Chapter IV

IMPLEMENTATION OF LITERARY PROGRAMME IN ERNAKULAM DISTRICT

The two princely Kingdoms of Travancore and Cochin witnessed enormous social disabilities in the 19th and the beginning of 20th century. Discrimination and suppression meted out to the low caste people by the upper caste, with the support of the ruling class, created wide social cleavages within the existing Hindu Caste hierarchy. The emergence of a few educated people among the low caste introduced tremendous changes mainly because of the fact that they gave leadership to the respective communities for a social and cultural renaissance. The conviction of the community leadership on the social upliftment of the backward communities through education encouraged them to establish educational institutions for admitting and educating the children belonging to these communities. This social renaissance was initiated by Sri Narayana Guru, Dr. Palpu and Kumaranasan among the Ezhavas and Ayyankali among the Harijans.

It was the social movement for upliftment through education that has brought about social and economic development in at least a few sections of these communities. This study looks at the present movement for total literacy in Ernakulam as a continuation of the social movement based on the same cultural ethos of Malayalis. In
In this context, the literacy movement in Ernakulam can be called as a New Social Movement. However, it is to be remembered that the movement initiated by the community leadership is different from the present movement in Ernakulam. The earlier movement was completely initiated and enforced by the community leadership with the involvement of the masses at large. The present movement was initiated with the active participation and direction of the District administration as a part of the National Literacy Programme.

The purpose of this Chapter is to investigate the objectives of the movement, involvement of voluntary agencies and NGOs, coordination between officials and Non-officials and the cultural factors which have been made use of for the success of the movement in the implementation process. Finally, shortcomings in the administrative structure and process in the implementation are examined, apart from venturing into a detailed discussion of political commitment and the role of district bureaucracy.

The eradication of illiteracy was taken up as an important policy perspective in Kerala in the 1980s and achieved considerable success in its implementation. In this sense, the success of the total literacy programme in Kerala must be sought in the political and administrative environment, within the context of a Kerala Model of development in which it is implemented. The strategies of implementation are crucial to the success of a programme. These strategies were formulated within the political and administrative
context of Kerala. The literacy movement in Kerala found wide acceptance in the state due to the favourable social and political climate that prevailed during the late 1980s. During the 1980s, new forms of social movements began to take place in different parts of Kerala, especially with the initiative of Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad. (KSSP)

In this Chapter, we shall focus our attention on the total literacy Programme in Ernakulam undertaken in 1989-90 and examine the issues connected with its implementation. The generalisations made from our study of Ernakulam would be representative of the trends figured in the implementation process of the literacy programme in Kerala as a whole. In this sense our argument is that the implementation for the success of the literacy movement in Kerala must be based on the political and administrative environment in which the programme has taken place.

The literature on Politics and implementation of programmes in the context of developing countries dwells on the undue interference of political factors, factionalism, political rivalries, that often act as stumbling blocks in the proper implementation programmes. It is our attempt to show that the experience in Kerala is different, given the political context in which the programme is undertaken. Our effort to outline the analysis from the experience of Ernakulam is to emphasise the factors that played their role in the implementation of
development programmes in Kerala. In this case the experience of Kerala is unique, as shown through the literacy programme.

**The Socio-political Context**

A new perspective regarding removal of illiteracy gained importance with the introduction of New Education Policy (NEP) that came into effect in 1986. NEP broke away from stereotyped confines of thinking and promoted strategies such as: (I) the shift from the States to the district as the Unit for planning for implementation of elementary education and adult literacy (ii) Social mobilisation to promote basic education; and (iii) integration of adult literacy and Non-formal programmes with socially relevant themes such as small population norms, health care, environment and nutrition.¹

This new perspective found acceptance in Kerala because of the particular environment that had prevailed there. In Kerala, radical movement for agrarian change resulted in the re-distribution of land to a greater extent. Even then, the initiatives undertaken during land reforms did not altogether benefit the landless peasants. The majority of landless peasants continue to remain poor, and certain sections lagging behind in the indicators of quality of life. They belong to the backward, scheduled caste and tribal sections of the society and were not able to take advantage of the primary education

facility. However, major sections of them remained illiterate in different pockets of Kerala.

The efforts to eradicate illiteracy through the Adult Education Programme of the Education Department and the Functional Literacy Programme of the Rural Development Department had not been very successful. This necessitated a new strategy for literacy in Kerala. These official programmes were failures mainly because of their inherent frustrations such as bureaucratic inertia, lack of commitment and absence of people's involvement and participation in their design and implementation. All the non-formal educational schemes announced at various times by the Central government were put into practice in Kerala to wipe out the remaining illiteracy. Through these efforts, Kerala Adult and Non-Formal Education Association (KANFED), a non-governmental organisation came into existence in 1978, spearheading non-formal education programme in the state. A state Resource Centre (SRC) was set up under KANFED for the production of teaching and learning materials for the centrally sponsored literacy drives in the State.

A close look at the history of social movements in Kerala brings to light some important trends. Immediately after India's independence a number of radical movements led by Communist Party with the help of the peasants and other sections of the society changed the whole social history of the state. Recent history has witnessed silent movements with a view to bring social changes in
the rural areas. The present movement can be included in the second category.

The present movement can be traced to the environmental protection movement launched by a few intellectuals of the state, who felt the necessity of retaining natural setting as it is without the influence of large scale industrial development. It was felt that the ongoing process of transformation of society through literacy, employment and other related social development should continue as the right way of developing the state of Kerala without adopting a new line of development based on large scale production, and exchange of market. There was apprehension that the changes of development on the industrial pattern would drastically change the conventional model of development leading to an artificial and material society. It was with this theoretical perspective that the intellectuals of Kerala joined together to oppose any movement that would jeopardize the historical identity and the cultural and social ethos which the State of Kerala has been cherishing since time immemorial.

