CHAPTER-V

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY

Democracy has remained as one of the most important themes in politics. Its meaning has undergone changes and revisions over the many preceding centuries and in the 20th century; however, today it has become a well and widely accepted principles of governance. The genesis of democratic practice could be traced to ancient Greece and Rome around 500 BC and mostly its development occurred in Europe, along the Mediterranean coast and in Northern Europe and slowly spread over to many countries and continents, putting aside vastly populated China. However, from the classical Greeks to the present days, many consider it as a worst type of government and society. It was synonymous with the "rule of the mob". In the words of C.B. Macpherson, "Democracy used to be a bad word ... fatal to individual freedom. Then within fifty years, democracy became a good thing."

It is because that the essence of democracy lies in its recognition of worth of each individual and their virtues providing adequate scopes for their contribution in social and economic life. The popular sovereignty of a state rests with people. Supreme power is shared by all citizens disregarding differences in their social position, economic status, and ethnicity and so forth. Direct democracy as was practiced in Ancient Greece may not be practicable in modern times keeping in view the size of the state, population and complexity of modern administration. Democratic system, today, can ensure people's

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participation in a variety of ways that would be the singular and only viable option open in the present times. To put the simplest definition carrying core staff of democracy, it can be said that it is a “government by the people”. It is a political arrangement to run the system by the people. Since, power is sine-qua-non to govern the masses; power resides in the people and is legitimately exercised by the representative of the people. People are an integral part in the management of state affairs. They participate in different type of political activities in order to keep the system working. Individual participation in political activities of a state is an important indicator of the working of a democratic system. Democracy will be a hollow idea if the people show little or no interest of involvement, be it local or national arena of politics, either directly or indirectly. However, it can be placed here, that extent of people’s participation does not constitute the sole criterion of a democratic system. It also, largely depends upon the extent of freedom extended to its citizens, freedom enjoyed by mass-media, independence of judiciary, and enjoyment of social and economic benefits along with political rights.

The extract from Pericle’s speech to his fellow-citizens affirms the democratic ideals of the classical Greek city states/polis and main characteristics of democracy. Pericles was of the opinion that democracy is the rule of all people. Athenian democracy involved equality before the law, selection of people for offices on grounds of ability and tolerance for differences. Pericles in a very strong word cautioned that who had no interest had no right to call themselves citizens. Again, Aristotle tried to see the social bases of democracy. For him, democracy meant the rule of the poor and free-
born and adequate safeguards to be created to protect them against the
domination of the rich people\textsuperscript{23}. There was fear that the power of the people
which democracy upholds could be usurped by the demagogues. Similar view
of democracy and its likely degeneration in the hands of power-monger and
wealthy people would be seen in the writings of several other political theorist
in later periods such as John Stuart Mill, Alex de Tocqueville, J.J. Rousseau and
G.D.H Cole. John S. Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville find democracy more as a
symbol of modernity that gives ample means for the development of its citizens.
For Mill, extending the suffrage was a ‘potent’ means of mental improvement.
In defense of democratic system, Mill gives two arguments. First as an anti-
paternalist, he thinks that each individual is the best defender of his/her interest
and second, democratic regime creates a particular type of character in the
individual to bloom himself and the state. He is seen opposing the ‘passive
type’ of character to the “active self-help type”. Albert Camus gives a very
vivid picture of how democratic ideas took roots to the present vibrant stage of
its development. In his own words, “a slave taking orders all his life suddenly
decides that he cannot obey some new commands and says,” No more. So one
begins and other joins in together they try to take charge of their lives\textsuperscript{24}.
According to H.F. Pitkin and S.M. Shumer such popular movements of
empowerment appeared, both on the large and small scale, everyday and in
local scene. It appeared in the sections of “Paris Commune” and ‘the popular
societies’ and political clubs of the French Revolution, the “fanshen” assemblies

\textsuperscript{23} Blaug, Ricardo and John Schwarzmantel (Ed) in Democracy- A Reader, Edinburg: Edinburg
University Press, 2000, pp.21-22

of Chinese revolution, in the soldiers and worker's Soviet Russian revolution. However, it does not stop there; it can occur and re-occur among the colonized people, among slaves, among subjects of ruthless dictator. Historical accounts are, in fact, full of series of events when people tried to find ways of being citizens even when they were excluded from the formal institution of power and pursued a hard continuous struggle, under the most diverse and inhospitable circumstances. Democracy is not something a distant dream or Utopia, a concept limited to the Greek city. History of democracy has taken place in the movements that struggle to transform societies that where themselves far from democratic.

The power and the radical nature of those movements grew specifically from the liberating and transforming capacity of political action. So, when a black woman decided to sit in the front of a bus, became a national drive for human dignity and equality; a self-help cooperative providing credit for poor farmers can became a democratizing National movement. The demand of Paris Commune for cheap bread and some political organizations to bargain with their legitimate demands helped people to be "participators in government". Geraint Parry and George Moyser argue strongly that for measuring the extent of democracy, "the degree of popular political participation must constitute one of the indices". Democracy means the rule of the people or "the power of the people". The regime in which people exercise no part in rule could not qualify to be called a 'democratic'\(^{25}\). However, there lies difficulty in measuring the

\(^{25}\) Parry, George and George Moyser, More Participation, More Democracy? , ibid.p.442
extent of people's participation in the political activities. How much participation and which type of political activities for citizens can give the stamp of democratic legitimacy to a regime. Both are quite aware of the glaring limitations and difficulties in taking popular participation as a measure of democratization. The political discontinuity in Athens and modern states could be seen because of gigantic nature of size, number of population and more complexity of decision-making process, are therefore, far removed from the people. John Dunn puts it, "in no modern state, do its members, male or female decide what is in fact done or hold their destiny in their own hands. They do not, because they cannot."²⁶

Although, the participatory democrats trace a genealogy from the ancient citizenship models and within the modern thought from Rousseau, J.S. Mill and G.D.H. Cole, however, none of them believed that today's modern states have been successfully lived up to an ideal participatory democratic polity. In fact, it is held that modern institutions serve to discourage such ideals and as such participationist are in the constant lookout for structural changes in politics so as to widen its scope of greater and fair involvement of greater number of citizen.

A number of political theorists such as Theodore Roosevelt and Pikkin & Shymer had shown faith in the capacity of individual to act in a political and social scene. Ordinary and plain people for them, makes better choices in their day to day life than a small body of men who tries to govern them. Stupidity can

²⁶ Ibid p.442
be found in any class of society. A community nourishes itself and groups out of participation and a growing community desires for a participatory role. Participation by people in the civic activity takes him out from the confines of home to think beyond their limited private sphere. His private sphere can be transformed into a public sphere of activity that helps him to think as citizens. Benjamin R. Barber is keen to draw a distinct line between ‘citizen’ and ‘masses’. All cannot be said to have acquired the status of citizens in a state. For him, citizens deliberate, mass behave, citizens acts, masses collide and intersect. As soon as ‘masses’ start deliberating, acting, sharing and contributing, they remain no longer masses but becomes citizens. Only then they do “participate”.

Participation in political life is not free from normative value. Thinkers like Schumpeter sees little significant outcome that participation can bring when huge population takes part. In fact, participation has no central meaning and substance in his theory of democracy. For him, if enough number of people participate that enable the electoral machinery working would be sufficient for a democratic institution to work. He emphasized upon minority among the whole mass whom he termed as ‘the professional politics’ or the leaders. It reflects rather a negative disposition he had on many that they are incapable of action other than as is put by him creating a “stampede”. The competition among the leaders for vote is the basic characteristics upon which the foundation of democracy is built. In all accounts, he was not in favor of many people to come

and join, and enter in political arena and therefore, it is better for them to be
guided by few professional leaders.

