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Centralization of Decentralized Governance - Evidences from West Bengal Panchayat

Jaydev Misra *

“Democracy is neither black nor red. Democracy is gray... chooses banality over excellence, shrewdness over nobility, empty promise over true competence...It is eternal imperfection, a mixture of sinfulness, saintliness and monkey business. This is why the seekers of a moral state and of a perfectly just society do not like democracy. Yet only democracy-- having the capacity to question itself -- also has the capacity to correct its own mistakes.... G-G-Gray is beautiful”

--Adam Michnik, New Yorker, December 9, 1996

Key Words - Democratic decentralization, participation, access, control, sustainable development, clientelism

I

Introduction

Another Panchayat election has been successfully performed this year by the West Bengal Government. This is particular mention because it is the only state in India where spreading up of power in the hands of common people has been regularly organized in every five years since 1978, when the left parties came into the power in West Bengal. The West Bengal Panchayat election, 2008 includes 49,140 people in the decision

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making process in 3,220 Gram Panchayat; 8500 persons in 329 panchayat samities (middle tier) and 713 local politicians in 17 Zilla Parishad (upper tier) in the state. That is, in the state of 80,221,171 people, more than half lakh is being direct decision taker regarding the basic needs of poorest of poor.

But, striking is that, the ruling parties, especially the Communist Party of India (Marxist), that is, CPM, is facing an unprecedented dent in what it has been taken for granted, that is, its support in the rural West Bengal. The election result is also striking as, in past six successive elections, the coalition of left parties in West Bengal has been repeatedly re-elected with an absolute majority, whereas other Indian states have witnessed incumbents losing elections regularly. But this time, the trickle of defeat during counting of Panchayat polls at the Zilla Parishad (District Council) level turned into a flood when results at the lower tiers emerged. (Exhibit1).

So far the durable political success of the left in West Bengal is described by the economists as the ability of the government to combat rural poverty via land reforms and broad based distribution of benefits from development programs, rather than a strategy of 'clientelism' which have favoured particular narrow groups to the exclusion of many others (Bardhan et al 2008). The state of West Bengal has been ranked third in 2005-06 and also in 2006-07 by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India for its initiatives towards devolution. Richard C. Crook and Alan Sturla Sverrison, two researcher of England at the end of the decade searched out a new theory of interrelationship between erasing poverty and decentralization. Their research with the data of eight countries voiced the outcome that the positive relation between decentralization and development has only been observed in West Bengal. Other than these, from economic perspectives also, the state of West Bengal seems stable. The SRD Cell (Strengthening Rural Development) of Government of West Bengal has revealed that between 1973-74 and 2004-05, population below poverty line has come down from 73.2 per cent to 28.6 per cent. That is, the rate of poverty reduction in West Bengal (44.6 per cent) during this period is just after Kerala (46 per cent)¹. Not only that, during 1980-1999, agriculture has grown at 6.5 per cent in the state which is highest among the states in India. During the same period, State Domestic Product (SDP) in West Bengal has increased almost eight times (Ghosh, 2008).

If it is taken for granted that the results developed by those elites are credible, then the present downfall of the ruling parties in recent Panchayat election seems ridiculous. To find out the actual reasons behind this twist, the issues of governance and development needs to be reexamined.

In the present paper, attempt has been made to analyze whether the recent reforms in the panchayat system in West Bengal leads towards greater participatory governance in terms of greater devolution of power, finances and functions in the hands of common people and thereby providing an enabling environment for sustainable development and poverty reduction; or deepen the problem of clientilism in the banner of party, thereby constraining the path of poverty reduction. The paper is organized as follows. The next section sets out the context in which the issue of decentralization, democracy and development are discussed in West Bengal. Section III contextualizes the political, social and economic ways of Panchayati Raj in West Bengal. The next section, section IV moves on to the challenges being faced currently by the West Bengal Government in overcoming constraints to implement poverty reduction strategies through this decentralized structure. Finally the last section concludes the discussion. The focus of the paper is based on the hypothesis that the term 'decentralization' is never used in the true sense of its meaning. To a certain extent a mystery persists - the mystery of party, politics, supporters and opposers, the ism comes in. This is the ism of clientelism, which is dampening the path of poverty reduction in the state.

