CHAPTER – 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The researcher likes to make it clear that stupendous efforts have made to study the concept of the ‘Panchayatiraj’ from written material as well as from knowledgeable persons. The researcher took real pains to visit the various locations in the Meenachil Taluk, contact people belonging to diverse social segments with a view to collect firsthand and reliable data on the standard of living of those people and the numerous disabilities they suffered from. Above all, the researcher paid greater attention to assess the extent of the realization of the avowed objectives of the Panchayatiraj such as decentralization and participatory democracy. The researcher recorded his findings without fear or favour. The researcher spent considerable time in analyzing the data collected and made some suggestions for bettering the conditions of the rural populace, especially of the suppressed and the down – trodden segments. The researcher hope that his humble effort will prove to be an asset in enlightening the people at large about the miserable standard of living of the rural poor, who might, in course of time, emerge as
the backbone of the economy of India, the country of villages. The researcher will feel gratified if his study can witness the time when these destitute will attract the due attention of planners and executors of development and they will receive their due share of the benefits, accruing there from, enabling them to lead a civilized life akin to that of their fellow men.

4.2 ANCIENT HISTORY

We have received detailed knowledge about the evolution of the Kottayam district from the days of the Chera Dynasty. According to Vazhapally Accord the area of the Kottayam district belonged to the Kulasekara Dynasty. There were three regions ruled over by the Kulasekara Dynasty such as ‘Nanthuzhainadu’, ‘Manchunadu’ and ‘Vempolinadu’.

‘Nanthuzhainadu’ consisted of present Changanassery, Thiruvalla, Chenganoor and Kanjirappally taluks, along with some areas of Meenachil Taluk and the nearby Highrange Region. ‘Manchunadu’ consisted of Kottayam and Ettumanoor regions, where as Vempolinadu comprised of Vaikom Taluk and some portions of the Meenachil Taluk. Mahodayapuram Chera rulers reigned here. In Sanskrit ‘Vempolinadu’ was known as ‘Bimbalidesham’. Perhaps Vempanadu Lake has derived its name from Vempolinadu (Kottayam District Directory 1997: 25).
The decline of the Chera Dynasty led to the emergence of a new state by name ‘Vempolinadu’. Later Vempoli Dynasty was divided into two kingdoms, ‘Thekumkur’ and ‘Vadakumkur’. These two states later came to be known as ‘Bimbaseelan’ and ‘Manikandan’. In the 12th century Manjunadu and ‘Nanthuainadu’ merged with ‘Thekumkur’. The headquarters of Thekumkur was ‘Vennimala’ and that of Vadakumkur was ‘Kaduthuruthy’. Later ‘Manikandapuram’ and ‘Thaliyil’ emerged as capitals of Thekumkur for administrative convenience. In the same way Thekumkur came to have its administrative nerve centres in Lalam, Vellilapally, Thodupuzha and Vaikom. The Thekumkur kingdom extended from Illickal hill to Vempanadu Lake and from Kaipattoor to Kanakari. Other notable kingdoms in the region were were Poonjar and Meenachil.

In the 4th century the headquarters of Thekumkur was again consolidated and shifted to the area, close to the Thaliyil temple. They built a strong fort around the temple and Palace. So this place came to be known as ‘Kottackakam’, which gradually got abbreviated into Kottayam. (Kottayam District Directory 1997: 23-27).

When the Portuguese arrived, Thekumkur and Vadakumkur had contact with Kochi Dynasty. Later Thekumkur
and Vadakumkur came under the suzerainty of Kochi Dynasty. But later Thekumkur quarreled with Kochi Dynasty and Vadakumkur unable to bear their supremacy in all spheres. Thekumkur ruler came to the rescue of Chempakaseri Dynasty and Chempakaseri rulers stayed at Kudamaloor. Then started the evolution of little Venad into the indomitable Travancore under a capable man by name Marthanda Varma. He attacked and conquered Thekumkur kingdom. In 1749 the areas upto Changanassery became part of Marthandavarma’s Kingdom. He had the staunch support of the Dutch Captain Delenoy. By the end of 1749, the Thekumkur had become a part of Travancore. Later Vadkumkur also merged with Travancore. The areas now known as Poonjar and Meenachil also became parts of Travancore during the reign of Marthandavarma (Kottayam District Directory: 23-27)

According to historical evidences, when the Greek merchants arrived in Kerala. Kottayam and the areas from Vayaskara to Punnathara in the West and Erattupetta in the South became prominent commercial centres for the export of pepper and other important spices from Pala, Erattupetta and Kanjirappally. From different parts of the world, people rushed to this place to buy the ‘black gold’. Owing to this changed trend
most of the people of Menachil got involved in agricultural activities especially in the cultivation of pepper and other spices. With the growth of export trade they flourished in all areas of development such as political, social, agricultural and economic.

There are lots of evidences for the export-import relations of Meenachil with foreign countries. Lots of foreign coins were found in the hands of the aristocratic people in Meenachil. Kathalikattil and Thazhathel families belong to this class of aristocracy. The most valuable coin of the Romans, ‘Ceaser’ could be found in the hands of Sri. Joseph Augusty Kayyalakkakttu, the former Managing Director of Pala Central Bank.

4.2.1 Modern History

In 1860 a new ruling community emerged in the name of ‘Kottayam’, following the disintegration of Travancore. The other principalities that became independent were Padmanabhapuram, Thiruvanathapuram and Kollam. Cherthala was the headquarters of the Kottayam District. In 1878 Divan T. Rama Rao shifted the Headquerters from Cherthala to Kottayam. Diwan T. Rama Rao is considered to be the architect of modern Kottayam town. Thirunakara ground was one of the remarkable
contributions of T. RamaRao, originally meant for the Police parade.

In 1909 a new Division was created which was named as Devikulam. These five divisions consisted of thirty three Taluks but in 1911-24, again these five Divisions were reduced to four with the merge of Padmanabhapuram to Thiruvananthapuram. Three villages of Kottayam Division merged with Kollam Division and six villages of Devikulam Division merged with Kottayam Division.

With the formation of Thirukochi in 1949, some parts of the Kottayam Division such as Kunnathunadu and Paravoor Taluks and some parts of Kochi state such as Kochi, Kanayannor, Kodungalloor, Mukundapuram, Thrissur, Thalapilli and Chittoor emerged as a new district by name Thrissur. Along with this Kottayam Division was reduced to Kottayam District. There are four districts in Thiru-Kochi state such as Thiruvananthapurm, Kolllam, Kottayam and Thrissur. When the state of Kerala was formed in 1956, it had seven districts with the addition of Kannur, Kozhikode and Palakkad.

In 1956, there were 11 Taluks in Kottayam district: Kottayam, Changanassery, Vaikom, Moovattupuzha, Thodupuzha, Devikulam, Peerumed, Menachil, Udumphanchola, Kanjirappally
and Kuttanadu. But with the creation of Alapuzha, Ernakulam and Idukki districts, the number of Taluks came down to five: namely Kanjirappilly, Changanassey, Kottayam, Vaikom and Meenachil.

4.2.2 Meenachil Taluk

The Meenachil is the largest taluk in Kottayam district, having an area of 692.86 Square Kilometers. The Meenachil Taluk is situated in the north-east part of Kottayam district. The boundaries of Meenachil Taluk are Peerumedu in the east, Kanjirappally in the west, Vaikom in the north and Thodupuzha and Moovattupuzha taluks in the South. The headquarters of Meenachil Taluk is Pala. There are twenty-six villages in Meenachil Taluk namely Elackadu, Erattupetta, Uzhavoor, Kondoor, Thalapalam, Kidagoor, Kuravilangadu, Kurichithanam, Kadanadu, Kanakary, Teekoy, Puliyannoor, Poonjar Vadakekara, Poonjar Thkekekara, Poonjar Nadubhagam, Poovarany, Bharanaganam, Meenachil, Moonilavu, Melukavu, Monippally, Ramapuram, Vallichira, Veliyannoor, Vellilapally and Lalem.

The areas housing the Panchayats of Poonjar, Poonjar Thekekara, Teekoy, Thalanadu, Moonilavu and Melukavu are blessed with enchanting natural beauty and most of the areas of these panchayats are hilly terrains. The highest peaks in Teekoy
and Chennadu Panchayats are Kurisumala, Vazhikadavu, Vellikulam, Thalanadu, Ayyampara and Meladukkam. There are lots of famous tourist spots in Thalanadu and Melukavu Panchayats. They are Erumapra, Elaveezhapoonchira, Kolani, Ellumpuram etc. The highest peaks in Ramapuram Panchayat are Koozhamala, Koombanmala and Nedumala. Lots of tourists are being attracted to Vagamon, Kurisumala, Elaveezhapoonchira, Ayyampara etc. These areas often get covered with mist.

The longitudinal and latitudal positions of Meenachil Taluk are 9° 24’ to 9° 52’ north and 76° 22’ to 76° 52’ east (Kottayam District Directory 1997: 31, 59). Meenachil Taluk is ten meter above the sea level. Meenachil Taluk consists of hills and Valleys, that is why Meenachil Taluk is sub-titled as ‘Malanadu’ and ‘Edanadu’. There are different communities living together in Meenachil Taluk such as Hindus, Muslims and Christians and the area is famous for its secularistic attitude and tolerance. These three communities have played a decisive role in the development of Meenachil Taluk. Meenachil Taluk is the nerve centre of Christianity in Kerala. The Hindus in Meenachil Taluk are living with original purity, observing time-honoured rituals and traditions. The Islam community also has given its own
contribution for the socio economic Prosperity of Meenachil Taluk.

There are at present one municipality and twenty three Gramapanchayats in Meenachil Taluk. Pala is the seat of the municipality and the Gramapanchayats are the following:

1. Kanakari
2. Kidagoor
3. Kuravilangadu
4. Uzhavoor
5. Kadaplamattom
6. Karror
7. Kozhuvanal
8. Maragattupally
9. Meenachil
10. Mutholy
11. Ramapuram
12. Veliyanoor
13. Erattupetta
14. Kadanadu
15. Thalanadu
16. Thalapalam
Eighteen panchayats of the Meenachil Taluk are now ruled by the United Democratic Front (UDF). They are Kanakary, Kidangoor, Uzhavoor, Kadaplamattom, Karoor, Kozhuvanal, Marangattupally, Meenachil, Mutholy, Veliyannoor, Erattupetta, Kadanadu, Thalanad, Thalappalam, Theekoy, Poonjar, Poonjar Thekkekara and Bharananganam. Moonnilavu, Melukavu and Thidanadu Panchayaths are ruled by Kerala Congress (M) alone whereas, Ramapuram Panchayat is ruled by the Congress Party alone. Kuravilangadu Panchayat is led by the Left Democratic Front (LDF). In the Panchayats of Melukavu, Bharananganam, Poonjar, Theekoy, Thalanadu, Kadanadu, Ramapuram, Kozhuvanal, Kuravilangad and Kanakary Presidentship is reserved for women. In Kadaplamattom Panchayath Presidentship is reserved for Scheduled Caste.
4.3 AN ANALYSIS OF THE DATA COLLECTED FROM THE PEOPLE’S REPRESENTATIVES IN THE STUDY AREA

The various parameters considered for evaluating the responses of the people’s representatives are detailed below:

To what extent the emergence of Panchayatiraj institutions helped in planning and implementing developmental activities at the grass root level.

In this connection opinions of 46 people’s representatives were systematically gathered. An objective analysis of the responses elicited from them is highlighted below.

As many as 90 per cent of the representatives categorically asserted that the formation of the Panchayatiraj institutions invariably helped to plan and execute developmental activities at the grass root level. Its greatest positive dimension, according to them, is the participation of the local people in planning, deciding and implementing various developmental activities. They further expressed the view that this democratic exercise, helped to tide over post implementation objections and criticisms to a considerable extent.

Apropos the responses of the people’s representatives regarding the utilization of the budgetary allocations, for various
projects especially those for the welfare and developmental programmes, almost 95 per cent of the representatives were quite positive about the role played by the Panchayatiraj system in the field of planning and execution of suitable programmes and activities.

With regard to the numerous problems confronted by the elected representatives in the efficient discharge of their manifold duties and responsibilities, they thought that the situation presents a bleak picture.

One of the most important problems that impede them in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities efficiently is that of the existing uncertainty regarding their continuity. This means under normal circumstances a ward from where a representative gets elected for a term can change its status as such before long. For the subsequent term the said ward might be declared a reserved ward for women. This means that the present incumbent has little chance to see the completion of the developmental activities, he has initiated.

The only way to remedy such an uncertainty is that a representative must be given at least two consecutive terms to serve in one ward. This argument is based on the rationale that for the fruitful and efficient implementation of the various
welfare and developmental programmes in one ward as also for their follow up, a minimum period of ten years is indispensable.

80 per cent of the people's representatives expressed their irritation over the political interference being made from high above, even from their own party members and leaders in deciding upon the priorities of various developmental activities as well as the beneficiaries for whom they are meant. These hurdles are often formidable and they hinder the impartial discharge of their official obligations.

In order to solve this problem they opined that they should be invested with sufficient autonomy and must be insulated against external influence, exerted by even their own party members in matters relating to planning and executing and prioritizing various welfare and developmental programmes.

