CHAPTER IV

CASE ANALYSIS

Case-1 Edamalakudy Panchayat, Idukki District

Kanniyamma is a forty-five-year old Muthuvan tribe woman who lives with her husband and three children in the Societykudy (Ward XII) of Edamalakudy Gram panchayat in Devikulam Block, Idukki District. The speciality of this panchayat is that it is the only tribal panchayat in Kerala which was formed in the year 2010 and the entire population comprises of Muthuvan tribe who usually lives in the thick forest area in huts. She served as the first president of the gram panchayat when the panchayat was formed. She used to be an agricultural labourer before becoming the panchayat ward member and had her education up to the primary level.

Kanniyamma was a woman without any affiliation to any political party when she was introduced to the position of ward member. Not only herself most of the inhabitants of Edamalakudy is not having any affinity with any of the political party as they reside in the interior forest area and their relationship is only during the election time. She represented the Indian National Congress party, and her association was because of her husband who has an affinity towards that political party. The tenure as the president of the panchayat was a changing point as she got many pieces of training and knowledge about the local government system in India. During the initial stage, the panchayat officials
supported her to deal with her activities as she was new to the process. Her supporters and leaders from the political party also helped her to deal with activities, and all she depended on them for help as her family members and dearest were not aware of these things or illiterate. Three main categories of people who helped her in her daily activities were the officials, contractors and party workers. As the Muthuvan tribe is more strict and close towards the conventional practices, the women were not allowed to come forward in the social and cultural activities which prohibited her presence in the public programmes. Because of these practices, she used to sit with community women during the public programmes, and the decisions always had the domination of the men. As women belonged to a community where the women were not allowed to be in the forefront, she was also under the control of the male counterparts in the party and all her decisions regarding governance were taken by them. According to her words, she merely holds the seat as a president because the party asked her to do so and her inexperience made her move out of the activities of governance.

Kanniyamma personally was not interested in carrying her political career as she never wanted it. Her interest was more disturbed even as she had no power and had a role. Moreover of the Panchayat office was located forty-five kilometres away from her ‘kudi’ or hamlet which created the real problem as she
found it to be difficult to travel the distance and the officials usually solved her absence on behalf of her.

Kanniymamma had a good relationship with the people and was happy with the support she used to get from the people. Even though she was not involved in the political activities or decisions, she was pleased with her performance as she believes that she had done her level best to reach the people. As Muthuvan tribe inhabitants were not that aware and interested in the politics, she did not face that much opposition from the people as well as community and had the support of tribal hamlet heads to deal with the affairs. Her close affinity with people made her close to all the people in the panchayat, but her lack of awareness was exploited by the officials, contractors and her close party fellows. They misused her power and designation, and the funds were used inappropriately. Her silence and lack of awareness worsened the situation and more than herself; her husband was involved in all these activities. Without her permissions, many decisions were carried out, and she was forced to be a silent spectator for all these matters. There were several occasions where she found discrimination towards her and this discrimination forced her to be silent as the Muthuvan tribes are more affectionate towards their customs. Edamalakudy is the area which lies inside the deep forest and the communication process like accessibility towards the mobile phone, T.V. and radio was limited. As a panchayat which is inside the forest area the activities of the NGO’s are prominent in the area. Being selected
as the first president tribal women president, she didn’t have any awards for the above. As in the case of most ST member of panchayat she also is not a recipient of an award. Even though being the president she did not have the power to make decisions and the male members did all in her party, hamlet, family as well as panchayat.

Outcomes

Edamalakudy Panchayat is having a prominent position in the history of Kerala as it is the first tribal panchayat in the state. Even though a woman who had a primary level education was not allowed to take decisions and these shows how the women are treated in the community. She was not allowed to work according to her will or vision, and she used to depend on others to make decisions. She only decorated the position of the president of the panchayat and used to be under the clutches of others which shows herself to be a compromising personality to deal with her activities

Case-2 Padinjarathara Panchayat, Wayanad district

C. Balan member of Manjoora, 8th ward of Padinjarathara Gram Panchayat, Kalpatta Block in Wayanad district is 51-year-old man belonging to the Kurichya tribal community. He lives in the same ward with his wife and three children. Balan had his education up to primary level and was working as a lottery ticket agent before he was introduced to politics which was new for him.
Balan contested in the election under the banner of Socialist Janatha Dal party where he didn’t have any membership. His close relationship with the public made the political party to make him as a candidate and to contest in the election. Before the election, he didn’t have an idea about the Panchayat Raj Act or 73rd Amendment. The only experience he had in the activities was his participation in the Gram sabha meetings, and ‘oorukoottam’ were he just participated. After being elected as a member of Panchayat, he still concentrates on his lottery business and prefers it to be more apt for him. He gives more importance to his business because he believes that it supports him for his livelihood. Even though he is taking many forward steps like the construction of houses for the public he is not having a house on his own. He finds it difficult to maintain everything he gets from the honorarium from panchayat and it’s the main reason he concentrates on his business. As a ward member, he listens to the needs of the people and takes it to the authorities for action. The main reason which hinders his performance as ward member is that he is not having any role in the decision making process and all he has to do is to perform according to the instruction of the party. He believes that his role is to attend the meetings for name sake and all the decisions are carried out by the party including the selection of beneficiaries for certain schemes and programmes. The party and decisions are performing the political activities influenced by the party than his own. The domination of the party made him to not continue in the politics as he doesn’t seem any role in the activities. He feels that after his introduction to the politics
his affinity with the public has diminished as he lost many friendly relations. He strongly believes that he was selected as a candidate to contest in the election was only because he belonged to scheduled tribe community.

