CHAPTER III

PROBLEMS OF THE MASSES IN KEALA WITH REFERENCE TO NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

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Chapter III

PROBLEMS OF THE MASSES IN KERALA
WITH REFERENCE TO NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

3.1 Introduction

Geographically speaking, Kerala forms one of the very small states of India. It lies the southern end of the Indian subcontinent with an area of nearly 37,000 sq. km. and has a long seacoast of about 580 km. The population of Kerala in 1991 Census stood at 290.32 lakhs. One of the major social achievements of Kerala was its universal literacy. The state has a literacy rate of 91 per cent according to 1991 Census, while all India rate of 52%. Female literacy is also high in Kerala. The standards attained in Kerala are almost comparable to that of many developed countries in the world.

3.2 Historical Background

The state of Kerala occupies the prior position in the educational map of India. Travancore was the first state in British India that recognised education as a state responsibility. As far back as the first decade of the nineteenth century the ruling queen unequivocally declared that her state should be no class distinction among people in diffusing education. Similarly Travancore owned the credit of being the first Indian princely state that made primary education compulsory.

Kerala has long and rich tradition of education in India. Even during the pre-British period, educational facilities has been quite widespread in every region of the area. However such facilities were not equally accessible to all the different socio-economic strata. In fact the distribution of educational...
opportunities was in those days determined by the pattern of distribution of
ownership and control of land. The higher castes of Hinduism such as
Brahmins and Nairs were the owners of land. Education was within the reach
of almost all socially privileged sections of the population. Majority of the
population did not get any facility of education and they remained in
illiteracy. Non-Hindu communities had their Church schools and Madrasas.³

3.3 Total Literacy Programme

Development does not start with goods. It starts with people with
education, organisation and discipline, without these three, all resources
remain untapped potential.⁴ Majority of the Indians live in rural areas. The
educational facilities are not sufficient enough to reduce inequalities among
the different strata of the society. They are mostly unaware of their right and
duties. Majority live in poverty and ignorance with a lack of skills. The only
way out is, complete literacy. Literacy is considered as an important
instrument in the transformation of society by promoting personal as well as
the economic 'well being' of the poor people.

The main aim of traditional literacy is to help the illiterates in learning
the basic skills of reading, writing and in acquiring elementary knowledge of
arithmetic. Nowadays, the main objective of the literary programme is to
promote literacy among the masses and to enable them to become aware of
the constraints to their development and growth and give them functional
competency to improve their living and working conditions. The Governor of
Kerala said, "literacy and development were interrelated while literacy was
good, education would make one understand the problem of society and work
for their solution."5 Literacy is an important means of meeting the individual's basic needs, acquiring knowledge pertinent to change in the existing practices and skills in their occupation.

Kerala's achievement in literacy and family welfare is largely due to mass involvement and participation at all levels. A massive mobilization effort and implementation of the literacy programme in Kerala became feasible with the total involvement of all sections of the people in formulation, implementation and sustenance. The development model of Kerala has been a subject for serious discussion by planners, administrators and social scientists as well.

A project for the total eradication of illiteracy in Kerala was prepared by the Kerala Saksharatha Samithi (KSS). The aim of the project was to achieve total literacy in the age group of 5-60 years in the state within one year. The Kerala Saksharatha Samithi has been registered under the Travancore-Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Registration Act 1955. The Chief Minister was the Chairman of KSS. Cabinet ministers, government secretaries, district collectors, representatives of political parties, voluntary agencies and persons of eminence were the members of KSS. 'Akshara Keralam' was the project of KSS implemented in 13 districts (except Ernakulam). The Total Literacy Programme of Ernakulam district was sponsored by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, in 1989. The approach was that the programme enlisted by massive voluntary participation of the people in the process with the active co-operation and involvement of government machinery, non-governmental organisations and local bodies. Through the massive programme of 1,50,000 persons were made literate
within one year. The Ernakulam district was declared as totally literate district in 4 February 1990 by the Prime Minister of India. Ernakulam experience served as the model for formulation and implementation of the programmes of Saksharatha Samiti. In order to ensure successful implementation a three-level implementation mechanism was built into the project, viz. state co-ordination centre, district co-ordination and block level co-ordination.

