CHAPTER V

LEADERSHIP AT WORK
CHAPTER V

LEADERSHIP AT WORK

- Developmental Role of Kerala Village Panchayats.
- The 11 - point Programme of the Village Panchayats.
- Committee System
- Developmental Programmes Implemented by the Village Panchayats.
- Role Perception by the Non-officials.
- Non-official - Official Interaction
I. Developmental Role of Kerala Village Panchayats

The state is geared to development in socio-economic and political sectors and relies on grass-roots level institutions, to realize this. In a predominantly agrarian economy like ours, solutions to the massive problems of poverty and unemployment, lie in the development of rural areas. Rural development would broadly mean maximizing production in agriculture and allied activities, developing rural industries with emphasis on village and cottage industries, generating maximum possible employment opportunities in rural areas, specially, for the weaker sections of the community (so as to enable them to improve their standard of living), providing basic services like drinking water, communication facilities, health, welfare and education. Panchayats, as grass-roots institutions have a crucial role to play, in realizing this - integrated development of the villages.

Integrated rural development can be defined as a synergistic approach, aiming at total development of the
area and the people, by bringing about necessary institutional changes and by delivering a package of services. This is achieved, through extension methods which reach not only the economic field, i.e., development of agriculture and rural industries, but also help to establish the required special infrastructure and services, in the areas of health and nutrition, education and literacy, basic civic amenities, family planning and the like, with an ultimate objective of improving the quality of life in rural areas.²

Village administration of Kerala received a uniform setup of operation, with the introduction of the Kerala Panchayat Act, 1960, put into operation in 1962. Thirty years have passed with the leadership working at the grass-roots engaged in extending development and strengthening the process of change. Within a uniform set-up, it is the leadership variable which makes the difference. A weak, ineffective leadership would give a poor show, and be content with limited traditional functions, while a dynamic leadership would go in for more vigorous programmes of development. The 11 point programme, offered such opportunity to village level developmental leadership in Kerala.
II. The 11 - Point Programme of the Village Panchayats

The erstwhile L.D.F. government of Kerala, to achieve the all-round development of the villages, proposed an 11-point programme to the village panchayats; government providing technical and financial assistance to panchayats and agencies, involved in rural development. The programme was launched on 23rd July 1988 at Beypore Panchayat of Kozhikode district and it was planned to cover the whole state. The 11-point programme of the State Panchayat Department is comprehensive, covering socio-economic and cultural development of rural area and the people. It touched every vital aspect of rural life, catering basic needs and helping to build infra-structure for continuing developmental activities. It can be detailed as follows.

1. Extension of drinking water facility,
2. Rural electrification,
3. Construction and renovation of village roads,
4. Rural housing programme,
5. Improvement of agriculture, animal husbandry and small scale irrigation,
6. Village industries and industrial training,
7. Education and culture,
8. Welfare of women and children,
9. Health care and family welfare,
10. Modern market facility,
11. Primary living amenities.
1. **Extension of drinking water facility**

   This programme aims to provide drinking water to the remotest areas of a panchayat. The programme is implemented in the panchayats under the guidance and co-operation from the Kerala Water Authority. The following measures are taken under this programme.
   a. renovation of existing public wells, ponds and bunds
   b. Construction of new public wells,
   c. Commissioning of new protected water supply schemes, and
   d. Extension of drinking water facility to the nearby villages from the protected water supply scheme.

2. **Rural Electrification**

   The aim of this programme is that, there should not be a single panchayat ward without electricity. The programme assures adequate power supply and is undertaken with the support of the Kerala State Electricity Board.

3. **Construction and renovation of village roads**

   The growth and progress of a village, very much depend on its roads. As infrastructure facility, roads link the area to the outside world and integrate it with the development that is taking place around. The measures proposed in the 11-point programme are:
a. Widening the existing roads by construction of side drains and culverts,
b. Levelling the existing village roads through metalling and asphalting the surface,
c. Construction of new roads and link-roads,
d. Widening the foot paths, and
e. Construction of foot bridges.