The attention of the intellectuals got further boosted when in the second half of the 1970s, the Government of Kerala sanctioned a project for the construction of a dam across a river flowing through Silent Valley in Malabar in order to produce hydro-electric power. This project known as Silent Valley Project which, according to these activists, was bent upon destroying one of the biologically oldest and
least disturbed continuous stretch of forest in the Western Ghats. The social activist groups, including scientists and other intellectuals raised questions regarding the long-term future implications of the project on the environment.

This was not the only movement initiated by the scientists and intellectuals. As a matter of fact, in the beginning these movements were unorganized and only later, they formed an organisation Kerala Sastra Parishad. Meanwhile, Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP) took its origin and under its supervision, similar movements were launched in various parts, with more emphasis in Ernakulam. One such movement was combined against water and air pollution by the Gwalior Rayons Factory in Mavoor in the Chaliyar river basin. It was in fact one of the first major anti-pollution struggles in the State. These movements soon became popular in Ernakulam district and later spread to other parts of Kerala. KSSP took the lead in launching various campaigns against issues relating to the misuse of energy, education, health, pollution control etc. Simultaneously KSSP

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M.G.K.Menon, Report of the Joint Committee on the Silent Valley Hydel Power Project (Typescript), New Delhi, 1983.

3 This movement, initiated by activists from Ernakulam, took up the issue of Silent Valley Project in Malabar.

4 In the year 1957, a group of science writers joined together in Ottappalam High School in Palakkad district of Kerala to give a final shape to an idea - The idea of eastern model of development into action. They constituted a forum called Sastra Sahitya Samithi and encouraged science writing and use of science among the people.
evolved a mass movement with a slogan “Science for Social Revolution”. Believing that scientists have a social responsibility of educating the people, this organisation further popularized their idea into action. This was followed by launching of a number of local and state-wide agitational campaigns against factory pollution, occupational health hazards and harmful drugs. In order to give a clear picture of the literacy movement in the district, of which KSSP had played a predominant role, an Account of KSSP’s objectives and its process of functioning is given below

**Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad and its Activities**

Some of the objectives of KSSP were to cultivate

- an interest and awareness of modern science among the masses,
- publish science books and periodicals in Malayalam,
- and to organize meetings, discussions, science film shows and to assist other organisations working for the same purpose.⁵

KSSP, in fact, wanted to restore the evolitional model of development based on villages with the help of science, thereby thwarting any attempt to introduce in the State Western model of industrial and technological development of society. Though KSSP had initially focused its attention on the environmental protection

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and later started showing more interest on education, especially to improve school science education and popularise science and create a scientific world outlook among the masses. And this organisation was fully convinced about the intimate relationship between lack of scientific awareness of the majority people and their poverty, the relationship between literacy and exploitation of common man.6

As a part of the programme, in the year 1977 (October-November) KSSP organised a long march known as Science Procession which visited near about 900 villages and talked to more than 5000 people all over Kerala.7 Travelling all over Kerala was the first improvement in the history of social movement in the State. Another important feature of the procession was to distribute booklets on selected themes among the people in order that people read them and understand the issues involved in the movement. One such booklet was titled - "Make a literacy work a Peoples Movement". The organisation was fully aware that support of the masses was an indispensable factor for the success of the movement. Moreover, KSSP thought of converting literacy movement into a people's movement.

Fully convinced of its objectives, KSSP launched its literacy mission in 1977 itself. Meanwhile, KSSP units and rural science forums began to take up adult literacy work in villages on voluntary

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7 Ibid.
basis as a follow-up action of the science procession, which had gathered intensive knowledge about various aspects in the rural areas of Kerala. In December 1977, the annual workers camp of KSSP was held at Malampuzha where a detailed framework of how to spread adult education was discussed. Having made initial examination of the subject, the working group and KSSP’s sub-committee on non-formal education had organized a joint sitting on 26-12-1977 at Trichur district of Kerala. The joint meeting took a decision to prepare a big project to bring about total literacy in Kerala within five years. It was also decided to provide the people with the basic knowledge in arithmetic, health, social sciences and agriculture, so that an all round development of the state would be possible within a short span of time. In short, its principal aim was to popularize among the masses a non-formal education with the help of rural science forums.

Attempt was being made in the initial stages, to arrange the way in which the literacy classes had to be handled and the methods of training instructors. The spread of literacy was given prominence by KSSP not for the sake of spreading it among the masses, but with the sole purpose of retaining the age old self sufficient Asian oriented autonomous villages with the main emphasis on traditional mode of production. It has already been pointed out earlier that Kerala has shown a different model of social development through literacy,

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9 See for more details on the impact of Asiatic mode of production, Karl Marx.
thereby bringing about social status and social upliftment among those communities which had lacked these developments. This movement, as such, had a number of positive effects: Keeping a check on the growth of metropolis, keep a watch on migration of the people from rural to towns, prevent industrialization and its later effects and to retain the existing peaceful and harmonious society intact.

**Interaction between Politics and Social Development**

With the advent of Left Democratic Front Government (LDF) in 1987, the whole programme of KSSP, especially literacy programme got a major boost mainly because of the fact that ideologically both LDF and KSSP was on the same path of social development. In other words, LDF Government and its policies were oriented towards reaching a helping hand to downtrodden and weaker sections of society and the mass literacy programme of KSSP, apart from its other activities, was no different from this. Hence, it was easy for LDF government to have a close interaction with KSSP's mass campaign programme on reaching literacy to the rural hinterland and downtrodden sections. Moreover, a number of KSSP activists and its intellectuals had a leftist orientation towards social problems facing the State.

