CHAPTER VI

PARTICIPATIVE DEVELOPMENT
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- Salience of Popular Participation.
- Participatory Organizations at Local Level.
- Panchayati Raj Institutions and Popular Participation.
- Popular Participation and Development.
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CHAPTER VI

PARTICIPATIVE DEVELOPMENT

I. Salience of Popular Participation

Popular participation in development has achieved great significance in recent years. The United Nations Economic and Social Council has recommended that, government should adopt popular participation, as a basic policy measure, in national development strategy and encourage, the widest possible active participation, of all individuals and national non-governmental organizations, such as trade unions, youth and women's organizations, towards development, in setting goals, formulating policies and implementing plans. Development of a country cannot be left to its government alone, it is to be routed through, a network of institutions, both governmental and voluntary, if people's participation is to be evoked. Thus, one can rightly say that popular participation is the back bone of, the theory and practice of development in any country.

The term participation is viewed generally, as the involvement of a significant number of persons in
situations or actions, which enhance their well-being e.g. their income, security or self-esteem. R.C.Baetz states, that participation in development, means how community members can be assured, the opportunity of contributing, to the creation of community's goods and services. UNESCO, in one of its documents, defined participation as "collective sustained activity for the purpose of achieving some common objectives, especially a more equitable distribution of the benefits of development". Thus, participation is regarded as a strategy. It is a means, a measure and the end is development - creation of community assets, enhancement of community esteem and a more socially desirable distribution of these benefits, by improving the development process. It is through collective and continuous efforts by the people, that improvements in their living conditions are realized.

Popular participation means involvement of the people in the development process, voluntary and willingly. Such participation cannot be coerced. Broadly participation may be identified as of the four different kinds.

i. Participation in decision making;

ii. Participation in the implementation of development programme and projects;
iii. Participation in monitoring and evaluating development programmes and projects; and

iv. Participation in sharing the benefits of development.

These together may be considered as a continuous cycle of participatory activities, in the context of planning and development.

Participation, in its real and practical sense, has two equally important aspects - contributive and distributive. The extent of participation would depend, on how much chance, one would get to influence the decision-making process. It would equally depend, on how much one would get, in the end, out of the collective social efforts. Participation is both. It is not only sharing the fruits of development, but it also means, contributing to the process of development, at every stage, from planning to evaluation through implementation and monitoring. Participation not only improves the product its quality and quantity, it improves the process too makes it effective and efficient. The virtues do not stop with the product. They enter the fabric of the actor. The goal of development thus, is not to develop things but to develop the man behind the things.

The real purpose of participation, is to develop human capabilities for development, decision making and
action. It visualises a kind of local autonomy, in which, people discover the possibilities of exercising choice and thereby becoming capable of managing their own development.8

Popular participation becomes crucial, more at local levels. It is considered as an important variable in local development. Not only, a small face to face community needs it. Here, it is more obvious, more natural, more unreserved and aboveall more communitarian.

i. To take note of the felt needs of the people;
ii. To mobilize local resources, for plan implementation including popular labour;
iii. To minimize conflict, during planning and implementation stages;
iv. To increase speed of implementation, by securing co-operation of the people;
v. To improve the legitimacy of authority; and
vi. To minimize popular resistance to decisions.

People's participation at local level is also necessary to reduce, unequal distribution of power in the rural areas. Participation at the local level would therefore, help in bringing about, a redistribution of both - control of resources and of power in favour of the rural poor. Unless, participation of general masses is ensured and encouraged at every level of our politico-administrative system, we cannot think of real
II Participatory Organizations at Local level:

Organizations that seek involvement of the poor, in programmes designed to improve their conditions have now sprung up, in many 'Third World Countries.' Uphoff and Easman have identified six functions for such local organizations. These are as follows:

i. Planning and goal setting;
ii. Resource mobilization;
iii. Provision of services;
iv. Integration of services;
v. Control of administration; and
vi. Aggregating and articulating claims of local people.

