

**CHAPTER - 1**

**PLANNING PROCESS AND PEOPLE'S  
PARTICIPATION**

**Introduction** : Planning is a charter of action for the purpose of achieving certain definite targets and objectives within a specific period of time. The concept of planning became very popular as an important technique of modern management in the early part of 20th century. The former USSR was the first country in the world to adopt centralized planning as an instrument of economic development in the early part of 20<sup>th</sup> century. No doubt it was a novel experiment and the first of its kind ever to be undertaken anywhere, but the western attitude was not favourable or sympathetic to this new idea. So the world waited with bated breath to know about its implementation in actual practice. Initially there was an attempt to ridicule the novel Russian experiment of planned economic development, however, this attitude did not persist for long. When the countries like UK, the traditional home of capitalism, undertook the economic planning with certain modification under the leadership of Labour Party in 1945, the capitalism had to face a set-back and its inherent contradictions came upto the surface. Economic planning became panacea for the economic ills and the writings of Keynes again strengthened the belief in the efficacy of economic planning in capitalist countries.

First ten years of intensive economic planning made the Soviet Union, made it economically and militarily so powerful that it was able to face and repulse one of the biggest invasions in world history.

Later on during thirties, economic planning was taken up in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, of course, the objective was different from that of the Soviet Union; it was primarily to build up the war potential rather than to bring about improvement in people's living standards.

The end of the Second World War saw the rapid spread of socialism in Eastern European countries and later on in China. The war-devastated countries of Europe were compelled to resort to economic planning to rehabilitate themselves. And the attainment of political freedom by some of the colonial countries in South East Asia gave further stimulus to the idea of national economic planning as a means of securing rapid economic growth within a short time. In order to understand the basic objectives and strategies of economic planning, it is, perhaps, essential to know the meaning and definition of the planning itself.

### **MEANING AND DEFINITION OF PLANNING**

The concept of economic planning cannot be stated as it has assumed different forms in different countries. It is a conscious and carefully carried out process for the best use of existing resources to meet well defined objectives. In simple words, planning means achievements of certain economic targets in different sectors of the economy within a specified period with a view to make the best possible use of the limited available resources.

It is not possible to give a precise definition of economic planning, which will be universally accepted. Different writers have attempted to give different connotations and contents to the term 'economic planning'. For a common man's understanding, planning is a means to achieve an end, and there is no agreement on the ends of planning. (Seth, 1977:22).

Planning is an orderly arrangement of future. Instead of leaving the future to be decided by the vicissitudes of circumstances, the method of planning is used as a deliberate attempt to understand the forces that shape the future and to mould them in such a manner as to facilitate emergence of the arrangements for the future which would be more consistent with our own goals and desires. Planning stands for the exercise of will as against helpless surrender to our own environment. Hence, planning stands for the triumph of reason over superstition, of understanding over ignorance, of organised initiative over fatalistic helplessness. (Dubhasi, 1983:1)

An economic plan may be defined as a "totality of arrangements decided upon in order to carry out a project concerned with economic activity" (Bettelheim, 1959:1). Thus, there can be plans of production, allotment or distribution, investment plans, partial plans, but, in the full sense of the word, an economic plan is a plan concerned with the

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whole of economic life, or the entire activity of an economic unit. To an ever greater extent these subordinate plans are programmes (*Ibid*: 1).

According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, planning is as old as mankind and they were born together. The making of the first stone tools already involved a measure of 'planning' of an economic activity'. Planning is a broad human attribute and it has been defined as to "scheme, arrange beforehand".

W. Arthur Lewis has found the word 'planning' being interpreted in six different senses, these are:



1. It refers only to the geographical zoning of factors, residential building, cinemas etc, also called town and country planning.
2. Planning means only deciding what money the government will spend in future during a given time.
3. A planned economy is one in which each production unit (or firm) uses only the resources of men, material and equipment allocated to it by quota and disposes of its product exclusively to persons or firms which have been authorized to it by the central authority.
4. Planning means setting of some production targets by the government, whether for private or public enterprise. This type of practice is done only if there are one or two industries or services to which she attaches special significance.
5. Fixing the targets for the economy as a whole, purporting to allocate the country's labour, foreign exchange, raw material and other resources among the various sections of the economy.
6. Sometimes it is also used to describe the means which some government tries to enforce upon private enterprise the targets which have been already determined. (Lekhi, 1993:3).

