

**POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF SCs AND STs:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF TWO
PANCHAYATS IN KERALA**

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that this dissertation entitled "The Political Participation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes : A Comparative Study of Two Panchayats in Kerala", Submitted by Mr. SUDHAKARAN. K.M. is his own work and has not been previously submitted for any degree of this or any other university. We recommend that this dissertation be presented before the examiners for their consideration for the award of M.Phil Degree.

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Abbreviations

Bharatiya Janata Party	:	BJP
Communist Party of India	:	CPI
Communist Party of India [Marxist]	:	CPI[M]
Cong.	:	Congress
Government	:	Govt.
Independent	:	Ind.
Janata dal	:	JD
Left Democratic Front	:	<u>LFD</u>
Member of Parliament	:	M.P.
Member of Legislative Assembly	:	M.L.A.
Not Member of Any Party	:	NMOAP
Panchayati Raj	:	P.R.
Panchayati Raj Institution	:	P.R.I.
Scheduled Caste	:	SC
Scheduled Tribe	:	ST
Socialist Unity Centre of India	:	SUCI
United Democratic Front	:	UDF

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Chapter – I

Introduction

The popular slogans of decentralisation, people's participation, participatory democracy, people's empowerment, especially empowerment of the backward sections of the people including women have gathered momentum during the last decades of this century. There is a universal clamour for taking governance and administration to the grass root level, to the people and for transparency in government and administration and the right to information concerning the affairs of the state. Again this is an era of rising expectations for debureaucratisation through decentralisation, democratisation and citizen participation and citizen control at all levels in decision making, implementation and evaluation. In the backdrop of these aspirations of the people and their struggle for achieving these goals, an increased emphasis is laid on the improvement and participation of the backward and depressed sections of the population, especially the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of the society, to cite the Indian Scenario. It is important because, historically the socio-political awakening of the depressed sections of the society has often been the decisive force for social change.

This thesis is an attempt is to make a micro-level empirical study

of the two panchayats in Kerala to understand and analyse the extent of political participation of the Scheduled Castes (SC) and the Scheduled Tribes (ST). The Human Development Report defines participation as the people having constant access to 'decision making and power', as well as economic participation¹ Therefore in addition to the political participation of the SC and ST, their participation in the process of people's planning movement in the state is also studied. The participation of the SC and ST in the political and planning process at the panchayat level is the problem of this dissertation. A comparative study of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is also undertaken.

This chapter deals with the background of the study and different dimension of political participation. The second Chapter contains the brief history of democratic decentralization in India, in general and Kerala, in particular. This chapter also tries to reveal the salient features of the 73rd Amendment act of the Constitution of India and Kerala Panchayati raj Act 1994. The newly constituted novel programme of people's participation through the planning process in the Grama sabha also has been dealt with.

The Third chapter is a comparative study of the two panchayats Kurichy and Agali. Brief profiles of both these panchayat's have been

¹.

UNDP, Human Development Report 1993, Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

given for this purpose. A micro level study of political participation and political affiliation of the 100 respondents [50 from each panchayat] has been undertaken, using well designed questionnaire. Political participation means participation in the Grama sabha i.e. (i) attendance in the Grama sabha and participation in its deliberation. (ii) membership in one of the various twelve subject committees for each ward and for the panchayats as a whole (iii) convenorship of any committee at the ward or panchayat level and, (iv) to function as a resource person. Political affiliation means (i) membership in any party (ii) sympathy towards any party or (iii) voting for any party. The age, income, education and gender of the respondent are the variables used for understanding their level of political participation and affiliation.

The Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in Kerala State constitute about 12% of the population. This itself is an important factor for any academic exercise regarding their role and participation in the political and development process of the state, because parliamentary democracy at the centre and in the state is based on single majority system both in the case of election to representative bodies and in taking decisions. The Scheduled Castes were untouchables, they were not allowed to use the public roads and paths, or to draw water from public/private wells and to dress fully. The

women were not allowed to cover the upper part of their body. They were illiterates and were like slaves and semi-slaves. Gandhiji called them 'Harijans' even though the Scheduled Castes would now prefer to call themselves "Dalits". The national movement for independence, the social reform and anti-caste movements by Ambedkar, Sree Narayana Guru and Ayyankali in Kerala were instrumental in awakening them and enabling them to stand up for their rights. Ambedkar and many members of the SC embraced Buddhism since they thought that the inhuman caste hierarchy among the Hindus was responsible for the untold miseries of the untouchables. Independence, parliamentary democracy, adult franchise, reservation in representative bodies and in educational institutions and public services, mass media and such other factors promoted socio-political consciousness of the SC and the ST. Of course this progressive measure due to protective discrimination has led to increased political participation among the SC and the ST.

To begin with the Scheduled Castes organised themselves into respective caste organisations. Later they have joined political parties of their own choice or formed their own parties, the Republican party and the Bahujan Samaj party are examples. All these promoted horizontal and vertical communication among the SC and helped

mobilization of their masses for their socio-economic and political ends. Despite these developments they are still quite backward sections of the society, and remain victims of divide & rule by the organised, entrenched elite groups. Even in the formulation of development projects designed for them, they could not play the decisive role due to socio-economic and politico-administrative reasons.

Democratic decentralisation as embedded in the Kerala Panchayat Act, 1994 on the lines of the 73rd Constitution [Amendment] Act, 1992, and the people's planning process pioneered by the present Kerala government in 1996, have contributed to more active and more enthusiastic political people's participation in the planning process at the panchayat level. This study examines to what extent this new scenario has affected the participation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the political process and in the Planning process at the grass-root level. Of course, it is to be remembered that decentralization and the new planning process at the panchayat level have been introduced in the existing socio-economic and political set up.

In this connection it will be only appropriate to refer, very briefly, to the process of decentralization and the process of planning, in our country. Gandhi said " Indian independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or Panchayat at having

full power My idea of village swaraj is that it is a complete republic..... Here there will be perfect democracy based on individual freedom".²Gandhiji's idea did not find expression in the constitution except in the form of Article 40 which enjoined the 'Indian state to take steps to organise village panchayats'. But it remained dormant. In 1952 Community Development Programme was launched to remove the backwardness of the Indian Village and to improve its shape. People's cooperation and participation, the king-pin of the system did not emerge to the desired extent, and as a result, neither did development take place nor did development administration can take a firm shape.³ The history of decentralization from the appointment of Balwant Rai Mehta study Team to the 73rd constitution [Amendment] Act, 1992 clearly witnessed the glaring absence of political will and influence of bureaucracy⁴. However, the 73rd constitution [Amendment] Bill, 1992 has become a landmark in the process of decentralization. The Kerala Panchayat Act 1994 is a manifestation of this spirit inspite of its drawbacks.⁵

The movement for people's planning is also unprecedented in

². Gandhi M.K., " My Idea Of Village Swaraj". Harijan, 26 July 1942.

³. Iqbal Narain, "Political Dimensions of development" (1994) Rawat Publishers, New Delhi, P-122.

⁴. See Chapter III, PART A for a full discussion of the process of decentralization in India and Kerala.

⁵. See Ibid for details.

India. It has opened up a new vista in decentralised planning from below i.e. grass-root level planning, or people's planning. All the political parties which have a mass base in the various panchayats have actively participated in the process. The political parties were instruments in the interest articulation, goal achievement among the other things. They play an active role in the present political system in the people and participating them in the planning process. Though M.N. Roy, Jayaprakash Narayan and others have advocated partyless democracy especially at the local level, it is highly improbable to keep off the parties from the panchayat administration especially in the context of devolution of more power to them. The Ashok Mehta Committee in PRIs has actually recommended that political parties have to be active in the process of rural local government.

Today political parties are omnipresent. They are the instruments of articulation of interest, socialization, goal achievement and better organisation. The panchayat council is elected on party lines. The Panchayat President is also elected on party lines. More powers, greater autonomy and greater participation and control given to the rural government through decentralization in planning and development call for more active and more organised role for political parties, party based organizations and voluntary organizations. The

Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes now fight for their interest mainly not through caste organisations which only leads to sanskritization, but through political parties. Further after the two stages of socialization through caste organization, and political participation, the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes or Dalits have organised themselves into political parties of their own like the Bahujan Samaj party (BSP). Some radical sections of the Dalits have founded non-partisan, non-traditional intracaste voluntary organization. But all these four types of participation co-exist and function simultaneously in the same society with varying degrees of influence and control over the concerned clientele. Here we are concerned with the political participation which is meant for the participation in the political process through a party of choice by the participant.

Political participation can be defined as the involvement of members of the society in the decision making process of the system.⁶ Political participants are those individuals who are oriented to the input structure and process and engage, or view themselves as potentially engaging in the articulation of demands and decision

⁶. G.A Almond and G.B Powell (Ir) Comparative politics. A development Approach. American Publishing Co, New Delhi, 1996 (p.53)

making.⁷ It is assumed that political participant of the democratic political system should be aware of his/her role in the political structure and more especially in the political input structure consisting of parties and interest and interest groups.⁸

Lesser Milbrath gives the following components of the hierarchy of political participation. This hierarchy is intended to cover the whole range of political participation and is applicable to all types of political systems.⁹

Hierarchy Political Participation

- Holding public or party Office,
- Being a candidate for office,
- Soliciting political funds,
- Attending meetings of the party,
- Becoming an active member of the party,
- Attending political campaigns,
- Attending political rallies,
- Making monetary contributions to the parties,
- Contracting public officials/political leaders
- Wearing a button or sticker of party,

⁷. Ibid

⁸. Ibid.

⁹. Lester.W. Mibrath, Political participation.Rand MC Nalley and Co, Chicago, 1965 pp 18-19

Attempting to talk another into voting in a certain way,

Initiating political discussions,

Voting,

Exposing oneself to political stimuli,

The most important is that those who do participate in most forms of political activating constitute a minority of the members of the society. Democracy in the system is decision making in which all members or citizens play an active role in the continue our process is inherently impossible,¹⁰ It is assumed that differences in political participation can be related to demographic, socio-economic ethnic, caste and religions characteristics. Their analytical value is relevant to the degree that they reveal motivational and socio structural uniformities¹¹

There are clear cut differences in the form of political participation in the political system. There are of course differences between various countries, but the basic patterns are similar. Milbath suggest that political participation varies in relation to four major factors, viz(i) the extent which the individual receives the political stimuli; (ii) the individual's personal characteristics and (iii) the individual's social characteristics and (iv) the political setting or

¹⁰ I bid

¹¹ H.C.Upreti, Youth politics in India, Printwell publishers, Jarpur, 1987, p.45

environment in which the individual finds himself.¹²

Political participation also affect socialization. Political learning is a consequence of the organisation of motivation around the perception of appropriate values of affiliation and participation. The idea of socialization centers about how the individual is introduced into and made part of an ongoing society and how he/she learns how to function within it¹³. In short a person's social characteristics such as his socioeconomic status, his racial/ethnic/caste/religious group, his age, sex, whether he belongs to voluntary organizations and so on are likely to influence his political participation. For encouraging citizen-participation a psychological involvement is also necessary. Psychological involvement is interest and concern of citizens in public affairs and politics¹⁴. According to Lipset one of the important concomitant of citizen participation in politics is the extent to which citizens feel involved in the Political process.¹⁵

In Kerala people's planning movement was introduced after the introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions in 1994. Therefore

¹². Lester W. Milbrath, Political Participation, Rand McNally and Co. Chicago, 1965. pp.26-27.

¹³. David E. Apter, Introduction to Political Analysis, Prentice-hall (India) New Delhi. 1978 p-277.

¹⁴. Sneha Latha Pande, Indian Politics. A Study of People's involvement. Archiever Publishers. New Delhi 1988, P.69.

¹⁵. Martin Lipset, Political Men, Arnold Heineman [India] New Delhi, 1973. Chapter 6.

participation in grama sabha is also included under political participation. The introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions is significant in terms of the extent of decentralization envisaged. Decentralization has actually increased the possibility and extent of citizen participation in deciding the development programmes and implementing them. People's planning constitutes not only the process planning at the grass-root level, it is also part of the political process of the Panchayat. All the political parties at the panchayat level have participated in the process of people's planning. Since the movement was pioneered by the Left Democratic Government led by the CPI(M), non participation of other parties could have been detrimental to them, particularly for those parties who have a mass base at the grass-root level.

Here it is necessary to give a historical background of the SC and ST political participation and its nature and content.. Even before independence, the Scheduled Castes in Kerala have rallied themselves around caste based organisations. Among the SC it was Pulayas, who were mostly agricultural labourers in a semi-slave status, who founded their organization, "Sadujana Paripalana Yogam" in 1907 following the organisation of 'Sree Narayana Darma Paripalana Yogam of the

Ezhava in 1903.¹⁶ Other sections of the SC&ST were quite backward in their social consciousness when compared to Pulayas. Now almost all the scheduled have their own caste organisations.

