

HSST HISTORY

KERALA HISTORY PART 6

'Kerala Model' Development



The Kerala model of development refers to the economic practices adopted by the Indian state of Kerala. It is characterised by results showing strong social indicators when compared to the rest of the country such as high literacy and life expectancy rates, highly improved access to healthcare, and low infant mortality and birth rates. Despite having a lower per capita income, the state is sometimes compared to developed countries.

These achievements along with the factors responsible for such achievements have been considered characteristic results of the Kerala model.

Academic literature discusses the primary factors underlying the success of the Kerala model as its decentralisation efforts, the political mobilisation of the poor, and the active involvement of civil society organisations in the planning and implementation of development policies.

More precisely, the Kerala model has been defined as:

A set of high material quality-of-life indicators coinciding with low per-capita incomes, both distributed across nearly the entire population of Kerala.

A set of wealth and resource redistribution programmes that have largely brought about the high material quality-of-life indicators.

High levels of political participation and activism among ordinary people along with substantial numbers of dedicated leaders at all levels. Kerala's mass activism and committed cadre are able to function within a large democratic structure, which their activism has served to reinforce.

History

Research done by economist **K. N. Raj** played a pivotal role in the model's development.

The Kerala model originally differed from conventional development thinking which focuses on achieving high GDP growth rates, however, in 1990, Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq changed the focus of development economics from national income accounting to people centred policies.

To produce the Human Development Report (HDRs), Haq brought together a group of well-known development economists including: Paul Streeten, Frances Stewart, Gustav Ranis, Keith Griffin, Sudhir Anand, and Meghnad Desai.

The Human Development Index, which was introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (a branch of the United Nations Organisation), has become one of the most influential and widely used indices to measure human development across countries.

Economists have noted that despite low income rates, the state had high literacy rates, healthy citizens, and a politically active population.

Researchers began to delve more deeply into what was going on in the Kerala model, since human development indices seemed to show a standard of living which was comparable with life in developed nations, on a fraction of the income.



The development standard in Kerala is comparable to that of many first world nations, and is widely considered to be the highest in India at that time.

Despite having high standards of human development, the Kerala model ranks low in terms of industrial and economic development.

The high rate of education in the region has resulted in a brain drain, with many citizens migrating to other parts of the world for employment. The job market in Kerala is forcing many to relocate to other places.

Human Development Index

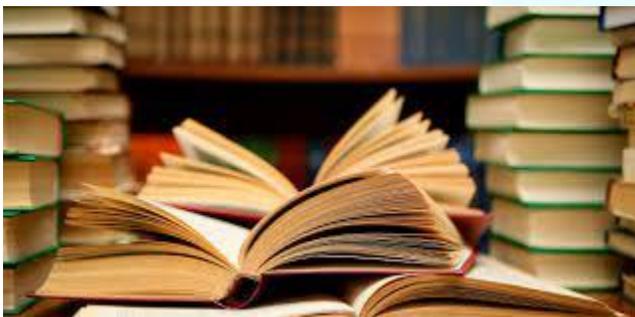
The United Nations developed the Human Development Index (HDI) in 1990 as a composite statistic used to rank countries by level of "**human development**" and separate developed (high development), developing (middle development), and underdeveloped (low development) countries.

The HDI is used in the United Nations Development Programme's annual Human Development Reports and is composed from data on **life expectancy, education and per-capita GDP** (as an indicator of Standard of living) collected at the national level using a formula.

This index, which has become one of the most influential and widely used indices to compare human development across countries, gave the Kerala model international recognition since Kerala has consistently had scores comparable to developed countries since the HDI's inception.

In 2021, Kerala again tops the HDI among the Indian states with a score of 0.782, according to the Global Data Lab

Education



Pallikkoodam, a school model started by Buddhists, was prevalent in the Malabar region, Kingdom of Cochin, and Kingdom of Travancore.

This model was later acquired by Christian missionaries and paved the way for an educational revolution in Kerala by making education accessible to all, irrespective of caste or religion.

Christian missionaries introduced Western education methods to Kerala. Communities such as Ezhavas, Nairs and Dalits were guided by monastic orders (called ashrams) and Hindu saints and social reformers such as Sree **Narayana Guru, Sree Chattampi Swamikal and Ayyankali**, who exhorted them to educate themselves by starting their own schools.

That resulted in numerous Sree Narayana schools and colleges, Nair Service Society schools.

The teachings of these saints have also empowered the poor and backward classes to organise themselves and bargain for their rights. The Government of Kerala instituted the Aided School system to help schools with operating expenses such as salaries for running these schools.[citation needed]

- Kerala had been a notable centre of Vedic learning, having produced one of the most influential Hindu philosophers, Adi Shankaracharya.
- The Vedic learning of the Nambudiris is an unaltered tradition that still holds today, and is unique for its orthodoxy, unknown to other Indian communities.
- However, in feudal Kerala, though only the Nambudiris received an education in Vedas, other castes as well as women were open to receive education in Sanskrit, mathematics and astronomy, in contrast to other parts of India
- Thirunavaya was a centre of Vedic learning in early mediaeval period. Ponnani in Kerala was a global centre of Islamic learning during the mediaeval period.
- The upper castes, such as Nairs, Tamil Brahmin migrants, Ambalavasis, St Thomas Christians, as well as lower castes such as Ezhavas had a strong history of Sanskrit learning.

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- In fact, many Ayurvedic physicians (such as Itty Achudan) were from the **lower-caste Ezhava** community and Muslim community (such as the father of renowned Mappila Paattu poet Moyinkutty Vaidyar).
- Vaidyaratnam P. S. Warriar was a prominent Ayurvedic physician. This level of learning by lower-caste people was not seen in other parts of India.
- Also, Kerala had been the site of the notable Kerala School which pioneered principles of mathematics and logic, and cemented Kerala's status as a place of learning.
- The prevalence of education was not only restricted to males. In pre-colonial Kerala, women, especially those belonging to the matrilineal Nair caste, received an education in Sanskrit and other sciences, as well as Kalaripayattu, a martial art.
- This was unique to Kerala, but was facilitated by the inherent equality shown by Kerala society to females and males, since Kerala society was largely matrilineal, as opposed to the rigid patriarchy in other parts of India which led to a loss of women's rights.
- The rulers of the princely state of Travancore also were at the forefront in the spread of education.
- A school for girls was established by the Maharaja in 1859, which was an act unprecedented in the Indian subcontinent.

