

8th International Conference on Multidisciplinary Research

Osmania University Centre for International Program, Osmania University Campus, Hyderabad (India)



6th-7th September 2019

www.conferenceworld.in

ISBN : 978-81-941721-5-4

Social Development in Kerala and 'the Kerala Model Development'

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Abstract

Kerala Model Development is the development pattern of Kerala. It is a globally accepted model with high human development indices but with low per capita income. India, which is the seventh largest country in the world still suffers from poor living standards. At the same time, a tiny state in India is acting as a model to almost all developing countries. As the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen himself said, 'India does not need to look elsewhere for development pointers; yet there is much India can learn from Kerala's developmental experience'. Kerala has emerged as a fully literate state, fully electrified state, open defecation free-state etc. The base of this development can be traced to education. With low dropout rate and high enrolment ratio, Kerala is acting as a model in the realm of women education also. The present paper aims at a study of the development of Kerala from the formation of Kerala state in 1956 to the present day with special emphasis on its social developments.

Social Development of Kerala and the Kerala Model Development

The state of Keralawas formed on 1 November 1956 on the basis of State Reorganization Act passed by our Parliament. Kerala was created by merging the Malabar district of old Madras presidency with parts of princely states-Travancore and Cochin¹. When Swami Vivekananda visited Kerala in the last century, he is forced to call Kerala, a land of lunatics. Then it was a land of superstitions, dogmatism, untouchability, starving farmers and workers. But now the state was well known for its achievements in the social sphere. Almost a casteless society, all can use public roads, temple entry for all, right to

¹Bipan Chandra,et.al, *India Since Independence*, Penguin Books,Mumbai,2012, p.125.

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education for all. With land reform laws, the downtrodden got land. Social Development here is remarkable.

Let us take the field of education. The educational growth here is quite impressive, not only in terms of near total literacy, higher student enrolment, increased number of educational institutions, gender equality in access but also in terms of development and diversification of the higher stages of educational system². In these respects, Kerala is often compared not only with the other Indian states or developing countries, but with some of the developed countries. The abolition of fees from primary level to high school level and making education totally free in 1969-70's itself, efficient noon feeding system, travel concessions, Kerala Education Rules 1959 etc. made education accessible to all irrespective of caste, class, gender etc. in Kerala³. It is to be noted that the fundamental right regarding free and compulsory education to all children between 6 and 14 years of age is incorporated in our constitution only in 2009. But Kerala which forms only 1.1% of India's land area had made tremendous achievements regarding this many decades before⁴. Since 1957, special efforts have been made by the state government to increase the enrolment of females belonging to educationally backward communities. To attract girl students, special scholarships have been introduced to Muslims, Nadars, SC/ST girls etc. This helped much to reduce gender desparity in literacy rates.

Table-1:Literacy rate of Kerala (1951-2011)

Year	Males	Females	Total
1951	58.35	36.43	47.18
1961	64.89	45.56	55.08
1971	77.13	62.53	69.75
1981	84.56	73.36	78.85
1991	93.62	86.17	89.81
2001	94.20	87.86	90.92

²K.K.George, N.Ajith Kumar, *What is Wrong with Kerala Education System*, Centre for Socio-economic and Development Studies, Edappally, 1999, p.1.

³Ibid.

⁴*Human Development Report 2005*, Government of Kerala, p.34.

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2011

96.02

91.98

93.91

Source: Census of India, 2011

In the field of education gender disparities are almost invisible. In 2002-'03, there are about 12,271 schools in Kerala with almost 50 lakhs students. In an area of each square kilometre, a lower primary school is there and in each 4 kms, a high school⁵. Accessability to education is more here, because of the numerous schools and this had attracted girls much. The educational survey of NCERT(1993-94) states that 90% of Keralites have lower primary schools, 67.5% have U.P schools and 62% have high schools with in a square kilometre. In 1956-57, about 41% of teachers in Kerala are females and now, it had been increased to 68%. In Bihar, it is only 20%. These factors contributed to the education of women in Kerala and by 1980's itself, virtually, there was no gender gap in school admission⁶.