4. Rural housing programme

A good number of people, in rural areas of Kerala are either homeless or living in very pathetic conditions. Rural housing is universally neglected. A recent survey conducted by the State government has identified the people who are staying on unauthorised lands, road sides or on the banks of streams. The survey reveals that, there are nearly 70,000 families in the State, who have encroached the 'puramboke land', covering an area of 13,471 acres. It further says that, eviction has to be done in public interests, from about 6,859 acres, the number of families involved being nearly 45,000. Before clearing these unauthorised settlements, the State government felt it, as their social obligation and moral duty, to help to rehabilitate these people elsewhere. Rural housing programme is, the product of this grave concern which the state administration felt.

The rural housing programme aims at providing to the rural mass, their own houses, by the beginning of the
21st century. With financial support from HUDCO and other Central and State agencies, village panchayats are asked to take initiative in constructing low cost houses. A village panchayat would identify the beneficiaries and also supervise the programme, at various levels of implementation. The main projects which are undertaken in this programme are Indira Avas Yogana and Rajiv One Million Housing Programme.

5. Improvement of agriculture, animal husbandry and small scale irrigation

Majority of the people from rural areas, depend on agriculture and activities from its allied sectors, for their livelihood. Rural development therefore, largely means development of agriculture. This can be achieved by augmenting irrigation facilities, providing technical and financial help to farming activities, and also by providing, proper marketing facilities. People can earn subsidiary income, from rearing cows and milch animals or from activities like bee-keeping. State departments concerned, provide financial and technical assistance to implement these schemes. Departments of Irrigation, Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, thus are implementing the following projects:

a. Introducing low cost irrigation facilities such as renovating irrigation tanks, streams, distribution of
pumps for irrigation purposes,
b. Distribution of seeds, fertilizers and pesticides,
c. Extending financial help for agricultural activities,
d. Extending marketing facilities for farm products,
e. Propagating practices of scientific cultivation among the farmers,
f. Supplying pure breed live-stocks to farmers on subsidised rates.

6. Village industries and industrial training

Modern mechanized production has adversely affected the growth of handi-crafts and the traditional industries of Kerala. At the same time in rural areas, no small scale industries keeping on time, was employing modern technology. This caused large scale unemployment, disturbed the rural fabric and hindered its progress. To overcome this state of affair, Industries department operates a three-pronged action plan as,
a. Rejuvenating traditional rural industries,
b. Establishing small scale industries based on modern technology and
c. Imparting vocational training to the rural youths.

To supervise the above mentioned activities, a body is constituted namely (Kerala Rural Employment and
Welfare Society), on which, all the panchayats of the state are members.

7. Education and Culture

Development is an integrated activity. Economic development therefore, should be combined with social and political development. Thus, the 11 point programme gives special emphasis on educational and cultural development of rural areas through its various programmes.

Under educational development of the village, the programme aims,
a. to establish nursery schools for children between the age of 3 to 5
b. to introduce, educational scholarships for bright students from the panchayat, and
c. to increase the infra-structural facilities of village schools.

For cultural upliftment of rural areas, each panchayat is supposed to open one 'cultural centre'. The centre would provide the following five facilities:
a. One reference library,
b. One reading room,
c. One recreation Kendra (for indoor games),
d. One audio-visual Kendra (for Radio/T.V),
e. One public educational centre (for continuing adult education).

Panchayats are free to make some minor adjustments, in the implementation of these cultural centres. Panchayats with collaboration from the Arts and Sports clubs functioning within the panchayat boundary, can organize Arts festivals and Sports meets to encourage talent and potentialities of village youths.

A healthy generation is an important asset of a nation. Thus, in the 11-point programme, construction of public play grounds assumes importance. This gives opportunity to the rural youth, to develop physique physical culture as it is said, is a culture.

Another important activity under this programme is the construction of open air auditorium for the conduct of public meetings of the panchayat.

8. Welfare of women and children

The programme is implemented through village panchayats, under the guidance of social welfare department and the State Child Welfare Samiti. The panchayat has to look after the functioning of the Aganwadies and Balwadies, which are functioning within
its boundaries. It also is expected to take necessary steps to start 'Day Care Centres' and Creches to help working women of the village. It is the duty of a panchayat to conduct free medical camps with the support from the Health Department and there through arrange for timely vaccinations for children and provide proper medical care for the mother. (Mother and Child Health programme).