Year ◆	Literacy ◆	Male ◆	Female ◆
1951	47.18	58.35	36.43
1961	55.08	64.89	45.56
1971	69.75	77.13	62.53
1981	78.85	84.56	73.36
1991	89.81	93.62	86.17
2001	90.92	94.20	87.86
2011	94.59	97.10	92.12

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- Kerala's improved public health relative to other Indian states and countries with similar economic circumstances is founded on a long history of successful health-focused policies.
- One of the first key strategies Kerala implemented was making vaccinations mandatory for public servants, prisoners, and students in 1879 prior to Kerala becoming a state, when it was composed of autonomous territories.
- Moreover, the efforts of missionaries in setting up hospitals and schools in underserved areas increased access to health and education services.
- Though class and caste divisions were rigid and oppressive, a rise in subnationalism in the 1890s resulted in the development of a shared identity across class and caste groups and support for public welfare.
- Simultaneously, the growth in agriculture and trade in Kerala also stimulated government investment in transportation infrastructure. Thus, leaders in Kerala began increasing spending on health, education, and public transportation, establishing progressive social policies. By the 1950s, Kerala had a significantly higher life expectancy than neighbouring states as well as the highest literacy rate in India.
- Once Kerala became a state in 1956, public scrutiny of schools and health care facilities continued to increase, along with residents' literacy and awareness of the necessity of access to health services. Gradually, health and education became top priorities, which was unique to Kerala according to a local public health researcher.

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- The state's high minimum wages, road expansion, strong trade and labour unions, land reforms, and investment in clean water, sanitation, housing, access to food, public health infrastructure, and education all contributed to the relative success of Kerala's public health system.
- In fact, declining mortality rates during this time period doubled the state's population, and immunisation services, infectious disease care, health awareness activities, and antenatal and postnatal services became more widely available.
- In the 1970s, a decade before India initiated its national immunisation program with WHO, Kerala launched an immunisation program for infants and pregnant women.
- In addition, smaller private medical institutions complemented the government's efforts to increase access to health services and provided specialised healthcare. As a result, life expectancy continued to increase in Kerala, though household income remained low.
- Thus, the concept of the **"Kerala model"** was coined by development researchers in Kerala in the 1970s and the state received international recognition for its health outcomes despite a relatively low per capita income.
- In the mid-1970s to the early 1990s, a fiscal crisis caused the government to reduce spending on health and other social services. Reductions in federal health spending also affected Kerala's health budget.
- As a result, the quality and abilities of public healthcare facilities declined and residents protested. Eventually, private health services

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began to take over, enabled by a lack of government regulation. In fact, by the mid-1980s, only 23% of households regularly utilised government health services, and from 1986–1996, private-sector growth significantly surpassed public-sector growth.

- In 1996, Kerala began to decentralise public healthcare facilities and fiscal responsibilities to local self-governments by implementing the People's Campaign for Decentralised Planning in response to public distrust and national recommendations.
- For instance, new budgetary allocations gave local governments control of 35 to 40% of the state budget. Moreover, the campaign emphasised improving care and access, regardless of income level, caste, tribe, or gender, reflecting a goal of not just effective but also equitable coverage.
- A three-tier system of self-governance was established, consisting of 900 panchayats (villages), 152 blocks, and 14 districts.
- The current healthcare system arose from local self-governments supporting the construction of sub-centers, primary health centres that support five to six sub-centers and serve a village, and community health centers. The new system also allowed local self-governments to create hospital management committees and purchase necessary equipment

Present

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- The basis for the state's health standards is the state-wide infrastructure of primary health centres.
- Under the current system, the primary health centres and sub-centres were brought under the jurisdiction of local self-governments to respond to local health needs and work more closely with local communities.
- As a result, health outcomes and access to healthcare services have improved.
- There are over 9,491 government and private medical institutions in the state, which have about 38000 beds for the total population, making the population to bed ratio 879—one of the highest in the country.
- There is an active, state-supported nutrition programme for pregnant and new mothers and about 99% of child births are institutional/hospital deliveries,
- leading to infant mortality in 2018 being 7 per thousand, compared to 28 in India, overall and 18.9 for low- middle income countries generally.
- The birth rate is **40 percent below that of the national average and almost 60 percent below the rate for impoverished countries in general. Kerala's birth rate is 14.1** (per 1,000 people) and decreasing. India's rate is 17, the rate of the U.S. is 11.4.
- Life expectancy at birth in Kerala is 77 years, compared to 70 years in India and 84 years in Japan, one of the highest in the world. Female life expectancy in Kerala exceeds that of the male, similar to that in developed countries. Kerala's maternal mortality ratio is the lowest in India at 53 deaths per 100,000 live births.
- According to the India State Hunger Index, in 2009, Kerala was one of the four states where hunger was only moderate.
- The hunger index score of Kerala was 17.66 and was second only to Punjab, the state with the lowest hunger index. The nationwide hunger index of India was 23.31.
- Despite the fact that Kerala has a relatively low dietary intake of 2,200 kilocalories per day, the infant-mortality rate and the percentage of the

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population facing severe undernutrition in Kerala is far lower than in other Indian states.

- In early 2000, more than a quarter of the population faced severe undernutrition in three states—Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh—though they had a higher average dietary intake than Kerala.
- Kerala's improved nutrition is primarily due to better healthcare access as well as greater equality in food distribution across different income groups and within families.

Public Health Infrastructure^[27]

Medical Colleges	34
Hospitals	1280
Community Health Centres ^[10]	229
Primary Health Centres ^[10]	933
Sub Centres	5380
AYUSH Hospitals/Dispensary	162/1473
Total Beds	38004
Blood Banks	169

Key Health Development indicators- Kerala & India

Health Indicators	◆ Kerala ◆	India ◆
Life expectancy at birth (Male) ^[35]	74.39	69.51
Life expectancy at birth (Female) ^[35]	79.98	72.09
Life expectancy at birth (Average) ^[35]	77.28	70.77
Birth rate (per 1,000 population)	14.1 ^[32]	17.64 ^[33]
Death rate (per 1,000 population)	7.47 ^[32]	7.26 ^[33]
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 population)	7 ^[29]	28 ^[30]
Under 5-Mortality rate(per 1,000 live births) ^[28]	10	36
Maternal mortality ratio (per lakh live births) ^[35]	53.49	178.35

State policy

In 1957 Kerala elected a communist government headed by EMS Namboothiripad, and introduced the revolutionary Land Reform Ordinance. The land reform was implemented by the subsequent government, which had abolished tenancy, benefiting 1.5 million poor households.

