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## UNIT 14 GRASSROOTS/PEOPLE'S INITIATIVES

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### 14.1 INTRODUCTION

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During the last decades citizens have been frequently taking the initiative in reclaiming their rightful place as the catalysts of social change. The civil society is considered a “global mosaic” with new frontiers including the role of the women and youth, local community, micro-enterprise and participatory methods, which are considered indicators of a healthy society. According to the UNDP, “Civil society, together with the state and market, is one of the three “spheres” that interface in the making of democratic societies. Civil society is the sphere in which social movements become organised. The organisations of civil society, which represent many diverse and sometimes contradictory social interests...include church-related groups, trade unions, co-operatives, services organisations, community groups and youth organisations, as well as academic institutions and others” (UNDP 1993).

In the last years, a stronger attention to the problems of development and international co-operation has been given at the grass-roots level. Citizens organised in associations, groups or NGOs representing the civil society, have taken the initiative and concrete actions towards less developed countries or countries in emergency affected by either natural or man-made disasters.

The phenomenon of the citizens' participation in international co-operation activities has become more relevant than it was in the past. In the advanced industrialised societies every new generation shows more interest for the post-materialistic values than the previous one. Post-materialistic values are those oriented to "a less impersonal society" that "give more importance to the opinion of the people about the decision-making process in the working environment and in the community". These values "defend the freedom of word", give "priority to the ideas rather than money" and "try to make our towns and countryside more beautiful". On the other side, materialism aspires to "maintain a high level of economic growth" while fighting against the high cost of living". Its main objectives are to "keep a stable economy", "strengthen the defence of the country", "maintain the order of the nation", and "fight against the criminality".

### **Aims and Objectives**

After studying the Unit, you will be able to understand

- The meaning of grassroots/people initiatives
- Approaches to the study of Panchayati Raj Institutions
- Main limits and constraints of grass-root initiatives.

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## **14.2 DECENTRALISATION**

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Decentralisation brings government closer to the people. The existence of local political arenas makes it easier for ordinary citizens to participate and exert influence. When power is brought closer to the citizens, the political process becomes more tangible and transparent and more people can become involved. Decentralisation may also create a more open political system in that it implies a division of powers in society; many channels of representation and power sharing become available. This counteracts the monopolisation of power by certain elite groups, often the consequence of centralised political and administrative structures. A decentralised system is also more accessible to new political movements and minority groups in their attempts to influence politics. This is particularly important in ethnically divided societies, where political exclusion can have seriously polarising effects (Hadenius, 2001).

Decentralisation promotes participation and improves the controlling function held by the lower levels of the political system. Its greater degree of political inclusiveness may also have important conflict-dampening effects. Decentralisation—the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to subordinate or quasi-independent government organisations and/or the private sector—is a complex multifaceted concept. It is the process of dispersing decision-making governance closer to the people and/or citizen. "While frequently left undefined, decentralization has also been assigned many different meanings, varying across countries, languages, general contexts, fields of research, and specific scholars and studies."

A central theme in decentralisation is the difference between a hierarchy based on:

- Authority: two players in an unequal-power relationship; and
- An interface: a lateral relationship between two players of roughly equal power.

The more decentralised a system is, the more it relies on lateral relationships, and the less it can rely on command or force. In development jargon, decentralisation is still a

relatively new and not altogether becoming term, but it probably has the advantage of saying clearly what it intends. It implies, correctly, that past development efforts have too narrowly operated in the context of centralised inter-governmental co-operation. The concept of an 'exclusive club' still largely prevails, but international co-operation, in a decentralised mode, recognises that a "people's sector" has a growing place in development and solidarity efforts.

Currently, Decentralisation seeks to reflect the fact that genuine development involves actors beyond the mere government sector. The increasing place of "civil society", the informal groups and formal organisations and communities who have a stake in the national interest and in development, has been recognised, in large part as a result of their own efforts and contributions.