In a similar line, B.R. Berelson also undervalues the participatory
domain of democracy. According to him, high level of participation is needed
only from a minority. Most of the people are uninterested and ill-informed of
the state activities. The apathy and disinterest on the part of majority plays an
important role in maintaining the stability of a political system\(^\text{28}\). Robert A.
Dhal is also no different in his ideas of participatory democracy. In fact, he
focuses on the ill-effects that might arise out of sheer greater participation of
people. His extremity of underestimating the role of majority could be
discernible when he says that the people from lower socio-economic scale breed
'authoritarian'\(^\text{29}\) personalities.

There is a divergence in ideas and ideals, opinion and attitude among
different political thinkers with regard to exact nature of democratic system and
people's role in it. Theorist such as J.J. Rousseau, John Stuart Mill and G.D.H
Cole advocated a government where people should have maximum access to
civic activity and in political decision making process. 'Realist thinkers', on the
other hand, draws our attention to actual level of participation prevails in most
countries. In fact, they try to convey that since most of the people are not
interested in State's affairs and are ill-informed, their participation will bring

\(^{28}\) Pateman, Carole. Participation and Democratic Theory: Ibid.p.469.

\(^{29}\) Ibid.p.473.
element of ignorance and indifference in place of expertise, which could have damaging impact upon the stability of a democratic system. However, if one goes by the core meaning of democracy, that is government by the people, power lies in the people and sovereignty is the people, if majority does not share in the exercise of power, in the making of decisions, have no desire to share equally the distribution of benefits and burdens in the management of state’s affairs, democracy will “deviate from its true path”. There must be adequate options and opportunities for people to participate in the sphere of socio-political and economic life in the state. There must be adequate participation of people in shaping the polity of a nation. Although, direct democracy existed in Athens, may not be possible to recreate in exact form and functional attributes, opportunities need to be explored for people to participate in political affairs. The system should encourage greater citizen involvement by way of opening up more and more avenues for them, if it is in lesser degree. Structural changes in the system can be encouraged with innovative practices.

The appreciable advancement in the field of technology has made it possible to ensure people’s involvement in great measure in important decision of government. It is not necessary that all people be made to gather at one place to debate over a topic. Issues of importance can be discussed at different places and locations. The application of internet and television can be helpful in

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30 Parry, Geraint et al. Political Participation and Democracy in Britain, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.5.
supplying the necessary feedback of such discussions. People can watch parliamentary debate on television and then register their vote or opinion at the end of it by pressing a button or by making a free phone call. However, watching or participation in the actual discussion is a different thing but, the level of discussion and style of engagement may not require many of the individual to take part\textsuperscript{31}. Internet governance as an evolving institution can be fruitfully promoted for collaboration among stakeholders on many policy issues and their basic framework including those of human rights, justice and equity, along with its design and implementation\textsuperscript{32}.

There is little doubt that people’s participation in the management of state’s activity constitutes as one of the important indices of democracy. The extent of participation on the part of its citizens shows the overall health of democratic functioning. After all, if democracy is a minority affairs, then the moot questions is who participate in it and why rest, the majority are not inclined in their engagement of state activity. The quality of democracy is likely to be adversely affected when only few participate and many remain uninterested. Even, institutional changes can help in opening access to important stages of decision-making and make possible for ordinary people to exercise influence. In the year 1969, therefore, the Sheffington Committee Report into participation in planning processes in Britain recommended that

\textsuperscript{31} Arblaster, Anthony. Democracy, Delhi: Bookland Publishing Company, 1997,p.84

\textsuperscript{32} Kasinathan, Gurumurthy, “Internet Governance and Development Agenda” in Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XLIII NO 14, April 5-11, 2008.p.22
greater opportunities need to be opened to allow people to influence in planning proposal.

Most of the activities in the form of political participation are, generally, directed towards the persons who are in authority and in certain position to exercise influence decisions, or the leaders of a pressure group who are intermediary in the process of policy making. “Government by the people” will have no meaning if the activities undertaken by citizen serve only symbolic purposes. Participation would be inconclusive and ineffective. Therefore, there is a need that common man and woman must ensure that political participation is after all, effective, not merely symbolic, his or her voice is heard, there is a prospect of favorable response from the authoritative institutional entities.

The empirical studies undertaken by scholars such as Lester Milbrath, Sydney Verba and Norman Nie in America, Gerriant Parry and others in Britain suggest that it is only the minority of the populace that takes part in political acts. Therefore, it is the realist school of democrats that gives a more accurate and realistic description of contemporary democratic practice. If participation is minority affairs, it is also important to seek the reasons of non-participation by majority population. Geraint Parry and George Moyser cite some of the plausible reasons as to why most people do not have the required level of interest to participate. People may be satisfied with policies made by the government. Many may see it as futile to bargain with governments. Since most people’s interest run around their family, work, leisure and largely untouched

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33 Parry, Op. cit., p.8
by government activities, politics generally, touches a men's life only intermittently and in an indirect manner. For some people, the decision not to take part in any political activity may be promoted by a rational calculation of the costs and benefits. Many a time, despite knowing well that a particularly government policy have a real impact on them but they may feel that they can do very little as an individual. In fact, many studies have shown that majority of the population lack what is called “political efficacy” or political confidence required to act in political scene.

Voting in an election is considered as the most visible and popular form of political participation. It is an indicator of working of a democratic system. Some political scientist in recent times, such as Warren Miller and Merrill Shanks are worried about the declining trend of voter's turn out. This declining trend could be seen in the United States of America, which led to produce such studies as the Disappearing American Voter and Why Americans Still Don't Vote. Electoral turnout in the developing nations is in a rosier state while in post-industrial societies “something is rotten in the state of electoral participation.” Altogether, there are sixteen countries that have experienced erosion in their electoral turnout during the 1945-2000. It includes countries such as the United States of America, Canada, Australia, France, and Switzerland.

On the other hand, The International IDEA database voter turnout from 1945 to 2000 shows that developing countries have registered increased

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electoral participation. 27 nations have recorded to have seen an upsurge in their electoral participation. Most of the developing countries across Latin America, Asia, and Sub-Saharan Africa demonstrate a rising turnout while majority of other nation experienced a trendless fluctuation or stability so far as electoral participation is concerned. Party membership varies considerably across different nations. Many established democracies have seen erosion in party membership from the early 1980s to the early 1990s, however during this era; party membership has expanded in some newer democracies. The World Value Survey from the mid 1990s confirms considerable cross-national variation with the lowest membership in post-Soviet Societies and far healthier party membership in newly established democracies in parts of Africa and Asia\textsuperscript{35}. There is a perceptible fear that western public have gone away from public affairs, detached from campaigns, and bored with politics giving rise to a, if not crisis and some growing problems of legitimacy for representative government. There has been a falling of active involvement of citizens in public affairs, undermining the legitimacy of more fragile democracy.

