

**DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALISATION AND THE ENTRY OF
CORPORATE SECTOR IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE: A CASE STUDY
ON TWENTY20 IN KIZHAKKAMBALAM GRAMA PANCHAYAT,
ERNAKULAM DISTRICT, KERALA**

A Dissertation submitted to the University of Hyderabad in partial fulfilment of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

in

POLITICAL SCIENCE

by

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “*Democratic Decentralisation and the Entry of Corporate Sector in Local Governance: A Case Study on Twenty20 in Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat, Ernakulam District, Kerala*” submitted by **Sonu Surendran** bearing **Reg. No. 18SPHL15**, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of **Master of Philosophy in Political Science**, is a bonafide work carried out by him under my supervision and guidance.

The thesis has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

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DECLARATION

I, **Sonu Surendran**, hereby Declare that this Dissertation entitled ***“Democratic Decentralisation and the Entry of Corporate Sector in Local Governance: A Case Study on Twenty20 in Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat, Ernakulam District, Kerala”*** Submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of **Dr K Y Ratnam** is a bonafide research work. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma.

31st December 2022
Hyderabad



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ABBREVIATIONS

ARC	Administrative Reforms Commission
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BM&BC	Bitumen Macadam and Bitumen Concrete
BSP	Bahujan Samaj Party
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CITU	Congress of Indian Trade Unions
CPA	Corporate Political Activity
CPI	Communist Party of India
CPI(M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DMO	District Medical Officer
DYFI	Democratic Youth Federation of India
FIR	First Information Report
FY	Financial Year
ha.	hectares
INC	Indian National Congress
INTUC	Indian National Trade Union Congress
IUML	Indian Union Muslim League
Kitex	Kizhakkambalam Textiles
KLA	Kerala Legislative Assembly
KPMS	Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha
LDF	Left Democratic Front
LSG	Local Self Governments
LSGIs	Local Self-Governance Institutions
M.E	Malayalam Era
MBA	Master of Business Administration
MD	Managing Director
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MNCs	Multinational Corporations
MP	Member of Parliament
MSW	Master of Social Work

NGO	Non-Governmental Organisations
NSS	Nair Service Society
PAC	Political Action Committees
PCB	Pollution Control Board
PCSR	Political Corporate Social Responsibility
PHC	Primary Health Center
PPC	People's Plan Campaign
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PRI	Panchayat Raj Institution
PSP	Praja Socialist Party
PWD	Public Works Department
SC	Scheduled Cast
SCB	Service Cooperative Bank
SDPI	The Social Democratic Party of India
SMS	Short Messaging Service
SNDP	Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam
ST	Scheduled Tribe
U.S	United States
UDF	United Democratic Front

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INTRODUCTION

Historically, Kerala is known for its progressive outlook on gender equality and socio-cultural advancement due to the socio-cultural revolutionary movement led by Sri Narayana Guru through his SNDP movement. Further, Kerala is also known as the bastion of the Communist movement with a highly politicised civil society. Kerala society was seemingly politically conscious and the first provincial state in post-independent India that elected the Communist Party to power.

Kerala state is well known for democratic decentralisation as the model for the country. This model yielded many economic and political results within no time and became famous as Kerala Model. The Panchayat Raj institutions in Kerala, with elaborate economic development programs and Social Justice at their core, are considered the model for direct grass-root democracy. Since these institutions got immense powers, including; authority in planning through a bottom-up approach and control over resources, they could achieve a high level of Human Development Index (HDI) in India. Mostly, political parties in Kerala, regarding their ideologies, tried to mediate and bring a consensus between people and the government, where ordinary people held the upper hand.

In Kerala, whichever political party comes to power seriously takes responsibility for fulfilling the requirements of the people, particularly the middle class. The elections to the Local Self-Governance Institutions' (LSGIs) were always contested based on a political party where members of national and regional parties contest. Though the polarised electorate fixes at its position in the state assembly elections, the neutral voters of a few lakhs decide who would be in power. However, the election to the

LSGIs is more focused on local levels, and the political parties usually find candidates suitable for their positions. The concerns like caste-community matters also play a significant role.

However, the 2015 general elections to the Local self-government elections in Kerala regarding grama Panchayat has created a new drift. Out of the total 941 Panchayats in the state, in 549 Panchayats, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)) led Left Democratic Front (LDF), and in 365 Panchayats, the Indian National Congress (INC)-led United Democratic Front (UDF) won. The BJP won 14, and others won 13. Out of the 13 won by the others, in one particular Panchayat, Kizhakkambalam in Ernakulam district, a Private company named Kitex Garments Limited won the election with a vote share of 69 percent under their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) label Twenty20, and now they are heading the Panchayat. This electoral victory expanded to four more Panchayats in the General Election held in 2020.

Generally, it is observed that the influence of capitalists/industrialists on the elected governments in Kerala, whether the LDF or UDF present to a certain extent. In Kerala, business houses/ companies cannot control the governments in power. The reasons are mainly the lack of big business classes in the state, a robust unionised workforce, and a vibrant civil society aware of rights and responsibility. However, in Kizhakkambalam Panchayat, the electoral victory of Twenty20 has Challenged these current dynamics leading to a shift in the socio-political equation within the Kerala state. The entry of the corporate sector into electoral politics has created a significant political debate.

In this context, the present study's primary aim is to take this as a study problem and understand the corporate sector's role in Kerala's local self-governance electoral politics. The study looks into the electoral victory of a group owned by a corporate in the General election to the LSGI of Kerala in 2015. The electoral victory of Twenty20 seems to offer something new regarding Civic elections in Kerala and the state's politics in general.

Anna-Kitex group was established in 1968 by the late M. C. Jacob. Initially, he started the Anna Aluminium company. Later, the group expanded to other arenas like Textiles and Food processing. Thus, all five industrial establishments, Anna Aluminium Company, Kitex Limited, Kitex Garments Limited, and Saras Limited, are located in Kizhakkambalam grama Panchayat in Ernakulam district. This industrial group is also the largest private-sector employer in Kerala. The employees are mainly from other parts of the country. The textiles/garments units have taken the name *Kitex*, which stands for Kizhakkambalam Textiles. The Company named Kitex Garments Limited is the second largest producer of children's apparel worldwide.

The Company welfare activities started in 2012 and were channelised as a legal entity Twenty20 to implement CSR activities when the Government of India enacted section 135 of the Companies Act in 2013. The Company spent 319.70 Lakhs for CSR activities in FY 2015-16 and in the 2017-18 financial year: Rs. 12 Crores. They tag the intention of Twenty20 to make Kizhakkambalam the model Panchayat among two lakhs 72 thousand Panchayat in India by 2020. The name "Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam" was inspired by Twenty20 cricket and a Malayalam movie by the same name.

Citing disturbances from political parties, especially the UDF-led Panchayat, as interrupting the implementing developmental activities, the Company decided to contest the elections showcasing the developmental and welfare activities undertaken by them and downgrading the mainstream political parties in general. The Company claims they can run the Panchayat in a very scientific, disciplined, and professional method by young educated people. Independent candidates of the Panchayat who are not employed in any industrial establishments contested in all the 19 wards of the Panchayat, three block Panchayat seats, and one District Panchayat seat. The candidates showcased a stunning victory by winning 17 Panchayat wards and two block Panchayat seats. Political parties in the Panchayat together responded to this victory by raising the allegation that they contested the election because the former Panchayat was continuously denying them the license because of the environmental pollution caused by them.

In the general elections held for the Local Self-Governance Institutions (LSGIs) in 2020, the Company contested four Panchayats where they are in power. However, other Private company groups tried to imitate the twenty20 of contesting in the elections but were unsuccessful.

Review of Literature:

The World Development Report (2000) addresses Globalization, Localisation, and Decentralisation as the three conditions for which institutions are to be built to capture the benefits of 21st Century neoliberal economy. In addressing development, it addresses four critical lessons from the failures of 50 years of Globalisation. It identifies Globalisation and localisation as the two phenomena contributing to

changes. In Globalisation, national governments should seek agreements with other national governments, international organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), and Multi-National Corporations (MNCs). Furthermore, in localisation, national governments are supposed to have responsibilities of the local to the people through sub-national institutions. It takes on sustainable development to be a rooted process that is socially inclusive and responsive to the changing circumstances (World Bank 1999a, 107–87).

Ronaldo Munck, in *Neoliberalism and Politics* (2005)., and *the Politics of Neoliberalism* edited by Sada-Filho et al., argues that citizens in Neoliberalism have been redefined in lines of a consumer where individual identity is to be expressed by consumption. He also argues that though Neoliberalism revived the concept of individual liberty, which was undermined by democracy, eventually, democracy itself got constrained. He observes that to accommodate the changes induced by Neoliberalism; political parties absorbed neoliberal economic agenda into their foundations. As a result, the difference in political parties was reduced, and influence of money in politics increased, leading to eventual disappointment among the public and alienation from politics.

Rajn Gurukkal, in his pioneering work, *When a Coalition of Conflicting Interests Decentralises: A Theoretical Critique of Decentralisation Politics in Kerala* (2001), argues that decentralisation in Kerala remained as constitutional reforms and maintained the status quo than enforcing mass empowerment and sustainable development. It failed in leading an “alternate institutional development, rise of people-cantered politics and the entailing empowerment.” According to him, it is due to the local knowledge that made popular consciousness eclectic and depoliticised. He

identifies the theoretical debates on decentralisation as an offshoot of development debates between liberal interventionist or Bourgeoisie democratic school versus Radical Populist or the Marxist School.

Thomas Isaac and Richard Franke's work on *Local Democracy and Development: The Kerala People's Campaign for Decentralized Planning* (2002), explores the trajectory of the People's Plan Campaign. Thomas Isaac is one of the architects of the People's Plan Campaign (PPC) program. It goes on to the descriptive account of the strategies and challenges of the PPC. Contrary to the neoliberal argument of decentralisation as downsizing, it is taken as a means of making the state more effective. Moreover, democratic decentralisation can improve the efficiency of the development process through participation and transparency. They regard economic development as a function of the local bodies where local-level planning becomes necessary to efficiently utilise local natural resources (Isaac and Franke 2002).

Biju B L's (2017) study analyses the influence of identity/community-based political parties in Local Self Governments (LSG) of Kerala in the election held in 2015. He observes that the identity/community-based parties are putting intense competition for secular parties in LSG elections. While there is a bipolar coalition at the state level, it is a tri-multi polar at the local level. This has resulted in a situation where both the state-level coalition LDF and UDF are not able to claim victory in Panchayats, where the decision of members of communal parties becomes decisive.

Shyam Hari (2020), in *Social Grievances and Corporate Greed: Twenty20 and conflicts in Kizhakkambalam*, attempted to look into Kizhakkambalam as a one arising due to the interactive and shifting nature of greed and grievances. Applying

the theoretical concepts of greed and grievance, he argues that the dominance and the electoral victory of twenty20 is a “product of managing social grievances and as a product of actualising corporate greed” (Hari P 2020).

Rajeev and Thampy's (2016) study looks into the electoral victory of twenty20 through the perspective of CSR. They observe that twenty20 managed to go ahead of the mere mandatory CSR requirements. The authors call it the Kizhakkambalam model with the involvement of professionals, social workers, and other welfare workers. Vision, development perspective major CSR initiatives are studied. They argue that the vision of twenty20 is with a scientific approach, and the candidates who contested the elections “were trained and moulded to understand and respond to the needs of the community” (S. P. Rajeev and Thampy 2016).

All these works have a rich contribution to democratic decentralisation, development, and political process in Kerala. However, most works are concentrated on decentralisation or human development or Panchayat LSG, Devolution of funds and resources, etc. The entry of the corporate sector has become a new phenomenon in Kerala, perhaps in India itself. The present study would like to deal with this problem. In this context, the above literature, despite having rich contributions to the political process, etc., the entry of the corporate sector has not been dealt with well. The study would like to consider that problem with the following objectives.

Objectives of the Study:

The main objective of the present study is to study the entry of the corporate sector in the local self-governance in Kerala state. The secondary objectives of the study are:

- To understand the theoretical and conceptual relationship between Governance, Democracy, and Decentralisation in the context of Neoliberalism.
- To study the evolution of community organisations' as pressure groups in Kerala.
- To explain the political economy of Kerala state in the context of development and caste-class relations in the post-independent period.
- To critically understand the relationship between the formal political parties/institutions and the corporate sector in Kizhakkambalam Panchayat.
- To study the structure of twenty20 and its corporate activities. How the twenty20 emerged as a powerful corporate sector in Kerala? What are the reasons?
- To study the electoral success of the twenty20. How is it different from mainstream political parties in its local self-governance? Why and how did the people of the Kizhakkambalam Panchayat accept this corporate Company?

Methodology:

The present study attempted here is a Qualitative Micro Level Study taking Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat as the study universe. Theoretical and empirical methods are used for the purpose. Theoretically, an attempt is made to understand the neoliberal project and the emergence of the corporate sector in the context of Neoliberalism. Empirically case study method is used to study the political

developments in Kizhakkambalam Panchayat. Specifically, Local self-Governance. Empirical data has been collected through interviews, open-ended discussions, and participation in Grama Sabhas. The researcher had informed conversations to elicit relevant information.

Direct field investigation has been used as an important tool of research. A pilot study was done, followed by a systematic study.

The source material for the study gathers from both Primary and secondary. The Primary data was collected from government-published data. Secondly, the primary data was also collected from the participants through in-depth semi-structured interviews using open-ended questionnaires, which were Triangulated using secondary sources to enhance validity and reliability. Materials such as election manifestos, pamphlets, Local Publications, etc., were collected.

The study is limited to the electoral victory of twenty20 in the General elections to the LSGIs held in 2015, Kizhakkambalam Panchayat.

Chapterization:

Besides the Introduction and Conclusion, the collected material is arranged into Five core chapters according to the study objectives.

The ***Introduction*** deals with the problem, objective, and a brief review of the literature. The methodology of the study is also explained in detail. The First core chapter, titled ***Neo-Liberalism, Decentralization, Corporate Sector, and Development: Conceptual Understanding***, deals with a review of significant works

on the concepts like Neo-Liberalism, Governance, Democracy, Corporate Political Activity, Political Corporate Social Responsibility, and Development. It analyses the emergence of the corporate sector and its relation to decentralisation and development as a neoliberal agenda in reforming the state through good governance.

The second core chapter, *Kerala: The Setting*, examines the historical evolution of the current political economy of Kerala. Especially the development of agriculture and industry and the role of various classes and castes in accessing the development in the post-state formation.

The third core chapter, *Local Governance in Kerala: An Overview*, traces the historical evolution of Local Self Government Institutions in Kerala. A brief history of pre-colonial local governments in various regions of Kerala and local self-governance during the colonial and post-colonial periods was explained.

Fourth Core Chapter, *The Corporate Sector: A Case Of Twenty20*, explains the role of twenty20 as the case in Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat. The emergence of twenty20 as an industrial group and its structure is explained in detail. It explains the twenty20 in comparison with other political parties in detail. This chapter is based on field data.

Fifth Core Chapter *Twenty20 and Kizhakkambalam Panchayat* examines the corporate entry into the Politics of Kizhakkambalam. It examines the origin and growth, development strategies, and election campaigning strategies of twenty20, the response of traditional political parties and the electorate, context of the rejection of traditional political parties by the electorate in Kizhakkambalam.

The main findings and observations of the study are presented in the *Conclusion*.

CHAPTER-I: NEO-LIBERALISM, DECENTRALISATION, CORPORATE SECTOR AND DEVELOPMENT: CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Neoliberalism and its Discourse:

Neoliberalism has become the dominant ideology shaping and dictating various government policies and key institutions' actions. Its implications are widespread and influential in diverse economic, political, ideological, and cultural areas. Neoliberalism as discourse is not disconnected from theory and does not remain detached from everyday life. Its policies affect our relationships with each other, its programs shape our behaviours, and its projects implicate themselves in our lived experiences. As the latest incarnation of capitalism, neoliberalism is an idea made flesh through the very power we assign it through our discursive participation.

The discourse of neoliberalism has no single conceptual birth. Even though it appeared in 1925 in Swiss economist Hans Honegger's, *Trends of Economic ideas*, who referred to it as theoretical neoliberalism, Hans Kelsen, in 1911, used the term in his *Habilitation* as an uneconomic meaning. However, the origin of neoliberalism as a political and cultural doctrine dates back to the late 1930s. At the five-day Colloquium organised to discuss Walter Lippmann's book *The Good Society*, published in 1937, they coined the term neoliberalism identifying their new philosophy of liberalism, placing extra emphasis on individual economic freedom (Biebricher 2018, 13; Mirowski and Plehwe 2015).

David Harvey defines neoliberalism as a condition where "individual liberty and freedom are taken as the high point of civilisation," which can "best be protected and

achieved by an institutional structure, made up of strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey 2006). The freedom and individual liberty of 18th-century liberalism propounded by John Locke and Adam Smith were connected to the Market by Hayek and Friedman by the end of the 19th century. The neoliberal theorists, along with fascism and communism, opposed governmental-social democratic state in Europe-intervention in the Market. The embedded liberalism of the post-war period reached a crisis of the global stagnation of the 1970s. The elites who supported this system turned against it, transforming from embedded liberalism to neoliberalism by the 1970s and strengthened by the 1980 and 1990s (Ibid).

The neoliberal turn in Britain has witnessed the rise of organisations like think tanks, influencing policy decisions and managing to create public opinion in favour of those policies. Political control was achieved by funding political parties and elected representatives, which later resulted in a corporate takeover of party politics. This involvement made the respective parties, especially the Republicans, put forward the neoliberal agenda with the mass support of the evangelical Christian right wing. In Britain, thus, the focus shifted from full employment to controlling inflation. The labour force was disciplined by being compelled to accept low-paying jobs. The powerful labour unions eventually weakened because fewer employees were unionised (Harvey 2006).

In neoliberal discourse, while the Market symbolises rationality in the distribution of resources, state intervention is considered irrational, compromising efficiency and liberty. A structure where social relations are embedded in the economic system designed by the Market is accepted as superior to any other societal organisation (Munck 2005, 6). Ideally, all actors on a level playing field would have access to the

same knowledge to make rational economic decisions. However, in practice, tension exists in monopolising power: the powerful agents having access to more information can use the same to procure more control and information, leading to the concentration of wealth and restoration of class power (Harvey 2011a, 66–68).

The market economy is comparatively liberal because they have more freedom to expand. Gaining profit in a deregulated market is the condition businesses seek in neoliberalism. When the market economy is commanding, people are free regarding their daily needs and choices. Freedom here depends upon the amount of money one has. The control of the market economy over people is present in every sphere. For people, the control over them by the market economy is not coming in the manifested way but is very subdued/implicit.

Internationally, neoliberalism opposed the protectionist dimensions of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and succeeded in replacing it with World Trade Organization (WTO). When states are forced to deregulate to enter into the global economy, it limits government intervention and imposes market regulation on anything to be commodified. Also, the grip of rules and regulations on businesses was relaxed as justification for promoting efficiency (Prechel 2007, 13).

Neoliberalism, in practice, takes democracy and the parliamentary system as a threat to individual rights and constitutional liberties and advocates governance by experts and elites or by executive order or judiciary. It separates politics and economics, and institutions form the democratic bargaining process of the people. According to the theory, there is strict adherence to the rule of law and constitutionality, where disputes are to be settled through a legal system (Harvey 2011a, 66–68). It advocates

maximum market involvement through privatisation in transforming societies towards economic life characterised by market domination and minimum state interference through deregulation. Such exclusion of economic matters from the political authority favoured by neoliberalism makes democracy impossible. In non-economic affairs, neoliberalism needs the maximum involvement of the state in preserving the conditions-protecting private property, ensuring the dominance of the Market, and even limiting democracy to meet the ends suitable for neoliberalism. The state that is supposed to step in and regulate this inequality is limited by deregulation, another core idea of neoliberalism (MacEwan 2005, 172).

The centrally planned economic system is where a plan is implemented in the service of specific societal values and is secured by a majority vote. Still, it may limit personal liberty because of the coercion through regulation used by the state apparatus to achieve it (Plant 2010, 155–59). Deregulation, the non-interference of the state in economic activity, is proposed in its opposition. Instead of regulation where the state sets the limit for the Market, deregulation advocated by neoliberalism regulates markets from social control-benefiting society-focusing on output rather than social goals. The political process, which is supposed to balance the goals of economic activity, is ineffective because of deregulation (MacEwan 2005, 173–74).

Governance:

Governance, an interactive process of stakeholders to resolve common problems, came in to manage the new system. The stakeholders in governance include governments, private companies, NGOs, and civil society, and joint problems may be social, economic, and political (Saito 2008, 16). The government's monopoly in

decision-making is lost because of deregulation, and they cannot solve the complex contemporary problems, particularly in developing countries. Governance is supposed to be bottom-up against the top-down model of government (Saito 2008, 8).

With the Market as its reference in decision-making, governance was adopted as a form of governmental management against the government and was also propounded along with neoliberalism. Governance and stakeholders limit economic actors as decision-makers, excluding those without capital in a free-market negotiation. As a result, the decision-making power in neoliberalism accumulated with the capitalist class by limiting government intervention. Though governance is claimed to be neutral, it does not address the accumulation of power in the system (Ives 2015).

Governance is supposed to solve the contradiction of neoliberalism in favour of the view that the objective of liberalism is to allow individuals to compete in a free market rather than realise their potential. Applied in the functioning of government, governance limits the role of government from a decision-maker to one among the actors in the process. As a result, the role of governments in governance turns out to be managing conflict and facilitating negotiations between stakeholders in free-market. The neoliberal system maintains a myth of democracy where the government is an important facilitator.

Neoliberalism and governance secured power with the capitalist class resulting in ignorance of social justice, equality, and environmental sustainability while advocating individual liberty and freedom through the Market (Ibid).

Neo-liberalism and corporate sector involvement in politics:

From a liberal point of view, corporations are private, not political, actors and are supposed to be apolitical and only interested in the Market (Scherer and Palazzo 2011, 907). On the contrary, since their establishment in the 17th century, corporations have tried to influence government policy to maximise their economic gains (Nyberg 2021, 3). The intensity and way of dealing have changed throughout the years. Though these attempt of business to influence politics under the label of public interest did not grant them the status of a political actor (Scherer, Palazzo, and Matten 2014, 147).

It is also in the backdrop of Globalisation, where Multi-National Companies (MNCs) operate in a free market where they seek the most hospitable location to maximise profit and compete in developing countries to attract corporate investment by offering incentives (Scherer and Palazzo 2011, 905). Corporate firms try to maintain their competitive advantage and profitability through Market and non-market strategies. The non-market intervention, which significantly impacts their economic performance, takes place in the political arena; sometimes, it even substitutes market strategies. Political actors in this process are treated the same irrespective of their current position in power, which aids in having their voice while legislation is discussed (Brown, De Leon, and Rasheed 2019, 118).

Business involvement in politics has led to the blurring of the distinction between economic and political spheres. In the interaction between political and economic actors, the former controls and regulates the latter. However, as the controls and regulations intensified, the latter found ways to overcome the clutches of the former. The extent of corporate involvement in politics has increased over the years, which is criticised for eroding democratic principles worldwide. These involvements vary from

the recent development in the United States of America of forming and donating to Political Action Committees (PACs) to the older form of lobbying.

Organisation and management studies categorise corporate involvement in the democratic process as Corporate Political Activity (CPA) and Political Corporate Social Responsibility (PCSR). Accordingly, “in democratic process PCSR and CPA, influence on 1) political sphere of decision making, 2) public sphere of deliberation, 3) private sphere of citizens interests have led to political corruptions. It resulted in the exclusion of 1) citizens from representation in the political sphere, (2) citizens’ voices from the public sphere, and (3) of citizens’ interests from the private sphere” (Nyberg 2021, 2–3).

Corporate Political Activity (CPA):

Efforts by MNCs to influence or manage political entities, in general, are called Corporate Political Activity (CPA). Corporations try to maintain “ties with political and regulatory actors and agents, particularly governments, political institutions, and regulators” (Puck, Lawton, and Mohr 2018, 663). Getz and Hillman define CPA as any deliberate firm action intended to influence governmental policy or process (Nyberg 2021, 2; Liedong, Aghanya, and Rajwani 2020, 875). It is being observed that as the government regulations and restrictions tighten, MNCs are more interested in CPA; other than knowing that MNCs are spending enormous amounts of money for it, much is not known about the political strategies of MNCs (Liedong, Aghanya, and Rajwani 2020, 859).

According to Hillman, firms depend on the government. Therefore, they will engage in CPA. At the global level, MNCs engage in CPA because of: Complexities and costs due to constraints from public policies and regulations faced in different stages of the international business environment; Threats (legal or regulatory) from political environments in respective markets which may affect 'strategic options and performance' of MNCs; To create strategic opportunities like favourable investment conditions, preferential treatments (Puck, Lawton, and Mohr 2018, 663–64).

Generally, firms that are large and highly regulated industries dependent on government contracts are engaged in CPA. The aim is to “influence policy decisions in a manner favourable to the firm by addressing legislative uncertainties and eliminating policy threats” (Hillman cited in Brown, De Leon, and Rasheed 2019, 119). CPA also helps corporations during the time of crisis, when there is uncertainty regarding the “actions the government will take; the CPA helps in what kind of regulatory and administrative structures will be created to deal with the crisis, the number of resources that will be allocated, and how the beneficiaries will be chosen” (Brown, De Leon, and Rasheed 2019, 124,127). Though the effects of CPA are visible only during a crisis, corporations invest in it even when there are no threats, and the benefits are reaped during a crisis. At times, these investments may depend on survival and failure, where those with CPA benefit from it (Ibid).

Firms try to maintain competitive advantage and profitability by having a voice in the political arena where the legislative and regulative power of the political executive can affect their sole purpose of profit-making. Because of the uncertainty that government decisions may have on their business, corporates struggle to gain a competitive advantage without considering the political process and dynamics. Firms

utilise Market and non-market strategies for this purpose. The non-market strategies mainly occur in the political sphere, which impacts the firm's performance. Corporate firms intervene in CPA as a non-market strategy to influence public policy and ultimately benefit their economic survival and success (Brown, De Leon, and Rasheed 2019, 118–19; Lock and Seele 2018, 1; Liedong, Aghanya, and Rajwani 2020, 857). Scholars in business, management, and administration usually are found to be least concerned about the implications of CPA on democracy (Nyberg 2021, 2).

CPA involves a wide range of strategies, and their intensity varies according to the local environment of the respective nations (Liedong, Aghanya, and Rajwani 2020, 856). Some popular corporate strategies are funding election campaigns, “partnering with think tanks to shape policy agendas” (Nyberg 2021, 3), lobbying, and co-optation of political elites through board memberships and bribery. The formation of PACs and the contribution of funds for campaigns is the collective strategy adopted by corporations in the USA. In the process, corporations try to maintain their relations with all the potential and influential players. Most political parties are moderately supported to have a say in the legislative process affecting them (Brown, De Leon, and Rasheed 2019, 119).

However, the nature and extent of CPA in developed, developing, and underdeveloped countries differ. In developed nations, where conditions are favourable for MNCs, politics and business depend on resources. While the business “is dependent on governments for a variety of critical resources, favorable regulation as well as lenient enforcement of existing regulation, and for procurement of contracts” (Liedong, Aghanya, and Rajwani 2020, 859). Politicians depend on them for resources to manage their affairs, particularly in the short-term and regular

periodic elections, which are expensive in developed nations. Nevertheless, firms depend more on politicians than vice versa because of the former “stronger control over access to critical resources and valuable information” (Ibid). Frameworks and regulations control CPA. The existing disclosure rules in the countries give firms a clean chit that they are within the law (Brown, De Leon, and Rasheed 2019, 123).

Hillman and Hitt identify constituency building, financial incentives, and information as political strategies employed by corporations in developed nations in altering the external economic environment. Through constituency building, firms can erect public support for the policies in favour of them. By offering financial incentives, corporations can direct policy decisions favouring them, achieved by political directorship and contributions through PACs. Corporations can shape policy decisions by gaining access to information through lobbying, research reports, and press conferences (Liedong, Aghanya, and Rajwani 2020, 859).

However, in developing countries where the institutional context is weak, corporations engage in CPA with the motivation of “(1) commercial and business opportunity; (2) regulatory leniency and arbitrary treatment; (3) sense of security and protection; and (4) voice and influence” (Liedong, Aghanya, and Rajwani 2020, 862). Here corporations attempt direct state capture, where industry participants can “actively engage, manipulate, and change the rules of the game to their collective or individual advantage” (Becker cited in Brown, De Leon, and Rasheed 2019, 123–24). in countries where institutions are still evolving. Bribing is more efficient than political strategies in these countries “where government officials have high degrees of discretion, and institutional development is at a very early stage” (Ibid).

In these countries, governments seem more regulative and monopolise resource allocations. Firms engage in CPA for competitive markets and preferential treatments. In such conditions, firms depend on political connections to obtain critical resources and facilitate economic exchange. For MNCs, political connections act “as substitutes for weak and absent market-supporting institutions” (Puck, Lawton, and Mohr 2018, 858). The business risks in these countries with emerging markets are another reason political connections help firms to 1) “obtain superior information and reduce information asymmetry in government policy discourses,” 2) “protection from bankruptcy and failure through bailout programs,” and lenient regulatory enforcement; 3) overcome bureaucracy and red-tape (Ibid).

Firms employ personal-level relations between politicians and managers in these conditions. Unlike developed countries, these unregulated activities are opaque and highly susceptible to corruption, bribery, cronyism, favouritism, and clientelism. Over time there have been changes in these countries, where “firms can use a wider array of western-oriented political strategies such as constituency building and information” (Liedong, Aghanya, and Rajwani 2020, 856–59).

Political Corporate Social Responsibility (PCSR):

Political Corporate Social Responsibility (PCSR) considers corporations as political actors that can perform many governmental functions. It put forward the idea of a corporate citizen, where public goods are given priority over business goals (Nyberg 2021, 4). It extends the influence of corporations in addressing public issues solely handled by governments. “Political CSR encourages transnational corporations to engage in the resolution of global public issues. This requested political commitment

is considered voluntary” (Lock and Seele 2018, 4). What distinguishes it from CPA is the lack of profit motive. It is concerned with increasing the legitimacy (the social acceptance of corporate practices) of corporate engagement in the democratic process by taking greater responsibility as a corporate citizen (Nyberg 2021, 4).