It is better in this connection, to have a look at the initial stage in which the LDF government came into contact with KSSP. This development of agrarian and rural development being some of the
main objectives of the LDF Government, the government initiative focused for a mass campaign for the purpose of Panchayat Level Resource mapping to shape it as the main instrument in local level mobilisation and development. The government introduced a project called Panchayat Level People Resource Mopping (PLPRM) which evolved as a result of close interaction between some of the scientists at the Centre for Earth Science Studies and People’s Science movement activists of KSSP.\textsuperscript{10}

One of the important objectives of the PLPRM project was to bring about a deep awareness among the people about local resources and their scientific management. It was also envisaged by the project to generate enthusiasm in order to enforce the local level plans drafted for the prevention of soil erosion and re-generation of water sources etc. Spread of literacy was very essential to bring about this awareness among the people. And it was in this context that LDF government began to support KSSP’s mass literacy programme.

The mass literacy programme of KSSP had active collaboration with the district administration at a later stage.\textsuperscript{11}, along with the moral support extended by the LDF government. One of the noteworthy aspects of this programme was to highlight its attention


\textsuperscript{11} The formal initiative of the District administration to collaborate with the literacy programme of KSSP took place in the year 1989.
on socially and backward sections of the society. As a general rule, the social composition of illiterates in Ernakulam district comprised a large number of scheduled castes, scheduled Tribes, Ezhavas and other backward castes, apart from a few upper castes who had till then not got any formal education. In terms of occupational profile of learners, the composition consisted of a large number of wage labourers and those women who were confined to household work, apart from a few people involving in small business, carpentry, cultivation and factory labour etc. One of the major beneficiaries of this programme were those who belonged to the fisherman community. Looking at the beneficiaries of this programme in terms of land ownership pattern, one may find majority of them did not have their own land and some of them who owned land had very small plots. A glance into their monthly income would show a very pitiable condition of their percapita income. Understanding the progress made by KSSP in collaboration with district administration in spreading literacy among the socially, culturally and economically backward sections of Kerala society, the National Literacy Mission (Government of India) had made up its mind to entrust the responsibility of spreading literacy in the state to KSSP. Therefore, it is essential to have a look at the interaction between KSSP and National Literacy Mission.

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New Education Policy of the National Government started in the year 1986 envisages a scheme, that voluntary agencies or groups of public spirited individuals could actively take part in spreading elementary education. National literacy Mission (NCM), being an integral part of the new policy on education, looked for universalising literacy among all sections of the people including those who did not have any access to literacy programme.\textsuperscript{13} It was in this context that the National Literacy Mission in the year 1988 sanctioned the project which had been forwarded to it through the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad for implementing total literacy in Ernakulam district as the first step towards achieving the goal.\textsuperscript{14} Having taken up the responsibility of implementing the scheme, KSSP in collaboration with the district administration chalked out the programme.

\textbf{The Structure of the Organisation that Enforced the Scheme}

The programme which was inaugurated in January 26, 1989 as the National Literacy Mission offered financial support to the programme through KSSP, the sponsoring agency. The responsibility of implementation was then handed over to a broad based registered body called the Ernakulam District Literacy Society.

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\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Achievements under Education for all : A Status Paper}, op.cit., p.38.
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This body was represented by various voluntary agencies and service organisations, such as the Kerala Association for Non-Formal Education and Development (KANFED). The District Collector became the Convener and Chief Coordinator and the District Planning Officer (DPO), the Joint Coordinator.

Some of the important features of the programme were:

- The prevalence of multiple agency. There was the administrative machinery headed by the Collector and his colleagues, the full time project machinery headed by the project officers and the people’s machinery in Ernakulam led by the KSSP.\(^{16}\)

- The necessity of sustaining an environment surcharged with the idea of literacy. This was important for motivating both learners and instructors. Several rounds of environment building campaigns were necessary for this purpose.

A Control Room was opened on 5\(^{th}\) December 1988 under the supervision of the District Collector. The envisaged programme to make Ernakulam district totally literate was inaugurated on January 26, 1989. The Ernakulam District Literacy Council was registered with the District Collector as the Chief Coordinator of the

\(^{15}\) Ibid, p.46

\(^{16}\) See, K.R.Rajan, Lead Kindly Light (Operation Illiteracy Eradication), An intensive Campaign for Total Eradication of Illiteracy within one year in Ernakulam District, Kerala State, 1989.
Committee. The Council was formally entrusted with the responsibility of implementing the project. The Council had, amongst its members, Members of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assembly, representatives of local bodies, top government officials, representatives of the KSSP and the Kerala Association for Non-formal Education and Development. It also consisted of representatives of political parties, trade unions, service clubs, members from all voluntary agencies, leaders of religious and social organisations, service associations, women's organisations etc. In addition, a broad-based people’s forum was formed with Justice Shri V.R.Krishna Iyier as Chairperson, to support the programme. The idea behind formation of such a council was to mobilise and ensure the solid support of all sections of the society.

The organisational structure of the literacy programme thus had a wider representation to become a genuine people's movement, with the cooperation and constructive participation of the governmental machinery. A three faceted organisational machinery was set up for the actual execution of the work.

- The project office network with the project officers and other full time personnel;
- The government network headed by the District Collector
- The people's network with KSSP, as a main representative.

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The district was divided into 20 sub-project areas, considering the number of literates in each area and other special features of the location. An Assistant Project Officer was in charge of each sub-project area. The Project Officer started functioning from 15th December 1988.\(^\text{18}\) The project office was in Charge of four project officers and four Assistant Project Officers. They were entrusted with

the academic, organisational, administrative and financial matters of the project.

Majority of the Assistant Project Officers who were to work in the field, were selected on deputation from among the teachers and other government servants, who knew well the socio-political trend, cultural background and the geographical peculiarities of the respective areas under their command. They were not given any deputation allowance or any other financial benefit so as to gather only the genuinely interested and deeply committed workers for the project.