For the successful implementation of the project, a three-level organisational structure was built into the project. At the first level, there was the state centre headed by the Secretary, Kerala Saksharatha Samithy and district centres headed by District Collector and Project and Sub-project Officers headed by Project Officers. At the second level, people’s committee were formed which included State Literacy Council, District Literacy Council, Panchayat/Corporation Literary Council and Ward Literary Council. At the third level, academic councils were formed at the district, project, sub-project and ward level. Each district was divided into projects and sub-projects on the basis of the number of illiterates. Generally a project covered about 70,000 to 80,000 illiterates. Each project area had a project office comprising one Project Officer, one Junior Project Officer and five Assistant Project Officers. Each project was divided into roughly 20 sub-projects. One sub-project was to take care of about 4,000-5,000 illiterates.6

The one-day literacy survey covering all the families was conducted throughout the state on 8 April 1990 to locate and identify illiterates. Squads of five literary workers covered about 50 families each. The survey revealed that there was 28.20 lakhs illiterates in the state, of which 22.5 lakhs were in the age group 5-60 years.7
For the successful implementation of literacy programmes, systematic training camps were organised at state, district, block and panchayat levels to key resource persons. At the state level, 250 key resource persons were trained. They trained 2,000 district level resource persons. To make 28.2 lakhs literate 3.5 lakh instructors were required. The resource persons and instructors were selected from voluntary agencies, trade unions, students and youth organisations.

The state level inauguration of literacy classes was held on 1 June 1990. Generally each literacy centre had ten learners and one instructor. Majority of literacy classes conducted between 5 to 7 p.m. The technique was mostly dialogue and discussion. Literacy centres were arranged in the learner’s or instructor’s house, *mahila samajams*, youth clubs and in separate huts made for this purpose. The guardian council was formed for each literacy centre to look after minimum infrastructural facilities and also to ensure social support. According to KSS report, out of 18,94,217 illiterates in the age group of 5-60 years 14,85,763 were enrolled as learners and in about 1,48,576 literacy centres. Nearly 1.5 lakh instructors were actively involved in the programme. Majority of instructors represented local agencies other than the popular voluntary agencies in the state such as Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad and Kanfed.

Total literacy programme is aimed at not only to eradicate illiteracy, but also to achieve many other objectives. They are to (1) create new ideas and outlook in the people, (2) increase overall productivity and standard of living of the people, (3) accelerate the economic and social progress of the country, (4) make people more involved in the onward march of society.
Apart of the literacy programme, the Rural Development Department is implemented many programmes like IRDP, NREP, RLEGP etc. Other departments like Scheduled Castes Development Department, Scheduled Tribes Development Department, Social Welfare Department are also implementing many welfare schemes. These schemes are intended for the weaker sections of the society.

One of the major social achievements that Kerala can take pride is its universal literacy. In 1991 Census, Kerala literacy rate was 90.59% corresponding to 52.11% in India as whole. Table 3.1 shows the trend of literacy in Kerala from 1901 to 1991.

**TABLE 3.1**

Trend in Literacy – Kerala 1901-1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Level of literacy in %</th>
<th>% of increase</th>
<th>% of male literacy</th>
<th>% of female literacy</th>
<th>Literacy SC</th>
<th>Literacy ST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>11.14</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>19.15</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>13.31</td>
<td>19.48</td>
<td>22.25</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>19.02</td>
<td>42.90</td>
<td>27.88</td>
<td>10.26</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>21.34</td>
<td>12.20</td>
<td>30.89</td>
<td>11.99</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>40.47</td>
<td>89.64</td>
<td>49.79</td>
<td>31.41</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>56.85</td>
<td>40.47</td>
<td>54.97</td>
<td>38.90</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>60.42</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>66.62</td>
<td>54.31</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>70.42</td>
<td>16.55</td>
<td>87.74</td>
<td>75.65</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>90.59</td>
<td>28.64</td>
<td>94.45</td>
<td>86.93</td>
<td>76.4</td>
<td>46.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table shows the increase of literacy rate from 1901 Census to 1991 Census, which is the result of literacy campaign introduced in the state as a whole. But the follow-up programmes are inadequate. So the literacy centres are gradually fading off and people’s participation reduced.

Post-literacy programme is very important to make any literacy programme a success. One drawback of the existing schemes is that the post-literacy work is not effective. Kerala has a good network of libraries in the villages. These libraries used for the continuation of follow-up programmes of neo-literate.

3.4 The Role of Universities in NFE

The universities would have been doing good work ever since 1978 for the eradication of illiteracy from our country. As per 1992 guidelines the UGC directed university department centres to launch Total Literacy Campaign. Centre for Adult and Continuing Education departments functioned in University of Kerala, Mahatma Gandhi University, Cochin University and Calicut University. Under these centres a variety of programmes were implemented for programme officers, social workers, representatives of various organisations.