India is undoubtedly, one of the most successful democratic nations in the world. It may not meet up some of the favorable conditions for successful working of democracy as has been prescribed for such as ‘modern market economy and society’ and ‘weak sub cultural pluralism’. For Dahl commented that democratic political institutions develop and endure in a cultural homogenous environment and less likely to be in a country with differentiated and conflicting subcultures. Because of the absence of some of the glaring

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.p.219
favorable conditions in India made him to put, “that India’s political practices have displayed some egregious shortcomings from democratic point of view”\textsuperscript{36}. The divisions in the caste, class, religion, regions and infinite subdivisions within each are the inherently embedded in the ethos of Indian Political System. Democracy in such countries if not impossible, it is improbable and chancy. Despite the shortcomings and chancy prophecy for a country like India, it has a relatively stable and successful democracy. It has witnessed over the last 60 years that the election process was done in a fair and smooth manner except for a brief spell during 1975-77. If one looks at the turnout rate of voters in Indian Parliamentary election since 1952, it is quite clear that it started with a modest beginning that graduated to an overall moderate level of people’s participation in the act of voting. The average level of turnout across all the states and all the parliamentary elections from 1967 to 1998 is a moderate 59%. There are some states which are well above this level while some are below this. In fact, there are almost equal numbers of states in these groups (Sanmitra Ghosh: 2006). Till the year 2004, there have been 14 Lok Sabha elections. Starting from relatively a low level of turnout in 1952 (45.7%), it reached to 61.2% in 1961. In 1984, it recorded the highest percentage of turnout rate (63.6%), however, that may not be as encouraging as is found many developing or developed countries of the world. It gives the impression of rather a trendless fluctuation with slight ups and downs in the intermittent periods. In the state level election, the highest average turn out is found in West Bengal and Kerala with 73% whereas Orissa has a dismal show of turnout with 51%. The participation in the electoral sphere

shows variations in the regional level whereas in the parliamentary level, there are not much conspicuous differences.

**Voter turnout in Lok Sabha Election 1952-2004 (India)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Turnout (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>45.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>47.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>55.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>61.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>55.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>60.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>56.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>63.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>62.0</td>
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<td>1991</td>
<td>55.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>57.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>58.1</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(Source: www.eci.gov.in/Archive)

Democracy is nourished and nurtured by people’s participation in politics. Democratic system of governance devoid of people’s political participation is inconceivable and the system will cease to be democratic. It is the participation of people in different political activities that sustains the
system. A democratic system gives citizens a number of opportunities to engage in the management of state. It depends on his interest and skills, attitudes and approach to engage and contribute for his own wellbeing as well as for the good health of the system. The present study, primarily, concentrates upon the extent of people's participation in political acts in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and how the democratic parliamentary system is working. So far as the study is concerned, it is found that the people are participating in some forms of political engagement in an overwhelming fashion while there is less participation in some other mode of political engagement. Both in the rural and urban areas, most of the people have shown greater degree of their interest and involvement so far as exercise of franchise right is concerned. In fact, rural population has surpassed the urban counterparts in terms of voting participation. 95 percent of rural residents and 91 of the urban populace said to have taken part in voting. Again, since women constitute almost half of the population in the state, their participation in political acts counts much. Although, in the urban area women showed little less interest as compared to the rural area, there is not a substantial gap in the pattern of rural and urban participation so far as women are concerned.

Compared to male participation, 96 percent female in rural area and 85 percent in urban areas are said to have voted in an election either once or more than once. In terms of male-female differences, it shows that there is not a big gap. So far as voting as the most conventional form of political participation is concerned it is heartening to note that vast majority of population in all age categories show their keen interest and involvement in the selection of their
representative and in the formation of government. However, there is a need to see that voting participation is effective. Since some of the respondents who voted say that it was done out of feeling of performing a duty rather than having understood well realistically the implications of their franchise right. There can be some qualms about the effectiveness of such participation. It can be assumed that with the expansion of formal educational level and socio-political consciousness, participation of the people will be more effective and will have real value. The present study found little a low level of education prevails among the population. Improvement in the field of formal educational scenery will, no doubt, have a transforming role in the state political landscape and in the behavioral aspect of the masses. It will help to instill a greater sense of political efficacy and, a more matured and meaningful participation is likely to breed from their educational gains. It was observed in the present study that many respondents were without formal education, both in rural and urban areas. To be a bit more precise, 34 percent in the rural and 29 percent in the urban respondents were illiterate. Another 24 percent in rural and 47 percent in urban belts were found to acquire minimum education (under matriculate).

It is, therefore, plausible enough to say that with sizeable population without any formal educational attainment or little education, their participation in democratic governance will be tantamount to little value. Sheer participation by many numbers in episodic election is not sufficient to save democratic institutions and its functioning. There is a possibility on the part of elite and leaders taking undue advantages for their narrow interest. There may be representatives elected are incompetent and incapable of doing things well to
the society. The educational resources of individuals will enable them to come out of the limited private sphere activities to more public activities. They would be rather stimulated to engage in other form of political participation such as signing a petition, going out for a demonstration, staging a strike, taking part in a procession, meeting responsible officials and their representative. Hence, their participation will not remain confined to participation in periodic voting alone, which is undoubtedly undertaken by huge sections of the population. In fact, election is so popular an activity in the state that it could be fairly likened to each tribe’s celebration of favorite festivals.

As stated earlier that due to lack of a sound base of education of the people, political competence will be either very minimal or absent in crucial decision making process. There can be reasonable fear of manipulation of the working of the parliamentary system by the influential leaders and elites against the common interest of the people. Most of the respondents in the illiterate group and with minimum education were influenced by the head of their family members in respect of their decision to vote for a candidate. Opposite was the case with respondents who have acquired good education. Along with the increased in their band of education, respondents were seen more of taking an independent decision. Thus, there is a positive relationship between the level of education and the respondent’s ability to take independent political decisions. Mere symbolic participation in periodic election cannot be said to be sufficiently legitimate label that could be pinned up with democracy. The question is if voting alone participated by substantial number of population is enough for a system to be called democratic. Voting is a periodic event. In
between the time, good number of policies are decided and implemented by the authority. There is a need to find ways for people’s participation in the policy making process of the government. Village Committees, Special Consultative Committees and advisory bodies can be formed to bring in valuable input to the effectiveness of a policy. People who are likely to be benefited and affected by certain policies of government require to be consulted at various stages of the implementation of policies. Many a time they are best judge of their own interest and their interest can be best protected through different stages of their participation. Of course, all may not be necessarily involved, but those who have profound understanding and knowledge on the local issues can be encouraged to engage. There were instances of allurement through money, and materials in the state’s electoral politics. It is very often the most marginalized section of people who are readily taken into leader’s confidence. People should be freed from the bondage of economic insufficiency so that they are not trapped or tempted. In order to make participatory democracy work effectively, participation of people is required as well as their participation have to be based on an informed and independence judgment, least guided by the external distorting and dampening factors. Participation will have a real value when people vote candidate for his competence and character, for his leadership ability and willingness to serve society. With the rise of education coupled with material contentment, these type of glaring deficiencies inherent in the working of the parliamentary democracy can be brought down. Symbolic nature of participation and its ineffectual consequences have to be done away with the state or in entire Indian sub-continent so as to attest democracy a true character.
The farmers and unskilled workers participate in the state’s electoral politics in large number but are unhappy with the end outcome of their participation. One of the common complaints of the respondents particularly, in the urban areas, against the elected representatives is that of latter’s inaccessibility once they are elected. One of the respondents puts about their leaders, ‘after victory, their faces can hardly be seen,”. As such, it is required to reduce the existing gap between the people and the elected representatives. There should be more contact and meetings whereby an exchange of thought on issues and local problems between elected leaders and local population can be enhanced to enrich participatory politics. Regular meetings can be organized to have better understanding of an issue and to serve as a link between the representative and the people. It will help to instill a sense of confidence on the general people regarding the value of their participation. At the same time, in the changing developmental scenario, “mass publics have come to expect their government to provide for their well being”. Subjective well being of the population is an essential condition for the stability of democratic institution. People will have faith in democratic institutions and in its legitimacy that, in turn, will help to enhance the supportive participatory orientations among them, along with bringing the element of effectiveness of their participation. “In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality…” (B.R. Ambedkar)38. As such, there is a need to insure that with political rights which


38 Sharma, S.D., Development and Democracy in India, USA: Lynne Rienner Publisher, Inc., 1999, p.1
are being showered equally on the people, they do have adequate means of enjoyment of social and economic gains also. Then only, participation can have a real value.