### 14.2.1 Different views about Decentralisation

Decentralisation and centralisation are themes that have played major roles in the history of many societies. An excellent example is the gradual political and organisational changes that have occurred in European history. During the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, Europe went through major centralisation and decentralisation. Although the leaders of the Roman Empire created a European infrastructure, the fall of the Empire left Europe without a strong political system or military protection. Viking and other barbarian attacks further led rich Romans to build up their *latifundia*, or large estates, in a way that would protect their families and create a self-sufficient living place. This development led to the growth of the manorial system in Europe. This system was greatly decentralised, as the lords of the manor had power to defend and control the small agricultural environment that was their manor. The manors of the early Middle Ages slowly came together as lords took oaths of fealty to other lords in order to have even stronger defence against other manors and barbarian groups. This feudal system was also greatly decentralised, and the kings of weak "countries" did not hold much significant power over the nobility. Although some view the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages as a centralising factor, it played a strong role in weakening the power of the secular kings, which gave the nobility more power. As the Middle Ages wore on, corruption in the church and new political ideas began to slowly strengthen the secular powers and bring together the extremely decentralised society. This centralisation continued through the Renaissance and has been changed and reformed until the present centralised system which is thought to have a balance between central government and decentralised balance of power. For the European Community, decentralisation is a development method (not a specific instrument), through which public funds support decentralised agents - NGOs and other associations working for the development of populations, representative local authorities - in their initiatives in designing and managing local or sectoral development programmes.

Decentralisation is based on a participatory development approach, centred on the needs expressed by the people concerned and their representative organisations and on how they wish to see these needs met. This enhances the grassroots democratic social fabric. Decentralisation is based on the logic of local development. It requires a programmed approach of envisaging development actions, as well as coherence between interventions by decentralised agents and governments, and co-operation between them, while respecting each other's role and autonomy.

For the European Commission, Decentralisation is a new co-operation approach: it is an action carried out by a local agent in a Southern country, defined, in the broad meaning of the term, as a non-state agent. Participation of a partner from an EU member state

is not indispensable and if there is one, the partner is not necessarily a local authority. The partner may be an NGO.

In several other countries, such as France, decentralisation is directly linked to the type of agent in the North. It is a form of co-operation undertaken by a local authority, theoretically, in partnership with another local authority in the South, Eastern Europe and also in the North. In practice, these partners are diverse and mostly associative. The different approaches may overlap due to consultations between local authorities and NGOs, in the North and South, with regard to development programmes that take into account the expectations of all citizens, especially those most marginalised. In this regard, the objectives of the different approaches converge, forming a common aspiration: development and local democracy.

At this point, it is interesting to describe the Italian point of view concerning Decentralisation. In fact, in the last years, scores of Italian local government institutions such as Regions, Provinces and Municipalities have been involved in humanitarian activities with other countries. Some activities of Decentralisation started on a small and isolated scale as twinning projects or solidarity actions. Some others have been co-ordinated by the Italian Co-operation (Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) or UN organisations (UNDP and WHO). On several occasions, human and material resources belonging to the involved institutions have been integrated with the efforts of different sectors of the civil society engaged in international aid coming from the same geographical area. The Italian local government institutions have been able to mobilise technical and solidarity resources of their territory promoting human development at the community level.

The Italian model of Decentralisation links between local communities in donor countries and local communities in countries where multilateral human development initiatives are being implemented. Decentralisation is an integral part of these programmes and takes place within their overall institutional framework. The objective of these links is to create and consolidate long-term cultural, technical and economic partnerships between local communities in the North and the South as a tool for promoting human development objectives.

Decentralisation and local governance are central issues in India today. When India gained independence in 1947 it had a population of 360 million, living, apart from the Provinces under direct British rule, in 562 princely states that came together to form the Union of India under the Constitution adopted on 26 November 1949. In terms of plurality of religion, culture, language and diversity, India has no parallel. When India became a republic on 26 January 1950 it was considered a highly centralised system. In the last five decades, India has travelled a long road towards decentralisation, especially through institutions of local self-government.

### **14.2.2 The Pre-Independence Period**

Self-governing village communities had existed in India from the earliest times. These village bodies of five persons were known as panchayats, a term that could best be translated as Village Councils. Panchayats symbolise the power of the people. Panchayats have been an integral part of the rural cultural heritage from the time immemorial in India. The term "Panchayat" literally means an assembly of five (Panch) persons, elected by villagers.

Village Councils and officials in India can be traced as far back as the Vedic age. They

looked after the affairs of the village, had police and judicial powers and were the lines of contact with higher authorities on matters affecting the villages. Custom and religion elevated them to a sacred position of authority. These panchayats were the pivot of administration, the centre of social life, and, above all, a focus of social solidarity. Besides these panchayats or village councils, there were also caste panchayats, whose role was to ensure that persons belonging to a particular caste adhered to its code of social conduct and ethics. Even during the medieval and Mughal periods, this characteristic of the village panchayats remained unchanged. So much so that Sir Charles Metcalfe, who was the Governor-General of India (1835-36), called the panchayats “the little republics”. Given the caste-ridden feudal structure of the village society of those days, these republics left much to be desired.

