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Policy Implementation in India: Issues of Participation:

Introduction

The term ‘participation’ has its genesis in *participare* meaning ‘to participate and share in, or partake of’.¹ It continues to mean the same even today, as ‘an act or instance of participating, taking part in and sharing’² and ‘the state of being related to a larger whole’.³ The literal meanings say nothing about the nature of collective action, the institutional mechanism that facilitates participation, goals being pursued, and the nature of power relation and the social structure it is embedded in. For these purposes, we need to turn the conceptual evolution of the idea of participation. Conceptually, the idea of participation draws from two distinct set of theories. The first and the older one, involve rights and obligations of citizens to take part in and share in the administration of justice and politics. The other, and more recent on is understood as a set of developmental approaches and methods. Today the idea of participation draws from both sets of theories, of citizenship and development, to be seen as the most socially just mechanism of organising power relation in society. Therefore, its contemporary popularity emanates from the fact that it is increasingly being put forth as the legitimizing principle as well as institutional mechanism for the developmental discourse.

Therefore, it becomes extremely pertinent to engage with and understand the genesis, nature, institutional mechanism, goals pursued, and its socio-political embeddedness to unravel the rationality behind participatory developmental policies. Seeing it in the Indian context, this module will delineate the contextual evolution of issues and concerns with the idea of participation in the Indian policy discourse. It will show how absence of concerns of participation was justified in the initial decade of the post colonial state and the factor that led its rise in the closing decades of the twentieth century. Therefore, the module first offers a quick synopsis of the twin theoretical roots of the idea of participation before shifting to its concerns in Indian policy implementation. Here it looks at how the issue of participation was sidelined by the nehruvian model and the technocratic poverty reduction schemes of targeted area/group approach, despite the introduction of universal adult franchise. However with the deepening of democratic institution, the increased political agency of the marginalised as well as business groups led to decentralization and the rise of the ‘governmentality of participation’ through PRIs. Finally we will delineate the practice of policy implementation that this ‘participatory’ approach to development has led to.

Theories of Participation

Most carnivorous animals, except for some like tigers, including the hunting forefathers of human have collectively engaged in securing food. Similarly, herds of herbivores move and eat

¹ as per <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=participate>

² <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/participation>

³ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/participation>

together to ensure security from predators. Thus participation is inherent to all social/collective efforts in nature, of humans and animals alike. And its role becomes even more important in cases of settled life, involving elaborate institutional mechanism to organise participatory collective endeavours. It was with similar understanding the we see the rise of the idea of participation in communitarian republics, epitomised by the Greek city states, involving active and obligatory everyday experience of being involved in the public affairs and collective interests of the community. However this participatory ethic is lost with the rise of expansive kingdoms, or is limited to local affairs, and returns in a truncated, passive and representational form of electoral democracy. The active participatory ethic re-emerges, even as citizenship discourse in lost in expanding the scope of rights it entails, in the developmental discourse attempting to embed itself in the everyday life and lived realities of the people.

Therefore this section looks at the evolution of the idea of participation as it emerged in classical works of Aristotle, its disappearance amidst rule of law regime of Roman citizenship. Then it looks at how 'set of rights' replaces participatory ethics in modern regimes, the contestation and struggle for the scope of rights amidst states legitimised by their welfare role and the rise of participatory developmental discourse. Herein we look at the rise of 'technocratic' participatory model, its critique for being tyrannical, in terms of unjust exercise of power, and the transformatory potential it has if seen right based developmental agenda with democratic practice.

Participation as Citizen's right

The idea of participation, in the management of the public affairs has its roots in classical Greek political theories of citizenship. Herein, the likes of Aristotle saw citizenship as *the sharing of* "the administration of justice and in the holding of [public] office" (Politics, 1275a; 1948). In this light, participation involved everyday experience of taking part in the political affairs of the collective. This implied sharing responsibilities in legislating and executing rules as well as obeying them. In this context, active participatory citizenship dominated every realm of social life with community being seen as prior to and constitutive of individuals whose life, living conditions and identity were offered and defined by it.⁴ This laudable conception of participation in the management of public affairs did, however, suffer from lacuna of exclusion of women and slaves from its fold. In spite of this lacuna, it did allow the participant, citizens or member of a political community, to take part in the collective act of managing the political affairs of his/her community.