The Local Self Government bodies in the district were the main agencies who dealt with the implementation of the programme. Apart from Cochin Corporation, there are 10 Municipalities and 86 Panchayats in the district. Ward is the smallest unit of the local body. There are about 1100 wards in Ernakulam district. Local organising committees were formed at the grass root level, entrusted with the responsibility of actual implementation of the project. Panchayat level implementation committees were formed in all the 86 Panchayats, with respective Panchayat Presidents as Chair Persons. The Executive Officer of the Panchayat, who is a government servant, was made the convenor of the Committee. In addition, a voluntary worker of that locality was made a joint convenor of the panchayat Level Committee. Panchayat members, government officials, representatives of all political and cultural
organisations were made the members of such committees. The district collector and his colleagues, the District Planning Officer, the Deputy Collector, the Tahasildars, the Block Development Officer and the Village Officers played an important role in the formation of these Committees. These Committees were made with representation from all sections of communities. Similar Committees were constituted in all the 7 Municipalities also.

**Three Tier Popular Committees**

Popular Committees were constituted in each of the 860 Panchayat Wards, 152 Municipal wards and 50 Corporation divisions. The elected ward member was the Chairperson of these committees and had representation from all sections of the Society. Each Committee selected, from among its members, one person as Convenor. These local level popular committees functioned as the actual implementing units. The formation of these committees took place in public meetings as a part of the campaign.

**The Administrative Machinery**

The District Collector of Ernakulam was the Chief Coordinator and the District Planning Officer, the Joint Chief Coordinator of the Literacy programme. One Deputy Collector was put in charge of each of the 7 taluks of the district. The Block Development Officer was the coordinator for all the Panchayat of the Block. A Coordinator

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19 Ibid, p.17.
each was appointed for the 50 divisions of the Cochin Corporation, 10 Municipalities and the 86 Panchayats. At the village level, the village officers were given the additional responsibility for ensuring that all the illiterates in the village were brought to the classes and they attain literacy. The village officer was assisted by the village staff in this respect. Similarly, the staff of the blocks including the Village Extension Officers, were looking after the conduct of the classes in their area and helping with the programme.

Supervisors were also appointed at the rate of one supervisor for five classes. The supervisors who were government officers in the locality were instructed to visit the classes at least once a week and ensure the progress of the classes. These committees had to meet at regular intervals to review the progress of the campaign. Meetings of the officers in charge of the programme were also convened periodically. Apart from the district headquarters, review meetings were held at the block level and in some Municipalities and Panchayats which were found to be weak initially. This structure was responsible for implementing total literacy programme in Ernakulam district.20

**Implementation Process**

Before examining the objectives outlined for the study, a background of the programme is given below:

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20 Details about Ernakulam District is given in Chapter III.
The actual teaching period lasted only for six months and the duration of the project operation period was about one year. This short period for the programme helped to keep the tempo of the movement. A mass upsurge was created in the whole district through publicity and field work, so that the illiterates would be mobilized and individual instructors be motivated and from neither groups there will be drop outs. Linking literacy work directly to other developmental and welfare activities was the main motto of the programme. The instructors, master trainers and resource persons were selected on voluntary basis. There was no monetary attraction for anybody to join the programme. The project personnel from the government were taken on deputation to avoid full time personnel. This helped to prevent the development of vested interests on the continuation of the project after the stipulated period. This programme was envisaged to be a new experiment in nation building enlisting the active cooperation of all concerned including political parties.

The National Literacy Mission has taken the target group of illiterates from the age between 15-35. On the other hand, the target for imparting literacy in Ernakulam district had chosen the age group between 5-60 years. The idea behind bringing down the targeted age to 5 years was to cover those who could not attend school education. Inclusion of those in the age group of 5-15 years
helped to target school going children who did not know how to read or write.

Children below 5 years of age constituted 10 to 12 percent of the population of the district. Those above 60 years was about 2 percent. The age group of 5 to 60 years was selected to include a substantial segment of the illiterates in the district.\textsuperscript{21} The project did not contemplate any fixed location for the classes or any minimum or maximum number of participants. The idea was that the classes should be as near their habitats as possible so that they need not have to walk long distances. The average number of participants in each class was around 10. Literacy classes were held in huts, verandas of houses or in open air. In some places, the classes were held at sea-shore, car sheds, caves, under the trees etc. Classes were held depending upon the convenience of the participants. For agricultural workers, classes were held in the night as it became convenient for them. The learners were given only the books for learning. Teaching aids such as writing board, pencil, lamp, etc., were not given for the project. These materials had to be provided locally by mobilising contribution by the local bodies and other institutions and individuals in the locality.

The main role in the implementation process was initiated by voluntary agencies, especially Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP), Kerala Association for Non-formal Education and

Development (KANFED) and Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI). The District administration, in fact, supervised, arranged the materials and equipments for conducting the classes, coordinated, interacted with voluntary organisations in the field, managed and monitored the entire programme. The literacy classes and other means of propaganda machinery were enforced by these voluntary organisations. As the first step, the Ernakulam District Total Literacy Programme\textsuperscript{22} went for bringing about initial general awareness creation through \textit{Kalajathas}, comprehensive literacy survey\textsuperscript{23}, conducting \textit{Saksharatha Padayathras},\textsuperscript{24} celebration of World Literacy Day\textsuperscript{25} and \textit{Souhradamel}\textsuperscript{26}

Five Literacy processions started simultaneously from five corners of the district on 25\textsuperscript{th} January 1989. They were inaugurated by well known political leaders, literacy figures and academicians etc. Each day each procession was given reception at various points where the group of artists, especially from Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad made performances like street plays, folk art forms, and group songs etc., depicting the message of literacy. One member from District Literacy Society (DLC) addressed the people about

\textsuperscript{22} EDTLP consisted of members belonging to voluntary organisations, officials belonging to district administration and members of local bodies.

\textsuperscript{23} Through this survey, the potential learners and instructors were brought face to face.

\textsuperscript{24} It refers to literacy procession held on 8th of July 1989.

\textsuperscript{25} It was held on 8th of September 1989, in collaboration with \textit{Nava Saksharatha Kalamela} (cultural event for neo literates.)

