CHAPTER-II

PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS AND
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
MEANING OF DECENTRALIZATION:

Decentralized system of governance, which have recently emerged in different parts of the world, vary considerably. They are structured, funded and held accountable in different modes and degree of popular participation. The process of decentralization seeks to create greater energy, a higher sense of responsibility and better morale among the field agents (Mukhyopadhaya 1980, p-5) Decentralization denotes “the transference of authority, legislative, judicial or administrative, from a higher level of government to a lower level. (S.N.Jha and P.C. Mathur, 1999, P-55) Although, the basic idea of decentralization is sharing the decision-making authority with lower levels in the organization, power can be shared within the system. Power can also be shared with outside organization or agencies.

Decentralization means assigning both the power and responsibility to the lower levels from centre in decision making, financial and administrative aspects with accountability. There are different forms of decentralization and it can be distinguished mainly by the extent to which the power to plan, decide and manage is transferred from central government
or organizations, in carrying out their tasks. Basically, there are four major forms of decentralization: 1) Decentralization, 2) Delegation, 3) Devolution and 4) Privatization (Chemma and Rondinelli, 1983, p-18).

**Delegation:**

Delegation is a form of decentralization in which power of decision making and management is given to local institutions or organizations. In fact, it is more related to administration. Delegation implies transfer or creation of ample responsibility to plan and implement the decisions concerning specific activities or a variety of activities within specific boundaries to an organization that is technically and administratively capable of carrying them out without direct supervision by an administrative unit.

**Devolution:**

Through devolution the central government relinquishes certain functions or creates new units of governments which are outside of its control. In most of the developing nations, devolution is seen as a form of decentralization. In which the local institutions or governments are given primary responsibility for some functions over which the central government often retains some supervisory powers may play an important financial role. Here this term is also used for devolution of funds. The devolution of funds means giving power to local institutions, which carry out the civic functions, which will mobilise the local financial resources as
well. It also implies the transfer of financial resources from a higher level to a lower level for performing different functions.

**Privatisation:**

In many countries decentralization takes place through the transfer of some planning and administrative responsibilities or public functions from central government to voluntary, private or non-governmental institutions like trade associations, boards, corporations, credit associations, women and youth clubs and village development organizations.

Decentralization thereby creates a corporate sense of responsibility making agencies with more or less independent existence and powers. It is training in self-government. It confines the administration of powers to those who will feel most directly the consequences of those powers (Laski, 1960, p-61).

The word decentralization relates to the devolution of powers resulting from creation of bodies separated by law from rational centre in which low representation is given to formal power to decide an range of public matters. Their political base is the locality and not with the commissioners and civil servants. Their area of authority is limited, but within that area, their right to make decision is entrenched by the law and can be altered only by a new legislation. They have resources, which are subjected to the stated limit, are spent and invested at their own discretion (Mawhood,1983, p-25). This is
the meaning of decentralization as used in this study. A decentralized local body, in this sense, would have a separate legal existence, its own budget and the authority to allocate substantial resources on a range of different functions. The representatives of local people, who constitute the body, who make decisions.

Decentralization, being the process of sharing power, especially for the decision-making authority has to be a continuum from centralization to ful autonomy. This continuum will constitute the phases of decentralization in a given country. The main decision is to be made in relation to the tasks of a system or in relation to the resources to accomplish the tasks. Hence, one can think of decentralization as a continuum of controls of the three variables. Organizational tasks, financial and human resources. Tasks of control or autonomy may relate to the policy-making, strategy formulation, planning, priority setting and implementation of programme. In financial resources, the concern of autonomy can relate to generation and procurement of resources, controlling and owning them and their utilization. (Parrek, 1989, p-2).

The Concept of Panchayat Raj:

The concept of panchayat raj has been considered differently by different academicians and policy makers such as units of local government, as an agency of state government for carrying out governmental functions and implementation of developmental programmes at local level and also as a means to realize participatory democracy at rural level (Nikunjalata Dutta, 1989 p-3).
Iqbal Narain (1969, p-119) discusses the concept both from normative and empirical viewpoints. Finally develops as a system of Local Government, a mechanism for rural development and also as an agency of a State Government for specific activities. Its objectives being considered as modernization, democratization and politicization tied to each other in a system of interconnections and interaction. It is with the introduction of panchayati raj that the process of politicization has begun on a massive scale for the first time in rural society in India. He further called it an institutional mechanism for decentralization—essentially means a category concept (R. C Prasad 1968, p-8) discusses village panchayats, the base unit of panchayat raj from three approaches, (i) As an institution of Local Self Government, (ii) As an agency of higher unit of government expected to carry out certain tasks on their behalf. And (iii) As an idea to realize democracy at village level. However, the author has accepted the first two approaches in his democracy and development.

