CHAPTER - 2

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

We have discussed the background and relevance of the study in the introductory chapter. The present chapter reviews the relevant literature through which the problem of the study has been developed. The present study is an analysis of the dynamics of participatory institutions in Kerala introduced with the People’s Planning Campaign, in relation to the approach of various social fields towards these institutions. The study adopts a relational approach by linking the dynamics of institutions with the nature of different social fields that can influence the habitus of individual actors and groups related to the institutions. This chapter describes the basic concepts of the study and reviews literature to pose certain questions that could identify the research gaps.

There are four sections in this chapter, dealing with different aspects of the study. The first section deals with two major concepts used in this study, i.e. institutions and practices. The concepts of field and habitus are explained as sources that generate the practices of individuals and groups. The second section of this chapter focuses on Kerala society in the broader context of the study. This section briefly examines the process of the emergence of Kerala’s polity and society during the last century. Such an analysis is relevant to understand the emergence of various social fields. This section also looks into the paradoxes of Kerala’s development experience, which paved the way for the emergence of a campaign for democratic decentralization, namely the People’s Planning Campaign. The third section of the chapter analyses various theoretical approaches to decentralization and participatory development. The fourth section reviews various studies on Kerala’s decentralization initiatives from the People’s Planning Campaign onwards.

2.2 Institutions and practices — Conceptual issues

Institutions comprise cognitive, normative and regulative structures and activities that provide stability, coherence and meaning to social behavior. Institutions are transported by various carriers, cultures, structures and routines (Scott in Appendini &
Nuijten, 2002). Institutions provide a means of orientation to a large number of actors. They enable the actors to coordinate their activities by means of orientation to a common signpost (Lachman, 1970). Initially, the German word ‘institution’ had a very restricted meaning, that is, of organized bodies. Institutions have a crucial role in society, which orient the actions of different sets of actors towards a common goal. There are formal and informal institutions. Formal institutions are formed through legislations or systematic processes, while informal institutions are formed through customary practices, rules or norms that have persisted over time. North (in Harris, 2000) argues that institutions are formed precisely to reduce the uncertainties in human exchange. They also reduce the problem of asymmetric information among different actors.

The nature of institutional configurations varies from society to society. The resources are distributed and needs are met through these institutions. Access to these institutions is open to some groups, while some groups are excluded. Through the inclusionary process, the actor’s space for local political action will increase and that will enhance his/her capacity to engage with mainstream society (Naila, 2002). Institutions provide rules and restrictions that are instrumental for governance. While formal institutions define the normative system and indicate blue prints for behavior, informal institutions define the actual behaviour of players (Zenger & Lazarini, 2001).

Max Weber regarded an increasing number of rational, legal authority and institutions as evidence of society’s advancement towards modernization and democratization (Giddens, 1972). He considered parliamentary democratic institutions as training centres for leaders. Institutions have an important role in collective action. The institution is a social unit whose purpose is to achieve collective goals or meet institutional needs in society (Appendini & Nuijten, 2002). New institutions are built up through varied responses and interaction between people or groups, who in order to implement their varied goals, undertake the process of exchange with other groups or people (Eisenstadt, 1968). Providing symbolic orientations and norms to articulate various goals, establish organizational frameworks, and mobilize the resources necessary for all these purposes are the various aspects of institution building.
Institution building also depends on the relative success of different interest groups who try to establish their interests in the institutional sphere (Eisenstadt, 1968). In real practice, an institutional system is never fully accepted, or accepted to the same degree by all those participating in it. By definition, practices are the different patterns and strategies followed by people to achieve institutional targets (Appendini, 2002). Organizing practices can be developed into established patterns and give rise to institutions. The practice of institutional ideals by the actors depends on their access to power, power differences and divergent interests among the people involved in it. Some groups may be greatly opposed to the very premise of institutionalization of a given system, and may share its values and symbols only to a small extent. These different orientations to the central symbolic spheres may lead to conflict and potential institutional change. The continuous functions of an institution and implementation of policy through it may affect the position of various groups in the society and give rise to continuous shifts both in the balance of power between them and their orientation towards the existing institutional system. After a stage, the problem of accessibility would have been solved and the centre will be demystified (Eisenstadt, 1968).

Pierre Bourdieu introduces the concepts of field and habitus in the formation of practice. His argument was that the ‘Habitus’ of an individual is the decisive factor in his action or practice (Webb, 2002). ‘Habitus’ is made up of a number of ways of operating and inclinations, values and rationale that are acquired from various informative contexts, such as family, education system or class context. The habitus of the player incorporates the fluctuations in the field and allows the player to respond practically and appropriately (Webb, 2002). Bourdieu argues that the extent to which the agent can attain knowledge and negotiate with various social fields depends on his logic of practice or practical sense and reflexive relationship between one's own field and his/her practice within the field. No cultural practice is explicable without reference to field and habitus. The practice of the individual greatly depends on the habitus in which he/she exists. Thus, institutional realities are constructed, sustained and altered by the process of cultural creations and enactment. The functioning of institutions makes for behavioral changes in related actors. The culture of a society in which institutions work will also bring changes in the institutions through the actors.
Peter De Souza observes that with the implementation of the 73rd & 74th Constitutional Amendments, the number of democratic institutions has multiplied in the country. According to the designed objectives, they should have considerable impact on the democratization process. According to this assumption, democracy in India would have been more inclusive in nature. However, available information indicates otherwise (for instance, attacks against Dalits, and elite capture that takes place in local bodies) (DeSouza, 2003).

Our discussion on practice indicates that the actions of actors involved in institutions and their behavior towards institutional norms is very important in deciding the directions of institutions. Thus, the actions of people and the factors affecting their practices have a prominent role in institution building. The response of actors involved in institutions is very contextual in nature. The field and habitus in which the actors are situated have a crucial role in deciding their practice. There is a reciprocal relationship between social, cultural and political environment of actors and the functioning of institutions.

2.2.1 Theoretical underpinnings of field, habitus and practices

Institutions provide a means of orientation to a large number of actors. They enable the actors to co-ordinate their activities (Lachman, 1970). Institutions orient the actions of different sets of actors towards a common goal. But the nature of institutional performance in different societies will be different. The success of institutions also depends on the relative success of different interest groups who try to establish their interest in the institutional sphere (Eisenstadt, 1968). In real practice the institutional system is never fully accepted to the same degree by all those participating in it. Practices are the different patterns and approaches that people follow in their day to day lives (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The practice of institutional ideals by the actors depends on their access to power, power differences and divergent interests among people involved in it (Eisenstadt, 1968). The practices of people related to each institution are very important in deciding their success or failure.

Field and habitus are corner stones in deciding the practices of people (Bourdieu, 1977, 1989; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The social structure is
identified as a combination of different fields such as political field, religious field, artistic field, field of class differences and field of power, and each of them has its own logic (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Social structure is defined as the sum total of typifications and of the recurrent pattern of interactions established between them (Berger & Luckman in Bourdieu, 1992:10). The structure is otherwise defined as the pattern of social relations in time and space involving the reproduction of situated practices (Giddens, 1984). The social structure and different fields working on that structure have the role of reproduction of social practices.

The field consists of a set of objective historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power or capital. Differentiated society is not a seamless totality integrated with systemic functions, or an overarching authority, but an ensemble of relatively autonomous spheres of play (fields) that cannot be collapsed under the overall societal logic, capitalism, modernity or post modernity. Each field possesses its particular values and its own regulative principles. These principles delimit a socially structured space in which agents struggle, depending on the positions they may occupy in that space, either to change or to preserve its boundaries and forms. A field is a patterned system of objective forces, a relational configuration endowed with a specific gravity which it imposes on all the objects and agents which enter into it (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:15-16). The field is essentially a set of relationships between positions that are defined by the power or capital owned by the participants in each specific field. It is simultaneously a space of conflict and competition between the participants, in which each of them (individuals or groups) tries to establish their monopoly over the other, based on the species and volume of capital owned by them. Here, by the term capital, Bourdieu does not mean economic capital alone, but he expands the categories of capital into cultural capital, social capital and symbolic capital (Bourdieu in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). In the field, agents and institutions constantly struggle, according to the regularities and rules constituted in this space of play, with various degrees of straight and, therefore, diverse probabilities of success to appropriate the specific products of their stake in the game. Fields are the spaces of competition and conflicts between the interests of the participants. In this struggle, the success of each of them will depend on the species and volume of capital held by them. Those who dominate in the given field are in a position to make it function to their advantage, but they always face
resistance, and contention from the dominated. Though the societal structure is the combination of various fields, each field has its own logic which cannot be reducible to the logic of the other. In order to understand the dynamics of each field we have to understand the inner power relations, conflicts, and competitions within each field.