Based on the studied of rural organizations, in the Afro-Asian countries, the report of the Food and Agriculture Organization (F.A.O), classifies rural organizations into two broad categories viz. (1) Standard Organizations and (ii) Participatory Organizations. The standard organizations are generally set up, by the government to elicit participation of the people, in its development programme. Panchayati Raj institutions of India, fall under this category.

The second category includes organizations that arise primarily, from the initiatives of the people
themselves. Mutual aid societies, worker's association etc. are the organizations that fall under this broad category. The common name for such organizations is 'Non-Governmental Organizations' (NGOs). These are also referred to, as participatory rural/urban organizations or voluntary organizations.

The following table lists organizations, both the standard and participatory kinds, which commonly exist in rural areas of the Third World Countries.

Table 6.1 Standard and Participatory Rural Organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Organizations</th>
<th>Participatory Organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Co-operatives</td>
<td>1. Special organizations of rural disadvantaged groups, such as tenant's associations and organizations of agricultural labourers and landless workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Village development Committees</td>
<td>2. Village based adhoc organizations formed for a specific and immediate local need</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Government sponsored farmer's organizations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Trade Unions</td>
<td>3. Village welfare associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Women's Organizations</td>
<td>4. Village funeral societies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Youth Clubs</td>
<td>5. Kinship associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Political Party Branches</td>
<td>6. Caste associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Other voluntary organizations represented by the government</td>
<td>7. Irrigation associations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

contd..
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Rotating credit associations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Religious associations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The main characteristics of these organizations can be described as follows:

**Standard Organizations**

1. These are funded and sponsored by an outside, mostly government agency. Adopt a 'top-bottom' approach to development for the people, rather than a 'bottom-top' approach. The idea is, that benefits will 'trickle-down' from above.

2. These are more formal and official.

3. Their set-up often, is inspired by alien concepts, principles and policies, frequently imported from abroad.

4. These are mostly elite-oriented and or elite-dominated, with the result, that the elite benefit more than others.
Participatory Organizations

1. These are started by the people themselves and not by the government or any other outside agency.

2. These are more informal and unofficial, in organization and working.

3. These are therefore, flexible in objectives and in set-up.

4. Their leaders and members are mainly, the poor who reach decision, in face-to-face relationships (The term 'group' or 'grouping' is often, more appropriate than the term 'organization').

5. Their activities are related to the day-to-day situation and needs of the rural poor. The latter, understandably, are more attracted to join and participate actively, in these groups than the official ones.

Many governments in the Third World Countries, have attempted to introduce new organizational structures at the grass-roots level, to stimulate participation of the people, in local development activities. The Panchayati Raj Institutions of India, aim in a similar way to involve people in decisions, about government-initiated programmes, to facilitate the implementation of development projects and inculcate democratic values among the people.13
III. Panchayati Raj Institutions and Popular Participation

India, after attaining independence, decided to follow democracy, as a form of government. The founding fathers, of the newly emerged nation, were of the opinion that democracy based on wide spread popular participation only, would bring the desired results of development programmes and thereby bring much desired and much more awaited social transformation. Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation, said that, "In a true democracy of India, the unit is the village. Even if, one village wants Panchayati Raj, which is called republic in English, no one can stop it. True democracy, cannot be worked by twenty men sitting at the centre. It has to be worked from below by the people."  

In democracy, people are sovereign and therefore a democratic organization as well as the distribution of power, should be from the base upwards. The Gram Sabha of a village, the foundational unit of democracy, should determine the process of administration and development. In this way, true democracy can be nourished.

The success of democracy and of planned developmental activities, depends on the active participation of the people. To enhance the level of participation, successive governments have introduced, various measures
and enacted legislations to involve people, in planning and decision making. Pt. Nehru rightly observed that, "No great change can be brought about, merely by governmental functioning, although that is important and we aim at great changes. Therefore, it is necessary that, community schemes should be based on the intimate co-operation of the people". You cannot force a change. It should come up through mutual discussions and persuasions. This is the essence of democracy.