Centre for Adult Continuing Education and Extension (CACEE) of Kerala University started in 1980. A number of novelty and fruitful programmes were organised during 1994-95. They have training in personal hygiene, religious amity seminar, class on rural development programmes, medical camps, continuing education programmes, class on health problems, training on environmental awareness etc. In rural areas they
arranged animal husbandry classes, agricultural seminars and free distribution of seeds and manures for the promotion of infrastructure. Training on self-employment conducted for rural youth. In short, general awareness, health, environmental, employment and agricultural training programmes are conducted under this centre. The centre also involved in UGC sponsored adult literacy programme and helped 62,000 illiterate adults to became literate directly during 1980-90. Students and teachers of affiliated colleges were fully involved in the programme. The colleges and CACEE units participated in the programme and organised various activities such as literacy survey, training camps, awareness camps etc. The major approaches followed were centre-based 'Each one Teach one'. Even since Kerala was declared totally literate, CACEE is concentrating on Janasikshan Nilayams, continuing education programmes and population education activities.

The University Grants Commission recognised CACEE as the nodal agency for the Adult Continuing Education and extension programmes in Kerala and Karnataka states. The CACEE is responsible for monitoring and reporting on the working of centres and departments of Adult and Continuing Education in the universities of Kerala and Karnataka.

Mahatma Gandhi University has separate department for Adult and Continuing Education. This centre has started a number of educational programmes. In collaboration with the university's own experience in Nalpathimala, the centre conducts seminars, symposiums and vacation classes.

Apart from the Adult Education Department, School of Gandhian Thought started an extension project for rural development called
Gram Swaraj Extension Project. A three-year time bound programme covered a number of programmes including awareness, health, afforestation etc. in selected backward areas, viz. Aymanam, Elanji and Karukutty. People's participation in development was the major thrust of intervention.

Awareness programmes including seminars and camps for various categories like women, farmers, fishermen, students, youth etc. For e.g., a special seminar for women was organised on 11 February 1996 at Aymanam panchayat, one of the project areas.\(^{12}\) The purpose of this seminar was to give proper insight to the participants on chicken rearing and animal husbandry. Three hundred women belonging to the various wards of Aymanam panchayat participate in the seminar. After the seminar, all the participants were given four chicks each to promote poultry farming in their respective houses. These chicks were given at a subsidised price by the district panchayat.\(^{13}\) Awareness programmes also motivated the people to participate in the development activities and promoted leadership among various categories of people. It also facilitated the formation of various grass-root level organizations of the people. *Mahila samajams*, farmers' clubs, *Haritha Swaraj* Club, youth organisations etc. help them for self-confidence and enthusiasm to got improvement. People also became aware of their capabilities and they were able to imbibe new developmental ideas. Through women's organisations their leadership abilities improved. Merit evening, career guidance, interaction with state level rank holders etc. motivate the students for their studies.

Health check-ups like eye camps, cancer detection camp, dental camps, *Ayurveda* medical camp, skin disease detection camp etc. to improve
the health of the poor people in respective areas. The awareness programme on Japan encephalitis and the preventive measures organised with the help of district medical authorities. World health day was celebrated with the aim of making the people aware of the general health and initiated steps to draw the attention of the government. Respiratory check-up programme was conducted in collaboration with School of Biosciences, M. G. University. The health and hygiene education programme organised for the school-going children enabled them to have better insight on health and hygiene. Blood group detection camps were conducted with the help of youth clubs and organised blood donating forums, which encourage youth for blood donation. Minor financial assistance were given to eligible patients. In short health education, health check-up, reference service for cases to appropriate specialised treatment centres, immunization and treatment for minor illness are the salient features of the programme.

In the field of agriculture, a variety of programmes of social foresting and agricultural development. An intensive kitchen garden programme implemented in association with women groups and mahila samajams. They were also given seeds and seedlings at subsidized rate. Seminars on coconut development and coconut growers' association organised with the help of Coconut Development Board and the seedlings from the board distributed with subsidy. This was conducted with the active participation of local people.

The awareness programmes for welfare schemes of government and other agencies conducted each and every corner of selected panchayats. A number of projects like IRDP (Integrated Rural Development Project), TRYSEM, PMRY (Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana) etc. were introduced.
Three DWCRA units were started through *mahila samajam* members. Provisional stores, chips centre, garment making, restaurant etc. functioned under this scheme with proper guidance and evaluation of GSEP. Seminars for pension schemes like agricultural labourers and agricultural labourers welfare fund were also organised.