II

Democracy, Decentralization and development: Some Vital Concerns

The coupling of decentralization with poverty reduction is a relatively new preoccupation. Traditionally, decentralization was thought in relation to politics, to political sciences, and to the sphere of power play between centre and the periphery, whereas poverty reduction was relegated to economic growth and distribution. This arbitrary division is increasingly thought untenable for good governance by the political theorists and economists. Decentralization deepens the democratic process by engaging

communities over decisions that shape their future, and by empowering them in the allocation of resources while holding accountable those that execute decisions on their behalf. However, the question is still pertinent whether the form of decentralization advocated and practiced leads to poverty reduction or whether this is a pure, but untested, presumption. Evidence on the effects of decentralization on community welfare, and specifically on poverty reduction, is not conclusive¹. Where decentralization is said to be accompanied by participation, empowerment, transparency and accountability, its impact is likely to be positive, as in that situation, it reduces cost of service provision and transaction costs. However, in other cases decentralization may not be a real transfer of power but rather an opportunity for politicians and power groups to capture power, and in extracting rent, at the sub-national level. Hence, when the effect of decentralization on development and people's well being is questioned, the primary concern is what precisely we mean by decentralization and what are the attributes that characterize this.

Decentralization refers to “the transfer of political power, decision making capacity and resources from central to sub-national levels of government” (Walker, 2002). A number of arguments have been advanced to support decentralization including:

Devolution: This involves transferring of political power and administrative autonomy to local government units with locally elected politicians. This system gives local authorities autonomy within clearly demarcated areas of decision-making through constitutional rights.

Deconcentration: Deconcentration of the administrative system involves setting up region or district offices of the central ministries and other state agencies followed by delegation of work and authority from the centre to these local representations of central authorities. Thus deconcentration of the administrative system to bring operations closer to the people.

Delegation. Delegation is a more extensive form of decentralization. Through delegation central governments transfer responsibility for decision-making and administration of public functions to semi-autonomous organizations not wholly controlled by the central government, but ultimately accountable to it. Governments delegate responsibilities when they create public enterprises or corporations, housing authorities, transportation

authorities, special service districts, semi-autonomous school districts, regional development corporations, or special project implementation units.

Accountability: Local communities are better placed to influence politics and policy at the local level than at the national level. Communities can put direct pressure on local authorities if they are unhappy with the delivery of services.

No doubt, the democratization through decentralization and empowerment of local administrative bodies can enhance participation among groups that have traditionally been marginalized by local political process. But, only participation through decentralization (i.e. 'access' to the decision making process) will necessarily lead to improvements in people's well being, is not entirely consistent with documented evidence. A sizable body of literature points out a weak correlation between democratic decentralization and poverty reduction (Blair, 2000; Crook et al, 1998; Rahaman, 2001). Decentralization may pose new problems of co-ordination and planning. As the Kerala experience has shown (Ghatak et al 2002), too much devolution can lead to major duplication of efforts and gaps among different government agencies. Without adequate training and support, the devolution of large sums of money can also over burden local bodies whose members lack the expertise to spend large and complex budget (Bardhan, 2002). Hence, there is no reason to argue that proper implementation of procedural democracy will surely reduce poverty and improve the index of development of a state². That is, decentralization is not without its risks of the following:

Elite capture: Devolution can lead to dominance by local elites and to regional imbalances between areas rich in rich resources and those poor in resources. It is therefore necessary to strike a balance between legitimate local interests on the one hand and legitimate national interests on the other. This balance can be effectively addressed through needs based revenue transfers from central to local governments.

Revenue minimization: Local government may have limitations in their capacity to mobilize local financial resources, or be unwilling to do so;