Majority of the people in the state are not interested to be involved in more intense form of political activities, besides voting. Many of them are pre-occupied with their day to day life, family, leisure and jobs and so on. Spectator-participants are in greater number in many societies than the super gladiators, including the state of Arunachal Pradesh. As soon as voting and its collateral activities are over, very few can be found interested to join in other sphere of political activities. In between the time of election, there comes the period of political hibernations for most people. It is the election and its related activities that bring about a heightened type of political activism. Canvassing for a candidate, seemingly connected to electoral process, has been found to be very popular among the local residents, particularly, in the rural areas. A very sizeable percentage of respondents in the study (63%) said that they had gone out for political campaigning on several occasions, whereas urban residents did not show that much interest in canvassing. Only 29 percent of urban residents said to have done so. There is a perceptible political inactivism among the urban population. If one looks at the other form of political engagement also, overall participation trend is not much rosy in the state, particularly, in the urban locations.
People in the rural areas while asked if they would contest for public offices in future, 34 percent of them said in the affirmative. Rural residents were more disposed towards political acts than the urban respondents. It is quite clear when a very small percentage of urban residents who expressed their interest to contest election. In fact, the people in the urban centers of the state does not hold a very positive idea of the term ‘politics’; they considered it too unfathomable and a profession baddest enough to pursue.

Nonetheless, in Arunachal Pradesh, activities relating to electoral contest have brought in its wake a positive participatory tendency among the population. People as a whole are seen very enthusiastic and most lose no opportunities to contribute their all bits of strength in making a candidate win. If one has a glimpse over their fund contribution, the people, especially, in the rural belts were very interested to go around a candidate and help him in all possible means. Expectedly, the rural economic activities may not be a very yielding type of activities, neither very prosperous. The whole point here is to say that despite being not adequately equipped in terms of economic gains, may not be economically so well-off, but they seemed hesitate little to contribute in winning his/her candidate.

It is in fact, striking to note, how eager they were to contribute for their contesting candidate by way of offering whatever little means they could. Some illustrations carry worth enough to place here. Many respondents interviewed were found to have made regular contribution in the shape of livestocks such as Mithun, Pigs, local beer and precious traditional beads etc. during election time.
Some respondents who were well off contributed finance to a political candidate. From this one can understand the intensity of their desire to be involved and linked with the electoral process. Out of the 175 respondents in the rural belts, 34 percent of them said that they had contributed either in money or material form. Admittedly, most contribution came in material forms keeping in mind the rural economic structure as is put in the foregoing lines. However, the picture is in sharp contrast to urban scenario where very few individual could be detected with fund contribution. The figure is dismally low and dampening, despite the fact that urban areas offer good earnings prospects to many. Just a 4 percent of urban residents said that they had made contribution for political activities. Urban residents are, somewhat disillusioned with political affairs and does not evince a keen interest in political matter. Contribution of fund largely depends upon economic prosperity of the regions, one’s interest as well as willingness to take risk in a rationally chosen-decision and thus it may show a variations from place to place

Membership of political parties, pressures groups and other associational groups provides an endurable experiences and impression in the political life of an individual. It is at the most the professional political activists who attach themselves with political party, work round the year with programmes and manifestoes and are in the constant drive to bring more and more party-members, supporter for nourishing and broadening the base of the party.

Political parties are the vein in democratic system of functioning. They are pillar of democracy, and an important catalyst agent in promoting political
participation. They serve as an important agent of diffusing political information, articulation and aggregation of people's aspiration. There are major national parties in the state which have stronghold over the politics of the state. Sometimes, sudden eruption of regional political parties can be seen in state's politics, which have more or less negligible longevity and influence as one can see the fate of Arunachal Congress founded by Kameng Ringu in the year 1996 and by the end of 2010, it lost the regional party status. Many political parties do not seem to have a dense network of party membership in this nascent state except very few. Membership of a political party does not appear to be very popular option open to many urban residents. Majority of people live in rural areas and only just little over 20 percent of the population live in seventeen towns (2001 census). The number of political activist in urban areas is much less than in the rural areas. In this form of political sphere too, the urban residents are not inclined to join political party as a member. Very minuscule percentage of respondents (21% in rural area and 7% in urban area) said that they were either party member in the past or has a membership of a political party at present. In fact, political parties have much to do in the direction of reaching out into the nerve centre of urban politics. Except the Indian National Congress, network of other parties are relatively weak and disorganized. Regional parties are often plagued with uncertainty. This often leads people to a state of confusion and disruption in the size of party strength. Generally, people who are attached to these regional parties cannot repose much faith in them; their transitory nature of politics put them in a fix to switch over

their party loyalty to another resulting in an unpredictable nature of party-politics. The stability and credibility which people, very often want to see is missing in the functioning of regional political parties. Many party workers who were interviewed expressed their dissatisfaction over the slipper nature of political party activities. Sudden shift of party loyalty by the politicians and changing the name of political party in a quick fashion put the workers in a guessing world of politics. It, thus, creates problem for the party-members and lower level workers in the task of sticking to its fold, attracting more followers and furthering the particular party interest.

The entry of more political parties will enhance the prospects of more participation. It can help in throwing up competitiveness among parties and at the same time, offer more choices to the people to join a party. Quite a good number of national level political parties have already made inroads in the political scene of Arunachal Pradesh. Mention may be made of Bharatiya Janata Party, Trinamul Congress, Rastriya Janata Dal, Janta Dal (U), Nationalist Congress Party etc. State level parties are also likely to surface in the state politics; but only worry is regarding the question of their stability. The multiplication of party members and diversification of activities will facilitate in bringing people closer to participatory tendencies that will also in the long run, strengthen the base of democratic superstructure. There are, of course, some parties, which have already made its presence in the local level political scene i.e. Panchayat Election.
There are a number of groups that are emerging in the horizon of state’s politics. Group and its participation in politics are sine-quo-non in a liberal democratic system, its importance and implications are prominently discernible in the contour of state politics of the state. Generally every group represents the interest of its members or may be collective interest of the state, which, largely, depends upon the strength of its membership and nature of issues. Although, the present study finds a minimal representation of individual in a group activity, in absolute terms, it was found that just a 6 percent of urban respondents have attended in a meeting organized by a pressure group in the state while 27 percent of rural residents did so. It is noteworthy in the context of Arunachal Pradesh where one finds one or other type of groups are formed and are working even in the remotest part of the state, such as Forest Protection Group, Self-Help Group, youth association, village committee etc. The proliferation of groups may not have an explicit impact of much magnitude in political scenes; however, many issues of substantial importance at the local level can be brought to the forefront of political discussion, deepening the essence of corporate life, reinforcing the social network which could help in inculcating a type of social and political values among the masses. They may serve as a fertile ground for furthering issues into the greater stream of political processes. With the expansion of education, media exposure and economic well-being, awareness among the different tribal groups is growing.