Habitus consists of a set of historical relations between positions deposited within individual bodies, in the form of mental and corporeal schemata or perception, appreciation and action (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:16). The schemes of perception and appreciation are incorporated in every member of the group, that is, dispositions of habitus (Bourdieu, 1977:17). Being the product of history it is an open system of dispositions that is constantly affected by them in a way that either modifies or reinforces its structures. The field enters into an individual through the habitus. It is structured by the field through a historical process, and structuring of individuals as a system of conditioning. All the external stimuli and conditioning experienced in every moment by an individual, are perceived by him/her through categories already constructed by prior experiences, that is habitus. The function of habitus is only related to certain structures that are fields associated with that habitus, or in other words the fields that can influence the habitus of individuals. The practices produced by the habitus are a strategy generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever changing situations. Practices decided by the habitus always tend to reproduce the objective structures of which they are the products. Habitus is determined by past conditioning that has produced the principle of their production, that is by the actual outcome of identical or interchangeable past practices, which coincide with their own outcome to the extent that the objective structures of which they are products are prolonged in the structures within which they function (Bourdieu, 1977: 72). Habitus is a historically constructed product deposited within individuals, which defines the nature of their practices in the living world. Social agents are the products of history, of the history of the whole social field and the accumulated experience of a past work in the specific subfield. Every individual is closely affiliated to one field, which can influence his/her habitus, and has a critical role in defining the practices. At the same time as a part of the total social field, other fields can also have a minor influence on individuals in their own way, according to the capital he/she holds (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992:133-135).
Though habitus is the product of history and a durable one, it is not an eternal one. It is a dynamic one, where the dynamics of the field will also correspondingly influence the habitus. All the theories that treat practice as a mechanical reaction directly determined by instant stimuli and reasoning are rejected here. The arguments of rational action theory, that practices are generated through rationally calculated strategic responses were also negated (Bourdieu, 1977: 73). Bourdieu never ruled out the possibility that the response of the habitus may be accompanied by a strategic calculation tending to carry on quasi-consciously. The operation of the habitus carries on in quite a different way, namely, as an estimation of the chances that assume the transformation of the past effects into the expected objective. It is explained that even these limited, strategically calculated responses of individuals will depend on his/her potential to act or not to act (based on the volume and species of capital/power that they hold) and their position within each field. The individual who acquires the capital to challenge the perceived notions deposited with them through the habitus will be able to make transformations within the field itself (Bourdieu, 1977: 76). In this sense, the individual response to the field is structured by the habitus at the same time that there is a limited chance of a strategic response, but that is limited to the individual positions and their negotiation potential within the field. Social agents’ practices are generated on the basis of socially and historically constituted categories of perception and appreciation, and the structure that determines them. Practices are the product of habitus that is the product of the embodiment of the immanent regularities and tendencies of the world (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 138). It is the embodiment of socialization itself that is issued out of the historical work of succeeding generations. The reproduction of the social order happens through the practices of the individuals, who lived within each society. Every institution that has ideal dreams on their origins will be reproduced through the practices of the individuals and groups who are involved in their activities and included in their respective fields. The success or failure of the institutions will depend on the practices of the individuals or groups related to them.

While we adopt Bourdieu’s concept of field in Kerala’s specific situation we should also recognize that Kerala society is the combination of various fields, each of them highly complex in nature. In Kerala the political field, religious field, field of class differentiations and cultural fields are strong and each of them includes its own
power relations. An examination of Kerala society indicates that the influence of political society, religious movements, and mass organizations and civil society organizations are very strong within the state (Devika, 2006; Tornquist, 2007; Tharakan, 2008). Each of these fields has its own logic that defines the nature of its functioning. In Kerala, we sometimes see an overlap between these autonomous fields. For instance, from the end of the 19th century, religious reform movements were the negotiating forces for protecting the interests of their own groups. They even used political channels for gaining their demands. The Vimochana Samaram (Liberation Movement) in 1957 was a joint struggle by the Congress led opposition parties, and religious and caste organizations of Christians and Nairs that had resulted in the dissolution of the first democratically elected communist ministry in the state by the central government. After the Liberation Movement the religious and caste organizations have forged strong relationships with the political field (with both coalitions) further strengthening their position as a bargaining force. Thus, the power or capital emanating out of the religious field has a pull or push effect on defining the power or capital within the political field. In order to understand such a complex society like Kerala we have analysed the logic and dynamics of each autonomous field and mutual transactions between fields.

While we bring Bourdieu’s concept to the local level, each grampanchayat has its own social structure and fields that define the structure. Political, religious and voluntary action fields are the three important fields that are relevant in this study, which can influence the functioning of participatory institutions at the local level. The dynamics of the institutions functioning at every locale are defined by the local political, religious and voluntary action fields including civil society organizations, political society and religious power relations. The power or capital emanating out of each field merges together to form the total field of power of a society.

The functioning of institutions such as gram sabhas, neighbourhood groups, Task Forces, self-help groups will be influenced by the practices of individuals attached to them, which are emanating out of their habitus. The habitus are produced through historical processes related to the fields where are they situated, that may be religious, voluntary action and political fields. In order to understand the underpinnings of the practices of people, a detailed enquiry is needed into the
dynamics of the different social fields of Kerala society. An examination of Kerala society and its development dynamics is needed before we enter into the specific discussion of decentralization. The next section of the review of literature focuses on the social history of Kerala and its development paradoxes.

2.3 Kerala society

In order to apply Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of field and habitus in studying social phenomena in Kerala, certain aspects of Kerala society need to be considered. The historical evolution of various fields of Kerala society is important in understanding the dynamics of the present society, and to understand the role of various groups in forming the presently existing social structure. It will also help in understanding how the habitus of individuals representing various groups has been structured. The following portion of this chapter analyses the marginal status of various social groups in Kerala and their historical roots. It also explores the debates related to the economy and how they led to the experiments on decentralization, and how the various institutions related to local planning have developed.

The “Kerala model” of development was considered as particularly interesting because it meant the state was able to attain relatively high human development with relatively low economic growth (Tharamangalam, 2003; Chakraborthy, 2005; Kannan, 2005). Kerala’s achievements as revealed in the human development indicators such as literacy, infant mortality, universal elementary education, low birth rate, are far better than in other states of India, and are even comparable to some of the developed nations such as the United States of America (USA) and United kingdom (UK) (Tharamangalam, 2003; GOK – CDS, 2005; Chakraborthy, 2005). In the case of the human poverty index Kerala can be equated with some of the developing nations that have good human development indices and human poverty index such as Sri Lanka, China, Indonesia and Thailand (Chakraborthy, 2005), and it is far better than the all India average (Kerala HPI-15.0 against an all India average of 36.7). In the case of some other indicators like gender disparity index (that is the indicator of different achievements of men and women in terms of education, longevity etc.), high consumption expenditure, Kerala ranked first among Indian states (Chadopadhyaya, 2004; Kannan, 2007; Chakraborthy, 2005).
Initially, the Kerala development pattern was projected as a model of high human development that was not accompanied by higher economic growth, that is, HDI without EG (Chakraborthy, 2005; Tharakan, 2007). But from the end of the 1990s and early 2000s, these narratives have been restated by various social scientists. They have argued that Kerala’s period of high human development indicators without economic growth has shifted to a period of high human development indicators with high rate of economic growth (High HDI with higher economic growth). They pointed out that this had begun in the late 1990s and it has continued after that without having any disruptions (Kannan, 2007; Chakraborthy, 2005). Kannan (2007) indicated that Kerala has had higher economic growth from the end of 1980s, but it is only now that it has been recognised (Kannan, 2007).

2.3.1 Roots of Kerala’s Pattern of Development

Whatever may be the development achievements of Kerala, it has been widely acknowledged that the development pattern that Kerala followed had a prominent role in shaping those development attainments. Amartya Sen (1999) had praised the Kerala pattern of development, and stated that it was a result of public action. The political movements from the grass roots had started from the beginning of the 20th century, and the persistent struggles of these movements had a role in the creation of the Kerala pattern of development. These political movements articulated public demands, and the response of the state to these struggles was through legislative measures and policies to ensure social equity and justice, which led to the emergence of the Kerala pattern of development. The political movements in Kerala for land reforms, minimum wages, and statutory rationing were some of the significant movements (Sen, 1999; Lieten, 2003; Tharamangalam, 2003). The social security measures and the development policies adopted by the governments including land reforms, minimum wages act, universalisation of education, health facilities and the public distribution system, together made changes in the standard of living of the people (Lieten, 2003; Kannan, 2005). This social environment created the ground for further development movements in the state.