9 Health care and family welfare

It is the responsibility of the village panchayat, to take initiative and provide medical facilities, for the prevention and treatment of diseases in rural areas. A panchayat is expected to take leadership in combating epidemics. With support from the Health Department, panchayats are conducting free medical camps for medical examination and treatment. Panchayats spread the message of family planning and enthuse the general public, to adopt the norms set-up by the Family Planning Programme.

10. Modern market facility

Unhygienic market places are one of the important causes of epidemics in rural areas. The 11-point programme therefore aims to construct at least one model
shopping centre in each village panchayat. Also it is the responsibility of the panchayat to maintain the hygienic conditions of slaughter houses and markets.

11. Primary living amenities

This programme, aims to improve common civic amenities in rural areas. The important objective of this programme is to maintain a clean and healthy environment. It is the duty of a panchayat to safe guard purity of drinking water and prevent it from any pollution. The panchayats should take initiative to construct E.S.P slabs for latrines and should handover these freely to the weaker sections of the panchayats. A panchayat should enthuse people to lead a better hygienic life and also look after the general sanitary needs of the village.

The 11-point programme, helps village panchayats as a guide line to plan and implement activities. The state government provides finance for its implementation through the state panchayat department. It is not possible, nor expected that the 11-point programme would cover all areas simultaneously and would be implemented within a short period of time. It has to be implemented step by step. But over a period, by implementing these programmes rural Kerala can hope to achieve economic prosperity and
social transformation - the twin objectives of development.

III. Committee system

Committee system is a structural device for participation. Non-official leadership, elected to the panchayat body, therefore, works through these committees. Subjects decide their importance, constitution their representativeness and leadership style, their effectiveness. Committee mechanism thus provides democratization of the process of development.

The elected body of non-officials, in its first meeting, elects its President and Vice-President. The President would preside over the meetings and the Vice-President, in his absence would perform the duties of the President. Elections to these two posts are based on strict party lines. Though, there is a provision for no-confidence motion, in practice they remain in office, till they enjoy, the confidence of their party bosses, at higher levels.

Committees have the responsibility, to work out programmes and policies, within the purview of the Act. All the ten selected panchayats conducted at least one
sitting in a month, to plan and evaluate developmental activities, pertaining to their respective villages. Majority of the members took genuine interest in the deliberations of the panchayat committees. Only twice in the case of Neelumperoor and once in case of Perumbalam panchayat, committee meetings were postponed for the want of quorum, during 1988-90. In all the other panchayats, the minimum required quorum was always achieved at the time of the panchayat meetings. The following table show the number and nature of the panchayat committee meeting during 1988-90.

Table 5.1 Number of Panchayat Committee Meetings during 1988-90

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Panchayat</th>
<th>Ordinary</th>
<th>Urgent</th>
<th>Meeting adjourned for the want of quorum</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aroor</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punnapra</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chettikulangara</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kartigappally</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venmony</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purakkad</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neelumperoor</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrikkunnapuzha</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ala</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perumbalam</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The agenda of the meeting is generally prepared by the panchayat President and the draft is placed before the panchayat committee (the elected body, acting as the Committee of the House), by the Panchayat Executive Officer. The Panchayat Executive Officer works as the Secretary of the panchayat committee. Each member requests the president to include items, pertaining to his ward and other items regarding the panchayat which he considers important, to be brought to the notice of the panchayat committee. But the President would enjoy, the discretionary power, whether to include one or many of these items in the agenda.

Section 44 of the Panchayat Act, 1960, states that in addition to the comprehensive panchayat committee, village panchayats, can also organize statutory functional committees concerning agriculture, sanitation, communication, public health and education. Such committees consist of both, panchayat members and others, who are interested in public welfare and who are accordingly, nominated by the panchayat.

Not all of these committees were in operation, in the selected village panchayats. Only functional committees on communication, education and agriculture have been working in some village panchayats under the
study. The strength of a functional committee is decided by respective panchayat body. Each member was given the option to choose his own area of interest and was given the opportunity to develop knowledge and expertise in it. For instance, teachers many times, opted for education committee, would undertake their job seriously.