Individuals have been active in the Travancore-state Congress, the Communist Party of Kerala, and Praja socialist party, ever since the establishment of these parties. After independence both the tendencies of caste based organisation for reservation and other measures of 'protective discrimination' and political participation by joining and working in different political parties have continued. Going further the establishment of the Bahujan Samaj party [BSP] [the Republican party was the first one of this kind] a lot of Scheduled Caste members formed units of the party in different parts of Kerala thus envisaging an independence party of their own.

Political participation has facilitated horizontal communication among the castes in the Scheduled Caste, on the one hand and Scheduled Caste and other castes on the other. Integration has been taking place vertically also across caste boundaries, politics and whole governmental structure of patronage and development have placed various Scheduled Caste and Tribes in to higher levels of state and

¹⁶. Sukumaran Nair, 'Rural Politics and Government in Kerala. Kerala Academy of Political Science, Karyavattom, Trivandrum, 1976. p.183.

national organisation. The same is true of the educational, institutional, the administrative structure and the market system of economy. A direct effect has been gradual replacement of hereditary traditional type caste leaders by the politicians and disintegration of the rural government structure.

Decentralization as much may not increase the participation of the different sections of the population particularly the SC and ST in the present socio-economic and political setting. Naturally the Scheduled Caste members attend the grama Sabhas and contributing to its deliberations perhaps mostly on matters regarding welfare projects for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. But only few of them may be recruited as members of the task force, convenors of the subject committees of the ward level and especially in panchayat level. This representation may fall short of this population and the urgency and intensity of their problems. But in problems other than process of people's planning the SC and ST through their caste organisations and political parties of their preference, may be able to put up a fight for the solution of their problems at the grass root levels. The office of the president in certain panchayats, depending on the size of the population is reserved for the SC and ST both men and women.

The extent and constant of participation¹⁷ will depend not only on decentralization, but also on the ideology and political will of the parties, the capacity for the party system to co-operate and control the bureaucracy with a view to be bureaucratization and more people's control, the availability of panchayat funds and finally the commitment of the political system to the demands of the people especially the backward sections against the vested interest of the entrenched elite groups.

Finally people's participation is quite a slippery term. It means different things to different persons, power holders and institutions. As Boaden et al have pointed out, in the case of local government in England, though there have been great moves towards public involvement in local services provision in recent years, little has been achieved by way of fundamental shift in power, a shift which implicitly underlay the ideas of radical proponents of participation In the end, elite perspectives have won out, and participation has served the purposes of building up a consensus for the proposals of those in power, there by legitimising them.¹⁸To develop effective approaches to local

¹⁷. Danny Burns, Rob in bleton, and Paul Hoggett Mac Millian, The Politics of Decentralization. Mac Millan London, 1994 P-154.

¹⁸. Boaden, N. Goldsmith, M. Hampton, W and Stronger P, Public Services in Local Government, Longman [London, 1982]. p.179.

citizen participation and empowerment, it is important to reflect carefully on the notions of choice, participation and control.¹⁹ The dissertation has the following objectives. Democratisation under the Kerala Panchayat Act, 1994 and people's planning process have contributed to the participation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. How far does political participation depend on the sociology of the participates? Whether the SC and ST are still alienated from the mainstream political process. A comparative analysis of the political participation of the SC and ST in two panchayats in different socio-economic and political setting is made with a view to highlight the essential criteria for eliciting participation. Whether the projects and programmes for the welfare of the SC and the STs are decided and controlled by themselves? The study also inquires into whether the status quo is more or less maintained inspite of the high talk of decentralised democracy and people's planning. Another problem which the study attempts to find out is whether the party system and bureaucracy are committed to the cause of the SC and ST.

Review of Literature

During the last few decades there have been a number of works done on the various aspects of the Scheduled Casts and Scheduled

¹⁹. See Chapter III PART B for a discussion of people's participation and its different dimension.

Tribes in the different parts of India. But most of them are sociological, anthropological and some of them are political in its nature. However, it is also necessity of the time to give more or equal attention should be given to the political participation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the political system of the society. As Aristotle, Man is a political animal by nature and his political activity may take place either explicitly or implicitly within his own group. So the nature of political participation also varies from person to person and time to time and there are other variables like, income, gender, age, social status etc. also affects the degree of political participation. Following are some of the studies as the different aspects of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Ghanshyam Shah's 'Politics of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe' in his study analyses the political awareness and behaviour of SC and ST. His findings were that the last two decades the political participation of SC and ST has increased considerably in the 1971 Lok Sabha election of Gujarat. He includes that political parties have failed in lessening the gap between the deprived communities and upper castes at top political participation.

Padmini Narayanan's 'Reservation in Politics and Scheduled Caste Elite' finds that the present system of political reservation benefits

only the SC elites and not SC masses. She concludes that the SC representative are in a better position to represent SC's interests but as it exist to days system has not works in their favours.

Barbara R. Joshi's 'Democracy in Search of Equality : Untouchable Politics and Indian Social Change' analysed the role of SC legislatores finds reservation for SC and ST is the major factot their political activities and the provision for reserved seats is not enough for the SC to reduce their political dependence on the higher Castes.

Kancha Ilaiah's 'SCs and Sts : Systemic Exploitation' analysed the serious socio-economic question raised by the 29th Report of the Commission for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes are likely to be relegated to the background by the rise of militant Hinduism and the recommendating made by it are likely to go unheeded by a system built on the exploitation of SCs and STs. He suggested that, it would be useful if the report is transferred and made available to people regional languages at a cheeper rate.

The unpublished Thesis, 'Political participation of SC : A case study of two Reserved Assembly Constituencies in UP 1987-1991' of Sri - Subedar Singh Arya pointed out that the dependence of various political parties ^{the} by Scheduled Caste has been major problem in the political consolidation of these deprived sections of the society. He

concludes that the provision of reserved constituency for the SC, political development does not lead them to create an independent identity for themselves in politics. Social and Economic transformation of the Society in general and SC in particular alone can help the SC to attain basic rights and necessities, which, in fact, was the foremost goal of our Constitution [unpublished Thesis, Centre for Political Studies, J.N.U., 1992].

Another unpublished dissertation 'Political Participation of SC : A case study of three Gram Panchayat elections in 1994 in Haryana of Sri Narendra Kumar 1996, found that political conscious accelerates the fesibility of secular politics. It was observed that caste, of course, is a significant factor in village punchayat but personally of the candidate has a greater impact on the politics choices. The political parties were not involved in the Gram Panchayat election. It was found that representative are not very much interested in functioning of the punchayats [unpublished Dissertation Centre for Political Studies, JNU, New Delhi, 1996].

The other unpublished thesis of C.Thomas analysed 'the role of matter programmes in the political socialization on Scheduled Tribes in Attappady on Kerala' mentioned about their lack of awareness in the governmental programmes that was because of the lack of their

economic, educational as well as the political unfitness in the society [unpublished Thesis, Karyavattom, University of Kerala, Trivandrum 1987].

Another unpublished thesis by Mr. K.K. Mathew's 'Impact of Welfare programmes on the life of Scheduled castes in Kerala - A Case Study of Pulayas' mentioned about their higher involvement in the welfare programmes among SC. And pointed out that all these welfare programmes are not sufficient for their development and change and most of the programme were not known by these communities because of the failure of the Government machinery. [unpublished Thesis, Kerala University, Karyavattom, 1991].

Another very good unpublished dissertation of Mr. Vijayanand S.M.'s People's Participation in Poverty Reduction Programmes- A case study of Integrated Tribal Development Project [ITDP]. Attappady, Kerala, goes to the detailed analysis of the tribal problems in Attappady. He pointed out the various barriers of the participation of tribals in the political system. The tribal need to be conscientised, organised and their traditional skill strengthened. The ranking of other options are (i) Ensure economic development with special emphasis on solving the land issue (ii) Select dedicated officials for assignments in Attappady (iii) Make Panchayati Raj functional. And he analysed major

problems faced by the tribal community in the Attappady. It was a recent very good work on the issues of tribals in Attappady [unpublished Dissertation Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram 1996].

The above mentioned studies does not cover the political participation of SC and ST in the Grama sabha of the Panchayat especially after the 73rd Ammendment Act and its over all effect in the panchayat's functioning. It is this aspect that I hope to highlight with my micro-level study of political participation of SC and ST in the Panchayati Raj, as well as in the Grama sabha in Kerala.

Methodology

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The methodology followed in mainly empiricial and analytical. It is a micro study of two villages of Kurichy and Agali in Kerala. The study is historical so far as it refers to the part milieu of the SC and ST and also to the history of decentralization. Primary data was collected by interviewing a selected sample representing a cross-section of the SC and ST [50 each] on the basis of a questionnaire and by interviewing leaders such as panchayat members, panchayat presidents, officials of the PRIs, convenors of the subject committees as the ward and panchayat level, party leaders, resource persons on different subjects. Secondary data consists of Panchayât Acts, Development

Report of the two panchayats , Reports and orders on PRIs published by the government, the publications of the Kerala Planning Board on people's planning, published works on Decentralization, political participation and unpublished theses and Articles in the subject.

Decentralization as such, may not increase the participation of the different sections of the population particularly the SC and ST in the present socio-economic and political setting. The Scheduled Caste members attended the Grama Sabha and contribute to its deliberations mainly on matters regarding welfare projects for their communities. But only few of them may be recruited as members of the task force, convenors of the subject committees at the ward level and especially, panchayat level. This representation may fall short of their proportion in the population, and the urgency and intensity of their problems. But in problems other than process of people's planning the SC and ST may be able, through their caste organisations and political parties of their preference, put up a fight for the solution of their problems at the grass root levels. The office of the president in certain panchayats, depending on the size of the population is reversed for the SC and ST both men and women.

Chapter 2

Panchayati Raj and Democratic Decentralisation in Kerala

The 1st part of the chapter is an endeavour to look into the process of decentralization in India, especially the salient features of the 73rd Amendment Act. The IInd part tries to look how the village Panchayats prevailed in ancient Kerala during the British period and after independence, and the various steps were taken by the Governments in Kerala in the process of decentralisation. Finally it goes to the important features of the Kerala Panchayati Raj Act of 1994 and its effect as a new experiment in the participatory planning in the process of decentralization in the Grama sabha and its various steps. It is essential to do so, because decentralization is the necessary condition for people's participation in the real sense. Decentralization involves devolution of power which enables the citizen to participate in the process of policy making, implementation and control.

The term decentralization signifies a relation of control from time to time by higher authorities through the downward flow of power and gradual simplification of administrative process. The central theme of decentralization is delegation of power, operated in a system of socio-political organisation. The main focus of decentralization is

democratization of power. Democratization means the participation of people in the decision-making in organisations, institutions and agencies. Thus dispersal of control over power is main concern of decentralization.¹ On other hand decentralization is a twin process of 'decentralization and devolution' where by the government diverts itself of certain duties and responsibilities and devolves them to some authority at the lower level². Decentralization is instrumental in involving people through their direct participation, or participation of their representatives in decision-making and implementation of development programmes.

Decentralization without democratisation would only lend to bureaucratization³. Thus democratic Decentralization as a political concept aims at widening the area of people's participation, authority and autonomy through dispersion or devolution of powers to people's representative. Organization from the top level to the lower levels, in

¹. B.M. Verma, Rural Leadership in Welfare Society - A Study in Social Status and Role performance, Mittal Publication, New Delhi 1994, P.22.

². Sakunthala Sharma, Grass root Politics and Panchayati Raj, Deep & Deep Publishers, New Delhi 1994, P.36.

³. Government of Kerala, Administrative Reforms Committee Report, Vol I, Thiruvananthapuram, 1958, P.11.

all the triple dimensions of political decision making, financial control and administrative management with least interference and control from higher levels.⁴ Decentralization and democratization go hand in hand and facilitates people's participation. Another important problem in this connection is the empowerment of backward sections of the society including women.

I

Democratic Decentralization in India

The process of decentralization in Kerala cannot be studied in isolation from that in India. Before the advent of the British, the local assemblies of Kerala had an identity of their own, yet they were not basically different from their counterparts elsewhere in India. During the British period and also after Independence the various states have been following the central pattern. Hence a brief examination of the process of decentralization in India is required as the background to the process of decentralization in Kerala.