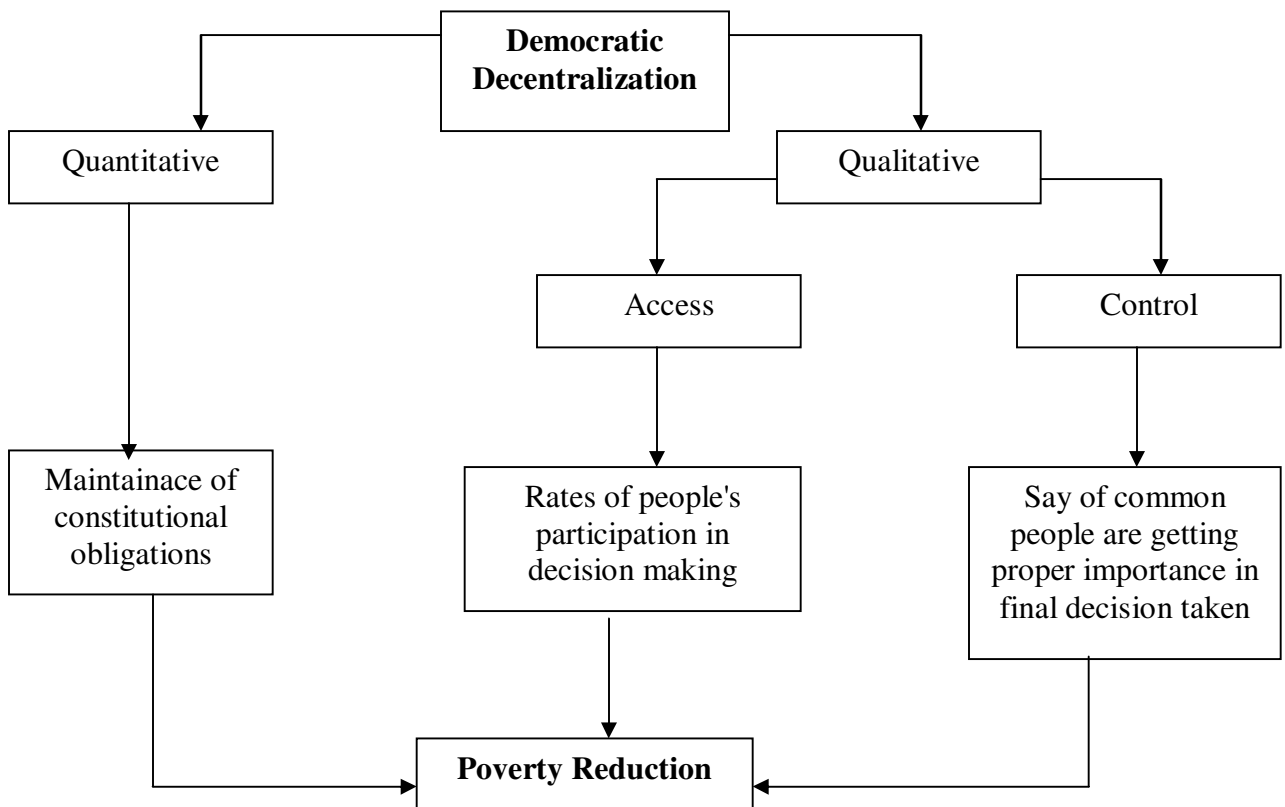
Corruption: More people have political influence under decentralization and consequently the risks of corruption may be higher;

Weak administrative and management systems: The transfer of responsibilities and resources to local government requires effective and efficient administrative and management systems, which may take a while to develop at the local level. Too much deconcentration, in reality, increases centralisation, because, if effective, it extends control of the central authorities over local matters, which may result in frustrating people's participation; and

Lack of participation: The decentralisation of resources and authority will not automatically result in more participatory and inclusive processes and topdown approaches to development may continue regardless.

Hence, to capitalize the concept of democratic decentralization for development, we have to go beyond procedural democracy and question ourselves whether a 'quantitative' rise in the representation of people from lower tier in political decision making would

Chart 1.1: Models of Democratic Decentralization



translate into 'qualitative' changes in the status of those people, thus paving the path for real political empowerment of the poorest of poor. Insurance of this depends on two different dimensions - access and control. Access indicates whether common people are participating in decision making process or not. Latter indicates whether their voice in the decision making process gets proper importance.

Actually, the prerequisites for effective decentralization are still emerging and are not altogether clear in their focus. For many analysts, effective decentralization invariably means that there is devolution of power and that participation, empowerment and accountability of communities is a measure on how successful the process has been. But should this be the sum totality of the expectations? Can we really have effective decentralization if the macroeconomic framework is inimical to economic growth and prosperity, that it is not pro-poor, if investment in health, water, sanitation and education, which are of vital importance to communities, is inadequate, and if there is no policy space for communities to operate? Participation and empowerment will sound hollow if illiteracy rates are high, with an added bias against women, if the macro stance implies usurious rates of interest that the poor cannot access, and if communities and civil society organizations cannot provide alternatives in the absence of markets. In the context of decentralized model implemented in West Bengal Panchayat, such considerations may appear significant to answer the very twist in recent Panchayat election result.