There are two important views related to the emergence of the Kerala pattern of development. One view attributes the achievements of Kerala society to the policies adopted by the first communist ministry led by the veteran Marxist leader E
M Sankaran Namboodiripad, especially the policies introduced by that government in the sectors of land reforms and education (Lieten, 2003). Lieten also pointed out the achievements that emanated out of the state—civil society synergy especially in population control, as a model for the combined action for social development of the state, and civil society. One of his observations is worth mentioning, which is related to the dualistic role of the political and civil society. In Kerala, both political and civil society had a tradition of acting as a pressure force upon the government to implement pro-poor, pro-people reforms and policies, and a creative interventionist role of participating in the implementation of progressive government reforms (Lieten, 2003).

Though the above narrative helps in understanding the political dynamism of Kerala after Indian Independence, it is inadequate to explain the history of social mobilization of Kerala that began from about the second quarter of the 19th century, which also had a role in the shaping of the policies of successive administrators. Thus, the second view of the formation of Kerala’s development pattern held that rather than the immediate history of the state after the formation of the state of Kerala, the relevant historical roots of Kerala’s political ethos began from the second half of the 19th century, and had a role in bringing about the more recent development achievements that took place. Further, some of the progressive policies, especially in the educational sector, introduced by the rulers of the princely states at the end of the 19th century and during the 20th century (Travancore and Cochin) contributed in developing the public school systems in these regions. This had provided educational opportunities even among the backward and lower caste groups, to whoever was interested in acquiring education (Tharamangalam, 2003). The evolution and strengthening of social religious reform movements (SRRMs) from the second half of the 19th century and their continuous efforts and bargaining for equal representation and equitable policies from the state, particularly the movement such as Ezhava memorial for higher participation in government jobs, also contributed to improving the educational and employment opportunities of even castes lower in the social hierarchy, such as the Ezhavas. Along with this, the internal reformation activities started within the caste group in the early years of the 20th century, through organizations such as the Nair Service Society (NSS) and SreeNarayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam, the organizations working among Nairs, as well as lower caste
groups (particularly among Ezhavas), contributed towards increasing the educational attainment and employment opportunities of these groups. Following these Social Religious Reform Movements (SRRMs), political movements too developed in Kerala during the 1920s as part of the nationalist movement.

The emergence of the nationalist movement led by the Indian National Congress (INC) was followed by the socialist, agrarian and communist movements in the 1930s. The Indian National Congress (INC) led nationalist movement was able to create a social environment against the colonial rulers, based on the concept of self reliance. Along with the anti colonial struggle it also focused on internal reformation activities in Kerala society such as the struggles against caste based discrimination. The agrarian and communist movements were part of many struggles against the feudal land relations, and led struggles for land reforms and social security measures such as minimum wages. Thus, the second view of the emergence of the Kerala pattern of development highlighted the logical link between the contributions of SRRMs that began in the 19th century and the political movements of the 20th century in creating the Kerala pattern of development. This view suggests that socio religious and political movements in the state created an environment for the progressive policies of the first communist ministry led by EM Sankaran Namboodiripad. These factors together contributed to the manifestation of the Kerala pattern of development (Tharamangalam, 2003; Tharakan, 2007, 2008).

As early as the 19th century, princely states of the region required the support of intermediary land holders and superior tenants (tenants from upper and middle Hindu castes, and Non Hindu communities such as Christians and Muslims). Succeeding monarchical regimes, therefore, made policies in their favour, which also led to the commercialization of agriculture, opened up possibilities to amass wealth for sections of backward Hindu castes as well as non Hindu communities. This also had increased their presence in educational institutions, particularly in the primary education system that developed through the policies of the princely rulers (Tharakan, 2004).

The attainment of modern education among forward Hindu groups, backward Hindu castes, and non Hindu communities also helped to nurture the social religious reform movements within each group. The higher economic status attained through
the commercialization of agriculture and the greater access to the educational system together made changes in the lives of backward caste groups such as Ezhavas. A group of educated leaders emerged from the lower and backward caste groups, by using the new opportunities to acquire an education. Though the economic and educational status of the backward and middle caste groups improved through the new opportunities, their backward social status continued to be unaltered. This contradiction led to their organized activities which in turn contributed to the emergence of Social Religious Reform Movements (SRRMs) within them. They have used SRRMs as tools of negotiation with the princely states, towards equal opportunity for education in public schools and the opportunity for government jobs, which were restricted mainly to forward caste groups (Tharakan, 2004, 2007, 2008). Meanwhile, the lower Hindu caste movements and the movements for the protection of the marginalized, such as Sadhu Jana Paripalana Sangham (Movement of Pulayas led by Ayyankali) and Prathyaksh Raksha Dyva Sabha (led by Kumara Gurudevan, as an organization of the poor, particularly from lower castes) also emerged during the first half of the 20th century. Charismatic leaders like Ayyankali and Kumara Gurudevan were able to mobilize the lower Hindu caste groups and the marginalized groups in society, and these movements fought for equal rights to education. They also raised their demands for participation in legislative bodies (Tharamangalam, 2003; Tharakan, 2008).

SRRMs were stronger in the Travancore and Cochin princely states, than in the Malabar region which was part of the Madras presidency. The weakening of SRRMs (which emerged through the commercialization of agriculture) due to economic recession in the 1930s, and the space created by the nationalist movement, enabled the socialist and communist movements to be strengthened, especially in northern Kerala (Malabar) (Tharakan, 2004). The new movements adopted different strategies in the Malabar and Travancore Cochin regions. In the Travancore Cochin region they focused on protecting the rights of labourers through a strong trade union movement, while in Malabar they focused on organizing the peasantry and landless labourers for their land rights. Subsequently, a joint movement emerged for United Kerala, and comprehensive land reforms, which created a favourable atmosphere for the communist movement all over Kerala, and culminated with the elections and the

Even within the social religious reform movements (SRRMs), a process of marginalization had occurred. The SRRMs of backward Hindu castes such as SreeNarayana Dharma ParipalanaYogam (Ezhava) succeeded in negotiating their demands with the state and got strengthened for further mobilization. The lower Hindu caste movements and the movements for the protection of the marginalized, such as Sadhu Jana ParipalanaSangham, and Prathyaksha Raksha Dyva Sabha were weakened. After the demise of their charismatic leaders, these movements broke into several small groups, which adversely affected their capacity to negotiate with the state (Tharakan, 2007).

In 1959, the newly elected communist government introduced a comprehensive land reforms bill in the legislative assembly, which resulted in the dissolution of that government. This bill was eventually passed by the Kerala assembly in 1969, a decade after its introduction. This bill is considered as a landmark that accelerated the human development achievements of Kerala. The welfare policies of the government helped to improve Kerala’s educational attainment which was already better than other regions of the country (Lieten, 2003). The land reforms act helped to end the system of tenancy and assured a homestead to the landless labourers (Lieten, 2003). In 1959 only one third of the rural households in Kerala had their own land. After implementing the land reforms in the 1980s, 92.2% of Kerala households got a title over for their land (Lieten, 2003).

The limitations of land reforms were that they had an unfavourable impact on lower caste groups and landless labourers, while they provided more mobility to the already empowered backward caste Hindus such as Ezhavas and other communities such as Christians and Muslims. The backward castes and other groups who possessed the bulk of land as tenants, had become owners over that land through the closing of the tenancy system as part of the land reforms, while the landless agricultural labourers got only homestead land (less than ten cents, i.e. less than 1/10th of an acre) instead of land for agriculture (Tharakan, 2007; Lieten, 2003). The land reforms had made changes in the dignity of the landless and lower caste people by bringing changes to their status, as ‘owners of land’. This enabled them to reap the
gains of various housing programmes introduced by the government (Lieten, 2003). However, in comparison the land reforms benefited these groups to a lesser extent than it did to the backward caste groups.

Land reforms did not make any qualitative change in the life of tribals because the plantation sector was not included within land reforms (GOK – CDS, 2005). The fishermen community in the state was also excluded from the benefits of the land reforms because they were not the tillers or tenants of the land during the period of land reforms. This virtually removed any opportunity to acquire ownership of even a minimum piece of land for their dwelling. Land reforms had excluded tribals and fisherfolk from their benefits, while the relative gain of lower caste groups was meager compared to the backward Hindu castes, and communities such as Muslims and Christians. These groups got comparatively better benefits out of land reforms because of their better social status as tenants, who acquired the ownership over lease land after land reforms (Kurien, 1998)

Though there were limitations in the land reforms, the reforms contributed towards reduction in inequalities between various social groups, which acted as a stimulant for further development achievements. The attempts by successive governments of Kerala, from the first communist government, to universalize public education, health care and the public distribution systems also contributed to the generation of human development achievements of the state (Kannan, 2005). The emergence of strong Social Religious Reform Movements followed by nationalist, agrarian, communist, and trade union movements set the ground for the mushrooming of civil society movements such as library movement, literary movements and people’s science movement. These movements, through their activities, also contributed in furthering the effects of the earlier development movements of the state. The mass movement for total literacy led by the Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishath, the people’s science movement in 1990 was a significant movement by civil society in the state (Parameswaran, 1999).