Popular involvement is the crux of planned development. Emphasising its needs, the First Five Year Plan stated that, "While on the subject of organization, it is necessary to stress the importance of ensuring, right from the start, peoples participation, not merely in the execution of the Community Development Projects, but also in its planning. This fact is, the very essence of the programme." But the Community Development Programme, launched in 1952, failed in sustaining popular participation. The Balwantrai Mehta Committee, in its observation found that, popular initiative was one of the least successful aspects of the Community Development Programme. Development of a Community can only take place, when the community understands its problems, realizes its responsibilities, exercises necessary powers through the
representatives, close to the community and maintains a constant and intelligent vigilance on the local administration. The report further stated that, in the Indian context, rural development was possible only by local initiative and rural discretion. Panchayati Raj, therefore gave a new outlook to rural development, with popular participation, as an important variable in the process.

Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, in his speech at the inauguration of Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan, on October 2nd, 1959, said that, "the responsibilities of administration should not be only in the hands of big officials but should be divided among our 400 million people." The implementation of this scheme was hailed by prominent persons, from the country. To Jayaprakash Narayan, it was a matter of great satisfaction that, a beginning was made, in laying the foundation of a participative democracy, in the shape of Panchayati Raj. Shri S.K. Dey observed that, "the people of India, would govern themselves through their representatives, in institutions from the Panchayat to Parliament and thus democracy would travel from Lok Sabha to Gram Sabha." Thus, by the introduction of Panchayati Raj bodies, people from rural India are asked to undertake, the responsibilities to govern themselves and it is felt, that Panchayati Raj would enthuse rural masses and evoke popular participation in the required measure.
Democracy at national level cannot succeed well, without democracy at grass-roots level or else, it would begin and end, at the national or state level and never percolate down to the smaller community – units of the society. Realising this, Nehru opined that, democracy is not to be equated merely, with the Parliament or State Legislature. It is something, which should excite every person and train him to take his proper place. Sadiqu Ali Committee Report on Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan, emphasises the same aspect and states that, if political participation is a 'sine-qua-non' for development, there is no alternative but to revive Panchayati Raj, more effectively. It was realized that, restructuring democratic process and channelling it downwards, would give real power to the people - 'Power to the People' is the ultimate goal of democracy.

IV. Popular Participation and Development

In a sense, it can be said, that popular participation is the end and community development is a means. When people participate in all aspects of the development process, namely participation in decision making regarding development projects/activities, participation in implementation of development programmes, participation in monitoring and evaluating these programmes and finally participation in sharing the
benefits of development, the real objective of development is realized. Such a participation, cannot be imposed on people, 'from above'. But it should come 'from below' and be based on a voluntary will, of the people themselves.

Popular participation in developmental activities, will legitimize the process of development. If people are associated with these activities, they are in a better position to understand the capabilities of the institution and to work collectively, for its improvement. For example, if people become conscious and think that, an approach road in their village panchayat, would add to transport and communication facilities in a positive way, they then, would be ready to render all sort of support, either in terms of money or through popular participation i.e. Shramdan or both. Because, such an activity, they know, comes very close to their real community needs. Thus, popular participation can help to vitalize the development process. Paul Appleby rightly observed that, citizens co-operation and participation, in welfare and development programmes, is helpful to maintain the solidarity and rapid progress of a nation. 25

Popular participation thus, is indispensable for realizing development. While becoming conscious of the
fruits of development, rural masses would now come forward, to extend help for the realization of development. All the non-official respondents, were in general agreement, that it was only through strengthening these grass-roots bodies, democracy in this sub-continent would widen its base, meaning and scope. Respondents were aware of the salience of popular participation, in the context of development and very affirmatively stated that, it was through popular participation that people could improve their social and economic status. (Appendix A.Q.7.1).

Here arises the utility of village panchayats. The respondents felt, that through proper functioning of these bodies, rural masses would take active role, in nation building activities. A large number of non-officials thought that, popular participation could be effectively linked with developmental schemes, provided there is a committed leadership at the grass-roots level to enthuse the people and to sustain their enthusiasm in this process. (Appendix A.Q.7.2).