The domination of the party in the entire arena made him not to indulge with the public as he is not able to settle their needs as the party takes the decisions in all aspects. Balan finds it challenging to approach the people as he is not able to answer their queries and to help them in dealing with the problems. He knows that he hadn’t done anything for the welfare of the tribal community as he is not able to take any decisions as party controls everything. The party handled the funds allocated to his ward, and he didn’t have any role in tackling with issues of his ward. He believes that his closeness with the public is only because of the lottery ticket business and is not because of politics. He hasn’t dealt with panchayat officials as he is not aware of the administrative aspects.

As a literate person with education up to the primary level he uses to read the newspaper and watches television and that the only source he comes to know about the matters of the panchayat provisions. He never deals with government officials and has not approached any NGOs for their involvement. His lack of confidence in dealing with public servants made him to withdraw from his duties and to leave everything with the party. It is the party who conducts the ‘oorukoottam’, and the Gram Sabha and his role are minimal regarding the meetings.
The party has more control over the matters related to the governance and his just himself for namesake. Even he feels that the officials are also not respecting him and even tries to control him. During the panchayat meetings, he always keeps silence as he doesn’t have any role as his co-members take decisions. About the contract jobs as a member, he doesn’t have any role as party decide over the matters. Over-involvement of the party and officials made him not to indulge more in the activities of the panchayat. Balan has feelings that tribal population are being subordinated and marginalised by the non-reserved people and authorities belonging to the higher castes. The people belonging to the more upper castes are not giving any importance to him as he is a tribal member and moreover he is not getting any support from his own family as they are not interested with his involvement in politics.

**Outcomes**

Balan's case is an example of the over domination of the party over the affairs of the representatives. His presence at Panchayat level is only for namesake and was made to do so because he belongs to a tribal community. The works and decisions are carried out by the party, and all he has to do is just accord the position as ward member for the party. All the decisions are taken by party and leaders of the party where they are utilising his position. Being a member of a tribal community is also preventing him from dealing with activities as he feels
that as a member he is being discriminated in the process of governance by the higher caste people.

CASE-3 Mangalam, Nenmeny Panchayat, Wayanadu District

Bindu Anandan a member belonging to the Indian National Congress is a member of Mangalam Ward No. 15, Nenmeny gram panchayat, Battery Block, Wayanad District. She is a woman who had education up to a secondary level which belongs to the Paniya tribal community who lives with her husband and two children and runs a provisional store near her home. Her association with the political party is because of her husband who is a member Congress party and a tribal welfare activist.

Bindu was made as the candidate by the Congress party to the Mangalam reserved tribal ward, and her husband’s active involvement in public life made her be the candidate. Her participation in the ‘Ayalkoottam’ and ‘Kudumbasree activities’ made her prominent among the public and her works as a child line volunteer is known to all. She used to be very vibrant in the Gram Sabha meeting and had a clear idea about the Panchayat Raj system. When she became a member of the panchayat, all these experience made her confident to perform her duties as a representative. She was regular in the panchayat meetings and raised the specific problem and issues prevailing child marriage among tribal communities and the addiction to alcoholism among the men. She made her
contribution as a member in an effective way, and she got the support of her
husband in these activities.