Another crucial problem they confront regarding their pragmatic functioning is the fragmented allocation of resources for executing various development activities. To cite an example, the allotment in the annual budget for executing a pure drinking water supply project in a ward is often disbursed in installments or bits. This causes inordinate delay in the completion of the project. Mind you, the initial allocation may be for earth work and pipelining. After having spent the first instalment on the
earthwork, pipelining and such other foundation work, the more crucial part of the project such as the construction of the overhead tank and motor fitting has to wait for long until the next disbursement. This causes undue delay in the completion of the project, even leads to its dislocation.

Moreover, the party members of the ward try to exert pressure on the representatives for getting things done through unfair means. This adversely affects the development of the area as a whole.

The panchayat members also expressed their strong reservations regarding the existing monetary benefits they are entitled to. According to them their monthly remuneration is nothing more than the salaries and perquisites drawn by a Class III government employee. About the quantum of work, it is huge and burdensome since they need to work for long hours to attend to a variety of issues but the prevailing remuneration is abysmally low and inadequate to meet even their day-to-day expenses.

The members also expressed their discontentment about the division of various important positions among the various coalition party members. According to the arrangement a Gramapanchayat President, Vice President and Standing
Committee Chairman are to hold their post only for a period of one or two years and then they must relinquish the same in favour of the nominees of the other coalition segments. This adversely affects the continuity of various developmental activities, initiated during the tenure of those predecessors. This often created chaos and discontinuity in the execution of many useful developmental activities, owing to the subjective preferences of the members concerned.

Apropos the failure of executing the crucial decisions taken by the Panchayat committee in connection with crucial or vital developmental projects:

The responses elicited from the representatives were analysed and it was quite heartening to note that almost 99 per cent of the crucial decisions, taken by the committee get implemented as they are. However, belated allocation and disbursement of funds, non-unavailability of the work force especially skilled workers cause some delay which is unavoidable.

All the panchayat representatives felt that fanatical political affiliation of the members hinder the time-bound implementation of even ambitious and vital developmental projects and programmes. To be more precise, when the ruling
front chalks out some beneficial developmental programmes the opposition members often raise silly objections merely for getting political mileage and tarnishing the image of the architects of the new projects in question. The majority of the members also expressed their resentment about the mode of choice of the beneficiaries of various welfare schemes. This means that there is presence of dirty politics even at this lowest level, which proves detrimental to the overall development of the area. Those who are in power often showed bias while deciding upon the schemes for execution. Thus often deserving people do not get benefited from such developmental projects.

With regard to the success of the ‘Kudumbasree’ project in the panchayat area, the responses of the existing panchayat committee members are detailed below:

They were unanimous in their opinion that all the beneficiaries of the kudumbasree mission under their respective panchayats were those living below the poverty line.

By and large, the members expressed serious concern over the fact that many of the beneficiaries under the Kudumbasree programme, are being exploited by middlemen. For availing of the benefits under any such project or programme, the
respective kudumbasree unit has to prepare a project with full details of the financial assistance involved in its execution. Since these members do not have the knowledge and expertise in articulating feasible income generating projects, middlemen come to the picture and they take undue commission from the beneficiaries for getting things done. This means, a considerable part of the subsidy, the beneficiaries are entitled to, are being mis-appropriated by these parasites.

In every panchayat ward there are several kudumbasree units. The number of such units depends on the size of the ward. For co-ordinating the ward level kudumbasree units, an Area Development Society (ADS) has been constituted. Normally an ADS consists of 50 to 70 members and this society is expected to co-ordinate the activities of the kudumbasree units in the respective ward. Five members represent each kudumbasree unit in the ADS. They are designated as the President, Secretary, Health Volunteer, Income generator Volunteer and Basic Volunteer. Again, the Governing Body of each ADS consists of seven members, representing the various individual kudumbasree units. These seven members represent the kudumbasree units of the ward at the panchayat level apex body, called Community Development Society (CDS). Again the
governing body of CDS consists of the elected representatives from all the wards of the respective panchayat. This CDS has a President, Vice-President and a democratically elected Executive Committee.

The members expressed their dissatisfaction over the fact that beyond the panchayat level, that is at the district and state levels, the decisions are taken by the bureaucrats. Thus, the elected representatives have no definite role to play at the district and state levels as far as the administration of the kudumbasree mission is concerned.

In general, the members expressed the opinion that kudumbasree as such is a very useful programme for empowering women in the panchayats, especially those from the marginalized segments.

All the members expressed their gratification that they enjoyed absolute autonomy in the areas of planning and implementing developmental and welfare projects and programmes, allotted for the respective panchayats. This means that there is no undue interference in this regard from the Central Government or the State Government or the State planning Board.
The members also expressed their satisfaction over the timely allotment of govt. grants for various developmental and welfare programmes. However, they complained that the funds, sanctioned for the various projects are too small and inadequate.

Bureaucratic red tapism is one of the major stumbling blocks for the smooth and efficient implementation of the various developmental schemes. They insist on strict compliance with all the stringent regulations while utilizing the allocated funds and create hurdles in the proper and timely utilization of the funds, earmarked for each gramapanchayat institution. The members said that the Panchayat President and the Members of the panchayat are ordinary people with little knowledge about the various conventions, rules and regulations regarding the implementation modalities of various welfare and developmental programmes, they are expected to execute in their panchayats.

Another complaint that they raised was that the bureaucrats in charge of budgetary allocation and sanctioning of various welfare and development programmes, often misinterpret the existing rules and regulations in this connection and create confusion in the minds of the panchayat executive members. This results in inordinate delay in various developmental programmes getting approved.
The opinions of the panchayat members were also sought regarding the increased involvement and participation of women in Panchayatiraj institutions and its effect in reducing corruption and integrating various welfare and developmental programmes:

The majority of the members interviewed expressed the view that the participation of women in Panchayatiraj institution will pave the way for reducing corruption and nepotism in the functioning of the panchayatiraj.

However, they expressed serious doubts about the capability of women members for integrating various developmental programmes at the panchayat level. As a result of reservations for women in various wards many new entrants, quite incompetent and inexperienced in the field are forced to do things which they are not fit for and fail miserably to justify the expectations placed in them. They cut sorry figures and have to stand blinking at the realities they are unable to face.

It is disheartening to note that since 50 per cent of the seats in the Panchayatiraj institutions are reserved for the womenfolk, some politicians in the field use their clout to install their own wives in those seats. These are typical instances of nepotism. In such panchayat wards their male counterparts often make unjust intrusions in the day-to-day administration.
They also pointed out that the socio-political scenario in the state do not permit the women folk to discharge their duties and responsibilities effectively. The lack of social and familial acceptance of the elected women representatives is also a matter of concern for capable women to come to the fore-front of politics.

The overall view of the members on the impact of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is positive. This is a special welfare programme, introduced by the Central Govt. for ensuring vast employment opportunities for the low income and marginalized segments. The respondents felt that this programme, implemented through the Gramapanchayat institutions, helped considerably in providing employment opportunities for the marginalized women. However, this laudable humanitarian programme has yet to play a pivotal role in solving the gigantic unemployment problem, carrying it to the common people as a whole.

It was also pointed out that of late there is a decline in the job opportunities for the unemployed women in the agricultural sector. Right now, they are given labour assignments in public places and various government sponsored ventures and firms. Here again, there is no efficient machinery for effective
supervision so much so it has failed to achieve any measure of success in the state of Kerala, particularly in providing employment opportunities for those marginalized segments, that are desperately in need of some means of livelihood. This is based on the rationale that the daily wages fixed for these workers are only nominal in striking contrast to the ever-rising living index, prevailing in the state. In this context, the abysmally low monetary relief provided for the poverty stricken women at the bottom, cannot even drench the brain of the Herculean problem.

As regards the impact of the Right to Information Act (RTI) in the functioning of Gramapanchayats, the opinions of the people’s representatives were gathered. A detailed analysis carried out, based on the responses elicited from them are highlighted below:

86.9 per cent of the respondents opined that the implementation of the Panchayatiraj Act greatly helped to improve the overall performance of Gramachayats. This implies that both the paid officials and the elected representatives were alert and faithful to their duties and responsibilities. This attitude on their part paved the way for improving the overall governance of the Panchayatiraj institutions in the study area.
Only 13.1 per cent of the respondents refused to subscribe to this view and took exception to the claim of the unqualified success of this revolutionary measure, adopted at the government level. They felt that an overhauling of the entire machinery is warranted.

Apropos the efficient functioning of the Gramapanchayat Institutions the opinions of a selected number of the elected representatives were sought. Their opinions were sought on various deficiencies in the overall functioning of the comprehensive machinery. A majority (77%) of the respondents thought that the functioning of the Gramapanchayat Institutions was not quite satisfactory. They attributed several reasons for this. They interalia include:

i) The majority of the people approach the Gramapanchayat Institutions, seeking individual benefits and when their demands go unresponded they get resented.

ii) The functioning of the Gramasabha has got politicized.

iii) Favouritism and nepotism reign supreme in the decision making process of the Panchayatiraj
institutions and there are few safeguards against this unholy propensity in the existing set-up.

iv) They also pointed out that in many cases benefits went to the same beneficiaries again and again and the existing mechanism to prevent such anomalies is ineffective.

v) Another important reason that they attributed for the poor performance was that even though all the people in the respective gramapanchayats are informed about the Gramasabha meetings, in advance, the participation is abysmally low. Not more than 10 per cent which is the quorum required for a meeting usually turn up at the venue. Even this paltry attendance has been achieved after considerable efforts on the part of the officials to woo the people which show lack of interest on the part of the people of the Panchayat in matters connected with their own needs and welfare.

In Gramasabhas most people come without doing any homework and they simply succumb to the views of people with muscle power and clout.
vi. Another problem that they identified for the unsatisfactory functioning of the Grama Sabhas was that most educated people keep themselves aloof from the deliberations of the Gramasabhas. This segment show little interest in the functioning of the Panchayathiraj. This tendency impedes the efficient functioning of the Grama Panchayats.

vii. Another grave factor that adversely affect the efficient functioning of the Gramapanchayat is that the members of the working groups in the concerned Gramapanchayat are not sincere in discharging their duties and responsibilities. Such inertia on the part of the working group is an important reason for the poor performance of the Grama Panchayats.

viii. In general the members expressed their discontentment in the functioning of Gramasabhas and they expressed concern over the fact that the Grama sabhas in most of the Grama panchayat institutions have degenerated to a mere ritualistic status.

Regarding the functioning of the ward level development committees the members said that in almost all the
Gramapanchayat the ward level Development – Committees are functioning. However, they expressed their own reservations in the sincerity and commitment of most of such committees. In short, these committees are merely namesake bodies which contribute little to the common welfare. They are supposed to play a pivotal role in the infrastructural and other construction projects but they fall short of the trust placed in them. This is a dismal situation and deliberate efforts must be initiated to ensure the wholehearted co-operation of the Ward Development Committees.

To the query with respect to the impact of the political affiliation of the elected representatives in the governance of the respective panchayats, the respondents were unanimous in their view that such a propensity created chaos and uncertainty in the governance of the respective gramapanchayats. All the respondents felt relieved that such a tendency is waning day by day. However, in some places in the state there is a log-jam in the smooth functioning of gramapanchayats, owing to the frequent changes in the political affiliation of some of the elected members. They pointed out that such changes in loyalties are legally forbidden and those members indulging in such practices may forfeit their membership as per the provisions of the existing
Panchayatiraj Act. But this deterrent often go unheeded and unnoticed.

With regard to the efficiency in the implementation of various flagship programmes such as: Poverty eradication, Housing for the marginalized, Pure drinking water supply and the Prevention of contagious diseases, the majority of the members were found satisfied. However, they are not fully contented with the adequacy of the budgetary allocations for these vital programmes.

The members stated that as far as pure drinking water supply programme is concerned, it is yet to reach out to many remote villages in Meenachil Taluk, where there is an acute scarcity of drinking water, especially during dry-summer. They felt that more lobbying in this regard is required to persuade the Government to solve this problem on an urgent footing.

With regard to the efficiency of the services rendered by their respective gramapanchayats in the fields of road improvements, waste removal, financial assistance for the low income / marginalized segments and educational assistance for all the economically backward sections, they expressed the view that the situation has improved considerably and justice is
meted out to the intended beneficiaries though not to the fullest extent.

However, the members are not satisfied with the existing budgetary allocations, earmarked for educational assistance to the economically backward sections. In this regard they asserted that larger monetary allotments should be provided in the annual budget to meet the requirements. When the members’ opinions about the present structure of the comprehensive Panchayatiraj machinery were ascertained, they almost unanimously stated that it is on the whole too bulky and combersome. The views expressed by the respondents in this regard are given below:

I) Majority of the people’s representatives opined that the Block Gramapanchayats are unnecessary and redundant. This is precisely because they do not have their own funds for their optimum functioning. They function solely on the grants received from the state government. The members added that if such government grants went straight to the concerned gramapanchayats, they could be more effectively deployed for boosting developmental activities of the gramapanchayat institutions.
II. The training currently imparted to the newly elected members of the Gramapanchayat is found to be insufficient and unoriented. It lacks the potential to improve the capabilities of the newly elected members to fulfil their mission. The quality and content of such training need improvement and truly efficient trainers should be found to impart purposive training that will empower them to meet any eventualities. Most of those who are currently in-charge of imparting such training have been found to be incompetent.

III. The prevailing monthly honorarium given to the elected Panchayat members is not at all sufficient to meet their traveling and other incidental expenses. Therefore, an urgent need is felt for increasing their existing monthly emoluments from Rs. 3500 to Rs. 7000.

IV. The members suggested that installation of web cameras in Gramapanchayats will enhance the transparency in the day-to-day functioning of the Panchayatiraj institutions. Currently none of the
Gramapanchayat institutions in the area have such facilities.