There was a difference of opinion regarding their attitude towards panchayat administration. The respondents were asked to 'state the peoples' attitude towards panchayat administration'. (Appendix A.Q.7.4) Their responses read as follows:
Table 6.2: People's Attitude Towards Panchayat Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People's Attitude</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apathetic</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operative</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>58.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enthusiastic</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

58.33 per cent of the non-officials said that, people from rural areas were very co-operative in the day to day administration of panchayats. This was reflected in hundred per cent tax collection of the six panchayats under study, during the 1988-89 financial year. 15 respondents were of the opinion that, rural masses were enthusiastic to render their support to development activities of the panchayat. Together, they form 73.96 per cent of the respondents. Only 13 respondents opined that, 'the people are apathetic towards panchayat administration'.

However, the non-officials were not much optimistic about the feasibility of holding 'Gram Sabha' (Appendix A.Q.7.9).
Table 6.3: Feasibility of Holding Gram Sabha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feasibility of holding Gram Sabha</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>32.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>54.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32.30 per cent of the non-official leaders, were very much in favour of the idea of constituting 'Gram Sabha' meetings. They strongly believe that through direct participation in village administration, they can change their socio-economic plight. But 54.16 per cent of the respondents questioned operational feasibility of conducting Gram Sabha meetings. They said that, conducting a Gram Sabha would lack quorum, as it happens elsewhere. If there be a quorum, considering the size of village panchayats in Kerala, and the general high level of literacy in the state, it would be unwieldy and would lead to confusion and mobocracy. (The argument may read unsound. But Kerala panchayats are populous, on average 20,000 population. Also they have alternative suggestion of ward committees in action). The alternative would be ward committees, to direct development works, mobilize resources and encourage popular participation. In Kerala, wards in which a village panchayat is divided, on an average constitute 1000 to 2200 voters. Thus, constituting
ward-committees would be feasible, in Kerala village panchayats. These would be manageable and effective too.

One respondent suggested, that instead of Gram Sabha, village panchayats should take necessary steps to constitute Village Development Councils, following the same guidelines as in operation, while constituting the Block Development Council and the District Development Council. The Village Development Council can provide wider representation, to all the local interests viz., social, economic, political cultural etc. They can pick up real needs of the villagers for necessary action. If the panchayats and these non-statutory bodies function in a cordial way; rural areas can achieve rapid development and can change its face too.

V. Constraints on Popular Participation

The obstacles which generally come in the way of popular participation are primarily socio-cultural, which are called internal constraints. The other which are external to the individual are called external constraints.\(^{26}\)

i. Internal constraints

The deep rooted attitude of fatalism among village people, hinders participatory process. There is a general
attitude of helplessness and indifference, towards defaults of these bodies. They lack confidence, in the capacities of these bodies, to tackle the problems which they face. The general complaint is that, the management of local affairs is very much dominated by, group and party politics. Thus, the image of these bodies in the minds of the rural masses, is that of inefficiency, mal-administration, delay and corruption. This situation creates indifference towards the affairs of panchayat administration. The apathy and indifference of the residents of rural areas are largely due to the absence of a sense of belonging to the community.

Another important factor which restricts participation of the rural masses is their low level of awareness. Governmental assistance seems irrelevant, because many people are simply unaware of public services, which exist for them, right in their own villages. The lack of awareness among the people, that the institution of local government is meant to serve their own interests and needs that any failure or shortcomings, in its working, would adversely affect them.

ii. External Constraints

The major external constraint on participation is the bureaucracy itself. Bureaucrats seriously come to believe that they alone have answers to all the problems of rural
poor and that they are the chosen ones, who have a right to this knowledge. In their scheme of things, the only role people can and should play is that of a recipient of the delivery system. This bureaucratic paternalism, turns rural masses into passive recipients of governmental services.29

In an hierarchical and highly centralized character of bureaucracy, the higher level administrators, begin to maintain more and more distance from the lower level officials in the field. This situation does not allow field staff any discretionary power to act. Their inability to act, when the local situation demands that certain things be done promptly, discourages people to comeforth. Rather than getting into trouble, through their act, the field staff prefer to sit back and await orders from above. Often, it is safer not to act than to act.30

In recent years, the government run developmental agencies, have rapidly proliferated. And there is no effective co-ordination between the working of these agencies.31 This causes a lot of problems to the rural masses. For example, a simple thing of getting seeds on credit, involves visits to several agencies, not once, but several times. Due to complicated administrative procedures, many of them will simply give up the effort,
of receiving help, from governmental agencies for the development programmes.

