, the elites who enjoy power may want to increase their own legitimacy.

   2. Politicians in power may be compelled to permit some decentralisation by pressures from various social groups for greater participation.

3 Improvement in the efficiency of development planning and its implementation may be a reason for decentralisation.

4 Decentralisation can also occur due to international pressure.

5 Decentralisation may be attempted as a way of getting rid of the responsibility for regional and local level development, by the national level politicians.

Some studies in the volume edited by Cheema and Rondinelli mentions a sort of anti-feeling about the desirability as well as feasibility of transferring powers and resources from the central government to local bodies and other organisations, in some developing countries. Some governments in developing countries seem to have been discouraging the growth of non-governmental organisations which support decentralisation policies, in order to minimise political conflicts. Because in development and preventive policies in developing countries, the intended beneficiaries did not possess the organisational capacities even when local groups created opportunities for greater involvement in decision-making.

Peter Oakley, in his book “Projects with People: The Practice of Participation in Rural Development,” has identified two schools with regard to participation of poor people in the development process. He stresses the importance of participation as a major force in development thinking. Of the

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two schools, one looks at participation as the key to include human resources as an input in development projects. They think that if the human element were included in projects, people would be more successful. This school has been identified with the liberal interventionist school. The other school, which is identified with the ‘radical populist’ or ‘the Marxist School’, sees participation as a process by which poor people seek to have some influence and get access to resources that will help them to bring about improvements in their standard of living. The thrust of the radicalists is on structural transformation. In their view, participation should involve the emergence of the poor sections as an influence in the planning and implementation processes.

L. J. Sharpe (1979)\(^{25}\) had observed that aims of local government reorganisation naturally differ in different countries. However, he had pointed that two such aims are dominant and common in western countries. They are (1) ‘Cosio - geographic objective’ and (2) ‘Service efficiency objective’. The first one aims at bringing the local government structure up-to-date through enlargement in spatial terms. And the second one aims at enlarging the population and resources of local units to enhance their functional capacity and to exploit economies of scale.

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Soren Lund\textsuperscript{26} in his essay “Efficiency or Empowerment? A Meta-theoretical Analysis of the Concept of Participation” says that people’s participation cannot be thought of without the transfer of power and resources to the poor. He has also distinguished between two participatory strategies. One is a public management strategy, which assumes that more involvement by the people would improve the development efforts. Here the concept is used in an un-instrumentalist sense. It is a means for development. The other strategy is a political one in which the assumption is that the only way to improve the living conditions of the poor is to transfer authority and resources to them. In this the concept of participation is used in a normative sense or as an ideal model of a development goal.

Guy Gran\textsuperscript{27} in his book “Development by People: Citizen Construction of a Just World” had argued that decentralisation must lead to the development of local-level institutions and non-governmental organisations to limit and control actions of the state and private forces. In his opinion, bureaucratic organisations, which are top-centered, are incapable of mobilising human resources and are generally obstacles to development. They do not allow participation by ordinary citizens at the grassroot level. So Guy Gram has suggested three strategies to empower


people at the grassroot level and increase their participation in the development efforts.

1. Create awareness among people who do not belong to elite groups, about their potential to influence political decisions.

2. Barriers against people’s participation must be broken down by creating grassroots level organisations.

3. All people, especially the poor, should be given opportunities to influence development policies and programmes.

M. E. Dimock\textsuperscript{28}, in his book ‘Administrative Vitality’, discusses the merits and demerits of centralisation and decentralisation in the sphere of bureaucracy and administration. In a set up where managerial responsibility is centralised among a few top executives, it will have several undesirable consequences. Initiative and creativity will be limited, efficiency will be reduced, implementation will be delayed and development will be retarded. He rightly points out that most executives waste a lot of time simply worrying about even unimportant details of administration and countering critical situation that arise often. He says that the best solution for this problem is centralisation in matters of taking policy decisions and decentralisation with regard to the execution of

policies. This is because he believes that decentralisation can combine the best elements of bureaucracy and enterprise.

Esman and Uphoff\(^\text{29}\) in their book ‘Local Organisations’: Intermediaries in Rural Development, surveys a series of experiences of local organisations like self-help groups and co-operative societies in which the members pool their economic resources and use them for their own benefits. They conclude that the best way to achieve rural development is through a network of organisations, horizontally and vertically linked together, representing a combination of institutions that contribute the respective strength of the government, private sector and voluntary organisations.