V. The Minutes of the periodic Gramapanchayat meetings are often being manipulated to include issues not discussed in the agenda. The present practice is that panchayat committee meeting minutes are not recorded and signed by the members then and there on the date of the meeting. This paved the way for manipulating the minute books. Therefore it is imperative to have panchayat committee meetings minutes recorded at the same day and at the same time ensuring that signatures of all the participants in those meetings are obtained.

VI. The current 50 per cent reservation for women in the Gramapanchayat institutions might well be reduced to 33 per cent. This is based on the rationale that the majority of the women Panchayat members are tied up with their household chores with little time left for participating in public welfare activities.

VII. Currently in all the Gramapanchayat institutions 9 working groups are functioning. But some of them have their existence in paper only. Each group is
expected to hold at least three meetings per annum. The members found that the nine working groups in all the Gramapanchayat institutions do not function in accordance with the stipulations in this regard but concocted records say that everything is fine. This adversely affects the efficient functioning of the Gramapanchayat institutions.

4.4 AN ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONSES ELICITED FROM THE LOCAL PEOPLE IN THE STUDY AREA:

Responses were gathered from 345 respondents. This means 15 respondents each from the 23 Gramapanchayats, selected for the study were interviewed.

A bird’s eye-view of the knowledge of the people (respondents) regarding the proponent of the Panchayatiraj system and various concepts connected with it shocked the researcher to find that 70 per cent of the respondents were found to be ignorant of the real author of the Panchayatiraj idea. Thus they have only a myopic idea about the origin of the Panchayatiraj concept and its larger implications for an efficient of Governance of the Panchayatiraj institutions. It was also noted that the majority of the respondents do not have any idea of the importance of Gandhiji in initiating and strengthening the
very concept of the Panchayatiraj and the importance of decentralized administration leading to local government entities.

They also do not have any idea about the pivotal role played by the former Prime Minister of India late Sri. Rajeev Gandhi, who by a series of important Constitutional Amendments, made Panchayatiraj system a reality in the administration of local government arena. They also do not know that those amendments were put into effect during the tenure of Sri. P.V. Narasimha Rao, the late former Prime Minister of India.

The majority of the respondents have had some idea of the Panchayatiraj system but it was found to be very shallow. However, they opined that their idea of Panchayatiraj institutions became more pronounced after the implementation of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, when the institutions started functioning in the state and more particularly the Gramasabhas, which kindled some interest in the system in the minds of the rural populace.

With regard to the knowledge of the people regarding the aims and objectives of the Panchayatiraj system, the following responses were obtained. In this connection it was noticed that
75 per cent of the respondents do not have a clear idea about the fundamental aspects of the Panchayatiraj and its significance for an effective Governance of the Panchayatiraj institutions. About 25 percent of them were found to have some idea about the system.

With regard to the interest and participation in Gramasabha meetings, the majority of them (70%) stated that they did not feel interested in participating in the Gramasabha deliberations in their Panchayats which took place from time to time.

It was interesting to note from an analysis of the responses of the people that they perceived Panchayatiraj Institutions as official entities meant merely for issuing building permits, residential certificates, ownership certificates, building age certificates, birth certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates, etc. This reflects upon their ignorance about the real objectives of the Panchayatiraj institutions and their relevance.

With regard to the relevance of people’s planning for the efficient functioning of the Panchayatiraj and the benefits that it can bring about, was not very much comprehensible to the respondents.
The delegation of powers to the Grassroot level through Panchayatiraj institutions is not precisely known to the respondents. This implies a lack of awareness among the common people and the need for making concerted efforts for making the people well instructed in the necessity of people’s participation in the meetings of the Panchayatiraj institutions for a clean and efficient administration. They are also not sufficiently aware of the powers delegated to the Grass root level. It was further noticed that most of the respondents participate in Gramasabha meeting merely to please the respective Panchayat ward representatives.

With regard to the efficient and transparent functioning of the Panchayatiraj Institutions what creative contribution people can make is also not known to the respondents interviewed. In General they were not properly aware of the creative contribution they can make to make the Gramapanchayats function effectively. But the respondents affirmed that the introduction of the Panchayatiraj system paved the way for improving public works and welfare measures including construction of roads, culwarts, Small bridges, provision for pure drinking water supply, and measures connected with health care. They also strongly responded in the affirmative that the introduction of the
Panchayatiraj system very much helped to bring several amenities within the reach of the ordinary people. Most of the key departments/institutions having a bearing on the welfare and development of the people are now accessible to them. Some such institutions are agricultural offices, Primary health centres and Government schools functioning within the jurisdiction of the respective panchayats. They opined that the functioning of these institutions has substantially contributed towards the welfare of the people in general.

However, they expressed serious concern with regard to the half hearted participation of the local people in the functioning of these key institutions. The local people are more concerned with the availing of any benefits or relief grants they can get rather than creatively contributing towards the efficient functioning of the Panchayatiraj system.

Another important inadequacy noticed in this connection is that the ordinary people are not well-informed of the important decisions taken by the panchayat committees and the crucial matters that are discussed at the periodic Gramasabha meetings and the discussions and deliberations carried out by the development committees in the various Gramapanchayats. This is indeed a serious flaw in the functioning of the Panchayatiraj
which unremedied further delay, can lead the tragic failure of the system as such.

To a query on the impact of constituting the three-tier Panchayatiraj system on improving the basic facilities in villages, the responses elicited from the respondents are detailed below:

All the respondents unanimously agreed that the three-tier panchayatiraj system paved the way for substantially improving the basic facilities in the villages; especially in those situated in the remote, underdeveloped areas.

They also opined that this new system has helped to focus attention on some of the vital areas of rural development, namely;

i) Facilitating pure drinking water supply in the backward villages.

ii) Providing adequate water for irrigation purposes.

iii) Construction of smell bridges, culwarts and rural roads.

iv) Construction of bunds for preventing soil erosion on the riversides and the valleys of small streams.

v) Perceptible improvement in providing street lights.
vi) Providing dwellings for the Homeless.

vii) Providing low cost sanitary latrines.

viii) Promotion of organic farming including the setting up of worm compost pits in individual households.

ix) Providing timely welfare measures for the upliftment of the weaker sections

x) Health development programmes particularly for the women and children.

Another crucial question that was put to the respondents was meant to elicit their opinion about the extent to which the panchayat committee members rendered their services to the people without any political bias. This question was included in the questionnaire as there is a general feeling among the people that when Panchayat representatives got elected, representing different parties they will be politically biased and they misuse their position and clout for favouring their own party cadres.

The local people expressed the view that even though some of the elected panchayat members who were by their nature impartial are often pressurized to be biased by their own party leaders. The reason they showed was that the elected representatives of each party was given stringent directions by
their own senior political leaders and are bound to abide by such directions. This is the main reason for the elected Panchayat members to be biased.

As regards the participation of the people in the Gramasabha meetings it was shocking to note that 70 per cent of the respondents confessed that they did not participate in the Gramasabha meetings. This attitude against the spirit of participatory democracy and can be ruinous to the very system. They also said that many of the people participate in such Gramasabas merely to please the respective ward member.

Regarding the proceedings discussions and deliberations in the regular Gramasabhas, it was revealed that prior systematic planning of the matters to be discussed was not made and as such the discussions were, for the most part futile. What usually happens is that those having a clout in the proceedings used to influence the participants and decisions were taken capriciously. This shows mistrust in the people in the functioning of the Gramasabhas.

One of the major lacunae in usual Gramasabha meetings as pointed out by the local people is the absence in such meetings of an objective evaluation of the projects and programmes already undertaken at the prior meetings of
Gramasabhas. Thus the local have only a myopic idea of the developmental and welfare projects devised and implemented in their Gramapanchayats.

Another important thing pointed out by the local people is that they come and participate in Gramasabhas with a mindset to get some benefits but they are least concerned with public welfare.

A very important hindrance to the efficient functioning of Panchayatiraj system is the task involved in ensuring the wholehearted involvement and participation of the local people. The researcher explored how far the people have been convinced that it is their responsibility to plan and decide upon appropriate programmes and projects for their own progress and development. He noticed a rather disheartening truth: people are yet to have such a passion and conviction.

It was also identified that one of the major misconceptions/erroneous notions of the people about Gramasabhas is that such proceedings are exclusively meant for providing certain financial and material assistances for the downtrodden people in the respective panchayats and not at all for the integrated development of the respective panchayats concerned and for ensuring participatory democracy.
It was further noticed that the local people also did not have a clear idea that the Gramasabhas are summoned for deciding up on the developmental and welfare programmes as well as upon the priorities given to them on the basis of emergency.

Apropos the decisions in Gramasabhas the query was as to whether such decisions are based on majority views and the product of detailed discussions at the Gramasabhas. In this connection they categorically stated that democratic norms are not reflected in the conduct of Gramasabha meetings. The decisions are arbitrarily taken by the respective panchayat member. Furthermore, such deliberations in the Gramasabhas are subjected to the whims and fancies of the concerned panchayat member.

The respondents representing the people blamed the inefficiency and inprudence of the working group, who were expected to chalkout development and welfare programmes for the people prior to the deliberation in the Gramasabha.

As per the norms of the panchayatiraj Act the working group is expected to make a list of beneficiaries and such a list is to be endorsed at the subsequent Gramasabha meeting. But no employee was found to adhere strictly to this stipulation. A
comprehensive list is not prepared and got approved. The beneficiaries are also decided upon by the Gramasabha itself and the work Group has no voice in the matter.

Another anomaly pointed out by the local people with regard to the functioning of the Gramasabha is that the officer in charge of the conduct of Gramasabha meetings is expected to record the minutes of the Gramasabha proceedings. Quite often, this is not properly done. Hence the concerned member selects beneficiaries arbitrarily. This is against the spirit of participatory democracy.

With regard to the functioning of the Gramasabhas the respondents confessed that they were not fully satisfied with the modalities and the field performance of their Gramasabhas. Consequently a considerable number of people are disinclined to attend the Gramasabha meetings and many others do it for name sake only. A sense of futility has grasped them. This phenomenon, they knew, was unhealthy and against the democratic spirit and rationale. On account of this apathy in participating in Gramasabha meetings, Grama sabha proceedings have degenerated to the level of mere rituals. The President and the others responsible for the implementation of the Panchayatiraj concept in both letter and spirit are, for the
most part, indifferent or influenced by extraneous considerations and thus have jeopardized the efficient and transparent functioning of the Gramasabhas.

Another weakness of the Gramasabhas pointed out by the local people’s representatives is that most of the participants in the Gramasabha meetings are people, having allegiance to the respective ward member and they blindly accept what the member does and says.

In connection with the people’s awareness of the criteria for choosing the beneficiaries of the various welfare and developmental programmes at the Gramasabha meetings a query was made and the responses of the people are given below: It was found that the majority numbering as much as 80 per cent did not have any clear idea regarding this. These points to the heightened need to make the ordinary people aware of their rights and privileges so as to impel them to avail of the benefits accruing from the various welfare and development programmes. They also pointed out that the concerned member of the panchayat has an upper hand in choosing beneficiaries and he does it according to his whims and caprices without considering the social and economic backwardness of the beneficiary segments concerned. Many a time this resulted in choosing
beneficiaries who do not deserve such benefits at all. Therefore, efforts must be made to ensure that intended benefits went to the hands of the deserving people through a true democratic process.

As per the norm of the Panchayatiraj Act, it is the responsibility of the working group in the panchayat to find out the most eligible beneficiaries for the earmarked welfare and developmental programmes instead of leaving the responsibility to the ward member. Such a situation must certainly change and the selection of beneficiaries must be strictly according to the established rules and regulations in this regard.

With regard to the query on improving the functioning of the Gramasabhas the responses of the people were analysed and the researcher has come to the following conclusions. According to them, the ignorance of the people is the main drawback and is responsible for the inefficient functioning of the Gramapanchayats. The politically divided local populace is unable to exert pressure to make the functioning of the Gramapanchayats, geared to achieve the overall development of the area without prejudice to any segment of the population.

When called for suggestions for overcoming these anomalies in the functioning of the Gramapanchayats, the
people’s representatives opined that proper awareness creating programmes should be conducted off and on to enlighten the local people as well as the elected representatives of the Gramapanchayats. They said that no such awareness building programmes were in vogue then and this deficiency should be remedied on an urgent footing if the objectives of the Panchayathiraj should be realized. They unanimously opined that such a training must be carried out with the help of proven experts and resourceful persons.

One of the important suggestions put forth by the people’s representatives in this connection is that at present almost all the individual welfare programmes are exclusively reserved for the poorest of the poor or the downtrodden. This dissuades those hailing from the lower and upper middle income group from taking interest in the Gramasabha activities. Therefore, they strongly recommended that such welfare and beneficial programmes should be extended to benefit the lower and upper middle income groups too, as many such families are still in need of pecuniary as well as societal assistance.

Another constructive suggestion made by the local people’s representatives is that at present the Gramapanchayat administration is not making use of the talents and capabilities
of the intellectually enriched and locally available experts in various fields. Therefore, adequate provision must be introduced to ensure the utilization of such potential for the greater benefit of the marginalized in the respective panchayats. At present the existing provisions for linking the support and co-operation of leading Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Kudubasrees are not satisfactory. Their participation in the affairs of the Gramapanchayats is just nominal. This situation should change and efforts must be made to ensure their active participation for improving the functioning of the Panchayatiraj institutions.