This achievement was the result of decades of struggle by Kerala's peasant associations. In 1967 in his second term as Chief Minister, EMS again pushed for reform.

The land reform initiative abolished tenancy and landlord exploitation, effective public food distribution that provides subsidised rice to low-income households, protective laws for agricultural workers, pensions for retired agricultural labourers, and a high rate of government employment for members of formerly lower-caste communities.

India is a multinational state home to provincial states with differing policies, and Kerala's place within this federalist system can be seen through analyses of its regime type.

Two coalitions containing all-India parties have alternately been in power in Kerala—not dissimilar to the neighbouring South Indian state of Andhra Pradesh. Kerala has a strong leftist movement presence that has contributed to changes in the traditional feudal-caste system in India.

Democratisation of the state has surrounded significant increases in components of welfare and has led to a large social transformation since the early 20th century.

Kerala and Tamil Nadu have comparable increases in social development, albeit with Kerala to a much higher degree—yet Tamil Nadu has been ruled by Tamil nationalist parties for over half a century.

In comparison, West Bengal is seen as even stronger in terms of Leftist movement and governmental policy compared to Kerala yet is ranked far lower in disparities in rural areas, urban areas, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes.

Further, there is hardly any per capita consumption expenditure and literacy levels between Muslims and Hindus in Kerala—while Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, and the country as a whole have relatively high levels of disparities among the two predominant religious groups.

Interestingly enough, those political radicals involved in the original social integration movements in Kerala were politically conservative.

Nonetheless, the social discrimination due to caste of the early 20th century contributed to the cultural revolt and political mobilization of depressed castes. It was the success of these movements that allowed for the creation of Leftist movements that elevates the social status of lower classes as a whole

Gaps in the Kerala Model

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- Kerala has had consistently high levels of development when compared to the rest of the country.
- The state has the highest record of per capita consumer expenditure, and this level has been progressively increasing since 1993.
- Kerala has now begun a high growth regime driven mainly by its service and construction industries.
- The all-India and state wise trend in the estimates of poverty headcount ratio (HCR) and Gini coefficient show that Kerala reduced its HCR by 10.3% between 1988-1993 and then again by another 12.2% in the 11 years proceeding until 2004-2005.
- Comparatively, Himachal Pradesh—which did not benefit from the same Gulf boom that Kerala did—reduced its post-reform rural poverty to a lower HCR of 10.9% in 2004-05.
- Moreover, though there was a marginal decline in the Gini coefficient for rural Kerala in 1993-1994 compared to previous years, there is a jump to 38.3% in 2004-2005—the highest figure compared to all-India figures and all other states. The urban Gini coefficient for Kerala in 2004-05 was 41%, second only to Chhattisgarh.
- Comparisons of scheduled tribes, castes, and religions also show growing income disparities, reflected by increasing incidence of suicides, family violence, gang activity, and alcoholism, among others.
- Even public provisioning of equitable access to healthcare and education, which are the foundation of the Kerala model, have decreased overall. The percentage of public spending on education to

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total government expenditure decreased from 29.28% in 1982–83 to 23.17% 1992–93 and 17.97% in 2005–06.

- In terms of education, the educational expenditure size of 6% which Kerala followed in the 1960s and 70s declined to just over 4% in the 1980s and below that in 11 of the 16 years during the post-reform regime.
- While the decline of public expenditure on education decreased during the pre-reform period (from 1980 to 1991) at a rate of 0.97% yearly, the post-reform period has seen an even sharper decline of 2.13% a year.
- With regard to public expenditure on health and family welfare, there too has been an equally sharp fall in spending, from 11.67% of state domestic product (SDP) to 1983–84 to 9.94% in 1989–90 and down to 6.36% from 2005–06.
- Social security entitlements as a percentage of SDP fell significantly too, while it was increasing at a rate of 1.83% in the pre-reform period it has fallen to 0.15% during the reform period. Under the current neoliberal regime there has been accelerated commercialization of the education and health sectors—which has altered the equity base of the Kerala model as a whole.
- For example, the proportion of students at private unaided schools rose from 2.5% of the 5.9 million total student population in 1990–91 to 7.4% in 2005–06 This is coupled with a 7.5% of intake in government schools over the same time, and only those with the means to pay high fees can go to these private unaided schools.

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- The marine fishery sector in Kerala is an example of the extent to which disparities still exist despite the Kerala Model's emphasis placed on equality.
- Though fish and fisheries have a very significant place within Kerala as a whole, fishing communities in Kerala have not benefited from the state's overall efforts at improving quality of life nor the increased value of output in the sector.
- Data from 1965 to 1975 indicate an eleven-fold increase in the value of output from Rs 68.5 million to 741.4 million in current prices.
- However, a major deceleration in the rate of increase of value of output is observed from 1975 to 1985 where the level grew from Rs 741.4 million to just Rs 906.4 million as a result of declining fish harvests and prices.
- While the net state domestic product has increased by about 18% in the same decade, the fishery sector product has decreased by 20% in comparison.
- This can be seen in the 29% increase in the gap between per capita state domestic product and product per fisherperson between 1975–76 and 1984–85.
- Poverty is also prevalent in marine fishing communities that are often located on the geographical margins of the land who depend exclusively on the sea for their livelihood.
- These and other communities on the fringe of state borders have been left behind in the economic and socio-cultural progress that has been widely witnessed by the rest of the state.

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- Poor quality of life and substandard conditions in marine fishing communities can be attributed specifically to the crowding of entire groups of people on the narrow strip of line along the length of Kerala's coastline: a total of 222 fishing villages along the state's 590 km coastline—none more than a half kilometre wide.
- Population density in marine fishing villages was measured to be around 2113 persons per square kilometre in 1981, compared to a state figure of 655 per square kilometre.
- Basic amenities such as electric lighting, access to running water, toilet facilities, etc. are also at far lower standards in these fishing villages when compared to the state as a whole.
- The lack of basic facilities and hygiene has led to rapid spread of contagious diseases in these areas which express high levels of respiratory and skin infections, diarrheal disorders and hookworm infections to name a few.
- Though the all-Kerala infant mortality rate was 17 per 1000 live births in 1991, the corresponding rate is 85 per 1000 births in marine fishing communities.
- There is also a clear gender bias evidenced by the sex ratio of 972 females to 1000 males in these communities, compared to the all-Kerala 1084:1000 ratio of females to males.
- Thus, marine fishing communities clearly represent an outlier community that has faced restricted levels of capabilities while the state of Kerala has seen progress overall

GENDER

Historically, women in Kerala are thought to have possessed more autonomy relative to other Indian states, which is often attributed to its matrilineal structure which ultimately changed into a patrilineal system in the 20th century.