Now, in a multi-ethnic society like Arunachal Pradesh, almost every tribe has formed its own ethnic-based organization in order to preserve their age old culture and traditional mode of living, which are visibly, under continual
threat of erosion by the onrush of multiple forces of modernity. Although their participation in politics is very limited, occasional issues of interest in relation to tribes may prompt them to resort to political acts. For example, the Apatani Cultural Society had served ultimatum to the state government to protect its allotted piece of land for cultural activity, which was encroached by some individuals. In similar way, the Nyishi Elite Society is constantly putting pressure upon the Government to replace the ‘Dafla’ nomenclature from the 8th Schedule of the Constitution with ‘Nyishi’. The All Nyishi Students Union time and again made demand for the enhancement and timely disbursement of student’s stipend\textsuperscript{40} and the apex student body i.e. All Arunachal Pradesh Students Union raised its voice against the non-supply of textbooks\textsuperscript{41}. However, the increasing number of groups and its activities may touch the boundary of politics in an intermittent manner rather than on a regular basis. The proliferation of political party activities and group activities will help to create a type of increasingly competitive political environment. The Worker’s Union, different Staff Associations, professional student body such as Arunachal Pradesh law student union, student’s union based on different tribes, cultural societies, unemployed persons association, and women’s forum add to a more politicized milieu that may, in the long run encourage people to take part in different political acts. Democracy does not always work only by the existence of formal institutions, but ‘‘has to be judged by the extent to which different voices from

\textsuperscript{40} The Arunachal Times, Itanagar, Vol.22 No.17, 22\textsuperscript{nd} June, 2010.

\textsuperscript{41} The Arunachal Times, Itanagar, Vol.22 No.13, 18\textsuperscript{th} June, 2010.
the diverse sections of the people can be heard"^^42. Group resource of different variety often is the representation and reflection of diverse interest that exist naturally in a plural society like Arunachal Pradesh and the need to attend them by the institutionalized entity.

In order to understand role of group organization and nature of political participation, it may find mention below two important pressure groups viz., All Arunachal Pradesh Student Union and All Arunachal Pradesh Worker's Union (AAPWU) in addition to the study of another pressure which occupies an important place in articulating the interests of business community i.e. Market Welfare Committees. From the standpoint of functional aspect, influence, organizational structure and maintenance, these groups are at the top as compared to the aforesaid pressure groups in the state. With massive infusion of man power and talent the students and workers union have carved a niche for their organizations in the socio-political ethos of the state.

All Arunachal Pradesh Student Union

The All Arunachal Pradesh Student Union is the apex student body (AAPSU). The student union was formed as early as 1947. This is, in fact, the largest body in terms of man power, influence and size of memberships. The student union has its well written laws and bye laws for the functioning of the body, hierarchy in the office with designated office- bearers, professional consultative staff, provision of periodical meetings and debate, with its

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proclaimed faith in the democratic methods of settlement of issues that are at stake. At present, a permanent building of the organization is under construction. Its functionaries with modern education and outlook, political consciousness has made a niche in the socio-political and educational sphere of the state politics.

The student body adopts and applies different means of political participation and persuasions to exert influence on the policies of the government and on several issues concerning the interest of the indigenous people and the state as a whole. They resort to different techniques for the fulfillment of its demands such as

- submission of memorandums,
- protest rally,
- contacting governmental officials,
- appealing to authority,
- seeking information from different departments,
- launching peaceful agitation,
- organizing signature campaigns,
- going for a door to door campaign to elicit people’s opinion on critical issues such as Refugee issue,
- serving ultimatum to the government in case of Government’s failure to meet their demand.
It maintains a constant contact with press and multi-media for the publicity of its viewpoints on wider scale amongst people in order to make people aware of issues and local interests and also generate support in its favor. It is seen in critical movement the members write regularly either in the form of letter or articles, in newspaper to influence the elected representatives and people. Although an organization of students it does not keep itself confined to the students' activities alone as seen from the nature of demands they have made to the government from time to time, such as issuing photo identity card to genuine Indian voters; shifting of the General Manager office of National Hydroelectric Power Corporation Ltd from North Lakhimpur to Arunachal Pradesh. Generally, giving call for a bandh, is the most common technique for pressurizing the government.

In the mid-eighties the state faced a series of agitations programmes launched by the student body. It was largely contained by the administration through some harsh steps and meaningful negotiations. It organized a “Delhi-March” agitation from 8th to 20th May, 1994 in which about 400 students participated and staged a dharna in Delhi and submitted memoranda to various central government leaders. It has, so far, submitted several memoranda to the Prime Minister, State Chief Minister, National Human Right Commission, Chief Election Commission on the vexed Chakma and Hajong refugee issue and for deleting the names of 1497 Chakma and Hajong who have been registered in the state electoral roll. The Student Union is working hard in creating awareness on the impact of the settlement of foreign national in the state, specifically,
perceived curtailment of indigenous rights\textsuperscript{43} and building a massive support base of the masses on this issue. According to its estimate foreign nationals in the state constitute a whopping 2.5 lakhs which include Chakma and Hajong and Tibetan. Even after forty years of their settlement and constitution of several committees, holding of meetings at the highest administrative levels, the refugee question still defies any solution.

In 1998 and 2006 it organized a massive ‘Awareness Rally’ against the entry of outsiders, particularly, the Muslim workers from neighboring Assam. Under operation ‘Clean Drive’, student activist took up the cudgels against the workers alleging them to be Bangladeshi immigrants and drove out hundreds of them beyond the border of Arunachal Pradesh. They see the continuous inflow of minority workers as a threat to demographic stability of the state as well as their share of potential employment avenues.

In one memorandum submitted to the then Prime Minister Shri A.V. Bajpayee, the apex student body conveyed its opposition of the decision to extend the Centre-NSCN ceasefire to some areas of Arunachal Pradesh (Ref. No. AAPSU /M-2/2000). In an explicit term the student union stated that peace in Nagaland was important but this could not be compromised with the territorial integrity of the state. The student body had been successful in its effort in convincing the State and Union Governments for the revocation of the said decision. An appeal was also made for initiating steps to flush out NSCN of both (IM and K) factions from Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

\textsuperscript{43} The Arunachal Times, Itanagar, Vol. 21, No. 341 24\textsuperscript{th} May, 2010.
Pradesh. The executive members of the body toured Tirap and Changlang districts and held series of discussions at Longding, Khonsa, Deomali and Changlang with the government officials, public leaders and local residents of the areas in order to understand the prevailing situation in the insurgency-affected areas. They found the activities of underground elements affecting the normal life of local inhabitants adversely. It urged the state government to constitute peace committee for the restoration of peace and confidence among the people. It held a number of consultative meetings with ministers, MLAs, and MP.

The leaders of the student union also, on many occasions, toured different constituencies and areas of Arunachal Pradesh to articulate public opinion on crucial issues concerning the interest of the state, such as, likely impact of the imposition of different laws and acts such as sales tax, control of organized crime ordinance (now an Act) on people and state.

The apex student union enjoys to an appreciable extent acceptance, credibility and respectability among the local populace. Although the direct involvement of the student body in politics is difficult to ascertain, sometimes tacit support is extended to political candidate also as was seen in the case of Mr. Tony Pertin who was a candidate for the parliamentary seat in 2004. AAPSU extended its support to the candidate on the condition that he would work with dedication for the cause of Arunachal Pradesh along with AAPSU in the future.
The AAPSU is, in fact, the most influential organization among all other organizations in the state. Its rising influence and power, credibility and wider acceptance of its role by the common masses, possibly, is attributable to the vacuum created due to the absence of opposition party politics worth of its name. There is "a strong tendency on the part of the opposition MLAs to join the ruling party in the state as soon as the election is over, irrespective of their party affiliation" (Kashyap, 1975).