2.3.2 Paradoxes of development

Though Kerala’s lopsidedness in terms of lower economic growth and higher human development has been replaced by high economic growth with high human
development indicators, Kerala’s development continues to be skewed in terms of the marginalization of certain groups within the state. This generates unequal power relations within the different fields of the society. The marginal status of each group contributes to the structuring of their habitus, which in turn will affect their participation in democratic institutions and the decision making process. The marginalized groups are women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and traditional fisherfolk, who have been marginalized from Kerala’s development due to the continued effects of historical processes.

In terms of per capita consumption expenditure, income and asset holding, Kerala is a state that has the highest rate of inequality. The Gini coefficient value that indicates the inequality in consumption expenditure is higher in Kerala than the all India average and it increased from 0.348 in 1999 to 3.92 in 2004 – 2005. The Gini value in urban Kerala is 0.4, which is considered as representing an extremely high level of inequality (KSSP, 2006; Subramanian & Prasad, 2008). The number of people below the poverty line in Kerala, according to official figures, has declined to 14% in 2001 (KSSP, 2006; Subramanian & Prasad, 2008). However, the rate of poverty in terms of the human deprivation index is higher in certain districts of Kerala such as Palakkad, Idukki, and Wayanad, which have more than 60% of the tribal population of the state (GOK - CDS 2005). The rate of absolute poverty is higher among Scheduled Castes (24%) and Scheduled Tribes (36%) in Kerala than the general population (which is 12%) (GOK - CDS, 2005; KSSP 2006),

Various studies have highlighted the deprivation of SC, ST households in Kerala, demonstrated in such indicators as nature of houses, ownership of land and level of education. In Kerala, seven per cent of the people live in kutcha houses (houses built of mud, not brick and cement, and without concrete roofs) out of which close to 50% are Scheduled Castes, and in contrast 36% people live in houses with concrete roofs out of which only 5% are SCs (Narayana, 2007). Among the general population of Kerala 86% have their own houses, while among SCs it is 64.7%, and among the STs it is 41.7% (who have their own houses). Of SC houses 71% and among STs 44.1% are electrified, while the average electrification among Kerala houses is 89.8% (KSSP, 2006). Though Kerala’s ST households have an average of
0.6 acre of land, the displacement and encroachment of settlers in forest areas affected land ownership of STs (GOK – CDS, 2005).

The marine fishing group has been described as an outlier of the central tendency of the Kerala pattern of development (Kurien, 1998). They face the challenges of high child mortality, low literacy, and low access to drinking water and poor sanitation (GOK – CDS, 2005). The fishing community living in the zone is socially and economically backward. Further, it should be noted that 38.6% families of the coastal fishing community live under the poverty line, and the deprivation index is also higher in coastal Kerala (Chadopadhyay, 2004). The educational backwardness of Latin Catholics (most of them belonging to the fishing community), still persists (Tharakan, 2008).

Though Kerala has reduced the proportion of poor in its population, the inequalities within the society or cleavages among social classes seem to be increasing (Tharakan, 2008). The index of deprivation by district, across social groups (based on indices of well being such as housing quality, access to drinking water, sanitation, electricity and lighting) is 30% in Kerala, ranging from 15.5% in Ernakulam to 46.3% in Wayanad. Poverty is concentrated among certain groups such as traditional fishermen, cashew and coir workers, and people who belong to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (GOK – CDS, 2005). Though the number of poor families has been considerably reduced, it is difficult to address the issue of poverty because the remaining poor families are spread all over the state. Also, the increasing inequality had negated the attempts to eradicate poverty, which has reached a stagnant stage (Subramanian & Prasad, 2008).

2.3.3 Higher gender development indicators vs low status of women

Kerala’s status in gender development is high. The achievements of Kerala in reducing gender disparity in terms of literacy, sex ratio, female life expectancy, average age of marriage, birth rate, and educational attainment are comparatively better than in other states of the country (Rajan & Sreerupa, 2007). However, when we go beyond the traditional indices we see that the status of women in Kerala is very low compared to other states. No equality exists in Kerala in the matter of gender relations. Only day-to-day livelihood needs of women are being met by Kerala
society. In the case of participation in decision making, the status of Kerala women trail behind Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Goa, which are states that have higher rates of illiteracy than Kerala. Kerala has been recognised for the low birth rate and its attempts and success at population control, but it is also seen that the burden of contraception is imposed on the women in Kerala (Rajan & Sreerupa, 2007). Kerala also ranks first in the number of recorded crimes against women (Panda, 2004; Eapen, 2004; Vijayan & Sandhya, 2004; Mukhopadhyya, 2007). A study in Trivandrum district, revealed that 35.7% of women in the district had experienced physical violence, and 69% has faced psychological violence. In sexual harassment, Kerala is ranked fourth among Indian states, and it has a higher rank in domestic violence. Suicides among Kerala women is also much higher than in other states (Panda, 2004). Though Kerala has a high rate of women's literacy and girls’ participation in higher education, Kerala also has the lowest rate in women’s work participation, that is below 15%, while the all India average is 22.3% (Kodoth & Eapen, 2005; KSSP, 2006; Vijayan, 2007). Women’s work participation rate in Kerala had declined from 43% in 1961 to 17% in 1999 (Eapen, 2004). The proportion of women who are exclusively engaged in household duties has increased from 16% in 1961 to 32% in 1999. This is higher than the all India average (Kodoth & Eapen, 2005). Most of the work in which women of Kerala are engaged are largely low paid in nature like sales girls, traditional industrial laborers, construction workers etc. (KSSP, 2006). Facts indicate that women who have their own source of income face less violence, so the increasing number of housewives who do not have a source of income creates chances for more violence against women (Panda, 2004).

The pattern of women’s education in Kerala also contributes to the increasing trend of creating housewives. The number of women enrolled in arts and science graduate and post graduate courses is more than 60%, while those participating in job oriented professional and technical courses are only 10 to 20% (Kodoth & Eapen, 2005; Rajan & Sreerupa, 2007). The tradition of greater opportunities for education and the lack of resistance to educate women, help to raise not only women’s literacy but also access to higher education in Kerala. However, educational orientations and strategies were limited to their role as managers of household activities (Devika, 2006; Devika& Thampy, 2007; Kodoth & Eapen, 2007). Their access to higher education has been used to strengthen the modern patriarchal family system in Kerala.
This is evident in women being predominantly located in professional sectors such as nursing and teaching. Both are very suited to feminine jobs structured by patriarchy (Rajan & Sreerupa, 2007).

The proportion of women who own property such as land in Kerala is still low, and the phenomenon of dowry continues to be an accepted social custom. An average Kerala family gives 140 grams of gold as dowry, which is considered as an asset of the husband’s family, rather than as a support for the girls who are getting married (KSSP, 2006). In fact property rights of women are being replaced by dowry, especially in some communities such as Syrian Christians (Devika, 2006). Dowry related violence is the major domestic violence that Kerala women suffer (Panda, 2004; Eapen & Kodoth, 2005).

The political representation of women in the Kerala legislative assembly has always been less than 10% (Vijayan, 2007). In this context the special emphasis for the empowerment of women and gender mainstreaming through Women Component Plan and the institutions of Jagratha samithis to deal with atrocities against women were quite appropriate and relevant.

From the above discussion we can see that even though Kerala’s human development achievements were remarkable, significant sections of the society such as scheduled tribes, traditional fisherfolks and traditional industrial and agricultural laborers have been marginalized during the development process. Gender inequality was also reflected in Kerala society in different forms. The inequality in society has also increased considerably during the higher growth period after 1986 (KSSP, 2006; Subramanian & Prasad, 2008). The marginalization of certain groups and the higher level of inequality that exists in Kerala society are also reflected in the power relations and the decision making process within political, religious, and voluntary action fields. This also has an impact in the structuring of the habitus of individuals within each group and their practices towards democratic institutions. In such a critical juncture, the relevance of decentralized planning in addressing the issues of poverty, development of SC, ST communities, and the emancipation of women has also increased. In order to understand the dynamics and effects of various fields upon decentralized institutions and vice versa, each field has to be examined in depth. The analysis of the habitus of people representing various fields is also required, to
understand how each field influenced the habitus of the people and their practices towards decentralized institutions and vice versa.

We have discussed some aspects of Kerala society and its internal dynamics. We now turn to the concept of decentralization and its application in Kerala. In this section we examine various conceptualizations of decentralization and participatory democracy. After this analysis we examine Kerala’s decentralization efforts before the People’s Planning Campaign. This chapter will end with the review of the findings of major studies that have investigated Kerala’s decentralization efforts during the PPC and KDP, focusing mainly on the functioning of participatory institutions.