With the expansion of political communities in terms of territorial and population size, the practice of inclusion of new member led to the loss of the 'participatory ethic' as political membership involved personal safeguards through 'rule of law'. It re-emerges with the self-governing republican regime of Italian city states, the autonomous civil and political authority

⁴ For details see Walzer, 1989, p. 214; Faulks, 2000, pp. 16-18.

regulating public affairs of an independent community. Rooted in the ‘theory of social contract’, herein participation implied the historical delegation of rights to self preservation by the citizens to the government. The emergent ‘rights based’ theory of citizenship sought a balance concerns with public order and the protection of life, liberty and property, intrinsic to the fulfilment of self interest.⁵ This led to liberal democratic polities championing the cause of state sovereignty, economic liberties and democratic equality to enable redistribution of resources through the invisible hand of ‘free market’. However as Marx convincingly argued, the economic liberties and political equality of the modern capitalist democracies was an illusion with an inherent deficit between the structural inequalities of class in capitalist system and the enjoyment political equality in democracies.⁶

Therefore, the lack of scope for direct and active participation⁷ in the political affairs was the lacuna of liberal right based citizenship. At the same time, in the post colonial third world democratic equality needed conditions facilitating state institution to become positive instrument for realisation of ever expanding rights of citizenship.⁸ Thus within this regime, membership of a nation state or nationality became the source of all rights as well as the target of claim for expansion of their scope. The resultant expansion has been seen both as the result of concession decided upon and promulgated by the state⁹ as well as the result of popular participation in social struggles and movements.¹⁰ The actual process actually involved a series of political bargains and negotiation whereby “elites seek to maintain their power through managing the affects of social change and containing the demand of the social movements through concession in form of rights”.¹¹

However the technocratic mode of welfare and developmental planning and the populist agendas of socio economic rights could not pave the way for reintroduction of the ethic of participation in political affairs. It was not until the closing decades of the twentieth century that participation re-emerged as a political concern riding “the wave of resurgent civil society, celebratory revival of civic republicanism by proponents of social capital and rise of neo-liberalism amidst piling evidence of state failure”.¹² It is against background that idea of ‘participation’ in the political affairs is increasingly contested in terms of the level at which it is fostered and its scope in terms of the realms in which it is fostered in. Furthermore, the institutional mechanism that best support it and the social goals that can be pursued by them proved to be other ground for the contestation and negotiation over the idea of participation. At the same time, as the extent and content of the political community of the nation state itself is being challenged by sub and supra national communities imaginable in an increasingly globalised world, the issue of participation

⁵ Faulks, 2000: 22.

⁶ As quoted by Jayal, 2013: 5.

⁷ For details see Walzer, 1989: 218.

⁸ Jayal, 2013: 6.

⁹ For Details see Mann, 1996; Barbelet, 1988.

¹⁰ For details see Turner 1986; Giddens, 1985.

¹¹ Faulks, 2000: 26.

¹² Jayal, 2013: 6-7.

has been further contested in terms of the multiple level at which it is involved in collective decision making and collective action. It was with such concern the participation rise as a set of approaches to and method for fostering inclusive development.

Participation as a Developmental approach

Initial forays into participatory development approach appealed for enabling poor to analyse their own reality to enable them to be at the heart of each development intervention.¹³ However it was the works of Robert Chambers on ‘participatory rural appraisal’ (PRA) framework that led to the emergence of “a family of approaches and methods to enable rural people to share, enhance and analyse their knowledge of [their] life and condition, to plan and to act”.¹⁴ As a technocratic and modular developmental approach, it soon it became a prominent feature in public policies directed towards natural resource management, agriculture, poverty reduction, and social welfare programmes related to health and food security.¹⁵ The approach was legitimised in the name of the people’s centrality in development planning and practice through greater involvement of the ‘local’ that facilitate accountability, relevance and empowerment through developmental governance.