Apart from these committees, panchayats have also constituted works committees for the implementation of the 11-point programme. During the year 1988-89, seven such special committee meetings were held in the Purakkad panchayat and three in Thrikkunnapuzha panchayat for the construction of the 'Cultural Centre' (Item 7 of the 11-point programme). The works committee is constituted by the President, Executive Officer and two non-officials from the panchayat committee. The members of the works committee supervise construction activities of the 'Cultural Centre'.

There was a difference of opinion, about the extent of party influence on the decisions of the panchayat committee - whether party considerations influence decision making and if so, to what extent.

Majority of the non-officials i.e. 51 out of 96 respondents stated that, party considerations influence to some extent, the decisions of panchayat committees.
12 respondents were of the opinion that, panchayat committee decisions are the manifestation of the interests of higher up party organs. Party considerations are mainly coming at the time of identifying beneficiaries, for developmental schemes. It was stated that, Alappuzha Panchayat could not implement its earlier decision on the construction of Public Health Centre and it was mainly due to local political pulls and pressures. In case of Purakkad panchayat, party politics came at the time of naming the cultural centre. Congress (I) members, the leading partner in the U.D.F. proposed to name the Cultural Centre as Jawaharlal Nehru Centenary Cultural Centre to commemorate, the 1989 birth centenary year celebrations of late Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. The proposal was however voted down in the L.D.F dominated Purakkad

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of influence</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence to a great extent</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence to some extent</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not influence</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
panchayat. One member from Punnapra panchayat said that, opposition members of the panchayat were totally denied the opportunity, to participate in development activities of the panchayat. Similarly unwarranted political interference, delayed the inauguration of the Netherlands sponsored, water supply scheme of the Thrikkunnnapuzha panchayat.

Out of 96 respondents, 24 were of the opinion that, party considerations have nothing to do with the decisions of village panchayats. A panchayat committee they feel, in its functioning and performance, should uphold its autonomous status and maintain, the right to think freely and should implement programmes and policies without any fear of its political consequences. Members supporting this opinion, come to 25.00 per cent. It is a minority, but not an insignificant minority.

However, there seems to be a general feeling that panchayat decisions should be free from higher level politics. Replying to the question, "Do youu favour political interference in the panchayat administration"? (Appendix A.Q.3:10), 63 respondents i.e., 65.63 per cent, categorically stated that, panchayat committees should be free from party politics. After getting elected to the panchayat committee, they must and need to show broader
vision and commitment for the growth and development of the village as a unit. Excessive political influence in panchayat committee, would obviously hamper the development of the village and affect the autonomy of these institutions. Therefore, majority were in favour of keeping this grass-roots institution, free from political interference. They maintained the view that, political considerations should not come in the way of panchayats development. The following table shows the opinion of the non-officials regarding political interference in panchayat committee deliberations.

Table 5.3: Preference of Political Parties Influence in Panchayat Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preference</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>65.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Member participation varies from individual member to members. Partly it is a personal equation and in part, influenced by the group to which he would belong.
Table 5.4: Leader Participation in the Panchayat Committees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nature of participation</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mainly committed to the development of his own ward</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>43.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving priority to party considerations</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operative</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>36.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above figures make it clear that, 43.75 per cent of the respondents, viewed participation of the non-officials, as the effort to maximize benefits for their own wards (and that with an intention to get re-elected). At the same time, 36.45 per cent, viewed panchayat activity as a group activity, which needs adequate co-operation and support and felt that, members tried to uphold this spirit, while participating in the committee deliberations. Eight respondents were of the opinion that, members participation in panchayat committee meetings, is guided and directed by external political strings. Only two respondents said that,
non-officials maintain indifferent attitude in the panchayat committee. Another two on the other hand, were of the opinion that, non-officials are enthusiastic in the committee deliberations.

Even with high level of female literacy, women participation in panchayat committees is very poor. In most of the panchayat committees they were silent spectators. This may be because of the influence of tradition and the male-dominance in Kerala. Some non-officials remarked that, "women do not want to be involved in panchayat work" or 'cannot' because of their household responsibilities and our traditions do not allow women to come out in the open".

Effective member participation make committee system meaningful. As such, ways must be found to increase member participation. The non-officials have suggested certain measures to improve member participation, in the panchayat committees. These can be listed as under:

(a) Adequate powers should be devolved on these bodies so as to make them function meaningfully.