According to S.R. Maheshwari (1979, P-112) panchayat raj in India has three broad images: (i) As an instrument for realization of community development, (ii) As an organ of state government to execute community development programmes and other schemes and (iii) As an idea to realize democracy at village level (Ziauddin Khan 1969, p-58) considers panchayat raj essentially as local self-government institutions the idea of which is to bring the decision making authorities nearer to the people. It is also said that
the term panchayat raj literally implies government of the people's representatives and thus develops the feeling of self-government among the rural masses. Sugatha Dasgupta (1969, p-37 and 38) discusses the concept as an (i) administrative tool (as viewed by the bureaucrats), (ii) as an agency of local self-government (as viewed by some others) and (iii) as Gram swaraj (as viewed by Jayaprakash Narayan as well as by All India Panchayati Parishads). Dasgupta also discusses the public image of panchayat raj. According to this author, the public viewed, it as an effort to put back the clock of progress. With regard to its operational image, rural elite and weaker sections of the community are the three parties concerned with it. To the first, panchayat raj is an instrument for implementation of community development programme and to the second, it provides opportunity for increasing participation with village government and also for attaining position of political stability and to the last, it has yet to develop a concept of its own. Its operational image from three parties concerned is far from being satisfactory (S.N. Dubey 1972, p-254 and 269) considers three basic rational for the creation of panchayat raj (i) to make community development programme relevant to the needs and problems of the people, (ii) to transfer decision making authority to the villages regarding development work and (iii) to realize the values of participatory democracy. So, development and democracy are considered as two purpose of panchayat raj development in
modernizing rural mind to respond to modern technology and democracy in
associating people with process of decision making (M.R. Khan, 1967, p-1-13) discusses the concept from viewpoints of (i) villagers (ii) elected
representatives and (iii) officials. To the first, it is an institution, which
provides them certain amenities like construction of roads, educational
facilities, drinking water etc. The second describe it as an institution for
carrying out village welfare and developmental functions. While to the third,
it is an institution of democratic decentralization an autonomous body capable
of deciding its own affairs and an institution for implementing local
developmental programmes.

V.M. Sirsikar (1974, p-211) discusses the panchayati raj has also
provided opportunities for the emergence of local leadership and the success
of the panchayats its dependents on the quality of this leadership. It is further
assumed that panchayat raj leaders provide opportunities to the ruling party
in strengthening its position in rural area and thus become 'vote banks' during
the time of election.

Panchayat raj is unquestionably Indian in origin. Panchayati raj bodies
which are genuine and effective democratic decentralized institutions,
provide ample opportuntunities for large number of rural people to take genuine
and effective participation in development and democratic decision making
process and to infuse in minds of the rural people a spirit of self help, self
dependence and self reliance and to obtain the experience in the art of local self government. The concept of panchayat raj, since its inception, faced various interpretations both from its protagonists and antagonists. On the one hand, the emphasis was on maximum local autonomy and minimization and control by higher authorities especially the state government on the some considered it to be ruination for country.

In this light, The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 has provided a new dimension to the concept of panchayati raj. In other words, the concept of participation of the people should be considered as an ideological commitment and, therefore, what is needed is legislative and structural measures to give legitimacy to people's participation (Vijaykumar A 1984, p-32 and 34).

**MEANING OF PANCHAYAT RAJ SYSTEM :**

The panchayat raj system is really an effective instrument of participation. In order to make the panchayats and edifice of democracy, they should be given more powers, more autonomy and financial resources. It also means to overcome the prevalent socio-economic deficiencies in rural society.