CSR, merely complying with stakeholder expectations, is the central concept of PCSR. It places the global sphere where corporations operate. Globalised international business results in regulatory vacuums that nation-states are unable to address. The power of nation-states in this arena is decreasing. International organisations are unable to fill the gap in global governance. Corporations operating in this arena were able to step in and address societal challenges. Corporations take up an approach of self-regulation in addressing these challenges, resulting in international standards set up by corporations through deliberations among themselves and multiple stakeholders. The dialogue and rational communication, proposed by the theory of communicative action of Habermas, along with deliberative democracy by which corporations participate “in democratic processes alongside citizens to inform legitimate political decision-making and self-government” (Lock and Seele 2018, 3; Nyberg 2021, 4), is at the core of PCSR. Nevertheless, PCSR ends up justifying a business takeover of the democratic process. Empirical evidence suggests that the deliberative process instead propagates power imbalance in favour of corporations (Ibid).

Corruption and its Effects:

International agencies believe that liberalisation can minimise rent-seeking behaviour and corruption. The neoliberal discourse identifies trade restrictions, subsidies, price

controls, low wages in civil services compared to the private sector, and state monopoly over natural resources as the factors causing rents that lead to corruption (Mauro and Driscoll 1997, 4). According to the United Nations, corruption is the most significant global obstacle to economic and social development, leading to weak governance and criminal activities. It affects everyone and can lead to less prosperity. Corruption prevents people, countries, and businesses from fulfilling their potential (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2016).

The popular definition of corruption is “use of public office for private gain” (World Bank 1997). The economic rents associated with the public official’s office motivate corruption. Politicians and bureaucrats (the agents) are in an advantageous position, giving them space to pursue personal ends without proper monitoring by citizens (the principal) (Pethe, Gandhi, and Tandel 2015, 56). Paying bribes and cash/goods for votes are the most common corruption in public offices. Neoliberals identify the monopolistic nature of government services and the demand and supply of money for political parties as the causes in the public domain. In the private sector, unaccounted money is propagated to be used by political parties (Paul 2015b, 17). Political parties or those in power are the prime corruption targets. The common allegations against political parties are; corruption, criminals, and accountability of funds, and political parties are often criticised for not bringing legislation to fix corruption.

In dealings between governments and citizens, public officials delay or neglect their task of providing services to the citizens. In such a condition, the public, particularly the poor and marginalised sections unaware of their rights and entitlements. In this context, getting work in urgent need of services uses money. The officials willingly wits for those with urgent needs to show up. Lack of transparency is associated with

promoting this kind of corruption (Paul 2015a, 1062). At some point, it may lead to extortion, where those in need of service are forced to pay. Within the officials, public assets are used for private interests and misappropriation of funds by politicians and bureaucrats. This kind of corruption is categorised as grand and is linked adversely to any nation's economic development. Large-scale individuals bribe officials for government contracts, and tax evasions, speed up evading regulation and influence the legal and regulatory process (Gray and Kaufmann 1998, 7–8).

Corruption is as illegal when such use of public office violates the law and does not break the law but violates society's social norms or moral standards. It is categorised as petty, grand, bureaucratic, or legislative based on volume. Petty corruption is where small bribes are paid to get work done. Grand corruption is when the formulation of policies itself is manipulated, and implementation is diverted in such a way as to serve the private interests of the political elite. Bureaucratic corruption is defined as the “dishonest practices by bureaucrats in their interactions with the political elite or the general public” (Pethe, Gandhi, and Tandel 2015, 56). Influencing legislators voting behaviour through bribing or buying is legislative corruption (Ibid).

The conditions in developing countries, poverty, low-paid civil servants, lack of risk-spreading mechanisms like insurance, and a well-developed labour market are considered ripe for corruption. The regulated nature of the economy is said to be fostering opportunities for corruption, where it (corruption) further breeds demand for more regulation. Economies in transition have huge economic rents where the state-owned resources are out for grabs (Gray and Kaufmann 1998, 3). Politically, businesses are increasingly becoming a source of funds for political parties in developing countries. These special interest groups fund political parties and lobby in

the legislature during election campaigns. Corporate funds will put political parties under the pressure of business lobbying leading to corruption. The target is usually an individual politician or political party, a bureaucrat selected based on the funder's interest (Yadav 2011, 12). The power of lobbying shifted from domestic business groups, which dominated lobbying policy decisions, to MNCs after Liberalisation, Privatisation, and Globalization (LPG).

The economic impacts of corruption are; high transaction costs and uncertainty in the economy, inefficient economic outcomes, the decline in investments and international aid, misallocation of talent due to rent-seeking and nepotism, reduced state capacity to raise revenue, leading to inefficiency in the supply of public goods, low-quality infrastructure, and public services. Politically corruption undermines the state's legitimacy, the rule of law, and the denial of rights (Gray and Kaufmann 1998, 8; Mauro and Driscoll 1997, 6–7). Corruption must be addressed seriously because of its direct impact on property, equality, and justice. It can also affect the effectiveness of policy decisions. For citizens, it becomes the reason for depriving the constitutionally guaranteed rights and bad economic policies. As the dissatisfaction among the population grows, it affects the stability of the governments.

Anti-corruption Movement:

Internationally, corruption is an ignored political issue, however, which became an economic issue of concern for international lending agencies through neoliberal policies. The neoliberal assumption was that corruption comes from a lack of competition. Deregulating markets and opening up the economy in developing countries will reduce corruption in developing democratic countries (Bardhan 1997,

1339). For them, corruption prevents development, curbing markets from operating fairly for businesses and consumers and exploiting the already marginalised. The simple technocratic neoliberal solution for problems, organisations, governments, civil society and international agencies focusing on anti-corruption will make a free passage to the success of neoliberalism (Jenkins 2015, 42).

The election of corrupt leaders is a sign of society tolerating corruption. The usual justification is that there is no other choice. Other factors like community and clan justify corruption or ignore it among themselves. It is being argued that other than anyone else, politicians have sensed this mixed response regarding people from corruption, which makes them speak against corruption but not enforce systemic reforms to address it (Paul 2015a, 1062). Politicians being corrupt is an intrinsic feature of the political system, but cannot be corrupt indefinitely. A political system has an inbuilt self-corrective mechanism in the form of protests that curbs corruption.

While corruption is an economic issue in the West, it exploits social and political opponents in developing countries, particularly India. Anti-corruption mobilisations were taken by political actors who strive to maximise their gains (Bardhan 1997, 42). The media reported such mobilisations as a conflict between civil society and the political establishment, opposite sides who expects high standards or credibility from politicians (Sinha 2011). Later, the media took over corruption and marketed it as a spectator. The media, independent of any political gains, demands removing corrupt governments and punishing the guilty (Paul 2015a, 1061–62).

The popular belief is that corruption is an individual act; if those found guilty are punished, it can be fixed. The public opinion against corruption is that the guilty

should be punished, and the governments should resign. The most accepted solution is to punish those who are found guilty (Paul 2015a, 1061). Corruption not only operates at the party-politics level, but the winners of liberalisation also use the discourse of corruption in a broader sense to consolidate their position and create an inferior image of the lack of progress of lower caste and poor (Jenkins 2015, 41).

Corruption became a central concern and the missing part in addressing the failure of neoliberalism in developing countries. The policy-makers favouring neoliberalism addressed corruption in the highly regulated markets, which would eliminate corruption by competition; the educated middle class took this up. The middle class took neoliberalism as the logic of the Market with self-interest leading to efficiency would help the poor rather than the “good intentions of politicians and government officials” (Jenkins 2015, 45). They were convinced that the national resources would be more than enough to address poverty and unemployment. The state’s role has been as one among the many service providers, which hinted that it is not the responsibility of the state to address the needs of those who cannot afford it.

The middle class felt betrayed and angered against politicians who claimed liberalism would end the corruption, vice, and venality of licence raj. The credit for the failure of the market economy to get rid of corruption was recognised more by the government than the Market’s role in it. They argued that the politicians had distorted liberalism to benefit them. This rage was directed toward the political class and blamed for cheating the ordinary person of the full benefits of liberalism (Jenkins 2015, 47). The middle class, later annoyed with not reaching the promised progress by the political class, found problems like vested interests, politicians, and vote banks, which led to corruption as a cause of the failure. The Governments which introduced neoliberal

reforms, which failed, also articulated corruption as the reason for failure of reforms. Middle classes, politicians, academicians, higher bureaucrats, and NGOs came up with the narrative that the policies were correct, but corruption in implementation affected them. This focus on corruption ignored investigating the need for policy assessment. The urban middle class, active in the anti-corruption narrative, criticised the welfare programs of governments as a trick to win votes (Jenkins 2015, 47–48).

Anti-corruption discourse dominated by the middle class has taken it up as a tool to discredit the lower castes and the political elite, thereby justifying their claims to be the political nation. These moves of the middle class displaced the problem of corruption away from the concerns of marginal groups while simultaneously dismissing them as corrupt. It is more practical to blame the marginalised sections instead of addressing the structural violence to which they are exposed because of the withdrawal of the state from the developmental agenda (Jenkins 2015, 48).

The anti-corruption movements are where the consolidated middle-class sentiments against the poor and political class erupted. The middle class portrayed themselves as victims leading a movement in the national interest. These movements raised the corruption issue, intending to bring a technocratic solution. The anti-corruption legislation demanded by these movements was focused on the public sector, not the private sector. The middle-class side takes corruption by the side with the state intervention for the poor as distorting markets. These interventions are such that they bypass the patronage of the state and citizens, which fatally undermines the positions of the middle class (Jenkins 2015, 47–48).

Though the corruption by bureaucrats usually remains too petty, with both parties not complaining, it usually goes unnoticed and unattended. However, corruption involving politicians is usually not taken lightly. With the increase in neoliberal policies, politicians are often branded as corrupt and violate society's morals, ultimately stunting development. They are blamed as those interested in small-term gains in commerce where national interests are compromised to maximise individual gain by hook and crook to the extreme. They sell the nation off. In general, the political party's leaders in or closer to the office are identified as the corruption targets. The corruption through this route is associated with lobbying, where public decisions are violated in favour of officials (Mitra 2001, 1158–59).

Lobbying can be the primary source of corruption, where monetary rewards influence policy-makers through the interested party's business interests. Politicians in his capacity and political parties, with their group bargaining power, managed to mobilise funds from business houses. The contributors also, while contributing, took factors about their gain in donations (Yadav 2011, 26). Business interests, concerned about the policies, implementation, and outcome, are strongly motivated to lobby political parties or legislatures in charge. Political parties primarily exert control over legislative members through party discipline. The ability of party discipline is taken as a central fact to attract business lobby towards the party in a parliamentary system. Lobbying is executed in the parliamentary system through individual legislators and political parties in a presidential system (Yadav 2011, 31).

Vineeta Yadav, in *Political Parties, Business Groups, And Corruption in Developing Countries* (2011), identify two demand and supply-side dynamics of corruption in party-focused developing democracies. Supply-side dynamics result in increasing

corruption, the ability of a political party “to use legislation to capture state institutions, which exercise delegated policy powers, and to protect corrupt financing practices” (Yadav 2011, 43). It increases their ability to raise illegal funds to meet these higher demands (Yadav 2011, 43).

Earlier, the source of funds for political parties was from voters, interest groups, and the state. Membership fees and party-run businesses were another two sources. These sources of funds are broadly classified as business, public, and other financings (Yadav 2011, 26). Compared to individual leaders, political parties need money for operating as organisers and financiers of the party, election campaigning and managing party offices and organisations, followed by the high cost of campaigning through media and events. This shortage of funds is more in developing democracies because of low income and low political participation (Yadav 2011, 40).

There is also a need for illegal and expensive tactics in developing countries like vote-buying and bribing. Usually employed in developing countries, claimed to be by expanding illegal funds. In developing countries, sufficient illegal funds should be raised to finance this operation. Individual legislators need not maintain these funds as it is not expensive for a party as an organisation. Along with these needs, political parties’ new tactics and methods to win and hold office create demand for more funds than individual legislators. Thus this is the first demand-side dynamic that raises corruption in developing democracies with a party-focused system rather than an individual-focused one.

The second demand-side dynamic specific to political parties is the “strong preference for fungible resources, especially money over non-fungible resources” (Yadav 2011,

42). Political parties that cover a significant geographic area need resources that can be moved around and have the same worth throughout the territory and prefers monetary resources to maximise electoral gain. Individual candidates favours other constituency-specific elements like information on voters and volunteers (Ibid). The cost went up as the activities grew, and the initial contributions remained the same. Political parties and politicians in developing countries struggled to raise sufficient funds. Businesses, eager for any chance to grow their operations, contributed money, which turned into a reliable source of funding for political parties Indirectly, business houses also depend on the discretionary power of those in office (Yadav 2011, 29).

These donations turned out to be an investment where they expected a return. This link between political parties and business led to another alliance, which resulted in the people in business lobbying policy-making and, at some point, entering key positions of the political parties and legislatures in party tickets (Yadav 2011, 26). Corruption in local bodies has become a ‘necessary evil’ where people voluntarily give for the speedy delivery of services. Political parties operating at the local level try to centre their political strategy on delivering services in local politics, where local bodies are concerned about the delivery of services.

Development: Bias of the Western World

The idea of development through modernisation was proposed for the third-world nations during the post-second world war era. It was a period of conflicting interests. The conventional definition of development through modernisation was the path defined by the first world for the third world to reach the state of the first world through western-style industrialisation. As per the modernisation theory, “all the

countries in the world have uniform historical experience” (Sheth 1987, 156–57). The strategy stimulated the internal growth process within the nation-states, where states led by international agencies and the US monitored the stimulation and growth. This view of development conceptualised quantitative economic growth will follow qualitative socio-economic changes when the economic growth trickles down to the masses. In such a way, as people earn income, poverty will be reduced, and people will have the freedom of mass consumption and politics. “Development was merely the ideological expression of the expansion of post-World War II capitalism; alternatively, it can be argued that development was the result of refined forms of knowledge and greater potentialities of science and technology that could be put to the service of the non-industrialised world” (Byekwaso 2016, 285, 294). The Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs) were often shown as the model’s success.

This conception was based on limited variables such as capital, technology, and resource, repeatedly used in the World Bank documents an idea of material progress to catch up with the industrialised countries (Escobar 1992, 427). David Harvey takes the idea of creative destruction in understanding modernity and the development introduced by it. According to Schumpeter, creative destruction is the constantly recurring pace of ‘benevolent capitalist development (Harvey 2011b, 16–17).

The idea of development kept on changing in social sciences. Until the 1960s and early 70s, with the slogan of development for all, it was considered a “linear, universal process involving different time lags for developing countries” (Sheth 1987, 155–56). While theories of development developed, underdevelopment developed in the real world. The compulsion of theory on practice in the third world in the form of advice, and aid, did not help the developing countries and people. Thus these theories

in the early 70s failed to preserve the political force of the original theory. Hence the new terminology like growth with distribution replaced growth, interdependence and an international division of labour replaced foreign investment to stimulate growth were presented (Sheth 1987, 155–56).

Towards the end of the 20th century, the idea of development moved from the state and market interventions and the search for a single meta policy to the necessity of a complementary approach of both state and Market and discarding the view that a meta policy will hold effective everywhere. In this process, more development objectives were added. Raising per capita income became only one among many development objectives. Development policies were considered interdependent, operating in integrated mechanisms, and institutions were needed. The role of governments is vital without any particular definition, and it varies depending on various factors. The policy process should include consensus, transparency, participation, and involvement of institutions of good governance that ensure civil society participation. The new conditions put forward by Globalisation and localisation are such that national governments cannot attend to them (World Bank 1999b, 2–3).

Development: Concerns of Third World Countries

The proponents of neoliberalism are of the view that neoliberalism can solve social and economic problems in developing countries. Its widespread acceptance stems from the propaganda of its association with democracy. It is often portrayed that markets in nations without a democratic system are regulated to benefit the elites. It also managed to overcome the crisis by presenting itself as a society's choice between an undemocratic and corrupt state-controlled economy and that of the Market

(MacEwan 2005, 172–74). For Schumpeter, democracy was consent for market leadership (Lentsch 2019, 4). By the 1990s, neoliberalism extended to the social realm by coming up with welfare and rejuvenation policies and bringing the excluded categories of society under the regulations of neoliberalism (Munck 2005, 63).

Soon after the second world war, most newly independent countries considered themselves underdeveloped and embraced development to solve all their problems (Escobar 1992, 416). It was a period of conflicting interests. Leaders of newly independent nations wanted to modernise their nations through urbanisation and industrialisation. The masses who fought for independence wanted to liberate themselves from the old and new forms of subjugation. The former colonisers still wanted to maintain control over their former colonies' natural resources and markets. The idea of development was at the centre of attraction for a certain period because of its acceptance from all three quarters.

Third-world leaders promised people development, which they regarded as a liberating force, but it fell short of their expectations and resulted in exclusion and discrimination than liberation. Furthermore, modernisation got limited only to making favourable conditions for the private sector to make a profit, leaving no room for the state in economic development, where the attention was supposed to be on the poor population of these countries (Byekwaso 2016, 292). Nevertheless, the attempts for development failed in the third world, resulting in economic crisis, environmental damages, increasing debts, poverty, social and cultural crisis, and urban bias creating large, inhospitable cities. Western science, which the third world looked at, failed “to provide the knowledge necessary for building and maintaining culture and community” (Escobar 1992, 419–20).

Though the conditions have not improved in the third world, and some have worsened, the development is powerful and has become a hegemonic form of representation. Further, the primary beneficiaries of development were local elites, and the affected population was the rooted community. As a result, the local elites hold power and are disconnected from the roots (Sheth 1984, 260). The elites have developed a wide enough production base to support their lifestyle and the surpluses needed for political survival and manipulation while withdrawing from an extended role for the state, which otherwise played a more distributive and mass-oriented role.

The state's role was reduced to technological modernisation to catch up with the world development process. However, the ruling elites refused to expand the market mechanism, which would have required redistributive policies. The confrontation between the state and civil society during a period of stagnation resulted in political instability as a response from the people to the former. The consensus between the two is demanded but dictated by the elites by considering dissent illegitimate (Kothari 1984, 217). Even after the worst crisis of capitalism, thus the ruling elites of the third world hold on to the idea of development as a linear and universal process and manage to keep the population hopeful.

Search for an Alternative:

The third world linked the idea of development to that of urbanisation, but the new urban spaces did not create better living conditions for the masses. People were uprooted from their rural ecosystem. (Byekwaso 2016, 296) Though the idea proposed the development of all, the gap between haves and have-nots increased. The national and international bureaucrats who had the control mechanisms of

development never consulted the poor for whom the whole project was (Sheth 1984, 259). The poor were constantly assured that the development was for them, and their conditions were not improving because of extraneous factors like corruption, lack of capital, and destabilising policies of outside powers (Kothari 1984, 216). The idea of participation of the poor, propelled by populist politics as an art of arousing faith among the masses in their benefactors and populist economics as expertise in legitimising such a faith, did not become a reality (Ibid).

The development discourse in the third world is considered to be imposed upon it. As it has dropped down from the top, the local conditions and needs could not be taken into account where; this size fits made the supposed beneficiaries its victims. The bottom end was not given any power to customise it because of its strict regulative nature. The existing conditions of the third world were assumed to be underdeveloped and were tried to solve through foreign aid (Escobar 1992, 415–21).

The economic and political challenges that followed development degraded the conditions of the poor without leaving hope for their development, denying them the opportunity of being full-wage earners or full-fledged citizens in the polity. The main affected population from the failure of development was the unorganised and informal sector which was more exploited by the ruling class, while the organised sector had some benefits because of their entitlements. The third world finally started picking up developmental alternatives considering grassroots movements and local knowledge, transforming the development concept. They press for alternatives to development than alternative developments (Ibid).

The social and political changes since the beginning of the 70s and the failure of development gave rise to grass-root movements in the early and mid-seventies. These movements had the active participation of a new brand of grassroots activists, mostly famous leaders, middle-class, educated youth, intellectuals, professional and church people who went to “villages and tribal belts in sizable numbers to work with and for the poor” (Escobar 1992, 421; Sheth 1984, 259). In contrast, the criticism of development came from third-world intellectuals, the elites, and international agencies who adhered to it (Escobar 1992, 416–21).

The third world took development as “a theory, not about economic growth and elimination of poverty but as an ideological and institutional device used by the rich and powerful nations to monitor economic and power relations vis-à-vis the underdeveloped nations to maintain the former’s political domination and to establish cultural hegemony” (Sheth 1987, 55–56). In the third world, the development idea changed from a theoretical, macro-level paradigm to a more empirical, localised, and participatory framework. In this context, the new right and left have shifted their focus to local as the site of new engagements and development interventions. Though the local and global are the opposites, the neoliberal, postmodern/post-Marxist interventions makes an appropriation of the local by the global possible. According to Seethi, the strategies such as participation, grass-root democracy, decentralisation, peoples planning, and citizens initiatives are presented as alternatives in the third world as an ideology-free, value-neutral pretence. Furthermore, they have nothing to do with the politico-economic goals of capitalism in the era of Globalisation (Seethi 2001, 309).

After 50 years of development failure, the world bank identified four critical lessons: macroeconomic stability, an essential prerequisite for achieving growth. Secondly, the growth does not trickle down; thirdly, the development must address human needs directly. Lastly, the institutions matter. Accordingly, sustained development should be rooted in socially inclusive processes and responsive to changing circumstances. Globalisation and localisation are the two phenomena contributing to the changes (World Bank 1999b, 1–2).

Identifying Globalisation and localisation for development seems to be an attempt to balance the shortcomings of previous development experiences. Through Globalisation, national governments should “seek agreements with other national governments, international organisations, NGOs, and multi-national corporations—through supranational institutions” (World Bank 1999, 4–6). In the case of localisation, national governments are supposed to hand over the responsibilities of the local to the people through sub-national institutions. While in localisation, decentralisation and urbanisation are given importance. The failure of a centrally planned economy also became the cause for the push for localisation. However, ideas such as decentralisation put pressure on the backward class of society to find solutions for their fundamental problems (Seethi 2001, 314).

Neoliberalism and Decentralisation: Liberal Versus Radical

By the 1970s, the dominant development paradigm failed to achieve the goals of economic growth. It ended in widening economic inequalities, which led to serious debates on decentralisation between capital-intensive industrialisation and centralised planning. The proponents of the former view are from the liberal interventionist or

bourgeois-democratic schools, while the latter comes from the radical populists or Marxist schools. Though there was consensus among the opposition to centralised planning and a top-down approach, the same consensus was extended to adopt decentralisation and people's participation in achieving equitable development (Gurukkal 2001, 65–66). The proponents of the bourgeois-democratic school subscribe to the dominant paradigm of economic growth. For them, development is capital-intensive but has problems with the top-down model of development administration, and here, their central concern is rapid economic growth. According to them, decentralisation is a more effective means to make government efficient in development administration for quick and efficient implementation of development schemes. Further, they say that it is only a constitutional question that can solve “uneven economic growth, poverty, delay in distribution of benefits” (Ibid).

According to the bourgeois-democratic view, decentralisation is a means to achieve development and is considered an administrative strategy to realise development goals. Accordingly, they define decentralisation as the “deconcentration or redistribution of administrative responsibilities of the central government based on liberal normative assumptions” (Gurukkal 2001, 66). Gurukkal argues that the goal is to empower the local government by assigning more financial autonomy through the rapid redistribution of benefits from the centre to local bodies and warranting national democracy within the liberal scheme. Thus, “they mix up different types of decentralisation such as delegation, devolution, and privatisation of administrative and political powers in favour of semi-autonomous local bodies or privatised organisation, corporate bodies, and NGO respectively” (Ibid). For liberal interventionists, participation is a meek association of local people in the process of

planning and development. Though it serves as an immediate implementation of development projects, it maintains the status quo of the local power relations.

Contrary to the bourgeois-democratic capital-intensive industrialisation and centralised planning with the mantra of people first, the radical populists or Marxist school attacks the capital-intensive model, saying that it is the crisis-ridden and inescapable consequence of the dominant paradigm of development. The radical populists or Marxists called this crisis-ridden paradigm scandalous, and the economic growth of this model is incapable of bringing justice to people. Under the radical populists' or Marxists' model, equity was given importance, and development is not restricted to the economic sphere, but it is holistic of "socio-economic, cultural and political package aiming at local self-reliance presupposing sustainability" (Gurukkal 2001, 67). In their view, the development process is "integrated socio-economic development determined to do justice to nature and people" (Gurukkal 2001, 67).

For the radical populists', decentralisation is a political project, fundamentally for the empowerment of the weak, and the central concern is the "democratic redistribution of political power to the grassroots" (Ibid). Decentralisation, for them, is not simply a transfer of executive powers without any authority to make laws but to make the local authorities autonomous entities and says that the "transfer of financial powers with lots of checks and ties on revenue rights" (Ibid). The radical populists argue for a type of decentralisation where the central government withdraws to the minimum. Participation, for the radical populists,' is not a mere people's collaboration. It is where "poor people get access to resources, improve the standard of living and exert political power through local administration" (Gurukkal 2001, 67–68). Participation

means a structural transformation, according to the radical populists, where power is excreted from below by locals, especially the poor and backward sections (Ibid).

Thus the lack of clarity on concepts like decentralisation, participation, and development, the debates over decentralisation were considered a public policy debate in terms of administrative reform. Some politicians considered it a constitutional issue. For some, the concept of decentralisation is a shortcut to development and poverty alleviation, while ordinary people are still confused about the representation of decentralisation and development. In contrast, “the dominant actors manipulate the political process for their advantage” (Ibid).

Political Parties and Depoliticisation:

A shift in power and redefinition of citizens changed the political landscape in neoliberalism. Power in a system with a limited government and self-regulated market’ shifted from people and people’s representatives, supposed to be the legitimate source of power in a democracy, to the capitalist class whose goal is to invest and accumulate more (MacEwan 2005, 171). The citizen in neoliberalism is redefined as a consumer, where individual identity is expressed in terms of consumption. It resulted in the basis of class division shifting to consumption from production. In such a way, politics, in general, was discarded for not being able to attend to a consumer citizen (Munck 2005, 66).

In the neoliberal era, the world bank had a significant share in depoliticising civil society. NGOs were encouraged to replace or rule the state, followed by introducing the conservative concept of social capital to replace civil society. In such a way,

democratic values were pretended to be adopted into neoliberalism to legitimise it in the 1990s. Though neoliberalism revived individual liberty undermined by democracy, it constrained democracy itself. Rules of the Market attacked the political domain for not complying with it, and the everyday attempt to defame bureaucracy and politics can be taken as opposed to democracy. Political parties absorbed neoliberal economic agendas into their foundations to accommodate these changes, decreasing differences among parties. Money's influence over politics kept increasing, marketing politics as a commodity in the Market. As a result, the public was dissatisfied, lost interest in politics, and became disengaged from the political process. (Ibid).

There has been a weakening of traditional political mechanisms such as the state and political parties, in the end, democracy itself. As these mechanisms are getting integrated into the market economy, they lose command over the economy and are impotent to intervene successfully on behalf of the poor. There has been a weakening in the strength of political parties also. Political parties under the neoliberal regime started focusing more on short-term goals. In order to be in power occupying the ideological centre, they employed new means for mobilising funds. Because of all these factors, people seem to have lost trust in these mechanisms. These compromises led to the devaluation of politics and individual politicians (Joseph 2015, 300).

In the era of neoliberalism, the withdrawal of the state from organised politics and organised economics severely impacted the political process and the state's role. According to Kothari, "it accentuates the growing vacuums in the structure of the state, reinforces depoliticisation of the people, increases their sense of insecurity and isolation, and makes them dependent on charismatic individuals" (Kothari 1984, 217).

Further, he says that “role of the state in social transformation has got undermined, development has led to a striking dualism of the social order, and democracy has become the playground for growing corruption, criminalisation, repression, and intimidation for large masses of the people whose very survival is made to depend on their staying out of the political process and whose desperate economic state incapacitates them from entering the regular economic process as well” (Ibid).

Despite this, the elites are determined to take development further, even in its crisis, with more participation, cooperation, and less conflict. Whereas the economists clarify it as fewer politics, the populist rhetoric manages to depoliticise “the people, the development process, and operation of the political system itself” (Kothari 1984, 216), resulting in the marginalisation of the poor from the organised economy and organised politics. According to Kothari, they had to depend on a few dominant individuals and their authorised agents, such as the techno-bureaucracy, the *dadas*, and the skilled experts in communication and mass media (Ibid).

CHAPTER-II: KERALA: THE SETTING

Kerala's socio-religious movements were institutionalised into community organisations, with institutions open for all but prioritised for their people. Politically they act as powerful pressure groups on the state in the provision of new resources for their communities. The presence of organisations for youth, children, students, and women made them inclusive and attended to their needs. The one with more bargaining power benefited more, leading to an unequal redistribution from the state. Some political parties are implicitly or explicitly organised along caste and community lines (Scaria 2008, 10).

Community Organisations as Interest Groups in Politics:

Community Interest groups emerged in Kerala state because of the existing socio-economic structures and the challenges posed by political developments. In Travancore, caste interest groups were predominant because of the dependency between economic and caste/religious structures. The communities like Nairs, Ezhavas, Syrian Christians, Roman Catholics, Muslims, Backward Christians, and Scheduled Castes- behaving like interest groups in western society- bargained through their caste/religious associations (P. Nair and Nair 1966, 77–78).

These organisations were initially set up for the cause of social reform but were later involved in political parties because of the logical compulsion. Those started later for the community's common interest and entered the political arena in the quest for power (Ibid). Alliances are formed when political parties alone cannot win the

election at the time of elections. Kerala's social composition is more organised on lines of community intertwined with religion and politics, allowing religious pressure groups to play a lead role. Thus the community entangled with Religion/community successfully influenced the people's cultural, socio-economic, and political life through their establishments like hospitals, educational institutions, and places of worship. This influence was so strong that the political parties, exploiting religiously organised communities, came under the influence of religious groups in shaping their strategies and political behaviour. The *Malayali Memorial* of 1891, the modern political agitation, was a joint protest by religious groups against the Travancore government's policy of appointing Tamil Brahmins (P. J. John 1977, 55–57).