(b) Members should be given proper training, regarding the Panchayat Act and various administrative procedures.
(c) Members should develop a participative culture through mutual respect and co-operation.

(d) Political interference should be avoided to the maximum extent possible.

(e) Decisions should be taken only after adequate discussion. All should get equal opportunity to express their opinions.

(f) Agenda of the meeting should be circulated much in advance. This would give members, sufficient time to study the items and in turn, to improve their participation.

(g) The President of Panchayat Committee should make special efforts to enthuse women members to participate.

(h) Panchayat members should develop a broader perspective for the integrated development of the village panchayat and for this, they should come out of their narrow commitment to their election wards.

IV Developmental Programmes Implemented by the Village Panchayats

The role of Panchayats in development of villages, needs no elucidation. Village panchayats, the only democratic body at the grass-roots, have to cope up with the rising expectations of the people. The elected representatives feel morally responsible for realizing
these expectations as they would take the office as panchayat members. Within the frame of the ambitious 11 point programme, diversified developmental activities were undertaken. A brief resume of such activities undertaken by the ten select village panchayats during 1988-92 would being out a clear picture of the scope, thrust and extent of development. The following were the broad areas of work.

a. Construction and maintenance of village roads.
b. Rural electrification and extension of connections to harijan colonies/settlements,
c. Augmenting water supply schemes and construction of minor irrigation projects, for the development of agriculture.
d. Supervisory role in housing schemes for the weaker sections.
e. Construction of shopping centres, public markets and renewal of old markets.
f. Distribution of E.S.P. slabs for latrines.
g. Organizing free medical camps.
h. Enhancing rural literacy.

a. Village Roads

Construction of village roads improves communication and transport facilities for the villagers. It helps farmers, to bring agricultural products to the village
markets and take seeds and fertilizers to their farms. All the panchayats invariably earmark a fixed amount in their annual budgets, for the construction of new roads and for the maintenance of old ones, by constructing culverts and by providing temporary drainage facilities during rainy seasons. In the year 1990-91, the Thrikkunnappuzha panchayat received Rs.12,00,000 from the State Government, for the construction of Thrikkunnappuzha - Valiyazheekal road. During the tenure of the present body, the Punnapra panchayat has undertaken the construction of a road linking to Karuthamandum harijan colony. The Perumbalam panchayat also has provided Rs.1,00,000 for the renovation of the Vathikkad-Arayankulangara road and Rs.45,000 for the construction of a foot-path to the Erappuzha harijan colony. Voluntary associations like the village youth clubs and Balajana Sakyams are associated with these activities undertaken at local levels.

b. Rural Electrification

Kerala rightly can be considered as a state, where power has reached the remotest areas. Extending electricity to rural areas is one of the major public services, which the village panchayats have been performing. Electricity charges have been a major item of expenditure out of panchayat's revenue receipts. In the
year 1990-91, the Karthigappally and Thrikkunnapuzha panchayats budgeted Rs.1,20,000 and Rs.1,50,000 respectively for the extension of street lights, in panchayat areas. In another three panchayats, the programme named 'Kutil Jyothi' was implemented by providing 2 point (cost Rs.300) connection, free of cost to the selected beneficiaries belonging to the under privileged sections of the society. It has been a major achievement with social dimension. Under this scheme, Venmony and Ala panchayats spent Rs.50,100 and Rs.50,000 each and 167 and 166 Harijan families respectively received the benefit. Remote areas of the panchayats were covered by providing new electricity connections.