The panchayat raj institutions are statutorily elected bodies at the Village, Block and District levels with powers of local government There are village panchayats at the Village level, panchayati samithis at the
block/taluka level and the Zilla parishads at the district level. The primary objective of panchayati raj is to strengthen the base of democracy at grass roots and to enable the people of each village to achieve intensive and continuous development in the interests of the entire population, irrespective of the caste, class, creed and religion. The panchayat raj is different from all other government as a whole, is not an administrative arm of the government but a part of the whole government. It's great potentialities lie in the fact that, under the guidance and supervision of the state government, the final responsibility for carrying out rural development will fall more and more on people themselves through their elected local representatives. The greatest stress and attention must, therefore, be put on the village panchayats and Gram sabhas, periodic elections, evolution and proper local planning (Desai Vasant, 1990, P-3).

Panchayat Raj or local self-government is an exercise in democratic decentralization of administrative authority. The system is based on the following principles.

(i) There should be a three-tier structure of local self governing bodies from village to district level, with an organic link from the lower to the higher ones.

(ii) There should be a genuine transfer of power and responsibility to these bodies.
(iii) Adequate financial resource should be transferred to those bodies to enable them to discharge their responsibility.

(iv) All development programmes should be channelled through these bodies.

(v) The system evolved should be such as to facilitate further decentralization of power and responsibility in the future (Dahama 1991, P-41).

The panchayat raj like democracy at the national and state levels, is both an end and a means. As an end, it is inevitable extension of democracy, as a means it would continue to be responsible for discharging obligations entrusted to it by the people. As an edifice of democracy, it forms the base of the democratic pyramid in the country. Altogether, both as an end and a means, panchayati raj contributes to the philosophy as well as practice of a rich rewarding life in rural India. Jawaharala Nehru emphasized that "Panchayats should be given greater power. For we want the villager to have a measure of real swaraj in his own village. He should have power and does not have to refer every thing to big officials. We do not want the officials to interfere too much in the life of the village. We want to build swaraj right from the village up" (Desai Vasant, 1990, p-4).

The future of country really depends upon effective panchayat raj and people's participation or co-operation. It is only the effective instrument,
which can put speed and substance in our planning process and ensure the most effective use of the country’s resources productivity. In that lies the future both of democracy and real development of the economy as well as of the people in our country. In the years to come, panchayat raj will be a catalytic agent of integrated rural development.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA:

Pre Independence Period:

The history of village level panchayat raj institutions in India goes back to hundreds of years. A feature of these institutions was that, they were largely self governing, although their social background was characterized by a rigid social structure.

Between ancient medieval and modern period, the growth of panchayats had ups and downs. It is only from the year 1870 that India saw the dawn of representative local institutions. The famous Mayo’s resolution of 1870 gave impetus to the development of local institutions by enlarging their powers and responsibilities. Following the footsteps of Mayo, Lord Ripon in 1882 provided the much needed democratic framework to these institutions. All boards (then existing) had to have a two thirds majority of the non-officials. Who had to be selected; the chairman of these bodies had to be from among the elected non-officials. Local self-government institutions received a boost
with the commission on decentralization in 1907 under the chairmanship of C.E.H. Hobhouse. The commission viewed local government should start from the village level rather than the district level.

The years that followed, after the First World War, saw the advent of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi on the national political scene. Gandhiji set the tone of nationalist point on the panchayat and declared that "the village panchayats would be now a living force in a special way, and India would almost be enjoying self-government suited to its requirements." (Shiviah, 1976, p. 32). The development of local self-government institutions got further momentum with the introduction of Moutague-Chelmsford Report, which made local self-government a 'transferred subject' under the scheme of Diarchy. The most significant development of this period was "the establishment of the village panchayat in a number of provinces, no longer a mere ad hoc judicial tribunal, but a representative institutions symbolizing the corporate character of the village and having a wide jurisdiction in respect of civic matters" (Shiviah, 1976, p. 33) However, due to organizational and financial constraints the scheme evolved by the reforms did not make the panchayats truly democratic and vibrant institutions of local self-government, yet, by 1925 eight provinces had passed Panchayat Acts and by 1926, six native states had passed panchayat laws.
D.P. Mishra made a critical assessment of the performance of local self-government institutions, the then Minister for local Self-government under the Government of India Act of 1935 in Central Provinces and Bearer. He was of the view that “the working of our local bodies in our province and perhaps in the whole country presents a tragic picture.... ‘Inefficiency’ and ‘local body’ have become synonymous terms. Having opposed the existing system of responsible government at the grassroot level, the minister proposed reforms, which marked a departure from the recommendations, made by earlier committees and commissions. To rejuvenate the system of local self-government, Mishra proposed a scheme in which decentralization of administration was the main approach. He suggested a three tier system of local government with district as the formation of popular ministries in 1937 and they undertook legislations to make the local bodies truly representatives of the people. Unfortunately, the initial zeal of the ministries to make these institutions popular was jeopardized with the outbreak of second world war in 1939. The period between 1939 was looked as a dark period in the history of local government.