As regards the bureaucratic red tape in the official cadre in getting the budgetary allocations for the various developmental activities released and disbursed in time, the people’s representatives pointed out that inordinate delay is quite common in every sphere of the activities of the Gramapanchayat institutions, creating stumbling blocks to the progress of the various developmental projects and programmes. Fifty per cent of the respondents endorsed this view and suggested ways and means to overcome such bureaucratic indifference. They went on saying that even for simple matters they need to visit panchayat offices three or four times owing to the lack of
cordiality and cooperation on the part of the government officials, responsible for sanctioning funds for developmental and welfare programmes.

They also said that people are tempted to bribe officials on account of this and provision for strict surveillance of such malpractices must be introduced in every Gramapanchayat institution by those in the upper supervisory cadre to get rid of this kind of corruption.

A question was put as to whether the prevailing provision of reserving 50 per cent participation for the women in the Panchayatiraj institutions has any significant impact on reducing corruption and accelerating the efficient functioning of the day-to-day activities of the Panchayatiraj institutions. The majority (80 percent) of the people’s representatives responded in the affirmative. However, they do not subscribe to the view that such reservations for the women, have achieved all its intended objectives to the fullest extent. Lack of efficiency and experience on the part of the women entrusted with the activities of the Gramapanchayat has created chaos and delay in the implementation of several welfare and developmental activities of the panchayatiraj institutions in general.
With regard to the importance of women empowerment in the social activities, the people’s representatives opined that it is a crucial reform which is of supreme importance, for it is bound to enrich the activities of the Gramasabha and as such, is highly laudable. This has resulted in the enhanced participation of women, in the periodic Gramasabha meetings. Further, those women coming under the purview of the MGNREGS and the Kudumbasree projects are bound to play a pivotal role in the day-to-day functioning of the Gramapanchayats.

With regard to the provisions connected with the welfare of the women and children in the respective Gramapanchayats, the people’s representatives opined that such decisions are being invariably implemented in the panchayatiraj institutions. The major programmes undertaken in this regard are optimum health care for the pregnant and lactating women and safeguards against the nutritional deficiency among the poor and marginalized children.

To a query on the importance of kudubasree projects in improving fellowship among the women folk and achieving their active involvement in public activities, 85 percent of such respondents replied in the affirmative. They also expressed the view that the implementation of the kudumbasree project has
been found to enhance women’s confidence besides ameliorating
the poverty in their families. However, they opined that the
Kudumbasree project has a serious deficiency that it has failed
to include all the categories of backward communities and as
such several deserving segment of the population are being
denied the benefits of the scheme. Therefore, they suggested the
adoption of practical measures for attracting and including such
marginalized women, who remain outside the realm of the
Kudumasree programme. However, the implementation of the
Kudumbasree scheme has helped to identify to a large extent the
abilities of the women folk and in fostering their hidden talents
and abilities.

With regard to a query on the functioning of the
developmental committees in their respective wards and their
active role in the developmental activities of the panchayat, 90
per cent of the respondents seemed to have no idea about the
existence of development committees in their respective wards.
They also did not have any idea about their objectives, roles and
responsibilities and other pertinent matter connected with them.
And it was found that in many Gramapanchayats Development
Committees existed only for namesake.
The opinions of the people’s representatives were also sought regarding the efficient involvement of Panchayat development committees in construction projects in their respective wards. They evinced ignorance of the very existence of such development committees, let alone the role they played in the development activities in the area including the construction projects.

Apropos the implementation of the MGNREGS in the respective Gramapanchayat wards, the respondents stated that they were not satisfied with the functioning of this prestigious project in their respective wards. They stressed the vital need to streamline the scheme to ensure its proper functioning in keeping with its avowed objectives. They were of opinion that there is grave disparity between the efforts of the beneficiaries and the benefits resulted from them. It could be considered as successful if a reasonable congruence could be established between input and output. When beneficiaries put some efforts in this regard the benefits that accrue out of them should be proportionate. Now there is a colossal mismatch between the ability of the person assigned for a particular task and the output obtained out of him or her. The beneficiaries consider such jobs as a temporary relief and not as a enduring occupation
that will ensure their subsistence/livelihood on a permanent basis.

Of late political unions of MGNREGS beneficiaries have crystallized in many places. This resulted in reducing their output substantially to reduce their output since they now feel that they are secure, do what they may. Their political affiliation enables them to keep away from the undue interference of Panchayat officials and Panchayat members. This paved the way for their free discharge of duties and responsibilities entrusted to them under the MGNREGS programme. But the people’s representatives categorically revealed their conviction that the political affiliation of the MGNREGS beneficiaries has adulterated the serenity of this ambitious project.

When a question was put as to whether the frequent changes in the political loyalty of the elected members during a single tenure of office, adversely affected the smooth functioning of the Panchayat institutions, a vast majority as much as (85%) of these representatives responded that such changes of loyalty were very negligible. The reason was quite simple: if they made any such changes in loyalty, it would lead to the loss of their membership and this served as a strong deterrent against changes of loyalty. Normally, this type of change of loyalty comes
from the members, who have won the local government elections as independent candidates. It was found that in the entire study areas such happenings had been insignificantly rare.

Another very important response elicited from them pertained to the unscrupulous, illegal sanctioning of granite quarries, crussure units so harmful to the serene environment, prevailing in the salubrious panchayat areas. This not only pollutes the healthy village environment but also poisons the natural fresh air. It also paves the way for deteriorating the health of the people as a whole. It is learnt that breathing problems, asthma, allergy and such other diseases are rampant in such villages.

The level of satisfaction of the respondents with regard to the reconstruction of panchayat roads, the waste removal programmes, financial assistance to the weaker and the marginalized and the help being extended to the educationally backward in the respective Gramapanchayats was also explored. The responses obtained in this connection are detailed below:

i) As regards the renovation and expansion of the village roads and financial assistances for the weaker, the vulnerable and the marginalized, the respondents
expressed their satisfaction and acknowledged the laudable efforts being made in these directions.

ii) However, They felt that the existing arrangements for waste removal and financial assistance given to for educationally backward segment have fallen short of expectations.

Normally the students belonging to the marginalized segments avail of financial assistances through the Banks. However, since the Banks demand heavy collateral securities for disbursing such loans, which the majority of the deserving people are unable to cope with owing to the low financial position of the concerned families. This, in effect, shows that the panchayat administration has failed in extending creative financial assistances to such eligible students.

With regard to the respondents’ suggestions for improving the overall governance of their Gramapanchayats, the following data were obtained:

i) For dispelling the lack of awareness and ignorance of the people about their rights and privileges, periodic training classes, Seminars, Workshops, information dissemination and sensitization programmes for the
people should be conducted at short intervals for ensuring the achievement of these objectives to the fullest extent.

ii) The need for reinforcing the Gramasabhas in the respective Gramapanchayats with further delegation of powers and enhancing the number of Gramasabhas in each one of the Grama-panchayats.

iii) The duplication of beneficiaries was found to be common, i.e., the same beneficiaries are obtaining benefits under various schemes of the panchayats. This prevents several eligible candidates from getting such benefits.

iv) The implementation of the MGNREGS need to be further strengthened by increasing its efficiency through closer supervision and periodic assessment of the outcome.

v) There exists undue delay in granting licenses from the panchayat vis-à-vis the implementation of various schemes and projects. Such delays must be avoided through effective supervisory surveillance.
vi) The respondents unanimously opined that a panchayat president’s relief fund akin to the Chief Minister’s relief fund should be instituted in every Gramapanchayat. Such a fund can be embellished reinforced with the whole-hearted support and co-operation of the right thinking and affluent members of the society. It must be subjected to periodic audit.

vii) Another important suggestion they put forth was that the existing rules and regulations, connected with the implementation of Kudubasree must be amended so as to expand their ambit to cover more beneficiaries in the region.

viii) The local beneficiaries are deriving benefits directly from the respective Gramapanchayats and as such they do not have direct access to Block and District panchayats. This situation should be changed and provision must be made for a coordinated functioning of the existing three-tier panchayatiraj system (Gramapanchayat - Block panchayat - District panchayat)

ix) A strong fellowship of the elected people’s representatives, Government officials and local people
must be created for initiating more ambitious and creative programmes to further augment the implementation of the developmental activities of each Gramapanchayat and re-oriented to cover a larger number of beneficiaries.

x) The implementation of the various welfare and developmental activities in each one of the Gramapanchayats should be made subjected to social audit in order to ensure their proper implementation and to prevent misappropriation and mis-utilization.

xi) The people also strongly advocated the total abolition of the use of plastics in the panchayat areas and the stringent implementation of waste removal programmes in their respective panchayats.

xii) The respondents also suggested affecting an increase in the number of self-employment projects being allotted to the Gramapanchayat institutions by the State and the Central Governments.

xiii) Construction of check dams and bunds for preventing water scarcity was also very strongly
recommended by the representatives of the local people.

xiv) While introducing new developmental activities, all its potential benefits must be made known to all categories of people, they said.

xv) They also strongly recommended the adoption of adequate measures for promoting amity and cordial relation among all religious denominations in the Gramapanchayats which can ensure the smooth implementation of the various humanitarian and developmental activities.

xvi) The respondents opined that it would be very productive if officials and the members, representing the Gramapanchayat institutions visit the people, discuss various issues with them and chalk out various remedial measures and programmes for augmenting their welfare.

xvii) Mobilization of voluntary labour from persons of goodwill in the implementation of the developmental activities in the panchayats was very strongly recommended.
xviii) It was suggested that the Gramasabhas which are functioning ideally and meaningfully, must be identified and must be projected as models for inspiring the people at large.

xix) Strict surveillance should be made to spot unscrupulous politicians and corrupt officials and they should be brought to book to serve as a lesson for all other vulnerable individuals and bodies.

4.5 AN ANALYSIS OF THE RESPONSES OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICIALS CHOSEN FOR THE RESEARCH STUDY

While choosing the sample from this particular category sufficient attention was paid to ensure that only those officials who have put in at least 5 to 6 years of service in the study area were included in the sample.

Apropos the question related to the extent to which the formation of the Panchayatraj institution helped in planning and executing developmental activities at the grass root level, the views and convictions expressed by the respondents are highlighted herein below: All the Government officials responded in the affirmative, ie, the formation of the
Gramapanchayat institutions has greatly helped in the planning and execution of developmental activities at the lowest strata and very much helped to ensure participatory democracy at the lowest level. This means that the ordinary people have been given adequate opportunities in discerning appropriate programmes in conformity with the locally available resources, for their own development instead of leaving it to the whims and fancies of the bureaucrats to decide programmes of development for them.

They unanimously opined that the formation of the three-tier panchayatraj has very much helped in realizing the great dream of Mahatma Gandhi, which gave supreme importance for identifying the real problems of the common people and to find out appropriate solutions to these problems.

In their views the formation of the three-tier Panchayatiraj system can be legitimately considered to have paved the way for ensuring self-reliant villages as visualized by the Father of the Nation.

They vehemently opined that ordinary people at the grass-root level did not have an easy access to the State and Central
Governments for getting their needs fulfilled and their grievances redresed. However, the introduction of the Panchayatiraj has enabled them to have an easy access to the administrative authorities for getting their genuine needs met promptly. Thus, for them Panchayatiraj institutions are the closest constitutional body to which they can have an easy access and get their needs met expeditiously.

With regard to the query how far the delegation of powers from the top to the lowest level as envisaged in the Panchayatraj concept has helped in the development of the rural areas, the officials responded as follows:

As many as 70 per cent of the respondents expressed the view that the Grama-Panchayat institutions need to be given greater powers and authorities for enabling them to function more fruitfully and productively. They also opined that besides the existing powers if more powers can be delegated to the Gramapanchayat institutions in various areas including the vital field of power supply, it can keep a vigilant eye over the functioning of the Electricity department, Irrigation department, Revenue department, Civil supplies department and Police
department which are crucial areas in which the Panchayat machinery must have an effective control. Right now, the Panchayatiraj institutions do not have any statutory control over these administrative areas. This view is based on the rationale that these are the key-departments, which are directly involved in the day-to-day life of the ordinary people. If these nerve-centres are brought within the supervisory authority of the gramapanchayat, people can get their grievances met expeditiously. The concerned officials vindicated their view by citing some typical examples. For instance, the proper maintenance of street lighting in within the province of each Gramapanchayat institution is now the sole responsibility of the Electricity Board. Most often this system is functioning in a haphazard fashion with frequent power failures and the Panchayat administration is vested with no authority whatsoever for correcting the negligence of the Board officials. Another example they cited was that the Public Water Supply system with tap connections in strategic centres meant for the poorest segment in each one of the Gramapanchayats is administered and maintained by the Water Authority Department. However, normally they do not pay adequate attention to see that these
taps provide an uninterrupted supply of water. To make matters worse, officials concerned keep a deaf ear to the complaints in this regard. And the irony is that the Gramapanchayats concerned are bound to make payments to the Electricity Department and the Water Supply Department whether or not those people carry out their responsibilities.

They also said that the common people do have grievances about the functioning of the Police Department, Revenue Department, Civil Supplies Department but they do not have an easy access to any of these bodies for getting their grievances redressed. Thus delegation of more powers to the Gramapanchayat institutions particularly in the afore-said areas is imperative and indispensable if the avowed objectives of the panchayatraj are to be fully realized.