c. Water Supply and Irrigation

Seven, out of the ten panchayats, selected for the study, were having their own protected drinking water supply schemes. Drinking water was distributed through pipe lines and extending this facility to the remotest areas, was given priority by the panchayat committees. The Ala and Venmony panchayats collectively decided, to launch a drinking water supply scheme, with financial help from the State Water Authority. With technical and financial assistance from the Dutch Government, Thrikkunnapuzha panchayat implemented its water supply scheme. Even with this, drinking water still remains an acute problem in most
parts of the panchayat. Its proximity to sea, causes salinity problem. As such to fetch pure drinking water, the residents of Lakshmithop ward of Thrikkunnnapuzha panchayat have to walk 5 to 6 kms. Under the J.R.Y Programme, the state government has implemented a scheme called 'Million Well Scheme'. The target group was small and marginal farmers amongst the schedule castes and scheduled tribes and freed bonded labourers, below poverty line and listed in the I.R.D.P. survey register of the village. If sufficient number of beneficiaries are not available from the I.R.D.P beneficiary list, other SC/ST families living below the poverty line are also considered under the 'Million Well Scheme'. During severe drought, panchayat would play an important role to overcome the situation. For e.g. the government entrusts with a panchayat, the responsibility of providing drinking water to the drought affected areas and settlements. Panchayats perform this task by putting in service tankers for distributing water.

The economy of Kerala, is mainly based on the growth of the agricultural sector. Agricultural growth in turn depends to a large extent, on the proper utilization of available water resources. The village panchayat Neelumperor under the study, implemented a lift-irrigation scheme, collecting water from the nearby river and distributing it through small canals to agricultural
fields. The Venmony panchayat spent Rs.2 lakhs for the construction of a pump house at Chamacavu and renovation of its irrigation canals. In the year 1990-91, for the maintenance of the minor irrigation projects Karthigapally and Ala panchayats budgeted Rs.2,00,000 and Rs.1,00,000 respectively.

d. Housing

The panchayats of Kerala have the credit of implementing the state sponsored massive housing scheme called 'One Lakh Housing Programme' or 'Laksham Veedu Padhathi'. The programme was intended to provide permanent houses to landless agricultural workers. Each panchayat was entrusted with the responsibility of constructing 100 houses and allocating these to the beneficiaries. The main centre of activity of this massive housing programme, was identified as the local panchayat. The major responsibility for pushing the scheme to completion was entrusted with popular committees, chaired by the concerned panchayat Presidents and composed of representatives of political parties, trade unions, students and social and voluntary organizations. The scheme has all the character of a mass movement with active participation of the people, and at all levels.

Each house has a total area of 25 sq.feet and consists of 2 rooms, a kitchen and a small verandha. Houses are
built back to back, separated from each other by a common central wall - this is saving in construction cost. The twin houses are situated in plots of about 8 cents of land each on an average, there are 20 houses, in one acre with 20 cents of land reserved to accommodate common amenities. The houses under the scheme is given as a permanent and non-transferable possession. All the panchayats under study, were having 3 to 5 (Laksham Veedu Colonies). It is creditable that village panchayats have taken upon themselves, the task to provide basic needs to these people such as drinking water facilities, approach roads, electricity and other civic amenities.

In the year 1990-91, five panchayats, selected for the study, have allocated the full amount they received under the Special Component Plan (S.C.P) for the construction of permanent houses for harijans. Each of the panchayat, Thrikkunnapuzha, Karthigapally, Punnapra, Purakkad and Perumbalam constructed five houses (each houses costing Rs.10,000). The panchayat committee selected the beneficiaries under this scheme.

The village panchayats of Kerala are expected to play a significant role in the newly designed 'Rajiv One Million Housing Scheme' for the weaker sections. The renovation of houses, constructed under 'One Lakh Housing programme' and improving sanitary facilities are covered by the 'Rajiv One
Million Housing Scheme'. The supervisory role, in identification of the beneficiaries and construction of houses under the 'Indira Avas Yojana' and 'Rajiv One Million Housing Scheme' is entrusted with the village panchayat.

e. Public Facilities

Construction of shopping complexes and new markets is presently the urgent need of these growing villages. Such permanent investments, would also improve, financial position of village panchayats in general and would provide, good public facilities, even at the village level. Punnapra panchayat has received a long term loan, from the 'Rural Development Board' and has constructed a lodge-cum-shopping complex, in the heart of the village. It provides temporary accommodation to people who come from a long distance and have work in the village. It also helps people in establishing small scale business units in the village. The Aroor and Purakkad panchayats are having a plan to construct 'Yathri Nivas' in their panchayat areas. The National High Way No.47 is passing through these panchayats. Such permanent constructions therefore become remunerative and help vilalge panchayats to improve their financial position. The Thrikkunnappuzha, Chettikulangara and Aroor panchayats have shown genuine interest, in the renovation of old markets and also constructing new ones in
their village. It is worth mentioning that during the tenure of the present body, Aroor panchayat, in the year 1990-91 spent Rs.70,000 for the construction of a panchayat fish market.

g. Health Care

Kerala stands first, among the states, in providing maximum facilities for health care, with the result, that the infant mortality rate has come down and the span of life expectancy, gone up. In accordance with the programme
'Health for All by 2000 A.D', more facilities are being provided under health care. The following table shows positive indicators of the health profile of the state.