Dr.B. R. Ambedkar, the architect of the Indian Constitution, did not think highly of these panchayats and, in fact, his own experience had given him a negative view of them. His well-known remark in the Constituent Assembly on 4 November 1948 that “these village republics” have been the ruination of India and that they were “a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism” has validity in several parts of the country even today. With the advent of the British, the self-contained village communities and their panchayats were replaced by formally constituted village administration. Local self-government in India – in the sense of an accountable, representative institution – was the creation of the British. Although not the first reforms of its kind, the Ripon Resolution of 1882 providing for local boards consisting of a large majority of elected non-official members and presided over by a non-official chairperson, is considered to be the Magna Charta of local democracy in India. Although the progress of local self-government on the lines of the Ripon Resolution was tardy, the term self-government had begun to gain currency and it triggered several resolutions aimed at strengthening the panchayats and local government on the part of the Congress Party, which was fighting for India’s freedom, including self-government as the political goal for the country. But most importantly, village panchayats became central to the ideological framework of India’s national movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. For him the village panchayat was a complete republic based on perfect democracy and individual freedom (Gandhi, 1942).

Mahatma Gandhi was among those who believed that for freedom to be meaningful, real power must rest with the rural communities. He wanted the survival of village Panchayats. “India’s independence”, he maintained, “must begin at the bottom”. As a result of their efforts, a provision was embodied in the Constitution to the effect that, “the state shall take steps to organize village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.”

Gandhi wanted the village Panchayats to come together to form a strong broad-based network of republics spread all over the country, peacefully cooperating with one-another, primarily for mutual economic, social and political harmony and interaction. He further tried to examine carefully whether, in the present state, Panchayats are anywhere near the goal laid down by Gandhi and whether they are and will be proceeding in the correct direction. If not, where did we err and what should be done to rectify the defect?

#### **14.2.2.1 Approaches to Study the Concept of Panchayati Raj**

There can be two approaches for the formulation of the concept of Panchayati Raj – the normative and empirical. The Gandhian society, in its ideal form, does not approve of

vertical social positions. In an ideal Gandhian system there can be no high or low positions; there will be only social positions of equal prestige because in a classless society, where caste hierarchy is not recognised, there will not be any possibility for differentiations. All occupations will have the same ranking. The motivation for social actions will not be egoistic but altruistic. The community service will replace motivation for personal gain and competition. There will be no conflict between individuals because all actions will be non-violent. In such a society the unity of administration will be a Panchayat. Each village will be a self-sufficient, self-sustaining and self-administered republic.

#### **14.2.2 PRIs for Decentralization at the Grassroots level**

The PRIs in India are the prime instrument of decentralisation at the grass-roots level and the future hope of rural development in India lies on it. It is an institutionalised mechanism for empowering the people in general and women and weaker sections in particular. The Panchayati Raj System ushered the India in 21<sup>st</sup> Century to fulfill the new hope and aspirations of the people by incorporating Gandhian model of development with new science and technology. No model is immutable and valid for all times to come. What is, therefore needed is a trade-off between the pristine purity of Gandhian village model and the modern worldwide economic paradigms preserving some parts and not all of Gandhian model.

#### **14.2.3 Characteristics of decentralised co-operation in human development programmes**

**Territorial:** That is planning taking place in a well-defined area, small enough to permit the active participation of the local community and large enough to have the resources necessary to support local development plans and to constitute an authoritative interlocutor for national and international policies.

**Connected:** That is linked with sustainable human development programmes, which can guarantee linking local development to national and international policies. The harmonisation of micro and macro approaches is the premise for effectiveness and sustainability. By elaborating local development plans, specific projects can be inserted in a unified strategy.

**Integrated:** That is the necessary association of income, health, education, environment and human rights, as components of development.

**Participatory:** That is focusing on concerted decision-making processes between public institutions and civil society

**Sustainable:** That is maintaining economic and organisational support to development in linked communities, beyond the conclusion of a given co-operation project

**Partnerships:** That is relationships among communities in the North and South, with the different entities involved, in international development co-operation – governments, local authorities, NGOs, International organisations

**Vision:** That is conceiving the social development as a “common interest”, as a process which not only improves economic indicators but also the quality of human relationships and individual opportunities in all parts of the world (Italian Co-operation/UNDP/UNOPS, 1999).