This dominant technocratic understanding of participation was challenged first by Uma Kothari and Bill Cooke and their contributors in the edited volume, *Participation: The new Tyranny*. For Cooke and Kothari, participatory developmental approaches are tyrannical because of the manner in which it was contested and critiqued. These critiques focussed on the technique of implementation of these participatory approaches without questioning the effect, qualitatively or quantitatively, of the approach.¹⁶ These modular participatory approach has been challenged over issues like– obsession with the local while ignoring wider structures of injustice; lack of understanding of how power relation at work as well as the role of structures and agency in social change; and focus on technical rather than political methodology for empowerment. Let’s elaborate on each of them.

The first challenge is over the obsession of the participatory approach with the local as site, space as well as level of developmental intervention. The ‘local’ is not a bound entity, as understood by the modular approach, but is constructed from overlapping and intersecting flows of dynamic social relations. It has its own hierarchies and is also a part of several other hierarchies. The obsession with personal and local as sites of empowerment ignore the state and developmental community, the actual sites of power and knowledge¹⁷ thereby ignoring the existence of power relation and structural injustices the local is embedded in it. Such local participation has little impact on the broader pattern of exclusion and injustice that keeps

¹³ For details see Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 1968; Michael Cernea (ed.) *Putting People First*, 1985.

¹⁴ Robert Chambers, 1994: p. 953.

¹⁵ For details see Chambers, 1994: 961-62.

¹⁶ Cooke and Kothari, 2001: 3

¹⁷ For details see Mosse, 2001: 16-35; Mohan, 2001: 153-67; Hickey and Mohan, 2004: 17

participants relatively dependent and powerless. Such forms of participation hides as well as perpetuates a certain set of power relation, concealing everyday oppression and ensure the subjectivity of the participant. Thus, ritualistic practices subvert participation by hiding how and where power is exercised in participatory approaches.¹⁸

The fruits of democratic decentralised too are limited in poor rural areas with limited political agency and access to information and with bureaucratic hierarchy and control. Therefore, democratic decentralisation did improve participation but its impact on inequality and poverty remains modest due to inherent inequalities, hierarchies and power differential in social relation that excludes those without it.¹⁹ Moreover, the approaches display inadequate understanding of the role of structures and agency in social change as changing and multiple identities of individuals impact their choice about whether and how to participate. The success of participatory approaches, dependent on several factors like poverty, literacy, wealth, education and information, lies in securing the rights of the poor people. In this pursuit, it does open up space for the marginalized to negotiate with power in,²⁰ however, direct participation is too risky for the poor who choose to be represented by local power broker, to *speak of* as well as *speak for* them.²¹

Focus on technical rather than political methodology for empowerment further reveals the limitation of such approaches whereby development's grassroot organisation are converted into human software for investments with the least local opposition. The success of these approaches was rooted in the understanding of and responses to the need of the local community built on a close personal relationship. At the same time, individual thoughts, feeling and behaviour are influenced by group dynamics especially the presence of real or constructed 'other' in face to face interactions. In this light, participatory process can lead to risky collective decision, second guessed decisions, decision harmful to 'the other'.²² Scholars have also argued that for decentralisation reform to be transformatory, they not only need the support but also promotion from political parties. Further involving spaces of negotiation, participation needs to be analysed in terms of its mechanism, restrictions, assumptions and expectation while being aware of its intended and unintended consequences ranging from creativity to passivity and entrenchment. Democratic local governance is more responsive to citizens' desire and more effective in service delivery but how much can participation deliver in term of accountability of democratic local governance.²³

¹⁸ For details see Cooke and Kothari, 2001:14; Vincent, 2004: 111-24; Glyn Williams, et al 2003: 163-92; Glyn Williams, 2004a: 92-108; Taylor, 2001: 122-38; Kothari 2001: 139-52.