Matriliny, in which property was inherited collectively through the female line, was largely practised by the Hindu Nair caste as well as some other upper-caste Hindus such as the Ezhavas and even some Muslims, who are exclusively patriarchal in other parts of India.

However, Christian succession laws in the early 20th century in Kerala were severely restrictive against women.

For instance, unmarried daughters could only claim between a quarter and a third of each son's share of paternal property, or 5,000 rupees, whichever was less,

if the father died without making a will. In all other instances, daughters' inheritances were restricted to dowries.

These laws were challenged when Mary Roy, a Syrian Christian woman who had not received a dowry sued her brother to gain equal access to their inheritance.

She ultimately won the case and it was considered a landmark ruling for female succession.

Beginning in the 1920s, the Hindu patriarchal system fragmented, especially once the Travancore Nayar Regulation Act of 1925 was passed, which was initiated by the British and began the transition to a strictly patriarchal structure.

By the 1970s, the matrilineal system had virtually disappeared and the Kerala family organisation became exclusively patrilineal and women's rights to property were significantly restricted.

Though women in Kerala are highly educated, recent studies have called attention to the **"gender paradox"** in Kerala, in which despite the literacy and education of women in Kerala, they are still oppressed in similar or greater regards by the patriarchy relative to other Indian states.

Societal and cultural norms are argued by scholars to continue to restrict women's freedoms and maintain their subservience to men both at home and in the labour market.

High female unemployment rates, discrimination in the labor market, and elevated female suicide rates and gender-based violence, are all indicators of the **"gender paradox"** in Kerala.

In addition, the persistence of the long-standing tradition of dowry across lines of caste, class, and religion, and the finding that women do about twenty times as much housework as men in Kerala suggest the restricted autonomy and oppression that Kerala women continue to face.

Furthermore, economic participation and involvement of women is declining in Kerala, and male casual labourers receive almost double that of women.

However, some policies such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and Kudumbasree microenterprises have promoted female entrepreneurship, encouraged women's economic empowerment, and decreased gender disparities in Kerala, according to academKerala's achievements in development are legendary, particularly in quality of life measured in terms of human development index.

The index of human development of Kerala is found to be comparable to that of the middle income countries in the world whereas its per capita income is as low as \$100, which is lower than that of the average per capita income of the low income countries.

Thus, the Kerala model² shows how an economy can achieve high quality of life with low per capita income. Many of the development trends/features in Kerala have been tending towards the capacity building of local level planning, and since independence these centrifugal forces have gained momentum and resulted in sustained improvement in the quality of life, despite very low per capita income.

The following are, among others, important features of the regional economy, which have tended towards moulding a background for such an experiment in the Participative Decentralised Planning (PDP).ic literature analysing gender sensitive policies.

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The following are, among others, important features of the regional economy, which have tended towards moulding a background for such an experiment in the Participative Decentralised Planning (PDP).

a) Geography and Ecology

Kerala is the Southernmost State in India having geographical area of about 39,000 sq. km. with population of 33,387,677 as recorded by the 2011 Census. It is one of the densely populated states with population of 834 per sq.km.

There are four major geographical zones in the

State: the Highlands, the Middle zone, the Lowland plain, and the Coastal plain.

Kerala is a region of relatively heavy monsoon rain.

There are 44 streams/rivers in Kerala. The even availability of water rendered possible an even settlement pattern, as distinct from the cluster villages in the rest of the sub-continent, and it helped reducing the chances of rapid spread of epidemics in the region.

b) Rural-Urban Continuum: Rural-Urban Continuum:

An idiosyncratic feature of the development trends in Kerala is the absence of rural-urban polarisation. The public policy has been so targeted that the disparity between the rural and urban area reduced to the minimum. These developments in Kerala – ‘rural-urban continuum’ – have resulted in the coinage of a new term ‘rurban 4

Woodcock, during the late Sixties, described the situation very beautifully in the following way.

c) Public Action

Kerala’s accomplishments shows that the well-being of the people can be improved, and social, political and cultural conditions be transformed, even at low levels of income, if there is appropriate public action. In Kerala, the action of mass organisations and mass movements against social, political, and economic oppression and the policy actions of governments have been the most important constituencies of public action

In these activities, people's participation has been quite considerable. In fact, these movements have been, one way or another, turned out to be citizens' education programmes. With this historical background Kerala had been able to 'take off', during the sixties and seventies, in terms of social infrastructure and quality of life.

d) Development of Social Infrastructure

The social activism of the people have been reflected in the political economy in terms of policy decisions in favour of mass literacy, Public Distribution System (PDS), and development of social infrastructure. A study of the Central Statistical Organisation, of 22 basic facilities in Indian villages, shows that Kerala ranks first in 17 out of 22 indicators. Most of the basic facilities are available in Kerala villages within 2 to 5 kilometres (see Table 1).

e) Universal Education for Children and Total Literacy

Kerala is the only State in India having total literacy. Because of the dense and fairly even distribution of population, it is simply easier and more cost effective to provide health and educational services in Kerala than in other parts of India. Kerala's physical and geological characteristics help account, in part, for the State's unique ability to deliver public services.

f) Early Demographic Transition

Kerala has experienced one of the sharpest fertility declines in the South Asia region. With very low level of per capita income this Indian State has achieved results in controlling population growth comparable to those in the most successful middle-income countries. In 1987 itself the State had crossed the restating rate of birth. In 1996 Kerala observed a birth rate as low as 17.8 with a death rate of 6.3 and infant mortality rate 13. The comparable rates for India were 29.5 (birth) 9.8 (death) and 80 (infant mortality). And Kerala is the only state in India with a sex ratio favourable to women. In 2011, for every 1000 men in the State there were 1086 women

g) Absence of Gender Discrimination

One of the peculiarities of the Kerala's development experience is that there is not much gender difference in social development unlike elsewhere in India.

We have noted that the sex ratio in Kerala is in favour of women as against the all India picture. While this ratio has been increasing in Kerala, the same in India as a whole has been decreasing.

Moreover, life expectancy of women is more than that of men, unlike in India. In some aspects of educational attainments, girls in Kerala are in fact ahead of boys.