In spite of adverse developments in the area of the local government, the idea of panchayat remained as a vital factor and as strategy of mobilization in the struggle for independence. Mahatma Gandhi viewed the panchayats as a ‘swadeshi’ institution and argued that ‘Village Organization’ meant the organization of the whole of India, as much as India is predominantly rural (Shiviah, 1976 P-35).
With such a conceptional place of panchayats in our political system, the main question which came up after India got independence was whether this institution should have a place in new constitution or not? Unfortunately, the republican constitution did not mention the panchayati of Gandhian notion. As Granville Austin (1972 p-34) writes, “the minutes of the committee meetings contain no mention of the Gandhian Constitution, or of a panchayati or indirect government. A Gandhian Constitution seems not to have been given a moment’s thought” The Constituent Assembly debates reflect the dual picture of the importance of panchayati in the constitution. Those who favoured had considered panchayats as schools of democracy and as instruments of village uplift, and those who opposed it displayed contempt for our instruments of village democracy. Ultimately, the overall feeling of members was for the inclusion of village panchayats in Article 40 under the directive principles of constitution. The directive principles were only persuasive, despite the working and did not compel the state to take steps to promote panchayats. The Article reads “The state shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of local self-government”. Commencing on the importance of panchayats in the constitution. Henry Maddick (1962, p-204) observes that the “panchayat development under the constitution has had three main aims, to foster the involvement of individuals throughout the nation in the process of democratic government to gain the
village participation in national development from village level upwards; and to lesser the burden of state administration through decentralization”

Post Independence Period:

The post independence phase of panchayat raj is marked with significant developments. It is an attempt to usher in socio-economic and cultural transformation in the countryside. In 1952, the Government of India had launched a comprehensive programme known as community development programme, encompassing almost all activities of rural development. However, the programme could not make much headway in fulfilling the dreams of the rural masses. In order to examine the causes for its failure, the Government of India had constituted a high power study team headed by Balwantrai Mehta, a member of parliament. The team observed that the failure of the community development programme was due to the conspicuous absence of people's participation. In order to secure participation, the team suggested that a set of institutional arrangement would have to be created to make participation meaningful and effective. This resulted in creation of a ‘three-tier’ system of panchyat raj institution to organize and manage the rural development activities. Thus, began a new experiment in the sphere of rural development through the participation of people. The recommendation favouring democratic decentralization accelerated the pace of constituting panchyat raj institution in the states. By
1959, all the state had passed panchayat Acts and by mid 1960s, panchayats had reached all the parts of the country. The framework of the new institutional arrangement comprised ‘Village Panchayats’ at the base ‘Panchayati Samithis’ at the middle and ‘Zilla Parishads’ at the apex levels.

Commentators have visualized the growth of panchyat raj institutions during the post independence period in three phases: first phase 1959 to 1966; second phase 1967-1976; and third phase 1977-1986 (Shiviah, 1986) A similar periodisation was made by Ashok Mehta Committee, namely, the phase of ascendancy (1959-64); the phase of stagnation (1965-69); and the phase of decline (1969-77). Commencing on the performance of panchyat raj institution during these phases, the committee records, “a number of developments in the past have conspire to undermine the panchayat raj structure and made them effective. In fact, except in Maharashtra and Gujarat, the panchayat raj institution have been rarely an opportunity to take up planning or implementation work on a sizable scale. Schemes like small farmers development agency or drought prone areas programme or intensive tribal development project were not brought within the purview of the elected zilla parishads either in Gujarat or in Maharashtra”

The appointment of the Ashok Mehta committee in 1977 did bring new thinking in the concept and practice of panchayat raj. The committee envisaged a role for the panchayat raj institution. Such that they would under
take democratic development management under conditions of rapid changes, continuous growth and sustained innovations in all spheres of rural life (Government of India, 1978, p-177). With this objective in the background, the committee recommended a panchayat raj institutional structure consisting of a zilla parishad, taluk samithi and mandal panchayat. This concept is to expertise and to secure administrative support. The district was suggested as the first point for decentralization below the state level. Based on its recommendations, some states have attempted to incorporate them with a view to strengthening their existing panchayat raj structure. Further, it is significant to note that the committee also made the first official recommendation for including panchayat raj in the constitution and favoured for the participation of political parties in panchayat elections with their symbols.