¹⁹ For details see Glyn Williams (2004b) Craig Johnson (2001) Elan Kapoor (2005) Ellora Puri (2004)

²⁰ For details see Cleaver, 2001: 36-55; Miltin, 2004: 175-89; Krishna (2006); Masaki (2004)

²¹ For details see Miltin, 2004: 175-89; Williams et al 2003; Hickey and Mohan, 2004:19.

²² For details see Carmen, 1996; Cleaver, 1999; Rehman, 1995; Helyard et al, 2001: 56-71; Hailey, 2001: 88-111; Cooke, 2001: 102-121

²³ For details see Forisbello and Gujit 2004: 190-204; Esther Turnhout (2010); Harry Blair (2000)

Despite these political and theoretical challenges, believer of its transformatory potential came together for Giles Mohan and Sam Hickey's edited volume, *Participation: From Tyranny to Transformation*. Herein they argue that in order to be transformatory, participation has to be ideologically explicit with a coherent development theory, encompassing multi scale strategies, applied at the institutional as well as structural level' linking participation to a rights based agenda, that targets the developmental polices, social relation, institutional practices and capacity gaps that cause social exclusion. It has to engage with the level at which participation takes place, its duration and ideological underpinnings create spaces for collective actions, which overlap, may reinforce or resist each other. And its success is dependent on its engagements with development for the underlying project of social justice and radical political change. On the other hand, emphasis on identity, place and political action to conceptualise resistance with local culture is the bedrock of alternatives to development.²⁴ Hickey and Mohan (2005) argue that participatory approaches of development work when they are a part of the larger political project aimed at securing citizenship rights and the participation of the poor wherein development is a social change rather than technical intervention.

Across these two theories to participation, the idea has varied from involving direct everyday participation in the making and implementation of laws to a distant, historical participation in 'the social contract' and regular participation in representation democracy. It has also implied the dominance and tyrannical reign as modular approach to development through the 'local', critiqued for its ignorance of the power relation and injustice of inequalities and inadequate and 'technical understanding of what is necessarily a political process of empowerment. Drawing from both these approach, participations real transformatory potential lies in being a 'rights based agenda' directed towards securing the rights and participation of the poor in social change by targeting developmental policies, social relation and institutional dynamics. It is with such nuanced understanding of participation, distilled through the theories of citizenship and development that issues of participation in the policy implementation in India are looked at in this module.

Issues of participation in Indian policy implementation

Even through India has had its share of historical experience of participatory political communities like the ancient village republic, the idea of participation of 'citizens' in the political affairs of a territorial state is of a more recent origin. Furthermore, regulation of social behaviour of the population of the entire expanse of what we know today as India through a centralised 'rule of law' also does not have much historical precedence in this 5000 years old civilisation. It was only with the arrival of the British colonial masters, that a system of rule of law was made applicable to most of India. The post colonial national state that emerged was the first attempt of a so called 'social contract' that led to a set of fundamental rights with universal franchise based polity. However, the post-independence Indian state was conceived as planning

²⁴ Hickey and Mohan, 2004: 12-18

authority to construct a political ideological program that would facilitate the largest possible nationalist alliance involving elite leadership based mobilisation of the subaltern group to build 'modern' India of modern 'Indians'.