Joel Samoff\(^\text{30}\) in the article ‘Decentralisation: The Politics of Interventionism’, points out that it is important to ask who rules and who benefits with regard to administrative decentralisation and interventionism. Focusing on these matters is asserting a particular political orientation. Not asking these questions and asking them are both political standpoints. By not asking these questions, one is not challenging the presumption that decentralisation will empower disenfranchised groups. To ask those questions one must recognise that decentralisation may or may not


empower the disadvantaged sections of the population. Only by asking those questions, democratic participation can be extended.

Ian Livingstone\textsuperscript{31} and Roger Charlton have considered the financial side of decentralisation in agenda. They have examined the district government efforts to raise revenue with the tax instruments, which have been assigned to them. It was found that the Government efforts are defiant in a number of ways and their tax raising potential is not commensurate with the responsibilities being devolved. They pointed out that either the identification of new or modified methods of raising revenue locally or increased commitment to transfer of financial resources from the center or both can be adopted for fulfilling the objectives of decentralisation with regard to finance.

David O. Porter & Engiene A Osen\textsuperscript{32} are of opinion that the strongest argument in favour of political decentralisation is that it will increase the ability of the elected constituents. Access, citizen participation and political responsiveness are all expected to increase with political decentralisation. The leaders of general purpose of the Governments will be better, able to distribute available resources according to local priorities rather than being


restricted to rigid functional categories as, and is after done in systems that are administratively decentralised. In other local bodies, officials will be to integrate and co-ordinate the resources coming to them from the federal Government, in such a way that they will meet the highest local priorities.

**National Studies**

Kumar B. Das,³³ in his work ‘Regional Economic Development and Decentralisation’ says that centralised planning is not only complex and difficult to implement, but inappropriate for promoting equitable growth and self-sufficiency among low-income groups or regions. Decentralised structures for procedures for peoples participation in the development process will be effective to generate economic growth with greater social equity.

B.P.S. Bhadouria³⁴ expresses his views on decentralisation. To him, decentralised planning enables better perceptions of local needs, provides the rational for taking planning to the grass root levels, ensures effective participation of the people makes better informed decision making possible, leads to a better exploitation of local resources and potentials, aims at better co-ordination & integration among programmers & create greater awareness pertaining to their well-being and welfare in general. He

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suggests a combination of “top down” and “bottom up” planning process for establishing, receiving and delivery mechanism at the local, regional levels to meet the needs of masses and thereby reinforcing national and indigenous capability towards self-reliance.

Inamdar and Kashire\textsuperscript{35} made an attempt to examine the nature and process of district planning in Maharashtra State, through a case study of one district planning process adopted in Maharashtra state, deviates much groom the prescribed model in the state, which facilitates co-ordination and participation to a great extent. They remark that the gap between theory and practice has adversely affected the scientific nature of planning process in the state. The authors were not impressive with regard to the popular participation.

The status of decentralised planning in the state of Himachal Pradesh was taken as a matter of investigation by O.C.Sub\textsuperscript{36}. The study reveals the fact that the State Government is enable to operate the district planning in accordance with the recommendations given by the Row committees, [C.H Hanumantha Rao committee and G.V.K.Rao committee] on district planning. The entire decentralised planning in the state is from district level upwards and not below district level.


\textsuperscript{36} See O.C Sub, administrative Problems of Rural India, Kanishka Publishing House, Delhi, 1992.
A joint venture of nine IAS officers\(^{37}\) at Lal Bahadur Sastri National Academy of Administration, results in an evaluation of the process of district planning in Gujarat. The investigation reveals that the district planning in the state is only partially successful as it is confined only to 15 per cent discretionary outlay and 5 per cent incentive outlay. Planning for the 80 per cent normal district level schemes are done at state level itself. A substantial amount of the united funds is eaten away by way of committed expenditure in the form of ongoing schemes and non-plan expenditures. The role of Panchayat Raj Institutions in decentralised planning is reasonably low.

Lack of scientific approach towards district planning was considered as an important feature of the district planning system in Gujarat. Abdul Aziz tries\(^{38}\) to evaluate the decentralised planning experience of Karnataka after the implementation of Karnataka Zila Parishads, Taluk Panchayat Samithis, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats Act 1985.

