CHAPTER VI

POSTSCRIPT

POST LITERACY PROGRAMME IN THE SELECTED DISTRICTS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Though the literacy movement launched in Kerala during 1989-91 by the district administration of Ernakulam and later by Kerala Saksharatha Samithi was a success as overall literacy percentage of the state had gone upto 93.64%, it had its own demerits which are going to be critically examined here. Total literacy does not really mean that the entire population became literate because the total number of literates identified in the age group of 6 - 60 came to be 22.83 lakhs. This shows that there were more illiterates to be brought to the literacy centre. As a matter of fact, in spite of the lack of enthusiasm in Post-Literacy Phase, attempts were made to re-enroll the illiterates who could not be identified or who dropped out before the end of Total Literacy Campaign in order to continue the Literacy campaign.

Meanwhile the Post-Literacy and Continued Education programme continued for the neo-literates, though in a low profile. As a part of the second phase of post-literacy programme, certain clear cut objectives as organising activities for the continuity of literacy awareness among the neo-literates, ensuring literacy skills to be retained and creating an atmosphere for the implementation of the skills obtained by them in the course of the literacy campaign. Moreover attempts were also made to provide the neo-

1 A Report on Literacy Programmes in Kerala, KSS, op.cit., p.28.
literates with reading materials and continue literacy classes for the illiterates who were identified later. It was also thought to promote and create a linkage between the total literacy campaign and the post-literacy programme so that there could not be any break up in between. Apart from this, one of the objectives of the post-Literacy campaign was to take up non-formal education scheme for the dropouts from the school in the age group of 6 to 14 and to re-enroll them in the respective schools. Efforts were made to bring about awareness among the parents about the necessity of education. It also organised different programmes for the instructors who could pass matric examination in order to help them pass the examination.

The responsibility of enforcing the post-literacy programme was entrusted to Kerala Saksharatha Samithi. And it is worthwhile to remember here that it was Ernakulam district that again gave lead to conduct post-literacy programme which was later followed by other districts in the state. The organisational structure of the post-literacy programme was similar to Total Literacy Campaign (TLC). For the sake of convenience, five or six nearby literacy centres were clubbed together to constitute one centre which has to be known as Literacy Circles or Akshara Sangams. Simultaneously, two or three Jana Vidya Kendrams were also founded for the purpose of coordinating the activities of literacy circles. Just above this, people's committees were constituted to supervise the activities of the Literacy circles and Jana Vidya Kendrams.
Just like in the total literacy programme, the official project network, the people's committees network, and departmental official networks were also made use in the post literacy campaign. Almost the similar system of giving training to the activists was also introduced and now post literacy campaign needed 1.5 lakh instructors for executing the programme. Instructors handbooks were also prepared and distributed among them so that the training could become more effective.

Apart from this, the KSS prepared a number of supplementary reading books and it was thought that by the end of post literacy period, the neo-literates would be in a better position to learn themselves and continue the learning further. The activists also decided that a number of reading books on various topics relating to their day to day life were to be distributed among the neo-literates so that they could grasp the learning process very fast. In fact, 25 types of such books were printed and distributed among them for the same purpose. There was shortage of books for the neo-literates and therefore, they organised workshops to prepare such books and other relevant literature. Besides this, they also selected the books prepared by State Resource Centre and the Centre for Adult Education and Extension of Kerala University.

The activists planned to start the second phase of the programme immediately after the I phase. As the general elections took place in between, there was the delay of at least four months to begin the second phase. The new government that came to power in the state after the elections did not encourage the activities of the
post literacy campaign. In fact, the new United Democratic Front (UDF) government issued an ordinance to stop all the works connected with literacy campaign. It was followed by the issuing of another order from the Chief Ministers office withdrawing all the officials deputed for this programme and asking them to join their parental organisations. Also, allegations of corruption against the KSS came up, and as a result, a vigilance enquiry was constituted against the KSS. Moreover, "the new government turned the district councils virtually toothless institutions by taking away their powers and reverting them to the District Collectors."