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Thus, planning is nothing but the effort of the government of a country to achieve certain national objectives, with the help of a set of economic policies, within a specified time-frame. It is a systematic programme to encompass a gamut of economic activities. The aim of a planning is to enlarge production, re-allocate its resources or distribute within a specified period of time.

### **NEED AND USEFULNESS OF PLANNING**

For most of the developing countries, planning stands for a method of breaking the vicious circle of poverty and bringing about economic development and social change as speedily as possible. But for the western countries planning is to mend the evils of capitalism if not to end the system itself - the evils of monopoly, unemployment, inequality and social costs.

It is no surprise that all the underdeveloped countries have been practising economic planning in one form or other. The need of the economic planning in less developed countries (LDCs) rests on the grounds of - (i) to remove market imperfection, (ii) to ensure socially optimal use of resources, (iii) to bring about major structural changes, (iv) to provide for the requirements of future generation, (v) to cater to collective and big choices, (vi) to achieve important socio-economic goals, (vii) to break the low-level equilibrium trap, and (viii) to facilitate the flow of foreign aid (Taneja and Myer, 1992: 6-9).

It is also observed that economic planning is an integral part of the development of a socialist society where the means of production are social property used for the purpose of material and cultural needs of the whole society. Hence in the socialist state planning is an institutional need of the system, while in the capitalist countries with private ownership, several factors have necessitated for the use of planning. On the other hand, in the developing economies like India's, it helps to overcome the bottlenecks and obstructions that always exist in a development project. Thus we can safely argue that 'planning for economic development' implies external direction or regulation of economic activity by the planning authority which is in most cases, identified with the government of the state, (Gadgil, 1965: 88).

The need for the introduction of planning particularly in underdeveloped or developing economies can be many. The major reasons are :

- (i) In socialist countries, where private ownership has been replaced by state ownership, planning considered to be most effective institutional medium as it provides more economic independence;

- (ii) to remove the obstructive system of capitalism and feudalism and further replacing the same by planning use of resources, with public ownership;
- (iii) for making mass production, planning is a social character as it links the basic needs of the common man;
- (iv) planning is being advocated from the point of view of one's independence and symbol of sovereignty;
- (v) in economically backward countries, economic development is only possible by public rather than by any other alternative;
- (vi) modern technologies being a costly affair, requires a planned use for its fuller utilisation; and
- (vii) planning is also required for economic reasons, as modern marketing mechanism involves innumerable complexities as of market inadequacies, incomplete knowledge and other market deficiencies (Lekhi, 1993: 5-6).

The ultimate objects of planning are to improve the level of living and expand facilities for education, health care, cultural amenities, etc. for all the people of a country. A spectacular improvement in the level of living of the advanced countries has been possible in past, and a similar improvement would be possible in the less advanced areas in future, only through a continuing increase in the per capita production, a continuing substitution of human and animal power by machines, driven by steam or by electricity for



productive purposes of all kinds including industry, agriculture, transport and distribution (Bose and Mukherjee, 1985:291). It is in this context that planning is a good panacea and technique of rapid economic development. The aim of planning in the ultimate analysis is to bring about a conscious adoption of production to social needs, which assumes that the various needs have been assessed, their importance has been estimated, that the various means of production have been calculated and that on the basis, it has been decided what ought to be produced and in what quantity and how this production should be distributed(Lekhi, 1993:6).

However, the objectives of economic planning are subject to change for different countries at different times. It largely depends on the nature of social, economic and political environment prevalent in a country at a specific time. Hence, economic planning has multi objectives like rapid economic development, proper utilisation of natural resources, to provide additional employment, to reduce inequalities and disparities in distribution of income and wealth, economic and price stability, reduction in population, coordination etc.

In underdeveloped countries, the rationale for planning arises to improve and strengthen the market mechanism which works imperfectly because of the ignorance and unfamiliarity with it. To

remove market imperfections, to mobilise and utilise efficiently the available resources, to determine the amount and composition of investment, and to overcome structural rigidities, the market mechanism is required to be perfected in underdeveloped countries through planning (Jhingan, 1994: 490).