The student body may not be able to produce the desired level of success and achievement all the time, but the most significant part of its functioning is that it maintains a constant vigil on the diverse aspects of changes that are taking place in the socio-economic and political scenario of the state and stimulate discussion on issues, primarily, relating to interest of the indigenous population.

Some other issues, frequently raised and taken up by the union can be well understood from the following.

- The refugee problems.
- Reservation of jobs for local population in state government and corporate bodies working in the state.
- Reduction of sale tax.
- Separation of executive from judiciary.
- Establishment of High court in the state.
- Assam-Arunachal Pradesh boundary issue.
- Extension of C.I.B network in the state to look into corruption charges.
- Formulation of forest policies.
- Establishment of Arunachal Regiment.
- Cancellation of land allotment, trading license, schedule tribe facilities issued to non-APST.
- Deletion of Yobin from schedule tribe list.
- Revocation of Centre-NSCN ceasefire from Arunachal Pradesh.
- Conversion of Arunachal University into a Central University.
- Awarding contract works to local contractor.

**All Arunachal Pradesh Worker's Union (AAPWU)**

All Arunachal Pradesh Worker's Union (AAPWU) is another important pressure group operating in the state. The AAPWU was formed on 5th June, 1996 and since then it has been working tirelessly for the welfare of working class in the state. It is primarily formed to bring all the workers of different public, private sector, unorganized sector, trade and industry under a common platform. At present, the total number of registered members stands at seven thousand. In addition to this, there are around thirty five thousand other workers, mostly unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled workers who join the Union on different programmes but are yet to be formally registered as a regular member of the Union. Interestingly, the shifting of political parties' loyalty as evidenced among the elected legislators and parliamentarian is evident even in the workers' union. Initially, the Union was affiliated to the Centre of India
Trade Union (CITU), but on 17th Dec, 2006 it changed the affiliation to the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), affiliated to Indian National Congress, probably on the assumption that this would be helpful in bargaining with the government as both the Government and the Union belonged to the identical political party line.

At the initial stage of its working all the office-bearers were selected. Election has been introduced for the first time on 15th Dec 07 for various positions within the Union. It is, in fact, heartening to note that democratic mode of functioning of the organization was discernible at the time of Union election. Contesting candidates go out for door to door campaigning, posters are used for wide publicity appealing the members and seeking their support. For strength and sustaining capability of an organization, material support base coupled with secretarial / clerical staff is essential. Because of continuous and tireless effort of its founder president Mr. Jalley Sonam and his colleagues, the Union has been successful in managing and mobilizing resources for the construction of a permanent office building, engagement of a few clerical staff, and arrangement of a professional legal adviser to help the members of the nitty-gritty of legal issues. The structural make up of the organization is a three-layered unit. All Arunachal Pradesh Worker’s Union stationed at capital is at the top of the ladder, in the middle comes the District Unit, and in the lowest rung of the ladder is the Block Unit. Election has not been introduced in the District and Block Unit but is likely to be introduced in the year 2008. The tenure of the office-bearers has been fixed for a maximum period of three years.
Issues, modes of participation and influence:

The Workers' Union takes up a wide-range of issues, basically, relating to the protection of the worker's interest and right. Some of the issues taken up by the Union are:

- regularization of jobs for casual workers working under various government departments,
- implementation of minimum wage rate for casual workers under government department, pension benefits,
- retirement age,
- promotion,
- social security schemes, and
- compensation, employment of local people in the Hydro-electric power projects such as NEEPCO, NHPC and similar other projects existing in the state.

The common modes of operation adopted by the Union, in order to pressurize the state government and other concerned agencies are,

- submission of memoranda,
- organize joint meetings,
- negotiations with the state government. If these steps fail to achieve the objective they intensify their course of action by resorting to
- state-wide strike,
• procession,
• black out,
• disrupt water/electric supply, and
• organize *dharna* before civil secretariat, office of the Deputy Commissioner, and other high ranking officials of the state.

It may be worth-mentioning that the Workers' Union undertook a series of programmes of agitations from December 2003 to 18th August 2005 seeking the implementation of minimum rate of wages for casual workers appointed in various government departments. After several rounds of negotiations, the state government finally agreed to their demand. Consequently the revised rate as was adopted on 18th August 2005 is given below.

**Table 1**

**Revised Rate of Wage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of employees</th>
<th>Area-I Monthly rate (Rs.)</th>
<th>Area-I Daily rate (Rs.)</th>
<th>Area II Monthly rate (Rs.)</th>
<th>Area II Daily rate (Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled</td>
<td>1430.00</td>
<td>55.00</td>
<td>1482.00</td>
<td>57.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-skilled</td>
<td>1560.00</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>1612.00</td>
<td>62.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled</td>
<td>1690.00</td>
<td>55.00</td>
<td>1742.00</td>
<td>67.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Government of Arunachal Pradesh, Dept. of Labour and Employment, Naharlagun, 18th August 2005*
One of the major achievements of the AAPWU is the establishment of Worker’s Welfare Board. The AAPWU could be credited profusely for its success in its long drawn struggle since 1997 that eventually culminated in the fulfillment of its demand of the establishment of Arunachal Pradesh Building and Construction Workers Welfare Board. Amongst other achievement of AAPWU is the formal acceptance by the state government of the longstanding demand for inclusion of four Sundays as working days and wages for the days. AAPWU also takes up individual cases of worker’s grievances and provides them necessary guidance and counseling. Like the AAPSU, it also demands for the employment of local people in the different ongoing project works in the 80:20 basis i.e. for Arunachal Pradesh Schedule Tribe and non-APST. Issues related to workers working under some minor industrial groups such as tea, timber, and beverage are also taken up and brought under the protective fold of AAPWU.

It would be farfetched to say that a particular policy and decision taken by the government and other corporate agency is purely as a result of group-based action. However, the existence of these groups and its persistence efforts in promoting interests of the members, its endeavor to generate public opinion in its favor, the political will on the part of the government, the good-will and sagacity of representatives, all have a cumulative effect in matter of achieving the legitimate ends of a demand. In a state where opposition party is almost nonexistent, there is possibility that at certain period of time grievances of a

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section of individual may go unattended and unrepresented. However the existence of strong Unions like AAPSU and AAPWU has filled this political vacuum.

**Market Welfare Committees**

In addition to the aforesaid major pressure groups in the state politics, the trading communities of the state also have their own groups. The Apex trading body in the state is the Arunachal Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In addition to this, every 17 urban locations has its own Market Welfare Committee/Association. Out of these, two Market Welfare Committees namely, Naharlagun Bazaar Welfare Committee and Itanagar Market Welfare Association were studied for the present study and its members were interviewed. These market welfare committees are not affiliated to the Arunachal Chamber of Commerce, nor is there any formal tie up, though the convergence of interest often brings them under a common roof. On important issues, the members of Arunachal Chamber of Commerce and Market Welfare Committees arrange joint meeting and discuss the issues such as taxation policy of the government and formulate a common agenda to deal with issues that appears detrimental to their interest.