Such assimilationist ideology of the Indian state had to do with the distinct historical process leading to the rise of modern nation state in India. Unlike most, democratic governance through liberal institutions was not an outcome of class conflicts and struggle in India as popular democracy even before the rise of liberal institutions of an autonomous nation state by the colonial masters. Therefore, it continued with the colonial rationality of government's obligation to ensure the welfare of its population irrespective of their participation in the sovereignty of the state. As a result, the technocratic welfare model of governance through detailed knowledge of the conditions of social reality too predates the rise of the modern state. The resulting state formation and the mode of governance was technocratic but highly contested political issue as well involving political struggles whose dynamics were shaped by the politics over development policies.²⁵

Thus, the political community of India had centralised planning emerged as the mechanism to legitimise the newly emerging power relation and create consent for violent primitive accumulation amidst vote bank politics of electoral democracy. Political participation through representative electoral democracy with centralised bureaucratic-technocratic developmental policies was seen as the path leading to the rise of a new 'modern' India. Thus, participatory electoral democracy and non participatory technocratic development connected the sovereignty and the well being of the state to that of the people, respectively. Such a set up was to allow the state to contain conflict, control and manipulate the dispersed power relation towards further accumulation and incorporate organised demands of particular groups to resolve social conflict, caused by development deficit. Therefore, securing the welfare of various categories of population irrespective of their participation in sovereignty was the organising principle of the post colonial Indian state.²⁶

This section of the module looks at how the issue of participation has evolved from such dichotomous genesis. In doing so the paper first looks at the Nehruvial model of participation of local elite in what was described as the 'congress system' and its limited scope despite the euphoria of national independence that propelled and sustained it. The next section looks at the populist turn in Indian policy implementation under Mrs. Gandhi. Herein we look at how Mrs. Gandhi '*garibi hatao*' and target area/group approach amidst contested voted bank politics led to vertical and horizontal expansion of political mobilisation and democratic participation. This expansion created a serious crisis in the 1980s as technocratic planning is increasing unable to incorporate the demands of newly mobilised group. The third sections begin by look at the causes put forth behind this crisis and the move towards a decentralised participatory mode of

²⁵ For details see Mitra, 2002: 12-13; Mitra, 2006: 8; Chatterjee, 2004: 36- 40.

²⁶ For details see Chatterjee, 2004: 203, 213-14.

governance ushered in the closing decade of the 20th century. On a concluding note with look at the contemporary goals of economic growth that enhances capabilities that facilitate parity of participation, the increasing importance and hope from PRIs and civil society organisation and the continued importance of the neo-Keynesian state.

The Nehruvian Model of Nation Building and Participation

As the time of the transfer of power came around, the negotiation over structure of state, form of society and allocation of resources led to polarisation within the Constituent Assembly as is reflected in the tussle between Nehru and Patel. It was over the strategy of social transformation between the socialist and the bourgeois factions within congress. However, the untimely death of Patel in 1950 ended this struggle without being settled and paved the way for the adoption of the Nehruvian model.²⁷ Thus emerging Nehruvian model, enjoying the subtle support and cultural approval of the thinly but crucially dispersed of modern Indian elite, sought India's social transformation through a 'passive revolution', instead of mass mobilization and political negotiations.²⁸

The goals pursued by the Nehruvian model spoke of freeing India through a new constitution, feeding and clothing its starving and naked masses and to give every Indian the fullest opportunity to develop himself according to his capacity'.²⁹ The idea of the state as the 'provider, protector and promoter' of people was reinforced by the pursuit of adequate means of livelihood for all citizens to minimize inequalities of income, status and opportunities through health, education and social justice for the backward classes.³⁰ And yet, the rational embodiment of the state as a planning authority did not reduce the state's importance as the 'site' for 'free' citizens to engage in political negotiation and struggles.³¹ Therefore, the 'commodity centred approach' of technocratic planning process for accumulation had to content with the democratic processes of representative government.

Thus, within the Nehruvian model, accumulation through technocratic planning was legitimised through representative government implying avoiding the unnecessary rigours of industrial transformation by being a positive means of conflict resolution. To do so, Nehru deployed a 'congress system' as the institutional mechanism for negotiating power, resources and mandate through the participation of the local elites. These local elites were to mobilise their caste peers and economically dependent people to allow for a 'vertical disaggregation' social and elite conflict, negotiated and contained at local level.³² Thus the nehruvian model of public policy only sought the participation of the local elite in the process of primitive accumulation with the role of reducing its violent rigour.