The need for planning in underdeveloped countries is also to remove widespread unemployment and disguised unemployment in such economies. For rapid economic development, underdeveloped countries require the development of the agricultural and the industrial sectors, the establishment of social and economic overheads, the expansion of the domestic and foreign trade sectors in a harmonious way. All these require simultaneous investment in different sectors which may be only possible under development planning.

The planning for development is indispensable for removing the poverty of all nation. For raising national and per capita income, for reducing inequalities in income and wealth, for increasing employment opportunities, for all-round rapid development and for maintaining their newly won national independence, planning is the only path open to underdeveloped countries. (*Ibid*: 490-91)

Of course the economic planning has been hailed as panacea for all economic evils, yet there are some shortcomings in it. Some of

the shortcomings are: loss of economic freedom, not easy to formulate, a costly affair, more unstable etc. The success of planning for attaining the desired objective greatly depends upon the type of planning chosen by the country itself. So, let us discuss the types of planning.

### **TYPES OF PLANNING**

Economic planning has been classified in a variety of ways and from different angles based on differences in institutions affected, media of planning, geographical area, extent of activities covered, mode of executing plans, time periods etc. However, no classification can be rigid or water-tight because one often overlaps the other. The classifications of the major types of planning in brief are as follows:

Planning can be divided into physical and financial in terms of its allocation of resources. In case of physical planning resource is allocated in terms of man, material and machinery, whereas in financial planning it is allocated in terms of money. Structural planning implies the objective to change the structure of the society along with economic development and improvement, on the other hand, in functional planning, no major change in the socio-economic set-up are involved.

Planning is also divided into socialistic and capitalistic on the basis of the power sharing. Planning under socialism is based on a central plan, having a central planning authority to fix the plan objective, priorities and targets. In case of capitalistic planning, there is no state interference and a central authority. Planning by inducement is closely related to the planning in capitalism where the planning authority achieves the objectives by persuasion and not through compulsion. On the other hand, the planning by direction is possible in a full-fledged socialist economy where there is only one controlling authority which plans, directs and orders the execution of the plan in accordance with the predetermined priorities and targets.

In the democratic planning, people participate in both formulation and implementation of plans. The people themselves or through the parliament or legislature, through mutual discussions carried on under free atmosphere decide the need for planning, objectives, techniques and targets of production etc. On the other hand, in totalitarian planning the almighty state or the planning authority is the supreme body, which decides about targets, schemes, allocations, methods and procedures of implementations of the plan. The common people at large have no choice, no freedom in deviating in any manner from the prescribed plan ( Dubhasi, 1983:22).

Comprehensive planning is the planning of the totality of the economy, whereas, the partial planning covers a particular sector. The planning of public sector in underdeveloped countries is partial planning. The perspective planning is also known as long-term planning, taking a long time-frame. The short-term plan covers the short period of one year, otherwise known as annual plan. If the planning pertains to a region with homogenous features such as national conditions or the population composition, it is regional planning. When planning is applied to a nation, it is national planning, which is coterminous with political boundaries of a nation. If a single agency plans for a group of countries, or for all countries , it is world or international planning. The main objectives of international planning is to avoid war and maintain peace and to help the economic development of backward countries .

Barry classifies the economic planning into flexible, normative, inducement, planning by enlightenment, agreement and actuation. In terms of formulation, he defines into two broad categories - (i) Democratic planning, where decision are taken by the people, and for the benefit of the people, and (ii) Technocratic planning, where decision are taken and put into force by the planners or the technocrats (Barry, 1966: 42).

There are different types of planning in relation to different economies system. The three principal types of planning are:

- a) Planning in Market Economy - Western Countries.
- b) Planning for Socialist Economy - Former Soviet Russia and East European countries.
- c) Planning in Mixed Economy - Developing Countries like India.