Panchayat is a very ancient institution in India. It was not democratic in the modern sense and consisted mainly of elders of different castes. There were in fact, panchayats for each caste which enforced caste rules and codes of conduct. While Kings and rulers

⁴. Iqbal Narain, 'Democratic Decentralization, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, 1981, pp. 15-16.

changed, the village and panchayats continued as basic unchanging units.⁵

Before the British came, local governments existed in India in the form of village communities and governments. In 1830, Charles Metacalf, stated, "They seem to last where nothing else lasts. Dynasty after dynasty tumbles down revolution succeeds revolution; Hindu, Pathan, Mughal, Sikh, English, are masters in turn, but the village communities remain the same".⁶

In Mughal times, there was a 'kotwal' or town governor who looked after magisterial, police and fiscal matters. He had plenty of power and authority to do as he pleased. He maintained a few simple municipal services for visiting traders, on whose income his income depended.⁷

During the British rule the government was unitary, only bureaucracy was greatly decentralised. Lord Lawrence's resolution was to leave as much as possible of the business of the country to be done

⁵. 'Status of Panchayati Raj in the State of India 1994'. Institute of Social Science, New Delhi, 1995, p.105.

⁶. Padma Ramachandran, Public Administration in India, National Book Trust, India, New Delhi, 1996. p.190.

⁷. Ibid.

by the people themselves.⁸

In 1824, Thomas Munro, governor of Madras had objected to the proposal to absorb the village 'watch' of Madras into the regular police. Earlier, in the Presidency towns of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras, Justices of Peace were appointed to levy taxes on land houses, and to provide for scavenging, police and maintenance of roads. By Act XI of 1845, administrative power was vested in an Indian Justice with the senior magistrate of police as chairman. In 1856, Act XIV was made for the Conservancy of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay towns, with three commissioners in each of these towns. The 120 justices in Calcutta were given very wide powers. A Special Controller of Accounts was appointed in Bombay. Power was given to levy town dues, while the town was to pay part of the cost of constructing the waterworks. Madras town was divided into eight wards with four councillors appointed to look after each ward.⁹

Lord Mayo's Resolution of 1870 advocated decentralization so as to involve more and more Indian at the levels best suited for them that is municipal administration. Lord Rippon's Resolution of 1882 was to be interpreted by the provincial governments according to local conditions

⁸. Ibid.

⁹. Ibid. p.191.

Limited powers were entrusted in the field of education, watch and ward, health, sanitation, poor relief and roads in particular, to panchayat boards, 'taluk' boards [intermediate level] and district boards.¹⁰ They started as government nominated bodies but subsequently, the number of elected members increased during the period 1932-37.¹¹ This was the direct result of the Decentralization Commission Report in 1909, and the Government of India Act of 1919 and 1935. The Government of India Act of 1935 separated the Legislative and executive functions even though in a very limited way at the Centre and provinces¹².

Following the report of Royal Commission on Decentralization [1909] and the Government of India Act of 1919, the laws regarding panchayats were revised in 1920 and panchayats become legal entities losing their traditional prerogatory powers.¹³ The British Government adopted the policy of controlling the local government and administration through the officials of different departments of the provincial government posted at district level.

¹⁰. Ibid. pp.193-94.

¹¹. Ibid. p.194.

¹². Ibid. p.194.

¹³. 'Status of Panchayati Raj in the State of India 1994, Institute of Social Science, New Delhi, 1995, 106.

The founding fathers of the constitution of India have given the panchayat a place only in the Directive Principles of State Policy [unjusticiable] under Article 40, according to which, 'The state shall take steps to organise village panchayat and endow on them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government.'

After Independence, at every turn so far, after initial success, the movement has weakened. To increase food production, 'interalia' the country started the Community Development Programme in 1952, with 55 community development blocks, each having 100-120 villages and a population of 3 Lakhs. Each block had technical officers in agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperation and village level worker and a fund of Rs. 65 Lakh for three years.¹⁴ The idea of the block was to promote people's participation in their development in a range of activities from literacy and each certain to the setting up of women's groups (Mahila Samaj) to agricultural advice, Social Welfare and general rural upliftment. It was very good experiment while it lasted, but it did not go far, and in any case did not touch the aspect of local self-government.

Balwant Rai Mehta Committee

In the Second Five Year Plan period the Planning commission

¹⁴. Padma Ramachandran, 'Public Administration in India', National Book Trust, New Delhi, 1996. pp.196-97.

realised the importance of the people participation in the self-governing bodies for the implementation of local programmes. During the first and Second five Year Plan period the achievements of other Community Development Programmes were not satisfactory as envisaged due to the lack of people's participation. Community Development Programmes were viewed basically as "people's programmes with government participation" and not as 'government's programmes with people's participation'. The Balwantrai Mehta committee was set up by the committee on Plan Projects of the National Development Council in 1957 to investigate into the reorganization of district administration. It recommended the setting up of a system of 'Panchayati Raj' with the district level 'Zilla Parishads' coordinating and supervising the lower two tiers at the block (panchayat samiti) and village levels, which would be democratically elected bodies. Panchayat samitis would be elected through indirect election from village panchayats. The Zilla Parishad was to examine and approve the longest of panchayat samitis in the district, distribute the funds made available by the government among the panchayat samitis, coordinate and consolidate block plans in the district, and be the link between the government and the panchayat samitis.

In the report, the commission has given greater importance to developmental tasks as well as administrative and political ones. It also

emphasised the importance of devolution of revenue to the local bodies. The non-development of own sources of revenue proved to be the greatest stumbling block in the performance of the assigned tasks. This led to a mounting pressure on district level bureaucracy and ultimately it led to hostile attitude of bureaucracy towards grass root institutions. The MLAs & MPs started looking at the representatives from the Panchayati Raj institutions as political rivals. At the sametime it helped in narrowing the gap between bureaucracy and the people.

The elections were to be held on indirect basis¹⁵. There recommendations came into being an April 1, 1958. "The creation of the Panchayati Raj in 1959, with the object of entrusting the authority and responsibility of rural development to rural people was limited only as an innovation but also as a revolution."¹⁶

In January 1959, the National Development Council (NDC) endorsed the introduction of panchayati Raj. There were other committees also which favoured the district as the proper level next to the state for being the centre of local administration, both from a historical point of view and from the reality that planning can be done

¹⁵. Balwant Rai Mehta : Study Team on Community Development Projects, Vol. I, New Delhi, 1959. p.20.

¹⁶. Henry Meddi, Dr... A Study of Rural Local Government in India, Longman, London, 1970. p.3.

better with the expertise available at the district level. They strongly urged for district government by holding elections at the district level.

Immediately after NDC's approval, the three-tier system of panchayati raj was introduced in Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Gujarat, Haryana, Madras (Tamil Nadu), Maharashtra, Karnataka (Mysore), Orissa, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The way the system worked differed widely from state to state depending on the powers and autonomy they had, and the efficiency with which they could function. There was great interest in development matters and in the 'new' system, but it did not succeed, as production did not go up at all. New programmes such as the Intensive Agricultural District Programme, the Intensive Agricultural Area Programme, and High-Yielding Varieties Programme were started, to make up for lost time and opportunity.

Asoka Mehta Committee

The decline of Panchayat Raj institutions in the 60's led to the appointment of Ashok Mehta Committee in 1970. This committee recommended a two-tier structure, Zilla Parishad at district level and Mandal Panchayat for a group of villages with population of 20,000 to 30,000 persons.

The Asoka Mehta Committee felt, however that the 'Panchayati Raj' ---institution could have survived well if they had been encouraged

by entrusting responsibility as a 'vanguard of development in village India,' as a in Maharashtra and Gujarat.¹⁷

In the two tier system the district becomes the first point of decentralization below the state level and, secondly, a grouping of a number of villages to constitute 'mandal panchayats'. States with a three tier system could generally get converted to the two tier system.¹⁸

The state government did not possess the absolute power to supercede Panchayati Raj institutions on political grounds and it was recommended, that in case the institution was superceded, elections were to take place within six months. The district was to be the first point of decentralization under popular supervision below the state level and favoured the official participation of political parties at all the levels of Panchayat elections. Seats were to be reserved for the SCs and STs in proportion to their population.

It is felt that the committee perceived the approach to panchayat Raj in narrow terms. It gave an impression that panchayat Raj is more an administrative contrivance whose justification is only in terms of rural development. It might have been more secular if panchayat Raj

¹⁷. Padma Rama Chandran, 'Public Administration in India', National Book Trust, New Delhi. 1996. p.201.

¹⁸. Ibid. p.202.

institutions or rural local governments were regarded like its counterparts at the state and the central level as a system of government having a measure of autonomy in the matters of functioning and existing in its own rights. New legislation was enacted in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh without planning or money (or where there was money, there was misuse). Amidst the growing lack of faith, the 'panchayat raj' had nothing to cling on to except in West Bengal (because of the strong political will and political decentralization which has made the bureaucrats fall in line).

Recent Developments Leading to 73rd and 74 Constitutional Amendments

Recommendations along the same lines were made by the G.V.K. Rao Committee in 1985, and the L.M. Singhvi Committee in 1987, as also the Chief Ministers' Conference in Panchayat Raj institutions held in May 1989. The Government of India brought in the constitution [64 Amendment] Bill. It was passed by the Lok Sabha on 10th August 1989. This was a comprehensive Bill covering all the vital factors ignored till date, but it could not be passed in the Rajya Sabha, so this could not be worked out. In 1990, a new initiative was taken by the Janata Dal Government to strengthen the Panchayat Raj institutions. It was brought before the conference of the Chief Minister's held in June 1990, the Conference endorsed the proposals for the introduction

of a fresh Constitutional Amendment Bill. The Constitutional Amendment Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 7th September 1990. This Bill however, was not even taken up for consideration.

Before the new constitutional amendments came about in 1992, many advocated (as necessary, though not sufficient conditions) what should go into them, such as real distribution of functions and funds to local bodies. Decentralization of some of the Centre's functions to the state governments was suggested, but the makers did not provide for elected bodies below the state level. Towards the end of 1987, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi held a series of workshops with district collectors to review the working of panchayati raj. Based on these discussions, a paper was prepared by the ministry of personnel which was discussed at a meeting of chief secretaries in July 1988. The Consultative Committee of parliament to the ministry of personnel had also made some recommendations. The prime minister felt convinced that a constitutional amendment to provide for compulsory, timely and periodic elections to local government institutions, and enlistment of appropriate functions to them, along with funds, was urgently needed. The introduction of the 64th Constitution Amendment Bill was an abortive attempt, for it was understood or misunderstood as aimed at

encroaching on state autonomy.¹⁹

Finally, the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments, were passed in 1993 (separately), making it compulsory for all states (except for some specified hill and tribal regions and states) to have three-tier decentralization below the state level with compulsory elections every five years to the different tiers. There is to be a State Election Commission to prepare electoral rolls and hold elections of panchayats, and a State Finance Commission is to be appointed once every five years. The law enacted by the state will provide for levy of taxes, duties and fees, and allocation of taxes and grants to panchayats. Audit arrangements would be finalized by the state legislature

The concept of Panchayati Raj has come to be accepted as an extension of democracy upto the village. It is often said that the more exercise of the right to elect representatives to the central and the state legislatures is not enough for the ordinary citizen. The concept of participation of the people might be considered as an ideological and structural measure to given legitimacy to the people's participation.

73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992

To make Panchayat Raj institutions more meaningful, the power should be exercised by the people at the grass-root level. The 75th

¹⁹. Ibid. 205.

constitutional Amendment Bill was passed by the Lokh Sabha on December on 22nd 1992, and by the Rajya Sabha on December 23rd, 1993 and got the ratification of 17 states within record time. It emerged as the 72nd constitutional Amendment Act with President's assent on 20th April and came into force on April 24, 1993.

Salient features of this Act

1. There shall be a Grama Sabha in each village exercising such powers and performing such function at the village level as the legislature of a state may provide by law.
2. Panchayat shall be constituted in every state at the village, intermediate and district levels, thus bringing about uniformity in Panchayat Raj structure. However, the states having a population not exceeding 20 Lakhs have been given the option of not having any panchayat at the intermediate level.
3. Reservation of seats for SCs and STs has been provided in proportion to their population at each level. Not less than one-third of the total membership has been reserved for women and these seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a panchayat. Similar reservation have been made in respect of the office of the chairman also.
5. A uniform term of five years has been provided for the panchayat Raj institutions and in the event of their supersession, elections

to constitute the body should be completed before the expiry of six months from the date of dissolution.

6. The state legislatures have been given the power to authorise the panchayat to levy, collect and appropriate suitable local taxes and also provide for making grants-in-aid to the panchayat from the consolidated fund of the concerned state.
7. A finance Commission has to be constituted once in every five years to review the financial position of the panchayats and to make suitable recommendations to the state on the distribution of funds between the state and local bodies.
8. With a view to ensuring continuity, it has been provided in the Act that all panchayats existing immediately before the commencement of this Amendment Act will continue till the expiry of their duration unless dissolved by a resolution to that effect passed by the concerned state legislature.
9. The state Legislatures bring in necessary amendments to their panchayat acts within a maximum period of one year from the commencement of this Amendment Act so as to conform to the provision contained in the constitutions.²⁰

²⁰. Prof. S.N. Mishra and Sweta Mishra, 'Future Panchayati raj after 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, Kurukshtra, New Delhi, 1994. pp.26-29.