Another important problem that they pointed out was that the Panchayats are provided with services of some officials deputation from the various key departments such as Agriculture, Health, Education, etc. But persons for various purpose are not under the jurisdiction of the Gramapanchayats concerned. This means they are mainly controlled from their
parent departments, leaving no effective power to the Gramapanchayat institutions to supervise their functioning and ensure their faithfulness to their responsibilities. This quite often creates chaos. On the contrary, if these delegated officials are brought under the exclusive control of the Panchayats, their services can be utilized more effectively and productively. This will surely result in providing better services to the ordinary people.

The various problems confronted by the Government officials in the execution of their day-to-day duties and responsibilities and their opinions as to how to solve these problems, were also sought. Their responses are detailed below:

(i) From time to time fresh rules and regulations are introduced by the Government for ensuring a better governance of the Panchayatiraj institutions. These newly introduced rules and regulations are not brought to the notice of the elected representatives and the people of the panchayats in general. Since they are not well aware of these, they do not know the legal implications of acting beyond the realm of these
rules and regulations. Owing to their ignorance in this regard, they often compel the government officers to act ignoring the same. This is quite embarrassing to them. As a result of all these, the majority of the people have come to consider Panchayatiraj institutions as Government Bodies, incapable of or disinterested in satisfying the vital needs of the people and view them as institutions functioning for creating troubles and difficulties for the people. The reason is their sheer ignorance of the rules and regulations and the lack of awareness on their part that a Panchayat official can’t function outside the purview of these rules and regulations.

(ii) The officials also expressed a genuine grievance that they are over burdened owing to the shortage of staff in their respective offices. Several vacancies are left unfilled. Besides, each panchayat needs some really qualified and competent personnel to meet the needs of the people they are expected to attend to.
(iii) The deputed officers in each panchayat namely, the Revenue Inspector, Agriculture Officer, Health Inspector and Panchayat Engineer are acting in autonomy and, as such, the Panchayat administration has little control over them. This situation must change and adequate statutory amendments must be made to make them under the overall control of the Panchayat administration, which will enable it to extract the best output from them. This was yet another short-fall pointed out the interviewed officials.

(iv) The Panchayat officials complained that there is a severe shortage of clerical staff in their respective panchayats and stated that there should be at least one clerk to look after each section of the Panchayat administration to ensure maximum efficiency.

(v) The officials expressed their strongest dissatisfaction with regard to the services of the Panchayat Engineer, deputed for looking after the Public Works and other important developmental activities. They resented
the present practice of appointing one Engineer for a group of Panchayats. This means a single engineer is forced to find out and meet the needs of two or three panchayats including the construction of bunts and the digging of wells. This is a field in which the regular presence and close supervision of the Engineer is very much needed. Quite often this is not possible as one man cannot be present in all the work spots spread over a vast area. So they suggested that the exclusive presence of one engineer for each panchayat is quite imperative.

(vi) The officials expressed their strong discontentment over the inordinate delay in disbursing the money for various development programmes and public works, allotted to each Panchayat from the State exchequer. Such funds are released normally at the fag end of the financial year, usually in March. This makes it virtually impossible to undertake any meaningful construction work in such a short period. This can create a lot of chaos. Hasty construction work can
adversely affect the quality of work and much of the construction work will have to be left unfinished. This is a common spectacle.

(vii) With regard to the distribution of funds among various welfare schemes, the existing rules and regulations are too stringent. For instance, the distribution of funds for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes (ST). This includes construction of footpaths leading to ST colonies but most colonies do not need such foot-paths. The irony is that such funds cannot be diverted for other important purposes, such as, construction of new roads and the improvement of the existing ones. Hence, necessary amendments to the existing laws must be made, providing for the utilization of such funds for other important purposes so as to avoid lapse of resources.

(viii) Trees standing in public places will have to be cut down in several situations. Panchayats have been granted authority to do so. However, it can be auctioned only after proper valuation is done by the
Forest Department authorities. This is not usually done in time so much so much precious wood goes rotten and unusable. What a waste of resources! According to the officials, adequate provision should be made to preserve such wood till it is auctioned out. This is the exclusive responsibility of the Panchayat concerned but the experience shows that there is dereliction of duty on its part, causing a heavy loss to it. The officials said that stringent regulations must be introduced to prevent untoward incidents.

(ix) Another grave problem that adversely affects the smooth and efficient functioning of the Panchayat institutions is the lack of continuity of the governing body including the President and the Vice-President. They change off and on owing to the vulnerability of the coalition arrangements, initially made. Loyalties and allegiance change and this creates instability. The ultimate outcome is chaos and confusion in the ruling circle and that leads to a state where nobody is
responsible for anything. Greed for power often supersedes the welfare of the Panchayat as a whole and the common people become the ultimate victims. To make it more explicit, this usual coalition arrangement in Panchayat governance affects the continuity of a person as a President or Vice-President for the full term of five years. This adversely affects the progress and continuity of the various developmental initiatives embarked upon by his or her predecessor, owing to the difference in developmental vision of the two incumbents.

To the query on the conduct of conscientisation and sensitization programmes for the people's representatives and the people for sharpening their understanding of a smooth and efficient functioning of the Panchayatiraj system from time to time the respondents expressed their views as follows:

By and large, the respondents are not satisfied with the conduct of such conscientisation and sensitisation programmes in their panchayats. Such programmes are done with the help of Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), an autonomous
government body, meant for the said purpose. Their personnel 
conduct occasional awareness awakening programmes for the 
people as well as for the elected representatives. This is quite 
erratic and has not been found to be effective and useful.

However, they unanimously opined that the idea of 
providing periodic training programmes to the people as well as 
their representatives is good. The job can be entrusted to the 
experts from the KILA. But it must be conducted more 
frequently, ensuring continuity to the programmes. The 
Panchayats must get themselves involved in such activities and 
necessary assistance should be given in the day-to-day needs in 
conducting such programmes. Then that will be a hall-mark in 
the success of the functioning of the Panchayatiraj.

Another important observation that they made in this 
connection was that the KILA assigns their trained hands from 
time to time for conducting awareness generating programmes 
on Panchayatiraj for the people’s representatives and the people 
in general of the Gramapanchayat institutions in the study area. 
However, the ordinary people are not showing much interest in 
this, owing to the reasons best known to them. Therefore, efforts
must be initiated to evoke interest in them to attend such training programmes unfailingly.

Apropos the functioning of the Gramasabha in their respective Gramapanchayats the administrative officials expressed the following views:

They were discontented with the functioning of the Gramasabhas in their respective Gramapanchayats. The various inadequacies they pointed out include:

(i) Such Gramasabhas usually do not ensure adequate participation of all the sections of the people.

(ii) The reason for those participating from the marginalized segment in Gramasabha meetings is to speed up the financial or material assistance to which they are otherwise entitled to.

(iii) They also observed that in general the participation of those belonging to the Above Poverty Line (APL) categories is just nominal. The reason might be that they are not entitled to any financial or material
assistance from the government as in the case of the poor and marginalized segments.

(iv) Among the Below Poverty Line (BPL) categories participating in the Gramasabha meetings, the majority are women.

(v) Another important observation that the administrative officials made is that the various discussions carried out in such meetings are not effective and creative.

(vi) They also expressed their reservations regarding the functioning of the Working Groups, constituted in each Gramapanchayat as part of the Panchayatiraj. These Working Groups which are expected to study and trace out appropriate developmental and welfare programmes for the respective Gramapanchayats do not function effectively. Most of the members keep mum, instead of giving valuable suggestions on the basis of the requirements of the localities they represent. Often such meetings fail to get the
required quorum and capricious decisions are being recorded in the minutes of such meetings.

(vii) In general, the respondents expressed the view that the people participating in Gramasabhas do so mostly on account of the pressure exerted on them by the elected representatives and the facilitators, appointed for the purpose are not properly playing their role of creating interest in the people to participate in the Gramasabhas.

(viii) They also expressed dissatisfaction about the role played by the stake holders in making rationale contribution towards various projects and programmes, suggested by the Gramasabhas. Here the projects and programmes, proposed by the respective Gramasabhas are kept in the draft form indefinitely.

A query regarding the various conventions in connection with the conduct of Gramasabhas, the representatives of the administrative officials, stated as follows:
(i) It is the prerogative of the Panchayat Committee to fix the date, time and venue of a Gramasabha meeting.

(ii) The respective panchayat ward member is expected to serve notice seven days prior to the date of the meeting.

(iii) The convener of the Gramasabha meeting is the person representing the Ward and the co-ordinator is the person specially assigned for the purpose by the Panchayat Committee. Such a person should be an official, working under the Panchayat.

(iv) The Chairperson of the Gramasabha meetings is either the President or the Vice-President of the respective Gramapanchayat. In the case of the absence of both of them the respective Convener must chair the meeting.

(v) The Member of the Parliament (MP) / the Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) / The Member of the District Panchayat (MDP) and the Member of the Block Panchayat (MBP) representing the concerned
Panchayat Ward are also expected to participate in such Gramasabha meetings but normally they do not participate.

(vi) Apart from Special Gramasabha meetings, the normal Gramasabha meetings are required to be conducted twice in six months during each financial year. Such Special Gramasabhas are convened for special and urgent purposes, decided by the respective Gramapanchayat committees. In the study area normally 2 to 4 such Gramasabhas are conducted every year.

(vii) New schemes are discussed and deliberated at the first Gramasabha of each financial year. The beneficiaries are normally selected at the second Gramasabha meeting.

Apropos the criteria for selecting the beneficiaries at the Gramasabhas, the respondents said as follows:

(I) The criteria for selecting beneficiaries for the various welfare and developmental programmes are given in
the government circular specially intended for the purpose.

(ii) As per the above circular 30 days prior intimation is given to the members regarding the criteria for the eligibility priority for choosing the beneficiaries of various schemes.

(iii) Thereafter, a printed material highlighting the eligibility criteria for choosing the beneficiaries will be given to the people along with the application forms meant for the purpose.

(iv) The concerned working group along with the Panchayat Member, representing the Ward scrutinizes the applications and makes enquiries regarding the eligibility and suitability of the beneficiaries to be selected under various schemes.

(v) Based on marks, received by the beneficiaries at the aforesaid scrutiny, the priority list of the beneficiaries will be given to the respective Gramasabha.
(vi) Based on the priority list a further discussion will be held at the Gramasabha meeting and the applications of those who are not found eligible will be rejected.

(vii) This will be followed by the finalization of the list of beneficiaries for various welfare and development programmes in the financial year concerned and the formal approval of the same will be given at the subsequent meeting of the Panchayat Committee.

(viii) In reality what happens is that owing to the laxity and inefficiency on the part of the working groups, the final list of beneficiaries is the list, arbitrarily decided upon by the respective ward member concerned. Thus the role played by the Working Group, the committee and the stake holders, remains as only a procedural formality.

To a query as to what extent excessive political influence of the Panchayat members is detrimental to the efficient implementation of the various developmental projects and programmes, the response received is given below:
As many as 70 per cent of the respondents expressed the view that the “over-politics” of the Panchayat members adversely affects the smooth and efficient implementation of the various developmental activities in the panchayat. The biggest problem is that the members representing the ruling front and the members of the opposition are always at loggerheads so much so that even very worthy programmes initiated by the ruling front members are vehemently opposed for gaining political mileage and to mislead the common people.

And as such, each elected representative sticks to the directions given by the respective political hierarchy without giving any concern for ethics.

The members representing each ward in the panchayat is solely concerned about the welfare and development of the people in his or her ward but does not stand for the common good. This means that each member is more concerned about what benefits his or her ward members received and is least bothered about the common benefits for the people of the whole panchayat.
The elected representatives are not wellversed in the current rules and regulations, governing the panchayat administration and matters connected with the allocation and utilization of the funds and so on and so forth. This jeopardizes the efficient discharge of the duties and responsibilities vested with him.

A query was made seeking their opinion as to what extent the introduction of the Right to Information Act (RTI) helped in the proper and transparent implementation of the various welfare and developmental activities of the Panchayatraj institutions.

As many as 90 per cent of the respondents strongly opined that the introduction of the RTI has immensely helped in the proper, transparent and effective implementation of the various activities of the Gramapanchayat institutions.

However the RTI is put to unnecessary and unwarranted use in panchayats. That is to say the least, that for each and everything the provisions of the RTI are being evoked. In this connection, the secretary to the Gramapanchayat is responsible for giving replies to each and every query under the RTI and he
used to be over burdened in this regard. Therefore, the respondents vehemently expressed the view that a special officer should be appointed in each Gramapanchayat for dealing with the issues connected with RTI.

The tendency among the common people to use the provisions of RTI purposely to create chaos to the elected members and officers of the Grampanchayat institutions is quite evident. Such tendencies need to be checked. They also expressed the view that with respect to this, common people must be effectively conscientised and sensitized in order to restrain them from using the provisions of the RTI unnecessarily.

The respondents, representing the officers of the Gramapanchayat were very much concerned about extraneous political interference, creating hindrance to the smooth discharge of their responsibilities. As much as 90 per cent of the respondents endorsed this view.

Inciting to act violating the existing conventions, rules, and regulations is an irresistible pressure exerted by top officials and the administrative personnel of the Gramapanchayats. Such pressures are oral in form and therefore lead to chaos among the
officials concerned and this adversely affects the efficient discharge of their duties and responsibilities. This is a real problem for honest officials, serving in the Panchayatraj institutions. This type of outside interference must be prevented by all means. They expressed their discontentment over the political pressure on them in granting licences particularly for starting crussure units and granite quarries against the rules and regulations in this regard. Several responsible officers are disenchanted on account of this.