Though the girls enrolled in lower classes are fewer than boys, their number exceeds that of boys by the time they reach the tenth standard in schools. Teaching profession has come to be dominated by women who form 61.5 percent of teachers in schools.

h) Land Reforms Land Reforms

Redistribution of wealth is considered to be one of the important prerequisites of development. Kerala is the foremost state in implementing land reforms effectively. Amin (1991) commends Kerala for its land reforms and the success attained in providing basic services to the people, **"in itself a policy of redistribution of wealth and income"**.

i) Public Distribution System

Kerala has the best Public Distribution System in India. All households in Kerala possess ration cards. The scheme for supply of rice at concession rates to families below poverty line to the extent of 25 per cent of population, launched by Government of India had been

extended to 42 per cent of the total population, in Kerala. There are 14262 ration retail shops in Kerala, of which 12325 are in rural areas. Apart from the PDS, the government promotes fair price shops for groceries and medicines.

j) Remittances from Abroad and its Impact Remittances from Abroad and its Impact Malayalees (people of Kerala) are found all over the world. Looking for higher earning avenues, they go to elsewhere in the world, particularly to gulf countries. One of the unique features of Malayalees is that they are keeping their contact with their homeland, Kerala. Most of the migrants come back to the homeland after working 15–20 years abroad. Others support their relatives by sending money.

The Economic aspect of this culture is that, Kerala has a good opportunity for loanable funds for development. It stands to reason that an international airport, the Nedumbassery Airport, has been financed mostly by Malayalees abroad.

III Decentralisation : The Philosophy

Decentralisation becomes meaningful only when there is democratic decentralisation, which is characterised by flow of power through the elected bodies and its members to the people. By power we mean the power to augment capabilities of the people by increasing production and reducing inequalities. Indeed, development is basically enlarging the choices of the people. And the choices of the people, in turn, depend upon the '**economic development and social justice**'.

Principles of Decentralisation

The following are important principles, among others, that may govern transfer of power to LSGIs.

i. Autonomy

Autonomy does not mean sovereignty. Among the LSGIs, autonomy is guaranteed by limiting the supervision of the State Government to the obligatory and regulatory functions. It has got three dimensions:

- 1) financial autonomy;**
- 2) Functional autonomy;** and
- 3) Administrative autonomy.**

Autonomy implies that various levels of LSGIs should not be seen as hierarchically organised, with unit one controlling the others below it. However, there exists active '**cooperation, coordination, complementation, and integration**'.

Nevertheless, the State Government has a very proactive role in formulating the state priorities within the framework of the national perspective. Thus a multi-level exercise of developmental functions implies, "the existence of a sphere of independent action, at each level, a sphere of cooperative and coordinated action, a sphere of delegated agency function, and a sphere of agency from above, in the descending order of magnitude" (Committee on Decentralisation, 1996).

ii. Subsidiarity

This principle governs the division of functions among different tiers of LSGIs. Subsidiarity implies what can be done best at a particular level shall be done at that level and only residual functions are given to the higher level. The process starts from below, transferring functions and powers from the level of Grama Sabhas/Ward Committees and go up to the Union Government.

iii. Complementarity

Integration is perhaps the most important task in decentralised planning. The entire system has to work with unity of vision and diversity of

means. While integrating the functions, there must not be any chance for overlapping and repetition. This means that the activities of higher levels should complement those of the lower levels and the programmes implemented by all agencies in a given local body will be consistent with local needs and priorities and will in turn, converge into an integrated local plan.

iv. Uniformity

The principle of uniformity stipulates that norms and criteria for selection of beneficiaries, identification of sites, prioritisation of activities and pattern of assistance within a given local body shall be the same for a particular programme irrespective of the agency sponsoring such programmes. This helps in formulating criteria for decision making, which may be made open to the people so that transparency can easily be ensured.

v. Participation of People

In decentralised governance, participation of the people is envisaged by empowering them to take their own decisions after they analyse their problems themselves. In fact, the local self- government provides an institutional framework for participatory democracy. People's participation is expected in all stages of a development programme including identification of needs, formation of scheme, its implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The reservation of seats for women, Scheduled Castes and for Scheduled Tribes is one of the ways of ensuring participation of the vulnerable sections in the mainstream development activities.

The institutions like Grama Sabhas/Ward Committees are meant for facilitating people's participation in terms of mobilisation of resources in cash, kind and of decision making.

Participation also helps in ensuring transparency by examining the

activities at various stages. Furthermore, the citizen's pro-active role is expected in augmenting harmony among various sections of the people, popularisation of literacy, improvement of public health, etc.

vi. Transparency and Accountability

Local Self-Government Institutions are primarily accountable to the people and this is guaranteed by making transparency in its function. This calls for a social audit system for examining the performance of the local bodies. The social auditing is performed by the Grama Sabhas and Ward Committees by examining the activities of development programme in the respective area.

Every decision taken has to be based on certain predetermined norms and criteria, which are evolved on the basis of social consensus and the rationale behind each decision has to be made public.

For this purpose, the procedures and the language of administration have to be made people-friendly by simplifying it. In such a system the people have the right to know details of project documents, procedure of its execution, estimates, its monitoring, financial expenditures and evaluation. The people are also expected to play a facilitative role for smooth functioning of the developmental activities.

Decentralised Planning : The Concept Decentralised Planning :

The Concept

The concept of the ongoing experimental participative planning process in Kerala has been emerged, primarily, as a critique of centralised planning process. Development planning in India has, so far, been primarily planning for investments, required for building up essential

economic overheads such as irrigation, power, transport, mining and heavy industry and social overheads such as in education, health and scientific research.

In this centralised planning process, there has been very limited space for people's participation, despite some deliberate attempts in making the process participative

However, there is no disagreement in defining planning in its broad sense, as an attempt by society to consciously regulate the economic process through collective decisions so that sustainable and equitable growth is achieved. But the departure from centralised planning began when one consider:

- 1) ideal unit of planning, and**
- 2) separation of sequential stages of planning.**

Discussions on local level planning have often been preoccupied with the identification of some unique ideal level of planning. This is really a false notion as rightly pointed out by the Report of the Working Group on Block Level Planning (Government of India, 1978). In fact, such an ideal unit of planning neither exists

nor is it necessary. In the case of separation of different stages of planning one has to bear in mind that planning is an interactive process wherein the programme itself may undergo several modifications in setting up of organisational arrangements for the design, selection and implementation of projects.