As a member of panchayat Bindu involved herself actively in all the
activities of the panchayat especially of her ward. Her performance as a
representative made her be the victim of cheap politics as her party men tried to
destroy her political career because she was denied with a chance in the next
election. Her involvement with all spheres of the panchayat made her more
prominent among the representatives. As an educated person it was easy for her
to reach the officials and to make them into the matters of the people. Even the
people were happy with her performance as she was reachable for at any time.
She tried her level best to reach in to all the aspect of the people especially of the
Paniya tribe. Even the opposition party was disturbed by her performance that
once she hospitalised due to an attack by them. In the time certain crisis, she
believes that she didn’t have the support from her party and it was only the
people who stood with her. Being honest also made her in trouble as the officials
didn’t support her in her works as she stood strongly against corruption and other
sought of illegal measures. She was very close with the people and made it sure
that they can reach her at any point in time over the phone. As a representative,
she actively participated in training programmes, and it helped her to get
familiarise with different aspects of local administration. The NGOs and
voluntary organisations were effectively utilised by her to serve the people, and
she assured their service to reach the needy people. The president was giving her
preferential treatment. The officials under some pretext or other they did not provide her relevant information on the vital matter on time. Resisting pressure, she used to select beneficiaries independently. But she could not effectively withstand the pressure from the party in awarding contracts. It goes to her credit that she could mobilise the people and ensure their participation in the developmental works. Her passion to serve the people was outstanding that she tried her level best to help the people especially the pregnant women, children cancer patients and the old age. Her husband was with her, and that’s how she was able to curb the opposition raised in her party. She was happy with her performance and needed to do more, but the opposition party seriously created problems which made her from reaching to her goals. Her family depended on the income from the provincial shop and her involvement in politics affected the income from the business. Being targeted by the opposition and her party men she was not able to take her political career forward.

Outcomes

The case of Bindu is an example for the empowerment of women to reach its maximum, but the notable fact is that she was denied support from her party people. As an educated person she quickly captured the aspects of governance and tried her maximum to reach the people. The case portrays the fact that the political parties are not allowing women to perform well even though she is capable. It was the situation which hindered her in reaching the people and performs well for the betterment of the people. The case shows the hardship of
women to forward in the politics and takes decision her own. It is not about lack of empowerment but support from own political faction.

Case-4 Rattakundu Ward, Mennangadi Panchayat, Wayanad district

Sheeba T.K. member of Rattakundu Ward VII, Mennangadi Panchayat, Battery Block, Wayanad district, belongs to the Kuruman tribal community. She was a homemaker of 38 years old who lived with her husband driver by profession and two children. She completed her education up to higher secondary and her association with the ‘Kudumbasree’ really sparked her entry to politics.

Sheeba was the member of CPI (Marxist) and has represented her party thrice in the Panchayat. Her presence in the party is very vibrant as she is the local committee member of the party. Her political career is influenced by the support of her husband and family. Her leadership was wholly accepted as she represented twice as ST reserved candidate and once as the general candidate in the last election. Because of her leadership quality and administrative capacity she was made as the chairperson of the Panchayat Welfare standing Committee. The experience as a ward member made her to get aware of the rules and regulations of the Panchayat Raj system and to understand about the schemes and projects of the Panchayat. Her works are supported by the officials also as she is happy with the support which she gets from the bureaucracy and also advises she gathers from the gram sabha meetings. As she is the member of the Marxist
Communist party, all the works performed by her is the as per the directions and policies of the party. The party is also happy with her performance which made the party to make her as the candidate of the general constituency which she believes as an honour for her service. She is vibrant and is happy to continue her career in the politics and serve the people until her party and the people supports her.

The works of Sheeba influences her party, and the schemes are implemented as per the instruction is taken in the party meetings. The schemes are implemented on time, and she is happy with the people and the officials in helping her to implement it on time. Her primary works include that of reaching the people especially the tribal people and to improve conditions. The party people assist her in allocating the fund and to reach the needy people to utilise the schemes. The opposition party is supporting her works, and she is happy with the support she gets from them. Being tribal women, some complexes haunted her during the initial stages of her public life, but she was able to overcome it through the support she got from her party.

Sheeba is happy with her performance as a homemaker as well as a panchayat member and is always busy to reach the people at any time. Her association with NGO and the voluntary organisation has been channelled through the party, and it helped her to find out the needy people and to reach them effectively. In the case of, any absence in clarity without hesitation, she
fetched the help of the officials and the party people, and she believes that it is the key to success in her career. She always consults the tribal heads and the panchayat officials to know more about the problems and guided them whenever they need her help. She is very much happy with the support she gets from her family and believes that they provided her with the spirit to serve the people in a better way.

**Conclusion**

The study reveals that Sheeba T.K. was a successful woman in discharging her duties as a panchayat member. The case shows the active participation of the political party to reach the people and to support an able candidate in her discourse. It was the party which helped her and made her as a candidate in the general constituency to serve the people. The case shows the positive trend of a political party in supporting tribal women to a successful politician.

**Case-5 Kadavarai, Vattavada Panchayat, Idukki district**

Rajammal is a member of Kadavarai (Ward No. III), Vattavada Gramapanchayat, Devikulam Block, Idukki district belongs to the Muthuvan tribal community. She is primarily an agriculture labourer with 35 years old and lives with her husband and two children.