Economic planning became an instrument of rapid economic development for the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa in the Post-Second-World War period. Most of the third world countries preferred to the mixed economy, which is a compromise between the two economic systems, capitalism and socialism. India by choice, followed the mixed economy system. The types of planning discussed above is theoretical. From the viewpoint of the execution of plans, the planning process in India can be divided into centralised or decentralised.

### **CENTRALISED PLANNING**

Under centralised planning the entire planning process in a country is under a central planning authority, which formulates a central plan, fixes objectives, targets and priorities for every sector of the economy. It takes all investment decisions in accordance with the goals and targets of the plan. The principal problems of the economy -

what and how much is to be produced, how, when and where is to be produced, and to whom it is to be allocated - are exclusively decided by this authority. The Central Planning authority controls every aspects of the economy. The Planning Commission in India formulates the plan and the state governments merely adjust these policies and programmes accordingly.

The first two decades of Indian planned development was centralised in nature, which could not meet the developmental challenges because of its elitist character. It led to concentration of political power in the hands of bureaucrats and economic ruin of the poorer and less privileged community (Das, 1978: 560-61). It also could not secure the co-operation of public and tackle a broad range of crucial development problems.

The Centralised Planning has been criticized by Prof. Oscar Lange for its bureaucratic character. To him, the entire planning process is based on bureaucratic control and regulation, which, makes it rigid. It also lacks economic freedom and all economic activities are directed from above. Shortages and mistakes arising during the course of planning are not likely to be rectified because of the absence of decentralised decision making (Jhingon, 1994: 518-19).

India is a country of multi-ethnic, caste, culture, religion and language. It is a land of villages and till more than seventy per cent people live in remote rural areas and a good number in the inaccessible forest regions. People are not at the same level of development, and there are regional disparities. In order to meet the need and aspiration of all sections and classes of the society, it is essential to decentralize the planning system or to make special plan for some specific groups.

The policy-makers, planners and administrators have emphasised on the problems like poverty, unemployment and low quality of life in rural sector. The development of the rural sector has been the centre-point of our development planning. The objective of the multi-dimensional rural development programmes was to reach the poor and most disadvantaged groups like Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes to ensure their socio-economic development. Past experience shows that centralised planning has failed to benefit the most needy. Although major chunk of funds were diverted to rural sector, basic problems of the people still exist. More than 50 per cent people in rural areas are below poverty-line even today.

Since India is a vast country, the Planning Commission alone cannot accommodate the needs and problems of all regions. And it is also not possible to get the exact statistical figure of all regions. The



plan formulation process which is a highly centralised one neglected the spatial factors and genuine regional planning. In the initial stage of planning in India, Planning Commission alone formulated plans and the state governments were not even competent to carry out this job since they did not possess any machinery for planning. The Planning Department in the Secretariat like any other department of the state government functions with limited staff without any knowledge of economic and planning problems. In the past, hence, it was argued that the centralised process of formulating plan for the development of micro level areas was inconsistent with the need to take into account local resources, local needs and local problems. (Aziz, 1983: 123).

Despite the centralised nature of plan, the Community Development and National Extension Services set the objective of taking it to the villages and work in cooperation with the people. The significance of village planning was increasingly realised. The rural development entirely failed due to non-existence of an active organisation in villages which was supposed to bring all the people into common programmes to be carried out with the assistance of the administration.

Indian planning started with the model of centralised planning where emphasis was given to heavy industries, major and medium

irrigation and heavy machinery mostly feeding urban industrial complexes. The main beneficiaries of this development process were the relatively more affluent farmers and the process almost completely by-passed the poorer sections of the people and displaced many workers from their traditional occupations. The need for micro-level planning has been recognized during the formulation of the Fourth Plan. However, the District Planning Boards were strengthened only in the Fifth Plan period. Need for decentralization of the planning process from national and state levels to the block level with major and direct involvement of the local population was sought during the Sixth Plan.

It was realised that the Five Year Plans did not make much impact on the poor and on the backward regions. For the successful implementation of the backward regions, developmental programmes required systematic identification of the backward regions and the really poor (target groups), and formulation of appropriate programmes and projects for reducing regional backwardness and poverty among the poor. (*Ibid*: 124). As there was a demand for further decentralization of the planning process to the block level, special emphasis was placed on agricultural development and decentralised democracy during the Sixth Plan.