In the sphere of higher education of women too, Kerala has shown spectacular achievements. At the time of India's independence, there was only 14 colleges in Kerala⁷. But a considerable increase regarding the number of universities, colleges and other institutions occured in the post independence period. At present ,there are 14 universities in Kerala. It includes 1 central university, 11 state universities and 2 deemed universities and the number of colleges also increased tremendously and it is 256 now. If we analyze the women enrolment of our country, it is clear that Kerala occupies the second highest percentage of women enrolment among the Indian states with 58.24%, Goa leads the list with 60.31%, but the national average is only 43.28%⁸. But in matters of South Indian states, Kerala occupies the highest

p o s i t i o n .

More than 45000 high-tech classrooms, free text books, free uniforms, free meals, free insurance schemes, travel concessions etc. have become a reality as far as the student community is concerned. Swandhanam project for the welfare of orphans is another feather in the cap.

At the same time, we have to admit that women education has bought a great change in the outlook of the women in Kerala. It can be seen like the bright sun in many areas. In literature, it is reflected remarkably.

⁵*Human Development Report 2005*, Government of Kerala, p.86.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Rajini.K.M, *Human Resources Development in Higher Education in Kerala*, Cochin University of Science and Technology, Kochi, 2009, p.5.

⁸*UGC Annual Report, 2012-13, Pp.55,56.*

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Indulekhais a perfect example. Her negation of the suit of Suri Namboothirippad in *Indulekha* clearly reflects the status of women, thanks to English education. It enabled her to 'know herself'. That is, it awakened her self knowledge. It also resulted in a general awakening of womenhood. It changed their mode of dress-from the traditional difficult dress or half dress to jeans and tops; standard of living-from the four walls of the kitchen to beauty parlours, parliaments, offices etc.; thought; food habits; behavioural pattern; social system and even folk traditions. The various social disabilities like pardah, early marriage, sati, prohibition of widow remarriage and her legal inequalities have all disappeared. The 20th century has ushered in a new outlook on life and the most amazing product of the new era is the New Free Woman, whose role in shaping the state is crucial⁹.

In Kerala, both access to and utilization of health care particularly among women are quite high compared to the women in rest of the country. It is mainly because of the educational achievement of women in Kerala. A notable achievement of women's health in the state has been that over 90 of the deliveries take place under institutional care whereas at the country level "even 60% of the deliveries could not be institutionalized so far". The result is that maternal mortality in the state has come down sharply. For every 3000 deliveries the reported maternal morality is below one. Female life expectancy in Kerala is 74 years which is 15 years higher than the Indian average and almost 6 years above the corresponding figure for men in Kerala which is 68. Girls and women have access to the health care system in Kerala and primary data based surveys show that in general the rates of immunization of girls are as high as those of boys. Female literacy and education are crucial determinants of child survival, general health and hygiene. These in turn determine progress in other demographic and health indicators such as the expectancy of life at birth, the birth and death rates, the infant mortality rate and general mortality etc. The female to male ratio in kerala is 1084 females per 1000 males. This is very unlikely to be found in other states. Kerala is chosen by the UNICEF and World health organization as the first state in the world to become 'baby friendly state'. Patient friendly government hospitals have become trade mark of Kerala. The women of Kerala are better off than her counter parts elsewhere in India. She has better status, numerically superior and enjoys more freedom than her sisters in the north. She goes to school controls administration, earns money and runs in international athletic events in addition to attending in the daily

⁹R.N.Yesudas, *A History of Women Education in Kerala*, South Indian School Centre, Thiruvananthapuram, 1988, p.79.

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household chores. Kerala girls and women can dial 181 and can get proper help from police at critical times.