III

Democratic Decentralization and Development in West Bengal

Before 1977, West Bengal Legislative Assembly passed a series of Acts on Panchayat system consecutively in 1957, 1963 and 1973. However, the real journey of the Panchayati Raj system in West Bengal began under Left Front Government (LFG) in 1978. The experience of West Bengal under the Panchayat system stands in sharp contrast with that of other states and, together with land reforms, the Panchayat has been credited for playing an important role in the impressive economic

turn-around of the state since 1980s. West Bengal is the first and only major state to have organized Panchayat elections on a party basis regularly in every five years since 1978.

The Panchayati Raj system in West Bengal has won accolade not only from the scholars in India but also from the political theorists and economists abroad. The West Bengal Panchayat system has very often been considered as role model for the rest of the country. Primarily based on the experience of West Bengal, the Government of India passed constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 to give constitutional status to the Local Self Government (LSG). The 73rd Amendment Act initiated the journey of the 'third generation Panchayat system' in the country. So far, as the people's participation³ is considered, West Bengal remains the pioneer in the context of creating a space for third generation Panchayat Raj system in all respects. In addition to the Gram Sabha, the Government of West Bengal has also made a provision for creating the gram samsad so that people can directly be involved in the decision-making process as well as implementing functions of the Panchayat.

In spite of that, the rural West Bengal seems ominous with respect to development perspectives and it raises a serious question about the effectiveness of recent policies implemented in the Panchayats in West Bengal. The latest Annual Administrative Report (2006-07) of the Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal reveals that the state is still impaired with abject poverty, acute unemployment, low level of primary education and depressing indices of human development. Following the report, certain crucial observations are in order –

1. Around ten million people in our state can not secure two squares of meals through out the year. Another two million are surviving with no mill a day in the worst affected districts of Malda, Murshidabad, Jalpaiguri, Purulia, Dakhsin Dinajpur, Uttar Dinajpur, Bankura and Paschim Medinipur. The Government report admits that around 16.5 per cent of the total state population are facing difficulties arranging two square of mill per day. To combat poverty, Government of West Bengal has identified 4,612 villages as backward and those villages are scattered among the 1,169 Gram Panchayat (out of 3,354 Panchayat in total) in 239 block of the state (Exhibit 2).

2. While overall schedule tribes population of the state is 5.5 per cent, those 'backward villages' consist of 30 per cent of the STs population. Thirty two per cent of the total population of those villages are landless and 82 per cent of the remaining population depend on monsoon. About 45 per cent of the total GPs in West Bengal have irrigation facilities less than 40 per cent. In 1046 GPs, it is even less than 20 per cent. With these, A wide disparity in BPL measures has been reported by the report⁴.
3. Striking is that, in those villages, More than 60 per cent of those villagers have no job. The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is there to help the rural poor generate some income. In our state, per household availability of employment on an average has been only 14 days. The position is particularly poor in respect of Jalpaiguri, Murshidabad, Uttar Dinajpur, South 24 Parganas and Malda (Exhibit 5). Media reveals that Rs 650 crore remains unspent under the implementation of the programme (Anandabazar Patrika, February 03, 2008) whereas, 34.8 per cent of the GPs has been recognized as backward with a point that those village have no pucca roads (which can easily be implemented through NREGS programme). Not only that, according to government sources, the total amount already allocated and which was required to be utilised under various schemes before March 31, 2008 was more than nine hundred crores. That means, the wide list of development programmes could not be implemented and this may be due to lack of awareness, inadequacy of preparedness of the implemented machinery for which necessary collective measures was necessary (Exhibit 3).
4. Apart from these pictures of abject poverty and malnutrition, aspect of primary education also seems quite depressing. The female illiteracy rate in the backward villages of eight districts is more than 70 per cent, while the overall illiteracy rate is less than 30 per cent for the state. Education up to primary level is impaired by the Sishu Shikhsa Kendra (SSKs). But the number of SSKs in the state has decreased from 16,054 numbers in 2005-06 to 16,117 numbers of SSKs, which functioned during the previous year.
5. From human development perspectives also, the rural West Bengal seems to be an underdeveloped state. The underweight childbirth, according to the recent

report, is more than ten per cent in 2109 (62 per cent) GPs of the state. There is no percentage of children during the last one year born either in hospital or with the help of a trained birth attendant in 463 GPs of the state. In another 1934 (57.6 per cent) GPs, the said percentage is less than twenty per cent. In addition, the neonatal mortality rate, maternal mortality ratio and the infant mortality rate are still less than the national averages.