#### **14.2.4 Characteristics of Decentralisation According to WHO**

The main characteristics of Decentralisation according to WHO experience are as follows.

##### **Local Governments and Civil Society Together**

The synergy between actions of local governments and civil society is a peculiar characteristic of Decentralisation. The local government (municipality, province, canton, region, etc.) is the co-ordinator of the active bodies in its area which may include citizen's associations, NGOs, trade unions, enterprises, social co-operatives, etc. As a decentralised institution, nearer to the citizens and rooted in its territory, the local government is better able to link the efforts of the different interested actors. The co-ordination role is accompanied by a specific involvement of the public services within which the local government is articulated. Decentralisation combines the expertise of the health and social services sectors with that of the economic, educational and cultural sectors.

##### **Mobilisation of different resources**

Besides the financial resources coming from local government, private organisations and the third sector\*, human resources are another peculiarity of Decentralisation. Human resources are mobilised for specific activities such as training courses and technical assistance. Health and social services' expertise is used to assist institutions, which have to reorganise their work to improve efficiency and effectiveness. However, the exchange activities are stimulating all the potentials of human resources in Decentralisation. In fact, during the visits to health services, in the meetings and seminars as well as during the joint recreational activities, participants interact on both professional and social levels, opening their own experiences to each other. A bi-directional relationship among people with their relative expertise is established with mutual benefit in a long-term perspective.

##### **Community involvement**

Decentralisation, understood as local governments and civil society together, requires a participatory approach. The communities are involved because the co-operation is decentralised. Individuals, associations, institutions make part of the process in the two countries. As opposed to the rhetoric of international co-operation, the community involvement has become a common practice of Decentralisation. Community is seen as a partner in the implementation of the activities for planning and development and not a resource, which is replacing the role of public services and institutions.

##### **Coexistence of micro and macro strategies**

Decentralisation implies that the strategy of the activities is local. In fact, the community, the municipality, the canton are the main interlocutors. It is important for Decentralisation to have a specific territorial boundary taken into account with its problems and resources. However, the central level is well considered as the point of reference for policies, guidelines, and reform processes. The small and punctual initiatives implemented at peripheral level are connected with a general frame from a macro perspective. The role of UN organisations, especially that of WHO, in the health sector, is crucial to guarantee the link between the two levels.

##### **Mediation and Negotiation**

Decentralisation works through mediation and negotiation methods. Each of the parties previously involved in the armed conflict take part in the process. Former enemies joining in the participation of activities such as preliminary meetings, need assessments, planning exercises, or training sessions can strengthen the trend of reconciliation.

## **Sustainability**

By mobilising human resources and undertaking exchange activities, Decentralisation is utilising low-cost resources, which can be used over a long period of time. This is due to the political and technical interests and, especially, human relationships. The links among people established through Decentralisation are not cold professional connections but interpersonal relationships with cultural differences and affinities, which develop a positive cycle of affection. Moreover, by activating the civil society and training the staff, Decentralisation creates better conditions within public institutions and non-profit organisations to undertake activities with their own resources.

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## **14.3 STRATEGIES**

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The state government plays an important role in establishing the rules and standards to be applied. But not everything can be directed from the centre. Successful decentralisation is the result of interplay between central and local actors. What the centre can do is establish incentives and the rules of the game, thus encouraging new modes of behaviour at the local level. The trick is to initiate a local dynamic that works independently in support of political and administrative reform.

### **14.3.1 Control from above**

Central government can do much to control local activities – both *ex ante* and *ex post*. There is a broad array of measures to be applied *ex ante* (that is, before local programmes are started). The central government can, for example, lay down specific criteria for choosing local programmes and for possible beneficiaries. It can also specify the decision processes to be applied. To ensure that local organs do things right, it is sometimes required that the central government (or its representatives) endorse local budgets, and even individual programmes. Such a requirement implies, however, that the local authorities enjoy only limited autonomy.

Another way for the state to intervene *ex ante* is to influence the recruitment of local personnel. In some successful programmes (Tendler, 1997), central government has taken charge of recruitment of the agents who should carry out the work in the field, with the intention of safeguarding an essential degree of professionalism and work-engagement among these field agents. This strategy also deprived local authorities of an important source of patronage, since the distribution of jobs is often a key factor in exerting political dominance. This was, of course, an intended consequence although no doubt, by intervening in local recruitment processes, the centre may create troublesome tensions between itself and local power-holders.