Predetermined sequencing of stages of planning tend to lose sight of the inter-dependencies among different projects in the programme in terms of both technical relations and resource constraint. That is to

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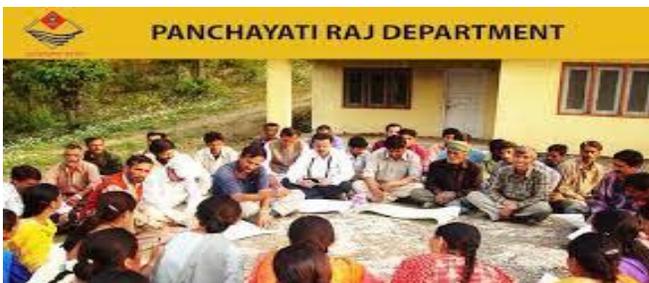
say, the total money to be spent on different project during a given The period of time is limited. Some have, therefore, to be chosen in preference over others. Furthermore, in formulating projects, the basic technical balance between different projects, belonging to different levels of planning needs to be maintained.

In the light of the two points raised above, the conventional procedure of moving from the formation of overall plans to individual projects needs to be reversed. Instead, one has to start from the end use, and end users, of different projects - which would itself indicate the most convenient level at which the particular projects should be implemented.

This will, in turn, indicate the appropriate organisational framework/points at which different sets of projects should be Implemented

Therefore, in practice, what is required is a system of multi-level planning, where the lowest unit is allowed to plan and implement everything that may be performed most effectively at that level and only the residual is left to the higher levels.

Panchayati Raj System in Kerala



Earlier System

Historically there were self-governing units at the village level organised

on the basis of castes, in different parts of Kerala. These units were not democratic in the modern sense.

They did not have any voice in the overall governance of villages. However, it is important to note that despite the changes in Kings/rulers, these traditional panchayats survived as basic units of administration.

The 'Gramams' of Brahmins, the 'Tharas' of Nairs, the 'Karas' of Ezhavas were examples of village level self-governing units. These units were further divided into subunits having the nature of a Grama Sabha and they were known as '**kazhagam**' and '**kootams**'.

The '**koottam**' was the base on which the structure of both civil and judicial administration at the local level was built (Ramachandran, 1995).

In Kerala, formal local bodies were first established during the period of the British under Lord Ripon. They were urban local bodies established in the form of municipal boards and sanitary boards initially, and later panchayats also were constituted in the similar pattern. By In 1920 panchayats became legal entities in Kerala.

When the Kerala State was formed in 1956, there were panchayats and urban local bodies in the three different regions of the state, viz. Travancore, Cochin and Malabar.

In addition to these, there was a district board in the Malabar Region, which was abolished soon after the formation of Kerala State.

The first elected government of Kerala in 1957 gave top priority to democratic decentralisation. However, the attempts were not successful with the failure to enact the Kerala Panchayat Bill and the District Council Bill as a result of the dismissal of the Government. The next government passed the Kerala Panchayat Act 1960, the Kerala Municipalities Act, 1960, and the Kerala Municipal Corporations Act, 1961.

The executive and financial powers of the panchayats were very limited under the Kerala Panchayat Act of 1960 (hereafter KPA) and the local bodies were more nominal than real.

For instance, the principal functioning of the panchayats included only items like maintenance and lighting of local roads; drainage, sanitation, garbage disposal and provision of public latrines; arrangements for petty irrigation, potable water, burial, and registration of births and deaths; and maintenance of village courts.

For the major developmental activities like agriculture, animal husbandry etc., or even social services like education and health, the role of the panchayats were merely that of lending its cooperation to the concerned departments of the State Government.

Panchayat Raj in Kerala since 73rd and 74th Amendments of Amendments of Constitution in 1992

Despite the historical developments in favour of decentralised governance in Kerala, it was the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India that gave a background for the effective initiatives. Within the framework of the Constitutional Amendments, the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, 1994 was passed with effect from 23rd April 1994. This KPR Act was, in fact, a turning point in strengthening the Panchayat Raj System in the State.

However, as a result of the hectic legislation, the KPR Act contained a number of mistakes and omissions, and to rectify the same, the Kerala Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Act, 1995 and the Kerala Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Act, 1996 were passed with effect from 5th August 1995 and 26th March, 1996 respectively.

To incorporate the recommendations of the Committee on Decentralisation and the State Finance Commission, and the suggestions of the State Planning Board in the light of their experience in decentralised planning, a new legislation was necessitated and hence the Kerala Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Act, 1999.

This may be considered as one of the best legislations in the State since the methodology adopted for the formulation of it was **'learning by doing'**.

Kerala Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Act, 1999 (KPR (A) Act) Kerala Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Act, 1999 (KPR (A) Act)

The KPR (A) Act has taken care of almost all aspects of the process of decentralisation ranging from environmental aspects to judicial matters.

Notable features of the KPR (A) Act are :

- 1) strengthening of Grama Sabha;**
- 2) changes in the structure of panchayats both in terms of number of constituencies and in terms of committees;**
- 3) emphasis on transparency;**
- 4) new institutions such as Ombudsman and Appellate Tribunals;**
- 5) new system of auditing;**
- 6) more decision making powers to elected functionaries; and**
- 7) provisions for wide people's participation.**

Present Panchayat Raj System

We attempt to provide an account of the present system of Panchayat Raj incorporated the recent legislation of KPR (A) Act. Therefore, while going through this section one has to bear in mind that certain

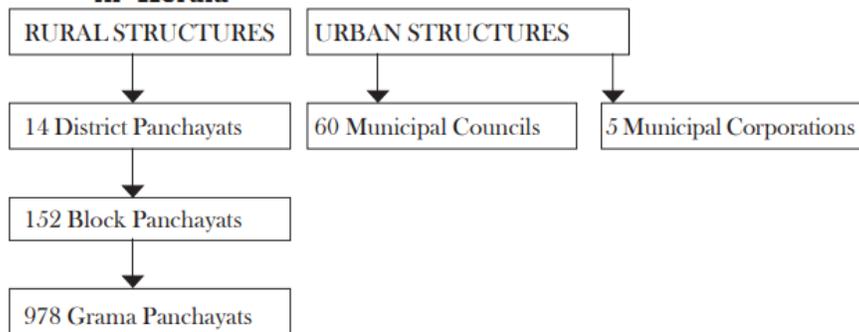
provisions in the latest Kerala Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Act, 1999 has to be materialised by means of Rules and its implementation.