Table 5.5: Important Health Parameters of Kerala

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Kerala</th>
<th>India</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth rate</td>
<td>22.40</td>
<td>33.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death rate</td>
<td>6.20</td>
<td>11.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality rate</td>
<td>27.00</td>
<td>96.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal mortality rate</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>3.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>67.00</td>
<td>55.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>54.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple protection rate</td>
<td>52.60</td>
<td>37.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The above mentioned figures show that in health and family welfare field, Kerala rates above the Indian average and enjoys a position, equal with the Western developed countries. This is mainly due to general health consciousness of the people, even in rural areas. Village panchayats play an important role in enthusing people, to take proper health care. In this regard, panchayats have organized free medical camps in rural areas. High level literacy has also contributed to the success of health programmes.
h. Rural Literacy

The village panchayats of Kerala have played a significant role, in the massive literacy programme, to achieve the target of hundred per cent literacy, for the state. It was the panchayat leadership of the state which was mainly instrumental in realizing this monumental task (refer Chapter VI Literacy Programme p.p 275-280).

The non-official leadership from village panchayat has worked in and out to make these programmes a success. They have performed varied roles sometimes a coordinator at another time a guide and a friend. Due to this multiple role the non-official leadership was able to mobilize, the potential resources; material and human for the realization of the programmes of development. They chalked out the needs of their wards, through interaction with them. They pleaded their case, before the members of the panchayat committees, convinced them about the urgency of the project and in the end successfully secured funds, for their completion. Their role was legitimated to the extent, they lived upto the expectations of the people.

V. Role Perception by the Non-officials

If leadership function is translated into the success/failure of a scheme, the way in which non-officials look at
their role, becomes relevant. The respondents had different priority conceptions, as they played the leadership role (Appendix A.Q.4.2).

Table 5.6 Role of Leadership in Implementing Developmental Programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of leadership</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locate the schemes in the ward</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting as a co-ordinator</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>51.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improving popular participation</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Majority of the respondents, i.e. 51.04 per cent regarded their role, as co-ordinators in the implementation of development programmes. As a respectable and influential person at the local level, a non-official leader can easily keep himself in touch with the programme operated by different agencies, at different levels and coordinate these into a single whole by weeding out differences. Thus, in case of acquisition of land for the purpose of constructing village road, the non-official leadership in Chettikulangara panchayat intervened in its official capacity and convinced the disputing parties, to arrive at an amicable solution. Such instances are many and were also
reported from other panchayats selected for the study.

37.50 per cent of the leaders, considered their main role as that of locating development schemes for their ward and to successfully including these, in the agenda of the development programme of their panchayat. 11.46 per cent of the leaders said that their main function is to enthuse people and make them participate in development activities.

In case of resource mobilization too the non-officials can take active part. Through their resourcefulness and capabilities they can convince people, about the urgency of a particular development programme and can enlist their cooperation, either in terms of money or in the form of manual labour (Shramdan). The non-official leaders have taken initiative in the 11 point programme by formulating ward committees so as to generate resources and mobilize human efforts.

However available resources do not match with its onerous duty list. This affects the implementation of programmes within the stipulated time schedule. Frequently panchayats are forced to seek financial help from the state government. This leads to dependency and delay in securing financial support and ultimately dampens the enthusiasm of the non-official to embark on new developmental projects.
Official bottlenecks and lengthy administrative procedures also add to the delay. Local contractors find it difficult to take up new construction works, unless bills for earlier works are finalised. For instance, at Karthigapally panchayat, one non-official leader had to approach the government department thrice, to pursue finalisation of the contractor's bill. This experience forced him to say that "The bureaucracy at the state level is maintaining an enemical attitude, towards panchayat administration and if this attitude continues, our eagerness to pursue developmental works at the lower level, would be weakened and this would finally end in an attitude of apathy, towards these institution". Even if, this appears to be an extreme reaction, it shows the thinking of local leaders.