In controlling *ex post*, central authorities try by various means to supervise and monitor programmes that have been carried out. This, however, is not an easy task. As observed by Ostrom (1990), the supervision of local activities from the centre is seldom efficient, mainly because it is difficult to obtain reliable information on what really has been achieved. While people have been working (on paper at least) and money has obviously been spent, it is difficult to find out from a distance what has actually been done and what the outcome has been, especially if a number of dispersed small programmes have been operating simultaneously. New information systems that make it possible to trace economic transfers even at the local level may increase the degree of transparency (Nistads, 2001). Such systems are still scarce in poor countries, however. Besides, economic transactions are only one side of the problem. Other policy instruments that promote good performance are therefore also needed.



### **14.3.2 Encouragement and Information**

Studies of successful reform programmes reveal that work ethics can make a big difference. Great efforts have sometimes been made to motivate field agents to perform well. It is important to create a feeling among those involved in a programme that it is not just a matter of doing a job (and getting a salary), but of carrying out a mission. An enhanced work ethic has also proven to be a side-effect of recruitment on merit. Employment on the basis of certain qualifications of a technical or personal character gives prestige to the staff in question, and this in turn tends to generate dedication in carrying out the job. When projects have got off the ground, official appreciation of good performance, e.g., by awarding prizes to successful communities and individual participants, is another way of boosting the work-spirit (Tendler, 1997).

Another important policy instrument is information to the general public about the goals of the programme, about the resources that have been invested, and about the achievements that have been made. This increases awareness in society, especially among potential beneficiaries, about the programme, and generates valuable popular support for the measures taken, thus facilitating the operation of the programme. Such publicity, moreover, tends to further the work-spirit of the agents. In addition, enhanced awareness among the general public makes it easier for society to exert control (Ibid).

### **14.3.3 Control from Below**

The principal argument in Ostrom's study (1990) is that in order to bring about sustainable reforms, a process of change must take place in the local community. Central government can facilitate such a development in several ways, but it cannot accomplish the process itself; this can only be done by local actors on the ground. To a great extent, it is a matter of mobilising and empowering the local community. Hence, local democratisation is an essential part of the 'reform package'.

A basic weakness of centralisation is the fact that this mode of decision-making is inflexible to varying local demands and conditions. In addition, central actors are severely restrained when it comes to monitoring the actual implementation of programmes out in the field. Involving local actors with an independent responsibility for accomplishing certain activities may mitigate these drawbacks. This is a fundamental argument for decentralisation. The problem, however, is that existing local decision-makers often have their own policy agenda and are therefore likely to divert programmes for their own ends, to the detriment of the community at large (Manor, 1999). To counteract this tendency, it is necessary to inspire the stakeholders – the intended beneficiaries – to become involved in the process.

One important parameter is information, i.e., to bring knowledge about ongoing programmes to the local public. Another is popular organisation. Groups in civil society could be encouraged to become involved in the work. In the last decade there has been what almost amounts to euphoria about the significance of civil society as a vehicle for reform. Robert Putnam's study (1993) on democracy and governance in Italy has been very influential in this regard. A strong organisational life can certainly be a great asset, as it serves as a means of popular influence, and may also have important effects in the area of democratic schooling (Hadenius and Ugglä, 1996). Civil organisations can channel popular demands, and can also strengthen society's capacity for holding decision-makers accountable. Such organisations can even be made responsible for actually realising certain programmes. It should be observed, however, that civil society is a mixed bag. It may contain highly reform-minded elements. But it could also hold important elements that are

closely tied to a prevailing clientelistic structure that is mainly interested in preserving the status quo (Azfar, et al, 1999).

If reform-minded groups do exist – be they churches, unions, cooperatives, professional associations, business groups, human rights groups, etc. – it is natural to invite them to take part in the process. Sometimes however, such groups do not exist at all, or are poorly developed. Under such conditions it has at times been possible – in connection with a reform project – to establish new organisations of reform-minded local stakeholders, or to give support to existing feeble ones.

Another key factor is the existence of institutions at the grass roots level that can channel influence upwards. Community organs at the village or ward level can be supported and actively involved in the reform programme to ensure that measures meet the demands of the local community at large. Where such organs do not exist, they can be established. Some successful programmes of decentralisation have created and mandated new local decision-making bodies with broad social representation to handle certain issues (Tendler, 1997).

