

## **People's participation in administration:**

**Meaning of people's participation:** Participation in generic sense has been conceptualized in terms of citizenship; it is a right on its own strength. Participation is generally referred to when common people play a role in the activities of the government. It is defined as all forms of actions by which citizens 'take part' in the operation of administration. Taking part may be of any type e.g., advisory or in decision making or in implementation etc. People may participate through their representatives or voluntary bodies.

In other words, people's participation in administration means collective and continuous efforts by people themselves in setting goals, pooling resources together and taking actions which aim at improving their living conditions.

Accordingly, participatory governance means a convergence of social and political participation and the scaling up of *participatory* methods, state-civil-society partnerships, decentralization and devolution, participatory assessment and other factors.

Thus, with such extended meaning of participation beyond traditional voting and political rights, there is a serious search going on in all democratic countries for more participatory approaches to processes of democratic governance.

**Means of people's participation in administration:** People's participation may be formal or informal; direct or indirect or it may be political, social or administrative in nature. Professor S.N. Mishra has classified the means of people's participation in administration into the following four categories:

1. **Participation in decision making:** This mode of participation involves generation of ideas, formulation and assessment of options and making choices about them, as well as the formulation of plans for putting selected options into effect.

2. **Participation in implementation:** People participate in implementation of projects through resource contributions, administration and co-ordinate efforts and programme enlistment activities.

3. **Participation in sharing of benefits:** People participate in project generated benefits which could be material, social or personal.

4. **Participation in monitoring and education:** This is rural people's participation in project evaluation, either directly or indirectly, through political activities or lobbying activities or through some co-operative organization.

Thus, people's participation in administration may take many forms and refers to those activities which show the people's involvement in the process of administration, i.e., participation in policy formulation, programme planning, execution and evaluation of policies.

**Relationship between citizen and administration:** Citizen and administration are just like two sides of the same coin. They are obviously inseparable and closely related to each other. In recent times, active participation between citizen and administration is very important for many reasons. Their relationships can be summarized under the following points:

1. There can be no administration of any kind without the citizen to whom it serves. The ultimate goal of administration is to exist to look after or to take care of the people.
2. Public Administration has to do with people and not with things. It has to do with human beings and essentially a matter of human relationships.
3. Few scholars viewed that Public Administration means totality of governmental activities and concerned with government in action. It is described as the executive, the operative and most obvious part of the government. In fact, Public Administration systematic execution of the will of the people, which has been formulated and expressed in the form of laws passed by the legislature.
4. Public Administration strives hard to ensure essential services to the people. Its main objective is to secure all-round development of the people. It ensures socio-economic, cultural and political development of the state.
5. The concept of development administration demands active participation of the people in administrative process. It is essential to maintain a mutual cooperation between people and administration to achieve its developmental policies, plans, programmes and projects.
6. The recent trends that emerged out of the principle of public-private ownership in Public Administration also reveal the relationships between people and administration.
7. Active cooperation between people and administration is required to prevent widespread maladministration. A close relationship is required to prevent corruption, malpractices, indifferences, inefficiency and irresponsibility of the bureaucrats. The positive side of their relationship results in accountability, efficiency, economy and transparency in administration.
8. Relationship between them also helps in strengthening people's credibility towards administration. The interaction enables the administrators to understand the need and expectation of the people better.

Thus, Public Administration is more comprehensive in contemporary times. It deals with the multifarious needs of the people. Maintaining a cordial relationship between them is good for people and administration as well.

**Problems of people's participation in administration:** Problems of people's participation in administration are varied. Some of the common problems are:

1. Lack of awareness, illiteracy, inertia and general apathy of the people restricts mass participation in administration. Therefore, lack of adequate knowledge of administration is considered as the major problem of people's participation in administration.
2. The nature and degree of people's participation in a developing country like India manifested that the past colonial legacy, socio-cultural diversity and the peculiarity of the political process obviously restrict mass participation in administration.
3. In all administration system, the small group called administrative elite stands to support limited government. For example, in India the decision-making in all major issues of public policy is monopolized by small politico-administrative elite. This hinders mass participation in administration. It is surprising that bureaucracy has become a privileged minority group who frequently refuses to share any decision-making power with anybody including people.
4. Widespread poverty, illiteracy and corruption facilitate the dominance of powerful socio-economic groups who monopolise the fruits of development and progress. Various developmental schemes and planning failed to eradicate widespread poverty, inequality

and unemployment. Consequently, there is a lack of people's support for the goals of policies and programmes of the government.

5. The system of democratic decentralisation introduced in many countries including India did not really help in concentrating power with the people. Community development programmes undertaken in Panchayati Raj system failed to generate necessary enthusiasm and rural initiative. All these programmes turned out to be a governmental programme instead of people's programme.

**Importance of people's participation in administration:** The major objective of people's participation in the administration means active cooperation and involvement of general masses and the targeted people in the various decision-making process, planning, project formulation, implementation, monitoring and review of local level development initiatives in administration. On the other hand, when people involved, they take direct initiative for the operation, maintenance and repair of a facility which benefits them. The people's participation leads to the building of beneficiary capability which calls for both political and administrative decentralization. Again, participation means sharing of information not just about needs and deficiencies but also about possible means of solution to various administrative problems. The importance of people's participation may be summarized under the following points:

*Firstly*, people's participation in administration is considered as an integral part to the process of development especially in a Third World country like India. People participation has become a mass movement in these countries. It is considered not only a means to development but in itself a developmental goal.

*Secondly*, in the planning and programming stages and throughout the implementation of development projects, the participatory process of the people provides important information, ensuring thereby congruence between objectives of development and community values and preferences in the administration.

*Thirdly*, people's participation is essential for maintaining balanced citizen-administration relationship. This relationship helps in reducing the dominance or subservience of administration as well as to minimize the ignorance, and indifferent attitude of citizens. By rationalizing manpower resources utilization, the process is likely to reduce project cost.

*Fourthly*, any change brought about through development will be acceptable to the community if the local people are involved in setting the stage for change, if these are made by people who have to live with them. For example, the concept of rural development indicates the all round development of the village community with the efforts of the people themselves. Panchayati Raj was introduced to operationalise the concept of democratic decentralization and devolution of real power and responsibility to the local people for the development of their respective areas.

*Fifthly*, the functioning of administrative monitoring is better and sustainability of the developmental projects is more likely with the people's participation. Practical experiences tell us that when people have a direct participation in administrative functioning, they fix things or call attention to any administrative malfunctioning.

*Sixthly*, participation in administration is two ways learning process in which both administrators as well as people are benefited. This helps in running the administration efficiently and smoothly.

*Seventhly*, another importance of people's participation is that it rationalizes the proper utilization of manpower resources. The process is likely to reduce project cost in administration.

***Lastly***, active community participation helps in rebuilding community cohesion and installs a sense of dignity into the community.

Thus, people's participation in administration is often advocated at all levels and which is necessary for speedy development. Local government and decentralization are the common recipes in this context. Panchayati Raj in India was recommended in 1957 on the ground that sustainability and meaningful local development would be possible only by the creation of a system of decentralized, participative local government.

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