Kerala's almost all caste and community organisations are well-organised and capable of political bargains. These community organisations work as disciplined pressure groups for their respective communities' political, educational and economic interests, successfully influencing the political and socio-economic activities of the governments in power. Some of them had political parties, and those without one offered support to a particular party depending on their benefits. These pressure groups influence policy formulation or restrict the government from implementing any policy. Political parties conscious of the power of these interest groups gave due consideration to caste/community factors in selecting candidates. Governments of Kerala was unstable until the 1970s as a result of unhappy religious pressure groups, with average span of ministers being two years (P. J. John 1977, 61–62).

Political parties, in many instances, diluted their ideologies and went on to ally with communal parties. They formed many opportunist alliances and were in power (O. John 1992, 533–34). The support of the minority communities totalling 45 percent of

the population consisting of 27 percent of Muslims concentrated in northern Kerala and 18 percent Christians concentrated in central Kerala, is crucial for both fronts to be in power (Ibrahim 2022, 297). Further, the geographical concentration of communities helps regional/communal parties to gain more seats in their areas. They end up working as pressure groups to protect the interests of their respective communities. The sharp division of society and the mosaic nature of politics make the various community interest groups far more important (J. Oommen 1995, 546–47). they become a decisive force for governments in power, where the stability of the ruling party is dependent upon them. Interest aggregation becomes problematic for the coalition governments in power (Ibid).

The governments in power cannot go against the interests of the communities, irrespective of their support for the government. The institutional character keeps the government in a dilemma in making certain policy decisions like regulating self-financing colleges owned and run by religious bodies,' and education policies against the interest of the communities. None of the governments could bring radical changes in these areas fearing setbacks in elections (Ibrahim 2014, 502).

The politics of Kerala is dominated by castes like Nairs, Ezhavas, Christians, and Muslims fighting for economic and political advantage based on social stratification. Though most of them are the Hindu backward caste and classes, the economically prosperous Nairs and numerically Ezhavas dominate (Chakrabarty and Tamang 2006, 133). Christians and Muslims are the religious minorities, where Syrian Christians dominate among Christians; Latin Christians can decide the results in a few constituencies. After independence, the Church, in the beginning, was aligned with the INC; after strengthening the Kerala Congress, it is regarded as the political wing

of the Christian community. Muslim leagues are powerful in northern Kerala (Pillai 1987, 599). The condition is somewhat the same at present. The communities united and fought among themselves to get things done accordingly. When the Nair community benefited from the opening up of state services because of their privilege, the Ezhavas and Christians agitated against it. The 1891 unity for the Malayali memorial followed this, where the communities united in demanding rights.

Christians, Ezhavas, and Muslims demanded communal representation in the legislature and public services, followed by the 1931 legislative assembly elections. The joint political Congress formed by these communities became the Travancore state Congress in 1937, dominated by Christians. During this period, the Praja Mandal of Cochin fought for responsible government and Malabar Congress, which fought for freedom though led by upper-caste Hindus, was free from communal tensions (Nayar 1966, 45–50). Communal pressure groups in the Malabar region could not become strong because of the negligible representation of Malabar in the erstwhile Madras Presidency. Interest groups in Malabar were mainly the plantation industry, trade unions, landowners, and school and college management (P. J. John 1977, 55–57).

These interest groups operate while asserting their presence in the day-to-day functioning of society. In a way, political parties are a cluster of pressure groups meant to promote the interests of the communities. Their demands include “More employment, business facilities, forest land for cultivation, and schools. More seats in professional colleges, and more berths in the ministry, are some of the issues around which communal parties and groups revolve” (J. Oommen 1995, 545). The shift of these parties between the coalitions left no room for ideological politics to develop.

The four significant communities, Nair, Ezhava, Muslim, and Christian, constituting 80 percent of the population, have decided the fate of governments. Along with this, the communities' geographical concentration is another factor that gives them an upper hand in the bargaining process. They are also beneficial for the respective coalition because of their ability to become instruments for expressing political preferences and mobilising political resources and support (Ibid).

In politics, these communal/caste act as pressure groups and guard the interests of their respective communities. Caste consciousness among these communities also leads to this pressure group political behaviour. There is no single uniform stand in electoral politics among Hindus. However, it is more organised among Muslims and Christians, giving them more bargaining power. Ideological politics have given away opportunistic politics. Political parties are more focused on alliance formation, winning more seats than in lines of ideology benefiting regional parties with more say and can even become a decisive factor in certain things. With the risk of these party shifting to the opposition, which is strong, the majority party have to come to terms with them. With this exercise being a regular practice, the secular parties could not work much on secularising the political process in the state (J. Oommen 1995, 547).

The Political Economy of Kerala State:

Incommensurable social and economic development, and prolonged growth in the commodity production sector, are seen as the overall development of Kerala. Earlier distributive issues central to economic development were successfully addressed through policies like land reform, health, and Public Distribution System (PDS). Thus Kerala's development issues are high unemployment and low per-capita income

(Kannan 1998, 61). The progress achieved and the socio-economic transformation of the state altered its job market. When the standard of living increased, people were no longer interested in agriculture-related work, though Kerala traditionally was an agrarian economy. Although the developmental model of the state managed to increase the standard of living, it could not accommodate future needs other than self-employment. People preferred public sector employment or other salaried jobs matching their social status.

However, the state failed to create white-coloured jobs for the qualified and unsatisfied population, leading to educated unemployment. Every year pass-outs lead to increasing educated unemployment without any demand from the job market. Shortage of land is another issue where there is a limitation in bringing new industrial establishments and the changes in travel after liberalisations where there is an inflow of cheap labour to the state. There is a paradox of unemployment even after having high wages and a shortage of labourers, especially in the agricultural sector, which migrant labourers take over. National schemes to address unemployment were inadequate in tackling the problem due to the state's unique contexts; underpayment and highly qualified labourers hesitant for such kind of work (Aneesh 2009, 13–25).

Agricultural Sector:

In Kerala, large-scale farming was impossible and became less profitable after the land reforms. Left parties organised struggles for agricultural labourers led to an increase in wages that augmented their bargaining power. The landowners were forced to shift to cash crops which were less labour-intensive and profitable. The unemployed labourers shifted to non-agricultural sectors like the construction field,

rejuvenated by the remittances from abroad. After liberalisation, the cash crops also suffered. The state mainly depended on agriculture and related work and faced problems of high wages and a shortage of labourers (Aneesh 2009, 13–16).

The labour force in the state in both organised and unorganised sectors is strongly unionised under political parties, but they enjoy regional autonomy (Kannan 1998, 61). The under-performance of industrial establishments in the state was often associated with the lack of working-class consciousness and inter-union rivalry (Pillai 1987, 605). Though they succeeded in their bargains for better wages and working conditions, they could not attract youth as casual labourers. With improved standards in education, youth look forward to stable jobs matching their skills and status. The state was not able to produce the jobs nor able to attract investment which may produce jobs. The youth ventured out to West Asia in the 1970s and 80s. With the population present in almost every country in the world. The remittance managed to sustain the developmental track achieved by the state even when the state had to cut down spending because of the financial crisis. With these developments, the status of the majority population got elevated to that of the middle class and caused a decline in the number of peasants and labourers. The state focused on welfare activities to improve the quality of life (Aneesh 2009, 22). Kerala's redistributive development model which was successful because the collective action of the empowered public faced a crisis by the 1990s.

The state had to cut down the spending in the welfare sector because of the financial crisis. Left political parties responded to the crisis by abandoning militant class struggle in favour of a social-democratic strategy of class compromise, which reduced industrial militancy and concessions for investments by LDF governments. It had its

effects, and Kerala's economy recovered in the 1990s, outperforming the national economy. However, still, the problem of unemployment persisted. The gulf migration and remittances helped the tertiary sector to survive. A revival followed it in the economy because of 'stable human development, remittances, demographic transition and economic reforms'. Even after a decline in public expenditure, social development indicators improved, and private involvement revived economic growth (Steuer 2009, 26; Scaria 2008, 4; Heller 2005, 85–86).

Industrial Sector:

The agricultural sector, where most people were employed, faced problems after land reforms in the 70s when large-scale farming was no longer possible. The industrial sector was already backward in the state and suffered more. Industrial development was a state-sponsored program in Kerala that too in the public sector or for the benefit of the industrial workforce. The resistance from grass-root movements against state-sponsored developmental programmes led to tensions between labour and environmental movements. Those opposing developmental programmes were portrayed as the middle class, which stood for the environment without concern for labourers. Labour unions further amplified this image.

The “green activists interpret the issue of pollution by focusing on its negative implications for the livelihoods of resource-dependent workers such as the inland fisher folk and the farmers, whereas the unions focus on the income and job security of the factory workers” (Satheesh 2021, 210). There was tension between the affected population of environmental damage and the workers of the industrial establishments causing pollution. It is to be noted that while the initial concerns regarding the

environment were on state-sponsored development, at present, it is more about increased consumerisation of society, especially in the post-economic reform periods.

Public Sector and Working Class Movement:

The state depended on the centre for finance and public sector investment, unable “to determine the course of economic development in general and investment decisions in particular” (Kannan 1998, 61). The labour movements in the state were from the organised and the unorganised sectors, including tenants, landless labourers and industrial workers. Through democratic institutions, these working-class movements were radicalised into active labour movements (Parayil 1996, 946). Since most of the population is the working class, political parties tried to create their sphere of influence within them. Irrespective of their support to the governments in power, the labour class had a hegemonic role.

With the support of the labour class, the governments in power “had to address distributive issues first” (Kannan 1998, 61). The state had to step in to mediate conflicts between labour vs state or capital, making it a reactive soft state. Initially, the Public sector companies and public policies showed progress and were promising. It did not give much output than the initial hype, or it could not maintain the pace of development. It is because of the secondary recognition given to production in Kerala’s political discourse. Mainly it is termed because of mismanagement by the politicians. The reasons cited are Pork-barrel politics, where the legislators are successfully lobbied by the interest groups, which the political leadership could not resist. The industries are said to be giving less attention to welfare politics (Balakrishnan 2015, 39).

While at the time of the Nehruvian era, the public sector was built and nurtured without excessive concern for welfare and allowed a free hand for the corporate sector without being lobbied or influenced by it. Though public policy in Kerala was business-friendly, compared with the national scene during the Nehruvian era, attention was not paid to economic activity. In Kerala, ‘there can be no demand for labour if there is no economic activity and no growth without investment. While other states have given undue favours to businesses to set up their units in their respective states, Kerala has not taken this route’ (Ibid).

Public Policies and Social Development:

The sub-national status made economic management difficult. The state had little success in promoting economic growth. Kerala managed to construct a good level of “social development, strong institutions and good infrastructure suitable to attract investment” (Sandbrook et al. 2007, 68). Nevertheless, it did not materialise and left the population unemployed (Sandbrook et al. 2007, 68).

Till the 1980s, the conditions of the state were that of “high population growth, low per capita income growth, higher incidence of rural poverty, relatively low social development, dependence on primary as well as labour-intensive manufactures in the secondary sector for employment, and trade unionist strategy of concentrating on wage bargaining and formal employment status supported by political parties” (Kannan 1998, 67). However, efforts have been made to change “to a regime of low population growth, low incidence of absolute poverty, relatively high social development, higher incidence of unemployment, and a high growth of the service sector that has emerged as the single largest provider of new employment” (Ibid). The

respective governments in the state, since the mid-1980s, gave attention to the economic crisis and tried to adopt policies for long-term economic development by bringing in investments (Ibid).

Though the governments in the state since the mid-1980s wanted to adopt policies to attract investments to address the economic crisis faced by the state but not able to make decisions for long-term economic development (Kannan 1998, 67). The focus through industrialisation was attaining mass production, employment generation, and generation and availability of energy. This economic crisis also guided democratic movements and political parties in formulating a developmental model for Kerala. However, this development model overlooked the resistance and protests from the affected population of the state, who belonged mainly to the marginalised community. There has been criticism of the Kerala model and how it excluded Dalits, tribals and fisherfolk, gender bias, and sustainability without economic development. Initially, the tribal community of the state was considered outliers of the Kerala model central tendency. Later It was found that they were the victims of the model (Steuer 2009, 26).

The geography of Kerala needs particular mention here. There are no big cities in the state and no clear distinguishable boundaries between villages and towns. The villages have a population equivalent to big cities. Clusters of a particular caste and communities are also not found. The village economy is no more agriculture-based. 'Villages have commonalities' with urban areas' (Scaria 2008, 11–12). The political society mediated between the ordinary people who demanded basic amenities of life and the state committed to socialistic national development (Devika 2007).

The public policies in the state emerged as a result of mobilisations from below, particularly of lower class/caste and state-sponsored initiatives from above. Such intense mobilisations against the existing hierarchical structures have made Kerala different from other states in Indian society. The left political parties, with a mass base of peasants and the working class, responded through public policies while in power and mobilised the masses for radical reforms when they were in opposition. The first Communist ministry set this precedence in Kerala, led by EMS during 1957-59. The government was in a dilemma between working within the framework of class society and a federal state, emphasising policies for gathering electoral support. Though the policies were progressive, it was not radical enough from the vantage point of a Marxist-Leninist party. It is said that even at its peak, the 'Communist Party' was forced to moderate its programmatic appeal and compromise its ideology' (Prabhash 2004, 405-6).

The developments that followed after the suspension of the government, losing the election, and dilution of policies by the governments had 'three important implications for policy making in Kerala: proved that the autonomy of state administration in shaping public policies vis- à-vis a hostile centre is severely limited; established the invincibility of caste and communal forces in state politics; and forced the Communist Party further to scale down the social content of its programmes' (Prabhash 2004, 406). All these effects resulted in less radical policies for social transformation, and more importance was given to appeasing organised interests in a big way and small doses of welfarism (Ibid).

Under pressure, the public policies took a route of moderation to that of a status quo. At the same time, popular mobilisation among the poor and marginalised managed to

pressure the governments to continue welfare activities. The governments did not pester the propertied class while maintaining welfare activities. It led to a paradoxical situation in the state where “the interests of the dominant section were protected to the maximum extent possible, at the same time attending to the minimum needs of the organised sections of the toiling classes and, terminating feudal relations and blunting the sharper edges of capitalism so that it could in no way exploit them” (Prabhash 2004, 413).

It is being accused that the coalition partners who come to power occasionally or accidentally are more interested in spoils of office and bringing pressure upon the government on behalf of their social and political constituencies rather than in shaping public policies. This vacuum in policy-making is taken over by bureaucracy, which gains a certain autonomy that the coalition political executive finds challenging to control, resulting in public policies drifting and distorted by vested interests, including bureaucratic elites (Prabhash 2004, 409).

The political class negotiated between bureaucracy and specific groups of the poor and managed to reduce its impact. The collective bargain by the poor for welfare created a sense of political participation among them (Devika 2007, 2464). Because of coalition politics, unstable ministries, and electoral politics, the state’s public policies were inconsistent and ad-hoc. Thus, Kerala, a highly politicised society, could not develop a consensus on policies relating to fundamental developmental issues. Under these circumstances, Kerala failed to evolve a durable development strategy. At the same time, several problems came up as opposed to the progress obtained, like: “enhanced welfare spending but a shrinking resource base; a highly literate and skilled human capital remaining idle at home but moving heaven and earth outside to

eke out a living; stagnation in production for want of capital but the high investment of domestic savings and foreign exchange earnings on unproductive ventures; high incidence of unemployment but the paucity of labour in traditional sectors” (Prabhash 2004, 413–14).

However, Kerala’s paradigm shift in public policies cannot meet these challenges. The attempt is not in favour of support to the marginalised classes of the society, but to end it and protect the propertied class. By privatising essential services, the new economic policy reduces the scope of public policies. The available space in policy formulations given to international lending agencies like ADB will eventually privatise public policies. New economic policies or populist policies cannot address the developmental crisis. ‘What is needed is a mix of effective state intervention in areas in which it ought to intervene and allow the market to take care of in sectors where the enveloping presence of the state is disastrous for long-term economic growth (Prabhash 2004, 414).

Political Parties and Political instability:

The shift in Indian politics in the late 1960s and 70s greatly impacted Kerala state politics. Kerala Congress was formed to protect the interest of the Christians of central Travancore and represent the Christian community. Split within, the emergence of either faction in power was pleasing for the Church, leading to influence in power irrespective of the political changes. They are powerful with capital funds, churches, plantations, educational institutions and hospitals. The Muslim League is dominant in northern Kerala’s Kasaragod, Calicut, and Malappuram districts. This intensified minority politics in Kerala.

Almost all political parties are dominated by middle-class and upper-caste leadership. Ezhavas, the lower caste, proportionate to the numerical strength, have also managed to be represented in the leadership. The involvement of interest groups in the process of candidate selection for legislature led to the weakening of political party leadership (P. Nair and Nair 1966, 79–81). To influence the people's socio-economic and political life and build a mass base, political parties came up with front organisations like Trade unions, women, civil services unions, Youth, Students, Agricultural workers wings, teachers organisations, and service organisations (Pillai 1987, 604). All these organisations are well organised and function as agents of political socialisation. The 'students, youth and women's wings of political parties influenced politically and played an active role in the political life' (Sandbrook et al. 2007, 72).

The unstable governments till the 80s were because of the 1) geographical concentration of communities, absence of one-party dominance of INC, 2) multi-party system where each community tried to bring up their political party or support any particular party, 3) Underdeveloped coalition politics where communal politics and the dominant role of minor parties became surrender politics, 4) dominant caste and religious interest groups with stable leadership in comparison to political parties, 5) "politics of influence and pressure played by interest groups and ideological politics played by the Communist Party" (O. John 1992, 532–34; Nayar 1966, 54).

The demographic composition where communities like Ezhavas, Nairs, Muslims and Christians are geographically concentrated in some areas was determinant for the electoral victory of candidates in particular constituencies. Communities united and fought for political gains, depending on the occasion. Initially, these communities joined together and protested for representation in government services. When the

opportunity opened, the Nairs took over, leading to the Ezhavas and Christians demanding reservations, and this was how communities played in state politics (O. John 1992, 531–32). Factionalism due to personal, ideological, power cliques, caste, and dominance in almost all political parties also contributed to unstable governments in the state (P. Nair and Nair 1966, 76).

It had been analysed that the kings of Travancore succeeded in arbitrating the claims of religious and caste-based interest groups. The short-lived ministries or political leaders who took over the agency could not arbitrate as demanded by the people of Kerala. This failure was because of the attempts by the respective political parties to articulate the demands of their support base. Political parties are more concentrated on aggregating the demands of their supporters and can only arbitrate successfully by balancing the most important interests. The Congress that attempted such an arbitration failed because its leaders became prey to factionalism. Other political parties individually could not represent the majority interest. Political parties succeeded in governing the state and became legitimate agencies for running the administration' by institutionalising coalition politics where each community had their government (Nayar 1966, 53–54).

LDF and UDF Governments:

No single party could claim a majority and form the government in the first general election held in the erstwhile Travancore-Cochin state in 1951-52. A coalition government was formed in 1952 with 44 members of Congress, ten members of the Travancore Tamil Nadu Congress, and two members from the Praja Socialist Party (PSP). It is regarded as the commencement of coalition governments in Kerala,

making Kerala the state with the longest history of coalition government in India (Chander 2004, 74–75).

After the formation of the state of Kerala in 1956, by adding the Malabar district from Madras State, the socio-political equation of the state changed. When the Malabar region became part of Kerala, the Ezhavas became the dominant community, and the communist party gained its influence in the state. Till the formation of the state of Kerala, the politics of Kerala was dominated by the Nair-Christian majority.

The two-party dominance, contrary to the single-party dominance in the union and the majority of the states, made Kerala's politics different from the rest of India. The single-party system of Kerala tried to develop as a multi-party system but got confined to two-party dominance. It is because of the success of Congress and Communists in presenting contrasting programmes before the electorate. Both could not claim an absolute majority and depended on the support of marginal votes scattered around minor parties (P. Nair and Nair 1966, 70).

The first ministry in power faced opposition from opposition parties and interest groups like Catholic Church, Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP) and Nair Service Society (NSS). 'The interference of cells and the Land Policy offended the legitimacy of people accustomed to bureaucratic government and the middle class who defended the property right' (Nayar 1966, 51–54). The opposition from Nairs against the land reform bill and from Catholic Church against Education Bill, which challenged their supremacy, came out as *Vimochana Samaram*, a civil disobedience movement led by NSS leader Mannathu Padmanabhan. The protests ended in 1959 with the president's rule and the electoral victory of Congress in an election held in

1960. It can be taken as “the failure of ideological politics in combating the politics of influence and pressure” (Ibid).

Congress entered coalition politics only after facing the heat of the first general election of 1957 when the Communist Party of India (CPI) government came to power. They came up with an alliance of Congress, PSP and the Muslim League in the 1960 election. As the coalition politics got institutionalised, minor parties got more bargaining power in securing seats in the elections. The major parties found it convenient to save “their energies and consolidate all support behind them instead of fighting against the minor parties” (P. Nair and Nair 1966, 73–74). In this situation, almost all the minor parties could make it to power.

Since the general election held in March 1982, the bipolar coalition LDF and UDF got established, and power has kept switching between the two ministries. Except in 2021, where LDF won twice. Since then, the leading parties, Congress and CPI(M), took anyone to gain strength. Except for LDF in the 1987 election, they managed to keep communal parties away from the coalition. As the coalition was established, small parties had no choice except to align with either coalition and bargain for maximum payoff. It led to a two-party system within a multi-party system in Kerala, and this polarisation was not ideological but political, stabilised through cohabitation and electoral adjustments (Chander 2004, 76–77).

The coalition in Kerala ends up being a combination of ‘secular and communal parties, socialist and rightist parties, or regional and national parties who agrees to work on a minimum programme of actions, which may have been formulated as the election manifesto (Chander 2004, 81–82). Usually, the chief minister was able to

select a minister from his party. In contrast, others are decided by their respective parties. The partners are powerful enough to bargain their share in the coalition, leaving the Chief Minister powerless and making compromises (Ibid). The electorate in the state responds to the election based on their consciousness rather than merely relying on electoral campaigns. Most voters prefer the political party to the candidate (Ibrahim 2022, 293).

Electoral politics in Kerala are influenced by social identity-based cleavages and alignments coupled with secular voters giving no attention to identity concerns. The cooperation between secular and identity-based parties in electoral politics contrasts with their secular and identity-based macro programmes. It somehow compromises these ideals to a certain extent in the quest for power (B. L. Biju 2017, 6).

The middle class in every community of that society led the social reform movements. They influenced socio-political organisations and government agencies in policy matters, along with the salaried employees, and the gulf migration expanded the middle class through their remittances. However, this new middle class differed from the existing class because their commitments toward market-led development stood for more economic freedom demanding efficiency and merit against affirmative action. However, they supported different political organisations but stood behind their respective caste groups. Identifying this trend conflicts with the politics put forward by established political parties. This class is not interested in the politics put forward by them; political parties, including left parties, made considerable changes within them to accommodate middle-class politics resulting in excluding the less powerful/influential class from mainstream politics. The protest against policies by Dalits, tribals, and Adivasis, against displacement, pollution, and developmental

projects can be seen as a reaction to this, and the initial hesitation of political parties, even those in the opposition, to take over these protests validates this trend.

The voting pattern of Kerala demonstrated the dominance of class voting. Irrespective of the policies, LDF usually secured votes from the poor. The rich and middle class usually supports UDF (Ibrahim 2014, 503; Gopakumar 2009, 101). The highest enrolment of voters is among the middle class (98.5 percent), and the lowest is among the lower class (97.5 percent); it seems that there is ‘an increasing depoliticisation among the working class’ (Varkey 2014, 79). “The voting trend based on the economic class illustrates a considerable shift from the LDF to the UDF and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)” (Ibrahim 2022, 927). The lower and middle classes, most of the population, moved away from the LDF.

Agitational Politics in the State:

Kerala’s political parties and interest groups can convince the governments of their demands. At times, the agitational politics of political parties turns out to be violent. A general conception is that no day passes without a strike somewhere in Kerala. It is led by opposition parties or organisations affiliated with them; the political party in power sometimes takes up protests against the central government. Opposition parties use these tactics to articulate their interest. Pressure is built on governments “by organising mammoth rallies, staging *dharnas* and *Satyagrahas* in variegated forms” (Pillai 1987, 605–6) in fulfilling at least some of that demands. Governments will not give it considerable attention at the initial stages of the protests, but they initiate reconciliation efforts once agitations pick up a particular tempo. Typically, while the state legislature is in session, agitation politics are at their peak (Pillai 1987, 605–6).

The politics between student wings of political parties often resulted in violence, making it difficult for the community organisation running these institutions to maintain peace. They often branded politics as bad and even went on to legal measures and succeeded in bringing judicial interventions, which even led to Lyngdoh Committee. Student politics have often been a headache for management when they support a particular political party, and the rival party's wings operate with revenge (Pillai 1987, 605).

The protests of marginalised sections due to class accommodation, which were the traditional vote banks of left parties, were initiated by local people and were taken up by political parties only after they got mainstream recognition. Most were environmental, and labour conflicts, and the left parties' initial stand was to protect employment. It was the kind that the protest was against a minority to protect their profit-oriented interests, which were against their stand on labour and development.

Political parties cannot survive without considering the diversity and changes in society. Leaders and political parties should be capable enough to understand and adapt to these changes. Because of these factors, political parties cannot take a rigid stand on any policy and cannot view their supporters as passive recipients of policies and services by a party. Politics have adopted a coping mechanism that identifies people's issues and formulates targeted solutions, leading to a change where politics in India has become primarily local with flexible solutions (Sarangi 2016, 46–47).

However, public policies are formulated to address general issues, and finding the solution may not be effective because of the uniqueness of the issues. Nevertheless, those with more influence and bargaining power managed to keep their demands

ahead while the rest were not considered. Before independence, the communities' socio-political and educational movements led to unity and bargaining power.

The state, through these years, managed to construct a well-organised vibrant, plural, and activist civil society which consisted of a “wide range of NGOs, unions, and associations continually organising and articulating “interest and exercising constant pressure on the state and its agencies” (Heller 2005, 82). Regardless of the political party, the governments responded with welfare and redistributive policies, responsible to the electorate. Land reforms abolished landlordism and transformed poor tenants into small property owners. Labour market reforms and unionism increased the labourers' bargaining power and impacted the informal sector—universal coverage of health care and public education, Social protection schemes and ration shops erased poverty and malnutrition. Irrespective of the political party in power, the increasingly precarious financial situation and a decline in centre financial support for primary public service or redistributive programs were never reversed (Ibid).

Since the bipolar coalition got stabilised in the state, the coalition fronts could not secure power without support from the minority communities (Muslims and Christians), who constitute 45 percent of the state. These communities traditionally vote in large numbers for UDF, mainly through the regional parties (Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) and Kerala Congress). Regional parties are very detrimental in winning elections by the voters they secure, from the caste, religious identities and interests (Ibrahim 2014, 501; 2022, 287–90). The bipolarity ensures that a stable base for the alliance and most social sections are accommodated on either side. Unhappiness regarding policies and performance leads to tension in the base leading to a shift in votes of 3 to 4 percent, leading to power switching (Ibrahim 2014, 512).

Together with their organisations and dependence on political parties to secure power, they enjoyed a more significant share in power, irrespective of the governments. Internal and external migration also led to the enhancement of the social and economic standing of these communities.

The Communist Party of India (CPI) emerged from the Congress Socialist Party, from the national movement, as an alliance of all working class against the imperialist rule. The initial focus of CPI was on the issue of class and focused on workers and peasants. The idea of community was not considered, leaving the tribal community in silence (Steuer 2009, 26). The Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)), which was formed in 1964, had a grass-root solid structure, with its labour federation, CITU (Congress of Indian Trade Unions), composed primarily of industrial workers in the public sector and government employees as its organisational heart (Heller 2005, 87). Since the 1980s, the left has had to retreat from class politics because of the crisis of working-class politics. CPI (M), the single largest political party in the state, could not secure 50 percent of the votes. The politically polarised society and stable base for LDF and UDF put the victory over a few lakh votes. However, both coalitions tried to polarise these wing votes towards them. Care was taken that the welfare policies do not affect the propertied classes. Congress-led governments gave due care in this process left-led governments were also not awful (Prabhash 2004, 410).

Development and its Concerns:

Kerala, a state with a high population density and scarcity of natural resources, inhibits it from opening up new industrial establishments, particularly in the manufacturing sector (Sandbrook et al. 2007, 87). Availability of land and the highly

educated population capable of political bargains and awareness of their rights. People of the state are also seen as interested in social movements and NGOs working in environmental protection, culture and education. There are always people to stand with the affected population, including the opposition parties and leaders within the parties. One of the leading organisations in this sector is Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad (KSSP), which argues for applying science and technology to development. They successfully prevented and modified several industrial and energy projects in ecologically sensitive areas (Parayil 1996, 947).

The capitalist class in the state, “mostly mercantile in character, engaged in such small-scale agro-processing activities as coir, cashew, fisheries, wood, and vegetable oils, was not powerful and had very less influence over the political class” (Kannan 1998, 61–62). During 1960-70 cost was high in Kerala due to “the predominance of cash crop cultivation in agriculture and labour-intensive agro-processing activities in industry and trade and transportation and related occupations in the service sectors” (Ibid), the share of modern industry was slight. The Unionisation of labourers, even in unorganised sectors, bargained for better working conditions and wages, resulting in a fall in surplus (Kannan 1998, 61–62).

In the 70s, unions opposed technological changes in the public and private sectors to increase and maintain the rate of employment. The compromise to introduce new technology was to pay equivalent wages to the labourers. The strong head-load workers started dictating the work’s terms and conditions, leaving the employers without any say. Labour charges were levied when work was not done. Though rural labour unions could not act like this, this was sufficient to create an image of Kerala as an unfavourable destination for investors (Kannan 1998, 64).

The employers pushed for either mechanisation or to migrate to regions outside the state with cheap labour and no opposition to technological changes. The fact that mechanisation will lead to reduced employment was considered, but the reinvestment of surplus generated may have created a higher output growth rate was not considered. Because of the strength and support of labour unions, the governments in power opted for a course of halting technological changes. The need for mechanisation was “partly thwarted and partly unattractive leading to a stalemate in commodity production sectors of the economy” (Kannan 1998, 61–62).