Agrifests were conducted in each panchayats for the promotion of agriculture and motivating and boosting farmers. In this connection, seminars, symposiums, agri-competitions like best agriculturist and agri-based sports, crop exhibitions cattle shows etc. are organised for inspiring the farming community. Experts from various agricultural institutions and firms take special classes on the occasion. The topics covered include organic farming, sustainable agriculture practice, optimum utilization of the water resources etc. These programmes were organised with the active participation of farmers’ organizations like Rubber Producers’ Society, *Kera Samithy*, Paddy Cultivators’ Organization, Pepper Cultivators’ Organization and *mahila samajams*.

Apart from these programmes public work like public toilets, approach roads, waiting sheds etc. initiated for the infrastructure development of the rural people. All programmes, especially the public works must be integrated with government schemes.

Under the auspices of National Service Scheme wing of Mahatma Gandhi University, a mass campaign of hundred percent literacy programme was launched with the active patronage of District Collector, Kottayam. To make 2000 illiterates under the age group of 5-60 in Kottayam municipal area
are fully literate within hundred days (April-June 1989). On the 25 June 1989, the municipality was declared fully literate.

Adult education centre in Calicut University has been encouraging students very actively in teaching, giving training, preparation of trainers, printing and publishing posters, producing various audio-visual aids and various other measures to popularise adult education in Kerala.

3.5 Voluntary Organisation in NFE

A number of social, religious and political organisations are directly or indirectly involved in NFE programmes. Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishat, KANFED etc. actively engaged in the programmes. Apart from the major organisations, thousands of other smaller ones like local mahila samajams, cultural organisations, arts and sports clubs and youth organisations also participated in the programme. The contributions of each of them are not less significant than those of others. But the programmes of certain major organisations given below.

Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishat (KSSP)

The KSSP is a science movement in Kerala. Its slogan or objective is ‘Science for Social Revolution’. Non-Formal Education is the main activity outside the sector of formal education. KSSP’s activities within the sphere of formal education too are non-formal in nature. The Non-Formal Education programmes like public lectures and seminars, publication of books and periodicals, propaganda and agitation on specific issues, use of art media—Sastra Kalajatha etc. During the last one decade KSSP might have
organised thousands of lectures on such varied subjects as from atom to galaxy, origin and evolution of life, history of mankind, wealth of Kerala, energy, water and forest planning in Kerala, agriculture, irrigation, industrialisation, ecology, healthcare, delivery system harmful drugs and so on. The total number of people who might have attended these classes will be several million.

The KSSP started its book publication programme in 1976 and since then it has been the main source of revenue for all its activities. These books can be broadly classified into (a) passive—children’s books, popular books for adult laymen, reference books and (b) active—agitation propaganda books and pamphlets, study reports etc. Passive books are prepared without any specific and defined programmes. Each book in the ‘active’ group is prepared with a specific objective in view. In the field of formal and Non-Formal Education, KSSP has developed its own experts and people look to them for collaboration. During 1990s KSSP was thoroughly engaged in literacy programmes.

**Contribution of KANFED**

Kerala Association for Non-Formal Education and Development (KANFED) registered on 30 June 1977 by P. N. Panikar, the spokesman of Grandhasalasangam with the aim of educational programmes outside the formal systems. The programmes of the association mainly give thrust to the rural poor and weaker sections of the society. They impart knowledge for life and culture apart from literacy. They are also engaged in a variety of programmes in the field of NFE, i.e. population education and education for dropouts, correspondence courses, justice for women, *padayatras*, exhibitions,
surveys and research studies, publications and audio-visual programmes. In 1978, the Central Government gave the responsibility and works of State Resource Centre to KANFED. With the co-operation of UNICEF, education for dropout’s programme conducted in northern districts of Kerala. Non-Formal Education aims at involving the so-called uneducated people in the country, to urge them to think about their dominant role in the implementation of developmental activities and to make them conscious of their rights and responsibilities. KANFED continues to play a vital role in making the people conscious of their rights and responsibilities, thereby contributing to the growth and development of the democratic process.