While identifying the backward region, confusion arose regarding how to select it and what should be the criteria to call a region as backward region. The National Committee (Government of India, 1981: 39) has recommended the following types of problem areas as backward area for the purpose of planning. These are:

- (i) Chronically drought prone areas;
- (ii) Desert areas;
- (iii) Tribal areas;
- (iv) Hill areas;
- (v) Chronically flood affected areas; and
- (vi) Coastal areas affected by salinity.

Though it's late, the social scientists, policy makers and administrators have realised in the meantime, that the tribal and backward areas of the country are faced with certain peculiar problems which inhibit the process of development. The most important of these are geographical, ecological, agro-climatic and socio-cultural features which are specific to these areas. Unless development plans for these areas are based on the understanding of their specific problems and characteristics, there is every possibility of their not achieving the desired results (Papola, 1983: 3). Keeping in view the distinct characteristics, cultural differences, regional imbalances, and inequalities within the Indian society

decentralization of the planning process was demanded. The need of economic freedom and flexibility was sought.

The Centralised Planning in India was not successful because of its unreliable data. Without reliable data, projection would be a mere guesswork and the analysis would lack the vigour of sound economic reasoning. In the process of centralised planning the statistical data below the state level are not available or found full of mistakes and gaps. There is also a great time lag which reduces the utility of the data for purposes of planning considerably. The centralised planning will be successful only in a small country.

### **DECENTRALISED PLANNING**

In a decentralised planning generally there is dispersal of functions. It refers to the execution of the plan from the grassroots, so it is called 'planning from below'. Under this a plan is formulated by the central planning authority in consultation with different administrative units of the country. Here the regional bodies and local enterprises are given greater freedom and power in formulating, adopting and carrying out the plan. Under decentralised planning, prices of goods and services are primarily determined by the market mechanism despite government control and regulation in certain fields of economic activity. There is freedom of consumption,

production and enterprise under it. This planning is for a balanced, acceptable and meaningful development of the country.

The concept of decentralised planning was accepted in our country since the beginning of the planning era. However, it is a fact that decentralised planning worked out in a systematic manner is yet to be operationalised (Government of India, 1984: 31). It has not been an easy concept for operationalisation due to various constraints like the inadequacy of the planning machinery itself and the lack of a uniform enthusiasm on the part of the states who were required to operationalise it. But with the changes in the orientation and structure of development planning over the years as evident from the large number of beneficiary-oriented schemes and area-development schemes, decentralization of planning and decision-making has become urgent. The Planning Commission had issued comprehensive guidelines for District Planning in 1969. Again in 1982, Planning Commission set up one Working Group to look into the district planning. Just before this Working Group another working group was appointed by Planning Commission in 1978 under the chairmanship of M.L. Dantawala to suggest ways and means of experimenting the block level planning.

The Seventh Plan was based on the premise that the key to the effective implementation of a development programme is local

involvement. Hence, it proposed to secure this by taking effective steps for decentralisation of planning and for involving local and voluntary agencies in plan implementation.

The past experience shows that the benefits of planning and development have been appropriated by the intermediaries and could not reach to the target groups. The reason was that the planners did not take the human resources and human problems, the village power structures, factional politics and the value system of the people into account. The planners required to have knowledge on special groups like women, Scheduled Caste and Tribes, the small and marginal farmers and landless labourers. People's involvement in the planning could complement the knowledge of the planners and therefore, may be carefully promoted and maintained.

The central government takes interest in the development of backward regions by reducing political tensions born out of economic inequalities. Considerable reduction, if not elimination, of destitution and abject poverty in backward pockets, reduction of unemployment among target groups and taking steps for maintaining ecological balance are the concern of the central government. The state governments either do not take interest or do not pay attention due to inadequate financial resources. In this premise, surely, decentralization is not going to help, unless, there is proper

coordination between the local, district, state and national planning bodies. The local planning authorities should be given full freedom, at the same time they should be monitored properly.

Improvement of the economic conditions of the poorer sections is one of the major objectives of the micro-level planning. However, what is more important is to make them self-reliant to a degree which will enable them not only to diagnose their own problems and to solve them but also to have greater control over their own affairs (Pandey, 1990).