Nevertheless, this decision could not save employment but resulted in the migration of industries outside Kerala with the added advantage of cheap labour. During the period from the 1970s to the late 1980s, the condition in the state was a decline in employment in the labour-intensive manufacturers coupled with a low output. A deceleration in the crop-cultivating agricultural sector, inability to attract adequate new investment in the modern industrial sector and overall growth in the commodity-producing sectors in Kerala decelerated, leading to unemployment and underemployment as the most severe socio-economic problem in Kerala (Ibid).

The state has responded by initiating co-operatives. Nevertheless, the co-operatives controlled by politicians could not manage day-to-day administration and financial management. The state had to take care of these by providing financial assistance. Industry-specific problems like “procuring raw materials, marketing and innovations to make them economically viable haunted them, leading to the politics of co-operatives while neglecting their economics” (Ibid). They failed the competition in the open market against the private sector with low wages and more cost-effective management in the private sector. What sustained them was their political base and

financial and administrative support from the government. However, their aim of proving employment was not much futile (Ibid).

By the 1990s and the opening up of the economy, the resistance to technology weakened, infrastructure, educated labour, low number of industrial disputes gave some favourable conditions for the state. However, the state could not attract investment and generate employment (Ibid).

Post-Liberalisation Scenario:

It is observed that the state's lack of a dynamic economy indicates that production is not competitive (Balakrishnan 2015, 39). Though the economy recovered by the 1990s, it was soon hit by neoliberal policies reducing subsidies by the central government and falling commodity prices, mainly rubber. Because of these developments, the financial crisis and the competition within states to attract investments (foreign and domestic) forced the states to 'relax labour laws, curtail social protection, downsize the state's role in developmental and planning' (Heller 2005, 87). In contrast, other states went on this course by reducing social commitments. Kerala's political equation, marked by broad-based working and middle-class support for the welfare state, have ruled out downsizing. The state responded with a project to strengthen the public sector by devolving service and development to local governments (Ibid).

By the post-liberalisation period, Kerala faced problems with its development model, ignorant of economic progress. Faced with problems in industrialisation, unemployment, and fiscal deficit, people called for 'investment-friendly reforms'

(Steur 2009, 26). as a response to these political parties and democratic movements, considered factors like large-scale production, employment, and energy generation dominated the democratic debates in the state.

The opening up of the Indian economy put pressure on the state's economy. The state had to cut down its expenses on social spending. In contrast, it disrupted the state's agricultural economy (Sandbrook et al. 2007, 68). Kerala was hit by the central government's decision to reduce tariffs and restrictions on agricultural imports, leading to price drops in agricultural produce. Kerala's focus on tree crops (mainly rubber, 32 percent of the total) left farmers with limited flexibility to respond to the changes (Sandbrook et al. 2007, 88).

Furthermore, this was followed by a cut in finance for public sector enterprises, which was Kerala's leading source of capital investment. With the highest proportion of publicly owned enterprises in India. With limited funds and open competition, public enterprises suffered. The private sector could not compensate for the loss of investment, and the state failed to attract investments even after being ranked high in terms of infrastructure indicators and possessing a literate and disciplined workforce. The reason is often connected to a militant and inflexible labour force which lacks justification for reducing the number of strikes and having the most sophisticated and suitable industrial relations system. "In many aspects, Kerala is symptomatic of a global trend of nations with highly effective public expenditures being boycotted by capital" (Sandbrook et al. 2007, 83).

Because of the state's comparative advantage in human capital and infrastructure communication, software and tourism witnessed robust growth during post-

liberalisation. Achievements in social fronts such as an “educated and mobile workforce, excellent infrastructure (especially communications), robust rational-legal institutions, and established ties to the global economy have provided rule-bound governance, which is the baseline institutional condition that market growth requires” (Sandbrook et al. 2007, 88). Nevertheless, it was incapable “of providing selective inputs and nurturing the more dynamic sectors of capital that are the hallmark of the developmental state” (Sandbrook et al. 2007, 88).

Decentralisation in Kerala:

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act in 1992 was introduced by the P. V. Narasimha Rao government in the backdrop of economic reforms undertaken by the Rajiv Gandhi government, which increased the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 2 percent to 5 percent. The sixth Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) report states that with the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992, the constitutional status of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI's) Local bodies became local self-governments (Palanithurai 2020). Furthermore, they were further strengthened by explications from the supreme court of India that “these institutions are also to be treated as government or state” (Government of India 2007, 8). The Grama Sabha thus became the house of ordinary people - literally the only house that the president of India cannot dissolve. It is claimed that the amendment provided a voice to the voiceless by filling the gap by reserving seats in elections and providing funds and functionaries (Venkateshu 2016, 201).

In India, PRIs failed to ensure the fiscal, administrative, and democratic elements of decentralisation. The declining participation of the underprivileged led to the

concentration of the devolved powers within (minority local elites) landlords and traders who dominated the village affairs, fostered the existing power structure, and challenged the idea of democratic decentralisation. This accumulation of power with the minority local elites and marginalisation of the numerically dominant community resulted in low efficiency and effectiveness in providing essential services (Manor 2006, 287; Venkateshu 2016, 201). The take of central and state governments as Local Self Government (LSG) is only to implement a government programme that undermines administrative decentralisation. Fiscally PRIs cannot generate income from local taxes, and governments never empower and fund them (Manor 2006, 287). The decentralisation experiment stood out from that of the national scenario in Kerala.

The Panchayat Raj Act and Municipalities Act of 1994, enacted on lines of the 73rd and 74th Amendments, has established the present Panchayats for Rural local administration with three tiers and urban local bodies with a single tier. The Panchayats in Kerala are relatively large, with an average population of 25,199 and a land area of 37.83 Sq Km. The three-tier structure of Panchayats in Kerala is not hierarchical; the three tiers are independent. The process of decentralisation came to be known as the People's Campaign in 1996, where the state government devolved 35 percent of the plan funds to Local Self Governments Institution (LSGI) and capacity building to empower LSGI's made them powerful and popular among the people. It ensured people's participation in planning along with the decentralisation of administration. It was a political act by the left government with the support of the active political society of Kerala (Isaac 2001a, 17; M. R. Biju 1995, 2550; Sharma 2003, 3832).

The type of decentralisation attempted in Kerala was not merely representation at the local level. Kerala democratised decentralisation, where functions and resources are to be devolved to the lowest level of elected representatives and facilitate the direct participation of citizens in governance, including elected representatives, officials, experts, and local-level activists. The guiding principle of devolution is subsidiarity, pushing centralisation to the minimum.

People's participation is ensured through Grama Sabha in "decision making, implementation, monitoring and sharing of the benefits and responsibilities of governmental activities" (Isaac 2001a, 8, 20, 37–38). Elected representatives must constantly be in touch with the electorate, ensuring transparency and accountability. LSGI representatives had to be involved in the day-to-day development administration, unlike other elected representatives. Politically it was supposed to be the "cooperation of the constituents of the two fronts in areas of common interest, such as the development of the state, without compromising their independent political platforms" (Ibid).

Gram Sabha facilitated people's participation in decision-making. Gram Sabha became a platform where people could participate in planning irrespective of social or political identity. A more transparent mode replaced the earlier patron-client system in beneficiary selection through the effective functioning of the Grama Sabha. Decentralisation challenged the political functioning of the state, where extremely sectarian, partisan division on issues related to development has affected the development process itself. The central government schemes and suggestions were focused on decentralised planning to the district level and were followed all over India; Kerala went ahead with planning at different tiers of the local government with

importance to the lowest level close to the people. Moreover, maximum autonomy was given by providing united grants in aid. Where the funds from central government to the LSGs were only for poverty eradication, the state government asked LSGIs to formulate their plans (Isaac 2001a, 14–15, 20).

Left in India found decentralisation as a process to expand parliamentary democracy to the local level and ensure the direct participation of ordinary people in day-to-day governance. It was also considered favourable to mobilisations that defend the exploited and weaker sections. The primary cause for the promotion of decentralisation was the state's economic crisis, especially low economic growth. Thus efforts to ensure people's participation was "a bid to move out of the poor economic growth and low productivity syndrome by encouraging people's initiative and transforming the whole work culture in the state" (Isaac and Franke 2002, 40, 252; Isaac 2001a, 17; Sharma 2003, 3834).

Decentralisation discourse in Kerala:

The failure of the centralised state led to the strengthening of decentralisation in India and, more specifically, in Kerala. The nation states worldwide were forced to give away their powers to lower levels of government. Local bodies should increase efficiency and be facilitators rather than service providers. According to Isaac (2001) there was also pressure from international lending agencies for decentralisation in order to develop a direct link between the local and global economies rather than a form of collective action (Isaac 2001a, 16).

There were debates over decentralisation, particularly during the people's plan campaign. The first one was regarding the devolution of 30-40 percent of state plan funds to the LSGs, where around 40 percent is under the control of opposition parties. Another criticism was that "dismantling the state bureaucratic structure without dismantling the political network of the centralised Communist party could weaken democracy rather than strengthen it" (Isaac and Franke 2002, 34). The "campaign activists argued that principles of party organisation should be distinguished from principles for organising a society in general or government administration" (Ibid). Another charge was that the Kerala left was pro-decentralisation because it intended to maintain uninterrupted power, as they did in West Bengal (Sharma 2003, 3835).

The decentralisation that Kerala proposed was against downsizing as in neoliberal logic but that of making the state more effective and transforming the existing state institutions into empowered deliberative bodies. The civil society involvement of democracy promoting type "which support the general welfare, bring people together, and usually hold egalitarian and co-operative ideals against libertarian type found among upper-middle-class section, which emphasises individualism and private sector economic activity, and views all government institutions as harmful" (Isaac and Franke 2002, 13–14, 47, 251–52).

It is claimed to be a different form propagated by international lending agencies as a facilitator than direct service providers, reducing welfare measures and restricting the public sector to a Gandhian version of gram swaraj, which mobilised people to fight against colonialism and could resist predatory globalisation. The left claims that left-led decentralisation is for those who would put up sustained resistance to the

International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and US government. In many cases, their own local or national elites are cooperating with predatory globalisation (Iibd).

The idea of decentralisation in Kerala was a combination of wide-ranging ideas like the Gandhian idea of gram swaraj, agenda 21, and other kinds of propagation by national and state governments through handbooks. At the same time, it was circulated as a normative and idealistic administrative reform (Gurukkal 2001, 61,68). The light was not shed on its depoliticising side. Such was the understanding of decentralisation among the public and politicians.

Many of these ideas conflicted within themselves, and people were unaware of the theoretical issues. Because of all these, the popular understanding of decentralisation formed among the general public was that of a development administration under local initiative without the people-centred and empowerment-oriented politics (Ibid). It made the politics of decentralisation a coalition of conflicting interests rather than the politics of people's struggle for self-government where the rich, as well as the poor, collaborate in the politics of decentralisation for the realisation of their goals that are conflicting with one another (Ibid). The decentralisation in Kerala could succeed 'mainly in accentuating the dominant paradigm of development and reinforcing the status quo rather than forging ahead on the path of mass empowerment and sustainable development.

CHAPTER-III

LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN KERALA: AN OVERVIEW

Today's Kerala, geographically, was part of the ancient larger *Tamizhakam*, which had caste-based local bodies. People of particular castes settled in particular geographical locations with specific names and had their local bodies. The Brahman settlements were known as *Gramam*, with *Kazhakam* as its lowest self-governing unit. In contrast, the Nair's, known as *Tharas*, had *Kootam* (meaning gathering) as the smallest self-governing unit. The Ezhavas were known as '*Kara*' and '*Cheri*' or '*Murri*' for other lower caste settlements (Ramachandran 1995, 105).

By the medieval period, *Kazhakam* lost its dominance, and power shifted towards *Kootam*, which "became the base upon which both civil and judicial administration at the local level was built" (Ramachandran 1995, 105). William Logan, in the Malabar Manual, has described the condition of the territorial unit known as a *Naadu* (country) as a congeries of *Taras* (Village republics). The Assembly of *Taras*, known as *Kootam*, was the general Assembly with powers. Logan also mentions the absence of the Hindu system of village republics in the Manual (Kurian 2000, 76).

Initially, these bodies had good participatory character, which was later given away by the Aryanisation of south India (S. Ramanatha Aiyar cited in Kurian 2000, 75). With elders in critical positions, these caste-based bodies enforced caste rules and codes of conduct. However, the residents did not have "any voice in the overall governance of the territory or the region" (Mathews 2014, 39). The upper layer of rules changed, and these lower structures remained intact. Looked after by a

Karyakkar (like a Tahsildar), ten *Taluks*, known as *Kovilakathum Vathukkal*, subdivided into 30 units known as *Pravarthika*, existed in 1762 (Mathews 2014, 39).

Present-day Kerala is composed of three regions: the princely states of Travancore and Cochin were not entirely under the British. The Malabar region under the colonial Madras Presidency' had different local governance systems.

Malabar Region:

In Malabar, villages were called *Desam* or *Naadu* and served as the unit of village government. The headman of *Desam*, known as *Desavazhi*, was the revenue officer and the military leader of the hamlet, with the power to try minor crimes. In political and judicial matters, he was assisted by two or three respectable inhabitants called, *Pramanies*, who were usually from the Nair caste. However, during the colonial period in 1822, under the supervision of a headman known as *Adhikari*, villages were grouped as *Amsom*. Each *Amsom* had a headman known as *Adhikari*, an accountant known as *Menon*, and a small staff known as *Kolkarans*. People initially accepted the position of *Adhikari* as a matter of honour rather than for monetary compensation. However, by the time Kerala state was created, it had been adopted as a means of subsistence (Government of Kerala 1957, 14).

From 1801 the District Collector became the Local Government representative for revenue administration, followed by *tahsildars* for *taluk* and revenue inspectors for each *firka*, who supervised the work of village officers (Sharma 2009, 83). By enacting the *Madras Towns Improvement Act of 1865*, municipalities were established in Calicut, Kannur, Thalesseery, Fort Cochin, and Palakkad, where taxpayers elected

the council. With the passage of Lord Rippon's resolution on local government in 1882, three-fourths of the council's members were now elected.

Modern Local -self-government in Malabar came after the introduction of the *Local Funds Act of Madras* in 1871. The Act established a local fund circle with a local board for villages, the *Taluk*, and the District. These local boards had the power to raise funds to execute public works like construction, maintenance, and repair of Roads, Hospitals, and communication; maintenance and inspection of schools and teachers' training; other local works of public utility. The board was a nominated body with an equal number of official and non-official members, the district collector serving as chairman. Later, the non-official members' authority was increased. (Sharma 2009, 83; Government of Kerala 1957, 15).

To entrust the management of Local boards within the non-official members with their own elected Chairman, *The Madras Local Bodies Act of 1884* established a three-tier system of administration consisting of Grama Panchayats known as Panchayat unions, District, and *taluk* boards. Each revenue village or group of villages was constituted into rural sanitary units called the union. The *Taluka* board served as an intermediate layer, with *Taluku* board delegates serving as taluk board members. The presence of non-official members on these boards was increased. However, these bodies had only nominal powers (N. A. Nair 1997, 143; Government of Kerala 1957, 16).

The Madras Village Panchayat Act of 1920, along with the Madras District Municipalities Act, was introduced to strengthen Panchayats in the backdrop of the Royal Commission on Decentralization (1909), Montague Chelmsford Committee

report (1919), Government of India Act (1919). According to the Act, Panchayats were supposed to be elected by those above 25 years of age. *Taluka* and District Boards existed above Panchayats. Nevertheless, powers were not transferred to the local bodies. However, the Act was nullified by *Madras Local Boards Act 1930*, and Panchayats were brought under the supervision and control of newly formed Local Boards. The membership was restricted to elected members, with an elected President. Later, the political parties, especially the Communist Party, gained power on the board; by 1954, they were the prominent forces. The Communist Party came to power in the last election to the district board held in 1954. The duties and functions of the Panchayat, the Circle Boards, the *Taluk*, and the District Boards were overlapping. The Taluk boards were abolished in 1934 since they had no unique functions that could not be taken over by Panchayat or District Board. Many of its functions were handed over to the district board, which was later abolished after the formation of the State of Kerala (N. A. Nair 1997, 144).

Travancore Region:

Local Government in the Travancore region can be traced to *the Sanitary Committees of 1878* constituted in urban areas. In 1894, *Town Improvement Committees* replaced these Sanitary Committees in Trivandrum, Nagercoil, Alleppey, and Kottayam. Elections were conducted on these committees, but the voters were limited to taxpayers. The primary function of the Committee was sanitation. However, they carried out the construction and maintenance of roads, wells, and markets and were also allowed to collect taxes and licence fees. The Act of 1919 replaced these *Committees* with Municipal Councils, with non-official majorities and enlarged functions and powers of taxation (Government of Kerala 1957, 7; N. A. Nair 1997, 145–46).

The Travancore Panchayat Regulation VII of 1100 M. E., introduced in August 1925, extended the Local Governments to rural areas (Government of Kerala 1985, 8) and established Village Panchayat, based on adult suffrage (Sharma 2009, 83). As per the Act, the Panchayat system came in 7 villages with a division *paysclark* (similar to today's district collector) in charge of the Committee with five to 11 members. Committees also consisted of government-nominated members. Panchayats were responsible for supervising local roads and ferries, wells, bathing points (*kulikkadav*), drainage, and sanitation as mandatory functions and discretionary functions included primary education, the installation of street lamps, agriculture, and cottage industries (N. A. Nair 1997, 146). They also had some judicial responsibilities, and the Act is significant for granting the Panchayat the authority of taxing (Government of Kerala 1985, 9). Vehicle, wealth, and labour taxes all contributed revenue (Chathukulam and John 1998, 13).

Later, *Travancore Village Unions Act IX of 1115 M. E* was passed on November 11, 1939, and implemented in 1940. The Act established Village Unions in charge of places without Panchayats and dealt with the constitution of Village Unions, their administrative functions and powers, the creation of a village fund, the appointment of Registrars of Village Unions, the delegation of powers by the Government, the liability of members for loss, waste, misapplication of property, the institution of legal proceedings against Village Union members. A grant of Rs. 500 was provided for their functioning (Iyer 1941, 48). These unions though similar to Panchayats, the Act took away the judicial powers of village Panchayats. (Chathukulam and John 1998, 13) The Act created the Department of Panchayats with an officer called the Registrar as its head, Panchayats and the Unions were brought under it (Mathews 2014, 40).

Initially, 26 Village Unions were constituted, each comprising a *Pakuthy* (Village). The unions had a total of 11 members, five official members, including Tahsildar of the respective *Taluk* nominated as President, members from Land Revenue, Medical, Public Health, PWD, Agricultural and Cooperative Departments, and six as non-official members (Iyer 1941, 48). At the time of the formation of Thiru-Kochi, there were 7 Panchayats and 195 village unions in Travancore. *The Trivandrum City Municipal Act of 1941* upgraded the Trivandrum Municipality to that of a Corporation with a nominated mayor. Rural areas got representation in the Travancore administration through a legislative council formed by the then king Sri Mulam Thirunal where members from the *Taluk* level onwards were represented. As reforms were brought to the existing legislative council, two members from the *Taluk* level were introduced into the Assembly (Mathews 2014, 40; Rahul 2019, 24).

Cochin Region:

The Cochin had Self-government under headmen (was no restriction on the number) called *Pramanakkars* selected by the Government and associated with the work of government officials like village officers (*Parvathiams*) and village accountants (*Menons*). They looked after the village and reported the state of roads, bridges, avenue trees, and government *poramboke* lands (not assessed to revenue records). Grants were sanctioned as requested to discharge their duties. They also settled disputes implemented by executive authorities (Government of Kerala 1957, 10).

Local Self-Governments (LSGs) in Kochi had nominated bodies but by 1920-30 took solid elective character. Similar to Travancore, the roots of LSGs in Kochi can be traced to the *Sanitary Boards* established in essential towns of Cochin in 1902. These

were advisory bodies without any power of taxation. *The Municipal and Sanitary Improvement Regulations of 1909* replaced the sanitary boards with *Town Councils*, established in Ernakulam, Thrissur, and Mattancherry. Initially, these councils looked after sanitation and other developmental issues but were later expanded. The councils had elected members, and a resolution of 1920 increased the strength of the councils and brought the elected and nominated members 2:1 ratio. This resolution also expanded administrative and financial powers. Women were provided voting rights (Government of Kerala 1957, 10; Rahul 2019, 24–25).

In 1914 *Cochin Village Panchayat (for specific areas) Act no 5 of 1089 ME* led to the formation of Panchayats (on a taluk basis) for the first time in Kochi. One Panchayat for each of the five *Taluks* of Kochi was established initially, which later became 34 in 1943. Initially, Panchayats had nominated bodies. *The Kochi Panchayat Regulation of 1922* enhanced the powers of Panchayats, and voting rights were granted to all taxpayers irrespective of caste or sex. By 1934 the entire Cochin consisted of elected Panchayats. These Panchayats only had nominal development charges. They had to deal with petty cases until 1934 the Cochin Village Courts Act 1943 was passed. They were also wholly dependent on grants in aid as the power to levy tax was not delegated to them. One hundred such Panchayats existed when the State merged with Travancore in 1949 (N. A. Nair 1997, 145; Chathukulam and John 1998, 14; Sharma 2009, 83; Mathews 2014, 40; Government of Kerala 1985, 9).

Post-Independence Scenario:

Changes in LSGs in Kerala came after Travancore–Cochin state (*Thiru–Kochi*) formed on July 1, 1949. Initially, there were 7 Panchayats and 195 village unions in

Travancore and 100 Panchayats in Kochi. They were reconstituted in lines of article 40 of the Constitution of India. (Chathukulam and John 1998, 14) *The Travancore-Cochin Village Panchayat Act of 1950* unified the Travancore Village Union Act of 1925 and the Kochi Panchayat Regulation of 1922. The Act constituted 550 Panchayats, dismissing all the existing Panchayats and village unions. All the Local bodies came to be known as *Panchayats*.

These Panchayats had a population of 10,000 to 20,000 and committees of 7 to 15 members elected for three years in office. One seat in each of these Panchayats is reserved for people from SC/ST communities whose population is more than 5 percent (N. A. Nair 1997, 147; Government of Kerala 1985, 9–10). The first election to these Panchayats was held in July 1953. The introduction of an adult franchise and secret ballot was the unique feature of this Act. The committees took charge on August 15. They could implement the welfare activities of the first two five-year plans (Government of Kerala 1985, 10).

The Madras Village Panchayat Act of 1950, which came into force on April 1, 1951, diluted the authority of the district boards and reconstituted Panchayats intending to invest the Panchayats with more extensive powers in matters relating to village life and village economy in Malabar region (Government of Kerala 1957, 18). The Act established Panchayats in villages with a population of more than 5000 and annual incomes of up to Rs.10,000. Tax revenue was classified into Class 1, and the rest as Class 2. Election in Class 1 Panchayats was by secret ballot, and those in the rest were by show of hands. At the time of the establishment of the State of Kerala, there were 364 class 2 and 35 class 1 Panchayats (Government of Kerala 1985, 10–11; 1957, 28).

Though the Panchayats were not eligible for statutory grants, funds were provided by the State (Government of Kerala 1985, 10). “Taxes on buildings, vehicles, profession, and entertainment were in-house revenue for the Panchayat” (Rahul 2019, 23–24). The village Panchayats under this Act were entrusted with obligatory functions. The areas without Panchayat remained under Malabar district boards (Government of Kerala 1957, 17; N. A. Nair 1997, 144–15). The district boards remained operational until the Kerala Panchayat Raj act was enacted in 1960. Because of the polarised political climate and unstable coalition management, where ministries till the 70s had not been in power for more than three years, the governments could not give much importance to the Panchayat raj system (Sharma 2009, 88).

Formation of State of Kerala

The State of Kerala was formed under the State Reorganisation Act of 1956. The total number of Panchayats was 892. The Travancore and Malabar have 493 and 399, respectively. The single-tier Panchayat raj system in Travancore-Cochin was robust compared to the two-tier system with Panchayats and district boards in Malabar (N. A. Nair 1997, 148). The post-independence newly formed state government brought a series of amendments to the existing local bodies.

By the completion of the first five-year plan in March 1956, the *District Development Committees/Council* had been constituted to assess and monitor the success of five-year plans chaired by the district Collector. Its objective was to get people’s support and make them part of developmental activities and to do district-level planning, monitoring, and controlling developmental activities at the district level. The Committees played an active role in bringing officials close to people through

people's representatives, ensuring people's participation in the level of Governance and implementation of projects. It changed people's mentality towards governments and reduced the distance between people and Government. These Committees, later on, functioned at the district level of Panchayats (N. A. Nair 1997, 148).

In 1957 the Government constituted Committees at Taluk and District levels to examine the delimitation of Panchayats. Block Advisory Committees were constituted with Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO) as Chairman and a non-official vice chairman to ensure people's participation in the Community Development programme. MLA and MP were nominated to these committees, later becoming Block Development Committee in 1963 (Government of Kerala 1967, 28).

However, the scenario changed soon after the progressive Left ministry led by E. M. S. Namboodiripad took charge in 1957. An *Administrative Reforms Committee* (ARC) was constituted on August 15, 1957, 'for examining the working of the present administrative machinery, assessing its adequacy and suggesting measures for improving its efficiency'. One among the six terms of reference was 'to suggest methods for the democratisation of the organs of Government at the various levels with a view to effective participation of local self-governing institution for other representative bodies in the administration' (Ibid). The Committee was Chaired by then Chief Minister E.M.S. Namboodiripad himself. During the Committee's tenure, Panchayats in Kerala were divided into three groups based on their revenue (Pathm and Chathukulam 1998, 31; Government of Kerala 1957, 1–2; 1967, 14).

The ARC submitted its report on July 26, 1958. The Committee observed that though the Panchayats were reconstituted in 1950 as per Article 40 of the Constitution of

India, “the nature and scope of their powers have, however, remained essentially unaltered even today” (Government of Kerala 1957, 27–28). ‘They have been functioning as mere local bodies.’ the Department agencies of the Government are functioning independently of Panchayats and each other. The Committee felt an urgent need for coordination of the activities of these functionaries and bringing them under the control of a local and immediate elected body like Panchayat (Ibid)

The ARC recommended the division of functions of Panchayats into three categories: Obligatory: those in respect of which they would have full devolution of powers as local self-government units raising their taxes, deciding policies and implementing them. Agency: those for which the Panchayats would act as agents of the government through executive delegation of powers and Advisory: those involving a necessary higher optimal level of policy-making and organisation, in which the Panchayat’s function would be primarily advisory (Government of Kerala 1957, 27).

It also classified Panchayat functions as mandatory and discretionary. Panchayats are totally responsible for developing and carrying out mandatory activities using their resources, personnel, functions, and execution. The Committee advocated complete devolution in these tasks, with no other higher authority in these functions. Higher control should be focused on ensuring correct and effective use of finances, rather than becoming disciplinary authority (Government of Kerala 1957, 33).

The ARC also considered party politics in Panchayat elections. They observed that the Panchayats without party politics have succeeded to the maximum extent. However, they pinioned that since the people of the State are literate and have developed high political consciousness, “external manifestations of their urges to

discover and align themselves with common ideals are only to be expected. They need not be interpreted as indicating the existence of any serious malady in the body politics and should not be viewed as a ground for denying democracy at the village level” (Government of Kerala 1957, 30). The Committee upheld optimism that soon political parties will unite, irrespective of party politics, to make a united effort to manage the local affairs of the village community (Ibid).

The ARC rejected the three-tier structure recommended by the Balwantrai Metha committee (which was working simultaneously and submitted a report prior to the ARC) as unsuitable for Kerala (Pathm and Chathukulam 1998, 31). The Committee believed that the basic administration unit should be the lowest elected local self-government institution (Pathm and Chathukulam 1998, 14). The ARC found the district committee more suitable for implementing developmental programmes than a block (N. A. Nair 1997, 149). Furthermore, it recommended Grama Panchayat and the district council for decentralisation and Suggested the institutions’ objectives, structure, and working style (N. A. Nair 1997, 149, 169). Based on the recommendation, a Kerala Panchayat Bill was introduced in December 1958; later, the Kerala District Councils Bill was introduced in April 1959, but the Assembly was dissolved in July 1959 (M. R. Biju and Pandya 1991, 407).

In 1957 the state government constituted Committees at Taluk and district levels to examine the delimitation of Panchayats. These committees considered the Director of Local Bodies’ recommendations in April 1958. Preliminary draft proposals for the delimitation of Panchayat areas were published by the Government on December 11, 1958, inviting public opinion; many objections and representations were received regarding the draft proposals (Government of Kerala 1967, 10).

A one-person commission, *The Commission for Delimitation of Panchayat Areas (1959)*, headed by a retired District Judge, O Chandhu Menon, was appointed in June 1959 to examine the representations received from the public and to make recommendations to the Government to delimit Panchayats (Government of Kerala 1967, 10–11). The Commission recommended constituting 984 Panchayats by delimiting 261 Panchayats coterminous with existing revenue villages, 154 by clubbing two or more revenue villages, and 508 by combining one or more revenue villages with portions of other revenue villages (Ibid)

The Kerala Panchayats Act of 1960:

After the President's rule, the Congress-led Government headed by Pattom A. Thanu Pillai as the Chief Minister (Second Kerala Legislative Assembly (KLA) 1960-64) introduced *Kerala Panchayats Act 1960*. The Act established a uniform structure of Panchayat covering the entire State. The Act was implemented in stages, and these institutions functioned till 1991. The ministry also successfully enacted the *Kerala Municipalities Act 1960* and *Kerala Municipal Corporates Act 1961* (N. A. Nair 1997, 150; M. A. Oommen 2009, 16).

The recommendations of ARC and the Balwantrai Mehta Committee guided the *Kerala Panchayat Act of 1960*. The Act, than merely unifying both Acts, gave more powers and functions than the 1950 Act and strengthened Panchayats to work as self-governments by expanding 'the functional domain and financial resource base of the Panchayats' (M. A. Oommen 2009, 16; N. A. Nair 1997, 150). Under the Act, Panchayats had mandatory, discretionary, agency, and regulatory functions. In 1967 when *Vilayodi Commission* was appointed, they had to perform only mandatory

functions, and the rest was not assigned (Government of Kerala 1967, 16). The Panchayats were grouped into four groups every three years based on their annual income. The Government divided the Local Bodies Department into the Panchayat Department and the Municipality Department (Government of Kerala 1985, 13–14).