²⁷ For details see Kaviraj, 1988: 2432

²⁸ For details see Kaviraj, 1990; Chatterjee, 1986; 1993; Hansen, 1999

²⁹ For details see Nehru's speech in Constituent Assembly Debates: 22 January 1947.

³⁰ For details see Corbridge et. al., 2005: 55-56

³¹ For details see Chatterjee, 1993: 203-04

³² For details see Chatterjee, 1993: 208-09; Hansen, 1999: 135; Mehta, 1991/93: 537

The death of Nehru and the subsequent decline of the congress system marks a distinctive turn in Indian historiography. Political observers on their part have argued that the roots of this turn lay in the limitedness and ambiguity of Nehruvian reforms attempting to legitimise 'violent' primitive accumulation within democratic framework. This transformed the institutions of rational planning by being increasingly constrained, moulded and distorted by politics in the name of producing consent.³³ To add to this, the food crisis of the 1960s and economic stagnation of the 1970s created a serious crisis for planning as the institutional mechanism for accumulation. Accompanied by political developments like split in Congress in 1969, the delinking of State and national elections in 1971 led to the rise of regional opposition parties riding the new wave of popular mobilisations. This expanded politics vertically, in terms of number of autonomously participating individual, as well as horizontal in terms of number of autonomously participating social groups. The next section looks at the dynamics and challenges of this phase of popular participation in Indian electoral democratic politics.

The Populist turn and expanding Democratic participation

The declining ability to accommodate the demands of the newly mobilised groups has been seen as the primary reason behind the growing political crisis of the 1980s.³⁴ On the economic front of accumulation, the Nehruvian model failed because the bureaucracy entrusted with the revolutionary task of social transformation was unsuited for the job and incapable of undertaking the political negotiation involved. At the same time, the excessive bureaucratisation of social life in the absence of structure of civil society created conditions for technocratic understanding of poverty to be solved by bureaucrats and experts.³⁵ At the same time, political participation through an increasingly institutionalising electoral democracy allowed the previously marginalised groups to mobilise in the name of their differentiated needs of development. Such expansion was the result of mobilisation of lower and scheduled caste around the socialist 'reservation' agenda and that of Hindu nationalism, paved the way for pluralisation of Indian politics.³⁶

Amidst growing crisis of the electoral democracy, state response was a highly populist rhetoric of socialist transformations through direct appeal for popular support that deinstitutionalised the existing governance mechanism of congress system. Growth and equity became the rhetoric to justify as well as contest policies that shifted from community development schemes amidst target area/groups approach for poverty reduction. The expansion of categories entitled to subsidies made technocratic planning central to populist democracy and its vote bank politics. Organised particular interest, based on class and identity, were to be recognised and incorporated in planning strategy by prioritising beneficiaries and relative allocation in redistribution. This

³³ For details see Kaviraj, 1984; Chatterjee, 1993; Corbridge and Harriss, 2000

³⁴ For details see Frankel and Rao, 1989/90; Kohli, 1990, Kothari, 1988; Frankel, et al, 2000; Shah, 2004

³⁵ For details see Kaviraj, 1984; 1991

³⁶ For details on socialist caste based mobilisations see Jefferlot 2003, for the rise of Hindu Nationalism see Hansen, 1999 and Corbridge and Harriss, 2000

emerged the unified framework was imposed by the state to incorporate all political mobilisations. Social mobilisations with territorial solidarities were incorporated through the idea of federalism while those with identity based mobilisation were incorporated through the ideology of protective discrimination. Reservation, extended in 1969 and re politicised the category OBC by the Mandal commission, emerged as one of the dominant themes of Indian politics.³⁷