The author is impressed by the mechanism created by panchayat raj institutions to allow the people to participate in the planning process and provisions for inter-departmental co-ordination, reduction in the mis-identification of funds by them, effective utilities etc:-


The study also throws light on the new institutional framework occurred due to the implementation of decentralised planning, and the resultant desirable changes in the rural areas particularly in the housing, education and health facilities of the villages studied.

The major conclusions he derived are many of the districts are dissatisfied with the present criterion of allocation of district plan fund, as it was allocated without giving a better scope for Zilla Parishad in handling the financial resources for the development of the district, heavy electricity and non-plan expenditure calls for the development work of Mandal Panchayat is hampered by limited and in experienced staff in the office, failure to give sufficient attention to grama sabha at village level which is the bedrock decentralised planning, at grassroot level.

Rondinelli and Cheema\(^\text{39}\) advise caution on the question of decentralisation and development. The authors point out that decentralisation may be invoked to promote a multiplicity of objectives often in conflict with each other to provide central efficiency by reducing the overload to promote political efficiency by providing for local initiative and local participation to maximise grass root democracy. Their conclusion, which is in favour of innovative systems of grass root democracy, is based on the ideals of decentralisation and participation.

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In a recent volume edited by Sinha\textsuperscript{40}, various authors discuss the need for greater functional and financial decentralisation. In his critique of Indian experience of Decentralised Planning, Sinha notes three types of “limits to decentralisation” - political, administrative and technological.

Misra\textsuperscript{41} argues that participation in planning is not of an instrumental value but an end in itself. Hence, it is an imperative in the process of planned development.

Emphasising on the development of a scientific approach and conceptual framework for a district plan in a multilevel planning structure, Chaya Degaonkar\textsuperscript{42} tries to analyse the planning and development process within a national system and a particular system in it. The author justifies the choice of district as a planning unit on the grounds of attending to the regional problems and fulfilling the regional needs, on the one side, and the need to involve the poor masses in the development process on the other. She emphasises the fact that growth and equity to be taken as the long-term objective of any district planning so that everyone can have access to the fruits of national development. She concludes with the remarks that district planning in India is still in the evolutionary stage.

\textsuperscript{40} Sinha R.K Economic development since Independence: Forty years of India’s development Experience Ed.Deep and Deep Publications New Delhi, 1989.
\textsuperscript{42} Chaya K Degaonkar, \textit{District planning in India} Pouter Publishers Jaipur 1997.
Ajith Kumar Singh argues for greater transfers of “power and resources” in an increasing manner from state level to the district level. For a better locative system and successful working of the decentralisation projects, he has made some suggestions. They are (1) maintain a proper balance between the share of the state and district in plan funds, (2) provide adequate weight to backwardness, (3) include element of incentive at all stages of planning and (4) provide for earmarking certain amount which is to be used for local development programmes. He concludes by emphasising local level development as an essential factor for the success of decentralised planning in its real sense.

Bharghava and Shivanna make an attempt to evaluate the functioning of Taluk Panchayat Samithi in Karnataka. The authors point out that the Samithi as a middle-tier Panchayat Raj Institution, has been found rendering useful service specifically in relation with the provision of a functional link between Zilla Parishad and Mandal Panchayats. The study also reveals the discontent among the officials and non-officials of the Taluk Panchayat Samithi, due to the absence of effective executive power for Taluk Panchayat Samithi.

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The main reasons for the failure of decentralised planning and development of economy are attributed to three main reasons by Hanumanth Rao. The cause he specified are:–1). Exploitation of the benefits which are meant for poor people in the rural area by the rural elites in the local self–government. 2) The non-congenial impact of Social–structure and property relations exciting in the country, on the rural people. 3) Political unwillingness of the state to decentralise the power to pass it to the lower level. These factors make the process of decentralisation difficult and painful in almost all states of India. So the author strongly recommends for the removal of these factors at any cost.

Prof. Gangrade\textsuperscript{45} is of the opinion that Panchayat Raj Institution have an important role to play in organising enrolling, informing, instructing, sensitising and mobilising people for the development and welfare activities.