Rajammal belonged to the Communist Party Marxist and contested in the election under the label of the party. As a woman educated only up to the primary
level, she was not willing to join the politics, but it was the party which compelled her to contest in the election. Twice she was elected as a representative but never finds it as helpful to empower herself or reach the people. She accepts the fact that she is not able to reach the people and to transform the area in any way. The constituency where she contested is the part of the Vattavada panchayat which is considered to be the most backward one in the entire state of Kerala. She accepts that developmental activities are minimal in her place and her performance is not up to the mark to reach the people. She firmly believes that the ward members like her are the puppets in the hands of the party as well as the officials and for name sake only they are being made as representatives. The general category leaders control the decisions and the funds, and the tribal community doesn’t have any role in these aspects. The only reason why she is representative is that she belongs to the tribal community and the reservation policy made her be a candidate. Rajammal used to attend the Panchayat Committee meetings but accepts the reality that she doesn’t have any role in the meetings. The dominant sections of the panchayat are utilising her lack of empowerment and awareness about the schemes and policies. She as a person doesn’t like to continue either in politics or in the party, but it’s the compulsion from the party which made her contest again. She confirms that she is not at all active either in politics or in the social activities but is being elected as her constituency is having more tribal community people. She has a close affinity with her community people, and the programmes like MGNREGS and
Kudumbshree further strengthened it. Even though she is elected twice, she never uses to sigh any documents and use to put dotted lines when demanded by the officials. She knows that the conditions of her kudi remains unchanged but doesn’t know what to do for changes. Her character has not changed as she is yet to recover from her shyness, inhibitions and diffidence to face the public and her candidateship has not empowered her as she avoids public meetings as far as possible. She is in the opinion that an ST ward member is not capable of doing anything to solve the problems the STs as they are not allowed or aware of such issues. Her husband is attending the official meetings of the party instead of her, and she doesn’t know what happens there. She confirms that she faces discriminatory treatment from her colleagues and officials belonging to the general category for being tribal women.

Rajammal doesn’t have any exposure to the media and even doesn’t know about all such facilities as there are no facilities in her ‘kudi’ or hamlet for the same. There is no electricity in the place, and the connectivity is poor which hinders the development process in the area. Even though she has attended many training programmes, she is not confident in carrying out her responsibilities. The party does all the responsibilities which she has to perform, and she is merely holding the position as per the demand of the party. Being representatives, she doesn’t have any role in selecting the beneficiaries whereas the party decides over the matter. Being very poor in her performance she doesn’t want to continue her
political career and urges the party not to force her to continue her career in politics.

**Outcomes**

The case of Rajammal is the clear evidence of lack of empowerment even after being a representative. Even after becoming twice as a representative she is not able to come out her conditions. Contested twice in the election has not bought any changes to her as well as the people and it shows that she is in the ‘rejection mode.’ The party plays a role in her decision-making process, and even she contested only because of the compulsion of the party. Being a representative twice she is not in a condition to have the confidence or self-assurance to be an active member. The reservation policy made her to a representative, but it shows that the progress of the individual as well as the community is with clutches of the dominant class.

**Case-6 Sholayoor Panchayat, Palakkad district**

V. Murugan is a forty-four-year-old tribal man from Kallakara ward of Sholayoor gram panchayat Attappady Block, Palakkad district. He was the president Sholayoor gram panchayat. As the ward and Panchayat was a reserve for the tribal community, he was able to become the President. He is from an agricultural family with education up to secondary level. He used to live with his family which is a joint family in nature and holds land of five acres where now no works are going on. He is the head of the Irula tribal community known as
‘Moopan’ in the local language and is the authority to decide over the matters of the whole community. Being the tribal head, he is respected by the community as a whole, and it was not a big deal to won the election. He contested for Indian National Congress party, and his sister is also a representative at the Panchayat.

Murugan was respected by the entire tribal community being the tribal head and has attended much training from institutions like KILA and has made himself aware of the Panchayat Raj Act and developmental projects. The experience in serving the people as the head helped him to reach them as representative as well as the president of the Panchayat.

Murugan was elected as the president of the Panchayat immediately after elected as the ward member, and it was a challenge for him the panchayat had a majority of non-tribal inhabitants. His experience made him deal with matters, and in no time he was confident enough to deal with the issues. He was the person to chair the panchayat meetings as well as the standing committee and tried to supersede him in every matter. He was bold enough to take an independent decision and was very active in the Gram Sabha and Oorkoottam. Even though the president he was also dominated by the officials as well as the general communities, and it was the most challenging thing to curb.

Murugan was very active in the local politics, but he had undergone a miserable situation where he was diagnosed with liver cirrhosis. The disease severely even affected his political life as he found it difficult to continue his
career. He firmly believes not to contest in future but to perform his duties fruitfully still he is in the position.

Murugan was very active to deal with matters of the people and to settle their problems. In many cases, he found that he lacked the support of the opposition party and to some extent, even the MPs and MLAs were also like that. He firmly believes that there is a lack of transparency in the matters related to income and expenditure and the officials have a more significant role in this. As Attappady is a notable area by the Government of Kerala, many schemes are being implemented, but he feels that the officials are not adequate to deal.