2.4 Different approaches to decentralization

The debates on decentralized governance and planning emerged all over the world since the 1970s, as a solution to the limitations of all encompassing centralized states (Gurukkal, 2001; Aziz, 2002). The lack of adequate information for planning, limitations when confronted with uncertain situations, dangers of bureaucratization at the higher levels of governance and under-utilization of resources were the major criticisms raised against centralized planning (Chandrasekhar, 2001). Though there were different schools of thought on decentralization, all of them agreed that there were serious limitations in centralized planning (Gurukkal, 2001).

There are two major streams of approaches to decentralized governance and planning. One approach of decentralization that has been adopted by international agencies such as the World Bank can be called the liberal interventionist approach. The other paradigm of decentralization can be named as the radical populist view and communitarian view of decentralization. The Marxist approach too keeps its position close to the arguments of radical populists and communitarians, though they have some disagreements regarding the nature and role of the state (Heller, 2001; Gurukkal; 2001). Market socialists argue for the decentralization of the economy in their attempts to strengthen the market structures (Chandrasekhar, 2001).

2.4.1 Liberal interventionist approach

This approach has given more emphasis to the efficiency aspect of the administrative process. It includes the developmentalists who subscribe to the dominant paradigm of
economic growth. They view development as capital intensive economic development and have no fundamental criticism of the paradigm of capitalistic development. They had a problem with the top down development administration process, and have, therefore, adopted decentralization as a means to make institutions of local government more efficient in development administration. They view local bodies as the agencies for quick and efficient implementation of development schemes, and perceive decentralization as an administrative strategy (Gurukkal, 2001). The neo classical economic theories also support this efficiency argument. Public choice theory, public administration theory, and political economy theory under neo-classical economics highlight the efficiency aspect of decentralization (Aziz, 2002). Public choice theory up-holds the argument that provisioning of some public goods and services would be more efficient, when a large number of providers can offer citizens more options and better choices. It has been argued that the efficiency and service quality of the state will increase when the number of providers increases. The public finance theory upholds the resource mobilization possibilities and efficiency of decision making at the lower level of governance operations. Due to the close interface with the community the possibilities for locating and mobilizing resources would be enhanced. Decentralized decision making would overcome the limitations of the lack of information through the increased access to proper and accurate information (Aziz, 2002).

The liberal interventionist view of decentralization approaches decentralization as an instrument for bringing good governance. The political process behind governance was not a serious concern of this approach. They did not recognise governance as a political process. The liberal interventionist view of decentralization approaches governance as a bureaucratic process rather than a political exercise. The process of reaching decisions through a democratic exercise was also not an element in this approach. Democratization of the grass roots and mobilization from below were not objectives in this version of decentralization. This view conceptualizes local institutions as tools to implement the decisions and programmes designed from above, rather than autonomous agencies for local governance (Gurukkal, 2001). This blueprint which was developed by international agencies without considering local specificities is not appropriate for the Third World, with their wide diversity even in relatively small geographical areas, regional variations, and quite often conflicts.
Liberal interventionists talked about the rapid distribution of benefits from the central to the local level. They have given more emphasize to avoid hurdles in the delivery of services to the lower level. The cooperation of Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations were sought for implementing the programmes at the lower level, which had been planned at the higher level. Their ultimate target was not to strengthen the institutions of local government with autonomous capacities (Heller, 2001).

2.4.1.1 Communitarian and Radical Populist Views

These views of decentralization argued against the liberal interventionist’s view. They raised their criticisms against centralized planning from the viewpoint of equity and excessive bureaucratization of administration. The radical populists viewed development as a comprehensive, economic, cultural and political package aimed at self reliance, and presupposed sustainability. They challenged the existing pattern of development which creates inequalities and leading to the over exploitation of natural resources. To them, decentralization means democratic distribution of political power down to the grass roots level, and that is their central concern. They approach it as an extensive campaign for mass empowerment (Gurukkal, 2001).

Communitarians also introduced an alternative to the liberal interventionist perception of decentralization. According to the communitarian perspective, democracy can develop only from below. They linked democratization with the mobilization of the masses, particularly previously marginalized groups, promoting horizontal solidarities (Heller, 2001). Communitarians believe social movements from below can nurture democratization from the grassroots. Due to the distrust of clientelestic political parties they proposed an autonomous civil society movement from below as a new form of people’s governance and democratization of society (Tornquist, 2007). This approach negates both the approaches of state centred and market centred development. They argue for people centred development. They have given utmost importance to local issue based civil society movements against the established authoritarian tendencies of the state and market (Heller, 2001).
2.4.1.2 Popular experiment of Kerala

Kerala’s decentralization experiment lies between the liberal interventionist perspective and the radical populist views. It avoided the instrumental approach of decentralization followed by the liberal interventionists. It also did not accept the anti-statist discourse followed by the communitarians. It has more similarity with radical populists and Marxist approaches of decentralization, which adopted the path of the social movement kind of democratization from below. This also shared some elements of communitarianism in the element of empowerment of marginalized groups, through a deliberative democratic process (Wright, 2001).

Kerala’s efforts of decentralization through the People’s Planning Campaign (PPC) was viewed as a popular experiment of decentralization, which has similarities with the movements of Porto Alegre (Brazil) and Philippines (Tornquist, 2007). These popular projects not only attempted to build a local public sphere but also tried to institutionalize it through state–civil society mediation. The synergy of the state and civil society for grass roots democratization was visible here as a political project (Harris, Stokke & Tornquist, 2004). Contrary to the liberal interventionist and communitarian views it adopted the process of strengthening the state by bringing democracy to the grassroots level (Wright, 2000). Kerala’s PPC was an attempt to create a state with strong grass roots democracy through the process of empowered deliberative democracy. Political decisions are the results of majority rule in conventional liberal democracies. The idea of deliberative democracy in contrast emphasizes consensus formation through public dialogue rather than power based bargaining. Thus, PPC was viewed as an attempt to strengthen the grass roots democratic process through the functioning of local democratic institutions. Democratic decentralization has been presumed to possess the potential for nurturing a useful state-civil society synergy through mass mobilization (Isaac & Franke, 2000). The participatory institutions formed in Kerala were intended as tools for such mobilization.

2.4.2 Participatory Institutions and Democracy

Participatory democratic theories viewed grass roots democracy as an attempt to take democracy beyond plain representation. The aggregative model through
representation conceives voting as a primary political activity because it maintains that political formations should be based on the preferences of the majority (Farrely, 2004). Participatory democratic theories, however, contrast this with the view of limiting the role of citizens in preferential voting. They explained that citizens should have an influential role in the decision making process, through a participatory democratic process, rather than confining their role to mere participation in elections, most often only as voters (Pateman, 1999).

In his classic theory about participatory democracy, Rousseau emphasized the need to educate the public for the democratization of society (Pateman, 1999). He visualized participatory institutions as protecting the free will of the people and assumed that the role of participation lay in enabling collective decisions. John Stuart Mill suggested that political institutions will promote the mental advancement of individuals towards community goals. It was believed that in a popular participatory institution, active public-spiritedness will be fostered, and will lead to responsible political action (Pateman, 1999). The real educative role of participation will be through actual participation in local institutions. GDH Cole argued that democratic principles must be applied in all fields in order to give participatory democratic training to people. Individuals will learn democracy only through participating at the local level. In his view institutions cannot be viewed in isolation from one another. The above theories laid great emphasize on the educative role of participatory institutions. They considered participation as a basic prerequisite for fostering democratic culture. By participation, they meant being involved in decision making.

Modern radical participatory theories go beyond the limits of the above theories. Earlier participatory democrats assumed that people would be attracted to political participation only if they had the opportunities, time and resources. Modern concepts of deliberative and discursive democracies conceive participation as a more radical process, which is an inevitable element because of the functional pressure of complex modern society (Warren, 1995). Deliberative democracy upholds the following opportunities that must be satisfied if a decision making process is to be called democratic. For effective participation, there should be equality in voting, enlightened understanding, exercising final control over the agenda, inclusion of all adults (Dahl in Farrely, 2004). Dahl further suggests that the policies of an association
must always be open to change by the members of the associations if they so choose. In a deliberative democracy one must participate in authentic deliberation, not simply express preferences through voting. Here, collective decisions are not reached through enforced consensus, but engaging in deliberation with those who disagree with us, expressing a willingness to listen to others, to take their concerns seriously and to find some common ground, so that compromises or consensus can be achieved (Farrely, 2004).

While deliberative democracy gives more emphasis to consensus building through deliberations, discursive democracy gives more emphasis to self transformation and empowerment. Discourse is considered as a way to the empowerment of self and an assertion of individual autonomy. But this discourse would not always result in consensus building and collective action. Habermas viewed discursive democracy as a functional necessity of modern complex society (Habermas, 1964; Warren, 1995).