II

Process of Decentralization in Kerala

Traditionally, there were self-governing units at the village level in different parts of the state, exercising different degrees of control over the lives of the people. These institutions were not democratic in the modern sense and consisted mainly of elders of different castes. There were, in fact, panchayats for each area which enforced caste rules and codes of conduct. The panchayats and the people of the village did not, of course, have any voice in the overall governance of the territory or the region. While kings and rulers changed, the villages and the panchayats continued as basic, unchanging units.

Village society lived and functioned on caste lines. The Brahmins lived in 'gramams', the martial castes [Nairs] lived in 'tharas', the lower castes [Ezhava] in 'karas' and the untouchables in 'cheris' and 'muris'. The self-governing unit in gramams was the sub unit called 'Kazhagam', which elected a chief executive and an assistant to him for a period of three years. The other communities had similar arrangements. In course of time, the thara of the Nair community came to occupy the dominant position. The representative body in the thara was the 'koottam (literally meaning 'gathering'), which enjoyed considerable legal powers. The other caste panchayats also continued, but with their powers limited to observance of caste rules. The

Kootam was the base on which both civil and judicial administration at the local level was built.²¹

Standing at the threshold of the 21st century when citizen empowerment remains a key theme of local government, a retrospective analysis of the rural local government in Kerala would remind us that the Kerala Panchayat Bill, 1968 and the Kerala District Council Bill, 1959 taken together constitutes the first major and significant landmark in the process of decentralization and democratisation in the true sense of the terms. Therefore a detailed study of the process of legislation in rural local government of Kerala till then will not be of much value except from a historical point of view.

The first six panchayats in the former Travancore state were formed during 1930-31 under the Travancore Village Panchayat Act, 1925 and the first village Unions Act, 1939.²² The first five panchayats of the east while state of Cochin were constituted in 1914 under the Cochin Village Panchayat Act, 1914.²³ The important pieces of legislation in the Malabar region were the Madras Local Boards Act,

²¹. V. Ramachandran, Kerala, in Status of Panchayati Raj in the States of India. 1994. Institute of Social Science, New Delhi, 1995. p.106.

²². T.K.Velu Pillai. Travancore Manual. Vol. IV. Trivandrum 1940. pp. 244 and 346.

²³. Report on the Administration of Travancore-Cochin for the year 1124. M.E. [17.8.1948 to 16.8.1949]. Ernakulam, 1950, pp.93-95.

1984. The Madras Village Panchayat Act, 1920 and the Madras Local Boards Act, 1920. In July 1949 the Travancore and Cochin states were integrated to form the Travancore Cochin state and at that time there were 197 Village unions and seven panchayats in the Travancore state and 100 panchayats in the Cochin state.²⁴ The Travancore-Cochin Panchayat Act, 1950 unified the rural local government system in Travancore-Cochin. In the same year Madras Village Panchayato Act was passed and the panchayats in the Malabar area were governed under it. Just before the formation of the Kerala state on 1st November 1956, the Travancore Cochin State ad 495 panchayats and the Malabar area which became part of Kerala had 399 panchayats. Thus the Kerala state began with 894 panchayats.²⁵

In 1957 when the Balwant Rai Mehta study team was at work at all India level, the first elected government in Kerala came into power in April. This government gave top priority to administrative reforms and constituted the Administrative Reforms Committee leaded by the then chief Minister E.M.S Namboodiripad. One of the terms of reference of the Committee was to suggest methods for democratisation of the

²⁴. Ibid.

²⁵. See Administration Report of the Panchayats Department for the year 1955-56 [Ernakulam 1957] and 1956-57 [Nov. 1956-Mar. 1957] [Ernakulam 1958].

organs of government at various levels. The committee which submitted its report on 26th July 1958 recommended the strengthening of panchayat as a viable and basic unit of administration, development, and for the collection of land revenue. Above the panchayat the committee recommended the reconstitution of Taluks and block in such a way that revenue and development functions could be combined at the level of the Taluk.

In the District, the Committee had two views. One view was that with the strengthening of panchayats, which would be relatively large sized, it would have been enough to have district council with advisory functions, co-ordinating various development matters. The second was that there should an elected district council with executive functions and all the development dependent in the district level should work under it.

On the basis of the recommendations of the latter, the District councils bill 1959 were introduced in the state Assembly. The functions of the district councils covered development matters which were to be progressively hanged from agency functions to fullfledged executive functions. However these Bills would not be enacted into law since the government was dismissed and legislative assembly dissolved on 31st

July 1959.²⁶

When the R. Sankar Ministry came to power after the general elections, the Kerala Panchayat Act 1960 was passed. It unified the laws existing in the Malabar Travancore-Cochin regions of the state and enlarging the functions and financial resources of panchayats. The Act provided that the government was to authorise the panchayats to exercise functions other than the impressive list of duties and functions assigned to them under the Act such as collection of land revenue, maintenance of survey and village records, collection of village statistics, supervision and control over government primary schools as also public health, child welfare and maternity institutions and execution of community development works. Over the years, however in the panchayats could exercise most of the mandatory duties while only very few of the development functions were given to them. None of the responsibilities contemplated in the act were entrusted to them by any of the governments that followed. In 1979 the specific mention of the collection of land revenue and other revenue functions was finally deleted from the Act.

In 1964 the Kerala Panchayat Union Councils and Zilla Parishad

²⁶. Biju M.R. & J.N. Pandya. 'Democratic Decentralization in an Indian State : Kerala' The Indian Journal of Political Science, Vol. II, No.3 [July-Sep.] 1991. p.32.

Bill was introduced in the Assembly. It was on the lines of the recommendations of the Balwant Rai Mehta study team. This Bill could not be enacted as the government fell within a few months. During the President rule in 1965, organization and economy committee was applicable under M.K. Vellodi as chairman. This committee observed that associated membership for M.L.As in an executive body like Taluk Samiti was likely to be inhibit the growth of local leadership. After a prolonged spell of President's rule in the state the Kerala Panchayati Raj Bill 1967 was introduced in the Assembly during the IInd E.M.S Ministry. The Bill contemplated a two-tier system-the panchayats at the basic level and the Zilla Parishad at the district level.²⁷ The Zilla Parishad was to have executive functions and some sources of revenue, with same power of supervision and control over the village Panchayats. The functions of the Zilla parishad were developmental and were elaboration of those contained in 1959 Bill. However the Bill lapsed in August 1970 when the legislative Assembly was dissolved. In 1971 the Achutha Menon government introduced the Kerala District Administration Bill on the lines of the previous Bill. But it also lapsed before it could be enacted into law.

A Kerala District Administration Bill was introduced in the

²⁷. Ibid. p.33.

Assembly in August 1978 when A.K. Antony was the Chief Minister. The structure of the Bill was also the same as the 1971 Bill but the second schedule specifically listing such items as police administration, business administration and the like was removed and the functions of the land revenue were also restricted the Bill was passed in 1979 and received the assent of the president in 18th May 1980 by which time a new government under E.K. Nayanar came to power. In the next few months a number of rules and notifications were issued but thereafter all efforts to implement the act was abruptly stopped.

In 1984, a committee under the chairmanship of the local administration minister was appointed to consider the implications of the Act, but nothing came out of it. Again in April 1988 government appointed a committee to examine the defect of the 1979 Act the report was submitted in the July 1988 with detailed amendments proposed to the 37 sections and 33 schedules in the Act. It was also suggested that once the powers were fixed realistically the district councils and panchayats should be free to exercise them with the minimum control from the department and from the government. The emphasis was to increase the quality of control by laying down standards and substantially reduce the quality of control. However a few amendments were made including the reservation of the 30% seats for women. As regards the important area of "powers and functions of the original

structure of the Act with its anomalies and defects was left untouched although district planning development and similar items were added on. The result was that the conceptually general entries in the acts remains in the schedule, while, in practice, the government sought to restrict their scope severely by invoking its powers to lay down the conditions and limitations on the powers and functions of district councils.

In spite of this elections to the district councils were held in January 1991 and the councils took office on 5th February. In March 1991 the government transferred district offices and institutions in several development departments like agriculture, soil conservation, animal husbandry and others to the district councils without making the necessary budgetary and other exercise.

The UDF [United Democratic Front] government led by K. Karunakaran which came to power in the elections held in June 1991 amended the District Administration Act 1979 further and restricted the powers of the district councils. This decision was political in nature; it was as sudden as the decision of the previous government to go in for the district council election without adequate preparation. Under the Amended Act, ^{the} Collector as the ex-officio secretary of the district council was replaced by a junior official; transfer of offices and institutions were modified and matters which could be dealt with by the councils were

severely limited. Each district councils had a small component of administrative staff and no technical or other staff for implementing any of the scheme. For more than two and half years in succession, therefore, the district councils remained in existence largely in form rather than in substance.²⁸

It was in this period that the constitution 73rd Amendment Act of 1992 mandating the creation of panchayat at three levels in the Districts was enacted in the parliament and a new part on panchayat was included in the constitution. The Amendment was brought into effect on 23rd April 1993. In March 1994, the state government introduced a 'Kerala Panchayat Raj Bill' in the state legislature. The provisions in the bill were very restrictive and led to a great deal of criticism both from intellectuals and public men. As a result of strong public opinion, substantial changes were made in the bill, by the select committee. A very much improved 'Kerala panchayat Act' was introduced and the District Administration Act, 1979 repealed. The new act confirmed to the mandatory provision of the constitution.²⁹

²⁸. Ramachandran. V. Report on the Measures to be taken for Democratic Decentralization at the District and Lower levels, Government Press, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum 1988. 2 Vols.

²⁹. Status of Panchayati Raj in the States of India 1994. Institute of Social Science, New Delhi. 1995, p.113.

Three tier Panchayat Raj System in Kerala.

The three tier experiment of local government in Kerala had come to an end now since it has been replaced by the Kerala Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 [KAP 94]. Some of the features of the Acts are; Grama Sabha were to be formed ward wise in Kerala in view of the large size of the panchayats. They were to have a number of supervisory and monitoring powers relating to development activity, and were to also assist in the identification of beneficiaries as well as the mobilization of community efforts.

The village panchayat was bound to place a report before each gramasabha on the development schemes and the development activities of each year and those proposed for the next year, and the reasons for non-implementation of the recommendations of the gramasabhas would have to be explained by the president of the panchayat, as regards the 991 village panchayats, 152 intermediate level panchayat coterminous with the rural development blocks [Block panchayat] and 14 district panchayats in Kerala.³⁰

The powers and functions of the panchayat at each of these levels had been listed in sufficient detail-there were one hundred and twenty six items for village panchayats, twenty-nine items for block level

³⁰. Ibid.

panchayats and eighty items for district panchayats. The lists were impressive and even covered all the items listed in the eleventh schedule, in addition to the traditional civic functions of the village panchayats. At the block level, the powers were limited to a few items.³¹

Sections, 7, 8, 9 of the KPA 94 provides for reservation of seats for the SCs and STs; reservation for the SC and ST chairperson on the basis of their population in each panchayat and reservation of one third of the seats for women at all the three-tier of panchayat respectively. Section 162 specifies the number of standing committees at the three levels of Panchayat Raj. The Kerala act provides for constitution of a state Finance commission. Another important provision which ensures participation of rural and urban areas in the District is constitution of a district Planning Committee [DPC]³². MLAs and MPs and presidents of Municipals/Mayors of corporations are also members of the DPC and the District collector is the secretary of the District planning committee.³³ On the basis of this Act, the elections were held in

³¹. Ibid. p.114.

³². See, The Kerala Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 Government of Kerala, Trivandrum, 1995. p.12.

³³. Ibid, Sections of the Acts : Section 10, 151 2c (ii), 159, 188, 191, 193, 283 and the like.

September 1995 in the 990 Grama panchayats, 152 Block panchayats and 14 District councils, and formally handed over power to them on October 20, 1995.

Panchayat in Action³⁴

Planning through People's participation

The new government gave top priority to decentralization of its planning process and earmarked 30 to 40% of the total Ninth Plan outlay for the local bodies, both urban and rural. The people's campaign for the formulation of Ninth Plan making grass-root level planning, the key input in preparing the plan schemes, was inaugurated on August 17, 1996 by the Chief Minister E.K. Nayanar. It was declared that 40% of the Ninth Plan outlay would be set apart for the implementation of schemes that would be formulated by the local bodies.

