CHAPTER 7

SOCIAL CAPITAL VIS-A-VIS DEMOCRATISATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
7.1. Introduction

The study was designed to reveal the extent of influence of social capital on the process of democratisation at the grass roots, with special reference to the marginal villages of Kerala in the context of decentralisation of governance. In order to achieve the objective of the study, it was necessary to examine the extent of social capital and the level of democratisation in the study areas. Having done this enquiry, the researcher in this chapter turns his attention to the causal relationship between social capital and democratisation.

As explained in Chapter IV, social capital had a weak presence in the remote villages of Kerala. The small number of civil society organisations, which were present in these villages, was not strong enough to create sufficient social capital capable of positively influencing democratisation. The desirable features of social organisations such as trust, networks, shared norms, sustainable and productive relationships and civic consciousness were only nominally promoted in and through the CSOs in the study areas. The low quality of these institutions was behind the low quality of social capital.

Similarly, the level of democratisation was low in the context of Grama Sabhas in the Village Panchayats. Almost all the elements of democratisation such as the level of people’s participation in the meetings of Grama Sabhas, manner of decision-making, the level of popular control over Grama Sabha deliberations, quality of leadership of the elected representatives, responsiveness of the Grama Sabha to the needs of the people, level of transparency in the Grama Sabhas and the level of popular awareness of the functions, rights and responsibilities of the Grama Sabhas were clearly not encouraging in the study areas.
These aspects are very important when one considers the quality of
democracy because democracy does not consist in mere numbers.
Measurement of democracy should take into account not only the number of
people voting in a constituency, but also the manner in which these people
take part in governance to the extent made possible by the relevant laws in
order to lead the country into economic development and social justice.

7.2. Association between Socio-economic Variables vis-a-vis
Social Capital and Democratisation.

The findings reveal that only caste had a significant relation with both
social capital and democratisation. More than any other aspect, caste remains
to be the determining background for the citizens to get involved or not in civil
society organisations and in the affairs of governance. Only two other
variables - religion and age - had significant relationship with social capital.
No other variable had a significant relationship with social capital. At the same
time, except religion, age and sex, all other socio-economic variables had
significant relationship with democratisation. This association was further
probed to capture the strength and direction of the significant relation.

The study has once again brought into focus the fact that caste is the
fundamental reality in Kerala’s history and culture. Culture and the way of life
of Keralites are even now determined by caste and caste organisations. Local
rural organisations are nurseries of training and grooming the young, very
often based on caste considerations. Every community (caste) has its own
organisation ‘to catch them young’ and impart in them caste-based view of life.

These associations are very often exclusive. The so-called more secular
organisations like libraries and sports and arts clubs become in practice
platforms for particular caste groups with drastic majority of one caste or the
other. This is due to the rural residential and occupational geography where
people of the same caste flock together to reside in particular areas. For
example, Christian fish workers and Muslim fishworkers and Hindu
fishworkers live along Kerala coaste, but crowded in particular villages of their
own. SHGs are also often affected by this phenomenon and very often
dominated by one particular caste people or the other.
7.3. Correlation Between Social Capital and Democratisation: Strength and Direction of Correlation

The study examined the socio-economic and demographic variables of the respondents such as age, education in school years, family ownership of land, monthly family income and economic status (in terms of ownership of house, type of house, fuel used for cooking, sanitary facilities owned, ownership of vehicles, ownership of other household facilities, source of energy for lighting, family ownership of land and monthly family income) and their relation with both social capital and democratisation in order to capture the direction and strength of the significant relationship by using correlation.

7.3.1. Age vis-a-vis Social Capital and Democratisation

Age is one of the two variables, which had a weak inverse or negative relationship with social capital (Partial correlation between social capital and age -.191). This indicated that the number of aged people who were members of CSOs in the remote villages of Kerala were less than the number of the young. It also indicated that the CSOs present in the study areas at the time of the study had a more recent origin. The young unemployed people are usually unsettled and when they get employment, they quit their association with CSOs. Rural associations are usually manned by this group. This, together with the economic benefit factor account for the short life span of CSOs in the study areas. Social capital had not taken roots and so had not come up to influential levels in the study areas. At the same time, age had no significant relation with democratisation.

7.3.2. Education (in School Years) vis-a-vis Social Capital and Democratisation

The relation between educational status of the people measured in terms of years spent in education (-.121) and social capital was not significant. At the same time, educational status of the people had a weak positive relationship (.268) with democratisation. People with less number of year’s education were involved more in the affairs of local governance. This has to be read with the fact that the average education in school years was 6.5 years in the study areas (Table No. 4.6). Among them, less educated had more closeness to grass root democracy. This does not mean that people with low
educational background were active participants in the process of grass roots democracy. They were attracted by other motives like monetary benefits than by real interest in participating in local governance. More number of people attended the GS meetings convened to finalise the beneficiary list.

7.3.3. Family Ownership of land (in cents) vis-a-vis Social Capital and Democratisation

Family ownership of land is one of the important dimensions of economic status. The relation between family ownership of land in cents (-.101) and social capital was not significant. At the same time, this variable had a weak positive relationship (.222) with democratisation. People who had more land showed more interest and involvement in the local governance through their Grama Sabhas. Here, too, the picture will be clearer if one looks at the average land ownership of the people in the study areas. Majority of the respondents (74.4%) possessed land below 50 cents.