Like participatory democratic theories, the People’s Planning Campaign in Kerala also had the objective of creating collective action through participatory democratic institutions. It also envisaged that these institutions will serve the role of educating society and will have a key role in creating a new civic culture involving grassroots democratic institutions. The assumptions of PPC also have some similarities with the concerns of deliberative and discursive democracies. Different institutions of PPC were also designed in a manner that discussions will take place among the participants, and collective decisions will be evolved through these discussions. Also, like the concerns of discursive democracy, participatory institutions under PPC were visualized as a forum for the self assertion and empowerment of weaker sections of society (Wright, 2000).

2.5 Decentralization in Kerala

Though Kerala has implemented many policies representing a strong welfare state and was able to achieve and display higher levels on the human development indicators, its economic growth rate was below the national average till the second half of 1980s. The period from 1960 to the end of the 1980s was known as the period of stagnation in terms of economic growth rate. From 1970-71 to 1980-81, Kerala’s
net state domestic product (NSDP) grew at 2.27% per annum, while the all India average for the same period was 4.7% per annum. During 1980-81 to 1987-88, it further declined to 1.16% per annum. From 1950 to 1987 Kerala had a period of lopsided development with high human development expenditure not matched by economic growth (Chakraborthy, 2005; Kannan, 2007). There were debates and discussions about the crisis of the Kerala model of development during this period. In 1994 a special seminar on Kerala development was held in Trivandrum, and discussions were held under the leadership of eminent political leaders and academicians (Kannan, 2007).

From the 1990s onwards another narrative on the Kerala economy has been generated. Kerala’s economic growth rate had reached the all India average from 1987 onwards (Chakraborthy, 2005; Kannan, 2007). From the second half of the 1980s onwards Kerala has been able to meet an economic growth rate of 6% per annum, which is close to the national average (Kannan, 2007). The long timelopsidedness in Kerala has been replaced by a balanced growth of the economy and human development (Chakraborthy, 2005). The demographic transition led to a very low rate of population growth, and the structural transformation in the economy resulted in reduced dependence on the agricultural sector, and a continuous rate of migration from the state contributed to this attainment (Kannan, 2007; Chakraborthy, 2005). The traditional narrative about the Kerala economy has been replaced by this new narrative. Kerala’s per capita income and consumption expenditure has crossed the all India average. The earlier achievements in human development have been translated into economic growth as a phenomenon of virtuous cycle (Chakraborthy, 2005). The stagnation in the productive sector continued even after the paradigm change in the economic growth. The deterioration of the quality of services delivered through the service sector such as education and health also became relevant issues to be addressed (Isaac & Franke, 2000). This situation has supported the discussions for the decentralized planning system to rejuvenate the productive sector, and to improve the quality of services delivered through the government machinery.

In the meantime, parallel discussions and experiments were going on in Kerala under the leadership of civil society groups. Kerala’s people’s science movement, the Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishath (KSSP) was prominent among them. KSSP
criticized the centralized system of planning and its complicated bureaucratic nature (Parameswaran, 1999, 2005, 2008). The KSSP suggested the method of decentralized participatory planning for the development process. The KSSP is an organization that has been working in Kerala since 1962, with a slogan of ‘Science for social revolution’. It introduced the concept of Rural Science Forum (RSF) in the 1980s which can act as an informal system to help the Panchayats in preparing their own plans by conducting a scientific study of resources in each Panchayat. In 1976 it conducted a pilot resource mapping programme in Vazhayur Panchayat in Malappuram district, with the participation of more than 100 trained volunteers. The KSSP upholds the principle that human capital can be mobilized for the development of society through voluntary efforts. It emphasized equity and participation in the development process. The same organization provided leadership to the mass Total Literacy campaign in Kerala in 1990 (Parameswaran, 2005). After the literacy campaign, they tried out participatory resource mapping in 25 selected Panchayats all over Kerala which was a step towards ‘alphabet literacy to development literacy’ (Sharma, 2007). In 1993, the KSSP launched a model panchayat development programme in Kalliasser in Kannur district, where it tried out the working of participatory institutions such as neighbourhood groups, PanchayatDevelopment Committees (PDCs) and Technical Support Groups (TSGs) in participatory planning at the Panchayat level (Sharma, 2007). In 1995, the KSSP expanded this experiment to five selected panchayats in different parts of Kerala named Panchayat Level Development Programme (PLDP) (Parameswaran, 2008).

Apart from the efforts of the KSSP, and from an even earlier year, from 1957 onwards, the Marxist leader EM Sankaran Namboodiripad had been arguing for administrative decentralization. Academicians such as K. N. Raj had been supporting this idea from the perspective of economics (Tharakan, 2004). One of the important terms of reference of the EMS Namboodiripad led administrative reforms committee formed in 1957 was decentralization of planning and administration to the lower level (Parameswaran, 1999). This report recommended having the panchayat as a basic unit of administration and suggested constituting elected local bodies instead of nominated local bodies. Namboodiripad had a clear political vision of democratic decentralization. In his note to the Ashok Mehta committee in 1978 he wrote, ‘All my faith in democratic decentralization arises from the fact that it helps the working
people in their day-to-day struggle against oppressions and exploitations’ (Namboodiripad in Ashok Mehta committee report, 1978). Namboodiripad had presented the first Panchayat Raj bill in 1958, but the assembly was dissolved by the central government. Several attempts were made by different governments to implement a Panchayat Raj in Kerala, but till 1994 all these attempts were unsuccessful i.e. until the enactment of the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Constitutional Amendment. After the 1995 state assembly elections the Left Democratic Front government came to power which introduced People’s Planning Campaign (PPC) by combining the experiences of KSSP’s programme in Kalliaressy, the PLDP programmes and the political idea of democratic decentralization prominently put forward by EM Sankaran Namboodiripad (Isaac & Franke, 2000; Parameswaran, 1999).

An examination of Kerala’s efforts in decentralization reveals that political parties of the state had not shown much interest in democratic decentralization. Though the argument of low economic growth was later contested, the historical marginality of certain groups from mainstream development and gender discrimination remain as relevant issues to be addressed (Vijayan, 2004, 2007; Tharakan, 2008). We have described the context in which the PPC was introduced. The internal paradoxes of Kerala society in terms of stagnation of productive sectors, gender discrimination, declining quality of education and health service delivery, and the continuing marginality of certain groups from mainstream society altogether made the situation challenging for the existing paradigm of centralized planning (Parameswaran, 1999; Isaac & Franke, 2000). The 73\textsuperscript{rd} and 74\textsuperscript{th} constitutional amendments made it mandatory to introduce and implement measures to have a functional Panchayati Raj, and these constitutional requirements also enabled the institutionalizing and implementation of micro level planning in Kerala. All these led to the emergence of PPC as a programme for democratic decentralization.

2.5.1 People’s Planning Campaign and related institutions

People’s planning campaign was viewed as a dynamic movement for democratic decentralization. The novel objectives of the programme and its mass mobilization strategies were widely appreciated (Heller, 2001; Tornquist, 2001). The uniqueness of the PPC was that it aimed to achieve its objectives by creating appropriate
participatory institutions. These institutions were intended to provide greater opportunities for citizens to participate in decision making, implementation and monitoring of development activities.

Like theoretical assumptions about institutions, the institutions created by the PPC also had a common orientation towards a collective goal i.e., developing a means for local participatory planning through mass mobilization. The PPC was launched to empower elected local bodies by rallying the officials, experts, volunteers and people at large, around them, and through this mobilization overcome the impediments to local planning. At the beginning of PPC, it was expected that planning would be an instrument of social mobilization and the participatory institutions will become a tool for this mobilization (KSPB, 1999; Isaac & Franke, 2000; Isaac, 2001).

It was assumed that institutions will provide a set of rules, norms and values for different actors to follow and will lead to the creation of new social behavior. The educative role of participatory institutions was also emphasized by participatory democratic theories. The PPC had similar theoretical assumptions as well. The campaign intended to generate a democratic civic culture favouring participatory development and grass roots democratic institutions. The PPC intended to bring attitudinal changes among different actors associated with these institutions (KSPB, 1999; Isaac, 2001). The PPC also planned to utilize the favourable tradition of the state in collective mobilization and public action, which were reflected through the presence of numerous class and mass organizations and autonomous civil society organizations. A state and civil society synergy was expected through the higher involvement of class and mass organizations and autonomous civil society organizations, throughout the campaign process (Isaac & Franke, 2000; Isaac 2001; Heller, 2001).