To a question relating to Mahatma MGNREGS and its impact on ameliorating unemployment problems, 70 per cent of the respondents expressed the areas that MGNREGS has had no significant effect in reducing the unemployment problems. Apropos the limitations of the scheme they said that the scheme (MGNREGS) is not suitable for the condition prevailing in the state of Kerala. This is based on the rationale that the situation in Kerala is quite different from that prevailing in the northern states. To be more specific, they said that the existing provision of paying 150 rupees per worker per day is too low in comparison with the prevailing wage structure in the state. In
Kerala, women outnumber men in availing of the benefits of MGNREGS.

One of the serious flaws in the efficient implementation of MGNREGS is that its work monitoring is not properly and systematically carried out. Another deficiency pointed out by them is that MGNREGS does not have enough programme officers and co-ordinators to supervise the efficient implementation of the scheme.

When the opinion of the respondents about the advantages of reservations for women in Panchayatraj institutions as far as it effect upon women empowerment and reducing corruption in public places was sought, 55 per cent of the respondents expressed the view that reservations for women in panchayatraj institutions have considerably helped in empowering women and also reducing corruption in public establishments. However, they thought that much remained to be done in this field.

They further thought that many women got elected as Panchayat members as novices without having adequate knowledge about the rules and regulations and functioning of
the panchayatraj institution. This has adversely affected the overall functioning of the panchayatraj system.

One of the perceptible problems, which impede the efficient functioning of the women folk as expressed by the respondents is that the women members are highly susceptible and their decisions are influenced by their husbands and their party members.

The majority of the respondents opined that the existing 50 per cent reservation for women in the Panchayatraj institutions must be reduced to 33 per cent at least for a few years until they attain sufficient maturity in the work they are supposed to do.

To a query about the frequent shift in the political affiliation of the elected Panchayat representatives as to whether it resulted in reducing the efficiency in the governance of the Panchayatraj institutions and created political uncertainty in the panchayatraj administration, they expressed the view that such shifting of affiliation of elected members is consistently on the decline. The reason is that the elected members who change their allegiance to the party they represent, would more often than not, forfeit their membership. Thus most of them are
scared and virtually reluctant to change their political affiliation. They reiterated the view that the State Election Commission is keeping a constant vigil on this type of issues to ensure that those who change loyalties do not get protection from the judiciary.

Another reason they thought, which acted as a deterrent is that such tide-floaters would be looked down upon by the state’s enlightened public.

To a query on the excessive interference of the Central and State Governments and the State Planning Board, the respondents expressed the view that such interferences have become few and far between and did not affect the working of the Panchayatiraj to any significant degree. However, the interference from the Planning Board is a fact but it is not strong enough to cause worry.

70 per cent of the respondents strongly asserted that instead of effecting proper decentralization in Panchayatraj administration, what really happens is a centralized Governance, contrary to the avowed objectives, enshrined in the Panchayatraj Act.
With regard to a query as to whether the Gramapanchayat institutions are receiving timely grants from the Central and State Governments, the following responses were obtained.

Ninety per cent of the respondents expressed the view that Gramapanchayat institutions are invariably receiving grants from the State and Central Governments in time. However, they expressed their gross dissatisfaction regarding the quantum of grant, received for some pivotal developmental and welfare programmes in each Gramapanchayat. This includes that the grant received from time to time is quite inadequate to meet the needs of all the marginalized in the respective panchayats and also for the general welfare of the poor in general.

The piece-meal release of grants from the governments has its disadvantages, too. It paves the way for cost escalation for various projects. Such increase in the cost often rose two to three times more than the actual estimate at the commencement of the project.

The question regarding the utilization of the budget allocation allotted to the Gramapanchayats and connected aspects, they expressed that almost 95 per cent of the budgetary
provisions for the panchayats are invariably utilized within the stipulated time period for the purposes for which they have been made.

In this connection they expressed their satisfaction over the fact that Gramasabhas are frequently and periodically convened to ensure the expedious utilization of the funds allocated and to prevent the same from getting lapsed.

The stringent rules and regulations governing the utilization of special budgetary allocations for the benefit of the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), normally result in undue delay and hurry.

In response to a query about the current functioning of the Ward Development Committees and the Kudumbasree programme in the panchayats, they said that that Ward Development Committees are non-existent in most of the panchayats. Even where such committees exist, they serve little purpose. Apropos the functioning of the Kudumbasree projects, they are live and active in a majority of the panchayats since this programme is inextricably linked with thrift and savings so much so that the financial position of a considerable number of
families has improved owing to it. However, they expressed their reservations regarding the confinement of Kudumasree programmes to the women folk alone. They strongly advocated for the expansion of this laudable programme to include the marginalized men also. This is based on the rationale that involvement of men in Kudumbasree programmes at present is negligible. Another deficiency of the kudumbasree programme being implemented in the panchayats is that those above the poverty line have no role to play in this unique welfare programme. This is a lacuna that impedes the way to take maximum advantage out of the kudumbasree programme.

To the question whether any of the major decisions taken by the Panchayat Committees went unimplemented without adequate reasons for that, the majority of the respondents (85 per cent) opined that all the decisions taken at the Panchayat committees were implemented. However, there have been rare occasions of keeping some decisions pending owing to objections from the part of the District Planning Committee. On account of the practical constraints in implementing some projects which, include shortage of raw materials, construction materials and
above all, bureaucratic red tape some decisions of the committee cannot be implemented according to the schedule.

The questions seeking the opinions of the respondents about the current functioning of the panchayatraj institutions and their constructive suggestions for improving the overall functioning of the Gramapanchayat institutions, they responded as given below:

i) Now the working staff of the panchayats are over-burdened with enormous duties and responsibilities and adequate measures should be adopted to overcome this deficiency, which is bound to curtail the overall efficiency in the Panchayatiraj administration.

ii) So far no comprehensive and scientific study has been conducted to assess the work load of the panchayat officials. A comprehensive study in this area can provide enough insight as to how this problem can be tackled to everybody’s satisfaction.

iii) Distribution of funds under numerous pension schemes is a heavy burden upon the panchayat economy. If this responsibility can be delegated to the respective village
offices, it will provide considerable relief to Panchayat officials and make pension disbursement regular and timely.

iv) Most of the panchayat secretaries are incompetent persons. They come from the clerical cadres are placed as such on the sheer strength of seniority promotion. They are not smart enough to take prompt decisions. This adversely affects the overall functioning of the Gramapanchayat institutions. Therefore, steps should be taken to bring smart, dynamic and well-educated persons, preferably graduates and Law graduates to this vital nerve centre in the Panchayatiraj administration.

v) Legal provisions must also be made for ensuring the full tenure of five years to the President and the Vice-president of the Gramapanchayat institutions. The present practice of frequent changes in these vital posts to adhere to pre-election understanding, has proved ruinous, causing discontinuity and resultant confusion.

vi) They strongly suggested exclusive computerization of the panchayat offices for the expedious discharge of the duties and responsibilities and to avoid accumulation of pending files.
vii) Right now the number of staff, deployed in the Friend Offices of panchayatraj institutions is too small. This shortage must be remedied and adequate staff must be provided for the smooth and efficient functioning of Panchayat Friend Offices.

viii) They strongly recommended the levying of a small cess for the services, rendered by the Gramapanchayat institutions and this could be rightly used to boost the developmental activities of the panchayat.

ix) They expressed the view that in a majority of the Gramapanchayat institutions, there is no sufficient technically qualified personnel to supervise major construction works. This adversely affects the timely implementation of such schemes and affect the overall efficiency of the Gramapanchayat institutions. Therefore, adequate measures should be taken to fill this lacuna.

x) Adequate steps must be initiated to ensure the efficient conduct of Gramasabhas and appropriate disciplinary action should be launched against those who are found guilty of dereliction of duty.

xi) They strongly opined that there should be an assessment mechanism to ensure that only competent and qualified
persons will come into the Working Groups and to prevent back-door entry into this vital body, using the influence of party leaders and panchayat members.

xii) They pointed out that in most of the panchayats projects are prepared by the section clerk. This is because of the inertia and lack of interest of the stake holders and members of the Working Groups. To change this situation, arrangements should be made to provide a sitting fee to the stake holders and Working Group members. This will considerably help to streamline the process.

xiii) They strongly advised for the introduction of the process of rotation in the work of the section clerk within a time schedule of three to four months. This will help increasing work efficiency and preventing corruption.

xiv) They strongly opined that steps should be taken by the Government to ensure cordiality among the officials, people’s representatives and the people at large. Such cordiality is essential for the successful functioning of the panchayatiraj institutions and for ensuring people’s participation in deciding their own destiny.
4.6 AN ANALYSIS OF THE WORKING OF MAHATMA GANDHI
NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME
(MGNREGS) IN SIX GRAMA PANCHAYATS IN THE
STUDY AREA

MGNREGS has been implemented in almost all the Gramapanchayats in the study area. This is a special welfare programme introduced by the central Government for ensuring definite employment opportunities for the low-income and marginalized segments. The basic objective of this potential scheme is to make sure a minimum of 100 days of employment for those needy families in the rural areas and to enable them to make their both ends meet.

The parameters taken into consideration for making an objective analysis of the impact of the scheme are: (i) the number of days of employment in a year (ii) the frequency of wage payment and (iii) the nature of work undertaken.

The frequency of wage payment in normal courses as per the stipulations of the scheme is within two weeks based on the Muster Roll specifically maintained for this purpose. There is a steady increase in the quantum of wage payment under the scheme. Accordingly, at the beginning the amount paid to an individual per day was Rs.125. This was subsequently increased
to 150, 165 and 180 respectively and currently the wage is Rs. 215 per person per day.

4.6.1 The nature of work undertaken under MGNREGS

They are:

i. Water conservation and protection for ensuring potable drinking water availability in the respective villages and also for irrigation purposes

ii. Measures for the mitigation of the adverse impacts of drought.

iii. Cleaning and improvement of irrigation canals.

iv. Agriculture land rejuvenation programmes.

v. Flood control programmes, and

vi. Repair, maintenance and improvement of public roads.

As per this scheme, a household is entitled to get one job card. Accordingly, a person is entitled to get benefit only if he has completed 18 years of age and he or she must be a resident of the respective Grama Panchayat. Further, each family or card holder is entitled for 100 days work. This means any number of members belonging to the respective family can avail of jobs and the maximum number of days entitled to them is limited to 100
days per family. According to the scheme those families registered under the scheme must be given work or job within a period of 14 days from the data of registration. As per the scheme, private individuals having landholdings less than five acre are also included and entitled under the scheme for soil conservation. For the eligibility of such persons, he or she must be a member of the scheme concerned. This means his land holding also comes under the purview of the scheme and the beneficiaries of the scheme can render their daily work under the scheme for improving soil conservation in his holdings. Here another essential requirement is that he must also work along with the MGNREGs beneficiaries deployed for the wok under the scheme.

The researcher made a meticulous review of the implementation of this scheme in the study area and the pertinent details in this regard are portrayed as under:

To facilitate an indepth analysis of the impact of MGNREGS, six Grama Panchayats were taken into consideration. These panchayats are: Karoor, Erattupetta, Meenachil, Poonjar Thekkekkara, Mutholy and Poonjar. The pertinent details of the scheme during the financial years 2011-2012, 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 were depicted in the following tables:
Table 1 A. Table showing the details of jobcards issued to cumulative number of households during 2011-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Name of Grama Panchayat</th>
<th>2011-2012</th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
<th>2013-2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SCS</td>
<td>STS</td>
<td>Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Karoor</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Erattupetta</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meenachil</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Poonjar Thekekkara</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mutholy</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Poonjar</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>426</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>5858</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Panchayat Records
Table 1B. Table showing the Consolidated details of jobcards issued during 2011-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Name of Grama Panchayat</th>
<th>2011-2014</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SCS</td>
<td>STS</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Karoor</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Erattupetta</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meenachil</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>369</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Poonjar Thekekkara</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mutholy</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Poonjar</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>1900</td>
<td>2333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Panchayat Records

As can be seen from table 1A above the total number of cards issued during the financial year 2011-2012 was 6324 and in the subsequent financial year (2012-2013) this was increased to 7761 and the number of cards issued during the
financial year 2013-2014 was 8657. This means there is a consistent increase in the number of jobcards issued in the respective panchayats during the last three years.