Political pressures at lower level of democracy are more severe than those at the higher state/centre levels of administration. Political interference from outside, seriously affects development programmes. For instance the inauguration of the Thrikkunnapuzha panchayat Water Supply Scheme was much delayed mainly due to political pulls and pressures.

During discussions with the non-official respondents, it was felt that the leadership has yet to develop a broader perspective. It has been mainly guided by narrow
interests of their own wards. In the long run this tendency will hamper development at the panchayat level. However, some leaders justified their stand and felt that, priority to the wards would be very obvious and necessary and would not affect the development of the village, in the long run.

VI. Non-official - Official Interaction

Parallel to the non-official body, there is an official hierarchy, at all the levels of panchayat administration. Together, they form a team. The executive authority, at the panchayat level, is vested in the Panchayat Executive Officer. But the success of panchayat administration, depends to a great extent on the team spirit, on reciprocal realization of the proper role of each other. The non-officials and officials have to act as 'partners in development' and where this partnership fails, complications arise. Because non-official leadership and official guidance are together essential for the smooth and efficient functioning of these grass-roots institutions.

Unlike the state/central levels, the relationship between non-officials and officials, at panchayat level, is face-to-face, direct and open. This in practice, puts the officials at difficulty when they endeavour to maintain good and cordial relationship, with the non-officials and
still remain within the rules, established procedures, and working practices in administrative business.

The problem basically, is one of human relationship and of the attitude. Both, the non-officials and officials have different backgrounds, social as well as educational and different interests political and career concerns. The non-officials are the 'sons of the soil' and are primarily concerned with immediate solutions of specific problems of their areas/constituencies. They are often concerned with personal or party gains and operate in an atmosphere of pulls and pressures. The officials are trained to observe rules and regulations, and follow procedures - the violation of which, may put them in difficulties. when people from diverse backgrounds and varying interests are put to function together, tensions and conflicts become obvious and inevitable. Many times, 'Government by procedure' comes into conflict with 'Government for benefits'. The problem which generally arises, while these people are at work, may be personal but the friction generated or tensions built, are likely to affect individual or group relationship and through it, the developmental work of entire body.

Thus, close and friendly relations between the non-officials and officials, are of great significance, in panchayat administration. The progress, in the
implementation of the extensive developmental programmes undertaken by these bodies, largely depends, on the positive understanding between the two. To realize this, both the sides should make valuable and reasonable adjustments without sacrificing, the vital principles in the discharge of their duties.

When they are working with a team-spirit, developmental activities are realized, to their fullest extent possible. For this, firstly, they should understand each other's role expectations. This understanding, can make them aware of the limitations and capabilities of either. Secondly, officials have to accept, non-official leadership, in panchayat institutions, in 'letter and spirit'. Thirdly, non-officials have to accept officials as an important component in the machinery of decentralized democracy. Non-officials have to realize that, without proper co-operation from the officials, development targets would not be accomplished. When this is realized panchayat administration, runs smoothly and harmoniously towards its pre-determined goals.

The non-official-official relations can be strengthened if the following conditions are fulfilled:

1. Panchayat service should be able to attract men of high calibre. For this, they should be provided with decent salaries and protected by prospects of promotions, comparable with similar services, in the state.
2. Staff morale should be inculcated by upholding three cardinal qualities viz., integrity, impartiality and objectivity.

3. Panchayat staff should develop a sense of loyalty to these local level democratic bodies.

4. Both, the non-officials and officials, should maintain mutual respect towards each other.

5. Proper training and orientation should be arranged for both, the non-officials and officials. Leadership is an art and like any art, it can be better learnt, by providing a proper module of training. Training programme should develop a proper perspective in the minds of both about the panchayat institutions as 'the terra firma' of the edifice of democracy, in the country.

The non-official-official relationship provides a frame within which organizations behaves. It is their interaction, close and friendly and harmonious that will ensure success for the host of activities which collectively contribute to development.
References