Murukan was aware of the print as well as television media but not technically expert to deal with a social media platform. Being the president, he was able to indulge many NGOs in the development activities of the panchayat. Sometimes he felt that his parties were dominating over some decisions and he was forced to do so. Most of such arrangements influence the dominant class of people where the tribal community people have to abide by that. Most of the non-tribal people of the area are settlers who came and settled there but now the original inhabitant tribal community has to perform according to their wish. Murugan was very efficient in dealing with the affairs of the Panchayat and still remember the most prestigious thing happened in his life where the honourable President of India awarded him the National Award for successfully implementing MGNREGS in Sholayoor Panchayat.
Murugan feels that the president of a panchayat is not free to take his own decisions as the political party has their domination and control over him. Many of his choices were intervened by the leaders in the party which he believes that hindered him from performing well as it was like discrimination over the tribal community.

Murugan is in the view that the government officials are the main culprit for corruption where he was forced many times to accept bribe which he successfully overcome. Even he tried his level best to curb corruption he was not successful as he didn’t have the support from the officials as well as his colleagues.

**Conclusion**

V. Murugan case is the example of discrimination faced by the topmost position of a Panchayat. As a panchayat president on several occasion, he felt discrimination for being a tribal community person. Although he was aware of the panchayat raj system and other aspects he was not able to go forward with his conviction as he faced bureaucratic hegemony and caste discrimination.

**Case-7 Nariampara, Kanchiyar Panchayat, Idukki district**

Balan Chakkan is a sixty-year-old tribal representative from Mannan tribe who represented the Nariampara VII Ward of Kanchiyar Panchayat, Kattappana Block, Idukki district. He was elected from a reserved constituency and is the
person who is the tribal ruler of his area. He is a member of the Mannan community which still preserves its traditional royal system of governance ‘Ilava Raja’ or King who resides in his ‘royal palace’ at Kovilmala with his consort and children. Although his education is confined to the primary school, he is enlightened on public matters as he has been in the thick of public issues for a long time. Agriculture is his source of income but at present, the collapse of the agriculture sector in Kerala has affected him too, and now he depends on the honorarium he gets from Panchayat.

Murugan was the member of the Kerala Congress (M) and an office bearer of the local unit. He contested in the election under the banner of the party for the first time and won the election in an excellent margin. His experience as a party worker and as a scion of a royal family inspired him to work as an active panchayat member. He has quite conscious of the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, and the powers of the Panchayat Committee and the Gram Sabha. As the ‘Ilava Raja’ he took the lead in convening ‘Oorukottam’ and Gram Sabha even before becoming a ward member. As the chairman of the Welfare Standing Committee in the Panchayat, he carried out his duties very effectively, and he was always active in all the form of the panchayat. Though the STs constitute a minority in his Ward, he was successful in enlisting the support of people of the general category.
As an activist intervening in local politics, he wants to continue to work as a member of the Kerala Congress which avowedly stands for the welfare of the farmers. He would happily contest another election, if possible from a general seat as he believes that he can win the election. He is very active in the social and cultural organisations and also devotes himself entirely in solving the issues affecting the ward. He has always been at the front in addressing people’s grievances and was accountable to his voters with particular interest to the tribal community. He was happy with that of the funds earmarked for his ward were fully utilised and could address a gathering confidently, coherently and eloquently and responses to the issues of the ward proactively. He had an excellent rapport with the government officials, colleagues and even MPs, MLA Ministers and even with the opposition members. He had been reading newspapers and watching the TV regularly keeping himself abreast of the times. In the social media, he is not much interested. Balan Chakkan has been very successful in ensuring the support of NGOs, and voluntary organisations. He has also been successful in fund mobilisation as well as in spending it on priority far is without allowing it to lapse. He had a particular branch for organising people, and he expressed his views frankly and fearlessly and the party, tribal heads and the Panchayat officials all supportive in his activities. They never tried to impose their beliefs on him. He could take decisions independently and with conviction. He has had a rare flair to influence people, especially his colleagues, and officials. He never allowed himself to be affected by external factors while
 awarding contractors. Although he has now been formally honoured flag any awards, he has received widespread recognition abundantly. It goes to his credit that members of the upper carter had not the guts to treat him with disdain. Although the ST faces discrimination on many fronts, he never met it.

He has been disciplined party member always abiding by the party directives. He gets the unstinted support of his family and community in all matters. Although Balan Chakkan is not much rich, he manages to live decently. He harbours the feeling that the honorarium the tribal member gets is not adequate to meet their needs as they live in far-flung regions. He is also of the view that the tribal development fund of the Panchayat also is minimal. Unlike many other tribal panchayat members, Chakkan dares to take an arrogant and corrupt official. The Panchayat officials discuss the schemes in projects with him before implementation.