VI. Mobilizing Popular Participation

Participation in democracy, does not end with people electing their representatives to run the local administration. The active involvement of people in the affairs of the local bodies, is essential for fostering democratic spirit. The desire of citizen to have some 'say' in local affairs, creates enthusiasm and interest which ultimately push forward, civic programmes and development schemes. Public participation makes local government aware of local problems. It is constant discussions, of the needs of individuals and of the community that lead to the growth of interest in the functioning of local government, appreciation of its difficulties and awareness of its short comings. Thus, rural development could be realized through mobilizing people and properly channelling popular participation to achieve the desired results of development.

The leaders of local community, have a very important role to play, in stimulating effective public participation. Local leaders who hold administrative positions, can mobilize people and resources, in the implementation of national and state level schemes of
rural development. With technical and financial assistance, from external development agencies, the local leaders can plan and initiate programmes of development in rural area. The future of rural development, therefore depends much on the quality of leadership, that emerges through the democratic process and matures through the experience, gained in the implementation of the programmes. In the absence of effective and sound leadership, resources may be misallocated and wasted or at the best may remain unspent. Leadership from outside, could be helpful in providing new ideas, but it is leadership 'from within', which is more important for mobilizing the villagers and for organizing and enthusing them and further ensuring their full participation at the grass-roots level.  

The local leadership to realize this, should maintain a constant dialogue with the rural masses. This would give them a feel of the aspirations of the people which they would translate into the programmes and policies. Popular participation is more during the realization of tangible and relatively immediate benefits. So small projects tailored to the specific needs of the villagers and worthy of producing quick results, will enthuse the people to participate and to participate more effectively.
Participatory local organizations can be very helpful in mobilizing popular support and assistance of the people, in the activities of the local body. Introducing participatory local organizations, would provide the villagers, a forum to discuss local problems and to design and implement local development programmes. But people in rural areas, generally lack the necessary skills in organizing and managing their affairs, collectively promoting development. Knowledge and information are crucial inputs, to make participation, a continuing activity and to give the people, an idea of what their rights and responsibilities are. Here training can be extremely useful to the people from villages. The following were identified as major skills which could help to build local capacity for participation:
(a) Managerial skills, (b) Internal organizational management skills; (c) Economic resource management skills; (d) Technical skills; and (e) Political skills.

Above all, the attitude of the field staff need to undergo a change. They should recognize that the new tasks cannot be realized with old attitudes of the pre-development era. Bureaucrats must view their role, as responding to the needs of the people rather than, simply expecting the people to respond, in a sheep like manner to governmental initiatives. It requires re-orienting the bureaucrats, to develop in them skills for working with
the people (and not for the people only) for achieving participatory development. Norman Uphoff noted that "orienting the technical staff toward fruitful collaboration with rural communities is not easy, but it is absolutely necessary."34

VII. Popular Participation in Development Programmes

Popular participation in various developmental activities, is an institutional device to imbibe a sense of oneness among the people. All developmental activities proposed to be undertaken at the grass-roots level need adequate mass support. Otherwise, they would be short lived. Realizing the significance of popular participation, the erstwhile L.D.F. government introduced a host of developmental programmes anticipating and winning the support of the general masses, to make these a success. For the purpose of this study, two important areas are identified viz. (i) Agriculture and (ii) Literacy.