The author opined that with the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Constitutional Amendment, the rural man started to give up the depending culture and focused on “self-reliant” policy. The rural man is both an actor and a beneficiary in the changing process, according to him. He emphasised the need for allowing the Panchayat Raj Institutions to do their welfare responsibility in accordance with the Eleventh Schedule of the Act. The members of the

\textsuperscript{45} See Gangrade K.D. “People’s Welfare in their own Hands- Role of Panchayat”, \textit{Yogana}: January 1996
Panchayat at all levels must be educated about various legislations and welfare measures to raise the status of the marginalised and weak groups. He further advocates that the Panchayat must act as a ‘Watch dog’ institution to monitor and implement the programmes and the motto of work should be to become self–reliant rather to look at others. He suggests “Self Reliant” village communities as the best model for India.

The necessity of decentralising governance from the center to states, town and villages for promoting people’s participation and efficiency in working is highlighted by Bhatnagar. He points out that the term ‘local self government’ in India was originated when the country was under the British administration and did not enjoy any tinge of self government either at the center or at the state level. He identifies five essential attributes of a local body:– 1) Its statutory status, 2) its power to raise finance by taxation, 3) participation of the local community in the decision-making, 4) freedom to act independently of central control and 5) its general purpose approach in contrast to the single purpose character. He emphasised the importance and efficiency of local bodies in tackling the local problems. He concludes his article by projecting a few advantages of the decentralised institutions such as they are more flexible, innovative and effective and can generate higher moral, more commitment and greater productivity, than the centralised institutions

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State Level Studies

T. M. Thomas Isaac and Richard W. Franke in their well-known work… put forward the view that decentralisation of governance is advocated today by people of widely different persuasions, from World Bank to third world nationalists. That underscores the fact that even though decentralisation is an ideal in its own right, its instrumental significance depends upon the linkage with the larger socio-political context. Democratic decentralisation is part of a larger struggle for self-reliance and an attempt to solve some of the most keenly felt needs of the people through mass participation. Decentralisation of the state apparatus is essential for transforming the existing state institutions into empowered deliberative bodies. Empowered deliberative democracy helps in prompting equity, improving the quality of citizenship and producing better outcomes of state action.

In the study on decentralisation in Kerala, the World Bank appreciated Kerala’s Planning Board decision to devolve 35-40 per cent of the total plan outlay to Panchayat Raj Institutions. K.N. Raj focused attention on the need for what he described as “Planning from below”. Arguing for effective decentralised development at the district level, he


48 See K.N. Raj “Planning from Below”, Working paper-No.1, Center For Development Studies, Trivandrum, 1971
emphasised the need for data collection, formulation of developmental needs and appropriate resource computation at that level.

Rajan Gurukkal\textsuperscript{49} in his article, ‘When a Coalition of Conflicting Interests Decentralises: A Theoretical Critique of Decentralisation Politics in Kerala’, puts forward the view that the popular consciousness about democratic decentralisation is made up of a mixture of ideas drawn arbitrarily from the Interventionist and Radical schools of thought. In the popular consciousness, decentralisation is a public policy of the central Government. The aim of this policy is to speed up development by meeting local needs more quickly through politically empowered local governments.

M. Kunjaman\textsuperscript{50}, in his “Globalisation: A Subaltern Perspective”, opines that democratic decentralisation in Kerala has opened the way for women’s entry into leadership positions. It was feared initially that the women representatives will be manipulated and controlled by men. But the people’s plan campaign completely removed that fear. The training programmes intellectually equipped the women representatives. Studies show that women head some of the best-run local bodies. He appreciates the role of Ayalkoottams in poverty alleviation and in making women more


\textsuperscript{50} For details, Kunjaman. M. Globalisation: A Subaltern Perspective, Center for Subaltern Studies, Thiruvananthapuram, 2002, P. 85
active and vocal. Women in Kerala have proved their ability to catch up with men in several fields.

Attributing the failures of Indian planning to the absence of effective people’s participation, Ramakumar\(^{51}\) says that Kerala has ushered in a new era in planning by launching the people’s campaign for the IX plan. The author has succeeded in citing the inability of our planning mechanism to identify the regional resources and to utilise them collectively in the absence of co-ordination in the working of different departments at the Panchayat level. Discussing the various stages of Kerala’s unique experiment, he says that decentralisation should be seen not as an alternative to national planning, but as an effective tool for it.