KANFED had initiated a number of activities aimed at literacy, continuing education and socio-economic development. These activities were undertaken mainly through voluntary efforts enlisting the co-operation of all political parties. It has opened a forum for all political parties to work together for the cause of national reconstruction. KANFED volunteers are working throughout the state with missionary zeal. Literacy is one of the doors which helps the people understand how they can get rid of poverty, how they can assert their own rights and privileges and how they can fulfil their responsibilities towards other. They extended their literacy programmes, where the areas nobody would take in jails, rescue homes, port trust etc. They also extent their services to mental hospitals and central jail. During 1970 KANFED co-operatively worked with Grandhasalasangams and rural development agencies. They made the democratic foundation of literacy programmes in Kerala. Grass-root level volunteers are the asset of KANFED without having the hope of any remuneration.
KANFED’s publications mainly give thrust to the needs of lower strata group of people. KANFED News Weekly, *Anaupacharika Vidhyabhysam* Fortnightly and *Nattuvelicham* published in Malayalam and all the three are strongly influenced the field of NFE. A compiled work of *Subhashitham*, an ideal programme of All India Radio was published. A number of leaflets were published irrespective of religion, caste and creed. The financial assistance of German Adult Education Association (DVV) helps them to print and distribute these publications free of cost. With this help they published a number of reference texts and books for neo-literates. Gradually DVV reduced and cut the help. More than two hundred books for neo-literates was produced a cultural revolution in the field of NFE. A legal literacy wing also functioned in KANFED. Common people have no awareness of the legal literacy for their daily life. When they are aware of this law and justice, they understand what is right and what is wrong.

There were 150 KANFED schools established in northern districts of Kerala for school dropouts on 2 October 1989. During the early years, there were more than 4,500 students were coming under these schools and they also returned their mother schools. The programmes mainly concentrated in tribal colonies and Muslim girls. These schools in Palakkad district conducted between 7 to 9 p.m. Large number of these students daily worked. Poverty and ignorance compelled them to drop out from schools. The spontaneous abilities of students developed through these schools with reading and writing of letters and simple arithmetic. KANFED schools covered the backward areas of northern districts of Kerala, i.e. Palakkad, Malappuram, Kasaragode and
Kannur. Now the functions of these schools continuing slow and the beneficiaries are small in number.

In short, KANFED extended a helping hand to the poor and the needy and assisting the government in the successful implementation of programmes aimed at the progress and prosperity of the country.

3.6 Socio-economic Problems – Unemployment

Unemployment is the most serious socio-economic problem of Kerala. The employment exchange data on the job seekers in the live register give an idea about the growing number of job seekers especially the educated category of job seekers. The job seekers of Kerala had increased from 1.51 lakhs in 1960 to 37.39 lakhs in denoting an increase by twenty-four times. There has been a steady growth in the rate of unemployment among the educated as well as non-educated. But the incidence of unemployment is higher among the educated. The available evidences suggest that there had been a steady increase in the rate of female unemployment compared to that of male unemployment during the last three decades. Kerala’s unemployment has the pronounced characteristic of youth unemployment as young people in the age group of 15 to 29 constitute nearly 75 per cent of total unemployment.
3.7 The Impact of NFE in the Problems of the Masses

Non-Formal Education programmes mainly concentrated in lower strata of the people. The strategies adopted through these programmes are motivated rural masses. For example, literacy campaign launched in Kerala helps a large number of illiterates became literate. Literacy has direct relation to poverty. Large section of our people are poor because they are illiterate. Economic and social development depends largely on education. It extending opportunities of education to all, regardless of race, colour, creed, sex or ability.

Income generating or employment-oriented non-formal training programmes by government and other voluntary agencies concentrated the rural masses who living below poverty line. Governmental programmes like TRYSEM, DWCR, IRDP infra training etc. visualized the uplift of the masses. Awareness, nutrition and health programmes through women organisations lead the overall development of the family. Women empowerment acquired the position of world-wide discussion topic. The programmes which have constituted according to the needs and ability of the selected areas are much better than general programmes.

3.8 Conclusion

To compare the situation of Indian education scenario, Kerala's situation is advanced. But also in the Non-Formal Education scenario, take a number of programmes and schemes introduced. Some of them are success and others have some failures and difficulties. If these programmes visualized, which is suitable to the geographical, social and cultural situation of Kerala.
Notes


2 Ibid.


7 *Kerala Total Literacy Program* (Kerala Saksharatha Samithy) p. 2.


10 Ibid., p. 2.

11 Ibid., p. 4.

12 *Gram Swaraj Bulletin* (School of Gandhian Thought and Development Studies, Mahatma Gandhi University, 1997) p. 6.

13 Ibid., p. 8.

14 Ibid., p. 61.


16 Ibid., p. 145.

17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.


22 Ibid., p. 17.