So far as the organizational structure of the Market Welfare Committees is concerned, it is observed that efforts are underway to strengthen the functional capabilities of the organization and to make it into a viable unit. At present, almost all the offices of the Committees irrespective of their geographical locations are housed in rented buildings and day to day
administration is looked after by a small group of appointed staff along with the office-bearers. The office-bearers of Market Welfare Committees who are mainly responsible for managing the affairs of the group are either selected or elected. It may be mentioned that the Naharlagun Bazaar Welfare Committee have selected office bearers while the office bearers of Itanagar Market Welfare Association have been elected. Each of the Market Welfare Committee, primarily, works to ensure the welfare of the trading members within its jurisdictional area. These committees are mainly concerned with issues such as safety and security of the trading community and its property, law and order. Other important areas of concern is the impact of frequent calls for strike given by different organizations of the state on the business community, cases of kidnapping of businessman for ransom, looting, asking for donations by some organizations. Issues of greater consequences such as imposition of sale tax, are generally, considered by all market welfare committees and apex business body i.e. Arunachal Chamber Commerce jointly and whenever it is felt necessary they fight for the realization of demand jointly. If one looks at the arena of activities of these groups and their participation in the political activities, most of the time, these confine to contacting law–enforcing agency, ministry of urban development and their officials demanding for initiation of programmes such as for a planned town development, construction of proper drainage system, beautification of town, arrangement of parking places, occasionally, whenever there are cases of kidnapping of businessmen and in their demand for the release of kidnap businessmen, they show their solidarity and shut down their
shutter to pressurize upon the law –enforcing agency for tracing and safety
return of the kidnapped businessman.

The modernization process in the state has brought in its wake a slow
break down of the traditional society and culture. Modern system of education,
growth of media, impact of western culture, introduction of modern political
institutions have affected the unique tribal customary laws, traditional practices
and values. Consequently, there is a proliferation of ethnic–based socio-cultural
societies with an end to preserve the traditional value system from complete
annihilation. Now, there are almost as many ethnic–based socio-cultural
societies as the number of tribes e.g. Apatani Socio-Cultural Society, Adi
Cultural Society, Tagin Welfare Society, Nyshi Elite Society and Nyishi Federal
Council. The multicultural character of the state has given a fertile ground for
the proliferation of such ethnic based group resources. If one looks at the extent
of their political participation, their activities and involvement are very limited
and only intermittent activities could be observed. As for instance, Apatani
Socio-Cultural Society served ultimatums on several occasions to the state
government for the protection of its allotted land from encroachers which have
been earmarked for its Cultural activities. In similar vein, Nyishi Elite Society /
Federal Council has been putting effort and pressure on government, meeting
ministers, MLAs and officials to see the change of nomenclature ‘ Dafla’ to
Nyishi tribe in the Eight Schedule of the Indian constitution.

As it is stated at the outset, the politics in the state is still at its infancy
stage of development, however, along with the rolling of time, some of the
major pressure groups will have, more vitality in its work efficacy and arena of influence as indicated by the working of the above groups. With the sizeable rise of middle class population, economic diversification and security, increase of literacy rate, rising social and political consciousness, percolation of newer ideas and thoughts, with their own experience in the social and political life and therein socio-political and economic issues encountered have effected a transition time in the state politics from a simple traditional one to a modern, participatory and progressive one. The role of pressure groups and their political participation indicate that people are keen to have a part in the state building processes. The conflict of interest between the groups and government often, helps to situate the masses in a position to understand the issues well, stimulate their interest toward socio-political problems, and put the government and its officials under constant check from unjustified doings.

Organized groups are the ‘private government’ as it is put by Earl Latham’s and the organs of the state represents ‘public government’ (Quoted in Political Sociology by Ali Ashraf and L. N. Sharma P-82). The groups hold power depending upon the size of its membership, intensity of issues, capability of leadership, financial strength, and political acumen and exercise the power against the much powerful ‘public government’ to realize its objectives. The existence of different power groups in the society ultimately, help, in the maintenance of equilibrium in a system which is essential ingredient for the success and health of a democratic political setting. Groups are, in fact, more important in a state like Arunachal Pradesh where the representatives of the people are keener to sit in the treasury bench and become oblivious of the need
of forming an opposition parties that could ensure a system of check and balance of the workings of a parliamentary system. Pressure groups will play a vital role in the politics of the state and will help people to bring nearer to participatory politics with different issues.

So far as the engagements in some other forms of political acts are concerned, it was indeed interesting to see that quite a substantial proportion of the population had shown tremendous interest to join a public meeting and listen to their popular leaders. A whopping 73 percent of respondents in the rural areas said that they had attended a public meeting organized by a political party. Public meeting still continues to be a very important mode of communication between the leaders and the people, particularly, in the rural areas. In the urban areas, public meeting no longer hold the traditional charm and appeal, as evidenced from the fact that a little less than half of the respondents admitted of having attended in public meeting organized by political parties. It is most plausible that mass-media has replaced the traditional role of public meetings. There were many individuals who said that they had contacted local Panchayat leaders, MLAs, ministers and MPs on different occasions. Contacting their leaders and representatives was more prominent in the rural areas rather than the urban centre. They approached with different causes and complain such as construction of bridge, development of road, school, health centers, construction of embankments etc. Some respondents found approach elected leaders for financial assistance for an ailing patient or education of their ward. Being compact the local rural scene, people maintain close and co-operative relationship with their leaders. The bond of community
feeling is strikingly very strong in the rural areas. It was different so far as the urban population was concerned. Urban areas being larger in size having pressure of growing population, and when many are happy to the confines of their family, works and leisure, there was less contacting activities as seen in the urban centers.

Besides the different conventional form of political participation, there exist some other modes of participation which can be labeled as unconventional form of citizen's participation. Some people or organizations often adopt these unconventional political acts to redress their grievances. Because of its tremendous influencing capacity on cases of urgency, unconventional form of participation becomes an important tool in the repertoire of people's participation. Strikes, demonstration, protest and procession are often used as a handy tool by the citizens. Indeed, these are powerful methods very often taken to make the man in authority heard his/her grievances or issues which an individual or group is trying to put forth. These groups enjoy enormous support as evidenced by the public response towards a strike/\textit{bandh} call given by an organization. For instance, whenever a strike is called by the APPSU, the apex student body in the state, it brings the entire set of normal activities to a standstill. All individuals are directly or indirectly affected by these types of activities. However, so far as these unconventional types of political acts are concerned in the society of Arunachal Pradesh, bulk of the populace prefer to keep themselves away from taking part in these forms of political engagement. Its exercise is normally confined in the hands of some individuals or some organizations at best.
There are generally, a various type of protest activities such as strike, organizing Dharna/Demonstration, taking out procession, declaring bandh call and use of physical force. The study seeks to put them outside the technical meaning of each category of protest activities and mode of operational dimension that can vary to some degree. It is because of the fact that there were very few respondents who resorted to this type of protest activities. There was also some overlapping of people’s participation in two or three or all of mode of participation. As such, these different types of protest activities have been placed under the broader framework of ‘protest activity’. This particular mode of political engagement, however, is not very popular among the population as a whole. Both in the rural areas and urban centers of the state, there are few individuals who said to have taken part in these activities. 17 percent of the respondents in the rural areas and just a 10 percent of urban residents interviewed admitted of having their participation. It is noteworthy that amongst the protest participant, the younger people evinced keener interest than either the middle aged or the older people. In both urban and rural areas, the individual below 25 years of age showed the highest percentage of participation. It was the students mostly and unemployed youths who were at the prime of their age and full of energy and vigor. They were readily available to engage in and undertake the risk of any worse consequences or backlash from authority. With the emergence of newer issues and challenges in the political scene, protest activities would be always a popular option for certain people and groups affected by governmental policies. This can prompt them to take more intensified unconventional course of action rather than going by normal mode.
of engagement. A number of issues were associated with the people’s protest participation in the state. A vast majority of respondents took part in protest activity mainly relating to the issue of deporting the Chakma and Hajong Refugees, whom they considered as a threat to indigenous interest in terms of cultural distortion, political subjugation and loss of economic avenues. Besides, there were several other local issues that prompted them to go for protest activity such as providing autonomy to the panchayat body, resolving demarcation of inter-community and inter-state boundary, change of nomenclature from ‘Dafla’ to ‘Nyishi’, protecting business interest of local community and demanding for tighter control such as house and apartment etc. not to be rented to some outside business communities etc.