From table 1B, it can be inferred that the maximum increase in the number of jobcards during the said period was in Poonjar Thekkekkara and the lowest increase in the number of jobcards were noticed in the Mutholy panchayat. The reason could be attributed to the number of families living under BPL. This means the maximum number of BPL families residing in the six panchayats studied were in Poonjar Thekakkara followed by Poonjar, Karoor, Meenachil and Erattupetta. Further Mutholy is the panchayat where the lowest number of BPL families are residing among the six panchayats studied.
Table 2A. Table showing the details of households demanded employment and employment given during the period 2011 to 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Name of Grama Panchayat</th>
<th>2011-2012</th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
<th>2013-2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Demanded Employment</td>
<td>Provided Employment</td>
<td>Demanded Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Karoor</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Erattupetta</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meenachil</td>
<td>895</td>
<td>894</td>
<td>866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Poonjar Thekekkara</td>
<td>857</td>
<td>851</td>
<td>837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mutholy</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>501</td>
<td>631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Poonjar</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3427</strong></td>
<td><strong>3420</strong></td>
<td><strong>3665</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Panchayat Records
Table 2B. Table showing the Consolidated statement of employment demanded and provided under the scheme in six panchayats during the period (2011-2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Name of Grama Panchayat</th>
<th>2011-2014</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No. of House Hold Demanded Employment</td>
<td>No. of House Hold Provided Employment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Karoor</td>
<td>2075</td>
<td>2035</td>
<td></td>
<td>98.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Erattupetta</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>304</td>
<td></td>
<td>93.83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meenachil</td>
<td>2524</td>
<td>2298</td>
<td></td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Poonjar Thekekkara</td>
<td>2540</td>
<td>2209</td>
<td></td>
<td>86.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mutholy</td>
<td>1646</td>
<td>1454</td>
<td></td>
<td>88.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Poonjar</td>
<td>1587</td>
<td>1436</td>
<td></td>
<td>90.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10696</strong></td>
<td><strong>9736</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>91.02%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Panchayat Records
Fig. 2B(1). The Histogram showing the Consolidated statement of employment demanded and provided under the scheme in six panchayats during the period (2011-2014)
The above table 2B revealed the fact that the total number of employment demanded under MGNREGS during the period was 10696 and the number of days of work provided was 9736. This signifies that 91.02 per cent of the work demanded were granted in the six panchayats studied. It further shows that the scheme is operating well and very satisfactory in the six panchayats as far as the number of employment granted. Mind you the implementation of the scheme paved the way for reducing the grave unemployment problem prevailed in the area.
Table 3A. Table showing the number of days of work under MGNREGS provided in six panchayats for various categories during the period (2011 to 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Name of Grama Panchayat</th>
<th>2011-2012</th>
<th></th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
<th></th>
<th>2013-2014</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SCS</td>
<td>STS</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Karoor</td>
<td>3206</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23118</td>
<td>26344</td>
<td>25691</td>
<td>653</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Erattupetta</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2786</td>
<td>2786</td>
<td>2289</td>
<td>497</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meenachil</td>
<td>1850</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>26458</td>
<td>28401</td>
<td>28035</td>
<td>366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Poonjar Thekkekkara</td>
<td>683</td>
<td>1361</td>
<td>35185</td>
<td>37229</td>
<td>31513</td>
<td>5716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mutholy</td>
<td>3035</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16993</td>
<td>20028</td>
<td>19711</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Poonjar</td>
<td>1959</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>15505</td>
<td>17564</td>
<td>17227</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>10733</td>
<td>1574</td>
<td>120045</td>
<td>132352</td>
<td>124466</td>
<td>7886</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Panchayat Records
Table 3B. Table showing the category wise consolidated statement of the number of days of employment provided in six panchayats (2011 to 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Name of Grama Panchayat</th>
<th>2011-2014</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SCS</td>
<td>STS</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Karoor</td>
<td>15608</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>95325</td>
<td>111228</td>
<td>106701</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Erattupetta</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16034</td>
<td>16820</td>
<td>15203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meenachil</td>
<td>8707</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>92762</td>
<td>101562</td>
<td>99587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Poonjar Thekekkara</td>
<td>4088</td>
<td>4547</td>
<td>79737</td>
<td>88372</td>
<td>79819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mutholy</td>
<td>11719</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>58436</td>
<td>70155</td>
<td>68962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Poonjar</td>
<td>7781</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>57935</td>
<td>66016</td>
<td>64560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>48689</td>
<td>5235</td>
<td>400229</td>
<td>454153</td>
<td>344832</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Panchayat Records
Fig. 3B(1). Bar Diagram showing the category wise consolidated statement of the number of days of employment provided in six panchayats (2011 to 2014)
Bar diagram showing the gender wise consolidated statement of the number of days of employment provided in six panchayats (2011 to 2014)

Table No 3A and 3B furnished above reveal the number of days of work provided to the various categories of people during the period under study. Accordingly, during the said period 454153 man days of work were provided in the six Panchayats, of which 434832 days of work were given to the women and the
number of working days availed of by men were 19321. Further the number of working days availed of by the scheduled castes were 48689 and the number of working days engaged by the scheduled tribes were 5235 and as many as 400229 days of work were availed of by the other categories of people.

4.6.2 Impact of MGNREGS

i. Prior to the introduction of the scheme unemployment among the women folk was quite rampant in all the grama panchayats in the study area. However, the implementation of the scheme substantially changed the situation of the women in the study area and also it paved the way for empowering them. Now the scheme helped ensuring the economic independence of the women to a considerable extent.

ii. Owing to the active involvement of the MGNREGS for cleaning streams and public drainages, the environmental hygiene prevailed in the panchayats were substantially improved. And as such, this would have definitely helped to prevent the spread of harmful mosquitoes and the spread of several contagious diseases in the respective panchayats.
iii. Now stagnation of dirty water in unwanted pits, roads and other public places have been substantially reduced and this in turn contributed to the improvement of environmental hygiene in the village.

iv. As part of the public cleaning programmes the beneficiaries of the scheme were deployed for cleaning the premises of public health care institutions, colleges, schools, aganwadies etc. This also helped considerably improving the environmental hygiene in the area.

v. The specific attention paid as part of the scheme for soil conservation helped several panchayats to prevent soil erosion through contour bunting. This in turn has a positive bearing on improving the agricultural productivity in the area.

vi. The measures initiated under the scheme for water conservation such as rainwater harvesting, digging of pits for the collection of rainwater etc have improved the groundwater potential of the villages for facilitating abundant availability of water both for irrigation and drinking purposes in the respective panchayats.
vii. The scheme also helped several farmers in improving the productivity of their lands and facilitated making agriculture more economical for them.

viii. The scheme also helped a lot in improving the public roads and amenities as constant attention is paid by the authorities in connection with the programme.

4.7 AN ANALYSIS OF THE WORKINGS OF KUDUMBASREE IN TWO GRAMAPANCHAYATS IN THE STUDY AREA

Kudumbasree is a reputed female oriented humanitarian project aimed at poverty reduction among the women folk in the rural areas. It is also a community based fabulous scheme aiming at the empowerment of women sponsored by the Government of Kerala. Forming self – help groups with a view to boost thrift and savings among the marginalized women and endeavours for fostering their entrepreneurial activities are the core programmes of the scheme.

This programme was launched in the state on 17th May 1998 by the then Prime Minister of India Mr. A.B. Vajpayee in the presence of Mr. Paloli Mohammed Kutty the then local administration minister of kerala at Malappuram.
The rationale for initiating the scheme was in consideration of the high female literary rate (86.2 percent), low Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) of 13 as against the national average of 80. Besides the favourable sex ratio of 1032 females for 1000 males and low Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) of 0.8 per thousand and on account of the high life expectancy of 74 years as against 70 years among the males in the state.

The other important reasons for initiating the scheme were the absence of women in the public domain and the economic marginalization of women. Another factor responsible for the introduction of the scheme was the decline in the female work participation in the state during the period 1981 to 1991. During this period it declines from 16.6 per cent to 15.9 per cent.

The other critical reasons for the introduction of the scheme were low wages paid to the women in the unorganized sectors like agriculture, cottage and traditional industries etc. Besides gender discrimination at the workplace, increased sexual harassment and violence against women.
4.7.1 The Mission

i. To eradicate absolute poverty through concreted community action under the leadership of local governments.


4.7.2 Objectives

i. Identification of poor families through risk indices based surveys.

ii. Empowering the poor women to improve the productivity and managerial capabilities of the community by organizing them into community based organization.

iii. Encouraging thrift and investment through credit by developing community development societies to work as informal bank of the poor.

iv. Improving incomes of the poor through improved skills.

v. Ensuring better health and nutrition for all

vi. Ensuring basic amenities like safe drinking water, sanitary, latrines, improved shelter and health environment.
vii. Ensuring a minimum of 5 years of primary education for all children.

viii. Enabling the poor to participate in the democratic decentralization process through the CDS as it is a subsystem of the local governments under which it works.

### 4.7.3 Functioning of Kudumbasree in Meenachil and Bharanaganam Gramapanchayats

The details of the functioning of the Kudumbasree projects in Meenachil and Bharanaganam Grama Panchayats were gathered and two micro enterprises functioning in these Panchayats were taken for the detailed study.
Table No. 4 A. Table showing the Functioning of Kudumbasree Units in Meenachil and Bharanaganam Grama Panchayats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>MEENACHIL</th>
<th>BHARANAGANAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cumulative no. of kudumbasree</td>
<td>Cumulative no. of kudumbasree members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>1700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>16868321</td>
<td>89913537</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kudumbasree Records of Meenachil of Bharanaganam Grama Panchayats
Fig 4A(1). Bar diagram showing the Functioning of kudumbasree units in Meenachil Grama Panchayats.
Fig 4A(2). Bar diagram showing the Functioning of Kudumbasree units in Bharanaganam Grama Panchayats
In order to ascertain the functioning of the micro-enterprises under kudumbasree units in the said panchayats, two such ventures were conveniently chosen. These were: (i) ‘Café Kudumbasree Women Canteen’, Bharanaganam (ii) ‘Anupama Tailoring Unit’, Meenachil.

4.7.3.1 Café Kudumbasree Women Canteen

The unit was embarked upon on 14th July 2011. This canteen was intended to provide delicious food to the panchayat officials, elected members and the people who called on the panchayat from time to time.

This was initiated as a group programme by six unemployed women hailing from the respective panchayats by availing of Rupees Sixty thousand as loan from the Service Co-operative Bank, Bharanaganam. Besides, a panchayat subsidy of Rupees Sixty thousand from the Bharanaganam Gramapanchayat.

This canteen functions from 8 am in the morning till 5pm in the evening. It supplies breakfast on an average to 40 persons per day and lunch is usually served for 50 to 100
persons a day. It also serves evening coffee to as many as 40-50 persons per day.

The modus – operandi of the unit is that food is prepared and served by the members themselves. It remains closed on public holidays and Sundays. It uses Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) for cooking food.

Each member draws a daily wage of Rs. 300. The unit purchases articles on an average worth Rs. 30000 per month.

**Table 5 A. Table showing the details of receipts payments and net surplus generated by the Café Kudumbasree Women Canteen during the period 2011-2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Receipt (In Rs)</th>
<th>Payments (In Rs)</th>
<th>Excess of income over expenditure (Net Surplus) (In Rs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14-8-2011 to 13-8-2012</td>
<td>720000</td>
<td>714000</td>
<td>6000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-8-2012 to 13-8-2013</td>
<td>780000</td>
<td>770000</td>
<td>10000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-8-2013 to 13-8-2014</td>
<td>800000</td>
<td>789000</td>
<td>11000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>2300000</td>
<td>2273000</td>
<td>27000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Account records of Café Kudumbasree*
Fig. 5A (1). Pie diagram showing the details of receipts, payments and net surplus generated by the café kudumbasree women canteen during the period 2011-2012.

![Pie diagram showing the details of receipts, payments and net surplus generated by the café kudumbasree women canteen during the period 2011-2012.](image1)

**14-8-2011 to 13-8-2012**

- Receipt (In Rs): 714000
- Payments (In Rs): 720000
- Excess of income over expenditure (Net Surplus) (In Rs): 6000

Fig. 5A (2). Pie diagram showing the details of receipts, payments and net surplus generated by the Café Kudumbasree Women Canteen during the period 2012-2013.

![Pie diagram showing the details of receipts, payments and net surplus generated by the café kudumbasree women canteen during the period 2012-2013.](image2)

**14-8-2012 to 13-8-2013**

- Receipt (In Rs): 770000
- Payments (In Rs): 780000
- Excess of income over expenditure (Net Surplus) (In Rs): 10000
Fig. 5A(3). Pie diagram showing the details of receipts, payments and net surplus generated by the Café Kudumbasree Women Canteen during the period 2013-2014.

Fig. 5A(4). Pie diagram showing the details of receipts, payments and net surplus generated by the Café Kudumbasree Women Canteen during the period 2011-2014.
Currently the canteen is running at a reasonable profit and each member is drawing an average monthly remuneration of Rs. 7000.

This canteen is found to be economically feasible and as such the members were able to repay the bank loan of Rs. 60000 and the interest accrued there on amount within a year.

One of the reasons for the profitable running of the Venture is that they are locally procuring vegetables, groceries and other necessary food stuffs. This saves transportation charges, loading and unloading charges and other incidentals connected there too. Another important reason for the viability of the unit is that the canteen is operating in a building provided by the panchayat free of rent.

The difficulties the members of the unit currently encountering are:

(i) The unit is functioning in a small building without any scope for further expansion.

(ii) The kitchen is very congested. Owing to the lack of space the canteen is not attracting outsiders and the business is
confined to the staff members and members of the gramapanchayat.

4.7.3.2 Anupama Tailoring Unit

Anupama Tailoring unit is a micro – income generation unit initiated under the Anupama kudumbasree unit operating in Meenachil Gramapanchayat, one of the local government entities in the study area. This unit was embarked upon by six dynamic women members of the kudumbasree unit. The total initial capital requirement was Rs. 240000 and of which an amount of Rs. 174000 was taken as loan from the Service Co-operative Bank, Edamattom and the remaining amount Rs. 66000 was mobilized by way of eligible subsidy under the micro – income generation promotion programme of the Lalam Block panchyat.