Decentralization of planning is essential to reach the unreached areas which is being neglected for a long because of various reasons like its inaccessibility and hill and forest area. Regional planning is needed for the development of the village and small and medium scale industries as they are wide spread are naturally to be encouraged. Generally planning of this kind is carried out within the framework of a national scheme in order to meet the special needs of a given region and the wants of its population. Countries like India, whose area is large, needs a high degree of regional decentralization. It ensures the potentialities of each region and economic as well as social differences are properly assessed and are planned to be successfully redressed. (Lekhi, 1993: 43).

The need for decentralised planning and development administration below the state level has been recognized in the context of agricultural and rural development programmes. Though the panchayat system is functional in many states, the actual decentralisation of political and administrative authority has been generally of a limited nature. Nor have sufficient arrangements been made in the organisation of technical administrative personnel at the state level and below to facilitate decentralisation. The lack of adequate machinery for decentralised planning and administration thus continues to be a critical weakness in the existing system (Jain, 1994: 136)

The decentralised planning provides for an active public participation in the planning process, both in plan-making and plan-implementation levels. In one case it permits the elected bodies at various levels (the centre, the states, the districts/blocks/villages) to get involved in it. This enables the public to play an important role in putting pressure on state policy, and on the private sector - directly or through state policy. Public pressure together with a free press makes the state responsive towards the demands of the people that it should take heed of the public welfare. If the planning is decentralised to lower level government units, then it will be possible to prepare realistic plans tailored to the local needs and resources, with much of welfare-orientation.



Public cooperation is always a necessary element for the implementation of the plans. Involvement of local people in plan formulation would lead to more enthusiasm for plan implementation. The need for citizen participation in development administration is, perhaps, nowhere better stated than in India's Five Year Plans, the recurring theme of which is to bring about economic, social and political development with active involvement and participation of the public in the development tasks. So a development planning purely depends on the citizen involvement in it in more and more numbers. A successful planning is not an isolated concept ; it has to go with the people's participation.

#### **PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION : THE NEED**

People can make contributions to the planning process at the implementation stage only if they are presented with a well-articulated and feasible framework of approaches, objectives, alternatives, etc. The participation of the people in local development programme provides the best guarantee that adequate action will be taken in the area itself. Public participation also creates an awareness of the problem and possible solutions among the people and thereby equip them as citizens to exercise choices relevant to development in a rational manner. When such a participation is institutionalized a stable base is created for decentralised exercise of power both on territorial as well as functional bases.

People's participation has acquired greater significance in a country like ours which is striving hard since independence to bring an overall socio-economic change through democratic processes. Community Development and Panchayati Raj were aimed at securing people's participation in the planning and execution of the programme as a vital aspect of community development (Sharma, 1970: 70). To expand the democratic basis of development policies and administrative actions public cooperation has assumed great significance. Public cooperation is sought in almost each phase of governance and the entire multifaceted development of the people in the various fields, viz., social, economic, educational, cultural and moral.

Involvement and sharing of the people in the process of development, particularly in decision-making, planning and implementation is in the interest of good government and good administration. The strategy of participative management approach was to share developmental activities among several components of the society like bureaucracy, the people and their representatives. Different nations named this process differently as 'partnership in development', 'people's participation' and 'community participation' etc. (Khan et al., 1988: 6). The term participation varies in meaning, content, nature and style from context to context and there are number of expressions related to it, some of which are used as synonyms or interchangeably. The term participation is very often used to cover all the forms of action by which citizens take part in the

operation of administration. The word is used broadly to refer to the role of members of the general public as distinguished from that of appointed officials, including civil servants, in influencing the activities of government or in providing directly for community needs (Bava, 1984: 21). Participation means a self-sustaining mechanism which does not end with completion of a project. People's participation is the people's initiative to assert themselves with dignity and self-respect (Ray, 1983: 15). Participation stimulates desire for a change and encouraging the belief or creating self-confidence that the change can be realised.

J.S.Mill, one of the founding fathers of the concept of Grass-roots Democracy, once wrote: "The only government which can fully satisfy all the exigencies of the social state is one in which the whole people participate". People's participation forms the core of democracy and the idea of maximum participation by the people has been a common theme in all discourses on democracy.