7.3.4. Monthly income level of the families vis-a-vis Social capital and Democratisation

Monthly income is another crucial factor in economic status of the families and individuals. Relation between monthly income level of the families of the respondents in the study areas (-.032) and social capital was not significant, while there existed a weak positive relationship between family income level (.196) and democratisation process at the grass root level. This indicated that citizens from the families, which had more income, got involved in the matters concerning local governance and democratisation than those who were from the lowest income families. However, it needs to be noted that majority of the respondents in the study had an average family income in the range of Rupees 500-1500 only.

7.3.5. Economic Status vis-a-vis Social Capital and Democratisation

Overall, economic status was the other variable, which had a weak inverse or negative relationship (-.161) with social capital (Table 7.1). This is an indication to understand that economically more sound people in the margins of Kerala did not bother to enroll themselves with the local social institutions and those who did enroll were not fully involved in the collective
interventions initiated by these CSOs. Poorer people showed some enthusiasm to join and associate with CSOs.

At the same time, the data indicated that economic status of the people in the study areas had a weak direct (positive) relationship with democratisation. This means that economically more sound villagers were more involved in the process of democratisation through Grama Sabhas. However, it has to be borne in mind that the economic status of the study area was much lower than that in other mainstream communities of the state.

This leads one to affirm the proposition that the poorest of the poor or the lowest strata are not capable even to participate meaningfully in the affairs concerning their lives. They need to be brought in to the next levels in order to involve them in local governance.

7.3.6. Social Capital vis-a-vis Democratisation: Causally connected?

The causal relationship of social capital on democratisation was finally examined. The data were analyzed by multiple regressions to examine the causality between the variation in democratisation and in explanatory variables such as social capital, age, education (in school years), economic status (index), and political party membership. Dummy variables were used to explain the variations within Panchayats.

The model used is specified as follows:

Democratisation = f (Social capital, Age, Education (in school years), Economic Status [index], Political party membership [Dummy], Chaliyar=1 [Dummy], Ayyampuzha=1 [Dummy], Kadinamkulam=1 [Dummy])

The regression is found to be a good fit as revealed by the value of $R^2$ and adjusted $R^2$. The result of the analysis of variance generated by the regression analysis shows that the model with the specified explanatory variables does a good job in explaining the variation in the dependent variable. Overall, the model is found to be significant as the F statistic (33.407) is significant at zero percent level.

The result shows, as in Table No. 7.1 that except the education in school years, all the other coefficients are significant. Thus, holding other variables
constant, democratisation is found to be positively influenced by social capital and age. Political party membership is also found to be a key factor affecting democratisation. Similarly, democratisation is found to be negatively determined by economic status. Here again, social capital is found to have the highest positive causal relationship on democratisation (.232) The significance of the regression coefficients for the dummy variables of Chaiiyar, Ayyampuzha and Kadinamkulam Panchayats indicate that there exist differences in democratisation at the Panchayat level.

Table No. 7.1
Democratisation and its Determinants: Regression Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>.547</td>
<td>.223</td>
<td>2.455</td>
<td>.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital (average)</td>
<td>.198</td>
<td>.027</td>
<td>.232</td>
<td>7.338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>2.487</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education in school years</td>
<td>.021</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>1.601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic index (absolute)</td>
<td>-.022</td>
<td>.013</td>
<td>-.123</td>
<td>-3.331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political party memberships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaiiyar=1</td>
<td>.428</td>
<td>.107</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td>3.985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayyampuzha=1</td>
<td>.333</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>3.082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadinamkulam=1</td>
<td>-.519</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td>-.194</td>
<td>-4.665</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data and the model were checked for the problem of multicollinearity. Collinearity (or multicollinearity) is the undesirable situation where the correlations among the independent variables are strong. Zero order, partial correlations, tolerance ratio and VIF (Variance Inflating Factor) were used to determine how much the independent variables are linearly related to one another. The results show that there is no serious problem of multicollinearity in the data as per the specified model (Table No. 7.2).

Table No. 7.2
Test for Collinearity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Zero-order</th>
<th>Partial</th>
<th>Part</th>
<th>Tolerance</th>
<th>VIF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Capital (average)</td>
<td>.226</td>
<td>.250</td>
<td>.224</td>
<td>.931</td>
<td>1.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>.114</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.570</td>
<td>1.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education in school years</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.056</td>
<td>.049</td>
<td>.505</td>
<td>1.981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic index (absolute)</td>
<td>-.059</td>
<td>-.117</td>
<td>-.102</td>
<td>.680</td>
<td>1.470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political party memberships</td>
<td>.284</td>
<td>.249</td>
<td>.222</td>
<td>.938</td>
<td>1.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaiiyar=1</td>
<td>.189</td>
<td>.139</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>.585</td>
<td>1.710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayyampuzha=1</td>
<td>.214</td>
<td>.108</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>.572</td>
<td>1.749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadinamkulam=1</td>
<td>-.271</td>
<td>-.162</td>
<td>-.142</td>
<td>.537</td>
<td>1.861</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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7.4. Concluding Observations

The comparative analysis shows that social capital and democratisation are not related uniformly by the socio-economic and demographic factors. The determining socio-economic and demographic variables are different for social capital and democratisation. The strength and direction of relations varied between social and economic variables vis-a-vis social capital and democratisation. However, there was a causal relationship between social capital and democratisation in the study areas. Here again, social capital was found to have the highest positive causal relationship with democratisation. This position is cemented by the analysis within the framework of the findings that the extent of social capital and the level of democratisation were low and feeble. In other words, whatever social capital was present in the villages, that much of relationship was evident on democratisation. This influence was more than the influence of other variables like age, education in school years, political party membership and economic status.