The people's campaign for the formulation of the Ninth Plan is a time bound programme divided into five phases. The phases were the identification of the needs of the people and the gaps in local development through sectors-wise discussions at Grama Sabha award

³⁴. (I) Jose George, Panchayati Raj and Participatory Planning in Kerala, *Indian Journal of Public Administration* A3 (1) Jan.-Mar. 1997 pp.79-93.
(II) Richard. W. Franke, Barbara H Chasin. Power to the Malayalee People. EPW. A Samiksha Trust Publication. Mumbai, Nov.29. 1997. pp.3061-3068.

conventions specially convened for this purpose. As a part of the extensive preparation, the planning Board took over the responsibility of the training of personnel necessary for each level of planning from below. A high level committee headed by the late E.M.S Namboodiripad was constituted to undertake the task of development in a scientific and participatory manner with the help of a scientists, activists economists etc. The number of personnel trained at camps is estimated to be about 400 at the state level,15,000 at the district level and about one lakh at the panchayat level.

The main events of the second phase were development seminars at panchayat or municipal level where integrated solution fo various problems identified by the people are arrived at. A fairly comprehensive development report was prepared according to the guidelines issued by the planning Board. For preparing the development report, there was a comprehensive collection of all the available resources and secondary data from the local offices and organised rapid appraisal techniques such as transact walks, were undertaken for geographical and environmental appraisal. Apart from local history and natural resources appraisal, the report contains separate chapters for each development sector, whereafter a historical analysis of the development problems, a draft of recommendation is drawn up. The recommendations represent a lot of solutions to the problems raised by the local people. Nowhere in

India, such initial grass roots level analysis in the form of a Development Report by each panchayat has been undertaken for planning.

In the first stage of the development seminar, the Gram sabha was divided into twelve subject groups assigned under various heads viz (1) Agriculture & Irrigation (2) Fisheries and Animal husbandry (3) Education (4) Transport, Energy and market (5) Industry (6) Housing and social welfare (7) Public health and drinking water (8) Culture (9) Women's welfare (10) Co-operatives (11) Welfare of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes and (12) Resources Mobilization. Each subject group elected two representatives for the next stage of development seminars. In this stage the discussion were going on the basis of the development report made by the panchayat and listed out the problems and project ideas.

In the third stage, task force was set up to translate the various projects and concepts into specific proposals, analysing and giving the appropriate technical cost-benefit and time-frame considerations, as well as an assessment of resources of the local community to carry out each project, emphasising the possibilities for local contributions. In the fourth stage, panchayat council decides the priority of the various programmes. It is an actual formulation of the panchayat plan. Special meetings were convened for the selection of the final plans with the

help experts in various fields.

The local bodies were to be encouraged to take up additional schemes on their own. It is hoped that the process of mass mobilisation and conscientisation would be such that the plan allocation from the state would be supplemented by voluntary contribution of labour material or money.

The fifth stage was an integration of local plans and not a wider, district level plan,. The block and Zilla panchayat would have their own separate plan schemes. All these proposed schemes were to be integrated by the District Planning Committee. The State Planning Board have also already made a steering committee and task force formulating the state plan. The state plan consists of the integrated proposals by the different District Planning Committee and the state plan. A major state level congress 1997 discussed the state's Ninth Five-year plan on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the formation of the state organised by the State Planning Board. The congress marked the culmination of the people's campaign for the Ninth Plan. And this conference held with the representation of each panchayat.

Now the panchayats are very much engaged in the implementation of their own projects formulated by themselves. The state government had allotted 40% of the Ninth Plan only to the local bodies for their implementation. Grass-root level planning had become

a people's movement. The conventions in the Grama sabha proved this fact. Statistics show that atleast 30lakhs of people took in the planning process at its first phase. Throughout the state, the people assembled together, deliberated and decided what schemes were good, viable and result oriented. It was a great movement hitherto unprecedented in India.

Before the 73rd Amendment Act, Kerala already experienced an innovative experiment in decentralised planning in Kalliasseri Panchayat. Due to the systematic completion of voluntary resources mapping, Kalliasseri was selected as the first panchayat to take up a panchayat development plan. They decided to conduct a socio-economic survey to cover all the missing elements in the existing data base. Some of the important activities that they undertook included (1) vegetable cultivation (2) pilot schemes for fresh water pisciculture (3) Kalliasseri Panchayat Educational complex and Kalliasseri Total Energy project. This was alone by evolving a successful methodology for local level participatory planning.

November 1, 1996 was declared as the Re-dedication Day", by the state government. On that day every panchayat did some voluntary constructive works. In Chappara Padava Grama panchayat constructed a bridge across a river in the panchayat through people's voluntary labour totally without the financial aid of the state government for the

panchayat. They collected materials and resources from their locality with the help of retired and other experts in the various fields. It was the fulfillment of their 25 years' dream.

All these campaigns would help break up the straight jacket of bipolar front politics in the state and usher in a new era of unity for development action cutting across political affiliations. And the movement is still going on in full swing through the phase of implementation of various projects with the maximum number of people's involvement.

In the next chapter we analyse the political participation of SCs and STs in the peoples' planning process in two Panchayats of Kerala.

CHAPTER III
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN TWO SELECTED
PANCHAYATS KOTTAYAM AND PALAKAD DISTRICTS IN
KERALA

This chapter attempts a survey based comparison of Kurichy and Agali panchayaths in Kerala. The relevance of this study owes to the 73rd Amendment Act and its after effect in the above mentioned panchayats. Kurichy and Agali, which are rural in nature, belong to earstwhile Central Travencore and Malabar regions of Kerala respectively. A total of hundred(100) respondents from these panchayats were selected and they formed the sample in the study. In an attempt to assess the political participation of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in these panchayats,interview with 40 SC and 10 ST out of the 100 respondents were interviewed. The age, income, education, gender of the respondents were the variables used to asses politial participation and affiliation. The sample from both the panchayats are selected by random samplilng on the basis of the latest voter's lists of the panchayats. The sample of 100 persons were interviewed on the basis of a questionnaire (see appendix and the responses are tabulated and analysed

The Kurichy Panchayat in the Changanassery Taluk of the

Kottayam District and the Agali Panchayat of Mannarkad Taluk of the Palakkad District were selected for the study. The former is part of the Madappally N.E.S Block or Block Panchayat, Changanacherry Assembly constituency and the Kottayam Parliamentary constituency. The latter belongs to the Attappady N.E.S Block/ the Block Panchayat, the Mannarkad Assembly constituency and the Palakkad Parliamentary constituency.¹

The two panchayats were selected because they have a high proportion of SCs and STs in their population. The Kurichy Panchayat has a total population of 32,000 [29577 according to 1991 Census, of this Scheduled Castes constitute 12.9 % [4125] and Scheduled Tribes 0.58% [185]. Hence it has been selected to study participation of SCs in the functioning of panchayats. In contrast out of the The total population of the Agali Panchayat of 33693. 9% [3031] are Scheduled Castes and 27.33% [9209] are Scheduled Tribes ².

The Scheduled Castes in the Kurichy Panchayat are very active

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- ¹. i) Kurichy Panchayath 'Vikasana Rekha' (Development Report), Kurichy Panchayat, Kottayam, pp:10-11, 1996.
- ii) Agali Panchayath Vikasana Rekha (Development Report), Agali Panchayat, Mannarkad, P, 15:1996.
- ². Ibid, (I) PP 21-22 (ii) P-13

for historical and political reasons³ Shri. E.E. John, a Scheduled Caste convert to Christianity, who died in November 1993, was the founder leader of the Communist Movement in Kurichy. He began his activities before Independence. Since he belonged to the converted Christian, ie, why the Scheduled Castes members were attracted to the communist movement .

The first Harijan colony was established in 1938 and further colonies were founded in the coming years still the beginning of the 1950's. In the 1940's there were only a few Nair families. There were a good number of Ezhavas. Most of the Nairs and Christians immigrated later after the establishment of the Harijan colony. Thus Scheduled Castes and Ezhavas were the support base of the Communist Movement. Shri. E.E. John was a selfless communist leader, activist and sacrificed his whole life for party building and as such he was

³. Interviewed (i) Smt. Mariamma John, the widow of Sri E.E. John, who played the leading role in building up the Communist movement in Kurichy. He belonged to Converted Christian. Smt. Marriamma John who has worked as a member of the Changanassery area committee of the CPI(M), Panchayat member, leader of the Mahila Movement; (ii) Shri.K.K.Kuttappan who was a prominent leader of the CPI(M) and panchayat member; (iii) Shri.T.B.Kunjappay; who has functioned as member of the local&area committee of the party. (iv) Speech of Shri. E.M.S Namboothiripad laying the foundation stone of the Kurichy local committee office of the CPI(M), (The Deshabhimani Daily of 4th Aug. 1994) and (v) Development report of the Kurichy Panchayat.

recognised by all sections of the population. Even now the majority of the converted Christians are followers of the Communist movement. Sri John has donated a two cents of land for the local committee office of the CPI(M). The foundation stone for the local committee office building was laid by late Shri EMS Namboodripad who paid homage to the founder leader of the party in the panchayat and exhorted the CPI(M) workers to follow his footsteps.

Secondly the establishment of Harijan Colony, the land given to each family and facilities extended to them for housing-all these contributed to the initial comparatively better position of SC settlers. The settlers got employment in the paddy fields of Kuttanad and in the Kurichy and adjoining areas. The initial economic advantages also helped them to participate in the politics. Today the Scheduled Tribe in the panchayat are are backwardeconomically educationally when compared to their communities in the panchayat but in political participation they stand first since they tend to support the CPI(M) which is the most organised and powerful party in the panchayat of the twelve members of the panchayat seven belong to the CPI(M), one to the CPI, one to the Kerala Congress (Joseph) and three to the congress. Before 1988 the Congress was dominant in the area, but since then the majority of members of the panchayat council belonged to the left and the single majority seats or absolute majority went to the CPI(M). The

Scheduled Tribe are quite backward and politically passive and indifferent. In contrast to this the Scheduled Tribes in the Agali Panchayat are more active but the Scheduled Castes are not well organized or politically united. Majority of the Scheduled Castes are immigrants from Tamil Nadu. Thus a comparison and contrast of these two most backward sections of Kerala in relation to their political participation in the Panchayat system will be undertaken in the backdrop of the socio-economic and politico-cultural scenario of the two panchayats in the context of the new Panchayati Raj system 73rd Amendment Act with its newly introduced movement of people's planning.

The physiognomy of the two Panchayats⁴

KURICHY:

The Kurichy Panchayat [The name Kurichy is derived from 'Gurusree', the abode of the grace of 'Gurus'] was in the past, the seat of learned men in the fields of education, Kathakali, Medicine, Sanskrit, 'Kalaripayattu'[indigeneous martial art] etc. It is bordered by the paddy fields of Kuttanadu well known for its contribution to the agrarian economy of Kerala and Neelamperur Panchayat in the West, Vakathanam Panchayat in the East; Panachikkad and Nattakom

⁴ Ibid: and Administration Reports of the two Panchayats for the years 1996 and 1997,

Panchayats in the North and Vazhapally Panchayat in the south. Changanassery is six k.m away from the southern border of the panchayat and the town of Kottayam is eleven km away to the north from its border.

In 1952, Kurichy was part of the Neelamperur Panchayat and was formed on 1st January 1962. It consists of the Kurichy area of Neelamperur Panchayat and the Ithithanam area of the Vazhapally Panchayat. The first elected Panchayat council came into being on 21st November 1963. Till 1988 the Panchayat Council was dominated by the Congress. Since then the CPI(M) has been leading the Panchayat.

The Panchayat has an area of 16.22 sq. k.m and is divided into twelve wards. Wards V and VII are Reservation wards for scheduled caste. Ward VIII is reserved for women. The population of the Panchayat according to 1991 census was 29577. The annual rise of population in Kerala 1.37 and present population is approximately 32,000. The main occupation of the Panchayat is agriculture [Coconut, Paddy, tapioca, rubber, pepper, plantain, vegetables etc being the major crops], supported by fishing from the eighteen ponds scattered throughout the panchayat except in ward VIII. The vast majority of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes are agricultural labourers. The population consists of , in the order of their strength, Ezhavas, Scheduled Castes, Christians and Scheduled Tribes.

There are five high schools, one Upper Primary School and eight Lower Primary Schools. of the 14 schools, six are government schools. The total number of students is 4614 of which 2376 are boys and 2238 are girls, sexwise distribution being more or less equal. But in the case of technical education [one of the five high schools is technical school] the sex ratio is 100:7. Of the school students 36.4% are studying in lower primary (L.P) schools 32.5% in upper primary (U.P) schools and 31.2% in high schools (H.S) . 39.9% of the total number of are studying in government schools.

The percentage of the **Scheduled Caste** and **Scheduled Tribes** students is 17.3% . The percentage of students in the L.P, U.P, and H.S are respectively 16.9(283); 17.3[259]; and 18 [258].

There are dropouts at different levels. In 1995-1996, the number is being 36. Of them thirteen belonged to the **Scheduled Caste** and **Scheduled Tribes**.