In order to consider ways to reinvigorate and revitalize the panchayats, the Government of India had appointed G.V.K. Rao Committee (1985). The G.V.K. Rao committee recommended to make ‘district’ as the basic unit of planning and favoured holding of regular elections to the panchayat institutions. The L.M. Singhvi committee recommended for devolving more financial resources to panchayats to make them more viable. The committee viewed panchayat as the base for democratic and republican operations of the nation.
Recent Efforts:

The amendment phase began with the 64th Amendment Bill (1989), which was introduced in parliament for constituting panchayats in every state at the village, intermediates and district levels. It proposed that the Legislature of a State could by law, endow the panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government. This bill was the brainchild of the late prime minister Rajiv Gandhi, who strongly believed in strengthening panchayats by giving them constitutional status. Unfortunately, though the Bill got a two thirds majority in the Lok Sabha, it was struck down in the Rajya sabha in October 15, 1989 by just two votes. The next government headed by V.P.Singh also made an abortive effort to provide constitutional status through the introduction of 74th Amendment.

Notwithstanding the above developments, the Government declared its commitment to the philosophy of ‘power to the people’ and for the purpose to provide much needed constitutional status to panchayats. The then congress-I Government headed by P.V. Narasimha Rao initiated the 73rd amendment to the constitution in 1991. A comprehensive amendment was introduced in the form of constitutional (Amendment) Bill in September 1991, which was subsequently referred to a joint select committee of parliament in December 22, 1992 and the Rajya Sabha on the December 23, 1992. The bill got the president’s assent on April 20, 1993 and the constitutional 73rd Amendment Act came into effect on April 24, 1993.
The Amendment provides farreaching steps to strengthen panchayats. Article 243 (G) thus recognizes panchayats as 'institutions of self-government' with prime responsibilities of promoting economic development and ensuring social justice. With this feature, panchayats have come to stay as integral part of our constitutional polity. The Amendment envisages the establishment of uniform three tier system of strong, viable and responsive panchayats at village, intermediate and district levels. The Amendment has also laid down necessary guidelines for the structure of panchayats, composition, powers, functions, devolution of finances, regular holding of elections, reservation of seats for the weaker groups including women and authority position in favour of weaker sections; an attempt at expanding the social base of the panchayats. With such a blueprint, the Amendment has been hailed as a revolutionary step towards establishing grass root democracy; specifically it has given constitutional guarantee for people's participation and self-governance. In order to translate the above into reality, the state governments have been given necessary freedom to feed 'flesh and blood' to the framework provided by the amendment.

Post Amendment Phase:

The purpose of this section is to see what extent the blueprint provided by the amendment has become a reality. To begin with, there was a positive response from the states. Since almost all the states had passed legislation in
conformity with the provisions of the amendment to establish panchayats at village, taluk, block and at district levels. For the first time in the history of panchayat raj system, a high degree of uniformity has been conferred on panchayats mainly in terms of structure, composition, powers and functions. However, there is some degree of leeway with regard to the devolution of financial resources, since the pattern of devolution, based on the recommendation of the respective state finance commissions, vary across the states. Further, smaller states having less than 20 lakh population may opt for two-tier system as against three-tier system panchayat raj.

**Constitutional Perspective of Panchayat Raj In India**

Panchayat Raj Institutions in India refer to statutory multi-tier administrative structure entrusted with the developmental duties and responsibilities by the state legislatures. This form of local self-government has its origin in Lord Rippon's famous Resolution of 1882 in which he recommended "the smallest administrative unit, the sub division or taluka or Tehsil-shall ordinarily be placed under a local board" Article-40 of the constitution directs states to form panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as responsible units of self-government.

The National development council constituted a committee on plan projects under the chairmanship of Balwantrai Mehta and its report was
submitted in 1957. The main suggestion was instituting democratic decentralization in rural areas with the help of a three-tier system, the village panchayat, panchayat samithi at block-level and zilla parishad at district level. The same three level has been retained even now but with a new vigour. Interestingly enough, another committee, known as Ashok Mehta Committee, looked into the functioning of democratic decentralization during the period 1959-1964. The committee found that “these institutions have suffered a serious setback in the absence of regular elections and due to perfunctory audit” Therefore, it suggested that there should be reconstructed, re-enforced and revitalized as an integral part of our democratic process. They should be accorded appropriate constitutional status and recognition.