The concept of participation is very old and used in political science from the days of Plato and Aristotle, who had emphasized the democratic government through sharing of responsibilities of office. For the scholars like De Tocqueville, J.S. Mill, Robert Owen, Rousseau and Bentham the need for participation of the people in various field was the central theme. The French Revolution of 1789 again gave the citizens the right to take part in law making (Bava, 1984: 14).

However, the meaning of participation changes with the change of time and role of the state. As, it has been observed political participation is an educational process as well as an expression of the participants potentiality for managing the new society that is to be ushered in by the qualitative transformation of political participation into a revolutionary overthrow of the existing exploitative social relationship (*Ibid:14* ).

In a democratic society participation gives the ordinary citizen a means of voicing his opinion and of showing by his behaviour and action that he is able to take on responsibilities. It gives the ordinary citizen a chance to show his willingness to carry out constructive public work and to demonstrate his good citizenship by other means than periodically exercising his right to vote. Participation involves a factor of determination on the part of the person participating. It is in the sense participation means self-motion. (Kumar, 1999: iv).

To make the concept of people's participation more clear, it is noteworthy to quote the report of the team for the study of Community Projects and National Extension Service, which pinpoints that "people's participation is not merely their providing a certain proportion of the cost of a particular work in cash, kind or manual labour. It is their full realization that all aspects of the community are their concern and the Government's participation is only to assist them where such assistance is necessary. It is the gradual development of their faith in the efficacy of their own cooperative

action in solving their local problems. This attitude can be developed by close mutual cooperation between the different sections of the community. Such participation is possible only through the organisation of cooperative institutions and of elected democratic institutions” (Government of India, 1957: 3).

Participation cannot be imposed on the people from the above, it should be voluntary and based on will to participate. Participation should be of direct involvement and not through the representatives, where they (representatives) represent the interest of rich rather than the interest of poor majority. However, in a vast country like ours direct participation of the people is possible only at the local level. Under the existing Indian social system, equitable participation of the poor in the process of development can be regarded as a gradual process. It can be accelerated only when the poor become conscious of their rights and privileges and build up strength to achieve justice for themselves in the sharing of benefits of development.

People’s participation or involvement can be better understood in four senses:

- (i) Participation in decision-making ;
- (ii) Participation in implementation of development programme and projects;
- (iii) Participation in monitoring and evaluation of development programmes and projects; and

(iv) Participation in sharing the benefits of development  
(Mishra and Sharma, 1985: 6)

The pre-requisites for people's participation are a democratic system which will allow the people, even the smallest and the poorest, to participate directly as well as through genuine representatives in the decision-making process at all levels. Also, it would provide for devolution of political power to the smallest village and decentralization of administrative authority to the lowest level in the administrative hierarchy. However, if we see various studies based on past experience the development benefits have accrued to the economically better-off, socially high ups in stratification and the politically advantaged sections. The weaker sections have either been deprived of the process or marginally benefited. In this way, participation in benefits has remained negligible. The Sixth Plan has also stated that: "Much of the benefits from infrastructure have accrued largely to the relatively affluent....Many areas of the country remain backward and regional disparities in agricultural development have increased. Many segments of the population like the Scheduled Castes and Tribes have not shared fully in the benefits of growth."

People's participation is also expected to lead to the inculcation or development of democratic values and thereby to strengthening of democracy. There is a close link between people's participation, democracy and development and its success is related to the extent of public participation. However, the extent of the participation of

citizens depends to a large extent on the image one has of administration. People's participation will be forthcoming if people's image of administration is positive (Bava, 1984: 16).

Starting from the structural-functional approach to comparative history approach, social process approach and political change approach, all have agreed upon the significance of people's participation in the development process. For the capitalists and socialists also participation of citizens in government, politics and administration is both an end in itself and a means to an end (*Ibid*: 18).

Due to various reasons like poverty, ignorance and illiteracy etc. the level of participation in public affairs in developing countries is very less. The desired result of the development in a democratic political system cannot be achieved without people's participation (Pai Panandiker, 1974: 229).