\textsuperscript{26} It was held in January 1989.
programme of literacy which was going to be implemented in the district. On an average 300-400 people gathered at each reception point. At every reception centre, local reception committee consisting of Panchayat level ward members made arrangements for the processions in consultation with the district administrative officials. District officials and local bodies in organising the reception created a cordial and friendly atmosphere without any bureaucratic formalities. It was, in fact, the members of the local bodies, especially the ward members who played the role of a key person for mobilising resources for the literacy procession.

The cooperative relationship between various agencies right from the beginning of the campaign, set a trend that continued throughout the programme. This made the literacy campaign into a people's programme and ensured participation of a large number of socially motivated local people especially academicians, housewives, students, religious leaders etc., in the campaign. Each procession covered on foot a distance of over 120-160 Kms and congregated in Cochin at the place of inauguration on 26th January 1989. According to Michael Tharakan, the programme created a highly charged social context in which most illiterates could not decline the chance offered to learn, and many educated persons were socially persuaded to teach them."\(^27\)

\(^{27}\) P.K.Michael Tharakan, *The Ernakulam District Total Literacy Programme*, op.cit., p.10.
These processions were organised by the involvement of activists from voluntary and cultural organisations, the largest number of them from Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad and the Youth Wing of CPI(M), the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI). The involvement of DYFI in the campaign added it with a political dimension. These cadres of youth were a men of dedicated lot, highly spirited and sensitive to give leadership role to the activists of the party. The Youth and Student Wings of United Democratic Front (UDF) Partners, especially Congress, Muslim League or Kerala Congress did not officially involve themselves in the campaign. This was evident from the discussions with the political leaders of these parties. They complained that CPI(M) led Left Democratic Front government was taking all the credit for a programme initiated by the District Collector and voluntary organisations. They were of the opinion that, there are a lot of factors responsible for the higher literacy rate in Kerala and its progress in various fields. Members of the Legislative Assembly, most of them members of UDF, attended the literacy functions in their respective constituencies. It is the involvement of the lower party workers of the opposition parties, which made the movement mass based. On the other hand, the frontal organisations of LDF, such as members of CITU, DYFI, SFI etc., participated in large numbers. The leadership role showed by the officials in the district administration in organising these processions merits attention.
Kalajatha was the method used in bringing the illiterate people to the classes. Kalajatha performances were conducted from 15th April to 25th April. Twenty Kalajatha teams were formed and trained its members drawn from youth organisations like DYFI, Youth Congress, All India Youth Federation (AIYF), Muslim Educational Society (MES) etc. The majority of the members who participated in the Kalajathas were from Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad (KSSP). KSSP had a troupe of well-trained artists, who could train other performers; and they were made available for the campaign. The organisational efforts shown by the district officials, members of KSSP and local bodies for the training of performances, their rehearsals and the actual organisation of the performances were remarkable. The KSSP activists, on their part, was committed to making the programme a success. Their political leaning to the leftist ideology helped in securing the ruling parties support and encouragement for the programme. Also KSSP as a voluntary organisation has had considerable social grounding in Ernakulam district. The organisation has committed local activists, intellectuals and academicians drawn from different sections of the society in Ernakulam. KSSP as a voluntary organisation gained wide popularity in Ernakulam district within a short span of time. Many like minded academicians, especially school, college teachers and employees of government establishments were drawn to the ideology of KSSP, as it

28 This information is based on the researcher's interview with the cultural troops and the officials in charge of cultural committee.
was a voluntary organisation, that kept aloof from political interference.

KSSP had already been using *Kalajatha* performance in and around Ernakulam for making people aware on science and environmental concerns. The experience of KSSP activists in *Kalajathas* added a new dimension to the movement. Training for the teams for the *Kalajathas* were given by experienced KSSP activists drawn from various parts of the state.\(^{29}\) Art forms were based on songs and dramas especially written for Literacy Campaign. The *Kalajatha* instigated in the people, the advantages of literacy. About 300 potential artists were trained at Kalady Plantations. The second stage of training was arranged at three centres, viz., Kothamangalam, Tripunithura and Parur. Local organising committees were formed with the help of ward members and Panchayat Presidents in all the three centres for the successful conduct of the camps. On the whole, the process of the formation and training of the 20 *Kalajatha* teams, its members including members of KSSP, Youth Organisations like DYFI and Youth Congress created great enthusiasm among the people who were already attracted with the activities of the project. It is to be emphasized here that the *Kalajatha* training and performance

created the much needed cooperative relationship between various agencies in the district.

The non-involvement of members of opposition parties in the programme initially were due to the thinking that this could be another routine programme and hence would not attract much attention. But as the programme gained momentum, and active involvement of local population was noticed, members of various political parties joined hands to make the programme a success. It soon became a people’s programme with the involvement of all sections of the population in the district and a community feeling was gained. It is this spirit of community feeling that sustained the tempo of the movement. The community feeling of togetherness and being united for a cause for the development of the district made people to shed differences of caste, religion and politics. If there were any such disturbances, such tendencies were sidelined due to the popularity of the programme. The active role for the creation of such an atmosphere was initiated by the elite sections of the society, as they considered the programmes as not a threat to their already elevated positions. The leaders of various communities gave official statements to their members to cooperate with the movement. This had a dramatic effect in Ernakulam district.