The resultant social conflict induced the state to transform citizens as object of three projects: development, security and secularism, subsumed within a centralising, homogenising and secularising development discourse that saw all conflict to be rooted in unbalanced development. By transforming conflicts into law and order problem, the discourse perpetuates horizontal, i.e. between communities, and vertical, i.e. between state and society, violence leading to a crisis of institutions.³⁸ The Marxist explanation for this institutional crisis was rooted in the erosion of autonomy of the state, limited to its regulatory and patronage dispersing role, by the ruling class coalition. Others saw it as the result of alternative historical process of capitalist transition or ‘the passive revolution’ while some argued that increasing political demands and limited resources ensures that even ‘passive revolution’ does not succeed.³⁹

The liberal democratic explanations for Indian state’s dismal economic performance, argued that democracy brings political and economic life too close together for rational calculation in development decisions. While civil and political rights of its citizens were sanctified by the constitution but their development, both redistribution and growth, was to be achieved through economic planning. However, the eroded autonomy of the state slowed the rate of institutional change and government’s capacity to raise rural resources for industrialisation.⁴⁰ The breakdown of consensus on centralisation of state power and the decline of the congress system amidst the pluralisation of politics transformed Indian political economy into an elaborate network of patronage and subsidies which seriously deteriorated the ability of the state to manage conflict and achieve policy targets.⁴¹

Furthermore, the deepening of democratic institutions gave citizens a “growing sense of empowerment, enfranchisement and entitlement” that reflected in their growing participation in diverse modes of politics across the spectrum of institutional electoral politics and radical protest based alternative. These protest actions and movements serve as source and means of legitimising state authority through reflexive planning that build new institution to address local demand and thereby broadening its social base. Thus, the political constituency of ‘poor’ led to a new ‘demand politics’ in India wherein interest groups could force governmental agencies

³⁷ For details see Chatterjee, 1993: 215-219; Corbridge and Harriss, 2000: 74; Chotray, 2011: 39.

³⁸ For details on the three projects see Kothari, 1988: 1-20

³⁹ For the Marxist interpretation of the crisis see Bardhan, 1984; For passive revolution see Chatterjee 1983; 1993; 1998; and for its failure see Kaviraj, 1988

⁴⁰ For details on the liberal democratic explanations see Kaviraj, 1996:122; Frankel, 1978: 18, 202.

⁴¹ For details see Kohli, 1990; Bardhan, 1992.

through ascriptive group mobilisation facilitated by the “politics of scarcity”.⁴² In the process, Indian democracy acquired a distinct form of focussing on “political equality of groups rather than individual... assertion of electoral power of rural masses due to the specific sequence of economic modernisation...conflict of secular state principle...subjected to a democratic electoral ratification”.⁴³ The rise of a new contested consensus of liberalisation, privatisation and decentralisation of governance emerged to pursue economic growth with social justice. Education, employment and health are seen as the precondition to enhance the capabilities of the people and groups to ensure parity of participation in securing their welfare. It is in this political process that to try and delineate the emerging participatory discourse of governance in India.

The rise of Participatory developmental approach in India

The rise of the ‘participatory developmental approach’ is intrinsically linked to the process of liberalisation, decentralisation and privatisation introduced towards the end of the 20th century. While economic side of this process had started with the end of the licence raj in India, its political side emerged with the constitutional promulgation of the panchayati raj institution (PRI). Championing the cause of growth with social justice, herein development becomes the central issue of political mobilisation and contestation. In this light, use of state’s political power to introduce change for the weaker sections was seen as legitimate developmental politics. However, increasing democratisation and political competition made it difficult for a democratically elected government to implement redistributive policies.⁴⁴ It was argued the groups or communities should be represented through reservation both in production and distribution of goods and services. Thus in the Indian case, the quests of identity recognition and that of socio-economic changes are inextricably intertwined in and anchor much of India’s democratic experience and resistance to its authority and legitimacy.⁴⁵

The state continues to be seen as the exclusive social instrument capable of declaring universal obligations, implementing and adjudicating them and enforcing redressal and accountability.⁴⁶ Further, patterns of state authority, organisation of state politics and use of state power decisively influenced the economic context and are key determinants of regional developmental dynamics.⁴⁷ The attention however has now shifted on to mechanism of local governance, role and efficacy of social capital and market mechanisms and better tools to assess human development.⁴⁸ In addition to the formal institutions of local governance i.e, PRI, new institutional forms loosely clubbed as ‘civil society’ have also been critically analysed for their

⁴² For detail on increasing popular participation see, Mitra, 2002: 4; while for demand politics see Rudolph and Rudolph, 1987; while for ‘politics of scarcity’ look at Corbridge et al. 2005; 36, 65-66.