Scheduled Caste and Tribes⁵

The SCs and STs are the most backward sections of the population. In the past they worked like slaves in the lands of landlords

⁵. Ibid : (I) PP. 157-167

and were subject to untouchability and other injustices. They had no freedom of worship, education and even right to walk through the paths or roads . A notable change in this inhuman conditions was introduced by the establishment of a Harijan colony in 1938 by the Government of Travancore. The colony was known as the Sachivothamapuram colony in the name of the then Divan of Travancore Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer. To begin with, forty families were brought and settled in 112 acres. The size of the colony increased in 1950 when more families came to settle here. This was the first model Harijan colony in the whole of India. Attached to this colony there were a night school and a temple. The Temple Entry Proclamation in 1936 paved the way for the foundation of this Harijan colony. The night school was later transformed into a full fledged school is now known as the Harijan Welfare Primary School.

Analysis of Population growth.

In 1961 Scheduled Caste constituted 8.5% of the population, in 1972 10.9%, in 1981 11.9% and in 1991, 12.74%. Now the total population is approximately 32,000 and scheduled caste population is approximately 4125, ie 12.9 of the total population [see Table No. I]

The table shows that the Scheduled Castes population increased from 1,506 in 1961 to 4,125 in 1998 ie an increase of 174% during 27

years.

Table No:I

Year	Total Population	Scheduled Caste	% of SC Population	Female	Male
1961	17,661	1,506	8.5%	748	748
1971	21,875	2,385	10.9%	1,164	1,221
1981	25,357	3,014	11.9%	1,468	1,546
1991	29,577	3,769	12.7%	1,882	1,887
1998	32,000	4,125	12.9%	2,041	2,084

The ownership of land is an an important factor in deciding the economic status. 55% of the Scheduled Caste families own only two to five cents of lands, 13% each own five to ten cents and 10 to 25 cents respectively. Only 12% of them own 25-50 cents of land. Only few families have more than one acre of land. But 99% of the Scheduled Caste families have their own houses, how ever small and insufficient they are.⁶

About 45% of the Scheduled ^{Caste} households live in the ten colonies of the Panchayat. Others live in the house scattered in the different wards of the Panchayat. The total number of households is 1016. the

⁶: Information collected from the Panchayat office, the village office and the various caste organisations.

Scheduled Caste consist of Cheramar, Pulayar, Samba & Paravars.

Scheduled Tribes.

The population of Scheduled Tribes in 1991 was 167, 88 females and 79 males. Now in 1988 their approximate number is 185 ie 0.58% of the total population. They belong to Allude & Veda Tribes. they live in 34 households of this own, but some of the households have not yet obtained legal titles for their land as which thus houses are built. majority of them are daily wage earners. They have almost abandoned or forgotten their traditional occupations like making of baskets and mats etc

The Agali Panchayat ⁷

The Panchyat is surrounded by Bhavanipuzha[small river] in the North, Siruvanipuzha [small river] in the East and Mannarkadu Panchayat in the southwest. The area of the Panchayat is 310 sq. k.m. and the total population at present is 33693. The Scheduled Castes population is 3032 and ST population is 9209 constituting 9% and 27.33% respectievly.The Scheduled Tribes in Agali are 'Erular',

⁷. (i) See, development Report of the Panchayat. (ii) Administrative Report of the Agali Panchayat for the year 1997.

'Mudugar'. They live together in a cluster of houses called 'Ooru'[ie, hamlet]. There are 56 hamlets constituting of 2,100 households. The 'Erulr' live in 1815 households and the minority 'Muduga' have 285 households. Every 'Ooru' has an 'Oorumuuppan' as its head. The other important functionaries in the past were ' Bandari' [who was responsible for collection and custody of crops], 'Kuruthala' [Doctor] and Mannukkaran[who is in charge of cultivation] with the increasing settlement of immigration in the tribal lands, they have been increasingly losing their identity and land. A favourable solution of the land problem of the scheduled Tribes is the first and the basic step to be taken by the government in the process of their rehabilitation without losing their identity⁸.The Indian President has already refused to give his consent to the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Reservation on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) amendment Bill, 1996 and has refused it for reconsideration by the legislation in keeping with the interest of the tribes. ⁹

Majority of the tribal people even today depend on the produce of the forest for their livelihood. They also cultivate whatever land they have still under their possession and engage in cattle rearing. Some of them are daily

⁸. Interview with Ooru moopans of Nellipathy and Koravankandy.

⁹. Kerala Kaumudi (malayalam Daily) Trivandrum 3rd April 1998.

wage earners and several females work as house maids. There are a number of government employees among the tribals, one is a M.D student (Modern Medicine) and another is a Block Development officer.

There is no written script for the tribal languages and they have spoken languages which have affinity to the Tamil language. Now with the immigration of the settlers they have been increasingly learning Malayalam. The medium of instruction in the schools are Malayalam and Tamil.

From the table no.2 it is quite evident that the percentage of those who continue their education despite failure and dropouts in the case of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe students are lighter than those of non scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribe students especially in the case of drop outs

Number of SC and ST in the Schools of Agali Panchayat

Table No.2

	Lower Primary (L.P)	Upper Primary (U.P)	High School (H.S)
SC-ST Students	899	504	33
continuing studies despite failure			
SC ST	119	65	32
Others	94	122	92
Drop outs			
SC ST	92	62	22
Others	33	22	19
Total	2328	1698	1340

Political Participation in the two Panchayats

Political participation in the panchayat system includes membership or sympathy towards any party being voted at the panchayat level and participation in the Gramasabha. Participation in the grama sabha involves (1) attendance in the Gramasabha and participation in its deliberation. (ii) memberships is one of the various twelve subject committees for each ward and for the panchayat as a whole (see below) (iii) convenorship of any committee at the ward or panchayat level and (iv) to function as a resource person.

Political participation of the sample is studied in relation to their sex, age, education and income. The political affiliation of the participants and non-participants of the Grama sabha is also studied with reference to their sex, age education and income. Finally participation in the Gramasabha by those outside the sample is also studied on the basis of interviews with panchayat president, panchayat members and convenors of the subject committess at the ward and the panchayat level. Finally a comparison of participation in the two panchayats is made critically.

Research findings

Political Affiliation of the Respondents

Since the sample consists of the SC-ST of two panchayats, political affiliation is taken as a liberal concept and is deemed to be (I) membership in any party or(ii) sympathy towards any

Political Affiliation of the Respondents in the Kurichy and Agali Panchayats

(membership, Sympathy, Voting behaviour)

Table No.3

SC ST	CPI(M)	Cong	CPI	JD	SUCI	Independent	Not member of any party	BJP
Respondent								
SC ST	SC ST	SC ST	SC ST	SC ST	SC ST	SC ST	SC ST	SC ST
Kurichy	40 10	28 3	6 6	2 0	2 0	1 0	0 1	0 1
Agali	10 40	0 15	5 14	1 2	1 5	0 1	5 2	0 1

party or (iii) voting for any party. The political affiliation of the sample is represented in the above table no.3

From the above table shows that 33 out of 40(82.4%) Scheduled Caste in Kuruchi belong to the leftist parties where as 2 out of 10 in Agali

L(20%) are left oriented. In the case of the Scheduled Tribes in Kuruchi, only 30% belong to the left while 55% of them support leftist parties in Agali. In both the Panchayats CPI(M) has emerged as the dominant political party, both emerged as the dominant political party, both among the Scheduled Caste in Kurichy(70%) and Scheduled Tribes (37.5%) in Agali. In Kurichy 15% of the Scheduled Caste are Congressmen, where as in Agali 50% of Scheduled Caste belong to the Congress. In Kurichy 60% and in Agali 35% of the STs support the Congress. In Kurichy one Scheduled Caste each belongs to the SUCI and B .J.P. In Agali five persons (10%) are politically indifferent, these of them are scheduled caste and the remaining two Scheduled Tribes.

Gender and political affiliation

The following Table No.4 gives the sex ratio and the sex-wise political affiliation of the sample. The sex ratio (male & Female) of the Scheduled Caste and the same 3:2. In Agali these are respectively 2:3 and 11.9. To highlight the dominant characteristics, the sex ratio of supporters of CPI(M) among the Scheduled Caste in Kurichy and the Agali are respectively 4:3 and 0:0. In the case of the Congress these ratios are 1:2 and 1:4

**Gender Vs Political Affiliation of the Respondents of Kuruchy
Panchayat**

Table No.4

Gender	CPI(M)		Cong		CPI		JD		SUCI		BJP		Ind.		NMOAP		Total		
	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	
Male	16	2	2	3	2	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	24	6
Female	12	1	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	4
Total	28	3	6	6	2	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	40	10

**Gender Vs. Political Affiliation of the Respondents of Agali
Panchayat**

Table No. 5.

Gender	CPIM		Cong		CPI		JD		SUCI		BJP		Ind.		NMOAP		Total	
	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST
Male	0	8	1	5	0	2	1	3	0	0	1	0	2	2	0	1	4	22
Female	0	7	4	9	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	18
Total	0	15	5	14	1	2	1	5	0	0	1	1	3	2	0	1	10	40

Note : Ind. = Independent, NMOAP = Not Member of Any Party

In relation to Scheduled Tribes the ratios in the case of CPI (M) are 2:1 and 8:7 respectively and in the case of Congress they are respectively 1:1 and 5:9. It is evident that the Congress gets support from more from the females.

Age and Political Affiliation

Age has been an important factor in Kerala in the past in determining political affiliation. Generally younger people support the leftist parties and comparatively older ones support the rightist parties. But parliamentary politics, elections and increase in the members of catch, all parties have influenced this pattern adversely.

The sample has been divided into ten age groups as shows in the table no.5.61% of the sample in the two panchayats taken together are 18-42 years old and only.

Age Vs Political Affiliation of the Respondents of Two

Panchayats

Table No.6

Age Group	CPI(M)		Cong		CPI		J.D		SUCI		BJP		Ind.		NMOAP		Total	
	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST
18-22 K	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
A	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	6
23-27 K	2	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	1
A	0	2	0	4	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2	7
28-32 K	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	4	2
A	0	5	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	9
33-37 K	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1
A	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	5
38-42 K	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1
A	0	3	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4
43-47 K	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	1
A	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
48-52 K	2	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	1
A	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	3
53-57 K	2	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1
A	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
58-62 K	2	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2
A	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1
63 & Above K	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0
A	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	3
Total	28	18	11	20	3	2	3	5	1	0	1	1	3	3	0	1	50	50

Note : K = Kurichy, A = Agali. Ind. = Independent, NMOAP, = Not Member of Any Party

39% are above 42 years of age 9% the sample are above 63 years of

age. Of the 28 Scheduled Castes who favour the CPI(M) in the Kurichy panchayat 15(53.6%) are below 43 years of age. The corresponding percentage for the Congress is 66.7%. In the case of Scheduled Tribe these percentages are 33.3 respectively. In Agali the Scheduled Caste supporters of the CPI(M) and the Congress constitute 0% and 40% respectively. In Agali there are five Scheduled Tribes who belong to Janata Dal who are below 43 years of age. The two Janata Dal supporters in Kurichy belong to the scheduled and are above 43 years of age..

Educational level and Political Affiliation

From the table No.7 of the sample (100) in the two panchayats are illiterate, 40% have received primary education and 17% have got secondary education. There are two post graduates, three are degree holders and four have studied upto or passed pre-degree. One has professional education ie S.S.L.C and Teacher's Training Certificate. There is only one illiterate among the scheduled caste in Kurichy while there are seven in Agali. There is only one illiterate among schedule tribe, out of 10 in Kurichy, while their numbers is 24(60%) out of 40 in Agali, Of the 28(CPIM) supporters in Kurichy, 13 have primary education, five secondary, three pre-degree, two degree and three post graduate education. One has received professional

education. Of the six Congress supporters four have received primary education and the remaining two have got secondary education. The educational level of the Scheduled Castes^e and Scheduled Tribes in Agali are very low

Table No.7

Education Vs. Political Affiliation of two Panchayats

Parties	Illiterate		Primary		Secondary*		PDC		Degree		PG		Tech/Prof.		Total	
	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST
CPI(M) K	1	0	13	2	5	1	3	0	3	0	2	0	1	0	28	3
A	0	9	0	3	0	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	15
Cong K	0	1	4	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6
A	2	9	2	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	14
CPI K	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
A	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2
JD K	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
A	1	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
SUCI K	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
BJP K	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
A	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Ind. K	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
A	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2
NMOAP K	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	8	25	23	17	10	7	3	1	3	0	2	0	1	0	50	50

Note : Ind = Independent, NMOAP = Not Member of Any Party. K= Kurichy, A= Agali, * Secondary including S.S.L.C. Passed.

Income and Political Affiliation

Income level of the samples in the two panchayats is given taking into consideration their or land owned by them and also their occupation. The vast majority of the sample are daily wage earners, hence their income level is low .