Based on Adult Franchise and secret ballot, each Panchayat was to have 8-15 members in office for five years. The number of members is fixed as per the population in a ratio of 8 members for the first 10,000, at the rate of one member per ward and an additional one per 4,500 to a maximum of 15 members. One seat is reserved for individuals from SC/ST community if their presence is more than 5 percent of the population. Initially, the reservation for women was of one member being nominated without an elected female member; later, one ward was reserved for a female candidate. The President and Vice President of the Panchayat are to be elected among the members. The elected members need to take oaths before taking office (N. A. Nair 1997, 150–51; Government of Kerala 1985, 11).

After the Act came into force only by January 1, 1962, delimitation was completed. The first elections through secret ballot and adult franchise to the newly formed Panchayats were held in November-December 1963. This election was non-partisan; political parties agreed to contest irrespective of party politics and contested in independent symbols. The elected members took office on January 1, 1964, and continued until 1979. After multiple postponements, the second election was held in 1979, and they served till their tenure expired on December 31, 1968. However, the government delegated the tasks to a Special officer in accordance with the Act until the next elections (Government of Kerala 1985, 11–12; N. A. Nair 1997).

Administrative Reorganisation and Economy Committee:

During the President's rule, the *Administrative Reorganisation and Economy Committee*, popularly known as *Vellodi Committee 1965*, was appointed with M K Vellodi as Chairman, K R K Menon, and P S Patnabhan as members, "to study the question of reduction in administrative expenditure and to formulate steps necessary for achieving maximum economy compatible with security, efficiency and the paramount needs of the planned development of the state" (Government of Kerala 1957, 1). The Committee observed in its 1967 report that Panchayats only engaged in mandatory functions, and the rest was not assigned to them. Panchayats are unable to perform even basic responsibilities, and attempts to expand revenue are not made. It made many recommendations to the Government (Government of Kerala 1967, 19).

The Kerala Panchayathiraj Bill, 1967:

The Third Kerala Legislative Assembly (KLA), where the Left Government returned to power under the leadership of EMS Namboodiripad, introduced *The Kerala Panchayathiraj Bill* in August 1967. The Bill accommodated the *Vilayodi Committee* and ARC recommendations. However, an elected two-tier structure was proposed by adding a directly elected Zilla Parishat at the district level as a coordinating body for planning and development. The Committee is to have 35 members, with five of them elected by members of local authorities in the District among themselves. The functions of the Zilla Parishad contemplated in the Bill were all developmental and elaborated the provisions in the 1959 Bill (M. R. Biju and Pandya 1991, 408; Chathukulam 1991, 162). The Zilla Parishad was to have executive functions and some source of revenue, as well as powers of supervision and control over the village

Panchayat's (Ramachandran 1995, 108). The Bill was heavily criticised and was referred to a select committee.

The Select Committee, while considering the Bill in detail, and taking evidence from within and outside the State (Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh), submitted its report in August 1968 (M. R. Biju and Pandya 1991, 408; Sharma 2009, 89). In its August 1968 report, which was delivered to the Legislative Assembly in March 1969, the Select Committee recommended various changes, including renaming the bill as the Kerala Local Government Bill. The Bill expired when the Assembly was dissolved and new elections were declared in August 1970 (N. A. Nair 1997, 171–73).

Kerala District Administration Bill of 1970:

With the general structure of the recommendations of the Select Committee, the Fourth KLA (1970-77) headed by the C Achutha Menon government introduced the revised Bill of 1967 as *the District Administration Bill 1970*. Though the ministry was in office for seven years due to the national emergency, there was no effort to pass the Bill (Pathm and Chathukulam 1998, 32). The Bill was finally passed unanimously in 1979 in the Fifth KLA by the ministry headed by A K Anthony.

However, the Achutha Menon ministry implemented a revolutionary program of *the One Lakh Houses Scheme (Laksham Veedu Paddhathi)* during 1971-72 through Panchayats. The programme was to construct 100 houses for homeless agricultural labourers in each ward of Panchayats. The scheme was completed during 1974-75, where 23,198 double houses and 10,165 single houses were constructed in 3145

colonies. A total of 56,561 families benefited from this programme, with Harijans making up more over half of the beneficiaries (N. A. Nair 1997, 156–58).

Meanwhile, the *Ashok Metha Committee Report* was published in 1978. It took the stand that Panchayats should have the role of a developmental agency instead of self-government. EMS Namboodiripad, a member of this Committee, wrote a dissent note that democracy is present only at the central and state level, and the rest is only bureaucratic rule (Pathm and Chathukulam 1998, 15).

Kerala District Administration Bill of 1978:

The Congress-led ministry headed by A K Anthony, which came to power in 1977, introduced the *Kerala District Administration Bill of 1970* with some amendments in August 1978 (Chathukulam and John 1998, 15). It introduced a fully elected district council for five years by direct election based on adult franchise, thus introducing a two-tier system against a 3 tier system recommended by the Ashok Metha Committee. The Bill lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 (M. R. Biju and Pandya 1991, 413–14). The Bill was passed unanimously by LA on March 7, 1979, when P K Vasudevan Nair was the Chief Minister (Kurian 2000, 84). The ministry changed when the Act became Act 7 of 1980 with Presidential assent on May 18, 1980. However, the Act was not implemented until 1991 by the left Government led by Chief Minister E K Nayanar (M. R. Biju and Pandya 1991, 409; N. A. Nair 1997, 171).

Though there was no provision for a finance commission in the Panchayat Raj Act, when the resources of the Panchayats did not increase as the functions and powers increased, the state government appointed a *Panchayat Finance Commission* in

September 1983. The Committee Chairperson was K Avukaderkutty Naha, an MLA, who became Deputy Chief Minister when the report was submitted in September 1985. Other members were secretaries of LSG, planning, and finance departments. At the time of the Committee, 85 percent of the population lived in rural areas, and there existed 1001 Panchayats with an average population of 23,103 in Kerala. It recommended measures to stop leakages in the funds of the Panchayats, modify some taxes and abolish some, unify the rates throughout Panchayats, and renew the guidelines for getting government grants. Measure to reduce expenses of Panchayats, and also increase measure to increase appropriation of funds and modify rules for the purpose was suggested. Some recommendations were accepted, and some amendments were made accordingly (N. A. Nair 1997, 166). According to the Panchayat Finance Commission's report of 1985, the Panchayats received three statutory grants and 23 non-statutory grants, which increased to 47 non-statutory Grants in 1993. (M. S. George 2007, 33).

Committee on the Democratic Decentralisation

The State Government appointed a Committee under the chairmanship of Former Chief Secretary V. Ramachandran to advise the Government on the measures to be taken for decentralisation at the District and lower levels in April 1988, basically to study the defects of the 1979 Act (M. R. Biju and Pandya 1991, 409). The Committee submitted its report titled *Report on the Measures to be taken for Democratic Decentralisation at the District and Lower Level* in July 1988, where it suggested Amendments to 37 sections and 33 schedules in the Act. The Commission recommended taking action before the next election in 1990. Though significant

amendments, including the title change, were recommended, only a few necessary amendments were made. In addition to the reservation recommended for individuals belonging to SC/ST communities, 30 Percent of seats were reserved for women (Ramachandran 1995, 110).

In 1987, E. K. Nayanar returned as Chief Minister and implemented the District Administration Act was one of the promises of the Left Democratic Front in its election manifesto (Kurian 2000, 84). The first election to the council was held on 1991 February 5, except for one, in all the elected district councils, LDF came to power (Sharma 2009, 95). The UDF government that came to power in May 1991 under the leadership of K Karunakaran withdrew powers of the district council through the 21st Amendment 1991, which came into force on October 1991. Furthermore, changes were made in Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, which pushed them back to the previous stage (N. A. Nair 1997, 176–77).

The Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1994

Though the Government of India passed the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, which came into force on April 23, 1993, mandated PRIs, the Kerala government had only a lukewarm response. There was pressure from intellectuals regarding the Government's attitude toward the Bill, and they insisted that the law should not be introduced as an ordinance. The deadline for passing the Bill approached on April 23, 1994; the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act was presented on 1994 March 9 in the KLA (N. A. Nair 1997, 184; Ramachandran 1995, 113). The Bill was referred to a select committee, and the Left opposition members in it wrote a dissent note that the Bill does not promote democracy but bureaucratic rule. They criticised it for entrusting the

delimitation to the state government. They advocated for the abolition of bureaucratic authority over elected bodies in LSGs (Pathm and Chathukulam 1998, 33–35).

Intellectuals like K N Raj and I S Gulati staged a sit-in protest in front of the secretariat against some provisions of the Bill; Social Activists led by V R Krishna Iyer and MP came up with protests (K R Sastry 1995, 1909). The Bill got passed as Act no 13 of 1994; it defines Panchayat in section 5(1) as “every Panchayat shall be a body corporate by the name of the Panchayats specified in the notification issued by the government, shall have perpetual succession and a common seal, and shall subject to any restriction to qualification imposed by under this Act or any other law, be vested with the capacity of suing or being sued in its corporate name, of acquiring, holding and transferring property, movable or immovable, of entering into contracts, and of doing all necessary, proper or expedient for which it is constituted” (Government of Kerala 1994).

As per the Act, an elected three-tier system consisting of Grama Panchayat, Block Panchayat, and District Panchayat, based on universal adult suffrage, came into being in the State. Furthermore, it defines Local authority as Panchayat at any level or Municipality. All three functions are autonomous from each other without hierarchy in the framework of subsidiarity and role clarity (M. S. George 2007, 22). The head of the body is known as President and Executive Officer Secretary. The members will elect the President and vice president (Sastry 1995, 1909).

As per the Act, the power vested with officials was handed over to elected representatives and listed 126 items for the village, 29 for the block, and 8 for District Panchayats. In every tier of the Panchayats, 1/3rd of seats and the position of the

President are reserved for women on rotation. For individuals from ST/ST community, reservation is based on proportion to population; if the population is not sufficient to reserve seats, a minimum of one seat is reserved for SC or ST candidates, whichever is more. 1/3 rd of the post of President is also reserved for SC/ST candidates. Initially, the authority to fix the number of reserved posts and determine the constituencies reserved for each category was with the Government, which should notify the reserved posts before every election (N. A. Nair 1997, 114,184).

Grama Sabha: It is the lowest decision-making body, limiting the population to 1000, consisting of the electorate in the Panchayat, which is to be convened twice a year. Grama Sabha is to be convened by the member of the constituency and presided over by the President in the absence of the Vice President and, in his absence, the member. It represents all the voters in the ward, and they have powers to raise issues, ask for clarifications and suggest programmes for implementation. It is not an executive body but has supervisory, monitoring, advisory (for prioritising developmental needs), as well as absolute powers in selecting beneficiaries and mobilising community initiatives (Ramachandran 1995, 114; N. A. Nair 1997, 185; Sastry 1995, 1909).

Grama Panchayat: It is to have eight members for 10,000 people, one member each for the additional 4500 of the population, and a maximum of 15 members in Grama Panchayat. The constituency is known as wards; the members are elected by the residents of the respective wards based on adult suffrage. The elected members elect the President and Vice President of the Grama Panchayat. The executive officer is known as the Secretary. Grama Panchayat Presidents will be ex officio members in Block Panchayats (N. A. Nair 1997, 185). Soon after the Act's enactment, a notification to Increase the number of village Panchayats to 1093 was issued.

Comparing the other two tiers, the Grama Panchayat is entrusted with more responsibilities: with 32 obligatory functions, a total of 126 items are listed as the function of the Grama Panchayat (Ibid).

Block Panchayat: Block Panchayat is the intermediary tier. It consists of 8 to 15 members and Panchayat Presidents as members. Block Panchayat Presidents will be ex officio members in the District Panchayat Committee (Ibid). The President and Vice President of the Block Panchayat are elected amongst directly elected members. All members have voting rights in the meetings except in elections and no-confidence motions (M. S. George 2007, 24). Initially, there were 152 Block Panchayat coterminous with rural development blocks. MLAs were also members and eight items listed in the fourth schedule were the functions of Panchayat. Though Block Panchayats' role is crucial for Block-level planning and Rural Development, legislators and officials were dissatisfied with them. The prevailing consensus was that Block Panchayat was unnecessary (Kurian 2000, 89; Sastry 1995, 1909).

District Panchayat: District Panchayat, known by the name of the respective District, had directly elected 15-25 members, Block Panchayat Presidents, MLAs, and MPs. The President and vice President are to be elected amongst directly elected members. Except for elections and no-confidence resolutions, all members have voting rights (N. A. Nair 1997, 185) Twenty-one obligatory functions are listed for District Panchayat in the Fifth Schedule of the Act. On September 18, 1995, the state government issued an order delegating institutions, responsibilities, and programmes to the respective Panchayats (N. A. Nair 1997, 190).

Panchayat Committees: The governing body of the Panchayat is known as the Panchayat Committee. The Act prescribes *Standing Committees*, *Functional Committees*, *Subcommittees*, *Ward Committees*, and *Joint Committees* to establish decentralisation within Local Governments. For the efficient functioning of Panchayat, *Panchayat Standing committees* can be considered like ministries of Local Governments carrying out specialised functions. The Act mandated *Standing committees* consisting of 3 to five members in every tier. The President and vice President are to be ex officio members, and each position is reserved for SC/ST and Women candidates. If the candidate from SC/ST community is a woman, there is no need for separate women members. Every Panchayat is to have a standing committee for Tax fixation, finance, and planning in Grama Panchayats.

Block Panchayat comprises two Standing committees on welfare, finance, and planning, while District Panchayats will have four *Standing Committees* on finance and planning, development, welfare, and Public works. The *Joint Committee* can be formed in cooperation to work with other Panchayats. If required for developmental purposes, with the participation of the general public, Panchayat can constitute a *Working Committee* with experts and the public and *Sub-Committees* to help them. *Ward Committees* in each ward can be with members and residents to study and report on each ward (N. A. Nair 1997, 188).

People's Planning Campaign (PPC) 1996 -2000:

The decentralisation scenario changed when the LDF government led by E K Nayanar came to power in 1996. As part of the Ninth Plan, the state government has devolved 35-40 percent of the state plan fund to the local self-governments. Each Grama

Panchayat was expected to develop a comprehensive plan for that level of Grama Panchayat (Rahul 2019, 27). For this purpose, the state government has designed a detailed process of local-level planning through the People's Plans Campaign, through which substantial devolution of funds to PRIs has been allocated. This shift is because of the following: problems of Governance; economic issues, political considerations of the ruling party, the impact of Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishat (KSSP), and the context of the constitutional amendment (Sharma 2009, 91).

Maximum autonomy for individual LSGs, for local planning where mass participation was a feature of this experiment. The participation was not just limited to elected representatives but to ordinary people. Before the Campaign (1996-97), the average amount available for LSGs was 20 Crores. The amount devolved by the state government during the period was Rs.1,025 Crores in 1997-98 and 1,178 in 1998-99 Rs. 1,178 Crores (Isaac 2001b, 10–11).

However, the programme was successfully implemented only in 200 of the LSGIs. Shortage of funds, “the failure to institutionalise the changes brought in by the mass movement launched in connection with the programme, misuse of funds and corruption in a large number of local bodies ruled by both the Fronts, and administrative and political shortcomings ensured that it ran into problems even before the LDF went out of power” (Krishnakumar 2005). The UDF government that came to power in the next elections reduced funds for the LSGIs and adopted a privatisation and liberalisation policy (Krishnakumar 2005).

The Committee on Decentralisation of Powers 1997:

The LDF government constituted *the Committee on Decentralisation of Powers 1997*, popularly known as the *Sen Committee*, in 1996 to ‘Restructure the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, the Kerala Municipality Act, and the allied Acts (Government of Kerala 2009, 18). The principles of decentralisation, according to the Committee, are: autonomy, subsidiarity, role clarity, complementarity, uniformity, people’s participation, accountability and transparency (Isaac 2001b, 8). The Committee submitted its interim report in August 1996 and its final report in December 1997 (Chathukulam and John 1998, 33).

The Committee suggested several reforms like ‘the necessary institutional reforms, activity mapping, performance audit, ombudsman, state development council, right to information, and citizens charter, and legislative framework for functional, financial and administrative autonomy’ (Government of Kerala 2009, 18). According to the interim report, LSGIs should be strengthened, and power should not be limited only to these committees but should reach ordinary people. As it reached the final report, stress was given on power to people. The Committee made several recommendations to reduce government control and interventions, transfer of officers, and supervision of officials to institutionalise the institutions of LSGIs. They recommended amending schedules of the 1994 Act by redefining the powers and responsibilities of each organisation to clarify the areas of operation. The Committee also recommended scrapping developmental authorities, developmental councils, and metropolitan planning committees, functioning parts of LSGIs (Chathukulam and John 1998, 35).

The Committee grouped the responsibilities of the Grama Panchayats under three heads: Unavoidable, General, and Territorial responsibilities, and proposed to amend '37 appended rules related to Panchayat administration' (Mathews 2014, 47–48).

Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1994: Amendments

Several amendments were made to the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1994. The LDF ministry headed by E K Nayanar, through *the Amendment Act 7 of 1995*, removed the membership of MLAs and Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs from Block and district committees. The amendments of 1999 on the recommendations of the Sen Committee give central importance to people's participation and planning for local development (Government of Kerala 2009, 18). An outstanding feature of the amendments act 13 of 1999 observed by Balan are: "1) strengthening of Grama Sabha; 2) changes in the structure of Panchayats both in terms of the number of constituencies and in terms of committees; 3) emphasis on transparency; 4) new institutions such as Ombudsman and Appellate Tribunals; 5) a new system of auditing; 6) more decision making powers to elected functionaries; and 7) provisions for wide peoples participation" (Balan, George, and Raghavan 2014, 18).

The Amendment expanded the powers and functions of the Grama Sabha and made it mandatory to convene Grama Sabha every three months. As per the Amendment, the quorum of Grama Sabha was increased from 50 people to 10 percent of the total population. If not less than 10 percent of members demand in writing, a special Grama Sabha is to be convened. The number of elected members in a Grama Panchayat is increased to a minimum of 13 and a maximum of 23 (Government of Kerala 1994).

The third schedule of the Act was amended, and the functions of the Grama Panchayat are divided into 27 mandatory functions, 14 general functions, and 29 sector-wise distributions of responsibilities. For Block Panchayats, the Amendment listed 24 sectoral functions. In the case of District Panchayats fifth schedule was amended, and plan integration and mobilisation of technical expertise in addition to its other sectoral functions are entrusted with the District Panchayats (Balan, George, and Raghavan 2014, 20–22).

The number of standing committees in Grama Panchayats and Block Panchayat has been increased to three in finance, development, and welfare, and for Block Panchayat to five, including public works and health and education. For tribal development, the Amendment provides a *deemed to be a Sub-Committee* with all the powers of a Grama Sabha regarding the development of a Scheduled Tribe if fifty voters of the constituency belong to the Scheduled Tribe (Government of Kerala 1994). A *Steering Committee* with the President, Vice-President, and the Chairman of the Standing Committee to coordinate the activities of standing committees and perform any task entrusted to it by the Panchayats was introduced. The Amendment also led to the formation of *Functional Committees* on “subjects like agriculture, sanitation, communication, public health and education consisting of members of Panchayat and others who are interested in public welfare and nominated by the Panchayat” (Government of Kerala 1994).

There is an Appellate Tribunal with the power of civil court at the district level headed by a judicial officer in the rank of the district judge. An Ombudsman to investigate complaints regarding corruption and administrative defects exclusively for LSGIs (Balan, George, and Raghavan 2014, 33–34).

Another landmark contribution of the Amendment is the forerunner of the Right to Information. A new chapter on the Right to Know has been added to the Act, which introduced transparency regarding matters of the Panchayats. It gave people the right to access information and material “contained in a document relating to the administrative, developmental or regulatory functions of a Panchayat and includes any document or record relating to the affairs of the Panchayat” (Balan, George, and Raghavan 2014, 31). Taking extracts and obtaining certified copies of documents became the right of the people.

Kerala Development programme 2002-2007:

The UDF government, which came to power in 2001, ignored the former Government’s decentralisation initiative and tried to bring development through privatisation and liberalisation. They tried to bring in large-scale private investment as an alternative to Decentralised development. The failure of the mega projects announced by the UDF government to bring investment and boost economic growth forced them to relaunch the decentralisation programme by changing its name to the Kerala Development Programme. The Government not only changed the nomenclature of the people’s plan to the Kerala Development Programme (probably to take the process away from a campaign mode into a more institutional setup), certain significant amendments were made which virtually put the clock back (Government of Kerala 2009, 18). “It was an attempt to restructure the local bodies in such a way as to aid the ruling front’s philosophy of privatisation and liberalisation as the engine of growth, to allow private investors and voluntary agencies to replace

governments in development, and to re-impose the primacy of the bureaucracy in running Local Governments” (Krishnakumar 2005).

Local Self-Government Election in Kerala

Elections have been held to the three tiers of Panchayats consisting of village, block, and district levels since the enactment of the *Kerala Panchayat Raj act 1994*. The State Election Commission conducts the election, and the Delimitation Commission divides constituencies. Unlike other States, the Local political environment since the first general elections to LSGIs is such that elections are contested basis of political parties with party symbols and fronts. Usually, the contesting candidates are members of National, State, and Regional parties. The basic unit for electoral competition in Grama Panchayat consists of wards and divisions for Block and District Panchayat. The District Panchayat division consists of a couple of Panchayats. The elected representative is called a member of the respective type of Panchayat. It is a system of multiple voting (Village, Block, and District Panchayats) based on a universal adult franchise (B. L. Biju 2017, 5–6).

The local election was also used to evaluate the performance of the ruling LSGIs and that of state governments. Issues like ‘Anti-incumbency, corruption, intra-party and inter-party feuds’ seems to affect electoral performance. With the state elections to be followed, The state leaderships of the respective fronts took the Campaign to ‘national and state issues in propaganda’. However, local issues get more attention in LSGI elections than state or national issues (B. L. Biju 2017, 7; Gireesan and Chathukulam 2006, 40–41; Prabhash 2015, 18). Four elections were held for the Local bodies before Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1995, followed by the 73rd Amendment. First in

1953 under the Travancore-Cochin village Panchayats act of 1950, as per Kerala Panchayat act 1960, the second election (the first election after the formation of the State of Kerala) was held in 1963, the third in 1979, and the fourth in 1988.

The first elections to the LSGIs after *Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1994* and *Kerala Municipalities Act 1994* were held on September 1995. It was the first election after entrusting enormous powers to LSGIs. The electoral competition was between the ruling Congress (I) led UDF and CPI (M) led LDF. Campaigning on both fronts was mainly by street corner meetings and door-to-door canvassing. The LDF held the majority by electing to power in 530 out of the total 990 Grama Panchayats, 19 out of 153 Block Panchayats, 10 out of 14 District Panchayats, 29 out of 54 municipalities, and two out of 3 corporations (M. R. Biju 1995, 2250–52).

The UDF managed to hold power in (establish its dominance) 342 Grama Panchayats, 45 Block Panchayats, 3 District Panchayats, 18 municipalities, and no majority in any corporation. In Kasaragod district, BJP came to power. However, none had a clear majority in 115-Grama Panchayats, where independent candidates will be decisive. Though the candidates of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) formed in 1993 and Indian National League (INL) did not win, they managed to carve out votes of IUML, a constituent of UDF, which helped LDF victory. The CPI (M) succeeded in Muslim Leagues Bastion by open election understanding with INL (Ibid).

The second election in 2000 was held, followed by the People's Plan Campaign, where in three years, Rs. 2700 crores were transferred to LSGs and the Amendments to the Kerala Panchayat Raj act based on the Recommendations of the Sen Commission. The contestation was between LDF and UDF, and both fronts came up

with manifestos at the state level. The General election to 993 Grama Panchayats, 152 Block Panchayats, 14 District Panchayats, 52 Municipality, and 5 Corporations was held in two phases with 72 percent of polling. At the state level, LDF won 463 of the Grama Panchayat, 68 of the Block Panchayats, 9 District Panchayats, 19 municipalities, and two corporations. Compared to the previous election, UDF improved and secured 347 Grama Panchayats, 70 Block Panchayats, 4 District Panchayats, 23 Municipalities, and 1 Corporation.

The political climate prior to the Third General elections held for LSGIs in 2005 was that the UDF, Led by Congress, came to power in the State in the General Elections held to the State Legislative assembly in 2001. However, LDF registered a more recent victory in a by-election held in Ernakulam Lok Sabha constituency and the 2004 general election to the Lok Sabha, where they managed to win 18 out of 20 seats. Congress could not win even one seat (Krishnakumar 2005).

The third general election to LSGIs was held in 2005 when the State Election Commission delimited the Constituencies. A unique feature of this election was the first time in the Panchayat raj election in India that the contesting candidates had to file an affidavit with details of educational qualifications, movable and immovable assets, and criminal background. Also, every elected member will be a member of any one of the standing committees. There was a significant reshuffle in the state-level coalition before the election. There were several local adjustments, irrespective of party and front. Constituents of both parties made adjustments with parties of other fronts and BJP in some seats. It was operationalised by not fielding a candidate in specific constituencies and supporting those contesting in independent symbols. Political parties came up with manifestos at the state level, and there were only some

exceptions where there was a Local Manifesto. House-to-house visit was a major campaign strategy, particularly at Grama Panchayat Level. The LDF won 725 out of 999 Grama Panchayats, 122 out of 152 Block Panchayats, 12 Out of 14 District Panchayats, and 33 out of 52 Municipalities, all 5 Corporations.

The Fourth general election to the LSGIs was held in 2010. A notable feature of this election was that 50 percent of the seats were reserved for women candidates. Elections were held to the three tiers of 978 Grama Panchayats, 152 block Panchayats, 14 district Panchayats, 60 municipalities, and five corporations ('Local Self Government Department' 2010). The emergence of new community-based parties, making community questions more party-based, was a noticeable factor. Identity-based parties like BJP, SDPI, Welfare Party, and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), not part of the state-level coalitions, were found to contest locally (B. L. Biju 2017, 8). For the first time, UDF managed to show impressive performance in the LSG elections by winning 565 Gram Panchayats, 92 Block Panchayats, 8 district Panchayats, 40 Municipalities, and two corporations LDF. could only win 348 Grama Panchayats, 60 Block Panchayats, 6 district Panchayats, 17 Municipalities and three corporations (M. R. Biju 2010; M. R. Biju and Padmanabha 2021, 219–21).

The Fifth General election to the LSGIs was held in 2015. The elections were scheduled to take place following delimitation, however the procedure was cancelled by the Kerala High Court for technical reasons. The election was held in two phases to a total of 941 Grama Panchayats, 152 block Panchayats, 14 district Panchayats, 87 municipalities, and six corporations, and a polling percentage was 77.35 percent. The LDF returned to power by winning 549 Grama Panchayats, 90 block Panchayats, 7 district Panchayats, 44 Municipalities, and 4 Municipal Corporations. On the other

hand, UDF won 365 Grama Panchayats, 61 block Panchayats, 7 district Panchayats, 41 municipalities, and 2 Municipal Corporations. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won 1.25 percent of the total seats in 14 Panchayats and one Municipality (Prabhash 2015, 19; State Election Commission 2015).

Another phenomenon during the 2015 LSGI election was the emergence of issue-based Parties in Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat in Ernakulam district and Vadakarapathy, Eruthenpathy, and Kozhinjampara Grama Panchayats in Palakkad district. Independent candidates put forward by a group called Twenty20, supported by a corporate company, intending to make the Panchayat number one by 2020, managed to win 18 out of 19 seats in Kizhakkambalam grama Panchayat in Ernakulam district. This electoral victory got much attention and was celebrated by the media as a corporate political party, which is the case being studied in this work.

Following the example of twenty20, many other issue-based parties contested in the General Election to the LSGIs in 2020. though they fielded candidates in all the wards, none were successful, and the performance of those in the Palakkad district was not impressive. However, Twenty20 managed to expand its base to more Panchayats, winning Districts and blocking Panchayat positions.

As of 2020, there are 1200 LSGI in Kerala spread over 941 Grama Panchayats, 152 Block Panchayats, 14 Grama Panchayats, 87 municipalities, and 6 Corporations. As per the 2011 census, the average land area of Grama Panchayat is 37.83 sq. km and has a population of 33,387,677; Block Panchayat of 296.01 sq. km in area and has a population of 170392, 14 District Panchayats are divided into lines of the revenue districts with an average population of 10 lakhs.

CHAPTER-IV

THE CORPORATE SECTOR: A CASE OF TWENTY20

Twenty20, or *twenty* as it is known locally, is essentially a corporate body with two entities: One of it is a charitable trust and the second of it is a political party. The activities of the twenty20 society started in 2012. The society was registered in November 2014 and when the Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility- CSR) rules of 2014 came into force as a society named *twenty20 Kizhakkambalam Association* under the Travancore-Cochin Literary, Scientific and Charitable Societies Registration Act, 1955. However, according to other sources, the association started on May 19, 2014 (*Mathrubhumi* 2014b). According to the bye-law of ‘twenty20,’ it is sponsored by four corporate companies named Kitex Garments Limited, Kitex Childrenswear Limited, Kitex Limited, and Anna Aluminium Company Private Limited, registered under the Companies Act 1956, based in Kizhakkambalam, and owned by the Kitex group of companies.

The society’s goal is to put the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of the four’ body corporates into action. The society has been represented by President Sabu M Jacob, the Managing Director (MD) of Kitex Garments and Kitex Childrenswear Limited, and his brother Bobby M Jacob, the MD of Anna Aluminium Company and Kitex Limited, since its inception (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2014d; High Court of Kerala 2015; Government of India 2014). After 2015, the group registered its political branch named “twenty20 Party.” The state Election Commission categorises it as a registered - unrecognised political party with headquarters is in Aikarnadu Panchayat (Election Commission of India 2016).