The tasks and steps involved in preparing a district plan are outlined by M. A. Oomman\(^{52}\) on the basis of a case study “Experience of Kannur District in Kerala”. The author expresses his discontent about the methodology so far adopted for the preparation of district plan as they are drawn from working group committee report on District Planning. He opines that for evolving a good methodology, with people’s participation in the planning process, the best resource is mobilisation of the man power of college students, NGOs, panchayats and people belonging to below

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poverty line which are lying idle at present. The author does not present anything by which these resources can be tapped for the district planning process.

With the objective of estimating the fiscal potential of village panchayats to compare fiscal potential with actual efforts and also to identify the constraints faced by the village panchayats in resource mobilisation, R. P. Nair\textsuperscript{53} opines that the level of misutilisation of benefits by the beneficiaries is significantly high in Kerala. Cash assistance seems to be more prone to misutilisation than the assistance in kind. He also finds that bulk of the benefits under the individual beneficiary programmes have gone to the poor and corruption in the delivery system has come down under the people’s campaign programme. Violation of norms in the selection of beneficiaries was found to be a complaint among the public.

M. S. John and Jose Chathukulam\textsuperscript{54} have studied a village panchayat in Kottayam District. The findings of their study are–majority of the WCP projects on the panchayat have not been initiated by women and there is absolutely no content in the projects addressing strategic gender needs. In projects like housing, no strategy to tie them with property rights for women was contemplated. The influence of WCP among the middle and upper strata


\textsuperscript{54} For details, John M. S and Jose Chathukulam, “Gender Issues and Participatory Planning, Case Study of Grama Panchayat in Kerala”, Workshop on decentralisation in Kerala.
of society is almost absent. However, the role of Grama Sabha has significantly increased. The study also reveals that some women have improved their entrepreneurial capability by moving from the status of credit groups to that of small entrepreneurs. Most of the projects under WCP are found to be in the productive sector. Only less than 50 per cent of the total allocated amount for WCP has been utilised. The WCP projects have the highest rate of spillover.

A R V Pillai\textsuperscript{55} and others examine the relevance of beneficiary committees under people’s planning programme. The study is based on large scale construction activities. They call these beneficiary committees as the “torch bearers” of the new development culture.

**Decentralisation in the Context of Kerala**

Today one finds it extremely difficult to dissent with the view that we are in the age of participation and it is the Paradigm of People that rules and reigns the development debate. Despite the theoretical setbacks and the practical problems, the canonical status attained by participatory approach to development sustains as orthodoxy in development strategy and perhaps this might have involved pretty exaggerating remarks such as one can hardly find a development strategy without any element of participation.

\textsuperscript{55} Pillai A.R.V, Jayaprakash N., and Ajith Bhaskaran; “Beneficiary Committees; An Experiment under People’s Plan”, *Workshop on Decentralisation in Kerala*, Op.cit
Development efforts centred around people will stimulate economic growth sustain equitable distribution of income, and maximise democratic representation and local level autonomy. Among the attempts in tune with this line of thought, a very serious one was the recent experiment of Kerala State Planning Board to decentralise the planning process to the grassroot level, by participating the local people, from the conception to the implementation of the plans. This was to empower the Panchayat & Municipal bodies to draw up Ninth Plan Scheme within their respective areas of responsibility.

These series of attempts, coined as “campaign for people’s planning”, have replaced the traditional type of planning, in which people were silent spectators of their fate being designed by external forces, and has created the environment for effective participation of people. Gandhiji’s dream of grama swaraj has blossomed into reality, when the Government of Kerala decided to implement the IX Plan in People’s Plan Campaign. Thus the tiny State of Kerala, model to the nation in various sectors of development and welfare activities, has once again attracted the attention of the nation and to a certain extent, the world by launching this novel programme for ninth plan to ensure the decentralisation of planning process.
For implementing people’s plan campaign, the state Government had decided to set apart 40 per cent of the plan fund to local bodies. This was aimed at setting right the imbalances crept in the famed Kerala Model of Development. In recent times it was revealed that Kerala model has lacked sustainability. In the absence of sustained economic growth, even the equity side of development cannot be sustained. The latest Kerala model aimed at transforming the local bodies into genuine institutions of LSGs, endowing them with substantive financial powers. Though we have passed five decades since our independence and despite the launching of eight five year plans, the prevailing administrative and planning modes could not find solutions to the problems the country faces. Prime short fall, the centralised planning had that the schemes were not local level based. In a country like India local development needs cannot be planned and settled at the state’s or central capital. So the Government decided to gain people’s co-operation in the IX plan, thus making it a people’s programme, so that efforts for rescuing areas under crisis and retaining the achievement made in other fields are possible.