Instead of taking civic culture as historically determined and given (Putnam, 1993), the PPC tried to create a new civic culture through associations and networks of autonomous civil society organizations, and class and mass organizations. The participation of people in actual decision making through various democratic institutions was to be realised through the PPC. In this process special emphasis was given to the hitherto marginalized classes like women, scheduled castes and scheduled
Like the sociological assumptions related to organizations (Eisenstadt, 1968), PPC was also intended to bring about changes in the balance of power in society. The PPC had the key objective of empowering marginalized groups, and ensuring their increased involvement in the mainstream development activities. Deliberative democracy has been brought into the People’s Campaign by providing opportunities for the people to participate in discussions and the decision making process through various institutional systems. The concepts of self-assertion and empowerment have been brought into the PPC process by providing discursive forums for marginalized groups.

Political theorists argued that in order to bring radical changes through the democratic process in society, politically backed movements are necessary (Heller, 2001; Tornquist, 2001, 2005). As with the experience of Porto Alegre (Brazil), the PPC has been presented as a political project started by a cadre based party in Kerala i.e., Communist Party of India (Marxist). This political backing was expected to help energise the functioning of institutions under the PPC. The theoretical view of the reciprocal relations between the functioning of institutions and the cultural system in which they are situated was also taken into consideration.

There is a close relationship between the functioning of the institutions and the practices followed by different actors associated with them. Thus, the actual practice of the different actors related to the institutions created by the PPC has a crucial role in the success of these institutions. The PPC expected certain behavioural patterns from the actors in these institutions in order to attain institutional goals. Certain rules, regulations and informal norms were created by the PPC for better institutional functioning. It was assumed that a collective action from the grass roots will emerge, supporting community goals rather than supporting only individual needs. The principles on the basis of which institutions were created are never fully accepted or accepted to the same degree by all those participating in them. Different interest groups within society will have different attitudes towards the institutions, and these will have a decisive role in their practices. Each group’s engagement in the institutional sphere will depend on its access to power, power differences and other divergent interests. Some groups may also negate the basic norms of the institutional
functioning. The socio-cultural status of individuals and groups has a prominent role in deciding their practices.

2.5.2 Kerala Development Programme: A shift from campaign to institutionalization

The PPC continued till 2001, when the Congress led UDF came to power. After being voted to power they renamed the programme as Kerala Development Programme. What was also sought to be done was to end the campaign approach to decentralization and to institutionalize the system (GOK, 2002, 2004). The element of voluntarism in the campaign was considerably reduced. The practice of having different levels of resource persons was abolished and full time coordinators of Block Level Expert Committee (BLEC) and District Level Expert Committees (DLEC) were sent back to their departments. The number of Task Force members was also substantially reduced. The mandatory women and SC/ST participation in Task Forces was reduced. Beneficiary committees for plan implementation were discouraged.

The basic structure of the programme and funding to institutions of Local Self Governments has not changed. But the mandatory earmarking of funds for state government programmes was increased, and that affected the freedom of the panchayats to formulate their own plans (GOK 2002, 2004). The Tribal sub plan of the panchayats was taken back to a government department. The special schemes under the Modernizing Government Programme (MGP) of Kerala for the strengthening of LSGs were oriented towards a more professional bureaucratic process than the mass oriented strengthening of the decentralization system. Even with these changes, there was still scope for further innovations in local planning. But that did not happen.

The bi-polar nature of politics and the inactivity of voluntary activists in KDP to a great extent affected activities of local governance. The CPI (M) activists and Left oriented civil society organization activists (such as KSSP) were reluctant to have any further involvement in the local planning activities (Tharakan, 2004; Tornquist, 2007). More than whatever other changes that may have taken place, the transformation of decentralization from campaign to institutionalized activity and its impact need to be further considered. The PPC had accepted the campaign strategy
because of the assumption of the pioneers of the campaign that fundamental reforms cannot be implemented only through legislative measures (Isaac & Franke, 2000). A campaign is entirely different from other ways of social mobilization such as projects, programmes, voluntary activism and popular protests. It is normally applied when there is need for a radical change, when lots of new things have to be done within a limited time frame, when a distinct break with the past was necessary in the work culture and when mobilizing of experience and expertise from different sources are necessary (Isaac & Franke, 2000).

The campaign approach to decentralization was adopted by the PPC in the historical context of Kerala which was not generally supportive of democratic decentralization. It was also intended to utilize Kerala’s tradition of public action (Isaac & Franke, 2000). Campaigns depend on volunteers who are willing to lead from the front without any expectation of personal gain. It also depends on an informal and semi-formal system and on the motivation of committed individuals. The momentum created by the campaign was meant to push things along (Isaac & Franke, 2000).

Through these descriptions it is clear that campaigns have a distinct capacity to mobilize people. But the attempts of the Kerala Development Programme to change the nature of the campaign and to reduce the voluntary effort may have affected the decentralization process. The doubt about the sustainability of the campaign mode has been answered by recalling the experience of Cuba. The experience of Cuba shows that the continued mobilization of people through a campaign mode is possible. Cuba has overcome almost unrelenting challenges to their existence through innovative campaign approaches (Tharamangalam, 2007).

2.5.3 Studies on People’s Planning Campaign and Kerala Development Programme

There are several general studies and some case studies on the performance of the PPC. However, very few studies have been conducted on the performance of the KDP. Even though analysis of institutions has been given space in some studies, they are predominantly on technical aspects such as problems in project vetting and implementation.
The PPC had created a momentum in furthering decentralization in Kerala. It also had visible achievements in the construction of infrastructure such as roads, bridges, housing, and in providing water supply and sanitation etc. in rural areas (Jagajeevan & Rajesh, 2005). To a great extent it has demystified the concept of planning and succeeded in evolving a methodology for participatory planning. It succeeded in creating the means and methods for sector allocation, allotting grant-in-aid to local bodies through direct budgetary provisioning, developing networks of woman SHGs, and in creating a large number of people with knowledge (even though limited in some cases) in decentralized planning. Most of the beneficiaries of the PPC have been drawn from the lower social strata. Gram sabhas have also become a forum for the articulation of the needs of downtrodden groups (Chathukulam & John, 2002; Tharakan, 2004; National Planning Commission, 2006).

Whatever the positive outcomes of the PPC, the basic principle of the PPC about state-civil society synergy to vitalize participatory institutions and grassroots democracy has not been demonstrated. Except for the Kerala Sastra Sahithya Parishath (KSSP), the people’s science movement in Kerala, other organizations as a whole were not involved in this process (Tornquist, 2001; Chathukulam & John, 2002; Tharakan, 2004). The expected outcomes of the PPC i.e. the creation of civic culture through the collective action of organizational networks has not materialised. Due to this, institutions created by the PPC were not able to generate mass mobilization in the expected size and form (Heller, 2001).

Political parties in Kerala, especially the parties in the LDF coalition that led the campaign were unable to function in such a way so as to avoid clientelistic politics. The class and mass organizations affiliated to the political parties also turned out to be highly clientelistic in nature, and became the front organizations of political parties rather than autonomous organizations (Heller, 2001; Tharakan, 2004). Agreement among the actors is considered as prerequisite for attaining institutional goals. But there were assorted views among the key actors of PPC, the groups related to PPC at grass root level, and the public at large about even the goals and objectives of the campaign (Gurukkal, 2001; Chathukulam & John, 2002). These may have happened due to the lower emphasis given to the educational role of participatory
Institutions have a key role in nurturing collective interests over diverse group and special interests. But the PPC’s institutional mechanism to a great extent failed in serving this purpose (Tornquist, 2001; Tharakan, 2004). Increasingly fragmented social and political structures became a major hurdle in the creation of aggregated common interests. Kerala society is seen to be getting more fragmented in terms of caste, religious organizations and commercial interests (Tharakan, 2004). This may have restricted the re-politicization of issues and the aggregation of common interests over narrow individual or group interests. Tornquist has observed that there seems a political deficit in Kerala’s decentralization attempts in terms of the re-politicization of issues from below, and in mobilizing people for common interests over divisive individual or group interests (Tornquist, 2007). There is also a growing social and physical separation between the lower middle class, backward class and caste, the poorer groups and between the rich and poor. This growing separation may affect the material base of public action, especially of any movement that works for the poor (Tharakan, 2008). The fragmentation of the public realm and lack of common understanding among different actors might have affected the functioning of participatory institutions evolved through PPC.

In Kerala, where even local body elections take place on the basis of political party identity, the political parties have a prominent role in grassroots democratic institutions. The attempts made by political parties to inculcate the value of new participatory institutions among their core activists and followers at the grass roots level are very important. But observers have indicated that there were no serious attempts by political parties, especially the CPI (M), in this regard. Further, parties did not make any effort to resolve problems generated within the system of local governance, especially the conflicts within the Parliamentary party and Organizational party at the local level (Parameswaran, 2001; Chathukulam & John, 2007). The centralizing nature of the guidelines followed by the PPC for participatory planning through local institutions had become a hindrance to generating creativity at the local level and affected the autonomy of panchayats.
Existing case studies have given insights into the institutional functioning under the PPC phase. However, they focused on the overall performance of PPC rather than on institutions and practices. The structure of institutional functioning as part of local planning, and major findings of these case studies are described below.