The Kitex companies allocate a specific (project-driven) budget for CSR every year within the statutory provisions of the new CSR rules of 2014. However, only Kitex Garments' and Kitex Childrenswear Limited's CSR policies are accessible and identical. As per the document: all the community projects are to be carried out under the patronage of the Kitex group through twenty20 Kizhakkambalam with the partnership of district authorities, the village Panchayat, NGOs, and other like-minded stakeholders. It says that reaching out to underserved communities through transcending business interests, grappling with the quality of life challenges that underserved communities face, and working towards making a meaningful difference to them is part of the heritage of the Kitex group. It claimed and declared that everywhere that twenty20 will make Kizhakkambalam a model Panchayat or the number one Panchayat in India. The corporate policy document mentioned twice that its dream is to make Kizhakkambalam Panchayat the best in the state among the total 978 Panchayats and its vision. Furthermore, the CSR policy of the organisation has set two goals and the realisation of the twin goals through shareholder value enhancement and societal value creation in a mutually reinforcing and synergistic manner; secondly, sustainable development for the rural areas; thirdly, eradicate hunger, poverty through promoting agriculture, protection of the environment, and lastly, to develop human capital (Kitex Garments Limited 2014a; Kitex Childrenswear Limited 2014).

The method adopted to identify the projects of the policies to be implemented in a participatory manner, in consultation with the community, literally sitting with them and gauging their basic needs, for which participatory rural appraisal mapping is to be used. Accordingly, these projects are prioritised based on a consensus and in

discussion with the village Panchayat and other influential personnel in society and the community. In such a way, education, health care, sustainable livelihood, infrastructure development, and espousing social causes emerged as the focus areas (Kitex Childrenswear Limited 2014; Kitex Garments Limited 2014a).

Before initiating projects, a baseline study of the villages on parameters like health indicators, literacy levels, sustainable livelihood processes, population data – below and above the poverty line, and state of infrastructure was conducted. From the collected data, one-year and five-year rolling plans have been developed for the holistic and integrated development of the marginalised and are presented at the annual planning and budgeting meeting. Every quarter, the projects are examined and monitored against targets and budgets, and revisions are made as needed (Ibid).

According to twenty20, “the whole idea in forming this society was to make a self-help group of people in the Panchayat and identify the needs of the have notes in the Panchayat and provide them with the same” (Cheriyen 2013, 38). In the inauguration, President and Managing Director Sabu M Jacob said that “vision twenty20 was inaugurated with the objective of overall development of Kizhakkambalam Panchayat. The aims are improvements in housing, water supply, electricity, health, education, agriculture, industry employment opportunity, pollution, law and order, and road. Development” (Ibid). Further, “the benefits of the society are open to all irrespective of caste, creed, race, religion, sex, and place of birth” (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2014d). However, the beneficiaries of schemes must take a membership card of twenty20 for each house. In October 2015, by the time of election notification for the general election to the local self-government institutions, there

were 7235 families, irrespective of political lineage, as cardholders of this scheme launched by the twenty20 (High Court of Kerala 2015).

According to the organization's bye-laws, the society's operational region must include all of India (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2014d). However, the society's functions are confined to the Panchayat, with the exception of providing membership cards to 1000 flood-affected households throughout the district in 2018 (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2014d; High Court of Kerala 2015; P P Sanakan 2019). According to Twenty20, neighbouring Panchayats have repeatedly demanded that their services be expanded (R. Babu 2017).

Objectives of twenty20:

The society has fifteen objectives, primarily concentrating on welfare-related activities: To set up and provide essential services forming the foundation of sustainable development for the people of Kizhakkambalam Panchayat. To provide basic infrastructure, including housing, drinking water, water harvesting, electricity, toilets, and others; To render medical and quality health care facilities to people, implement mother and child care projects, and preventive health through awareness programmes; To spark the desire for learning and knowledge at every single stage; To provide modern facilities for schools and also set up new schools; To conduct sustainable livelihood programmes, providing livelihood in a locally appropriate and environmentally sustainable manner through the formation of self-help groups, collective farming/multi-crop harvesting, promoting groups for women empowerment, providing vocational training through Kitex group technology parks,

promoting agriculture development and improve farming capabilities through rainwater harvesting.

To bring social change by advocating and supporting dowry-less marriage, widow remarriage, awareness programmes and espousing basic moral values; To promote industrial development through micro and small-scale industries with modern technical staff; To take steps to dispose of waste effectively by treating it through biogas plants and other modern techniques and ensure no pollution; To provide job opportunities for all in Kizhakkambalam; Eradicate corruption by educating and creating awareness; To promote road development by roads of the highest standards and township development through new markets, stadiums, and modern offices.

To implement CSR programmes primarily in the economic vicinity of the four companies' operations to ensure the long-term sustainability of such interventions; To support the community on festival celebrations, exhibitions, Onam/Christmas markets, and other activities for better community living; To collaborate with the government, its agencies, and other non-profit organisations in implementing various projects (gathered from the Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2014 document).

Membership and Organisation Structure:

The association has a three-plus one-tier structure. At the top level is the *governing board*, and at the ward level, *office bearers* are followed by *high-power members* supervised by an *area secretary*. Parallel to it is the monitoring mechanism of the sponsoring companies where qualified *ward executives* are appointed for each Ward, who works on the field, coordinate, and report directly to the CSR committee of the board of directors with Sabu M Jacob as its head. Except for the field staff among the

ward-level office bearers, no member in twenty20 receives a monetary reward for their efforts. The bye-laws make no reference to the organization's second and third levels. As reported in 2015, around 4800 persons are responsible for the village's development (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2019; Ittyipe 2015; G. Babu 2015).

The *governing board*, which manages the affairs of the society, is elected by members. Other office bearers such as *President*, *secretary*, *joint secretary*, *treasurer*, and *joint treasurer* are “nominated or elected from among members of the governing board on an honorary basis” (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2014d). The second level consists of eight office bearers for each Ward, including Patrons (2 Nos.), a President (1 No.), a Vice President (2 Nos.), paid ward staff (1 No.), and a secretary (2 Nos.). There are 152 ward level office bearers in all for the Panchayat's 19 wards (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2019).

At the third level, each Ward is divided into areas of roughly 20 houses. It is overseen by an *area committee* that reports to the Ward's office bearers. Each area committee will be overseen by an area secretary and two to six *high-power members*. A *high-power member* is the organization's lowest level, and each is responsible for five homes, including his own. In twenty20, alcoholics and persons with criminal records are barred from all positions. This village-level committee picks charity recipients and oversees development projects (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2019; Shaju 2019; Basheer 2018). In 2019, 19 wards were divided into a total of 279 areas, looked after by 279 area secretaries and 1132 high-power members, i.e., 5660 houses in the Panchayat are beneficiaries of twenty20. Chelakulam ward, with seven areas and 114 high-power members, has the lowest participation. Choorakkode ward has the highest participation in 24 areas with 114 high-power members (Ibid).

The high power Committee members are supposed to know everything that happens in the houses under their supervision. The discussions about everything happen in the ward-level meetings, which are held monthly. Decisions are taken on common consensus which will be communicated to people (Manju 2019).

The association's members should be 18 years of age and individuals engaged in conducting and promoting society's various activities. To become a member, an individual should submit a written application and a fee of Rs.100 to the governing board. The board can accept or reject the membership with a simple majority, and the decision is final. The membership is to be renewed annually by paying the fee before it expires. One member should have only one vote. The members "must engage within the rules and bye-laws of the society and decisions of the governing council and should give in writing that he will carry out the best of the capacity the objectives of the society" (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2014d).

Society is supposed to function without any profit motive. The income from the functioning shall not be distributed among the members, but reasonable remuneration can be paid to anyone for the services rendered (Ibid). The board members or people involved, except the full-time ward staff, are welfare-oriented people working without any monetary benefit (P P Sanakan 2019; Vijayan 2019b; A. Anthony 2019; Shaju 2019). The Ward executes paid up to Rs. 2 lakhs per month (Alex 2019).

The CSR department of the Kitex Group presents a vision, which will serve as the foundation for all CSR operations, in accordance with the company's CSR policy, and is led by Sabu M. Jacob (chairperson). The Chairman and Managing Director act as a mentor. The CSR cell head of Kitex groups' manufacturing units reports to the CSR

committee of the board of directors. These unit heads and CSR teams are responsible for project success and timeliness. The work done by the team was evaluated by an external organisation concerning the impact of the social satisfaction survey/audit (Kitex Garments Limited 2014b; Kitex Childrenswear Limited 2014).

The President of the twenty20 Association:

The President of the twenty20 association, Sabu M Jacob-a billionaire with assets worth Rs. 2,204 Crores in 2015 and one among the four private members of the technology development board under the department of science and technology-the MD Kitex Garments Limited, selected the business of kids garments because “there is no recession or inflation when it comes to providing clothes for children in the 0-24 months age group. Most parents will be willing to forego a meal to provide clothing for their children” (*Seasonal Magazine* 2017). Beyond kid’s clothing, he has not even considered expanding the business. Due to declining marriage and birth rates, he is also avoiding countries like the European Union and the United Kingdom, where it would take a year to sell what they are currently selling in a month in American markets. (*Seasonal Magazine* 2017; Government of India 2020). His net worth was Rs. 2,204 Crores in 2015, and he was featured in the Hunoor Billionaires list for the first time (*Malayala Manorama* 2015).

Twenty20, according to Sabu M Jacob, is a mission to make Kizhakkambalam the number one Panchayat among the 272,000 Panchayats in the country (Warrier 2015). He claims that it is in light of his father’s vision that the village should also develop along with the industry (Ittyipe 2015; Basheer 2016a; Warrier 2015). They came to notice people’s issues (such as lack of toilets, water, and food, poverty) soon after a

free medical camp organised by the group of companies on the occasion of the death anniversary of its founder, the late M C Jacob, in 2012. Later, the development vision was altered toward sustainable growth and development for everyone to make Kizhakkambalam -the smartest and best-governed village-a model village by 2020- a sustainable development paradigm that can be duplicated anywhere (G. Babu 2015; The New Indian Express 2019). A 12-point ‘vision 2020’ was drawn for the purpose (G. Babu 2015). The name was chosen since the projects is to be completed in 2020, and inspired by twenty20 cricket and a 2008 Malayalam film of the same name (*The CEO Magazine* 2017; Basheer 2016a).

The Secretary of the Association:

The secretary of the association, Augustine Anthony, became part of it as a representative of a cultural organisation. According to him, “all the expenses for welfare and developmental activities are borne by Sabu M Jacob as part of their CSR activities. What twenty20 have to do is to find beneficiaries for it” (A. Anthony 2019). He traces the roots of the organisation to the closing ceremony of the mega medical camp where approximately 88–89 people representing all political parties and cultural organisations met to discuss future initiatives and felt that they should do something to for Kizhakkambalam. They choose the name because it would take 7-8 years to implement and give results. (Ibid)

The Joint Secretary of the twenty20 Association:

According to P P Sanakan, an engineer by profession and joint secretary of the twenty20 association (in the 14-member executive board) since its inception: “the

vision is to make the Panchayat number one in India. Though we are board members, the chief coordinator Sabu M Jacob is the main pillar. The idea is his, and we make decisions after board meetings. His ideas are great; that is why things were successful and reached this level. CSR fund is only a small part of what is being spent. He (Sabu M Jacob) puts more than that from his pocket; the vision is the development of the locality by spending around 350 crore by the year 2020” (P P Sanakan 2019). The board meetings discuss development, what is to be done next, new ideas which will benefit ordinary people. “the joint discussions, decisions, is behind the success of the organisation (P P Sanakan 2019).

Panchayat President and Members:

The Panchayat president, K V Jacob, was the Local Secretary of CPI and former Panchayat member (2010-15) from ward No.12 Malayidamthurth, where he contested in the UDF panel as an independent candidate because of conflict within LDF. He calls twenty20 a collective irrespective of politics, connecting all those who can contribute/help the development of the locality so that they can do something for the locality (*naadu*) (K V Jacob 2019). However, on January 1, 2020, he resigned as the Panchayat president, proclaiming that “any project can be implemented only as per the wish of Kitex MD/chief coordinator. In a public system, we wish to implement welfare programmes for all the people irrespective of political, caste-religious differences” (‘Panchayat President Resigns Alleging Corruption’ 2 January at 13:06).

Conversation, however, with the elected members who contested in the twenty20 panel seems that they are unaware of what twenty20 is.. Almost all of them responded that it (twenty20) became a political party when it decided to contest, and the old

registration (of society) was cancelled. The office bearers also had similar observations, and they call it a collective (*kootayima*) (Mathai 2019), a movement of the poor (*paavamgaludedede oru prasthanam*) which will do every help the poor (Manju 2019), people from all the political parties are in twenty20 and while being a member in one an individual can work for twenty20 also (Thampi 2019).

Other than the office-bearers, the beneficiaries take it as the organisation of the locals (*naattukarude sangatana*) where the members have cards (Varghese 2019); “peoples collective (*jnaakeeya kootaima*) without any help or support of political parties” (Basheer 2019); a local organisation in Panchayat (*pradeshika sangatana*); and is not a political party, but a registered party (Jaimon 2019); for the good (*nanma*) of people in the Panchayat (Gopalakrishnan 2019). According to them, the sir (Sabu M Jacob) is spending his balance money on ordinary people. Joseph (school teacher, Ward no 8 Choorakkode) and Vijayan (auto driver), who donated land for road development, commented that they are obliged to spend a percent of the profit where the intention is not the well-being of people but their benefits (Joseph 2019; Vijayan 2019a).

The Industrial Groups of the twenty20:

In 2016 with a turnover of Rs. 1,200 crores (*Destination Kerala* 2016, 32), the industrial group employed 15,000 people – where 85 percent were women from 22 states, and 2,000 were from the locality was the largest private-sector employer in the state (Kitex Garments Limited 2020; *Destination Kerala* 2016; Ittyipe 2015; Raveendran 2018; Thayabji 2018; Philip 2015b; Abraham 2019; *Madhyamam.Com English* 2015; Warriar 2015) The beginning of the Anna-Kitex group of companies was in 1986 when the late M C Jacob established Anna Aluminium Company with

eight labourers in (Ward No 12 Poyyakkunnam) Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat. At present, Anna Aluminium is an ISO 9001-2008 certified company and is a leader in the production of aluminium utensils (S. Jacob M. and Jacob 2012, 62).

Following the aluminium company's establishment in 1975, the group entered the textiles business by manufacturing *lungis* in the newly launched Kitex Limited (Kitex stands for *Kizhakkambalam textiles*) located in *Colony Padi*, in Ward no 11 Vilangu (Anna Group 2013; Philip 2015b; Abdul Rahman P M 2019). Kitex could be established, when they accepted the request of then Chief Minister C Achutha Menon led CPI Government to house 400 of the 3,900 power looms given to Kerala by the union government (Philip 2015b). The local politicians claim that the capital to establish the company was from the loan of Rs. 4.25 crores from the State Bank of Travancore (SBT) in the name of 372 shareholders, which the company defaulted (A. C. Varghese 2015b). In 1979, the company launched Sara Spices in the Choorakkode Ward, which eventually changed its name to Saras (Anna Group 2013; Philip 2015b).

In 1988, CITU went on a strike of 465 days led by CPI Local Secretary K K Elias while T J Vinod was district secretary, demanding job security and the right to form a union in Kitex. In the post-strike period, the company relied more on migrant labourers (Karipra 2019; Nidheesh 2020) 'Kitex Exports Limited started in 1991 - became 'Kitex Childrenswear Limited,' and Kitex Garments Limited, established in 1992, are the five industrial establishments owned by the group located in the Grama Panchayat. All the brands and products except those being exported have become household names in Kerala (M and George 2014).

Kitex Childrenswear Limited and Kitex Garments Limited are two companies that specialise in the 100% export of ready-made kid's garments for children aged 24 months. With raw materials (primarily yarn) mostly from Tiruppur, Coimbatore, and Gujarat, the firm produced an average of 7.5 lakh pieces everyday (in 2019), ranking second internationally. Kitex is a major supplier to companies like Gerber, Walmart, Carters, The Children's Place, Amazon, and Target only for the US market (Chief Environmental Engineer 2012; Kitex Garments Limited 2020; V. S. Kumar 2020).

Kitex Garments Limited's production unit comprises two blocks of a 1.8 million-square-foot factory in a 64-acre plot,¹ which is like "a small special economic zone" (Philip 2015b; *Destination Kerala* 2016; *Seasonal Magazine* 2017). Two major plants (a processing plant and a children's wear dress section) exist on campus (Chief Environmental Engineer 2012). The labour strength was 5,000, 7,000, and 11,00 individuals in 2015, 2016, and 2020 respectively, with the majority being women. Around 6500 labourers stay in the vicinity of the company (Warrier 2015; *Destination Kerala* 2016, 32; V. S. Kumar 2020).

The company advocates and promotes the practice of only work in the workplace to ensure it inspires a computer-controlled monitoring system in which "a red bulb lights up the moment there is a slack in production or drop in quality in any one of the hundreds of work stations" (Jayaram 2018). While Sabu M Jacob is seen saying that there is only a single shift from 8 am to 5 pm and the company is like a seven-star hotel in 2017, a five-star hotel in 2020 because of which there are no union issues, according to a resident of Kizhakkambalam Panchayat, there are three shifts and labourers are living in tin sheds outside (Sasidar 2017, 16; Warrier 2015; Vijayan

1 Image of the Production Unit of Kitex Garments Limited see Annexure-I

2019a; Jayaram 2018). Indeed, comparatively better accommodation of dormitories with bunk beds for women on the factory's top floor is publicised without any reference to the tin sheds where men are accommodated.

The company's turnover shot up from Rs. 1.8 crores in 1995-96 to Rs. 312 crores in 2011-12, followed by Rs. 317 crores in 2012-13, and expected Rs. 425 crores in 2013-14 (*Business Line* 2013). Rs. 559.93 crores in 2017-18 (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2017; Roshan 2019) and Rs.1,000 crores in FY 2018-19 (V. S. Kumar 2020), the expected turnover in 2024-25 is Rs. 2,166 crores (Roshan 2019). In 2019, the board approved investments worth Rs. 920 crores, and an investment plan of Rs. 2,000 crores was envisaged by 2025 (V. S. Kumar 2020). The investment would upgrade the capacity for knitting, processing, and sewing, increasing the output to 22 lakh pieces per day, create jobs for 11,000 additional workers, bring the total to 21,000 employees, and make it no 1 in terms of global production of kids' garments.

In 2015, the company was named one of Forbes Asia's 200 greatest under-a-billion-dollar businesses (Warrier 2015). In October 2015, a new firm Kitex LLC was launched in the US market, and purchased the licensed trademark *Lamaze*. Products in their brand names, Little Star and My Little Star, a design studio, were also launched in the US (Jayaram 2018; V. S. Kumar 2020; Jayaram 2018). In 2018 Kitex packs LTD, Kitex socks LTD, Kitex knits LTD, and Kitex baby wear LTD were incorporated ('Kitex Garments Announces Four More Subsidiaries' 2018).

Development Strategies of the twenty20:

According to Mr. Augustine Anthony, secretary of twenty20, the first emphasis was on health camps. Later, the issue of water scarcity was resolved by installing 24-hour

water taps in every home, replacing the a single public tap shared by 30–40 houses and providing water for only a few hours each day. (A. Anthony 2019). As per M K Vijayan, a retired college lecturer and board member of the twenty20 association, the next step was to make the rations system accountable by ensuring that the shops adhered to timetables and by empowering customers to insist on the bill. Public works were scrutinised to stop corruption; boards were installed at the site disclosing information like expenditure and quality of raw materials (Vijayan 2019b). Hoarding with photos of Singapore was installed with the title, tomorrow's Kizhakkambalam (P. P. Baby 2019).

During the festival of Onam, a temporary market named *Onam Mela*, was initiated to provide goods for half the market price.² After a certain point, the vegetable-only market expanded by providing grocery items. When it became the food security market, almost everything except clothes became available. The price of the goods in the market is stagnant. The secretary in 2019 claims they were still selling goods at half the market price four years ago. i.e., since the beginning (A. Anthony 2019).

By the time of the election (within 2.5 years), twenty20 had spent Rs. 32 crores on development and charitable activities, while they were mandated to spend only Rs. 1.60 crores per year (Philip 2015b). The first step was to understand people's needs, towards which professionals conducted a household survey. A database was constructed that categorised "the 8,000 households into four categories-the extremely poor, below-poverty line, above the poverty line, and the well-off." Drinking water, toilets, house repairs, healthcare, and help for farming were identified as significant needs (Basheer 2016a). Following the categorization, bar-coded membership cards in

2 For details regarding the discounted rates see Annexure II

four colours—later replaced by Radio Frequency Identification Cards (RFID)—were issued to the people. In 2016 it was reported that Rs. 7,620 cards of four colours were issued to 8,600 families in the Panchayat based on their socio-economic profile (Philip 2015b). Despite the fact that each individual, including children, will have their own card, all of the household's cards are interlinked.

According to K V Jacob, the then-Panchayat president, the incentives available from the government will not be sufficient for anything. Without having to worry about a lack of funding, all projects, including roads, will be completed (K V Jacob 2019). Road development, construction and maintenance of houses, and food security market were the major attraction of twenty20 during the election. The issue of water shortage- which worried people, particularly in Dalit colonies, was solved permanently by installing 18 drinking water projects using CSR funds (*Mangalam* 2015b). The assistance of liaison officers was sought to clear paper work for the underprivileged in order for them to get government incentives (Philip 2015b).

In 2013 an evening market named twenty20 food security market provided goods, particularly daily essentials, for half the market price for the membership card holders so that the food security of a small family would be within Rs. 1,200-1,400 a month was functioning. Later, a permanent, air-conditioned building of 1,000 sq feet was inaugurated on November 2017 by union Minister Nithin Gadkari in the presence of union minister Alphonse Kannanthanam and leaders of the Jacobite church (Express News Service 2017; Basheer 2018).

One crore rupee is spent each month to subsidise the market (Evarta 2015). The main attraction is Rs.15 per kg of rice and Rs.10 for (500 ml) milk packet. Home

Appliances are provided at half price and can be paid in instalments for three years (*Haritha Keralam News* 2019). Vegetables, fruits, and other groceries were discounted during festival seasons. The market contains nine billing counters including a bakery, where (in May 2019) “sales would be over 40,000 per day in a counter” (3,60,000 per day). It will reach 80,000 during Onam and Vishu festivals. “Sunday sales will be lower, ranging from 25,000 to 30,000” (Bency Shaju 2019a).

The purchase limit is fixed upon the number of members in the family, the share of the head of the family is Rs.600, the second and third person is Rs.500 each, fourth person Rs.400. For kids, it is Rs.300; for those below 10, it is Rs.150. It was reported that the prices vary depending on the colour of the membership cards. However, from field investigation it was observed that there is no price difference. Only the 300 red-coloured cards holders and 1500 (as in 2017) individuals who have donated land for road development can have goods for free but with same ceiling limit as others. Nevertheless, the market affected the business of almost all the shops in the village (G. Babu 2015). In 2018 around 7,000 households registered with the shop, and an average of 1,000 people came to purchase daily (Basheer 2018).

All the activities of twenty20 comes under the production sector, which includes 1) holistic paddy cultivation, 2) self-help, 3) check dams in brooks 4) fencing of brooks. By disdaining those misbehaving, Sabu M Jacob says he has implemented the principle of discipline in his business. Also, by constructing and maintaining houses, he claims that they are not just constructing houses but changing attitudes and transforming lives. For him, “leadership makes changes, promoting self-reliance and responsibility-taking. He says that political parties will not be able to wipe out poverty

even after 100 years, and development can come only through corporates” (The New Indian Express 2019; Warriar 2015).

In order to make Kizhakkambalam a self-sufficient agricultural village, 900 acres of land were cultivated till 2015 (*Haritha Keralam News* 2019). The vegetable village project was launched to produce vegetables at home so as not to leave even a barren area. The leftover vegetables can be sold in the market (*Haritha Keralam News* 2019). To generate an income of Rs.15,000 per month for 10,000 families, a hybrid variety of goats was provided for 2000 houses under the “*aadu gramam*” (goat village) project in 2015 (Deepika 2015).

Another significant project involved widening roads and tarring them with BM&BC quality.³ People on both sides of the road equally give land for road development on a promise that twenty20 will try to give the money by the year 2020. The compensation at the time of giving land is that the fence and gate will be reconstructed and a twenty20 membership card to purchase for free, but with a limited ceiling like ordinary people (A. Anthony 2019). The cost of land in the area is worth lakhs, and those adjacent to the roadside will cost more. Though the accusation process of the government is lengthy, the compensation will be paid. The local population seems unaware of it. An unknown respondent said that if the government takes it, they will demolish it and take it. One will not get such a good fence and a suitable gate. Here twenty20 will give the money by 2020, and the land will be given to the government.

Twenty20 aims for the holistic development of the Panchayat by using funds from different government sources and the Panchayat’s income in a beneficial manner (Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat 2018, 14). In the introduction of development

3 For information regarding ongoing road development project of see Annexure-IV

plans of 2018-19, the Panchayat President claims that the Panchayat's development initiatives were effectively carried out through Public Private Partnership (PPP); due to the drawback that development is being solely dependent on the availability of insufficient funds. While assessing the development situation in the Panchayat in Chapter 1 of the 2018-19 development plan, the Panchayat claims that by "expending individual-centred industrial income for the public use of society, they are fulfilling Mahatma Gandhi's dream. Creating an industry-friendly system" (Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat 2018, 1).

The activities undertaken in PPP mode are the development of roads, installation of street lights, installation of smart classroom system to increase the learning standard of schools, ensuring mental and physical development of a new generation, strengthening Kudumbashree for poverty eradication and women empowerment, improving living standard of SC, ST population and development of colonies (Ibid). The Panchayat seeks to improve living standards via development. Building homes and income-generating projects like hen and goat villages would reduce poverty and raise the standard of living (Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat 2018, 17).

The development vision, objective, and strategy of the Panchayat first address the agricultural sector. As per the plan document, the agricultural sector on which "the land area is completely dependent has collapsed because of not giving proper attention to it. The Panchayats aim to make agriculture profitable by reducing costs, applying scientific methods, and seeking expert advice" (Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat 2018, 13). Further, to promote self-sustainability in food items, the Panchayat has started projects to cultivate paddy in fallow lands, vegetable gardens in homes, and poultry and goat villages (*aadu gramam*). The Panchayat committees aim

to include all the eligible beneficiaries and complete these projects. Protecting all water resources and biodiversity is also given due consideration. By protecting large and small brooks, the twenty20 ensured food safety through farming and water security. Though cattle and milk-related projects are implemented, projects capable of self-sustainability in the field must be implemented (Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat 2018, 17).

The (world-famous) industries in the Panchayat are the primary source of income for the Panchayat. The document declares, “like the importance given to the agricultural sector, the Grama Panchayat is industry-friendly Panchayat” (Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat 2018, 17). In the industrial sector, the Panchayat perceives that “industrial development is not only the solution to unemployment but also aims the increase in country’s wealth and development due to it” (Ibid). Since it is not practical for the LSGs to be involved in industrial matters, it can give crucial help and encourage industrial entrepreneurship. The Panchayat, close to Ernakulam city, is developing every day. Infrastructure and transportation facility needs to be addressed for the smooth functioning of the existing small and large industries.

Furthermore, to attract new industries, and for industry, big and small village roads are in the process of up-gradation. The development strategy of the Panchayat is that the income from the industries can be used for the developmental purposes of the Panchayat. They are preparing the infrastructure for the smooth functioning of the existing small and large industries. Generate employment opportunities by attracting new industries. Bring the development of the Panchayat to the fast track by developing all the roads by 2020 (Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat 2018, 17).

The two reasons for giving thrust for developing small and large village roads (widened in good quality and make transport use) using private partnership and Panchayat funds are the high vehicle density and upgraded industrial infrastructure (Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat 2018, 12).

Towards the service sector: up-gradation of infrastructure of government hospitals, and dispensaries, increased the standard of the school, Anganwadi, and standard of education. In 2018-19, the Panchayat started a project for a shopping mall: the reason for it was “since there is no shopping mall with modern facilities, people here are dependent on shopping malls far away since we need a shopping mall with a good stand and modern facilities to be built here. People who go to shopping malls in the city for quality and cheap-price, is to be provided with a mall where there are products with no compromise in quality and like in city malls branded items are to be sold in the lowest price” (Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat 2018, 33-34,41).

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the twenty20:

According to CPI (M) Local Secretary Jinns T Mustafa, “they managed to win by exploiting the weakness of ordinary people. They convened a meeting of cardholders in each Ward before the election and informed them that if they win, they would continue to provide these perks; if not, it would cease.” (Mustafa 2019). Furthermore, he noted that no one has offered the people anything to date. Political parties cannot do it; only corporations can, so they saw it as a blessing and leaped in (Ibid)

P P Baby was the CPI (M) Local Secretary when twenty20 won the Panchayat election. According to him: they purchased the people with money. For any

programme, people were picked from homes, providing free food. Probably three or four types were provided and dropped back after, which political parties cannot afford. The per head expense of a 10,000 people function is around 15lakh, which is nothing for them. By the time of the election, the number of such functions had increased. Whereas for a programme of a political party, people have to come by themselves and have to make a contribution also. He said that, usually, one individual from a family would attend events of political parties, whereas people attended programs of twenty20 with family. According to him, CSR is not their generosity but the people's right. The purpose of CSR was never revealed, and it was ensured that no one discovers it.

Baby claims that after first asserting that the Twenty20 is apolitical, Sabu M Jacob, began insulting all politicians as thieves. His new narrative has reached the point in Kizhakkambalam where people no longer need to work for political parties when Sabu is there. People began to do things they would not normally do because of the and motivations from MSW and MBA graduates. The people of Kizhakkambalam were mentally coerced into having a slave mindset. (P. P. Baby 2019).

Then district secretary P Rajeev commented before the election, "it is a local issue we do not want to comment on" (M. S. S. Kumar 2015). Soon after the election, in an editorial published in *Deshabhimani* he observed that the existing politics in the neo-liberal era is one where corporates endorsing bourgeois political parties buy their way into legislative bodies and represent the people. Because of neoliberalism, crony capitalism strengthened, and the nexus between corporates, political leadership, and the bourgeois opened new arenas of corruption. The number of such representatives reaching the Rajya sabha or State legislative assembly are less. However, "what

happened in Kizhakkambalam is an extremely dangerous tendency in a democratic system. The experiment here is a step ahead of where a corporate ended up controlling the democratic system. It is a declaration that other than corny capitalism by which capitalism can implement their agenda through political parties- capitalists can implement agendas by directly ruling and rule-making” (P. Rajeev 2015).