Outcomes

Although Balan Chakkan is a Panchayat member belonging to a Tribal Community, he seems not to harbour a complex about unlike the majority of tribal ward members in the area falling under the purview of the study. He discharges his responsibilities and duties on his own in accord with the law and takes his own decisions independently and with conviction. He is full of self-confidence and has a desire to pursue politics as a career. He is an enlightened public activist, and he sees that his action is clean and transparent. He gets
people’s recognition in abundance. So it can be affixed that he is an empowered tribal figure.

**Case-8 Kovilkadavu, Kanthaloor Panchayat, Idukki District**

Velumani Mayilsami is a Muthuvan tribe member of Kovilkadavu Ward XI in Kanthaloor Panchayat which is tribal reserved constituency. She is married and lives with her husband and two children. Her husband is an auto driver and a block committee member of the Indian National Congress (I). Velumani is representing the Kovilkadavu ward for the second time.

Velumani contested for the Congress party and was elected twice. She was selected as the candidate as per the influence of her husband in the party and was instrumental in being fielded as a candidate. It was at the insistence of her husband that she chose to contest and she won twice with the support of the party, her husband and the Muthuvan community.

Velumani who has been twice a member of Panchayat is unaware of the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act and 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. She has only limited awareness about the power of the Panchayat Committee, the Gram Sabha and the developmental activities of the Panchayat. Of course, being a two-time member, she has some idea about the duties and powers of a ward member. Although Velumani attends the Panchayat committee meetings, she is universally passive in the deliberation. She has never raised any matter on her own for
discussion at the committee meetings, the main reason being her ignorance the popular issues connected with the Panchayat. Although she resides on the Gram Sabha and ‘Oorukoottam’ meetings, she has been in a position to play a leading role in the deliberations or grouping their significance. She is yet to recover from the stage fright that possesses her. Being illiterate, she cannot present ideas coherently and effectively. It is her husband, her party and the tribal head who help her always. She listens to her electors’ demands; she is not competent enough to turn them into reality as she is not equipped with necessary technical know-how regarding formulation and implementation of plans.

Velumani is active in politics because of her husband Mayilsami’s interest and initiative that she involves herself in the local politics. Her attitude towards politics is of indifference and prefers to be an ideal homemaker. She is reluctant to contest once more in the election. However, there is a likelihood her husband insisting on his note contesting again. She lacks the confidence and self-assurance to the fielded to contest a general seat. Despite being a member of ‘Ayalkoottam’ and ‘Kudumbasree’, she is not at all interested in shoulder more significant responsibilities.

Velumani never makes any creative intervention in addressing the issues that beset the ward. Everything is done by her husband and the local unit of the party. What she does is just affixing her signature without comprehending the import of the contents of the paper. She has not been able to address the problem
of drinking water despite having a ward member twice. She does not have the confidence to meet govt personally. Officials and her colleagues, the M.P or MLA to demand actions from their par on various issues. Although she is a tribal member, she had miserably failed to do anything for them. Because of her inefficiency fund allotted to the ward has not been corrected in lighted. Although the gram sabha meets regularly, her role in its functioning is quite insignificant. Seldom does she attends public functions and is incapable of giving necessary directions to the Panchayat officials including the secretary and approaches them twice. She always follows their structures and gets on with the opposition members in a friendly manner. But they often criticise her for not being active in solving the issues of the ward.

Being illiterate, she does not read newspapers or journals nor does not watch the TV to listen to the telecast of the news. She uses a mobile but is ignorant of all of its applications. Despite being a ward member twice, she has not been much enthusiastic about attending training programmes. She does not associate herself with the voluntary organisation, and the ward does not get any help or benefit from them.

Whatever is done is at the initiative of the party and her husband. The tribal heads are the last word in the matter concerning the tribal colony Velumani’s role is merely passive. As she is a tribal woman, she faces discrimination from the part of their members. She seems not to have sought to improve the lot of the
ward in any manner. Although she has been a member twice, it is doubtful whether she received social recognition. She seems to feel that she has alone anything. So that others give her attention. Naturally, official awards have always eluded her. She has always heard only criticisms, and there has been nothing to boost her self-confidence. Only during election time, her community came to support. There has been no support from them in developmental matters.

Velumani has no loan or landed property positively affects her and her husband meets her travelling expense. Occasionally, she receives help from the public. Sufficient funds are not all allotted for the development of her ward. The tribal fund is the sole where in that far development. She does not dare to point out the undesirable activities that often take place in the Panchayat.