Recommendations along with the same lines were made by the G.V.K.Rao committee in 1985 and L.M. Singhavi committee in 1987, as the chief minister conference on panchayats was held in May 1989. The committee under the chairmanship of Dr. L.M.Singhvi formed in 1987 reviewed the functioning of PRIs in order to suggest measures for their revitalization. The Committee recommend recoganization of villages to make village panchayat more viable. It suggested that, they should have more financial resources and that there should be judicial tribunals in each state to adjudicate controversies about election to these local bodies, their dissolution etc, including other matters relating to their functioning. The committee wanted to vest panchayat raj with a constitutional status, saying that a separate chapter
should be added in constitution of India to make the identity and integrity of panchayat raj institution reasonable and substantially inviolate.

In response to the above suggestions, the union government introduced in parliament on September 16, 1991 a bill to amend the constitution. The parliament approved the 73rd amendment to the constitution along with the Nagarapalika (74th Amendment) bill. Therefore, this Amendment Act is the culmination of various proposals made by earlier committees on panchayat raj bodies, and thus giving PRIs a viable shape (Vijakumar A 1984, p-38)

PANCHAYAT RAJ SYSTEM IN KARNATAKA:

The panchayat raj system introduced in Karnataka State (earlier known as Mysore state) with the passing of Mysore Village Panchayati and Local Boards Act. 1959 (Act N0-10 of 1959). (B.S. Bhargava 1979 p-37) It was formally inaugurated after the completion of first panchayat raj elections, by Dr. Rajendra prasad the then president of India, on 21st December 1960.

Serious attempts were made in Karnataka in 1960s to introduce radical changes in local self-government. The Karnataka village panchayat and Local Boards Act, 1959 introduced earliest system of panchayat raj, with directly elected Taluk development Boards/village panchayats, coterminous with taluks group of villages. It related to the community development block, retained the direct administration structure. Infact the deputy commissioner, as its head was responsible for both development and regulatory functions.
A district development council was provided with a consultative, advisory and coordinating role. No scheme or staff was transferred to these elected bodies. However, these bodies were utilized by the state administration to implement various local oriented planschemes and the block development officer (BDO) was the chief executive officer of the taluka development board. In the process of planned development, they were almost entirely implementing bodies and non plan-formulating bodies.

This experiment in democratic decentralization proved abortive. The karnataka zilla parishads, taluka panchayat samitis and mandal panchayats Act 1983, which received presidential assent on July 10, 1985 was gazetted on August 2, 1985 replacing the earlier Act.

The panchayati raj act of Karnataka, 1985 is based on recommendations of Ashoka mehta committee Report, 1977. The Chief Minister, Shri Ramkrishna Hegade observed, “we have enacted this law with a view to translating Gandhiji’s concept of Grama Swaraj into reality. It also symbolizes our conviction that a large and diverse country like India cannot survive as a democracy unless it adopts a four-tier federal system with functioning units of government at mandal, district, state and national level, these units will function as governments at respective levels in real sense”

Karnataka panchayat raj system has been recognized as the most far-reaching effort of democratic decentralization in country. The objective is to
meaningfully carve out a third tier of government that is the district government. The state government has consciously devised a system which gives status and stature to the panchayat raj bodies, entrusts them with all those welfare, development and civic functions and responsibilities whose ambit lies within their respective jurisdiction, equips them with resources by way of budgetary support, staff and powers to perform these entrusted tasks satisfactorily with statutory autonomy of decision making. This will give to its people the factum to fully participate and to secure their deep involvement in ongoing challenges of socio-economic development with distributive justice (Vasant Desai, 1990, p-234 and 235).

**Political Participation:**

Nature and functioning of political system is analysed in terms of nature and extent of political participation. Political participation has assumed great importance in modern period, which is marked by democratisation and is heavily loaded with emphasis on human rights.

Among all citizens, the democratic citizens have ample opportunities to participate in political process in several ways, with different degree of involvement and at various levels of political systems. There is variation in citizen’s participation in political process, because of difference in standard of living, level of education, social environment and political culture.
Citizens contribute something to the people through participation in political process and such participation increases their creative energy, political participation makes a government responsible to people their demands and aspirations.