Then what actually the Panchayat are doing in the state? It can safely be concluded that the recent poverty alleviation programmes implemented by the Department of Panchayat and Rural Development are continuously neglecting the issue of endemic hunger, abject poverty and acute unemployment. Not only that, there is wide regional variation in the implementation of those programmes. One reason behind this may be the low level of participation in the activities of the Panchayat. The departmental report admits that, in more than 68 per cent of the total Gram Panchayat in the state, average attendance rate in the last gram Samsad meeting was less than 20 per cent. Not a single GPs could manage even 50 percent of attendance (Exhibit 6). In 1523 GPs (45.41 per cent), the average attendance in last Gram Samsad meeting was between 12 to 15 per cent and in 767 GPs, it was even less than 12 per cent. Only 78 GPs around 40 percent of the people had participated that meeting. The participation rate in Block Panchayat is more depressing. In 230 out of 333 Panchayat Samities, no Half Yearly Block Samsad meeting was held (Exhibit 7, 8). Government is campaigning enough for participation. But people are still surviving with their belief that all those meetings are actually useless.

Why? The recent studies in this respect have brought out some crucial explanations. The survey conducted by Pravat Datta in Birbhum and Jalpaiguri indicated that attendance in Gram Samsad meeting was only 15 per cent. Majority of the respondents in the study area felt that decisions of Gram Samsad had been taken earlier in the party office, they only endorsed them later. Another study conducted by Ghatak and Ghatak on twenty villages in South 24 Parganas reveals that the members present in the Gram Samsad meetings are mainly the supporters of the ruling party. Sachinanda Sau and Basubandhu Sengupta did an empirical study in Kharagpur II block of West Medinipur district of West Bengal on people's participation in grass-root institutions of decentralized planning.

The study shows that there has been a decline in the overall participation rate in Gram Samsad meetings. Debjani Sengupta and Dilip Ghosh based on their empirical study opine that “Gram Samsad meeting has failed to attract the village people not because they are less aware, but they are very much aware that attendance to Gram Samsad meetings will end just in killing of time”.

Presently, people's participation has emerged as a political slogan as it has become the pre-condition for development. Broadly, the people's participation in rural panchayat means their total involvement with its programme and activities. In democracy, the role of political parties is of utmost significance. It is termed as 'life of democracy'. It is the responsibility of the political parties to keep alive the spirit of democracy. In democracy, the political parties not only create the consciousness among the citizen, but, in fact, they also act as a weapon of working class to establish their rights. But in the research of those economists and political theorists, it has emerged that the whole operation of the Panchayat system in West Bengal during Left Front regime has been determined by its political strategy. This view has also been reflected in the research findings of scholars like Bandyopadhyay (1999), Webster (1999) and Bhattacharya (1998) that the CPM party has increasingly organized itself along strong democratic centralized lines. The party asserts a strong control over its members and supporters, including the members of the Panchayats. Those studies brings one unique conclusion that the affairs of the GPs are discussed by the local party members in closed door meetings and the elected supporters are then advised as to how party policy should be carried out through the GPs.

IV

Issues and Concerns about West Bengal Panchayat

One lesson that West Bengal experience teaches is that little changes with the mere passing of a law. Although local self governments—to use the constitutional term—have come into existence, the conditions in which they can work effectively do not exist. The tasks that these bodies (GPs, PSs and ZPs) are to look after are not new tasks. Till now, there have been vertically integrated agencies that have been responsible for these tasks.

For example, the Health Department has been running primary health centres; the Education Department has been running schools. Similarly, other departments have had their local presence and function. They have staff posted in every district and village, and a well established administrative machinery headed in the district by the Collector or Magistrate. They continue to work as before because the changes that brought in PRIs have not affected their functioning in any way. The district Collector still continues to be the first citizen of the district, even though today the elected President of the district panchayat holds elective, but decorative, office. The delegation of administrative powers gives the Collector—by whatever name called—the powers of the government. It is he who can declare a district ‘drought hit’, not the elected President. He reports to the state government, not the locally elected official. He is charged with responsibility for law and order and controls the police. His promotions and postings are decided at levels above the district. This line of authority has not changed in the least with the arrival on the scene of the PRIs.