**Outcomes**

Velumani Mayilsami cannot claim to have done anything for the uplift of the ward within her limitations even though she had been a twin term member. She has always tried to strike her responsibilities especially because hers has been a position imposed in her. Her behaviour has been such that she describes being placed under the ‘rejection category.’ She has never manifested the verve and confidence of one who has been returned twice as a ward member and has been disillusioned with her role in public affairs.
Case-9 Muttom Panchayat, Idukki District

Bejoy John is a forty-one-year-old member of ward IX of Muttom Gram Panchayat Elamdesam Block Idukki District. He is a graduate who lives with his family. He belongs to the Christian Mallaraya community which is in the upper strata of the ST community. They are educationally and economically forward and avail of the benefits of reservation in more than most other tribal communities. Although a farmer, his monthly income stands at around Rs.30000 and has a concrete house and owns a car. He contested the panchayat election in the Congress (I) ticket and is an office bearer of the party. It is for the second time that he was selected from the ST reserved ward. He has been an activist in the public domain being twin-time panchayat member and graduate, Bejoy John is quite a knowledgeable about the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, the powers of the panchayat committee, formation and implementation of panchayat plans and the functioning of the gram sabha. He has been in a position to execute the functions of the ward member by himself without the help of others. He has been consistently present in the deliberations of the gram panchayat. As a member of the Panchayat Education Standing Committee, he has been successful in his work promoting the education of tribal students. He has never been reluctant to intervene in issues facing the gram panchayat. As the party activist, he could influence the decision of the panchayat committee and put forward creative suggestions on the developmental
programmes in his ward. He has also been very successful in mobilising funds and in the planning. He has been very active in local politics and would like to continue in the scene. He seems to have the confidence to contest the next election from a general seat. He is also active in several local organisations, social platforms and cultural associations.

Bejoy John has a knack for addressing the issues that the ward faces. He is especially interested in formulating various programmes in accord with the views of the voters. He continually tries to be in contact with the higher officials, the MLA and the MP to solve the problems in his ward. Being a member of the tribal community, he mainly concentrates on tribal progress and development. He sees to it that the fund earmarked for his ward to spend up on time without lapse. He reveals his ability to take part in public functions and address public role with confidence. He could give precise answers to any question from the part of the electors. He had a close rapport with government officials and could give them proper and timely directions. He also had good relations with the opposition and sought their co-operation and support for addressing problems.

Being a graduate, he read newspapers and periodicals daily and kept himself informed current developments through the visual and social media. Being computer literate, he has recourse to information technology for speeding up the activities of the panchayat. He has actively attended the training programmes conducted for LSG members. With his mobile phone, keeps in touch
with one and all. Being a member of many NGOs, he has been successful in enlisting their support for rural development. Besides, he has effectively utilised the CSR funds for rural development. Abiding by the directives of his party, Bejoy John has been successful in pursuing clean politics. He maintains cordial relations with party men and tribal heads. Thus, instead of being subjected to their sway he works in tandem with them. It may be emphasised that as a tribal representative, he faced no discrimination form the part of others.

Bejoy John has been very successful his ensuring the effective functioning of the Gram Sabha and people's participation in it. Despite being an awardee of any institutional honours, he has been returned as a member twice who speaks volumes for his popularity. Unlike in many another panchayat in Kerala where the tribal members face much discrimination, Bejoy John has been functioning on equal terms with all other members in his panchayat. He claims that he has not submitted to any control other than that of his party.

Bejoy John is happy that his party, his community and his family support in every manner. More ST Panchayat members are not financially sound. But he faces financial constraints as he has earnings from his landed property. Of course honorarium he is paid as a member in every paltry. He never tolerates the bureaucratic arrogance or corruption. He is particular that the officials abide by his directions.
Outcomes

Bejoy John is an empowered ST ward member unlike the majority in the studied area. It goes to his credit that he has definitive stances, that he can function really and fearlessly and that he can work with conviction in his field of action. The works carried out in his ward mirror his efficiency as a public figure.

Case-10 Maryoor Panchayat, Idukki district

Pappa Kaliyappan is a Member of Maryoor Panchayat and Development Standing Committee Chairperson. The panchayat is situated in Devikulam Block, Idukki district, which is well known for its sugar cultivation. She was elected from tenth ward Meladi, Marayoor panchayath which is a reserved ward for the ST. She belongs to the Hindu Hill pulaya sect, a scheduled tribe. She is aged 45 and has two children, and her husband is a daily wage worker. Besides playing domestic works, she carries out the cleaning work of the panchayat but being a member of the panchayat she could not regularly engage herself in these cleaning work when her only source of income was the paltry honorarium she was paid. Her ancestors had been migrants from Tamil Nadu who arrived at Marayoor seeking work on tea plantations. Pappa, her husband and her children, live in a hut with a tiled roof standing on a piece of land covering just five cents. The Hill palaya tribe is subjected to significant discrimination in every filed by the upper carte Hindus.
Pappa was elected as a member of the local body for the first time in the 2015 elections where she doesn’t have any previous experience in the social field including politics. She was just a simple homemaker with minimum public contacts and was a member of the collectives Ayalkoottam,’ Kudumbasree and MGNREGA. She has confessed to having had a positive attitude towards the national party Indian National Congress (I). The party and the rank file met the election expenses. She is conscious of the fact that she was selected as a candidate by being a member of a tribe enjoying political reservation.