Kitex through twenty20 used the obligation to spend as per CSR rules explicitly for power. In anticipating advance Panchayat elections, projects were shaped, and they started spending more than required expecting future benefits. By paying salaries and giving vehicles to elected members, the responsibility of those elected by the people will be more to the company than the people, “which means that corporates have efficiently hijacked democracy” (P. P. Baby 2019).

C N Mohanan, the present district secretary of CPI (M), observes the causes as while twenty20 was formed, the company did not intend to contest and win the elections. He affirms that they still do not want to rule the Panchayat. Their interest is to run their business. In the 2010 election, because of a family feud with local Congress leadership, Benny Behanan’s attempt to establish a trade union in the company, and the attempt of the Congress Panchayat to shut the company, they tried to keep Congress out of power by cooperating with LDF which failed. Because of the failed attempt, they decided to do it by themselves. While examining the present scenario, he thinks that many powers were transferred to the Panchayats by decentralisation. Here, it is a concentration of powers within it. The system of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) giving orders will not work in a democracy; his opinion is that the elected members resigned because of the privation of democracy (Mohanani 2019b).

According to K M Mahesh, CPI (M) Local Committee member and Secretary of Vallathol Memorial Library, Pukkattupady, a family fight with Congress is the cause for twenty20. Their first step was to take people in hand, and Sabu M Jacob succeeded in it. CPI (M) anticipated that people would buy from twenty20 but vote for them (CPI (M)) because of their interest in political parties. The food security market also played a significant role. However, during election LDF felt that twenty20 would just fielded candidates without any history of social service or political activity for a namesake. During campaigning, LDF could only request voters to vote for us if possible, and in turn, people responded that “please do not feel bad, if we did not vote for twenty20, they would cancel our cards” (Mahesh 2019).

According to Vijayan a CPI (M) member who cooperated with twenty20 since its inception, Sabu M Jacob approached political parties and said they had some money and wanted to help people because none responds to his call. The political parties cooperated and tried to make their people/supporters beneficiaries. Compared to government mechanisms, the speed at which projects were implemented was something people had not heard or seen. He slowly construed an image and became accessible even at midnight. It was only the local Congress leadership with whom they were hostile. In 2014, they purposefully established an Onam stall without the Panchayat’s consent; as a result, the Panchayat took action and shut down the stand. They succeeded in transferring this sentiment to the people and said that the Panchayat and politicians did it because they did not want the welfare of the people. A campaign started that all this happened because we do not have power. We need the power to stop this from happening again and keep things going. In such a way, they won 17 of the 19 wards (Vijayan 2019a).

A female member of the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI) in her twenties says that money was freely thrown at people expecting everyone will come. Furthermore, the majority of the population in the Panchayat is illiterate. The company had a problem with its license regarding pollution issues. Some of our poor supporters (*anikal*) went there (twenty20) because of the card. Now he (Sabu) is controlling them as a feudal landlord by saying, if you go there, your cards will be terminated. Also, branded sold in the food security market do not have any discount. The women purchasing discounted items will also buy the non-discounted items. He is profited from it and enslaved people (Lakshmi 2019).

A CPI (M) member says, “branch members of the party attended all the programmes of twenty20 and took incentives. However, things changed, when it became clear that twenty20 led by Sabu would contest in the Panchayat election. At last, CPI (M) got only 14 votes in the Kizhakkambalam ward, where the local committee headquarters is located. The CPI (M) fell apart and did not even secure the votes of committee members. Overall, the CPI (M) got less than 2000 votes, and it seems like the organisation surrendered its workers and supporters to the corporate (Group conversation with people of Kavungaparambu Ward 2019).

The Indian National Congress and the twenty20:

In 2013, when Kitex was engaged in developmental activities, the Panchayat president Jolly Baby in a pamphlet claimed that the capitalist’s spy’s in the Congress (who were unable to contest) and the Marxist party tried their level best to defeat Congress in the previous election held in 2010. An attempt was made to purchase Panchayat members when the Panchayat took an uncompromising stand against

pollution from the Kitex company. To survive, the company tried to slaughter democracy and insult democratically elected members. She urged people to understand that what they are getting is because of laws made by the union government. She criticises Kitex capitalists and his henchmen for their claim to make it a model Panchayat by defeating Congress. The CPI (M) parted ways with twenty20 when only two seats were offered at the time of the election, and interestingly only the leaders came out, not the people who supported them. Thus the CPI (M), who joined them intending to destroy Congress, got self-destructed. Road development is the only major project undertaken by twenty20 because the town planner rejected the application for factory expansion as the roads are not 12 meters wide. She criticises that there is autocracy and slavery in twenty20. Cards were cancelled for voting in Kizhakkambalam Service Cooperative Bank (SCB) against their decision, and there was ostracism (*ooruvelakk*) and social boycott for the shops owned by those who were not cooperating with twenty20 (J. Baby 2013).

By the first week of September 2015, the UDF Panchayat committee alleged that twenty20 is trying to enslave people by giving incentives and claimed that, after parting ways with CPI (M), twenty20 made an alliance with BJP and tried to disrupt the inauguration of the new Panchayat building. UDF organised a protest meeting against false claims of twenty20 in general and taking credit for closure of beverages outlet and annulling of delimitation. The protest meeting was attended by the MLA of the constituency V P Sajeendran and Benny Behanan, MLA from an adjacent constituency belonging to INC (UDF Panchayat Committee 2015).

Twenty20 initially attracted residents from Vilangu, Njaralloor, Kanampuram, and Malekkamolam by promising that they would make the houses in *laksham veedu*

colonies to single homes, which was not accomplished till 2015. In a call for three days of vehicle campaigning against the false allegations of twenty20, the Congress Mandalam Secretary N C Varghese claimed that it is propaganda spending crores of rupees with the support of BJP and the left to destroy Congress and Panchayat administration which desires the development of the region (*naadu*) irrespective of caste, religion, and politics. He also alleges that twenty20 is trying to portray Congress leader M P Rajan as extremist. To refute this, he claims that the actual extremist is the capitalist who capitalises on the situation and did so in the name of the church and by funding a communal party like BJP, creating anarchy by deliberately creating riots in the locality (*naadu*) (A. C. Varghese 2015a).

Congress Mandalam Committee member and Kizhakkambalam SCB President Chacko P Mani say that the since the area is close to Ernakulam city, most of the residents are from other districts and do not know the history of the industrial group. By using every possible means, mainly keeping people under the hope that they will get something better tomorrow, twenty20 is using the people to the maximum extent to attain what all they can. By focusing on women, they were able in controlling the whole family. He says that their aim is their business only. The main objective is to get permission from the Panchayat and threaten others opposing them. During election time, Rs. 10-12 crores are required per constituency for each political party; usually, all the leaders go and meet the company people for donations; once they donate, they will be indebted to those who gave it. He regrets that even after the local Congress leadership informed the higher-ups (at the centre and the state) they did not take the situation seriously. This would not have happened if the leadership had resounded while in power at the state and the centre. According to him, the left

cooperated with them to win the election. They tried to win the Panchayat in a shortcut but felt trapped when twenty20 said that they would contest (Mani 2019).

Baby, a former Panchayat member, says that Sabu M Jacob purchased Kizhakkambalam except some people like us, to bring the people who came against the company because of pollution to his side, they created an impression that only twenty20 can protect people's interests. He says Sabu is only temporary, because there is no freedom even for the elected members. Freedom is valuable for humans; he cannot control them forever, though he can cheat them for the time being. According to him, to get back to people, something should be provided to people, as provided by twenty20. Furthermore, according to him, a sustainable alternative is to start a subsidised market at both the SCBs (Baby 2019).

According to Sony K J, Kizhakkambalam, Merchants Association President, the vote share of CPI (M) and Congress is of a slight difference, and when Panchayat took a strong stand against pollution issue, the Kitex came with twenty20, foreseeing the coming election in which the CPI (M) supported them. Thus the main agenda of twenty20 was to challenge Congress. During the election, the Kitex started appealing to the people that you must come and vote; only then will we win and get more incentives. Their main aim was to win the elections (Sony 2019).

Meanwhile, the CPI (M) shared many venues with twenty20. However, a difference of opinion came between the CPI (M) and the twenty20 by the time of the Panchayat election when twenty20 said that CPI (M) can contest in two seats if they want, it was not acceptable for CPI (M). When CPI (M) parted away with twenty20, only the leaders left; the supporters stood with twenty20. Though at present CPI (M) is

opposing twenty20, even today, CPI (M) is unsuccessful in bringing back its supporters. It was CPI (M) that suffered the worst. There was also anarchy and a slave mentality among people. For instance, on Sundays, the 7,000 employees working in Kitex companies will be brought to the market for shopping, and the supervisors take particular care that they will not purchase from the shops owned by the individuals who do not cooperate with twenty20 (Ibid).

The CPI and the twenty20:

The CPI local Secretary, P D Varghese says that until the last election, CPI had the upper hand in LDF. He revealed that he attended the first committee meeting in which Sabu M Jacob told them, “I have to spend around two crore per year; if the political parties and industrialists join us, we can develop the locality” (P. D. Varghese 2019). According to him, “in the beginning, it was LDF who stood with twenty20 because the majority of the beneficiaries are our people” (Ibid). The CPI (M) competed to get benefits for their people. People see that if they get things for half price, the monthly expense will come down to Rs. 2000. All these activities are to get people’s support covertly. However, the effluents from the bleaching plant of the Kitex is harmful to the future generations. He also says that Ernakulam district tops the number of cancer patients in Kerala; and it is Kizhakkambalam in the district. (Ibid).

The attempts to create awareness among people are not having any effect and what people ask back is, what can political parties do? What will you do if we stand with you? Can you give us something? They are giving goods in half price, you also give us. He says that Every political party at the local level is affected-almost finished-it is the political parties that suffered the most. With the then Local Secretary contesting in

the twenty20 panel and becoming Panchayat president, the party is left only with 80 members for the past three years, and the rest joined twenty20. The same is with CPI (M); LDF could finish second only in 2 wards. The card is their trump card, and it remains a threat. When they parted ways with twenty20, the majority of the people who purchased for half price would not stay, and also, because action was taken by cancelling cards, none was ready to come and work for political parties. The local leadership of the party maintains no relationship with Kitex, but there is support from the top leadership of all political parties except CPI (Ibid). There were joint opposition from political parties against twenty20 at the local level; Congress and CPI (M), and went to court and managed to get a stay order for the food security market, which the company approached High Court and vacated. There was no financial support from the top leadership; since local leadership is supposed to look after local issues and approaching court is not affordable for them (Ibid).

Wilson, secretary of AIYF-youth wing of CPI- and was an active member of twenty20, in the beginning. He observes that political parties were competing among themselves to make their people/supporters benefices of services and incentives provided by the Kitex group. When Sabu says he is giving 100 school bags or umbrellas for free, he used to find beneficiaries for it among their supporters/members. When Sabu M. Jacob stated at a meeting scheduled after the election that twenty20's goal in contesting was to defeat Congress, he resigned from twenty20 immediately because he believed it was improper. Wilson said he could understand the political motive only after that meeting. The condition in Kizhakkambalam is that "nobody can talk against Sabu or twenty20, if done so they will come to know, and their membership cards will be cancelled. Everything is

linked to the card; there is nothing without a card. Because of this fear, none will go against them” (Wilson 2019).

The SDPI and the twenty20:

Socialist Democratic Party of India (SDPI), an identity-based party, is influential in the Muslim-dominated areas of the Panchayat, particularly in the Kavungaparambu ward, where they had former Panchayat members from SDPI. The ward member and Action council president Abdul Rahaman also claims that “the number of cancer patients in the area is increasing, nobody cares. The problem will surface only after 10-15 years when people here will become casualties similar to Endosulfan victims in Kasaragod” (Abdul Rahman P M 2019).

He says they have turned politics apolitical, and democracy was conquered with capitalism. The objective of a capitalist company is its profit and economy. However, all the political parties except Congress Mandalam Committee stood with him for temporal gains. Assessing the mentality of the people, he states that twenty20 is focusing on individual gains to run business for which people do not have any problem in living the life of slaves. They only want things to go on. Twenty20 have opposition only from Chelakulam and Kavungaparambu (Ibid).

Twenty20 overpowers the attempts of the action council to create awareness among people through money. They will come and ask the people what they want; if people ask for a house, they will construct a house, and people will go silent. If anyone needs money to marry off their daughter that too will be given, they will go silent. Do they need to take a patient for dialysis? Every day ambulance will come to pick them up to

the hospital and drop back the patient, they will also go silent, and if they do not have a drinking water well, that too will be given, they will also go silent. Thus the company provides all that the people asks. The protest was also dealt with by communalising it “Kitex groups is very influential among their community, (the Christian belt is supporting them) which they used very well. During the election, people from the Muslim community being the affected population were at the forefront of the protest; they were threatened, manhandled, and cases were filed against them. However, the people stood inch by inch” (Ibid).

Assessing the functioning of the Panchayat from 2015, Abdul Rahman observes that considerable discrimination and political instability exist here. A ward member of twenty20 neither attend to any invitation or programme of other political parties nor invite Panchayat members belonging other political parties to weddings or any other functions. The elected members are only to process official formalities, everything is being done by executives appointed in each Ward. It is like a company administration. He also acknowledges that the Panchayat headed by twenty20 approved 70 percentage of the projects he proposed. (Abdul Rahman P M 2019).

Abdul Rahman has suggested two solutions: Firstly, the state government should intervene and develop a system. They should direct them to go according to law and legal systems and take decisive and vigorous action. Secondly, only if the officials from Pollution Control Board (PCB) and District Medical Officer (DMO) will report sincerely and take legal action the pollution can be contained (Ibid).

The BJP and the twenty20:

With organisational set-up only in 15 out of the total 24 booths in Kizhakkambalam, BJP is not strong and never had a Panchayat member in Kizhakkambalam (Mankkaekara 2019). The BJP, during the election, does not seem to address the local issues or those of twenty20. In an appeal to vote, the BJP candidate of Thamarachal ward claims that Congress and the Left in power could not bring development and claims it is only possible through BJP. By voting for the BJP, which works for the growth and prosperity of the area (*naadu*), this is the golden opportunity for you to finish off the politics of compromise of Left and Right. Vote for the growth and development of the locality and take India to the international level (Krishnan 2015).

Manoj Mankkaekara, the BJP constituency president, says that “initially BJP was also in cooperation with twenty20, but parted ways when they announced that they will contest in elections, but still is on good terms with them” (Mankkaekara 2019). According to him, though the corporate rule is not perpetual in democracy when political parties failed to deliver the incentives from the government, people stood with those who gave incentives through CSR. He explains the context of the victory as it is not possible to do anything in a village challenging the Panchayat. Since twenty20 had power and influence, they deliberately tried to ignore the Panchayat, which the Panchayat governing council opposed as per law, which turned out to be a political exploitation. CSR was spent in the locality (unlike other companies) and was visible to the people. Those in power failed to deliver the incentives from the government to the eligible, and it was portrayed as politicians’ mercy.

He observes that it was in this context that the people asked twenty20 to contest so as to counter opposition from the Panchayat for every action. People in general goes

after incentives because even a small help is a great relief for the people. People were annoyed because of the failures of both fronts in addressing issues like housing and agriculture and showcasing holistic development. When twenty20 worked on addressing people's problems using the CSR funds, people developed loyalty towards them. Though BJP also contested in all the wards, the victory of twenty20 in 17 of 19 wards is the reward for their interventions (Mankkaekara 2019).

According to him, BJP is not endorsing the entry of twenty20 into politics; CSR funding is people's right. When the developments implemented by twenty20 are factual, being a political party, BJP will not oppose development but will oppose it if people are being exploited for power. In a democratic system, people have the right for fundamental rights; when people are compelled to get incentives, the local leadership of the BJP has reacted against it. He problematises it as "if corporates takes over power, it will lead to autocracy. Politically using incentives and compelling (by force) people to do things, thus challenging fundamental rights, cannot be accepted. This tendency is to be resisted and defeated in democracy, or the Panchayat will go under an autocracy" (Mankkaekara 2019).

The middle class, who is the majority, may have voted for them. Those were the votes of Congress and CPI (M), and BJP got 600 votes in the place of 1500-1600. Before the election, they had established their influence in all the fields and organised many programmes. Around 70 percent of the attendees may have voted for twenty20. BJP never had a member in the Panchayat, and the votes share of other parties were only nominal. People supports twenty20 not politically but for the incentives; office bearers, including executive members of the BJP, are also card holding members in it. These people have not abandoned political parties; people have their politics and will

express where they want. However, they will not avoid twenty20 totally because of the incentives they receives. Twenty20 lost only in 2 wards because those are Muslim majority areas, and people were engaged in a consistent conflict against the company regarding pollution where almost 70 percent of the residents of the area participated. The pollution is minimal; if pollution reaches a limit where people cannot live, they cannot be silenced by providing incentives (Mankkaekara 2019).

People's Response towards the twnety20: Different Voice

In a group conversation, the people of the Kavungaparambu ward (one among the two wards where twenty20 lost) said they were not against development. However, their concern is that the profit motive in it where democracy now became corporate rule. Those stood against twenty20 are haunted. The company filed around 25 cases against the protesters. Another person opined that the way they select people is improper; people in the Panchayat should be treated equally. Now there is a differentiation between twenty20 and non-twenry20. For them, Kavungaparambu ward is the only place where his (Sabu M Jacob) atrocities will not work. Ansari, a CPI (M) supporter and tea shop owner, claims that twenty20 can be vanquished only if it goes extinct on its own, or when few wards of Kizhakkambalam Panchayat will become part of the to be established Pattimattom Panchayat as per delimitation. They observe that people are with twenty20 for short-term gains, and Sabu M Jacob wants to his industry to thrive. They allege that 'Pazhanganad', being worst affected by pollution, has many cancer patients (Group conversation with people of Kavungaparambu Ward 2019).

However, another resident and supporter of twenty20 believes that twenty20 lost by 47 votes in Kavungaparambu because people was unaware of twenty. Now, people

are becoming active members of it. He also says that people from political parties like Congress, and BJP, with whom he was on good terms, are now waiting for an opportunity to beat him up because he campaigned for CPI (M) candidate in Lok Sabha elections as decided by twenty20. He remarks that people are not interested in politics; the problem is that there is no alternative system. When an alternative system comes, politicians will suppress it (Ibid).

Elected Members' Response about twenty20:

K V Jacob was one of the initial leaders who joined CPI soon after the split in local committee of CPI (M). Despite the fact that both the parties were part of the LDF, Jacob contested in the 2010 general elections to the PRIs from the Malayidamthurth Ward in the UDF panel because of conflicts between CPI and CPI (M) in Kizhakkambalam. When twenty20 came to power, he became the Panchayat president but later resigned on January 1, 2020 before completing his term.

While in twenty20, Jacob could materialise what he couldn't when he was a Panchayat member previously because of money and other resources constraints. He opinion is that "Doing things beneficial for the people is our objective. The total funds available with a Panchayat are limited to Rs. 4.5 to Rs. 5.5 crore, which will not be enough for the area's development to the scale they have undertaken. He thinks that if industrialists would engage in development of Panchayats, things will change drastically. With uncertainty he also expresses that "it is not about what will happen tomorrow! Till the period where they cooperate; we can do whatever we can" (K V Jacob 2019). At the time of this interview, he was not associated with any political parties, which he justifies as "when both comes, usually an individual will try to foster

the other through this which will be a problem,” and also because of the practicability of implementation of interests and objectives. According to him, politicians are only concerned about their survival other than the development of the nation (*naadu*). They could not adjust to what happened in Kizhakkambalam when they saw another system performing tasks in a short period which they could not accomplish (Ibid).

The Panchayat members, except the President, had no prior experience in politics; two of them worked as teachers in aided and private school. All of them were part of twenty20 from the beginning. Chinamma Poulose, member of ward 3 Makkinikkara and chair of the development standing committee, became part of twenty20 because the activities of twenty20, like building a house for the homeless, providing treatment help for patients, widening the roads to BM&BC standards by expending own valuable money for the people (Members 2019).

Response of Twenty20 Office Bearers:

Biju, ward secretary of Ward No 15 Pazhanganad, who stands with those who do good, describes the origin of twenty20 as it sprouted after a war. An attempt by Congress to shut down the stall (now a food security market) made people violent and resulted in them losing the election. He further says if sir (Sabu M Jacob) says to vote for Congress or LDF, he is willing to vote (B. John 2019).

High Power Committee member Paul Mathew from Ward No 19 Pukkattupady, who works as a painter and purchases weekly from the food security market, argues that after twenty20 came, changes occurred not only in his life but also in the whole Panchayat, in every way. He supports twenty20 because they are doing good things

(P. Mathew 2019). For Manju, a high power Committee member and housewife in Ward No. 2 Malayidamthurth; the most significant change after twenty20 came was getting groceries for half price because of which there is no scarcity. She explains that earlier they used to purchase in small quantities, now because of bulk purchasing everything will be in stock (Manju 2019). Mathai, a high power member from ward no 6 Chelakulam says the “cost of living came down, twenty20 also changed the face of the panchayat, there is no starvation, roads have been widened, with Rs. 1500 in card people can buy worth Rs. 3600” (Mathai 2019). Sasi, a High Power Committee member (auto driver from Ward No 3 Makkinikkara), spends Rs.1800 allotted for his family of 3 and says that “people started getting at-least minimum sufficient food after 2020 came” (Sasi 2019).

A female high power member (ward 9 Njaralloor working in a sticker cutting shop) was a Congress supporter and, after working in twenty20, turned against Congress. With a family of four members, she purchases Rs. 3000 per month from the twenty20 food security market, which is sufficient. For her, the most remarkable change after the entry of twenty20 is that her expenditure came down. She commented that she had not explored the opposing sides, but they were still doing good. That is worth it. For her, voting for twenty20 or whom ever they say is the minimum they can do for the favours they get, or else it will be a liability (Kavya 2019).

Thampi, a high power Committee member (a rubber tapping labourer from Ward No. 10 Kunnathukudy), supports Congress but prefers twenty20 above Congress. “Our objective in life is to survive somehow. It is not politics. There is no benefit in going with political parties when an organisation (twenty20) is there to take care of the problems of our life like drinking water, availability of food, problems in life. These

are important for human life to progress.” Before twenty20 came, there was no time for him when everything (particularly grocery and food items) would be sufficient at home. After twenty20 came, there was no scarcity. Describing his brother, who got beaten up and was imprisoned many times for Congress, who later joined twenty20 “after twenty20 came, people are fed-up of politics, and none attends programmes of political parties” (Thampi 2019).

George, a high power Committee member (retired from Gemini circus from Ward No 11 Vilangu), says that things have changed in such a way that, if he (Sabu M Jacob) calls and says to vote for this particular person, they will do. There is no poverty, and can buy sufficiently from the food security market. He also received aid worth Rs.2.5 lakh to finish constructing his house. His opinion about politicians is the same as that of twenty20 (George 2019). Sham, a high power Committee member (retired engineer settled in Ward No 15 Pazhanganad since 1982), claims to be a CPI (M) supporter since 1978, has been with twenty20 since its inception, does not seem satisfied with twenty20 about the changes that happened after twenty20 he replies “what changes? The only difference is that we get grocery items at lesser cost.” (Syam 2019).

CHAPTER-V: TWENTY20 AND KIZHAKKAMBALAM PANCHAYAT

Kizhakkambalam Panchayat with six wards was constituted in Kunnathunad Taluk of Ernakulam district in 1953 after the *Thiru-Kochi Panchayat Raj Act of 1950* was passed to reconstitute Panchayats in the former Thiru-Kochi state in accordance with Article 40 of the Indian Constitution. Geographically, with an area of 31.57 km, Kizhakkambalam is composed of small hills, high plateau, slopes that seem appear as layers, plain with minor slopes, paddy fields, and marshes. The Panchayat has a population of 36,000 people and 8000 houses, where ten percent belong to the SC/ST community. The majority of the population are small-scale farmers primarily dependent on agriculture (Warrier 2015; Mathrubhumi 2018). After the enactment of the 73rd Amendment Act, the number of wards increased to 11 and 19 by 2015. The Panchayat's primary revenue sources include licence fees, professional taxes, and building taxes. In 2011, the literacy rate was 94.74 percent, higher than the state average. (Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat 2018, 18).

Historically, the Kizhakkambalam region was known as *Kazukkambalam* because of a *kazukk* (gallows) erected by the then rulers in the uninhabited area, where people from far-flung places came to witness the execution of criminals. Furthermore, *ambalam* means a market or place where people gather. Over a period, the *Kazhukambalam* became *Kizhakkambalam*. There is also a prevailing view that *ambalam* came from *Ayyankazhi Dharma Shastaha Temple*, an old temple in the region (Master 2009, 9).

Agriculture remains the means of livelihood for the majority in Kizhakkambalam. The feudal system in the area where most of the land owned by *Kalathil Kartakanmar*,

Swarnath Mana, Valloppillimana, Ulloor Devaswom, Akavoormana, and a few land lords' who used to lease land to tenants for large amounts ended by the enactment of Land Reforms by the Government of Kerala (Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat 2020). The area experiences severe water shortage in summer. The only irrigation project is the Periyar Valley Canal, which irrigates 673.47 hectares of land (Master 2009; Krishi Bhavan 2019). As per the data from the Krishi bhavan, 400 hectares of land is used for agricultural purposes, and 10 hectares is uncultivable. Of the 4600 farmers in the Panchayat, none has large farms (more than 10 hectares). However, 450 farmers belonging to the SC community own nominal farms (less than one hectare). None of the ST community has land for cultivation (Krishi Bhavan 2019).

The Panchayat has significant number of small-scale industries in Kerala (Sasidar 2017, 14). Kitex group is the only large-scale industry in the area. Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat's development plan 2018-19 addresses the entrepreneurial potential of the village: "Kizhakkambalam is Kerala's entrepreneurial village; entrepreneurship is dissolved in the people's blood. It has the industrial background and resources to develop as the satellite city of Ernakulam, the industrial capital of Kerala. In the absence of central and state owned enterprises, there are small and large institutions of international standard" (Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat 2018, 12).

Another notable feature of Kizhakkambalam is its location - almost the same distance as the main towns in the district. It is designated by the local population as the heart of the district (Pradesh Research Bureau 2017). The Panchayat is bordered to the north by Vazhakulam Grama Panchayat, to the south by Kunnathunad, to the west by Edathala and Thrikkakara Panchayats, and to the east by Vengola Panchayat. The District Panchayat is 13 km away, and the nearest railway station is Aluva (12 km).

Kizhakkambalam Panchayat Elections: Early Phase

The first elections to the Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat were held in 1954 for six wards: Kizhakkambalam, Oorakkadu, Pazhanganad, Malayidamthurth, Vilangu, Kummanode. K A Anthony, popularly known as *Anthapan Chetan* from the Indian National Congress, was elected as the first Panchayat President, and C C Varghese became the Vice-President. The governing council continued for ten more years even after their term ended. The second election was held in 1963 after the enactment of the *Kerala Panchayats Act* 1960. Interestingly, both K A Anthony and C C Varghese were the President and Vice-President. After 16 years, the third election was held in 1979, and K A Anthony was elected as the Panchayat President for the third time. However, the first no-confidence motion in the Panchayat compelled him to quit. E V Poulouse Ethakan took over as the second President in 1986 (B. Mathew 2015, 23–25).

In the first three elections in the Panchayat, other than political confrontation, personal interests and egos played a crucial role. Out of the 11 wards, Congress and the CPI (M) won five seats each in the fourth election conducted in 1988. With the help of Mr Baby Muttuvanchery, who won as an independent candidate from the *Thamarachal* ward, CPI (M) was able to break the tie. K V Elias, from CPI (M), was elected as the fifth President of the Panchayat, and the governing council remained in office for seven years till 1995. The two-tier Panchayat system in Kerala was replaced with a three-tier system with the passage of the 73rd Amendment Act and the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act 1994. Six general elections to local self-government institutions were held under the three-tier system. The total number of wards in Kizhakkambalam was 11 in 1995, 15 in 2000, 18 in 2005, and 19 in 2010, 2015 and 2020.

However, the political uncertainty in 1988 manifested in the election held in 1995, where CPI (M) and Congress won five seats. The system of 'lot' was used for the first time in Panchayat to select the President. Daisy Isaac from CPI (M) became the first woman President of Kizhakkambalam (M. Mathew 2015, 23–25). During this reign, the CITU labour union of CPI (M), under K K Elias's leadership, initiated a historic strike in front of Kitex Limited against the industrial group demanding job security and the right to form a union. The strike lasted 465 days and was one of the longest in Kerala. However, this strike was exposed by the CPI during the 2010 Panchayat election. The CPI claims that the strike was foiled by a joint attempt of M P Rajan (nephew of M C Jacob), the local level leader of Congress, and the leaders of CPI(M), who were in good ties with M C Jacob (Abdul Rahman P M 2019; P. D. Varghese 2019; Anoop 2019; Mustafa 2019).

The failure of this historic strike also created problems within CPI (M) and allegations of corruption and groupism within. K K Elias, becoming the Local Secretary, was the breaking point. As a result, around 1500 members in the Panchayat left the CPI (M) and joined the CPI, including P. D Varghese, the then secretary of the Thamarachal branch of CPI (M), now present Local Secretary of CPI. They justified their shift to CPI to uphold democratic values and be part of LDF (Ali 2010).

In 2000 Congress took power with a stunning victory of winning 13 seats, and M P Rajan became President. There were only two members in the opposition. Anil Kumar of the CPI (M) was chosen as president in the 2005 election by lot to break a tie between nine Congress members on the one side and seven CPI (M) members plus two members of the Democratic Indira Congress (*Karunakaran*) (DIC(K)) on the opposite side (B. Mathew 2015, 23–25).

Table 1: Names of the Presidents:

S. No	Name of the President Elected	Party/Organisation	Term/Period
1	K A Anthony	INC	1953
2	K A Anthony	INC	1963
3	K A Anthony	INC	1979
4	E V Paulose Ethakkan (by no-confidence motion)	INC	1986
5	K V Elias	CPI (M)	1988
6	Daisy Isaac	CPI (M)	1995-2000
7	M P Rajan	INC	2001-2005
8	M K Anil Kumar	CPI (M)	2005-2010
9	Jolly Baby	INC	2010- 2015
10	K V Jacob	Twenty20	2015 -2019
11	Jincy Aji	Twenty20	2020 -

Source: Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat.