There is opposition also from the NGO sector. As mentioned in the various reports of SRD cell of Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, the number of Self Help Group (SHG) has increased from 58,708 in 2002-03 to 1,78,050 up to February, 2008. Those SHGs have been shown as to empower the poor in a number of ways. First, they can connect poor and marginal people with a wider circle of allies, with whom they can mount a more effective political lobby. They have been working in all parts of the state for many years now. They have been running schools, hospitals, credit groups and much more. They have been innovative; what they have done today, governments have taken up tomorrow. They have brought in ‘people’s participation’. Many of them are large, with capable staff and good funding. The sector has a good track record. They have begun to see the PRIs as rivals who are taking up their space. They argue that the PRIs are ‘political’ and hence necessarily out of tune with the problems of the poor, who need the guidance of those whose only agenda is poverty alleviation, not political advancement. This group sees the NGO sector as the local state—or a substitute for the state⁵⁰, and the PRI as a ‘political’ interloper. That the PRI is democratically elected and representative, unlike the NGO, is neither here nor there. In a sense, this is a turf war⁵. Not only that, some electronic media, before Panchayat election raised the issue that

SHGs are campaigning in favour of ruling party before election. That is, it can be concluded, they are also not free from clienlism.

The condition of the state finances deteriorated over a number of years and was acknowledged as being in crisis in 2003-04 budget statement. The statement admits that this crisis was not caused by low economic growth, but by the public sector pay raises and payment of pensions. With the majority of the budget absorbed by recurrent expenditure scope for poverty reduction activities was constrained. But intention of the Government was something else. As the sustenance and well-being of those state employees are derived from the state and its revenues, the ruling government successfully organized, controlled and disciplined these members to act as an extension of the party. The government and the employees' union have become two closely tied centers of power. This strategic use of constitutional democracy for the sake of the party came with resultant fiscal crisis, thereby ignoring the needs of poor in rural Bengal.

By our pilot survey during panchayat election, it is found that the opposition parties or minority factions in the state stop attending the village council meetings or the public hearing, as they perceive that they cannot do much about the ruling party's spending of public funds that takes the form of widespread distribution of patronage. Sometimes whole of the villagers had expressed their agitation against the local ruling parties by not casting their votes in mass. This sometimes consolidates its electoral advantage.

V

By Ways of Conclusion

A principal aim of this article was to explore the extent to which efforts at empowering and democratizing local political bodies have produced real and sustainable gains for the rural poor in West Bengal. The above findings paint a somewhat ambiguous picture of the lengths to which models of democratic decentralization can go in relieving endemic rural poverty in West Bengal. And these may throw some implication on the present unexpected result in West Bengal Panchayat Election.

In one respect, they suggest that the correlation between democratic decentralisation and improvements in rural inequality and regional disparity has been relatively weak with respect to West Bengal Panchayat⁶.

Such findings illustrate the limitations of using models of democratic decentralisation to alleviate poverty in rural areas. It is found that state government is unlikely to pursue substantive redistributive programmes unless ruling elites are ideologically and politically committed to the goal of poverty reduction. This, in turn, raises questions about the ways in which poverty, and therefore the need for poverty reduction, is articulated within West Bengal. A second area of concern touches upon the tension between increasingly participatory systems of governance and the needs of effective and coherent party politics of the rural elites. That is, the democratic decentralization model in the State allows access of people in the process, but people have no control in the final decision taken. The decisions are taken centrally by the party office.

Clearly, therefore, democratic decentralization in the state of West Bengal, of its own, are not producing systems that are more effective or more accountable to local needs and interests. The formal mechanisms matter less than the informal institutions that underpin local political economies. And the understanding of it by the poor may have been reflected in the ballot box of Panchayat election. If 'only alternative of the left is better left', then the left strategy of democratic decentralization must have to be replaced by alternative model with more accountability, less corruption and abolition of those clientilism.