Income Vs. Political Affiliation of Two Panchayats

Table 8

Income	CPI(M)		Cong		CPI		JD		SUCI		BJP		Ind.		NMOAP		Total		
	SC	ST	SC	ST	SC	ST	S	ST	S	ST	S	ST	S	ST	S	ST	S	ST	
Upto 5,000 K	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
A	0	8	4	5	1	1	1	3	0	0	0	1	0	1	3	2	9	2	1
5,000 to 10,000 K	8	2	1	5	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	12	8	
A	0	7	1	9	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	9
10,000 to 15,000 0 K	12	1	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	17	2	
A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
15,000 to 20,000 K	6	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	
A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20, 000 and Above K	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	
A	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Grand Total	28	18	11	20	3	2	3	5	1	0	1	1	0	1	3	3	50	5	0

Note : Ind. = Independent, NMOAP = Not Member of Any Party, K= Kurichy, A = Agali.

The table (No.8) is a realistic reflection of the low income level of the scheduled caste and Scheduled Tribe in the two panchayats. The Scheduled Tribe has lower annual income when compared to the Scheduled Caste. Thirty persons out of the total sample of 100, have only the meagre income of upto Rs. 5000/- a year and all of them are in

Agali, 9 belonging to the Scheduled Caste and the remaining to the Scheduled Caste. 40% of the sample comes under the annual income group of Rs 5000-10,000/- of these 20% each comes from each panchayat. There no one in Agali who comes in the group of Rs.10,000-15,000/- and above. 19% of the sample have an annual income of Rs.10,000-15,000/- and all of them are from Kurichy. 17% of the them are Scheduled Caste and two Scheduled Tribes. Eight Scheduled Caste in the Kurichy Panchayat come under the income group of Rs. 15,000-20,000/- and six of them are supporters of the CPI(M) and two of the Congress. Three Scheduled Caste from the same panchayat have an annual income of Rs.20,000 and above two of them favour CPI(M). The supporters of the CPI(M) have comparatively higher income when twelve out of 28 Scheduled Caste in Kurichy have an annual income of Rs.10,000-15,000/-, only two congress men, one each from the CPI, Janata Dal and BJP come under this group.

In the past lower income groups were the support base of the CPI(M) this is no more true.

Sociology of Political Participation in the Grama Sabha

So far an attempt has been made to study the sociology of political participation in general. With the introduction of people's planning ["Janakeeyasoothranam"], political participation in the different facts

of people's planning which also included participation in the various programmes chalked out through people's planning. Here an attempt is made to analyse the sociological structure and pattern of participation of the respondents in the process of people's planning ie, in the formulation of development programmes of the panchayat. In this exercise the participation of the respondents in each panchayat is tabulated separately in terms of their sex, age, education and income. For convenience of tabulation and analysis, the sample are divided into two age groups [upto 42 including 42 and 43 and above], two groups of educational level [upto secondary and above secondary] and two annual income groups [upto Rs.10,000 and Rs10,001 and above]. The sociology of non-participation is also tabulated and analysed for purposes of comparison.

**Level of Political Participation in the Gram Sabha of Kurichy
Panchayat**

Table no.9

Parties	Kurichi	Sex	Age	Education	Income
	SC P-16	9 7	10 6	11 5	3 13
CPI(M)	NP-12	7 5	5 7	8 4	5 7
	ST P-1	1 0	1 0	1 0	0 1
	NP-2	1 1	1 1	2 0	2 0
	SC P-3	2 1	2 1	3 0	0 3
CONG	NP-3	0 3	2 1	3 0	3 0
	ST P-1	1 0	1 0	1 0	0 1
	NP-5	0 5	1 4	5 0	5 0
	SC P-1	1 0	1 0	1 0	0 1
CPI	NP-1	1 0	0 1	1 0	1 0
	ST P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	NP-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	SC P-1	1 0	0 1	1 0	0 1
JD	NP-1	1 0	0 1	1 0	1 0
	ST P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	NP-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	SC P-1	1 0	1 0	1 0	1 0
SUCI	NP-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	ST P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	NP-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	SC P-1	1 0	0 1	1 0	0 1
BJP	NP-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	ST P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	NP-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	SC P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
Independent	NP-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	ST P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	NP-1	1 0	0 1	1 0	1 0
	SC P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
NMOAP	NP-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	ST P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	NP-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0

Note : Age group i) Upto 42 ii) 43 and above, Education i) Secondary ii) Above Secondary, Income i) Upto 10,000 ii) 10,000 and above, P = Participant, Np = Non-participants.

The table (No.9) gives a vivid picture of both partywise participants and non-participants of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe samples with reference to their sex, age, education and income. Of the 28 CPI(M) supporters of the Scheduled caste sample in Kurichy, 16[57.1%] are participants and 12[42.9%] are non-participants. The participants consist of 9[56.3%] males and 7[43.7%] females, the age composition of the CPI(M) participants is significant, because 10 out of 16 ie 62.5% belong to the age group of upto 42 years of age and only 5 out of 12 ie 41.7% of the non-participants belong to this age group. 11 out of 16[68.8%] has received secondary education where as 66.7% of the non-participants belong to this group. The income pattern of the CPI(M) supporters is also significant. Only 18.8% of the participants belong to the lower income group while the remaining belong to the higher income group. Of the non-participants 31.3% comes under the lower income group.

Of the three Scheduled Tribe sample supporting the CPI(M) are participant and two are non-participants. The participant is a male. Of the two non-participants one is a male. The participants come under lower age group, lower educational level, but belong to the higher income group. Both of the non-participants belong to the lower group of educational level and lower income group.

The second major party is the Congress which has six supporters each from the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribes. Of the six Scheduled Caste sample three are participants. Of these two are males, they belong to the lower age group. All of them have received secondary education and come under the higher income group. All the three non-participants are women and belong to lower income group and lower group of education level. Two of them are upto 42 years of age. Of the six Scheduled Tribe supporters of the Congress, only one is participant. He belongs to lower age group, lower education group but to the higher income group. All the non-participants are females and come under lower education and lower income group, but four of them are above 43 years of age.

The one CPI Scheduled Caste participant is male and belongs to the higher income group. The SUCI, Scheduled Caste participant is a male and comes under the lower income group. One BJP Scheduled Caste participant belongs to the higher income group. The Janada Dal participant is a male and he comes under the higher income group.

The table shows that the majority of the participants are males, belong to the lower age group and the higher income group. Thus participation is directly related to lower age group, higher income group and gender.

The Agali Panchayat

In Agali, there is no Scheduled caste supporter of CPI(M). Of the 15 Scheduled Tribe supporters 10 are participants of whom 6 are males, the same number comes under the lower age group. All the ten belong to the lower income group and 9 of them have received upto secondary education. Of the five non-participants, three are females and all the five belong to the lower income group. Three of them come under the lower income group. There are five Scheduled Caste supporters of the Congress. Two of them are participants. One is a male and both of them belong to the lower age, education and income group. The three non-participants are females. Significantly they belong to the higher age group and the lower income group. Of the 14 Scheduled Tribes supporters of the congress only three are participants. Two of them are males. With reference lower group. Of the eleven non-participants eight are females and all of them belong to the lower education and income group. Five of them are up to the age of 42.

**Level of Political Participation in the Gram Sabha of Agali
Panchayat**

Table no.10.

Parties	Agali	Sex	Age	Education	Income
	SC P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
CPI(M)	NP-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	ST P-10	6 4	6 4	9 1	10 0
	NP-5	2 3	3 2	5 0	5 0
	SC P-2	1 1	2 0	2 0	2 0
CONG	NP-3	0 3	0 3	3 0	3 0
	ST P-3	2 1	3 0	3 0	3 0
	NP-11	3 8	5 6	11 0	11 0
	SC P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
CPI	NP-1	0 1	1 0	1 0	1 0
	ST P-1	1 0	1 0	1 0	1 0
	NP-1	1 0	0 1	1 0	1 0
	SC P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
JD	NP-1	1 0	1 0	1 0	1 0
	ST P-4	3 1	4 0	4 0	4 0
	NP-1	0 1	1 0	1 0	1 0
	SC P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
SOCI	NP-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	ST P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	NP-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	SC P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
BJP	NP-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	ST P-1	1 0	1 0	1 0	1 0
	NP-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	SC P-1	1 0	1 0	1 0	1 0
Independent	NP-2	1 1	0 2	2 0	2 0
	ST P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	NP-2	2 0	2 0	2 0	2 0
	SC P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
NMOP	NP-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	ST P-0	0 0	0 0	0 0	0 0
	NP-1	1 0	1 0	1 0	1 0

Note : Age group i) Upto 42 ii) 43 and above, Education i) Secondary ii)

Above Secondary, Income i) Upto 10,000 ii) 10,000 and above, P =

Participant, Np = Non-participants.

There are five Scheduled Tribe supporters of the J.D. Four of them are participants. The one non-participant is a female. There is one ST supporter of BJP one ST is politically indifferent and non-participant.

Eventhough the sociology of political participation in Agali is slightly different from that of Kurichy, the basic pattern is the same except in case of income. There is no one, either from Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, who belongs to the higher income group. There is only one Scheduled Tribe participant [CPI(M)] who comes under the higher education group.

Participation in the Planning process in the Grama Sabha by SCs and STs¹⁰

For purposes of people's planning twelve subject committees are formed in each ward of a panchayat. The Kurichy panchayat has twelve wards and the Agali thirteen wards. Those who attend the grama sabha [popular assembly of a ward of a panchayat] are divided into twelve committees each have an elected Convenor. These committees are on (1) Agriculture and Irrigation; (2) Fishing and animal husbandry; (3)

¹⁰. (i) Interview with Panchayat Members and President convenors of the Ward and Panchayat Level Committees and Resource Persons.

(ii) See the Development Report of the Two Panchayats.

Industries; (4) Education; (5); Public health and Drinking water; (6) Transport, Energy and market; (7) Social Welfare and housing; (8) Culture; (9) Vanita[Women] (10) Co-operative sector; (11) Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and (12) Resource Mobilisation.

At the panchayat level also there are twelve committees. Each committee is formed by selectively two representatives selected from the corresponding committees in each ward. The Chairman of all the ward committees is the member of the respective wards. A convenor for each committee is elected from among its members. The panchayat level committees are presided over by the panchayat president. Each panchayat level committee has a convenor elected from among the members.

The Kurichy Panchayat

The first special Grama sabha in each ward was convened before 2nd October 1996 and twelve subject committees were formed from among the people attending the Sabha

**Attendance of SC and ST in the Subject Committees of the
Grama Sabha in Kurichy**

Table no. 11

Wards	Total No of people attending Grama	Total No of SC/ST who participated		Attendance of Respendence	
		SC	ST	SC	ST
1	90	18	0	2	0
2	96	24	0	2	0
3	103	23	2	2	1
4	110	26	0	2	0
5	115	40	3	3	0
6	80	20	0	2	0
7	120	55	3	5	1
8	115	45	0	2	0
9	80	20	0	1	0
10	110	25	0	1	0
11	81	10	0	0	0
12	120	35	0	1	0
Total	1220	341	8	23	2

The table 11 shows that 1220 people attended the Grama sabhas of the twelve wards. This was 3.8% of the total population of the panchayat ie, 32,000, of these 341 Scheduled Castes were attended the meetings. They constituted 1.1% [341/32,000] of the total population of the panchayat, 8.3% of the Scheduled Caste [341/4125] and 28%[341/1220] of the total participants. Eight Scheduled Tribes members0 panchayat in the meetings. The corresponding percentages are 0.03, 4.3, and 0.7.

From the sample of 40 Scheduled Caste, 23 respondents participated in the ward Grama sabhas , ie, 57.5% of the sample. The

highest number of Scheduled Caste participant are from the Scheduled Caste Reservation ward,V and VII. Out of the ten ST sample, two participated, one each from wardIII and VII and this constituted 20% of the sample.

An analysis of the percentages given above of the participants of the general population, and the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, it is abundantly clear that the participation of Scheduled is very much higher than that of the general population. When 3.8% of the total population participated, the percentage of Scheduled Caste participation in relation to the total population is 1.1% in proportion to the Scheduled Caste population(12.9%) its 8.3%. Further 28% [341/1220] of the participants Scheduled Caste while their population constitute a 12.9%. It is significant to point out that higher participation is empirically true with regard to the Scheduled Tribes also. Their participation is 0.7% while their population constitute only 0.6% of the total population.

SC and ST Convenorship of Ward level and Panchayat level Committees¹¹

There are twelve wards in the Kurichy panchayat and 144 subject committees at the ward level. A Study of Convenors in the sample is

¹¹. Interview with Panchayat Members, President, Ward Convenors of the Committees and Convenors of the Panchayat Level Committees.

attempted bellow.