Cultural factors like utilising art forms for performances in the street was used as another method for creating an awakening among the masses about the purpose of literacy programme. Culture is an important aspect that penetrates into any community and assimilates itself as a part of its inherent identity. Cultural factors
have been used by various theorists and social activists to create an awakening on the issues being raised by them. Moreover, these factors can create a great impact on the people and it was with this assumption that the organisers of the literacy movement made use of art performances on the street. Various art forms such as songs, drama and rural arts were shaped with special emphasis on literacy campaign of Ernakulam district. These performances were conducted at road sides, scheduled caste colonies, islands and in areas where it was difficult for the organisers to reach.30

Apart from conducting cultural oriented programmes by the organisers, attempt was made to motivate the illiterates to display their inherent talents in artistic, literary and cultural spheres. In fact, these people never got a chance in life to show their talents. They had also planned competitions in 9 items for the learners at three levels: at the Panchayat level, at the Project area level and finally at the district level. The items chosen for the competitions were as follows: (1) Group Song (2) One act Play (3) Mono act (4) Reading (5) Quiz (6) Fancy dress (7) Writing (8) Speech (9) Rural arts.31 In organising and carrying out these programmes, there was coordination between officials and non-officials at all levels.

This method of spreading the message about the importance of implementing the literacy mission programme created great impact in various walks of life. Though it was started at small scale, there

30 The above information is based on field interviews.
began mass participation at a later stage. Creating an opportunity for the illiterates to depict their inherent talents gave them an outlook of participation and interaction. Conducting these campaigns among the socially and economically disadvantaged sections of the people brought about a new thrust in the movement. It was for the first time that the bureaucrats came out and started interacting with the masses. Simultaneously, the activists began to enquire about the needs of the peoples and as a result, such important tasks as construction and repair of roads, issue of ration cards, electricity connections were also carried out. Till then the poor masses could only witness the interaction of the politicians who, quite often, made promises but not enforced them in reality. Now they have seen the officials along with other social activists reaching out to them with a positive approach of implementing the objectives of the programme and taking up the social causes. This in a way led to the emergence of a new force: bureaucracy with the people. The attitude of the educated people was also positive in this respect. Moreover, a cultural interaction between various communities and social classes took place leading to the blending of social harmony and cohesion, which have never been witnessed earlier by the Kerala society. Even the political parties which were reluctant in supporting and participating in the movement in the initial stages actively joined later when the movement became a peoples' movement, cutting across all social and cultural barriers.

Previously the poor masses, especially those belonging to scheduled caste and scheduled tribes did never get a chance to meet the District Collector directly and tell their grievances. Even if they
could meet any time, their grievances were not taken seriously. Now the Collector along with his officials, in collaboration with scientists and intellectuals were reaching out to the poor people at their doorstep in the rural hinterland and enquiring about their grievances. This brought about a new trend in the set up and approach of bureaucracy bringing about close interaction between the peoples’ needs and officials. As a result of liberalisation of the rules in order to meet the people’s problems very quickly, there took place a positive trend in the bureaucracy and it also changed people’s traditional views about the administrators.

This trend of campaigning carried out to spread the message of literacy and its importance, liberalised the previously powerful hierarchy of bureaucracy and completely eliminated the segregation which had prevailed between the common man and bureaucracy. The movement that had been led by the community leadership in the 1920s did not have anything to do with the bureaucracy as such. This being a novel approach quickened the efforts for reform and if the policy continues in future, as a matter of social principle, this would bring about possibilities of eliminating corruption from the administrative set up. One of the important aspects to be noted here is a changing phenomena of the role of Collector as a part of social development in the district. Having carried out the propaganda method as mentioned above, the organisers of the movement went to the next step to have a specific and direct approach to the problem. This can be better called literacy survey.
Literacy Survey

The first method of campaigning used for the spread of message of literacy programme is having certain characteristics. They are participatory, out-moded, and interactive in the sense that this technique made use of art forms, street plays, interaction with the people and observation etc. The immediate impact this technique has created were awareness about the programme and mass participation. Thus it had become, within a short span of time, a people’s movement and it was after this that the organisers of the movement conducted literacy survey in order to have a glance and a detailed account of the illiterate social composition of the district.

The survey of the district, which was held on 18th March 1989 comprised only one day in which it was completed with the help of active participation of political, and social leaders, prominent citizens and literary figures on voluntary basis. It covered more than 80 percentage of the households and the team consisted of 12,000 persons with four or five persons covering 50 houses. To be more specific, the people who actually went to field to conduct house to house survey were only 5000 volunteers and the rest of the members of the team did auxiliary job in order to give a helping hand to team work envisaged by the activists of the movement. This, in fact, increased the peoples’ interest in the issue of literacy and created a spirit of motivation among them because of mass participation of the people in it. Understanding the progress of the movement, the youth organisations of the ruling party such as DYFI and SFI came forward to volunteer themselves to actively participate in the survey.
The survey covered nearly six lakh households, involving around 30000 households with an effective contact programme, reaching out to the rural hinterland and inaccessible areas inhabited by the socially and economically backward masses. The team comprised of literacy activists, district officials, representatives of local bodies and members of the main organisations, thereby bringing about a harmonious blending of various social classes and organisations. The survey showed a total of 1,85,387 illiterate population mostly confined to socially and economically deprived sections, 62 percentage among them being women.

**TABLE : 1**

**Statistics of Illiteracy: Ernakulam District, A Comprehensive Survey 1989**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illiterates</td>
<td>1,85,387</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Illiterates</td>
<td>1,15,958</td>
<td>62.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Illiterates</td>
<td>69,429</td>
<td>37.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterates between the ages 16-35</td>
<td>56,220</td>
<td>30.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterates between the ages of 5-15</td>
<td>10,619</td>
<td>5.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterates above the age of 35</td>
<td>1,18,542</td>
<td>63.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterates among Muslims</td>
<td>40,785</td>
<td>22.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illiterates among Scheduled Castes</td>
<td>33,370</td>
<td>18.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The remarkable feature of the survey is that there are more female illiterates, followed by illiterates above the age of 35. In terms of communication, the above table shows that Muslims are found to be more illiterate comparatively than scheduled castes. It is on the basis of the information that further action to execute the scheme was carried out by the organisers of the movement. Having identified the communities, the age group and the areas which have been badly affected by illiteracy, efforts were made by the organisers to find out the reasons for not having spread literacy among them. Social backwardness and economic deprivation, coupled with the lack of efforts of the government till then, were found to be some of the important reasons. It was with this perspective that the efforts to recruit volunteer instructors for teaching the people and give brief training for them were attempted by the activists.