Notes:

1. See Vinod Vyasulu, *Panchayats, Democracy and Development*, Rawat Publishers, New Delhi, 2003, and Vinod Vyasulu, “Transformations in Governance in the 1990s: Some Reflections” *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5th June, 2004 for a detailed discussion.
2. See also “Decentralisation in India: Challenges and Opportunities”, Human Development Resource Centre, UNDP, 2000, for a clear statement of issues.
3. People’s participation is then implicitly pitted against representative democracy. This view can be seen in Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze, *India: Development and Participation*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2002. See my review of this book, in *EPW*, “Development and Participation: What is Missing?” 13, August 2002 for an elaboration of this point.
4. “Below Poverty Line and “Above Poverty Line”—India’s poverty reduction strategy cannot do without acronyms and initials! See Vinod Vyasulu, *Panchayats, Democracy and Development*, Rawat Publishers, New Delhi, 2003, and Vinod Vyasulu, “Transformations in Governance in the 1990s: Some Reflections” *Economic and Political Weekly*, 5th June, 2004 for a detailed discussion.
5. See the review by Alok Sinha, “Decentralised Governance and NGOs” *EPW*, 31 March 2001.
6. People’s participation is then implicitly pitted against representative democracy. This view can be seen in Amartya Sen and Jean Dreze, *India: Development and Participation*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi

List of Exhibits:

Exhibit 1: Result of Panchayat Election in West Bengal (2008)

Tier of Decentralization	Left Front		Opposition	
	2003	2008	2003	2008
ZP	622	518	90	230
PS	284	189	45	140
GP	2303	1633	917	1463

Note: ZP stands for Zilla Parishad (District Council), PS stands for Panchayat Samities (Block Council) and GP stands for Gram Panchayat (village council) of the three tier panchayat system in West Bengal.

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

Exhibit 2: Distribution of Backward Villages in Worst Affected Districts in West Bengal

District	No of Blocks	No of Block consisting Backward Villages	No of Gram Panchayat	No of Panchayat consisting Backward Villages	No of Backward Villages	Percentage of Backward Villages to total
Jalpaiguri	13	11	146	45	79	10.45
N Dinajpur	9	9	98	92	760	50.53
S Dinajpur	8	8	65	49	184	11.23
Malda	15	15	146	114	602	33.46
Murshidabad	26	23	254	103	242	10.45
W Medinipur	29	24	290	173	637	7.32
Bankura	22	22	190	151	569	14.05
Purulia	20	20	170	150	994	37.05
Birbhum	19	18	167	96	218	8.80

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

Exhibit 3: Person Days Generated per BPL Family under Various Wage Employment Programme in West Bengal

No of Days of Employment	GP	Percentage to total GPs
25 days or more	343	10.23
24 to 10 days	2154	64.22
Less than 10 days	665	19.82

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

Exhibit 4: Progress of Receiving Nirmal Gram Puroskar by GPs in Worst Affected Districts

District	Total No of Gram Panchayat	Nirmal Gram in 2004-05	Nirmal Gram in 2005-06
Jalpaiguri	146	0	0
N Dinajpur	98	0	0
S Dinajpur	65	0	0
Malda	146	0	0
Murshidabad	254	0	0
W Medinipur	290	4	43
Bankura	190	0	0
Purulia	170	0	0
Birbhum	167	0	0

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

Exhibit 5: Progress of NREGA in West Bengal during 2006-07

District	Employment provided	Works completed	Mandays generated per family
Jalpaiguri	4,33,362	2,045	11
N Dinajpur	4,92,674	3,496	10
S Dinajpur	2,35,768	1,801	16
Malda	2,42,237	680	13
Murshidabad	6,15,642	2,077	8
W Medinipur	6,14,360	4,048	16
Bankura	7,28,999	1,239	24
Purulia	6,55,150	1,263	15
Birbhum	16,75,713	6,108	22

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

Exhibit 6: Average Attendance in Last Gram Samsad Meeting in 2006-07

Percentage of Attendance	No of GPs	Percentage of Attendance
100-50	0	0.00
50-40	78	2.32
40-20	814	24.27
Less than 20	2290	68.27

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

Exhibit 7: Average Attendance in Last Block Samsad Meeting in 2006-07

Percentage of Attendance	No of PSs	Percentage of Attendance
100-60	0	0.00
60-40	170	51.06
40-20	101	30.33
Less than 20	62	18.61

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

Exhibit 8: Progress of Holding Block Samsad Meeting in 2006-07

No of Panchayat Samities	Total No of Block where Meetings held		No of PS which did not hold any meetings	
	Half-Yearly	Annual	Half Yearly	Annual
333	103	262	230	71

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

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