56 Sustainable development is referred to as “a.k.a. sustainable growth” by the author. Sustainable development is viewed only as a modification of a failing practices that makes it possible to remain anthropocentric and human-chauvinist. See Bender, Frederic. 2003. The Culture of Extinction: Toward A Philosophy of Deep Ecology. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books.

57 Hans-Joachim Schellnhuber and Hermann Held look at the second Copernican revolution using Earth System modeling in which the Global System (a self-organised cooperative phenomenon driving global change either to sustainable trajectories or self-extinction) must guarantee sustainable development to assure a tolerable environmental future. He proposes new science to explore the human violations of Global System called “Sustainability Science” See Managing the Earth: the Linacre Lectures 2001. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
People-oriented development could be attained only through positive deviation from the existing mode of centralised plan implementation. The growing gulf between people and wielders of political power has created a bizarre and potentially dangerous situation in Indian polities. In a representational democracy, it is perhaps inevitable to have a charm between people and those who operate levers of power. The spirit and content of democracy can be enriched and enhanced if suitable institutional mechanisms are introduced in the system at appropriate levels in a thoughtful manner. Economic inequality of feudal pattern attendant with all its socio-cultural deprivators is the main factor that comes in the way of empowerment of people, which is an essential pre-requisite for making democracy, participatory and meaningful. The absence of any popular representative administrative structure below the level of the state governments was a serious handicap in obviating the passivity of a vast majority of citizens in the matter of administration and development. To remove this dangerous feeling of powerlessness, they had to be empowered by appropriate representative mechanisms at multiple levels below the state administration. The latest Kerala Model aims at transferring the local bodies into genuine institutions of local self government endowing them with substantive administrative and financial powers.
A few Observations about Kerala Experience

At state level, the Government itself has brought out many pamphlets, publications, orders, circulars, and committee reports regarding this matter. Apart from this, a number of articles have been published by eminent experts on this topic in various reputed journals.

Rajan Gurukkal in his article, “When a Coalition of Conflicting Interests Decentralises: A Theoretical Critique of Decentralisation Politics in Kerala”, puts forward the view that the rhetoric of the developmentalists dominates the consciousness of the general public, for it is ostensibly idealistic and neutral. In the popular consciousness, decentralisation is a public policy of the central Government. It is an administrative reform for avoiding red-tapism and corruption, bringing efficiency, quickness, flexibility, accountability and responsiveness, drawing government closer to the people, enabling political and administrative penetration of national policies, increasing political stability and national unity, improving the link between demand and supply of public goods and facilitating better mobilisation of the local resources.

Kirsten Westergard in his “Introduction to the Debate on Decentralisation and Participation”, mentions that within political science

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59 Westergard Kirsten, Introduction to the Debate on decentralisation and Participation, Center for Development Research, Copenhagen
decentralisation has a long tradition. It is concerned with the extent to which the power and authority should be dispersed through the geographical hierarchy of the state and the institution and processes through which such dispersal occurs. Many of the arguments for decentralisation follow the liberal arguments in favour of democratic local governments, which are claimed to be good for national democracy and provide benefits to the locality. Within development studies there is a broad-ranging literature on decentralisation, the role of the local institutions and institution building. By and large it is based on the liberal assumptions of decentralisation and the focus is on decentralisation as a tool for development.

M. Kunjaman, in his “Globalisation: A Subaltern Perspective”, opines that democratic decentralisation in Kerala has opened the way for women’s entry into leadership positions. However, statutory power is one thing, the real people’s power is another. The fact to be noted is how and how much empowered an ordinary woman outside the administrative fold feels. Here one has to look at the Ayalkoottams, [Ayalkoottams are neighborhood groups, or cluster of households] the real repositories of people’s power. Kunjaman tries to look at people’s planning in Kerala in terms of its paradigmatic dimensions. He is of the opinion that the poor and oppressed are slowly but surely, emerging out of the shadows of marginalisation and moving into visibility. He remarks that certain social
sectors remained handicapped in taking full advantage of the overall development attained by the state mainly women and the scheduled tribes. Quoting Amartya Sen, he states the conviction that the viability and desirability of any development strategy should be judged by the degree of freedom enjoyed by these two submerged social sections. The study reveals that with the inception of people’s planning, the tribal started assuming a different role-being the architects of their own destiny and they started to think that it was first ever opportunity they got to directly participate in the decision-making process. “Development through redistribution” was identified as the development strategy of Kerala, for which people’s planning was the acceleration and culmination.