When the L.D.F.government came to power in 1987, Kerala had been under the firm grip of deteriorating agricultural production. The government took up the challenge and evolved a comprehensive scheme to give a complete face lift to the mode of functioning of the Department of Agriculture, the main state organization to
plan and monitor development in agriculture. For the first time in the country, 'Krishibhavans' were started in every panchayat with effect from 1st November 1987. It was realized that no agricultural project can be effectively implemented without active participation of the cultivating farmer. Kerala is also the first state in the country where the service of an expert in agriculture is provided to every panchayat with a view to popularise agricultural activities and decide on these democratically. Popular committees, namely Agricultural Development Samities are constituted in all panchayats with the active participation of local organizations, representing co-operatives, farm labourers, farmers, people's representatives and officials of local bodies. Panchayat President is the Chairman of the Committee. It is the responsibility of the Committee to formulate agricultural development schemes, to suit the local needs and to implement the same. The aim of the programme is to produce locally, seeds and seedlings, required for the area, there through create more employment opportunities locally and also attain self-sufficiency in these matters. Similar committees have been constituted in the district and at the state levels also. The state level committee is chaired by the Chief Minister, with concerned Ministers as its members.

The organizational structure of Panchayat Agriculture Development Samiti can be drawn as follows:
Organizational Structure of Panchayat Agriculture Development Samiti

**Development Samiti**

- **Panchayat President**
  - Chairman

- **President of the Village Agricultural Co-operative Society**
  - Vice-Chairman

- **Panchayat Krishibhavan Agriculture Officer**
  - Convenor

**Members**

- M.L.A. representing the Panchayat
- 6 Farmers from the Agricultural Samities
- 2 Agricultural labourers (out of this one from SC/ST)
- 1 Representative of Primary Agricultural bank
- 1 Representative of the Commercial bank
- Village Extension Officer
- Local Officer of the Irrigation and Electricity Departments.

**Functions of the Agricultural Development Samiti**

1. Identify agricultural development programmes and report these to the Department of Agriculture.
2. Give proper guidance to the Panchayat Agriculture Officer, in preparing agriculture development projects.
3. Help in distributing and recovering agricultural loans.
4. Distribute seeds, plants, fertilizers, pesticides to the farmers.
5. Organize Shramdan and public participation in the implementation of schemes.
6. Organize seminars, workshops, exhibitions and fairs for agricultural development.
7. Organize agricultural groups with a minimum of 10 and a maximum of 50 farmers.
8. Identify the necessity of small scale irrigation projects, soil conservation, provision of marketing and processing facilities for agricultural development.

i. **Group Farming in Paddy Cultivation**

Agriculture continues to be the most important and the single largest sector of the economy, accounting for over one third of the state's total income. This sector supports more than 50 per cent of the total workers in the state. But this vital sector is fast losing its dynamism and resilience, it had shown in the past. To overcome this stagnant situation, the state government adopted popular participation as a strategy to
agricultural development. The agricultural policy of the government states that all the future agriculture extension programmes, at the grass-roots level will be drawn up in consultation with 'Agriculture Development Samiti' constituted in every panchayat. Farmers' participation will be institutionalised, with the allotment of specified functions and responsibilities.

The staple food of a Keralite is rice and the soil and climatic conditions of the state are also conducive for rice cultivation. The state which produced over 40 per cent of its requirements of rice at 13.4 lakh tonnes during early 1980's from an area of about 8.06 lakh hectares has produced only 11.33 tonnes from 6.6 lakh hectares in 1986-87. Area under rice cultivation has declined, affecting the total quantity of the produce. The following table will show the decline in the rice production of Kerala.35

Table 6.4 : Decline in Rice Production in Kerala

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Area in 000 hectares</th>
<th>Production in 000 tonnes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981-82</td>
<td>806.92</td>
<td>1339.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982-83</td>
<td>778.49</td>
<td>1306.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-84</td>
<td>740.09</td>
<td>1207.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984-85</td>
<td>740.08</td>
<td>1255.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985-86</td>
<td>678.28</td>
<td>1173.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986-87</td>
<td>663.80</td>
<td>1133.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The factors that have led to the decline in the area under rice cultivation, are purely economic. Rice cultivation is very labour intensive. The costs of agricultural inputs such as seeds, labour, fertilizers and pesticides have gone up without any check, while the price of paddy has registered a moderate rise only. 1986-87 figures show that, wages have increased 75-100 per cent, prices of fertilizers 60 per cent and pesticides 42 to 140 per cent. The corresponding increase in paddy price has been only 48 per cent. With the small size of land holdings and meagre amount of profits, rice cultivation is put to difficulties. The popular feeling is that, rice production is not remunerative.