This initial capital of Rs. 240000 was invested for setting up a tailoring unit wherein the members undertake job works in tailoring and embroidery. This unit from the very beginning of its functioning started generating income. And the details of the receipts and payments accounts of the venture during the period 2010 to 2014 is portrayed as follows:
Table 6A. Table showing the Receipts and Payments account of the Anupama tailoring unit during the period 2010 to 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Receipt (In Rs.)</th>
<th>Payments (In Rs.)</th>
<th>Excess of income over expenditure (Net Surplus in Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-2011</td>
<td>240000</td>
<td>220000</td>
<td>20000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-2012</td>
<td>132800</td>
<td>86480</td>
<td>46320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-2013</td>
<td>96630</td>
<td>75490</td>
<td>21140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-2014</td>
<td>181140</td>
<td>162300</td>
<td>18840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>650570</td>
<td>544270</td>
<td>106300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Account records of Anupama Kudumbasree

The unit is functioning in a rented building at Edamattom. For the smooth and efficient, functioning of the unit, the members purchased six sewing machines, a wardrobe, an wooden stand, scissors, a cutting table besides an office table, required chairs, stools and the other accessories. Inorder to enhance the dexterity of the members, they were exposed to six months training at Government Polytechnic, Pala.

Thereafter, the unit took off undertaking commercial job works. And as such, adequate work orders were poured in from
then onwards. In addition to the job works frequently they get at the unit, they started dressmaking also at the unit. This interalia include making shirts, nities, frokes, blouses, uniforms and so on. The dresses so made at the unit were marketed through the various kudumbasree units and also through the beneficiaries of the MGNREGS.

The six members of the unit are entitled to get income on piece rate basis and all of them are invariably getting Rs. 400 to 500 per day. In addition to this, the annual profit generated at the unit is equally divided among the members. Accordingly, as per the details furnished in table no. 6 above, the unit generated a net surplus of Rs. 20000 during the 1st year of its operation and there was a quantum leap of Rs. 46320 during the 2nd financial year (2011-2012). Thereafter, the profit margin declined and the profit registered during the subsequent financial years were Rs. 21140 and 18840. The details are depicted in the following bar diagram.
Fig 6 A(1). Bar diagram showing the Receipts and Payments account of the Anupama tailoring unit during the period 2010 to 2014
The reasons submitted for the decline in the profit margin was due to the increased competition in the field. Therefore, they are planning to adopt newer marketing strategies to penetrate into wider markets. The other reasons they have identified were lack of space in the unit, absence of professional marketing approach, inability to make trendy clothes etc. Accordingly, they are planning to make a quick evaluation and revamping of the unit to make it more profitable.

4.8 AN ANALYSIS OF THE DETAILS OF THE REVENUE RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS OF SIX GRAMA PANCHAYATS

A meticulous examination of the revenue receipts of the six Grama Panchayts were carried out as part of the research study. Accordingly, the details are as furnished in the following table:
Table 7A. Table showing the Revenue Receipts and Grants Received by six Grama Panchayats for the Period 2011 to 2014 (Amount in Rs.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Name of Grama Panchayat</th>
<th>2011-2012</th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
<th>2013-2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tax revenue</td>
<td>330776</td>
<td>18625293</td>
<td>15094566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Revenue Grants, Funds and compensations</td>
<td>15094566</td>
<td>23648384</td>
<td>72529890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Grants, Funds and Contributions for specific purposes</td>
<td>643530</td>
<td>25029890</td>
<td>726520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tax revenue</td>
<td></td>
<td>23648384</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Erattupetta</td>
<td>1159280</td>
<td>9327875</td>
<td>15135277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Revenue Grants, Funds and compensations</td>
<td>15135277</td>
<td>9344248</td>
<td>21384703</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Grants, Funds and Contributions for specific purposes</td>
<td>2390729</td>
<td>2589849</td>
<td>21808691</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tax revenue</td>
<td></td>
<td>2390729</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meenachil</td>
<td>356735</td>
<td>4330257</td>
<td>12141400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Revenue Grants, Funds and compensations</td>
<td>12141400</td>
<td>10330696</td>
<td>23230391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Grants, Funds and Contributions for specific purposes</td>
<td>636279</td>
<td>725039</td>
<td>36963940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Tax revenue</td>
<td></td>
<td>636279</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Poonjar Thekkekkara</td>
<td>391465</td>
<td>11029481</td>
<td>12831200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Revenue Grants, Funds and compensations</td>
<td>12831200</td>
<td>9681501</td>
<td>24557819</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Grants, Funds and Contributions for specific purposes</td>
<td>843460</td>
<td>855745</td>
<td>36201427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Tax revenue</td>
<td></td>
<td>843460</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mutholy</td>
<td>427487</td>
<td>11769890</td>
<td>11811956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Revenue Grants, Funds and compensations</td>
<td>11811956</td>
<td>15844740</td>
<td>23575457</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Grants, Funds and Contributions for specific purposes</td>
<td>819988</td>
<td>951890</td>
<td>64634210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tax revenue</td>
<td></td>
<td>819988</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Poonjar</td>
<td>194990</td>
<td>10475770</td>
<td>10620746</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Revenue Grants, Funds and compensations</td>
<td>10620746</td>
<td>7082958</td>
<td>17926423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Grants, Funds and Contributions for specific purposes</td>
<td>437990</td>
<td>463275</td>
<td>19812461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Tax revenue</td>
<td></td>
<td>437990</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Grand Total** | **2860733** | **65558566** | **77635145** |

**Source:** Panchayat Records
Fig 7A11. Bar diagram showing the Revenue Receipts and Grants Received by six Grama Panchayats for the Period 2011 to 2014 (Amount in Rs.)
### Table 7B. Table showing the consolidated statement of the major Receipts of Panchayats for the Period 2011 to 2014 (Amount in Rs.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Tax Revenue</th>
<th>Revenue Grants, Funds, Contributions and compensations</th>
<th>Grants, Funds and Contributions for Specific Purposes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Karoor</td>
<td>1700826</td>
<td>55982470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Erattupetta</td>
<td>6139858</td>
<td>30555297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meenachil</td>
<td>1718053</td>
<td>24047110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Poonjar Thekekkara</td>
<td>2090670</td>
<td>32535350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mutholy</td>
<td>2199365</td>
<td>36858387</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Poonjar</td>
<td>1096255</td>
<td>25674031</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14945027</strong></td>
<td><strong>205652645</strong></td>
<td><strong>437279157</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Panchayat Records*
4.8.1 Major Revenue Receipts

The major receipts were confined to tax revenue, revenue grants, funds, contributions, compensations and revenue grant funds and contributions for specific purposes. The six
gramapanchayats selected for the study are: Karoor, Erattupetta, Meenachil, Poonjar Thekkekkara, Mutholy and Poonjar.

As per the table 7A and 7B the grand total receipts of Karoor Grama Panchayat during the period 2011 to 2014 was Rs.136026352 and that of Erattupetta panchayat was Rs.101323826 while for Meenachil Panchayat it was Rs.98100894 and for Poonjar Thekkekkara Rs.108216466 and that of Mutholy Grama Panchayath was Rs.139079375 and for Poonjar Grama Panchayath it was Rs.75129916. This means the total revenue received during the said period for the six Panchayaths by way of tax collected was Rs.14945027 and that of revenue grants, funds, contributions and compensations it was Rs.205652645 and grants, funds and contributions for specific purposes, it was Rs.437279157 and the overall receipts during the period 2011 to 2014 for the six Grama Panchayats were Rs.657876829.

The details regarding the allocation and utilization of funds (year wise) for the six Grama Panchayaths and for various sectors severally is as follows.
Table 8A. Table showing major Payments of Panchayats for the period 2011 to 2014 (Amount in Rs.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Productive Sector</td>
<td>Service Sector</td>
<td>Infra structure sector</td>
<td>Projects not include in sector division</td>
<td>Productive Sector</td>
<td>Service Sector</td>
<td>Infra structure sector</td>
<td>Projects not include in sector division</td>
<td>Productive Sector</td>
<td>Service Sector</td>
<td>Infra structure sector</td>
<td>Projects not include in sector division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Karoor</td>
<td>1454543</td>
<td>8482214</td>
<td>609307</td>
<td>1088322</td>
<td>833858</td>
<td>14455197</td>
<td>11263814</td>
<td>60000</td>
<td>2722717</td>
<td>9059776</td>
<td>2817022</td>
<td>121500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Erattupetta</td>
<td>430959</td>
<td>4990093</td>
<td>7107756</td>
<td>1661769</td>
<td>1667064</td>
<td>10955771</td>
<td>10320126</td>
<td>307819</td>
<td>2279052</td>
<td>6955661</td>
<td>941069</td>
<td>2169829</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meenachil</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5052163</td>
<td>46652</td>
<td>800798</td>
<td>3131549</td>
<td>12604639</td>
<td>3924955</td>
<td>250000</td>
<td>424285</td>
<td>8069295</td>
<td>554022</td>
<td>3819771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Poonjar Thekekkara</td>
<td>1341240</td>
<td>9242255</td>
<td>1101331</td>
<td>524721</td>
<td>1349805</td>
<td>10332009</td>
<td>273738</td>
<td>112161</td>
<td>1860155</td>
<td>17391548</td>
<td>354625</td>
<td>4497685</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mutholy</td>
<td>1707866</td>
<td>5389214</td>
<td>5673984</td>
<td>422366</td>
<td>1557280</td>
<td>11302845</td>
<td>7397298</td>
<td>311548</td>
<td>2408900</td>
<td>5969269</td>
<td>2003085</td>
<td>348157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Poonjar</td>
<td>560016</td>
<td>5129341</td>
<td>2621573</td>
<td>1496462</td>
<td>880071</td>
<td>8936703</td>
<td>3117839</td>
<td>168191</td>
<td>866977</td>
<td>4935910</td>
<td>1628789</td>
<td>2059422</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>5494624</td>
<td>38285280</td>
<td>17160603</td>
<td>5994438</td>
<td>9419627</td>
<td>68587164</td>
<td>36297770</td>
<td>1209719</td>
<td>10562086</td>
<td>52381459</td>
<td>8298612</td>
<td>13016364</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Panchayat Record
Fig 8A(1). Bar diagram showing the Major Payments of panchayats for the period 2011 to 2014 (Amount in Rs.)
Table 8B. Table showing the consolidated statement of the major Payments for the Period 2011 to 2014 (Amount in Rs.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Productive Sector</th>
<th>Service Sector</th>
<th>Infrastructure Sector</th>
<th>Projects net included sector division</th>
<th>Grand Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Karoor</td>
<td>5011118</td>
<td>31997187</td>
<td>14690143</td>
<td>52968270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Erattupetta</td>
<td>4377075</td>
<td>22901525</td>
<td>18368951</td>
<td>49786968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Meenachil</td>
<td>3555834</td>
<td>25726097</td>
<td>4525629</td>
<td>38678129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Poonjar Thekekkara</td>
<td>4551200</td>
<td>36965812</td>
<td>1729694</td>
<td>48381273</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mutholy</td>
<td>5674046</td>
<td>22661328</td>
<td>15074367</td>
<td>44491812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Poonjar</td>
<td>2307064</td>
<td>19001954</td>
<td>7368201</td>
<td>32401294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>25476337</strong></td>
<td><strong>159253903</strong></td>
<td><strong>61756985</strong></td>
<td><strong>266707746</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Panchayat Records*
Fig 8B(1). Bar diagram showing the consolidated statement of the major Payments for the Period 2011 to 2014 (Amount in Rs.)
4.8.2 Major Sector Wise Payments

As per the table cited above the funds utilized for the Panchayats were classified as productive sector, service sector, infrastructure sector and projects not included in sector division. Under the head of account namely productive sector the major programmes for which budget was utilized are for boosting agricultural production in the respective panchayats, animal husbandary promotion, generation of employment for the marginalized, digging of wells etc.

The total amount utilized by the six Panchayats during the three financial years 2011 to 2012 was Rs.5494624 and in the subsequent financial year it increased to Rs.9419627 and in the financial year 2013 to 2014 it was further increased to 10562086. This shows that there is consistent increase in the amount earmarked and utilized for the various sectors during the 3 financial years probed.

In the case of service sector the various concrete programmes included were housing schemes, sanitation programmes, pure drinking water supply and promotion of aganwadies and the like and the total amount spent during the first financial year (2011-2012) was Rs. 38285280 and in the
subsequent financial year it was Rs. 68587164 and during the financial year 2013 to 2014, it was Rs. 52381459.

In the case of infrastructure sector which includes road construction and improvement, construction of small bridges, street lights and construction of new buildings. The amount spent by the six Grama Panchayats during the three successive financial years were Rs.17160603, Rs.36297770 and Rs.8298612.

Apropos the head of account of projects not included in sector division, the various schemes under this head are General Projects, Sarvesishya Abhiyan project, upliftment of SC and ST and Development of women. And in these counts Rs.5994438, Rs.1209719 and Rs.13016364 were respectively incurred for all the panchayats during the said three financial years.

The consolidated statement regarding the major expenditure of the six Grama Panchayath for the period 2011 to 2014 for the various sectors namely production, service, infrastructure development and projects not included under various sector division are depicted in table 8B. As per this, the total amount incurred for all the six Panchayats for productive
sector was Rs.25476337, for the service sector it was Rs.159253903, for infrastructure sector Rs. 61756985 and for projects not included under sector division was Rs. 20220521 and the grand total amount spent during the said three financial years for all the six Grama Panchayats and for all the programmes was Rs.266707746. And for the six Grama Panchayats the amount spent separately for all the programs were Rs.52968270 for Karroor, for Erattupetta Grama Panchayat, it was 49786968 and for Meenachil Grama Panchayat it was Rs.38678129 and that of Poonjar Thekkekkara, it was Rs.48381273 while for Mutholy Grama Panchayat it was Rs.444491812 and for the Poonjar Grama Panchayat, it was Rs.32401294.