People’s participation in politics, will have more participatory value when participation of the people successfully brings out a desired degree of effects. It could be somewhat, doubtful with regard to the effectiveness of their participation or whether the acts undertaken by many individuals succeeded in effecting changes in the policy of the government. Participation through pressure group sometimes compels the government to concede to their demands. For example, the Nyishi Elite Society and All Nyishi Student Union put up a collective and consistent struggle for changing the name of their tribe from “Dafla” to “Nyishi”. They consider it as a ‘derogatory’ and ‘unsavory’ in the nomenclature. This has been fruitfully taken up by the Ministry of Law and Justice at the Centre45.

45 The Arunachal Times, 7th Jan, 2008
So far as participation in the state of Arunachal Pradesh is concerned, many individuals are quite well-informed about the political issues and affairs. Since the society is in a transitional period and it is trying to come out from the shackles of old traditional practices, therefore, there is great sense of enthusiasm among many people to experience modern democratic institutional practices. The bond of community feeling, particularly intra-tribe, is strikingly, very strong among many of the tribes in the society. Normally, local leaders, elected representatives and ministers have a flexible and cordial type of relationship and contacts. It is evident when most of the respondents interviewed said to have met officials, political leaders and have received a positive response of their grievances. This was more profoundly visible in the villages than in urban areas.

However, in a democratic society it is always a small group of individuals who take part in politics. Non-participation on the part of many people and groups, however, may not speak well for themselves as well as for the system. There is a possibility of negligence to such passive and disinterested members of the society from policy-makers. Some group of individual can feel well protected and their interests are promoted because of their interest and involvement in the socio-political arena of the state. Many scholars such as Sydney Verba and Nie, and Terry F. Buss and Marcela Tribble have found this observation and advocated for an extended policy of non-electoral participation for the citizens. When the better-off categories of people participate more than the poorer, this could mean that policies would increasingly be skewed in favor “of the particular participant groups and away from a more general “public interest”. Moreover, extensive and meaningful
participation by the active citizen in the governmental policies can also marshal support for a programme, bringing more efficacious, and can ensure efficient and quality services”.

Democracy demands participation from people. It is nourished by people’s participation and interest in the sharing of equal responsibility with leaders and representatives. Democracy in its true sense can only be upheld by the meaningful participation of its citizens. Or else, the body polity of a democratic system may be plagued by some damaging and unscrupulous elements in the shape of some leaders and elites. Power is likely to be misused for vested interest and self-aggrandizement. Democracy requires vigilance from its citizens through their participation in different phases of decision making so that public representatives and public officials are kept in proper check for their action. Some amount of restrain comes up automatically through people’s participation upon public functionaries and it will be exceedingly, helpful for the system to function in a desired manner. However, participation in politics varies from society to society and from country to country. It depends upon many variables that encourage or discourage its rate of engagement, either, due to variation in socio-political development, imbalance in educational gains, opportunities available, the role of the state, continuous overhauling of the

system and flexibility allowed for structural adjustments. The question that underlies in the concept of democracy is the distribution of dividends to all its citizens in a fair and equitable fashion; then it can be expected that its burdens and benefits be shared equally by all its citizens.

For most individuals, it seems that politics is far from their understanding and they view politics with a cynical mind. They prefer to be preoccupied with day to day business, and family responsibility rather than getting involved in political issues and acts. It does not, however, imply that they do not understand their role as a member of society. A vast majority of respondents interviewed said that decision making activity should not be left in the hands of elected leaders alone. They are of the view that ordinary citizens should also be given opportunities while decision are made and implemented. However, politics is by and large, handled by a few professional politicians, and common people may find difficulties to contribute to policy decisions of government. Still, there is a need to build up a state structure whereby more and more possible avenues could be thrown up for people to join politics and contribute towards the overall state building processes.

If not too many, sizeable number of population in the far north eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, showed rather a considerable interest in political activity and it is good to see them having a desire to be a part of the system. This is more so in rural areas than the urban centre. Urban populace seems little disillusioned from political activities. Since, the state is heading towards a time of transformation in its political role from prevailing traditional system of
governance, their responses to the democratic system of managing affair is quite notable. Modern methods of election, electoral competition, standing for public offices, importance accorded to each individual by leaders, people, in fact, are keen to be associated and to experience the virtues, democracy as a system offers. Some of the respondents have been found to be extremely articulate in their expressions of political ideas, developmental issues and myriads of changes going on in their society. Right to franchise gives a sense of equality of opportunity irrespective of social position, educational attainment, and economic condition. The idea of egalitarianism gets a fair chance to be tried in a more or less traditional society of Arunachal Pradesh, which can be often characterized by the existence of both moderated despotic and rudimentary democratic element of socio-political norms.

There is a possibility that the state soon experiences the emergence of newer divergent issues and sudden upsurge of issue-based participation. As a result of progress made in the field of formal educational expansion, diversification of economic activities and improvement in the standard of living, information explosion through multimedia the interface between people and government will become more frequent and more visible and sometimes opposition toward the government policies become imminent. Already Human Rights issues, feminist issues, environmental issues have drawn the attention of different sections of people. People's political participation, many a time do not singularly contingent upon the avenues and opportunities being thrown up by the state structure. There is also a greater possibility of emerging issue-based
participation in the state politics. The following incident amply substantiates this argument.

The state of Arunachal Pradesh is rich in hydro-power potential. The state govt. has shown interest to harness it through various hydro-power projects in collaboration with private developers. Since, development of hydro-power results in loss of natural habitats, rich diversity of plants and will distance the local tribal people from their natural settings. The fear of displacement of people as a result of the proposed construction of 2700 mw Lower Siang Hydro Electric Project by J.P. Associates in Pongging village\textsuperscript{47} led to protest by the villagers that led to scuffle between security agencies and protesters. These occasional rising of issues of such greater magnitude will bring people closer to the zone of political participation. Again, there are some tribes who live in the remote and backward part of the state, often feel alienated and marginalized due to their perceived imbalance development in the area as can be seen in the case of Aka and Miji tribe in the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. Their growing socio-political consciousness has made them to enter in the political arena. They formed a committee known as the Joint Action Committee to initiate a movement for the Creation of Bichom District (JACCOB). It organized a ‘referendum’ rally where ex.MLAs, officers, traders, political leaders, social workers of the community participated. The committee submitted

\textsuperscript{47} The Arunachal Times, Itanagar, Vol. 21, No. 344 27\textsuperscript{th} May, 2010.
a representation to chief minister in 1997 for the creation of a separate district.\textsuperscript{48} The trend of such development for upgraded geographical entity in the form of district and for autonomous council cannot be ruled out in the future from many other social groups. Therefore, there will be discrete issues that are likely to surface in the ongoing rebuilding process of the state from traditional to a modern, democratic and participatory state.