As the staple food, the annual state requirement of rice is 30 lakh tonnes. But the total annual production comes only to one-third of the total requirements. This leads the state into a dependency trap and also causes an annual outflow of Rs.500 crores for the purchase of rice. Hence, high priority to increase rice production and to rectify the dependency is evinced in state's efforts.

The small size of holdings and lack of infrastructural facilities, prevent farmers from adopting modern technology. Adoption of low cost scientific technology, in rice production is one way of making rice cultivation profitable. If farmers are organized into groups and
then provided with all inputs, they would be in a position to practice modern cultivation techniques. They could then pool their resources and do things which individually they could not have ventured upon. This seems to be the most effective and practical way to escape from the vicious cycle. As a remedy, therefore 'group farming' was introduced in the year 1989, in paddy cultivation.

In group farming, the individual farmer retains his ownership on land, yield as well as decisions on management practices. Only farm operations, purchase of inputs, water management, plant protection are undertaken on a group-basis. Thus, it differs from collective and co-operative farming. In the group farming system, the problems faced by individual farmers are tackled and solved by 'the group activity'. Farmers of 'Padasekharams' (group of paddy fields), with an area of 10 to 50 ha. or more, are organized and group committees of cultivators are formed, for each Padasekharam. The Padasekharam committee includes the chairman of the Panchayat Agricultural Development Samiti, Krishibhavan Agriculture Officer, representatives of local institutions and farmers organizations. All the programmes, envisaged in the scheme are implemented through Padasekharam committee and all the assistance and subsidies under the scheme is routed through this
committee. In the field, it is organized in such a way, that it works as a mass-movement with a commitment to enhance rice production.

In the year 1989, the programme covered in 62,000 ha., spread over 3069 Padasekharams and comprising about 1.7 lakh small farmers. In the select district Alleppey, during 1989 under 71 Krishibhavans, group farming was experimented in 160 Padasekharams, with an area of 3844 ha. More than 13,927 farmers, directly participated in this endeavour.

Group farming for paddy, hailed as the latest sensation in the rice sector, has emerged as the biggest promise for the immediate as well future development of the crop in Kerala. The new investment in rice sector, to double the production, also means doubling the quantity of straw, creation of large employment opportunities, introduction of modern implements and the subsequent creation of para-technical skilled jobs, more off-take of consumer-goods due to enhanced money handling in rural areas and above all, the arresting of the huge flow of money outside the state and making it available for recycling within the state for more productive purposes.

Group farming, now organized with active involvement of all the agencies interested in rice farming, is sure
to vitalize activities in agricultural sector. As it is, it has taken the shape of a farmers mass movement and is a step in the right direction to increase produce, to improve production process and help to reach development to the producer.

ii. Literacy Programme

Literacy is the very foundation of development of man. So universalization of literacy receives the highest priority. Many experts view literacy instructions, as the best possible means for a developing nation, to break the syndrome of poverty tradition and underdevelopment and to accelerate, the rate of progress on the road to modernization.37 One of the studies based on a Pakistan village observed that, "where the social setting itself is changing, the more literate man will be quick to perceive change and will find it easier, to redefine his beliefs, in ways that fit his new needs and interests.38"

The United Nations Organization, declared 1990 as the 'International Literacy Year', appreciating its importance and relevance, especially to further development efforts in the Third World Countries. As per the recent estimates, more than half of the world's total illiterates are in India. In Kerala, even before the International Literacy Year, fruitful attempts were
undertaken to remove illiteracy. This brought credit to the state, with Kottayam, as the first Municipality and Perumbalam of Alleppey district as the first Village Panchayat to be declared as fully literate in 1989. These efforts enthused Ernakulam district to achieve its target of total literacy on 4th February 1990.