As Gusta Esteva\textsuperscript{60} points out, in “Regenerating People’s Space” it will be necessary to rely on the scientific and institutional infrastructure already created by development, in order to reorient public policy. To be fruitful their strategy must reveal the consequences of bureaucratisation and rigidity that characterises policy as a first step towards reorienting it. These efforts would exist with the most autonomous initiatives undertaken by grassroots.

Presenting a critique of the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, 1994, against the backdrop of the people’s campaign for the IX plan launched in the state

\textsuperscript{60} See Esteva Gusta\textit{ Regenerating People’s Space}
to usher in decentralised planning. Mahipal\textsuperscript{61} calls for drastic changes in the Act to make participatory planning a reality. His paper is divided into three parts, each one is meant for dealing with one objective. The author thus tries to make a detailed analysis of panchayats and participatory planning in a historical perspective, community initiatives and suggestive framework for participatory planning. Pointing out that the State Act does not provide an enabling environment for participatory planning, he underscores the need to integrate rural areas with urban areas below the district level for making participatory planning effective. He concludes that the panchayats in Kerala are yet to become viable and pulsating institutions for ensuring participatory planning.

Ramakumar\textsuperscript{62} has succeeded in citing the inability of our planning mechanism to identify the regional resources and to utilise them collectively in the absence of co-ordination in the working of different departments at the Panchayat level. He points out that regional development can be ensured only through people’s participation, right from the project formulation to the implementation stage. The relevance of the IX Plan in the peculiar Kerala situation is analysed by him. Highlighting two aspects of it – removal of the drawback of absence of people’s


participation from the planning process and higher size of the IX plan (higher than the total amount spent through the VIII plan) - he considers the IX plan of Kerala as a unique one. Discussing the various stages of Kerala’s unique experiment, he says that decentralisation should be seen not as an alternative to national planning but as an effective tool for it.

M. A. Oomman expresses his discontent about the methodology so far adopted for the preparation of district plan as they are drawn from working group committee report on District Planning. He opines that for evolving a good methodology, with people’s participation in the planning process, the best resource is mobilisation of the manpower of college students, NGOs, panchayats and people belonging to below poverty line, which are lying idle at present.

Richard Franke and Barbara Chasin⁶³ who conducted fourteen years of research in Kerala on people’s campaign, terms it “a radical experiment in democracy.” They point out eighteen major achievements of the campaign which were presented in a tabular form. While explaining the origin of the campaign they point out four factors, which generated the people’s campaign, the most important one being the well known Kerala Model. They also express their anxiety whether the structural adjustment programme of World Bank and IMF will deteriorate the welfare gain of the

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developing countries. Quoting the examples of Zambia, Zimbabwe and Mexico, they also doubt whether the globalisation has increased inequality and poverty.

To examine and challenge the apparent contradiction between the orthodox planning principle and decentralisation as is being adopted in contexts like Kerala, Chandrasekhar\textsuperscript{64} explains the case for centralised planning in economic systems. The danger of informational inadequacy, bureaucratisation and decision-making levels are the main institutional obstacles, according to him. He also point out market socialism as an alternative. But they cannot be ‘People-friendly’; and may import the anarchy characteristic of capitalism into the system. The author considers democratic decentralisation as introduced in Kerala as an alternative. He calls democratic decentralisation as ‘transition’ and considers it as an alternative both to centralised planning and to the market socialism.

M.J. Joseph\textsuperscript{65}, identifies six functional areas where people’s participation is invited. They are—situation study, analysis, planning, implementing, monitoring and evolution. He emphasises the need for facilitating the evolution of sustainable people’s structure and systems at the gramasabha level and panchayat level so that people become creative

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\textsuperscript{64} See Chandrasekhar C.P; “Democratic Decentralisation and the Planning” Principle- The transition from Below”, International Conference on Democrat is Decentralisation, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{65} See Joseph M. J “A search into the feasibility and effectiveness of participatory approach, methods and tools of the decentralised development process of the panchayat raj institution”. Workshop on Decentralisation in Keralam Kerala Research programme on Local level — Development (LRPLLD) Center for Development Studies, Trivandrum, October 2001.
partners in the development process\textsuperscript{66}. It is essential to ensure people’s participation at a higher level in the ongoing panchayat level learning, planning and action process and thereby designing people centered action plans and projects for a panchayat. His methodology included consultation with the panchayat board members, selection and formation of research team, workshop on democratic decentralisation, formation of micro-level people’s structure, training on and of the application of participatory methods and tools, problem analysis, project planning, monitoring and evaluation, periodic review meeting etc. His methods have enhanced critical awareness, interactive learning and acquiring of new skills.