2.5.3.1 Gram sabha

Gram sabha is part of an institutional system for the entire country that was made mandatory through the 73rd amendment of the Constitution. The PPC in Kerala innovatively used the statutory institution of gram sabha to make the local planning more effective and participatory. According to the Kerala Panchayati Raj Act 1994, the gram sabha is the assembly of all voters in a ward. Gram sabhas were organized at the ward level because of the larger size and population of Kerala’s grampanchayats as compared to other states. The process of convening gram sabhas was formulated in accordance with the objectives of participatory planning that was launched in the state. They became forums of need identification and prioritisation, as a first step of planning. Group discussions were conducted in gram sabhas on a subject basis.

The lack of sufficient and timely information, and multiple gram sabhas at the same time in the same gram panchayat, were major impediments to people attending gram sabhas. Most of the people viewed the gram sabha as a forum for the distribution of benefits for Below Poverty Line (BPL) families. Middle and upper class participation was very low in gram sabhas (SAHAYI, 2000; Nair, 2000; Thomas, 2006; Planning Commission, 2006). A detailed examination of the working of gram sabhas during the PPC and KDP phases is lacking.

2.5.3.2 Neighbourhood Groups

Neighbourhood groups were formed during the PPC in order to overcome the limitations of large sized gram sabhas in Kerala, and to bring the democratic process to the actual grass roots level (KSPB, 1999). It includes 25-50 households in a locality. The aim was to make panchayat administration and the functioning of gram sabhas more efficient and effective and to make governance more transparent, accountable and participatory. NHGs were formed in 200 panchayats in the PPC phase (Isaac & Franke, 2000). The participation in the NHGs during the initial period of the PPC was very high, but declined later in the PPC phase itself. The higher
involvement of women was visible in these neighbourhood groups (SAHAYI, 2000; Planning Commission, 2006). NHGs also later became forums of clientelistic politics. A study showed that NHG meetings were frequently held in political party offices (Nair, 2000). NHGs became inactive during the KDP phase.

2.5.3.3 Self Help Groups

Women’s Self Help groups (SHGs) were established all over the state during the PPC. In 1998, the state government launched the Kudumbashree programme for poverty alleviation, by forming networks of women SHGs in selected panchayats. In 2002, the Kudumbashree project was expanded to all panchayats in the state, which led to the creation of a dense network of women SHGs. While the PPC initiated the process of setting up women SHGs, the movement was strengthened during the KDP phase.

The studies on the Self Help Groups and women’s component plan in the People’s Planning Campaign indicated that though these two elements were able to mobilize lakhs of women into the micro credit system, they were not able to redefine women’s space in society, or challenge the limits of the patriarchally formed family structure (Devika & Thampy, 2007). The income of most women from the Income Generation Programmes (IGP) related to SHGs are very low (below Rupees 1000 per month), and these activities actually imposed an additional burden on women apart from their familial responsibilities (Devika & Thampy, 2007). Most of the activities undertaken by SHGs and planned under the women’s component plans were actually helping to reaffirm the familial role of women, and placed women as an income earning mother at the centre of the family (Davika & Thampy, 2007; Vijayan, 2007). There were very few schemes and projects under the SHGs and Women’s component plan (WCP) that were innovative in nature and also challenged the patriarchal structure in Kerala (Vijayan, 2007; Eapen, 2007). Only the practical gender needs of women were addressed through these channels, while they omitted the strategic gender needs of women. The Jagratha samithis (vigilance committees) that were formed to respond to violence against women at the panchayat level were for the most part inactive, except in a few panchayats. Most of the panchayats utilized WCP funds for distribution among SHGs without proper planning (Eapen, 2007).
2.5.3.4 Task Forces

Task Forces were formed at Gram, Block and District Panchayats to prepare the plans of the institutions of local government (KSPB, 1999). Separate Task Forces were formed for different subjects by including officials, elected representatives, non-official experts and voluntary activists. During the KDP phase some changes were made in the structure of Task Forces, and they have been renamed as Working Groups. Studies during the PPC emphasized the incapability of Task Forces to frame projects in general, and especially in the productive sector. The non-cooperation of officials was also considered as a major hurdle in their effective performance (Nair, 2000; Planning Commission, 2006).

2.5.3.5 Block and District level expert committees

In order to ensure the technical feasibility, financial viability and procedural acceptability of projects and plans prepared by local bodies and to ensure that these plan documents were prepared in accordance with guidelines and norms of the state planning board, Verifying Technical Committees (VTC) and Plan Appraisal Teams (PAT) were formed (Kerala State Planning Board, 1999). Full time co-coordinators were appointed to coordinate the activities of these committees. Most of the members of the technical committees were voluntary non-official experts. During the KDP phase, however, the names of Block level expert committees and District level expert committees were changed to Block technical advisory committees (BTAC) and District technical advisory committees (DTAC). The post of full time co-coordinators was abolished (GOK, 2003; Isaac, 2005).

It has been argued that expert committee members do not have proper understanding of local specificities, and the spirit of decentralization. These committees have also restricted the autonomy of the panchayats in taking decisions and took an inordinate amount of time to sanction Local Self Government projects (SAHAYI, 2000; Chathukulam & John, 2002; Planning Commission, 2006).

2.5.3.6 Beneficiary Committees

Beneficiary committees (BCs) were formed under the PPC to undertake public works at the village level. Through this means, local community participation was to be
included in plan implementation (KSPB, 1999). Studies indicated that the hostile attitude of officials, official—contractor nexus, lack of technical guidance, lack of local cooperation etc. were the major hurdles in the functioning of Beneficiary Committees. In some places *benami* (surrogate) contractors have undertaken the work in the name of Beneficiary Committees (Nair, 2000; SAHAYI, 2000; Planning Commission, 2006).

During the KDP phase the functioning of the Beneficiary Committees was discouraged. Only semi-official bodies such as Parent Teachers Association (PTA), Hospital Development Committees (HDC) were allowed to take up work as Beneficiary Committees. The upper limit of the amount to which the BC can undertake work was also greatly reduced.

**2.5.3.7 Measures to ensure transparency and accountability**

The institution of ombudsman was created to inquire into malpractices in the panchayats as indicated in the Kerala Panchayati Raj Amendment Act 1999. A social audit mechanism was included in gram sabhas in order to ensure the accountability of Local Self Governments. The provision of the right to information was also included in the Kerala Panchayati Raj Act 1999. Grampanchayats were required to prepare Citizen’s Charter, declaring the services provided through each panchayat. Even though measures such as social audit, citizen’s charter, and provision for the right to information do not come under the narrow definition of institutions, these measures were intended to develop democratic practices that in turn were expected to strengthen the institutions created by the PPC. The public was expected to utilize all these systems to ensure accountability in the governance of local bodies.

The people’s responses to these measures were not encouraging. The number of complaints reaching the ombudsman was very nominal in number (GOK, 2003). The number of ombudsmen was also reduced to one in the KDP, from seven during the PPC, which has also affected their functioning (Isaac, 2005). Moreover, the complicated bureaucratic style of functioning made it difficult for people to approach the ombudsman (Chathukulam & John, 2007). Very few panchayats have taken the initiative to conduct social audits. Citizen’s Charters were prepared by most of the LSGs only in 2004 when it became mandatory for getting funds (Chathukulam &
John, 2007). However, grass roots level studies are not available to indicate how the people have taken these institutions as mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability of governance.

2.6 Summary

The survey of literature started with the analysis of major concepts used in the study. The remaining review of literature was based on the theoretical structure provided by the examination of major concepts. In the review of literature we have traced the historical roots of Kerala development and its development paradoxes. It has suggested that Kerala’s development achievements have historical roots that began in the latter half of the 19th century. It also indicated that the state bears many development paradoxes in the midst of development achievements. The marginalization of certain social groups such as SCs, STs and fisher folk are noticeable in this context. The chapter also described various concepts of decentralization and described Kerala’s experience of decentralization. The chapter has examined studies on Kerala’s decentralization experiences. The review of literature on decentralized planning in Kerala shows that there is a dearth of studies that have considered local planning and grass roots institutions as parts of the larger social structure. Though studies have narrated the dynamics of institutions, most of them failed in analysing institutions by relating them with the dynamics of social fields. This underscored the relevance of a detailed study that can unravel the factors that influence the functioning of local participatory institutions, by relating them with different social fields.