Besides this, some activists of the movement left the literacy campaign because of the lack of enthusiasm. Various factors penetrated into the post literacy campaign which made it ineffective. It was KSSP which had brought enthusiasm and encouragement to the whole programme in the initial stages of literacy campaign. When KSSP withdrew from the scene during the post literacy campaign period as a result of the differences between the new government and KSSP, the earlier enthusiasm vanished from the movement leading to a laxity of the entire campaign. As a matter of fact, KSSP had more than two lakh workers at their command to direct and enforce the literacy programme among the people. Withdrawal of these workers and activists from the movement in the post literacy campaign period led to the total

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3 S. Mohana Kumar, op.cit., p.2190.
destruction of the structure of the literacy network and its programme. During the total literacy campaign period, the volunteers of the movement were assured by the then ministry of giving preference especially in employment opportunities which were not taken care off by the new government that came to power after the general elections. This was another important factor that created a laxity among the volunteers of the programme. The interview carried out by the researcher in the districts under study during the post literacy campaign period brought to light the important factor.

The present research brought to light very important aspects in the districts of Ernakulam and Palakkad. There are many areas, particularly in the remote areas of Ernakulam and Palakkad where illiteracy still remains as a part of the social system. Though Ernakulam district is declared totally literate, it is not exactly so as there are still people to be made literate. This is more true in the case of Palakkad district where a large number of tribal and scheduled caste population still remain under the darkness of illiteracy. If the post literacy campaign had been made effective and successful this situation would have been rather avoided. One of the important aspects found in the literacy campaign of Kerala particularly in Ernakulam and Palakkad is the lack of continuity of the programme mainly due to the inadequate political support.

In the total literacy campaign, it was not possible for the activists to devote more attention to the illiterates among the tribal population who were living in inaccessible forest areas and the rural
hinterland of the state. They could cover during that period, only those tribal people who were living along with the main population. Therefore, for the benefit of the tribal population a sub-project was also executed along with the Total Literacy Campaign, which identified 93,000 tribals as illiterates. In the locality they could not get enough qualified instructors for spreading literacy. Therefore, the instructors were to be brought from far away places from the tribal settlement. It may be noted that even then literacy rate among the tribal population in the state of Kerala according to the 1991 census was only around 52%.

As a part of the post literacy phase, KSS having identified tribal, coastal and Tamil population illiterates, initiated the campaign for the spread of literacy among them. Though the official version is said to be a success among the tribal population, the present study shows that it is rather not satisfactory. The same is the case with the people inhabiting the coastal belt. It is estimated that around 2.5 lakh illiterates were still there among the fisher folk who dominate the coastal belt. As the male members of the families go for fishing deep in the sea it is difficult for the women to concentrate on literacy programme. Therefore, the movement has not succeeded in the coastal belt also. Kannada and Tamil speaking linguistic minorities in the border district of Kasargod area are also still backward in the sphere of literacy. The campaign initiated later among them by the KSS, has not brought

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about the desired result. Even though the State Saksharatha Samithi has brought about nearly 25 types of text books for the neo-literate who in fact do not take enough interest in making use of this literature mainly because of the non-functioning of Jana Vidya Kendrams, the main forum for post literacy campaign.

The Total literacy programme in the initial stages grew into a social movement fascinating the whole people of the state. Thus it emerged as a powerful force of social change and modernisation. The participation of the people at all levels, involvement of district administration and voluntary agencies brought about a new social movement which Kerala has not witnessed earlier. That temporary success of the movement did not continue for long as there was the change of government at the state level which rather did not encourage the post literacy campaign by issuing orders leading to the withdrawal of the deputed officers to join the parental organisation. The differences that erupted between the new government and KSSP formally made the KSSP to withdraw from the campaign. Moreover the literature that was made available to the neo-literates were not made use of by them. As such the post literacy campaign did not bring the desired results.