It is thus argued that a mixed strategy needs to be applied to effectively challenge prevailing structures of corruption, patronage and poor governance at the local level. Some kind of coalition should preferably be established between a reform-minded centre and supportive groups at the grass roots level (Johnston, 1998). Such a coalition puts the prevailing local elite – accustomed to running things its own way – under concerted pressure from both above and below. Under such pressure, it has been shown, even representatives of the 'old order' can gradually change their behaviour, either out of political necessity, or as a result of a process of socialisation into new viewpoints and attitudes (Tendler, 1997).

A major difficulty with regard to this mixed strategy is getting the rank and file activated. Political participation is often very low at the local level in developing countries; turnout in local elections is an indication of this. This is not primarily a question of a lack of support for democratic principles (Bratton and Mattes, 2001). Nor is it always due to a lack of political resources (as we know, poor people have also proved capable of forceful action). It would seem that a vital condition is lack of confidence in public organs and in what they can accomplish. Hence, it is necessary to demonstrate that public representatives can be trusted, and that political participation can really make a difference in terms of improved public services. This, in turn, presupposes access to resources and a critical administrative capacity on the part of the public organs in question.

In other words, there is a reciprocal relationship between state capacity (i.e., the quality of governance) and democratic activity. These factors mutually reinforce each other, often functioning as components in a vicious circle. Low levels of governance and state capacity breed low levels of democratic activity among the citizenry – which, in turn, makes it easy for the traditional local elite to stay in power and utilise public resources to its own advantage. We know, however, that such a circle can be broken and turned into a positive one. The interesting question is how such a dynamic can be initiated.

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## **14.4 STRENGTH TO PEOPLE'S INITIATIVES**

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Political decentralisation aims to give citizens or their elected representatives more power in public decision-making. It is often associated with pluralistic politics and representative government, but it can also support democratisation by giving citizens, or their

representatives, more influence in the formulation and implementation of policies. Advocates of political decentralisation assume that decisions made with greater participation will be better informed and more relevant to diverse interests in society than those made only by national political authorities. The concept implies that the selection of representatives from local electoral jurisdictions allows citizens to know better their political representatives and allows elected officials to know better the needs and desires of their constituents.

Decentralisation as conceived by Gandhi has the basic philosophy of giving strength to small groups to be able to resist exploitation and unfairness. In another way, it gives strength to the people's initiative by actually participating in the working of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in socio, economic and political terms. Gandhi's concept of Panchayati Raj can properly work if Gandhi's ideas relating to Swadeshi, Swaraj and his views in other fields are implemented. PRI is one of the boldest and most interesting experiments of modern India.

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## **14.5 LIMITS AND CONSTRAINTS**

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As a result of the absence of a specific and articulated legislative frame as well as lack of tradition and structured activities, Decentralisation experience reveals certain weaknesses and limits, referring both to the utilised approach and persons involved.

Generally speaking, there are two main problems:

1. Lack of initiative within the country on the part of the central and local governments to inform, train, co-ordinate the Decentralisation;
2. Lack of continuity concerning the engagement of Decentralised staff and sometimes-inappropriate professional skills.

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## **14.6 DEPENDENCE ON THE PUBLIC FUNDING**

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Decentralisation should have a double balanced component between local government and civil society. Sometimes, the link with civil society becomes weaker due to the attraction toward public entities such local and central governments or international organisations. The state support is important; however the cultural promotion, the method innovation, the keen impulse and the creative proposals from the civil society can be limited if Decentralisation is depending too much on public funds and the links with the social context become weak.

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## **14.7 SUMMARY**

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To open breaches, stimulate creativity, get out from abandon and solitude, and promote intercultural, decentralised and democratic networks. The basic idea behind this form of decentralisation is to encourage an increased opportunity for development in local communities by means of balanced exchanges in the following sectors: the economy, commerce, culture, health, education, technology, training, social protection and all other fields of integrated human development. In the process, it became increasingly clear that democratic, peaceful development was the only way to solve problems. It strengthened bonds between peoples and reduced the chance of degeneration into violence, a degeneration that is facilitated by the isolation and fragility of local populations.

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## 14.8 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

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1. What do you mean by grassroots/people's initiative? Discuss their main limits and constraints.
  2. Discuss various approaches to the study of Panchayati Raj Institutions.
  3. What are the strategies that could be adopted to achieve decentralisation?
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## SUGGESTED READINGS

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### (Footnotes)

\* "Third sector" is a controversial term, usually taken to refer to non-governmental, non- profit and voluntary initiatives in a society, including those in the field of social welfare and social protection. Seen in many texts as a vital addition to the two sectors of state/government/formal politics and market/ economy