Jana maitry policing, Welfare pensions-pension for agricultural labourers, widows, old people, Effective water management system-rain or shine, Kerala will shine. Thanks to recharging of wells, rain water harvesting and effective water management, water scarcity is not a problem in Kerala now. Sewage system is also remarkable. CNG buses, LNG buses, solar autos are emerging. Public libraries in almost every nook and corner, decentralization of power almost in the manner of Panchayati Raj – a step towards Gandhi's Grama swaraj. Churches mosques and temples co-existing harmony. There is no antagonism between religions. Communal harmony and religious tolerance are an essential part of Kerala model.

Kerala model development does not mean development for few-but it is development for all- especially, the have nots-this is the most important aspect. Kerala made history by being the first state to have a freely elected communist government. Again it made history by being the first state to have full literacy. It is a fully electrified state. Open defecation free state, it is the first state to come up with on document transgender policy. The *Kudumba Sree* which has four million members is another silver lining as far as women empowerment is concerned. If there is a heaven on earth, it is here and it is here. Where else one can find a hotel without a cashier-reminds us of cafeterias of most advanced nations- are all result of the activities of able ministers and a strong opposition together with a group of progressive minded people.Kerala is one of the most progressive states in terms of social welfare and physical quality of life. People have better access to social services and medical care than other parts of the country which makes Kerala the real God's own country.

Some Human Development Indices shows the position of Kerala.

Infant Mortality Rate

Infant Mortality rate	Kerala	India
1951	128	140
1961	94	129
1971	61	114
1981	34	110s
1991	16.5	91

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By analyzing this, it is clear that Kerala's position is far-far better than India. Same is the case with Birth Rate.

Birth rate (per 1000)

Year	Kerala	India
1951	44	40
1961	39	41
1971	32	37
1981	26	34
1991	18	30

Life Expectancy is the next category.

Life expectancy at birth: (in years)

Year	Kerala		India	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
1951	45	43	32	33
1961	50	48	41	42
1971	61	60	45	46
1981	68	64	50	51

If achieving radical reductions in infant mortality and population growth rates and eliminating acute poverty without significantly eroding the ecological balance are corroborating evidence for practising 'sustainable development' , then the Indian state of Kerala should be counted as an early example of a state/society which practises ' sustainable development'¹⁰ . Thus Kerala model is also equal to sustainable development .

Provision of selected basic services among all Indian states, by the late 1970s

Percentage of villages covered

Feature	Kerala's rank	in Kerala	in all-India
Within two weeks			

¹⁰ Govindan Parayil, The Kerala Model of Development : Development and Sustainability in Third World, Third World Quarterly, Vol. 17, 1996, p.941.

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kilometres

All-weather roads	1	98	46
bus stops	1	98	40
Post offices	1	100	53
Primary schools	1	100	90
Secondary schools	1	99	44
Fair-price shops	1	99	35
Health dispensaries	1	91	25
Health centres	1	47	12

Within five kilometres

Higher education	1	97	21
Facilities			
Hospitals	1	78	35
Fertiliser depots	1	93	44
Agricultural pump	1	65	19
repair shops			
Veterinary dispensaries	1	82	45
Credit cooperative banks	1	96	61
Commercial banks	1	96	40
Seed stores	2	63	40
Railway stations	8	23	18
<i>In the village</i>			
Drinking water	5	96	93
Electricity	3	97	33

Source: RW Franke & B H Chasin, *Kerala: Radical Reform as Development in an Indian State*

p 13.

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By analyzing all this, we can surely agree with Amartya Sen. He (1997) had stated: 'India does not need to look elsewhere for development pointers; there is much that India can learn from Kerala's development experience¹¹'.

Thus Kerala Model Development is a true model which everyone needs to follow. But everything is not well in Kerala also. There are some defects - the backwardness in industrial sector mainly due to aggressive trade unionism, lack of a boom in economic sector, educated unemployment particularly among women etc. So the model is often criticized, debated and discussed. In spite of all its drawbacks, Kerala model truly is a good model which can be followed by other states and nations as well for the overall development of its citizens. Social development is an inevitable thing for all communities.

¹¹Govindan Parayil, *Kerala , the Development Experience, Reflections on and Replicability*, Zed Books, London, 2005, p.3.

Sustainability