At the ward level there are 144 convenors since there are 144 committees. Out of them 38 are from the Scheduled Caste. The ward wise distribution of these convenors is seen in the table No.(11). While 38 SC s ie. 26.4% are convenor. There are no ST convenors. Out of the total SC respondents 23 are participants, of whom seven were elected convenors constituting 30.4% of the participants. There was no convenor from the ST participants. Both in the case of actual participation and also in the case of the SC sample, the percentage is much higher than their proportion to the total population.

Membership and convenorship of the Panchayat level Committees

At the panchayat level there are twelve committees. Large number of SCs have become convenors of the committees at the ward and panchayat level. From each committee two members are elected and a corresponding committee is formed at the panchayat level, which has a strength of 24. Of them forty are SC, whose participation at the panchayat level is 16.13%. Of the 23 SC participants, six are members of different panchayat level committee i.e. 26% of the total participants. It is significant to note that the percentage of the participation tends to decline at the panchayat level when compared to the ward level.

**Attendance of the Convenors of the Panchayat level Committees
of Kurichy Panchayat**

Table no . 12

Wards	Total no of Convenors	Convenors		Total
		SC	ST	
1	12	2	0	2
2	12	2	0	2
3	12	2	0	2
4	12	4	0	4
5	12	7	0	7
6	12	3	0	3
7	12	6	0	6
8	12	4	0	4
9	12	2	0	2
10	12	2	0	2
11	12	1	0	1
12	12	3	0	3
Total	144	38	0	38

Out of the twelve convenors at the panchayat level four ie, 33,3% belonged to the SC. These are committee for the SC and ST; Culture, Fishing and Women. Out of the 23 participants only two were convenors ie,8.7% of the total participants. Of the resource persons one belonged to the SC. He is an employee of the department of agriculture. In the case of convenors of various committees at the panchayat level, percentage of actual participation was about four times more than that of the participants in the sample. Convenors participated more in the Panchayat.

The Agali Panchayat

The SC in Agali panchayat constituted 9%(3031)of the population and ST 27.33%(9209).

Attendance in the Subject Committees of the Grama Sabha in Agali

Table no.13

Wards	Total Attendance in the Grama Sabha	Actual		Respondent	
		SC	ST	SC	ST
1	118	8	40	0	3
2	233	19	35	1	1
3	142	38	31	2	1
4	167	15	40	0	2
5	175	10	30	0	1
6	250	8	25	0	1
7	240	5	20	0	0
8	110	5	50	0	3
9	286	9	18	0	0
10	177	6	35	0	2
11	316	4	75	0	3
12	156	3	32	0	2
13	236	40	32	0	0
Total	2606	134	453	3	19

The panchayat has thirteen wards. From the above table the attendance in the Grama Sabha of each ward, the actual attendance of the SC and ST and also the attendance of the SC&ST belonging to the sample.

The participants in the Grama Sabha in each ward ranged from 110 to 316 and actual participation of SC and ST from three to thirty eight and eighteen to seventyfive respectively. The total participants in the Grama Sabhas of thirteen wards amounted to 2606 and this was 7.7% of the total population. Of this 134 are SC and 453 are ST ie, 4.4% and 4.95 respectively of this total population, but 5.1% and 17.4% respectively of the total participants ie, 2606. With reference to their

strength in the panchayat [9% and 27.3%] their participation was lower [4.4% and 4.9%] and this shows their lack of political and civic consciousness, obviously due to their backwardness mainly in their social, economic and educational status. Membership of the committees, out of the 40 ST in the sample. Of the 10 SC in the sample, three participated ie, 30% of the sample.

Convenorship at the Ward and Panchayat level.

There are thirteen wards in the panchayat and so the number of ward level committees is 156. The membership of the ward committees ranges from 9 to 26. The total strength of 156 committees is 2606, of whom 134 belong to the SC and 453 to the ST ie, 5.1% and 17.4% respectively. The 156 committees have convenors. Of them three 1.9 are from the SC and ten are from the ST (6.4%). In the Kurichy panchayat where there are 144 committees at the ward level, 3% convenors belong to the SC and ST where as in the Agali from 156 committees only 13 convenors belong to SC&ST. Of the 19 ST participants of the sample four were elected convenors ie, 21.1% of the participants. In the case of SC the corresponding number and percentage are 33.3. The total strength of the twelve panchayat committees is 312[2612]. Of these 13 belong to the SC [4.2%] and 20 to the ST[6.4%]. Of the 40 ST sample 19 are participants. Of these three are elected to

the panchayat committees. They constitute 15.8% of the participants. Of the three participants of 10 SC sample are is a committee member at the panchayat level. Actually there are two convenors at the panchayat level from the STs, 15.4% of the total number of 13 convenors. There is one from the SC ie, 7.7% of the thirteen convenors. From the sample, there are two convenors are each belonging to the SC & the ST. Of resource persons are each belongs to the ST and ST.

Even though the ST constitute 27% of the total population and four of the 13 wards are ST reservation wards, the political participation of the ST in the panchayat system turns out to be quite inadequate. This is true with regard to the SC also. The reason for this is to be found in their socio-economic and educational status.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The study is concerned with the participation of the SC and ST in the political and planning processes at the panchayat level. It is a micro-level, empirical study in the context of the introduction of the Kerala Panchayat Act, 1994 and the movement of people's planning.

The process of decentralization and planning has a chequered history in India as well as in Kerala. The main reason is the lack of political will. However, if the panchayats under the new Act, are able to exercise the powers devolved on them effectively, a major change in governance in the state is possible. The essential conditions for this are: (I) Sufficient funds to the panchayat, ii) the nature of effective control by the panchayats over the government machinery that will be deputed to function under them and iii) the cooperation and attitude of the civil servants and as well as the personnel of the parastate bodies like the Water Authority, Electricity Board, Housing Board and others.

Decentralisation of powers to the panchayats and people's planning process alone do not necessarily imply greater democracy and power to the people. This requires a partnership between the people and the authority together with devolution of power and control over the process by the people. Only such an arrangement provide a helpful

starting point of empowerment of the people especially the backward sections of the population like the SC and ST.

Political participation of the SC and ST in Kurichy and Agali is a true reflection of the socio-economic and political background of the two communities. The SC in Kurichy and the ST in Agali are politically active when compared to the SC in Agali and the ST in Kurichy. Even in Kurichy, the influence and participation of the SC at the panchayat level are less than those at the ward levels. But as a whole they play a significant role which is by all means higher in relation to their proportion to the total population. The CPI(M) is dominant in both the panchayats, among the SC in Kurichy and the ST in Agali. On the otherhand, the majority of the ST in Kurichy and the SC in Agali support the Congress.

Political participation is studied with reference to the sex and age, education level and annual income of the sample. The traditional pattern of political participation with reference to the above components seems to be irrelevant at least in the case of educational and income levels. Males constitute the majority of supporters of the CPI(M) where as the congress gets the case of age the traditional pattern of the comparatively younger voting for the leftist parties still holds good, but is obliterated in Kurichy panchayat in the case of the congress which gets more support from those who are below 43 years of age. With

regard to education, the SC supporters of the CPI(M) are the best educated among them. Further it is significant to note, especially in Kurichy, higher income group supports the CPI(M). In Agali education and income seem to be insignificant in political participation, because all the sample there belong to lower scale of educational and income level. However political participation does depend on the socio-economic milieu of the participants. Better education, young age and more income stimulate political participation.

The sociology of the participants in the people's planning process is also quite revealing 57.1% of the CPI(M) supporters are participants. 56.3% of them are males. 62.5% of them belong to the younger age group. 68.8% of them have received secondary education. 50% of the SC supporters and 17% of the ST supporters of the Congress are participants. The Congress supporter belong to the higher age group. Non-participants from the ST are females and belong to lower income group and educational level. Majority of the participants, irrespective of party affiliation belong to the higher income group.

In Agali 66% of the ST supporters of the CPI(M) are participants. In the case of Agali it is significant to note that with respect to age, education and income, all of them belong to the lower groups. Of the non-participants eight are females. Even though the sociology of participation in Agali is slightly different from that of Kurichy, the

basic pattern is the same except in case of income. There is none from the SC or ST who belongs to the higher income group. There is only one ST participant who comes under the higher education group. 28% of the participants in the Gramasabhas of the wards in Kurichy panchayat are Scheduled Castes while their percentage within the population is only 12.9%. The participation with regard to the ST is 0.7% while they consist of only 0.6% of the total population. In Agali the SC and ST participation constitute 5.1% and 17.4% respectively of the total participants where as their respective percentage to the total population is 9 and 27.3. This shows lack of political consciousness due to their socio-economic backwardness.

In Kurichy 26.4% of the ward level convenors are from the SC and ST. There was none from the ST. The SC participation at the panchayat level is 16.13%. In Agali only 8.8% of the ward-level convenors are from the SC and ST. At the panchayat level it is only 15.4%. Even though the ST constitutes 27% of the total population, and four of the 13 wards are ST Reservation wards, the political participation of the ST in the panchayat is quite inadequate. This is true with regard to the SC also.

In Kurichy the political participation of the SC is higher than their proportion in the total population. This is due to their relatively better (when compared to the SC in other panchayat) educational and

income levels, and housing facilities. In Agali the SCs are quite backward. The ST in Agali are more active than the ST in Kurichy. It can be concluded that political participation and participation in the planning process of any section of the population, in, Kerala depends on its socio-economic setting; its bargaining capacity as vote bank i.e. its number and organisation, and the attitude, ideology and commitment of the party system.

The barriers to political participation are thus social, economic and political. If better education, better employment and better housing are available to the SC in Kurichy, they would play a dominant role not only in their own affairs, but in the general development of the panchayat i.e. they could become not only their leaders as caste members but also the leaders of the society as citizens.

With regard to Agali, reference may be made to the social, economic and political reasons for non-participation, the social factors are the state of dependency due to loss of traditional skill and knowledge, loss of pride of one's own culture and the infusion of new social and personal habits. In the economic sphere, the tribals are cruelly alienated from their lands. Employment opportunities are limited. Government sponsored employment generation is highly bottlenecked by the control exercised by the contractors, politicians and the bureaucracy. This situation has marginalised them. The minority status

of the tribals in the political system and their lack of political consciousness, do not prevail upon the party system to consider them as assured vote banks. The parties refrain from long term commitment. The tribals do not have an effective leadership. The contractor-politician- bureaucrat nexus is against tribal participation which could expose them. At present their political allegiance is perceived by the political leaders as superficial. The political leaders see them as passive vote banks, which could be captured through simple blandishments. The tribals need to be conscientized, organised and their traditional skills strengthened. Their economic development has to be ensured with specific emphasis on solving the land issue. Dedicated civil servants have to be selected for assignment to tribal areas. The one factor which is most important is the omnipresence of political will.

APPENDIX I
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name :
 2. Age :
 3. Educational Qualification :
 4. Present Occupation :
 6. Do You Possess Land ?
If Yes, How much? :
-
1. Did you cast vote in the Last Panchayat Election?
 2. Did you contest ? Are you interested in contesting in future?
 3. Whom did you vote for? Won or got defeated?
 4. Did you Campaign for any candidate?
 5. Are you a member of any political party?
 6. Are you a sympathiser of any political party?
 7. Did you vote according to your will or under the influence of others?
 8. which political party is the ruling front?
 9. Have you participated in the Grama Sabhas meetings?

10. Are you a member of any committee consisted by the Grama Sabha?
11. Have you participated in the Panchayat level [Development Seminar] meetings?
12. Are you a member of any Panchayat level committee constituted by the Panchayat?
13. Are you a convenor of Grama Sabha Committee?
14. Are you a Convenor of Panchayat level Committees?
15. Are you a member of district or state level subject committees?
16. Are you a Resource Person?
17. What is the difference between the present and past working systems of the Panchayats?
18. Whether the welfare programmes for SC and ST were implemented properly?

Appendix II

Following are Bills were taken by the different Ministries in Kerala during their periods.

Bills	Chief Ministers	Years
1. Kerala Panchayat Bill,	E.M.S. Namboodripad	1958
2. Kerala Zilla Samiti Bill	E.M.S. Namboodripad	1959
3. Kerala Panchayat Bill	Pattom Tanu Pillai	1960
4. Kerala Municipality Bill	Pattom Tanu Pillai	1960
5. Kerala Municipal Corporation Bill	Pattom Tanu Pillai	1960
6. Kerala Panchayat Union Council Zilla Parishad Bill	R. Sankar	1964
7. Kerala Panchayat Raj Bill	E.M.S. Namboodripad	1967
8. Kerala Zilla Constitutional Bill	C.Achutha Menon	1971
9. Kerala Zilla Constitutional Bill	A.K.Antony	1978
10. Kerala Panchayat Raj Bill	K. Karunakaran	1994
11. Kerala Municipality Bill	A.K.Antony	1994

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