Greater participation in political process leads to greater self-government and provides opportunity for development of leadership at various levels. Under such conditions the government is by the people, for the people and of the people.

Meaning:

Many writers have defined political participation in different ways depending upon their perception of democracy.

According to "A dictionary of modern politics and political sociology, participation means manifest of self involvement in activities such as political groups, political parties, the electorate and government itself". This definition refers to citizen's voluntary participation in organised democratic institutions and taken note of institutional diversion of democracy. (Singh, B.P., 1987, P-214).

Herbert Mc Closky define political participation as "those voluntary activities by which member of society share in selection of rules and directly or indirectly, in formulation of public policy".
Norman H. Nie and Sydney Verb thus defines "political participation as we refer to those legal activities by private citizens which are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take". This definition covers selection and actions of public personnel and does not take note of non-conventional dimensions of political participation.

Myron Weiner describes political participation as "Some people define participation only those acts of citizens that are defined by law as legitimate-voting, demonstrating, petitioning, lobbying etc., excluding illegitimate actions. But in contrast, some radicals see illegal acts such as civil disobedience and other forms of mass 'confrontation' as the only genuine acts of participation in a democracy". Further, he defines political participation in a comprehensive manner: I shall use the concept of political participation to refer any voluntary action, successful or unsuccessful, organised or unorganised, episodic or continuous, employing legitimate or illegitimate methods, intended to influence the choice of public policies, the administration of public affairs or the choice of political leaders of government, local or national level.

**Factors Influencing Political Participation:**

There are certain individual and environmental factors which influence political participation. Individual factors which influence political
participation are general interest, economic interest, psychological needs and sense of competence of citizens.

i. Some citizens have interest and aptitude for public affairs and they participate in political process. There are two factors which motivate them to get into politics.

ii. Some citizens actively participate in politics to advance their material interest. Though there are other direct means to promote economic interest, some citizens report to political means for this purpose. Politics has also an economic component.

iii. Some citizens involve themselves in politics for seeking recognition and respect from others. According to them, participation of self-worth and success. Some other citizens have a natural drive for public service and participate in various political activities.

There are various psychological variables, which derive/ craze for domination derives for discharging social responsibilities. Compensation for certain deficiencies or deprivation etc. However, political participation survives by virtue of its capacity to provide rewards to those who engage in it. This is the one field in which there is no dearth of participation at any time.

i. Confidence in political competence drives some men to participate in active politics. Degree of political competence is determined by quality and level of education, sound financial position, physical and endurance.
Following Are The Environmental Factors Which Influence Political Participation:

i. Political environment which includes party system, nature of comparison, issues, ideologies, etc., influence political participation. Capacities of political parties to notice the people involvement in politics, intensity and effectiveness of campaigning increase the voting percentage. Burning issues and conflicting political ideologies divides people into groups. Such situation leads to wider participation in politics by the people.

ii. Expansion of governmental activities brings the hitherto untouched groups into contact with the government. When the government undertakes welfare measures for various sections of people in a democratic societies, the political beneficiaries press the government to accelerate the distributive measures, various beneficiaries organise themselves into various unions and associations, politicise their members and resort to pressure tactics like satyagraha to secure maximum benefits for their members.

iii. As citizens in democracy living in an open society, their political participation is influenced by certain environmental forces like religion, caste, political parties, ideologies and mass media, etc.

Religious philosophy, scriptures, beliefs etc influence political participation. A liberal religion encourages political participation of various
sections of society, including women and weaker sections while a conservative religion does not encourage women to participate in politics.

Religion has been used for political mobilisation of masses. Certain parties/groups in India have mobilised the people for political participation in the form of voting, for example: protest in the name of Ram Zanmabhoomi, Babrimasjid in India. Certain political parties in India are founded on the basis of religion and have mobilised their supporters for political participation.

Caste associations have mobilised their men for various political and economic gains such politicisation has led to greater political participation by various caste groups.

Various political parties which seek support of people try to explain their ideologies, programmes and achievements and at the same time highlight the failures and short comings of other parties. Thus they politicise citizens and involve them in various political activities. They swing the opinion of people in favour of or against a particular issue.