Also important to note is the fact that many of the provisions in the The KPR Act is related to other allied Acts.

Structure of Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs) Structure of Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs)

In line with the Constitution (Seventy Third Amendment) Act, 1992, the Kerala Panchayat Raj System has a three-tier structure of panchayats by constituting Village, Block and District panchayats. There are 1209 Local Self- Government Institutions in Kerala. The distribution of LSGIs is given in Chart 1 and the Table 2 gives the district-wise distribution of Grama Panchayats, Block Panchayats and Municipalities with average area and population. The broad structure of Panchayat The Raj System in Kerala is given in Chart 2.

Chart 1. Distribution of Local Self Government Institutions in Kerala



The State Election Commission and the State Finance Commission are the two higher offices set up concerning the implementation of Panchayati Raj system in Kerala. In addition to these, the KPR (A) Act provides for an Ombudsman and an Appellate Tribunal. The Ombudsman is constituted for dealing the cases against the panchayats or the officials under

the panchayats. The Tribunals, formed by Government for one district or for more than one district, are to make revisions of the appeals against the decisions of the panchayats.

Table 2 Distribution of Grama Panchayats, Block Panchayats and Municipalities by District

District	No. of GPs	Average Area (sq. km)	Average Population	No. of BPs	Average Area (sq. km)	Average Population	No. of Municipalities	Average Area (sq. km)	Average Population
Thiruvananthapuram	73	24.28	27032	11	169.93	189227	4	17.96	37979
Kollam	70	34.00	30655	11	186.66	168007	3	24.09	74439
Pathanamthitta	54	49.36	19739	8	293.05	118807	3	24.18	40710
Alappuzha	73	17.62	23406	12	104.24	138496	5	22.08	67863
Kottayam	73	29.25	22863	11	195.73	151727	4	13.43	39820
Idukki	53	99.38	20367	8	636.33	129839	1	35.43	40656
Ernakulam	84	24.76	22979	14	142.42	131809	11	18.31	34536
Thrissur	88	30.63	22479	16	170.68	145943	6	13.81	36582
Palakkad	91	48.02	23573	13	336.12	164859	4	26.69	59768
Malappuram	100	36.16	30181	15	242.80	202647	7	29.40	51855
Kozhikode	75	29.05	27235	12	185.77	177306	2	21.33	72434
Wyanad	25	87.15	27049	4	697.17	216393	1	34.14	22949
Kannur	81	35.65	23866	11	306.96	209380	6	29.34	52473
Kasaragod	38	51.49	26060	6	476.27	241054	3	28.11	53646
Total	978	37.83	25199	152	296.01	170392	60	24.16	48784

Note: GP- Grama Panchayat, BP- Block Panchayat

Grama (Village) Panchayat

In Kerala, Grama Panchayats are relatively larger in size when compared to those in other states. An average Grama Panchayat in Kerala is 37.83 sq. kms in area and has a population of 33,387,677 (2011 census). There exists wide variation in the population of village panchayats. The least populous panchayat of Idamalakkudi in Idukki district had a population of 4588 in 1991, while the most populous panchayat of Tanur in Malappuram district had a population of 78343. In terms of area, Valapattanam (2.04 sq. kms) in Kannur district is the smallest panchayat and Kumily (795.28 sq. kms) in Idukki district is the largest. It is to be noted that such variations seem to be against the spirit of the Constitution. Further, the existence of revenue villages not coinciding with the village panchayats creates difficulties in

administration. Grama Panchayats are often larger than the revenue villages.

There are 1384 revenue villages, while there are 978 Grama Panchayats in the state of Kerala.

The number of members of a Grama Panchayat will be decided on the basis of population. The minimum and maximum number of members to the three tiers of panchayats has been increased by the recent amendment

Act. The minimum and maximum number of wards (constituencies) as per the KPR Act and the KPR (A) Act are given in Table 3.

Table 3

Level of Panchayat	Minimum No. of members	Maximum No. of members
Grama Panchayat	13	23
Block Panchayat	12	22
District Panchayat	16	32

The existing Grama panchayats have been constituted on the basis that Grama Panchayats with population not exceeding 10,000 are entitled to have 3 members and one additional member for every 4500 of the population subject to a maximum of 23 members. All panchayat members will be elected directly by the people. The President and Vice president of the Grama Panchayat will be elected indirectly from among the elected members of the panchayat.

The functions and powers regarding the subjects devolved as per the 11th The Schedule of the Constitution is clearly stated in the KPR (A) Act. The 21

latest Amendment Act has revamped the functions of all the tiers of panchayats. The Third schedule of the Act lists the functions of the Grama Panchayat. There are 27 mandatory functions, 14 general functions, and

29 sector-wise distribution of responsibilities (for details see Appendix - I). Every village panchayat in Kerala has major institutions like Primary Health Centre, Veterinary Hospital, Krishi Bhavan, High Schools, etc. At present the village panchayats have control over all local level institutions except High Schools.

In order to establish decentralisation within local governments, Standing Committees are established dividing the functions of local governments among the committees. Grama Panchayats have four standing committees they are

- : 1) Finance,**
- 2) Development,**
- 3) Welfare,**
- 4) Health and Education.**

The village panchayats have their own sources of income and get reasonable

amount as grants and shared taxes. Moreover, they have been provided with the major share of plan funds. The following are important taxes assigned to Grama Panchayats:

- 1. Land tax (tax imposed on land and building in the concerned land)**
- 2. Employment tax**
- 3. Advertisement tax**
- 4. Entertainment tax**
- 5. Service tax**
- 6. Tax on land title transfer (as a surcharge on tax imposed as per the Kerala Stamp Paper Act of 1959)**
- 7. Tax on reclaimed land (or land converted from paddy fields and the like)**

The Grama Panchayats have powers to collect fees, and to avail loans for

financing development programmes. As per the KPR (A) Act, State Government Grants from basic tax, to Grama Panchayats are of two type - 1) grant, as far as possible, equal to $\frac{3}{8}$ portion of the total basic tax collected last year from the area of the Grama Panchayat, and 2) based on population and area of Grama panchayat, as far as possible equal to $\frac{1}{8}$ portion of the total basic tax collected from total panchayat area of the State shall be given to all Grama panchayats in the State.