When elected as a ward member of the panchayat, Pappa was ignorant of the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1994, the 73rd Amendment Act of the constitution and its provisions, the powers of the Panchayat and the Gram Sabha. Despite having been a member she still has no much idea about matters connected with the panchayat system. All through her five-year-long tenure as a member, she was helped by government officials, her colleagues and party associates. She had no notion at all about the developmental programmes of the panchayat. Being only partially literate, she could not depend on books to improve her knowledge. She could not regularly attend the training programmes launched by the panchayat top enlighten the members on the various aspects of the Panchayat Raj.

Pappa regularly attended panchayat committee meeting although she could creatively intervene of it in its deliberations and crucial decisions. There was only a silent, passive role. As convening the gram sabha was a legal and official
imperative, it was carried out with the help of party activists. Pappa made a point to be invariably present in the social events in the ward. But she was shy and silent always, of course, she attended party meetings without fail abiding by the instructions of her party. As she is loath to continue to be in politics, she will decline the offer of a seat in the forthcoming elections. She has the feeling that she chose to contest the last election only because it was a reserved seat and that she is not competent enough to contest election from a general position. She is active only women's exclusive SHGs.

Pappa hadn't the confidence to involve herself into the problems her ward faced. Nor could she discern the needs of the people. She could not propose courses of action at her initiative. She hadn't self-assurance to meet higher official and discuss the problems that pose themselves in the ward she does not feel that she could do justice to her electors by taking them into confidence about matters connected with the panchayat. It cannot be said that she could fully avail of the plan fund allocated to her ward. She could not positively respond to the many questions raised in the Gram Sabha. Nor could she provide precise direction to the panchayat officials about the development programmer of her ward.

Access to means of information was practically nil in her settlement. Audiovisual media such as the TV and radio and news are conspicuously absent. Newspapers are it's not there. Though pappa used a mobile phone, she was ignorant its many potentials.
Whatever little she did, she did with the assistance of others. No help was forthcoming from her family. Troubled by stage fright and inhibitions, she could not face her people with courage. She chaired the development standing committee only with the support of her colleagues and officials. She was not mobilised people and enlist help in matters of development. The man rest empowered to work in most circumstances. Everything was done under the auspices of the party. The instructions always found her and orders of the tribal; heads. Although ironically enough, the panchayat officials sought to control her, they were supportive and co-operative. The president and the panchayat secretary took decisions on her behalf also.

Pappa does not have a feeling that she performed her part efficiently as a ward member and standing committee chairperson of the panchayat. She had limits and limitations to work as the guardian of the ward. It seems that the people at large gave her due respect. She was never a recipient of awards or other recognitions.

Having been fielded by her party and having won the election by their support’s had no option but to abide by the directives. The party had its role in every decision taken. In no circumstances, pappa could defy the party whip. It may also be noted that in no way she faced restrictions from the family or relatives, ignorant as they were of public affairs. The discriminations she suffered as a tribal woman from the part of the high caste pained her much. Members of
the dominant castes treated her with contempt. Even the Hill Pulayas seldom came to her help in the implementation of developmental programmes.

Even as she was shouldering the responsibility of a ward member and standing committee chairperson she was in the financial strait, as the only income she had was the honorarium. Holding as she had immense responsibilities, she could not ply any of the work. She had often borrow money to make ends meet. Even the small hut she lives in was built with the help of the panchayat. Financial stringency in the matter of the development of the ward was conspicuous. Pappa hadn't the resourcefulness to mobilise funds for the development of the ward.

If at all specific proposals and suggestions came up from the part of her colleagues and officials ignored them as of no consequence. She failed to coordinate the activities of various departments. When difference cropped up on developmental matters among various government departments, she could intervene as a conciliator. Even when she discerned lack of transparency in the functioning of the panchayat Pappa hadn't the moral courage to point it out, which reveals her lack of empowerment.

**Outcomes**

Pappa Kaliyappan being a member of Panchayat could not make many breakthroughs in any field. As an innocent and honest woman, she happened to find herself in an unfamiliar milieu is owing to unforeseen circumstances.
Although she tried her best to do justice to her responsibilities, she succeeded in it only minimally. Being only partially literate and lacking inexperience of any kind. She could not graduate as an organiser and do much to address the problems of her ward. She had to content with doing only her routine work. Being a tribal woman, she naturally has a complex about it, and therefore all leadership qualities were alien to her. She was troubled and tormented by financial problems, discriminations, lack of social recognition lack of enlightenment and feeling inferiority. It is a pity that despite having been a panchayat member, she failed to equip herself with the qualities that can help her continue in the public domain. It is a moot point whether she could transcend her social and psychological barriers and empower herself. What one finds in Pappa Kaliyappan is that she is model of a person with all the features of people belonging to the ‘tokenism’ category.