**Training the Instructors**

Find out good instructors who were willing to go even to inaccessible areas was a difficult task. However, the organisers of the movement achieved its goal of recruiting volunteer instructors who hailed from various religious communities and social classes. In the beginning, there were 18500 volunteer instructors for carrying out the programme. Gradually their number increased and the instructors were committed volunteers who fulfilled their job with great responsibility. A brief training was needed for instructors so that they could convey the message of literacy and to orient them
towards undertaking this difficult task. Many of the instructors were unemployed young people who had studied up to school leaving examination since giving training to 20,000 instructors needed large scale organisational set up, a group of trainers known as Master trainers were identified for the purpose. Master trainers, in fact, had graduation as minimum qualification and they comprised teachers, employees of other organisations and unemployed youth. One master trainer was posted for each ward of the local body and the local bodies made a list of names of master trainers. Besides these, the organisers of the movement appealed through the Press requesting the people to come forward and register their names in the control room of the literacy campaign.

A three days' training camp was set up at the Renewal Centre, Ernakulam, where more than 700 master trainers actively participated. Simultaneously, training classes were also conducted for smaller groups of master trainers in other centres also. The camp was classified with batches of 50 and the training was given to each batch in a separate room. They were taught the method by which the instructors were to be trained and they also discussed the ways and means by which the illiterates were to be motivated. Before going to discuss other aspects of training of volunteer instructors, it is better to have a look at the background of master trainers.

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32 The Camp was inaugurated by Justice V.K.Krishna Iyer, Chairman of the District Literacy Committee on April 25, 1989.
trainers and instructors including their membership in various organisations.

**TABLE : 2**

**Membership in Organisations, Background of Master Trainers and Instructors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Master Trainees</th>
<th>Instructors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of males</td>
<td>% of females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>among total</td>
<td>among total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Parties</td>
<td>7.85</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KSSP</td>
<td>25.88</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher's Union</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other local Voluntary organisations</td>
<td>14.12</td>
<td>5.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Interim Report of the Ernakulam district Total Literacy Mission*, (typescript) KSSP.

Majority of the master trainers were from KSSP (28.24%) including both male and female) and at the same time, majority of the instructors including male and female, came from political parties (30.24%). Next in number came from voluntary organisations and this is true in the case of both master trainers and instructors.
The Master trainers were also volunteers who were trained by resource persons, experts of the State Resource Centre and teachers of colleges and Universities. 50 such resource persons met two or three occasions, discussed and exchanged views on the method of imparting literacy programme among the people. Resource persons expressed the view that the trainers had high motivation and a lot of enthusiasm to do the job. They planned to train volunteer instructors in 20 centres at the rate of one in each project area.

**Literacy Classes (Project Implementation)**

The process of starting classes was initiated on May 1st 1989 with the inauguration of the literacy classes. Literacy classes were held in many places, generally according to the convenience of the learners. While carrying out this task, they had to face a number of problems such as penetrating into forest areas where illiterate tribals had been inhabiting. They also undertook the task of teaching illiterate lepers and also went to the extent of teaching illiterates in a place called Mattancherry which was notorious for many unlawful activities. In the words of P.K.Michael Tharakan, “the problem of illiteracy in Matancherry area was tackled by unleashing a district wide special drive among the Muslim community involving prominent personalities from that particular community”.

While conducting literacy classes, organisers found that some illiterate old people could not read or write without the help of spectacles. Immediately, an eye camp was organised to find out those who were

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suffering from eye problem and after identifying them, it was decided to distribute spectacles free of cost. After completing the literacy programme successfully, Ernakulam was declared on February 4, 1990 as the first totally literate district in the country.

This literacy movement has brought about its own impact in Ernakulam district as well as in the rest of Kerala. The Ernakulam model and its success attracted the attention of Kerala government which has, subsequently, launched a similar programme in all the 13 districts of the state with a view to attain complete literacy by the year 1990. With the same perspective in mind, the Kerala Literacy Project was inaugurated in Cochin on February 4, 1990 and followed by this, Government of India has also recommended the Ernakulam model for the whole of India. Meanwhile, the Central government had written to all the State governments requesting them to send a delegation of senior officers who were in charge of adult education, to Ernakulam in order to undertake a detailed study of the movement and its impact. As a result, many State governments sent their representatives to Ernakulam and Government of Pondicherry, for example, determined to enforce the Ernakulam model in that State. Apart from this, the World Bank took special interest in the Ernakulam model of spreading literacy and looked for more information with the documentation. The motto of the World Bank has been to investigate whether this model can be applied in other countries, especially in Third World countries. The fact that it has attracted the attention of World Bank shows that apart from spreading literacy at the grassroot level, something really has taken place in the society. It is this aspect which is going to be examined here below.
The communities which lived in the far-flung and inaccessible areas had a feeling of total isolation with the rest of the society. They were also not aware of the various social developments taking place around them. Reaching to them with the motive of spreading literacy created an awareness that these backward communities and tribals were part of the social unit. They also understood their rights as human beings.\(^{34}\) The interview with these communities shows that they became aware of their right to vote and the right to have a social existence. This became clear in the course of conversation.

For the first time, in the history of Kerala, an interaction between various cultural patterns of different communities took place as a part of literacy programme. Different caste and communities, hitherto confined to hierarchy and segregation, started a process of interaction with the rest of the communities. Thus, it brought about cultural renaissance, creating "an attitudinal change in the illiterates and making them realize fully the disadvantages if they remained illiterate and convincing them of the benefits of becoming literates".\(^{35}\) Moreover, the interaction and the visit of the researcher further confirms this point.