These successful efforts made the erstwhile L.D.F. government, to launch the total literacy programme on April 8th 1990. The state wide survey, identified 22.5 lakh illiterates in 5-60 age group, 16 lakh of these were enrolled in about 2 lakh literacy classes. Roughly 2.5 lakh persons took part to help 12.5 lakh illiterates to cross the threshold of literacy. These efforts brought the state literacy level to 93.6 per cent, which is more than 90 per cent literacy norm, adopted by the National Literacy Mission for declaring total literacy. On April 18,1991 at an end of one-year long literacy drive, named 'Akshara Keralam', the state was declared totally literate.

The literacy programme, a broad based participative grass-roots effort has swept through the state, like a bracing wind, rejuvenating a cynical youth and putting 'faith' back in people-based development programmes. Most important of all, the literacy programme has given the deprived and oppressed sections of Kerala, a new voice and a new courage to question the world and its
K.N. Raj, the eminent economist, said that the programme is one which "reached the hearts of the people that is what development is all about".

Perumbalam panchayat of Alleppey selected for the study, is the first village panchayat which achieved the target of total literacy, on 2nd October 1989. The project was planned as a people's movement and various strategies were adopted, for the mobilization of all the available resources and for the involvement of all sections of the people.

Perumbalam is an island in the Vembenad lake. This is the smallest village panchayat, in Alleppey district. The total population of the panchayat is 9500 (1988 figures). Perumbalam is the only panchayat of Kerala, which does not have a motorised vehicle. Agriculture, fishing and coir manufacturing are the main occupations of people. More than 750 families, are directly associated with the coir industry. The state Government therefore has declared the panchayat a 'Coir Village'.

The idea of total literacy, for Perumbalam panchayat was initiated by the officials of 'Th challusserry' community development block and received the support of the panchayat committee. Panchayat level meetings were
held to plan the programme. To make adequate publicity, ward level meetings were also conducted. The panchayat members from the wards took initiative in these meetings. From 1989 April 2nd to 8th, in all the 8 wards, the ward level meetings were held with success. In all the wards, a 25 member committee was elected and the panchayat member of the ward, was the convenor of this committee. The committee prepared a list of volunteers, to conduct the survey. The selected volunteers were given proper orientation and training to conduct the survey and it was conducted under the supervision of the panchayat members and block officials. More than 200 trained volunteers helped the conduct of survey. An encouraging number of respondents were ready to spare time to impart literacy instructions (304 out of 9500). It looks that on average, one person would help 2 illiterates to cross the threshold.

The survey brought to light that, 6.5 per cent of the total population (excluding below 5 age group) was illiterate. To take follow up action, an 11 member implementation committee was constituted at the panchayat level. Wide publicity was given to the programme, through bit notices, banners, posters and by literacy processions. The Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad, CANFED and other cultural organizations took active role in the effective implementation of this programme. From July 5th
Table 6.5: Literacy Survey of Perumbalam Panchayat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward No.</th>
<th>No. of houses</th>
<th>No. of houses with illiterates</th>
<th>Illiterates</th>
<th>Total Illiterates</th>
<th>SC/ST Males</th>
<th>SC/ST Females</th>
<th>No. of persons willing to give literacy instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>277</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2221</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1989, literacy instructions were imparted by the volunteers to the illiterates. The villagers had collected the required money and purchased necessary teaching aids and these were distributed in the classes. The panchayat level implementation committee, once in 10 days evaluated the progress of the programme and reported to the development block. The noteworthy feature of the programme to mention, is that the total literacy drive of the panchayat was a mass
movement, 'a Jana Abhiyan' and the people in this small island, considered it as their own programme. The villagers of Perumbalam proved that popular participation could bring development to the door-steps. If one does not believe in miracles - such development is just short of that miracle, which guides the destiny of the millions of 'believers and faithful'. Experiments and experiences under 'group farming' and 'Akshara Keralam', indicate the potential untapped human energy, which can be activated and routed constructively - it only awaits leadership, foresighted and farsighted.
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11. H.M. Mathur, ibid.
16. Quoted in ibid p.371


29. Ibid p. 22.

30. Ibid p. 23.


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India', The Times Research Foundation, Pune 1985, p.104.


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40. K.N.Raj, Quoted in ibid, p.64.