Srikumar Chattopadhyay\textsuperscript{67} explains the background of introducing participatory panchayat resource mapping programme in Kerala in 1990. He advocated that decentralised planning process could be effective with proper data base at the Micro level. The single most contribution of their programme is found to be the initiation of a new planning culture at the lowest level of administration, which results in confidence building and empowerment.

\textsuperscript{66} For discussion on development process, Barrow explores the environmental management and the development process. Sustainable development brings together environmental management and development management. Identification of priorities and barriers to counter degradation are presented as to a sustainable development future. See Barrow, C.J. \textit{Environmental Management and Development}. New York, New York: Routledge, 2005.

Absence of technical expertise to interpret the data at the ground level, time gap in supplying the date, non-availability of certain basic information on productivity and land holding and lack of map based planning culture at different levels were mentioned as the possible limitations in the process of using panchayat resource mapping programme.

With the objective of estimating the fiscal potential of village panchayats to compare fiscal potential with actual efforts and also to identify the constraints faced by the village panchayats in resource mobilisation,. R. P. Nair has conducted a study at three levels. Inter Panchayat variation in terms of basic facilities revealed that Panchayats located in close to urban areas enjoyed better amenities than other Panchayat. It was also revealed that the Panchayat records contain only 40 per cent of the actual number of units functioning in the selected villages. A review of expenditure revealed that administrative expenditure is the most important item and education and public works seems to be the least expenditure incurring items. Lack of reliable date at panchayat level was a great difficulty experienced by him in this study.

While examining the performance of Ayalkootoms in Kumarakom panchayat, P. G. Padmanabhan finds that the interpersonal relation

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68 Padmanabhan P.G. “A study of Ayalkootoms in participatory planning and Grassroot level democracy in Kumarakom Panchayat and scope of Replication”. Workshop on
strengthened through Ayalkoottoms, expand opportunities for providing a congenial atmosphere for conflict resolution harmonies of life and total human development. The projects recommended by Neighbourhood-group meetings and approved by Grama Sabha were proved to be innovative, cost saving and successful.

Muraleedharan K\textsuperscript{69} assets that the campaign for people’s planning is really an innovation. He points out that the people’s campaign has replaced the traditional type of planning in which people were silent Spectators of their fate being designed by external experts, and has created the right environment for effective participation by the people. The study reveals that the housing peters and one’s attitude towards this programme. Farmers, agricultural labourers and service persons who dominated the group of participants while political association – ruling of opposition – dominated the non-participants.

M. S. John and Jose Chathukulam\textsuperscript{70} have studied intensively the extent to which gender has been reckoned in the participatory planning process particularly the manner in which the women’s; component plan (WCP) was implemented in a village panchayat in Kottayam District. They recommend a separate plan for women’s development and separate

\textsuperscript{69} Muraleedharan K. “Participatory Planning in Kerala Addressing some basis questions.” Workshop on decentralisation in Kerala Op. cit.

standing committee for women so that more focused attention could be given to the Women Component Plan.

Pillai and others\(^{71}\) examine the relevance of beneficiary committees under people’s planning programme. The important obstructions they find are lack of technical support, security of capital, part-bill payment procedure and deduction of beneficiary contributions. They recommend simplified rules and procedures for transparent and democratic governance.

In the study on decentralisation in Kerala, the World Bank\(^{72}\) calls the progressive vision of Kerala, a stepping stone towards democratic decentralisation. Funds, re-deployment of the staff, and different phases of micro planning and people’s campaign are explained in detail. The need for and mechanism of accountability is stressed by the study.

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71 Pillai ARV, Jayaprakash N and Ajit Bhaskaran, beneficiary committees: and Experiment under people plan, workshop on decentralisation in Kerala.