People's participation can be ensured through the formation of people's organisation and group actions. People's organisation, be it formal or informal, gives them the power to negotiate and bargain, recognition, status and cohesive strength as a community. It gives them accessibility to information, resources, check exploitation and injustices and effect fair distribution of resources. Effective participation needs integration of components/ activities and their proper and timely coordination. The people's participation is

necessary to lessen the gulf between the people and the administration.

Popular participation is regarded as one of the ways for 'empowering', the target - groups. However, various socio-cultural factors appear to hinder the participation of rural poor in the development process. This is because of the lack of confidence among the poorer sections in facing the adversaries with equanimity. This can be overcome if the target groups become economically better off (Sastry, 1991: 672).

The planned approach to socio-economic development in India aimed at the development of resources as well as development of human faculties and building up an institutional framework adequate enough to the needs and aspirations of the people. Right from the beginning, the First Five Year Plan underlined the importance of ensuring people's participation not merely in the execution of the Community Development Projects, but also in their planning. The basic premise of CD programme was to ensure the participation of the people both in the planning as well as in the implementation of various stages of the development programme. However, the Balvantray Mehta Committee observed that the CD programme failed in mobilising the people. So, the committee felt that full participation can be meaningfully harnessed only if people are associated with planning of development and not merely in the execution of planned schemes. It pleaded for the introduction of democratic



decentralisation or Panchayati Raj (PR) at village, block and district levels (Sastry et al, 1988: 691). Later on, Asoka Mehta Committee (1977) felt that PR institutions are dominated by economically and socially privileged sections of the society as a result, oligarchic forces emerges yielding no benefits to the weaker sections. The committee recommended for a two-tier system at District and Mandal levels and urged to revive the Gram Sabha.

The participation can be possible through cooperative institutions, farmers service societies, *Mahila Mandals*, *Yuva Kendras* and through providing uniform representation. "People's participation is a cumulative and continuous process, which has to be nurtured and gradually developed with the help of the people themselves through close rapport, communication, their organisation, decentralized and integrated approach so that the tempo of development not only reaches a crescendo but is also sustained" (Ray, 1983 : 18).

Successful implementation of any development programme depends on the level of people's participation. It is required because a person knows better his/her problem than anybody else. The success rate of Tribal development programmes was very minimal than any other programmes because the tribal participation is totally negligible. The desired result cannot be achieved unless they are involved in planning, implementation as well as evaluation process at the local level. They should be involved in planning, formulation,

implementation, decision-making, sharing the benefit of development, monitoring and evaluation. If the people concerned would take part, for whom it is meant for, in the development process then it would help in reducing the gap between the planners and beneficiaries and provide a better planning. It would also empower the people and provide an opportunity to play his/her role in the development programmes.

Meanwhile various programmes like - National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP), Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) etc. were introduced with the objective of uplifting the household by creating assets/employment. The Working Group on District Planning (1984) recommended that people's involvement should be encouraged at every stage of planning including pre-planning, strategy setting, scheme formulation, monitoring and review and not merely at the time of plan finalization. The G.V.K. Rao Committee (1985) on Administrative Arrangements for Rural Development (CAARD) recommended that public participation in centrally directed intervention strategies in rural development should be improved by associating people's representatives in these agencies and placing the plans prepared by them before the people's organizations like PR institutions for clearance. The Committee felt that the rural development programmes are lacking people's participation and the PR institutions have become dormant (Sastry, et al., 1988 : 695).

The Singhvi Committee (1987) also recommended for giving constitutional status to the PR institutions and to hold regular and free and fair elections to these bodies. The Sarkaria Commission Report (1988) also asked to strengthen the local bodies in respect of the resources and administrative matters.

The question of people's participation in the planning process arises to bridge the gap between what the people want and what they actually get. Without their involvement their felt needs may be ignored even if the plan is prepared at the local level. Decentralizing the planning process, in a real sense started during the Fourth Plan, however, the District Planning Boards got power only in the Fifth Plan. The 73rd Amendment Bill is a good step to achieve the target through active people's participation. Extra care has been taken in Panchayati Raj to encourage the weaker sections for major participation.