Block Panchayat

An average Block Panchayat in Kerala is 296.01 sq. kms in area and has a population of 170392 (1991 census). There are 152 Block Panchayats in Kerala. The existing Block panchayats are constituted on the basis that Block Panchayats with a population not exceeding one lakh are entitled to have 12 members and one additional member for every 25000 population subject to a maximum of 22 members as directly elected members. Each Block panchayat consist of

- (a) members who are directly elected by the people, and**
- (b) Presidents of the Grama panchayats, within**

Block panchayat area. The President and Vice-President of Block Panchayat will be elected from among the elected members of the concerned panchayat. The BDO is the secretary of the Block Panchayat. At present a Block panchayat is getting assistance from four Standing Committees:

- 1) Finance,**
- 2) Development,**
- 3) Welfare**
- , 4) Health and Education.**

The fourth schedule of the KPR (A) Act enlists the functions to be attended to by the Block Panchayats. Apart from the 24 sectoral functions, the Block Panchayats are entrusted to pool technical expertise both Government and Non-Government at the Block level, to provide technical services to village panchayat to avoid duplication and provide the backward and forward linkages.

Block panchayats have no powers to tax. However, they have powers to collect fees, and avail loans for financing development programmes. The State Government Grant to Block panchayat is such that, as far as possible equal to 3/10 portion of the total basic tax collected last year from a district panchayat area, as granted to all the Block Panchayats in that district. The plan fund is also shared with Block Panchayats.

District Panchayat

There are 14 district panchayats in Kerala. At present the District panchayats are constituted on the basis that District Panchayats having a population of 10 lakhs are entitled to have 16 members and one additional member for every one lakh population subject to the maximum of 22 members (directly elected by the people). The District panchayat consists of (a) members who are directly elected by the people, and (b) the presidents of Block panchayats, within the territorial limits of the District panchayat. The President and the Vice-President of the district panchayat will be elected from among the elected members of the concerned panchayat. The District panchayat is at present being assisted by four Standing Committees. The Standing Committees are: 1) Finance, 2) Development, 3) Welfare, 4) Public works, and 5) Health and Education.

The fifth schedule of the KPR (A) Act enlists the functions to be attended to by District Panchayat. The district panchayats are entrusted with plan integration and mobilisation of technical expertise in addition to its other sectoral functions.

The District panchayats have no powers to tax. However, they have powers to collect fees, and avail loans for financing development programmes.

The District panchayats can also issue revenue bonds and raise money for financing developmental works. The State Government Grant to a District panchayat is, as far as possible equal to 1/5 portion of the total basic tax collected last year from the district panchayat area. Furthermore, a portion of the State plan fund is distributed among the District Panchayats.

Grama Sabha

Grama Sabha is the soul of the Panchayat Raj system in the State and its functions and responsibilities have been strengthened further by the KPR (A) Act. In fact, it has become one of the important institutions involved in decentralised planning in the State.

Grama Sabha consists of all persons included in the electoral roll of a ward (constituency) of a Grama Panchayat. The member of a Grama Panchayat representing the constituency is the Convenor of that Grama Sabha and the meetings of the Grama Sabha have to be presided over by the President of the Grama Panchayat.

It is compulsory to hold general meetings of the Sabha once in three months. The quorum is 10 percent of the Grama Sabha, but if the Grama Sabha is convened for the second time for lack of quorum at the first convene, the second time needs a quorum of only 50 persons.

An important development in the recent legislation of KPR (A) Act with an element of direct democracy is the provision for Special meeting of Grama Sabha when not less than 10 percent of members demand for such a meeting in writing.

The Village Panchayat shall place before the Grama Sabha reports relating to the developmental programmes of the constituency during the previous year and those that are proposed to be undertaken during the current year and the expenditure therefore, the annual statement of accounts and the administration of the preceding year.

Grama Sabha can seek clarifications from the President or Members about the works undertaken by the village panchayat.

The selection of individual beneficiaries of various schemes has to be approved by the Grama Sabha. The Powers, functions and rights of Grama Sabha are given below:

(a) Help collection and compilation of details needed for formulating development plans for the panchayat.

(b) To generate proposals and indicate priorities for preparation of annual and Five Year Plans.

(c) To prepare the final list of eligible beneficiaries in the case of beneficiary oriented schemes by applying the selection criteria, according to priority, and giving them to the Grama Panchayat.

(d) Rendering assistance in the effective implementation of developmental schemes by providing locally needed facilities.

(e) Mobilisation of voluntary labour and contributions in kind and cash needed for developmental schemes.

(f) To suggest the location of streetlights, water taps, public wells, public sanitation units, irrigation facilities, other public utilities, etc. 2 7

(g) Establish awareness generating programmes relating to matters of public interest like sanitation, environmental protection, pollution control, etc. and provide protection against social evils like corruption and false and artificial dealings.

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(h) To promote harmony and unity among the various groups of people in the area of Grama Sabha and organise arts and sports melas to promote good mentality among people.

(i) To monitor and help the beneficiary committees conducting development activities in the area of the Grama Panchayat.

(j) To verify the eligibility of persons getting various kinds of welfare assistance of Government like pensions, subsidies, ration schemes, etc

.(k) To know the detailed estimates of the works proposed to be taken up in the area of the Grama Sabha.

(l) To ascertain from the officials the services they will render and the works they are to do in the succeeding three months.

(m) To know the rationale of every decision of the Panchayat concerning that area.

(n) To know the follow up action taken on the decision of the Grama Sabha and to know the detailed reasons if some of the decisions cannot be implemented.

(o) To cooperate with staff of Grama Panchayat in the cleaning process and provide voluntary service to remove wastes.

(p) To find out the drawbacks in the distribution of pure water and street lighting in the area of Grama Sabha and to suggest remedies.

(q) To help the activities of Parent-Teacher Associations in the schools in the area of Grama Sabha

(r) To help the public health activities in the area of Grama Sabha, particularly, immunisation and family welfare.

(s) Such other functions as may be prescribed from time to time.

Responsibilities of the Grama Sabha



- i. Dissemination of information on development and welfare programmes.**
- ii. Canvassing participation in health, literacy and similar development campaigns.**
- iii. Collecting essential socio-economic data.**
- iv. Providing feedback on the performance of development programmes.**
- v. Resorting to moral suasion to pay taxes, repay loans, promote environmental cleanliness, maintain social harmony, etc.**
- vi. Mobilising local resources to augment panchayat resources.**
- vii. Supervising development works and volunteer teams.**
- viii. Creating arrangements to report quickly incidence of epidemics, natural calamities, etc.**