Many petty crimes had been committed by the people due to ignorance and they had also a negative approach towards various social problems. When they became literate there took place a gradual behavioural changes which have been recorded by the Police department of Kerala. In order to testify this, the table furnished by the police department is given below:

\(^{34}\) Interview with the tribals and other socially and economically deprived sections.

TABLE: 3

Petty Cases Registered in the City of Cochin and Ernakulam Rural District, 1988 and 1989

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>678</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>February</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>682</td>
<td>824</td>
<td>916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>March</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>469</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>991</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>1129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>586</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>1005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>June</td>
<td>596</td>
<td>640</td>
<td>1173</td>
<td>975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>July</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>1307</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>August</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>September</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>948</td>
<td>717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>454</td>
<td>1052</td>
<td>697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>November</td>
<td>623</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>964</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>December</td>
<td>669</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>939</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>7684</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10813</td>
<td>8676</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Information furnished by the Police Department.

Within a period of one year, both in the city of Cochin and Ernakulam rural witnessed the reduction of crimes. Apart from the data, the researcher's interaction with the instructors and discussion with the prominent citizens of the area conformed this point. K.R. Rajan, then Collector of the district, in his book titled, "Mass Literacy : The Ernakulam Experiment" talks of people having
liberated themselves from liquor addiction. To quote him, "Many stopped drinking as a result of the persuasion of the literacy workers. Many of the habitual liquor addicts, though initially refused to come to the literacy classes, eventually got rid of drinking and attended classes and acquired literacy."\(^{36}\)

Another important aspect that took place as a result of Ernakulam model of literacy programme was the increase in political consciousness and a transformation in the electoral politics which are the important aspects of political development. In the general elections held to the Lok Sabha in November 1989, many of the neo-literates who used to identify a candidate by the symbol used by him earlier, began reading their names when they got the ballot papers. Now they were in a position to put their signatures on the counterfoil without using thumb impressions. Moreover, no one could influence them in choosing the candidates and this, in fact, helped them to have a kind of social mobility in the society. To quote K.R. Rajan who witnessed the change: "This feeling has enhanced their self-confidence and self-respect."\(^{37}\) The number of invalid votes also came down in the 1989 polling in comparison to that of 1984. Another remarkable feature was the increase in the number of votes polled in the elections.\(^{38}\) There is no direct relationship between the increase in literacy and the increase in the electoral turnout.

\(^{36}\) Ibid, p.147.
\(^{38}\) Ibid.
However, there is a direct relationship between literacy and the decline in the invalid votes. This is the product of political consciousness achieved as a result of spread of literacy among the people. This is what happened in Ernakulam which is testified by the information given above.\textsuperscript{39}

Leaving the school before the competition of their studies from the school has been a challenging problem even in Kerala which has attained the top position in the sphere of literacy in the country. There are various factors affecting the drop out and in some cases, parents do not have enough financial capability to promote their children's studies in the school. Therefore, the children have to find work to earn wages in order to support the family. In some other cases, lack of knowledge about the utility of education on the part of parents and children in an important aspect leading to drop out. The activists of the literacy programme in Ernakulam, having discovered the trends, tried to persuade the children who left their school before completing their education to rejoin the school and continue their studies. And the activists enquired about the reasons why this was happening and gave enough encouragement to the people. The conviction of the people on the idea expressed by the activists encouraged them to promote the education of their children so that there could not be any drop out of students from the schools.\textsuperscript{40}

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\textsuperscript{39} The Researcher’s interview with the people as a part of the field study confirms this aspect.

\textsuperscript{40} See Ravi Verma, “Velichenthinte Thazhravaviloode” (Malayalam) \textit{Deshabhimani} Cochin, January 23-26, 1990.
Movement for literacy cannot be treated just as a movement for spreading literacy alone and it has its own wider implications in society. Education is conceptualized today as an area where investment can be made for economic development of a given society. It is also looked at as a sphere which will lend to social mobility of communities and there is no direct relationship between literacy and social mobility. On the other hand, literacy prepares individuals for employment opportunities in an open competitive market and once they get employment, their social status and per capita income will definitely go up bringing about social mobility for them. This would not have been possible in the absence of literacy.

A close examination of the development of various communities such as Ezhavas, and Harijans, who had been backward in all walks of social life, shows the impact literacy development has created among them. It has already been mentioned earlier about the approach of these backward communities in the beginning of 20th century towards literacy development. They looked at education as an area of social upliftment and that was the reason why communities that had been suffering from social disabilities began to concentrate on the establishment of educational institutions for the respective communities. As a result of this development, a number of individuals have moved up in the social ladder.

The Ernakulam model of literacy development has also brought about a number of changes in society which have been testified in
the chapter on the basis of available data. The KSSP which began its movement covering many aspects of social life, including the environmental problems, in the beginning shifted its trend towards bringing about awareness on social issues having wider ramification. The organisation was convinced that this could not be possible without going into the grass root level for which development of literacy was very essential. The district bureaucracy collaborated with KSSP to make it a success. It has brought about two important trends: (1) It has reflected itself as a continuity of the same movement initiated by the community leadership before India's independence; (2) An indirect threat to large scale industrial development towards which almost all nations of the world are moving through. Thereby, the intellectuals who led the movement were initiating a model of economic and social development based on traditional Asiatic mode of production.

This Chapter, being an important research chapter, focuses its attention on the way the movement for literacy was launched as a joint effort of various organisations including bureaucracy and the efforts made by the activists of the movement to spread it among the socially and economically deprived communities who had been living in the remote and inaccessible areas of the district. It also examines whether the present movement of literacy development has any historical legacy and similarity with the movement launched by the community leadership in pre-Independent Kerala. Another important
aspect that the chapter investigates is the theory of the movement for literacy development and its wider implications in the society. Attention has been made to look at education as an area for social, economic and political development of the communities. Minute observation is also made to examine the impact it has made at various levels of the concerned communities. Membership in organizations, background of master trainees and instructors.