⁴³ Kaviraj, 2000: 155

⁴⁴ For details see Pai, 2010.

⁴⁵ For representation through reservation see Chalam: 2007; for twin challenges of Indian democracy, see Prakash, 2013.

⁴⁶ For details see Harriss-White, 2004: 450-1

⁴⁷ For details see Kohli: 2004; 2009

⁴⁸ Shariff and Krishnaraj: 2007

role in democratisation, political process and its relationship to citizenship but not so much for its developmental role which cannot be ignored.⁴⁹

Against this backdrop, the contemporary modes of governance in India are dominated by concerns of: coverage, efficiency and reach of governmental intervention; their political differentiation on grounds of redistribution, recognition and representation; and the democratic institutional anchor to embed these practices.⁵⁰ The political contestation over each of these issues creates challenges and resistance to these concerns across spaces of collective decision making and action over issues of social justice. In this context, governmental policy documents like five year plans envisage pursuing economic growth that enhances the capability of its participants. The focuses on balancing economic growth with desirable social attainments and growing opportunities for all by pursuing faster, more broad-based and inclusive growth to reduce poverty and redress inequalities. On the other hand, the National Human Development Report (NHDR) focussed on the quality of life involving attainment of three critical dimensions of well-being: longevity, education and command over resources.⁵¹

Thus, since the last decades of the twentieth century, the rise of participatory development through capability approach has seen excessive hype and hope being placed on the relative young PRIs. These PRIs have become the primary mechanism of deciding upon the choice of beneficiaries and the specifics of various governmental projects. The civil society, though seen as the expansion of participation in terms of citizenship rights and democracy has not been sufficiently interrogated for its developmental role. At the same time, political differentiated identity based development has been the heart of most political mobilisation on grounds of social justice and in terms of coverage, efficiency and reach of governance initiatives. The government on its part has focused on growth with equity and aims to enhance capabilities through provisions for education, health and livelihood.

Conclusion

The foregone discussion on the theories of participation and how it has evolved in the course of Indian policy implements shows that in India, the initial conception of participation was only in terms of regular electoral participation as entitled under the provisions of universal adult franchise. This civic and political participation was organised around the 'congress system' and its network of local elite that pursued for the socio-economic development of the people through non participatory technocratic institution of centralised planning. However excessive dependence of bureaucracy could not lead to primitive accumulation amidst democratic vote bank politics that paved the way for populist planning. This populist planning, however, could not keep up massive regional mobilisation against congress that led to the collapse of congress system and

⁴⁹ For details on civil society role in the relationship between political process and citizenship see Bhargava & Reifield, 2005; on how it ignores its developmental role see Alsop & Kurey, 2005; Pawar, et al, 2004

⁵⁰ Prakash, 2013

⁵¹ For details see Government of India: 2002, 23ff

rise of two party systems in India. The ensuing institutional crisis was readdressed through the participatory turn in the 1990s that saw PRIs as the institutional mechanism for grass root democracy as well as bottom's up development.

However this participatory turn needs to be analysed in terms of the scope of participation enabled by these PRIs, the rights of citizenship and capabilities of freedom that it claims to enhance, the power relation it is embedded in and form of social justice it seeks to establish. Doing this involves looking at the level on which participation is sought during the course of the developmental process, the kind of impact it has on collective decision making and collective action, the kind of political struggles and negotiation it foster and manners in which these are resolved. It is only with such understanding that we can improve upon the participatory approaches to make it realise its true transformatory agenda to empowering the poor and the marginalised.