Mass media like press, radio and television play an important role in politicising the people. They create political awareness among the people highlighting public issues. In a developing country like India where percentage of literacy is very low, radio is the main source of political information to the illiterate masses.
Opportunities and Resources For Political Participation:

Citizens participation in politics is secondary, effective and widespread participation is governed by resources and opportunities in addition to individual and environmental factors.

(i) Higher income leads to greater participation in a number of political activities, people below poverty line are forced to participate even in panchayat raj institutions. For ex: many political activities like voting, but people with higher income participate in voting without much persuasion.

(ii) Widespread and higher education increases the level of participation. For example, uneducated people may participate in certain panchayat raj institutions primary political activities like voting, procession, demonstration etc., but they cannot participate in higher political activities like campaigning, organising public rallies, contesting elections, holding office, etc. Their latter activities require education. The universal and higher education enable a large number of people to participate in a large number of higher political activities. Such participation in political process leads to democracy by the people and nearer to direct democracy.

(i) More number of people in urban areas participate actively in a number of political activities than people in rural areas. This is because the urban people have better standard of living, better education and have more access to political centers and media.
(ii) More number of people in organised sectors participate in a number of political activities than the people in unorganised sector.

(iii) People who are members of voluntary organisations are likely to participate in a number of political activities, because they are already politicised, such socialisation and politicisation motivates the people to participate in a number of political activities.

(iv) People who live in one place for a long period are likely to participate in a number of political activities because they identify themselves with local politics. People who move from one place to another due to transfer or business or some other reasons do not actively involve in political process.

Better standard of living, universal literacy, urbanisation, growth of organised sectors, existence of large number of voluntary organisations etc., constitute resources and opportunities for people to participate in a large number of political activities becomes effective and meaningful.

Modes of Political Participation:

Following are the some of the modes and means of democratic participation in politics:

i. **Voting:**

Among various modes of participation in politics, voting requires relatively a little initiative and is an easy act requiring little motivation.
Voting is influenced by sociological and non sociological factors. It is influenced by ethnicity, religion, caste, religion, sex, education, income, identification. In India, caste and religion may be important factors influencing the voting behaviour.

Voting in democracy is extended at various levels. Citizens vote at various levels like gram panchayats, taluk panchayats, zilla parishads, municipalities, municipal corporations and state assemblies etc. Voting is the most important and widespread activity of political participation in democracy. It influences the parties and the activities of leaders to shape their policies and programmes. It determines which party and which party leader shall hold elective office.

ii. **Campaigning:**

Campaigning requires initiative and activeness on the part of participants. The campaigners are the activists of the party and exercise greater influence in party politics than ordinary voters. The outcome of elections to some extent depends on the nature of the campaigners and campaigning. Campaigners adopt the various methods to canvass for their parties and candidates and their means are mobilising people to attend the election meetings, door to door canvassing, organising processions personal persuasion of hesitant voters and pursing voters to go to polling booths to vote for their candidates, etc.
iii. **Contesting Elections And Holding Effective Offices:**

Only few citizens can contest elections to various democratic bodies. Generally citizens who have political resources and opportunities can contest the elections. Only few among them are successful in the elections and hold elective offices. They become political elites and participate in the decision making process and immensely influence the political process in their chosen areas.

iv. **Citizen - Initiated Contacts:**

There are non-electoral political activities. In which citizens participate. Some citizens take initiative in meeting the elected representatives, officials and party leaders for ventilating the grievances of the people of their areas. Their grievances may relate to construction of dams, public undertakings, new railway lines, plying more number of buses and pension to old people etc...

v. **Group Participation:**

Some citizens participation in politics through groups and associations which may be formal or informal organisation. They are motivated by different factors in the formation of groups and associations, like caste associations, professional associations, economic and cultural groups for ventilating the grievances and the promoting the interest of their members. For solving the problems, they do not participate individually but come
together to influence policies, programmes and actions of the government. Thus adopt various means to fulfill their demands. They may submit memoranda and representatives to the public authorities.

vi. **Participation In Protest Activities:**

Some citizens participate in politics through protest activities like morchas, demonstration and satyagraha which are legal and peaceful. Such activities will influence the policies and programmes of government.

Among all activities, voting is widespread activity and generally every citizen participate in voting process. Other political activities like campaigning, contesting and holding public offices are carried on by a small number of citizens. Different citizens engage in different political activities according to their political ability and skill and attitude towards politics.

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REFERENCES