In the 2010 election number of wards were delimited to 19, there was a split in LDF. The CPI alleged that CPI (M) had prevented the CPI from operating in Kizhakkambalam by excluding them from the meetings and programmes of the coalition front and even physically assaulted party members, Party offices, the residence of the Local Secretary K V Jacob. Many fake cases were filed against members of CPI after losing the Kizhakkambalam SCB election. The conflict was unresolved despite the LDF and UDF leaders' intervention. Both of them remained hostile to each other. During the 2010 Panchayat elections, the CPI left LDF and decided to contest separately. K V Jacob, the CPI local secretary, contested in the UDF panel as an independent candidate (Ali 2010).

On the occasion of the 125th year of its celebration, the INC used the occasion for its Panchayat electoral campaign in 2010. In its public statement, the Congress local leadership criticised the CPI (M) for not standing with the have-nots and went ahead to say that CPI (M) has become workmen of capitalists (Kitex). Along with bringing up issues like corruption, they mock the LDF Panchayat by saying that “their only

achievement is that they made Kizhakkambalam dumping yard (including toilet a chemical waste) of Anna capitalist” (Congress Mandalam Committee 2010).

Kizhakkambalam unit of Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), urged voters to reject Marxist candidates, claiming that the Kizhakkambalam Panchayat had turned into a waste tank for everyone. They accused the CPI (M) in general and K V Elias and group in particular of facilitating big business (Kitex and Anna companies) to dump waste along the sides of roads and in the Periyar Valley Canal, which has a negative impact on the residents of the Vilangu, Choorakkode, Kavungaparambu, and Kummanode wards (INTUC 2010).

UDF filled 17 candidates of INC and one of Muslim league in Chelakulam ward, then Local Secretary of CPI (panchayat president of twenty20 Mr, K V Jacob) contested as CPI independent candidate in UDF panel from ward two Maleakaemolam (K. V. Anthony and Mathew 2010). Three candidates of SDPI contested from Chelakulam, Kavungaparambu, and Kummanode wards. While BJP had only one candidate from Kummanode ward, nine dummy candidates with same/similar names contested against UDF candidates, and four contested against LDF. UDF won 17 seats, and only two independent candidates who contested in the LDF panel won. Jolly baby from Choorakkode ward became president and Elias Karipra the vice President.

The Problem of Pollution and the Crisis of Kitex:

In the company’s history, the controversy over pollution against Kitex Garments Limited, located in the ward no 11 Vilangu and 6 Chelakulam wards, has grown to be quite contentious. The Kitex Garments Limited production unit is a 1.8 million square

feet factory with two major processing plants for children's wear dress section in a 64-acre plot (Chief Environmental Engineer 2012). The waste treatment plant of Kitex is located in ward 6, Chelakulam. By the mid-1990s, when Congress was in power at Panchayat, the industrial group faced hardships in getting the required clearances from the Panchayat (Basheer 2018).

The development plans of 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 reported massive pollution from the companies as there is a shortage of drainages for industrial run-off from companies (Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat 1999; 2000). Further, the company accommodates around 6500 labourers, where women are given dormitory accommodation on the company's top floor, and it was observed from field visits that the male employees are accommodated in labour camps with tin roofs. Abdulrahman, Action Council president, Kavungaparambu ward member belonging to SDPI party, and environmentalist C R Neelakantan who led the protests, said that "initially in 2012, the protests on pollution were against releasing toilet waste from the labour camps to the wetlands" (Neelakantan 2019; Abdul Rahman P M 2019).

People of Vilangu, Choorakkode, Kavungaparambu, Chelakulam, and Kummanode wards are victims of pollution (INTUC 2010; Anoop 2019). The company established a bleaching and dyeing plant that is said to be the only one in Kerala, and during 2006-12 when the LDF headed the Panchayat under the Presidentship of M K Anil Kumar (Anoop 2019). According to UDF bleaching and dyeing facilities that had been dismantled from Tiruppur due to judicial intervention were installed in Kizhakkambalam with the help of the Marxist party in 2006. Despite the opposition of all nine UDF members, the decision was passed by the casting vote of the Panchayat President (Karipra 2019).

According to the then Panchayat Vice-President Elias Karipra, human waste and chemical waste from the company is collected in three wells and is released when it rains or when wells are out of capacity to Periyar Valley Canal, brooks, Private lands, and wet lands. Forty acres of paddy fields is uncultivable. He further explains that UDF Panchayat Committee, which came to power in November 2011, took the allegation of pollution seriously. Gram Sabha of the three wards has decided to take strict action against the company. Vilangu *Padashekaras Samiti* (Paddy land committee) has submitted a separate petition (Asianet News 2012). The local agricultural official confirms that the company's effluents entering the paddy fields have grown terrible and that individuals have also had skin irritations as a result. (Jayamala 2019). It was also reported that the DMO inspected the factory and nearby water bodies in November 2011 (Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat 2012).

Though the Gram Sabha of the Chelakulam, Kavungaparambu and Vilangu wards demanded action against the company's pollution. However, the Panchayat neither approved nor rejected the company's application to renew its licence. According to Rule 12 of the Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, it should be provided within one month of receiving the application (B. Mathew 2015, 10). Because of this technical loophole, the company functioned as if having a deemed licence. previously, when the UDF headed the Panchayat in 2001-2006, it denied the licence to the company (Sanandakumar 2012; *The Times of India* 2012). The Action Council started protesting by blocking the roads to the company. As a result, the pollution problem has grown quite serious; within three months, 15 police cases against locals and five against the company were registered (Deputy Police superintendent 2012). Even the

Panchayat secretary filed an FIR against Kitex Garments for not taking action to solve the issue of water clogging nearby the company on a complaint by the residents.

Since the company was not implementing measures to check pollution, people started holding mass protests. The first protest of this kind was a meeting held on June 26, 2012, by the Action Council of Chelakulam against the pollution of air and water by Kitex company. A mass petition signed by 850 people from three wards of the Panchayat was also submitted to the District Collector, Health Department, and the Chief Minister. Remarkably, V. P. Sajeendran, the MLA of the constituency, inaugurated a protest meeting held at the West Chelakulam Taikavu junction. The Panchayat President and members, the Block Panchayat members and respondents, and representatives of political parties like CPI (M), Muslim League, and SDPI participated in solidarity with the protests (Elias 2020).

The UDF administration in power requested the Department of Health and Pollution Control Board (PCB) to inquire regarding pollution when the protests become more intense (Karipra 2019). In July 2012, the PCB reported pollution, suggesting refusing consent and initiating legal proceedings (Chief Environmental Engineer 2012). The Panchayat initiated the procedure to issue a stop memo in October 2012 based on the inquiry of the Panchayat secretary, which found pollution from the company causing problems like uncultivable land, risk of skin problems from water, and polluting wells. According to the Panchayat Vice President, “action is only taken against only one company under the group” (Karipra 2019; *Mathrubhumi.Com* 2012).

While the protest continued against the company, the company’s turnover increased from Rs. 1.8 crores in 1995-96 to Rs. 312 crores in 2011-12, followed by Rs.317

crores in 2012-13, and expected further increase to Rs. 425 crores in 2013-14, also the net profit Rs. 27.11 crores in 2011-12, increased Rs. 29.38 crores in 2012-13. Thus in 2013, when the company faced trouble from the local people and the Panchayat, the company had grown in terms of trade and revenue. The products manufactured in Kizhakkambalam were available in almost 16,000 retail outlets across the US and Europe in different brand names. The company was aiming to be number one in the production of kids' garments within three years, and the registration process to introduce its brand of kids' wear by July-September was in the final stage. With Rs. 117.6 crore reserves and an increased book value of Rs. 25.76, the company was more robust in the market during 2012-13 (*Business Line* 2013).

The Indian National Congress and Sabu M Jacob: Fiasco

The protest against the company intensified in 2012. On September 26, 2012, a protest meeting was held in Kizhakkambalam against Kitex Garments Limited, which was then an apparel park worth 256 crore, earning 550 crores through foreign trade employing 4,000 people (Elias 2020; *The Times of India* 2012; B. Mathew 2012, 9; *Mathrubhumi.Com* 2012). Simultaneously, the UDF-led State government organised a Biennial investors summit under the banner of *Emerging Kerala* to attract investments to the state. On September 28, 2012, soon after the investors met, the Kitex company MD expressed concern that even though the company was paying a tax of Rs. 60 lakhs to the local Panchayat, it denied the necessary licence. The MD declared that the firm is leaving Kerala and moving its 262 crore expansion plans to Sri Lanka or China, which would add 4,000 new jobs and boost the company's revenue to Rs. 1500 crore by 2015. He also commented on Kerala's loss is Sri Lanka's gain, where it takes

only a week to get all clearances-alleged that the UDF Chief Minister of the state also did nothing to assist (*The Times of India* 2012; Asianet News 2012).

Sabu M Jacob also lamented that in the current system, the powers of Panchayats are great, and the whole Panchayat is being led against the company by a strong MLA in the district, rendering all departments helpless. In such a situation, it is risky for the company to invest a huge amount here (Asianet News 2012). Sabu M Jacob denied and did not accept the issue of pollution but said that “the issue is being bubbled as the problem of the whole Panchayat when that affected population is only limited to 500-600 from Chelakulam and Kavungaparambu wards out of the total 32,000 people of the Panchayat” (B. Mathew 2012). In addition, he stated that he wanted to relocate his business from Kizhakkambalam to Tamil Nadu or Gujrat. (Ibid).

While trying to trace the triggering point for the anti-pollution agitation, Sabu M Jacob commented in an interview that “in 2011 some auto drivers charged extra fare from the employees of the factory. For the smooth movement of the employees, we purchased three Auto rickshaws, and it is because of this incident the local people came with the protest against pollution and intensified it” (K V Jacob 2019; B. Mathew 2012, 10). He accuses the auto drivers of taking help of “a right-wing Muslim organisation SDPI.” A dispute between Sabu M. Jacob and his cousin M. P. Rajan who is then block Panchayat member and local Congress politician, is said to be another factor (Philip 2015b). Lastly, the personal issues with the local leadership led by MLA of Thrikkakara constituency Benny Behanan (Asianet News 2012).

Though initially, P. K. Kunhalikutty, the Kerala state industrial minister of the UDF government, commented, “let them go if they are” (Asianet News 2012), however, it

became a problem, an incident of political harassment soon after the industrial summit “Emerging Kerala” organised by the government (Sanandakumar 2012). When the government of Kerala came with a press note that it managed to attract investors to Kerala, the Kitex MD Sabu M Jacob reacted by saying that Kerala does not have suitable conditions for industries to grow and develop. As a result, he claimed, residents of Kerala are investing in other states rather than Kerala, and foreign investors are not doing so. He stated, “Kerala does not have a clear industrial policy and transparency” (B. Mathew 2012, 10).

Thus the issue was at its peak, and opposition leader V S Achuthanandan of CPI (M) raised the issue in the Legislative Assembly and questioned the investor-friendly face of the government (Anoop 2019; Karipra 2019). Meanwhile, when the protest on pollution reached its 100th day, the CPI state secretary Pannian Raveendran suggested that the Chief Minister and Industries Minister initiate negotiation and settle the issue (*The Hindu* 2012). The state government got involved and urged the Excise and Fisheries Minister, K Babu, MLA V P Sajeendran, and the District Collector to settle the dispute (*New Age* 2014). By the end of February, in the fifth meeting with the company management and other concerned parties reached a compromise. As per the minutes of the meeting, the company agreed that there is pollution and agreed to temporarily address it by collecting effluents in its own property and install a treatment plant within six months as a long-term solution (District Collector 2013; Karipra 2019; Anoop 2019).

However, the company never complied with the agreement reached in the compromise meeting, and the people continued to protest. In 2013 a protest march was held at the Panchayat, where thousands participated. On May 17, 2013, thousands

of people picketed the Panchayat (Elias 2020). Despite these, the Congress headed Panchayat never issued a stop memo (Philip 2015b). Elias Karipra, the vice President of the Panchayat at the period, stated in a news hour debate: “Kizhakkambalam Panchayat is not against industries. Our vision is that new enterprises should come to Kizhakkambalam, which lies close to the smart city and info park. We are giving all kinds of help to industries” (Karipra 2019).

Political entry of twenty20:

The electoral politics of the Panchayat and the political entry of twenty20 are part of subsequent events which are interlinked. In the middle of all these controversies, the Kitex group organised welfare activities that took shape in twenty20. Within one year, twenty20 expended eight crores rupees’ worth of projects (*Mathrubhumi* 2014b). After they initiated welfare activities, hundreds of people came daily to vent their grievances in front of Sabu M Jacob.

Meanwhile, when the existing LDF Panchayat council had two and a half more years to complete its term, the Panchayat President Jolly Baby of Congress issued a public statement clarifying the role of Panchayat in the developmental activities of Kitex. She alleges that “the Kitex group is up to butchering democracy, attempting to destroy Congress in the name of development, insulting people’s representatives by putting them in their employees’ list” (J. Baby 2013). She further requested that people who have cooperated with Twenty20 refrain from doing so since they conflict with the Panchayat (Kitex Garments Limited 2013). The Action Council organised a protest in front of the Panchayat for not taking action against the pollution of Kitex. Soon after, twenty20 managed to rally a sizable crowd in a protest against the governing

Panchayat for interfering with development initiatives undertaken by twenty20 for the benefit of the people. Sabu M Jacob publicly questioned the ruling Panchayat in his speech in front of the Panchayat headquarters and accused both the Panchayat and politicians in general of corruption (Ibid).

Furthermore, he announced that he is doing all these to help people, and he does not have any gain or plan to contest elections. He also condemned the hoarding erected by Congress, calling the protest one sponsored by Kitex. Sabu M Jacob said, justifying the protest, “we came on the ground and sponsored when those elected were not for any use” (Ibid). Citing corruption and usage of low-quality materials, twenty20 started to intervene and disrupt road works (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2013a).

Throughout these programmes, the local leaders of CPI, CPI (M), BJP, and Congress (I) were present, including protests by twenty20 where the twenty20 highlighted its work while attacking Panchayat (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2013b). The regular faces from CPI were then Local Secretary and Panchayat member K V Jacob who later became the Panchayat President of twenty20; Area secretary T T Vijayan and Local Secretary P P Baby represented CPI (M).

Kitex under the banner of twenty20 launched new projects each month of 2014, and thus twenty20 remained in people’s attention almost every day or week. They took up the issue of *Laksham Veedu colonies* of Vilangu, Njaralloor, Makkinikkara, Chelakulam, and Kanampuram. The company criticised the Panchayat, stating that the Panchayat had failed to work for the people and not allowing the company to solve the issue of the inhabitable condition of the houses (*Mangalam* 2014a). Separate meetings were held with farmers, merchants, *kudumba sangamam* (family meet), and

auto/taxi drivers to discuss their concerns and to create an auto taxi-friendly village by 2020. (*Mangalam* 2014b), and anti-liquor meets (*Mathrubhumi* 2014a) were convened. Attempts were made to form organisations among these groups. However, they could form only one among auto/taxi and goods vehicles, called Kizhakkambalam Auto Taxi Association (KATA), which was formed with 220 members (*Mangalam* 2014b). Ward-level family meets were held in every ward, cultural programmes, public meetings, and feasts were part of it. When the welfare activities of twenty20 took over the construction of roads, and the Youth Congress and CITU installed hoardings appreciating it (*Mangalam* 2014c). Meanwhile, Section 135 and Schedule vii of the Companies Act 2013 were notified.

The Panchayat had a bar and a retail shop of the Kerala State Beverages (M&M) Corporation Limited.⁴ The twenty20 demanded the closure of the state government-owned beverages shop, which they calls a ‘curse of Kizhakkambalam’, and to abandon the attempt to reopen the sole Bar in the area (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2014b). A protest march with massive participation of women to the beverages outlet was held. Countering this, the local leadership of Congress demanded to stop the protest and installed hoarding. The twenty20 responded that politicians need alcohol to maintain supporters around them. (S. M. Jacob 2014). The bar was shut due to the liquor ban policy pursued by the UDF-led state government. Additionally, the authority to grant the licence to open new liquor shops was transferred to Grama Panchayats (UDF Panchayat Committee 2015). Despite the fact that the Panchayat had previously decided not to renew the licence of the beverages outlet, Twenty20 criticised the Panchayat, claiming despite being intended to be on the side of the

4 A fully owned Kerala government company entrusted with the monopoly in purchase and distribution of Indian-made foreign liquor, beer, wine, foreign-made foreign liquor and foreign-made wine in the state of Kerala. Colloquially known as Beverage

people, it is now opposing both the law and the people. They urged people to recognise the double stand of those in power (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2015c).

Meanwhile, the state Election Commission announced general elections for the LSGIs. In response, the twenty20 announced an indefinite protest against and it was inaugurated by *Catholicos Baselios Thomas I*, the head of the Jacobite Syrian Christian Church in Kerala (Ibid). The issue was kept alive, and protests intensified till the election date. The mode of *dharna* was changed to a hunger strike from October 2, Gandhi Jayanthi, which lasted till the day of the election (*Mangalam* 2015a). UDF Panchayat committee criticised Sabu M Jacob that “in his attempt to claim credit for shutting down the beverages outlet, he sought to close a government institution and walled it off, which brought the charge of non-bailable offence against hundreds of persons, including women” (UDF Panchayat Committee 2015). The Panchayat Committee organised a public meeting on September 8, 2015, against attempts of twenty20 “to make people slaves by giving incentives, false claims by twenty20, claims regarding beverages protest and election delimitation case” MLA Sajeendran of the constituency, and Benny Behanan participated (Ibid).

Twenty20 organised spectacle named *Onam Utsav 2014*, branded as *Mega Onam Mela* claimed to be for ordinary and poor, in a 50,000 sq feet pavilion, where twenty20 members got a discount of 10 to 50 percent on home appliances, groceries, vegetables, electronics, and clothes. The discount given to twenty20 members was double compared to non-members (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2014c). In the evenings, there were cultural events, dramas, stage performances, musical nights, and picture sessions with cartoon characters for children. Since the Onam Mela, people have been noticed to be increasingly drawn to twenty20 (*Mangalam* 2014d).

While the Pavilion to host *Onam Utsav 2014* was under construction, the Panchayat issued a show-cause notice to twenty20 for not taking permission. Counter to this, a day before the Chief Minister's inauguration of the new Panchayat office building, Twenty20 called for a protest against the Panchayat's decision and asked the people to boycott the inauguration. It was also a time when the Chief Minister and the government faced corruption charges in the Solar Scam. On August 25, 2014, the day of the inauguration, twenty20 organised protests, took out a procession which concluded in a ground where the construction of the Pavilion was disrupted (Mangalam 2014d; Malayala Manorama 2014a).

Political parties like CPI (M), CPI, BJP, Kerala Congress, Congress (I), and caste organisations like SNDP, NSS, Kerala Pulayar Maha Sabha (KPMS), Sambhava Society, and Vishwakarma Samiti conveyed solidarity to the protest (Ibid). K V Jacob, the CPI local secretary and Panchayat member from ward No 2, boycotted the inauguration function. The Panchayat President responded to his absence as "he has never raised any difference of opinion in Panchayat council meetings. He has been working for Kitex group for a long time" (Pradesh News Team 2015).

BJP organised a Hartal on the day. The solar scam and subsequent protests against the Chief Minister are one account of the cause of the hartal; the other is regarding the stop issued. Ajo John, the secretary of the Youth Congress, asserted in a pamphlet that there was an agreement between the BJP and Twenty20. Sabu M Jacob, he claims, remarked in his speech to the Panchayat a day before the election, "no one should attend the inauguration tomorrow. All the arrangements were made for hartal and given whatever was required for those in need." Congress alleges that twenty20 paid BJP for it (A. John 2014). He criticises CPI (M) in a different poster, saying the group

“was with the capitalists hoping to win the Panchayat election but was flung aside by them.” The CPI is criticised for “receiving money from capitalists and working for them,” while DYFI is criticised for its not entirely compromising stance on labour and pollution from Kitex (Toms 2015; A. John 2014).

In a pamphlet dated November 24, 2014, local secretary P P Baby criticised the youth Congress for weaving fake stories against CPI (M). Addressing the allegation that “CPI (M) is with twenty20,” he clarified their stand that let it be any party, CPI (M) would not oppose anything which benefits ordinary people, but CPI (M) will work in compliance with its policy and programmes. If any of these organisations try to foster apoliticism CPI (M) will be at the forefront, opposing it from foot to toe. He takes it as a family feud between younger and elder brothers, which threatens the peaceful atmosphere of the Panchayat. He says that personal likes and dislikes should not dictate the politics of Kizhakkambalam. Twenty20 did request LDF to organise hartal, which they declined because they believe that that Panchayat is of the people, irrespective of those in power. Understanding the political motive of twenty20 after the incident, CPI (M) parted ways (P. P. Baby 2019; Mustafa 2019; P. D. Varghese 2019). However, a CPI (M) member and beneficiary of twenty20 discloses that Sabu M Jacob broke the ties saying, “you did not help me when I requested your help, then what is the point in cooperating with you!” (Vijayan 2019a).

Ignoring the stop memo, the Pavilion was built by twenty20, and the market opened on the scheduled date, August 28, 2019. A march organised by political parties against twenty20 turned violent, a vehicle of Kitex garments was set ablaze, and section 144 was imposed by the district collector. According to twenty20, around 3000 people who came to the Pavilion were trapped and could not go home because

of the violence. Twenty20 accused the violence as organised by Congress and SDPI as conspired by an MLA (Benny Behanan) (*Malayala Manorama* 2014b; *Janmabhoomi* 2014). Panchayat sealed the Pavilion because of the violence and was reopened only on September 3, 2019.

This incident gave political mileage to twenty20, and more people were attracted to them. Politicians began to have a reputation for being self-serving and preventing other people from doing good. However, some locals remark that, “if it was a good intention (from twenty20) to help people, they should just have given an application on a white paper with Rs. 5 stamps. The Panchayat is to be blamed when it was closed due to no licence” (A. C. Varghese 2016).

By mid-October, twenty20 started house visits in all wards, with Sabu M Jacob himself visiting people in their houses. The first road construction with people’s cooperation was taken up in Poyyakkunnam ward, where a road 105 metres long and 10 feet wide was built for 12 families who did not have a road. Individuals provided free five feet of land on both sides for free. (*Malayala Manorama* 2014c). This was taken as a model by them in developing the Panchayat roads. In December, a job fair advertised as a “job for 1000 people” with qualifications 8-12 class for the age group 18-26 was held (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2014a). A market named *Christmas Mela* was held in December, where goods were offered for half the market price.

Electoral Preparation of twenty20:

The reputation gained via their welfare operations, the animosity they instilled against political parties, and the card and monitoring systems associated with twenty20 were

critical in assuring their electoral victory. Initially, Sabu M Jacob declared that there was no politics, but he started attacking politicians later. The protest for shutting down the beverage outlet prior to the election attracted many, especially women. The Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat could only spend Rs. 22.4 crores in 4 years, whereas the twenty20 could spend more than double it in 4 years.

The President, secretary, board members of twenty20, and the local people supported the same account of the entry of twenty20 into politics. For all of them, it is the politicians who forced them into politics. The Panchayat was not happy with the work of twenty20 and came with objections. The turning point was the protest, with the participation of 2,500 people, organised by twenty20 against the stop memo in Malekkamalam colony. In 2013 UDF-led Panchayat and SDPI created violence, declared 144, and managed to shut down the Onam Mela on the day it was inaugurated (A. Anthony 2019; *Keralasabdham* 2018; Vijayan 2019b). Twenty20 targeted the Panchayat governing council in power, as well as Congress leaders such as Block Panchayat member M P Rajan (Sabu M Jacob's cousin) and Panchayat Vice President Elias Karipra. Sabu M Jacob alleged corruption by the Panchayat and Congress leadership. Congress replied with the figures and retaliated that twenty20 exaggerated the figures (A. C. Varghese 2015b).

In an election-related article published in April 2015 by a resident of the locality, there was not even a hint about twenty20 contesting in the elections (B. Mathew 2015). Nevertheless, by 2015, the involvement of twenty20 seemed to be oriented toward electoral contestation. Each house maintained and constructed with the aid of twenty, which was not publicised in the beginning was publicised. By the time of the election, citing that the platform was being used to implement the President's agenda

(Sabu M Jacob), almost all businessmen in the area discontinued their association with twenty20 (Sethunath, K P 2015). There were only Sabu M. Jacob and Sevana group among the 55 small and large capitalists/industrialists who were there since its inception (Vijayan 2019a).

Kitex organised many spectacles for different celebrations, later adopted by twenty20, where they managed to attract crowds. The ground in front of the factory is where many events occur. All these functions are attended by Politicians, Ministers, and heads of the Jacobite Church.

Since January 2015, complimentary tea and snacks have been distributed in the Primary Health Center (PHC), Aid was given for constructing a temple (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2015a). In mid-February, *Vishu-Easter Mela* was held, and vegetables were provided at half price for cardholders. A reception was given to the head of the Syriac Orthodox Church, *Moran More Ignatius Ephrem II*, on the company premises, where the *ente veedu* project to convert double homes in *Laksham Veedu* colonies to single houses was inaugurated. Twenty20 started gaining strength, and clashes between its members and political parties erupted twenty20 started holding protest meetings against any assaults on its members (*Keralakaumudi* 2015a).

Local people were given jobs in the companies, which was not the practice before twenty20 was established. Twenty20 accused the Panchayat governing council and political parties of promoting alcoholism and marched 10,000's of people to the Panchayat office, called the Protest Meeting in 2015. Furthermore, NSS, an upper caste organisation and Kerala Pulaya Maha Sabha (KPMS), a Dalit organisation, shared the stage with twenty20 as regular attendees.

The Congress Mandalam Committee organised campaigns against the accusations of twenty20. The Mandalam secretary, A C Varghese in a pamphlet published for this purpose, cited that it is a joint propaganda by twenty20, BJP, and the Left front against the Congress and the Panchayat governing council. Varghese challenged Sabu to prove the allegations and denounced the family of Jacob and the history of frauds committed. Furthermore, he denied the allegation of alcoholism and portrayed it as a strategy to amass the Church's and its people's support (A. C. Varghese 2015a).

In April, when the election notification was scheduled to arrive by the end of the month, uniforms were distributed for free among auto drivers and AITUC union labourers with twenty20 printed on them, and a half-price vegetable market was started within the first two weeks (*Keralakaumudi* 2015b). Twenty20 held its convention in the first week of May, where people were allowed to purchase groceries and home appliances for half price and started branding the essential daily items being sold by them for half price with their labels on it (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2015b). Around 7,000 cards were distributed among families who rushed to the market. By the end of May, just five days before the final notification of the Delimitation Commission was published, Sabu M Jacob declared that twenty20 would contest if people agreed (*Mathrubhumi* 2015).

According to the Delimitation Commission's final notice, three wards of Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat would become part of a new Grama Panchayat, and a new ward would become part of Kizhakkambalam, bringing the total number of wards to 17 (Government of Kerala). Several litigations were filed against the newly formed Panchayats. Forty-seven cases were received regarding the delimitation, upon which the single bench of Kerala HC, in its judgement in *Saifuddin K vs the State of*

Kerala, quashed the Government orders. The government filed an appeal which the division bench refused (State Election Commission 2016, 67).

Out of the forty-seven cases, nine were from Ernakulam district, and eight were from Kizhakkambalam Panchayat, mainly sponsored by twenty20. Though the verdict was by considering all forty-seven cases together, twenty20 claimed it was because of their intervention and the three famous advocates they appointed that the delimitation throughout Kerala was halted. A victory procession of 2,000 people mobilised within three hours through SMS was taken out to celebrate the verdict. Before approaching the court, Sabu M Jacob approached the Chief Minister, asking not to divide Kizhakkambalam Panchayat, which he claimed to be futile because of the intervention of MLA Benny Behanan (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2015i).

Electoral Operation of the twenty20:

Bency Shaju, Ward Secretary of twenty20, claimed that they campaigned “like ordinary politicians, went after people and asked them to vote” (Shaju 2019). In an appeal for votes, it prepared a motto to ensure *truth*, *dharmā*, and *justice*. Sabu M Jacob declared that it was their dream to make Kizhakkambalam the best model Panchayat in India. Twenty20 has portrayed itself as different from other political parties, projecting itself as a people’s organisation. It wants to stand with the people and find the solution to their problems. He declared that to date, Kizhakkambalam was renowned for Anna and Kitex. From today onwards, it should be in the people’s name. Every single individual of Kizhakkambalam should be able to say, “this is my Kizhakkambalam,” a collective (*kootayima*) of reasonable minds (*nalla manasukaludae*), working only for people’s welfare, desiring for the (*nanma*) welfare

of the land (*naadu*). If you have complete faith in this organisation and the people leading it, you elect us (S. M. Jacob 2015).

While the anti-beverage demonstration in Kizhakkambalam entered its second stage, twenty20 conducted a Panchayat convention on September 27, 2015, and nominated a short-listed list of three candidates per ward from which the ward committees will select one. It was reported that BJP might contest in the front lead by twenty20 (*Madhyamam* 2015a). According to a post-election remark from Sabu, “twenty20 had even planned an alliance with the CPI (M), which did not materialise” (Philip 2015a).

The twenty20 declared its final list of (independent) candidates to all the 19 wards of the Grama Panchayat, three Block Panchayat divisions, and one district Panchayat on October 11, 2015 (*Madhyamam* 2015b). Followed by a 20-point manifesto and a letter signed by every contesting candidate that they are giving people the right to recall them was published on October 23. The candidates with political background were the then CPI Local Secretary K V Jacob from ward no 19 Pukkattupady, CPI (M) branch secretary M V George from ward no 15 Pazhanganad, and Lalu Varghese from Congress.⁵ Lalu Varghese joined twenty20 since UDF denied her ticket and contested in ward no 11 against UDF President candidate and former vice President Elias Karipra. Rest of the candidates were newcomers without any political background.

The first page of the Manifesto had a photo of Sabu M Jacob with a flag of twenty20 in a crowd, with the caption *njanumund munnil, ningalodoppam, ningalioralayi* (me also in front, alongside you, as one among you) (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2015h).

5 All three resigned from Twenty20 but remained Panchayat members; Lalu Varghese and M V George resigned in January 2018 and K V Jacob in January 2020, respectively. They were unable to be disqualified for defection under the Kerala Local Authorities (Prohibition of Defection) Act, 1999 since they stood as independent candidates.

According to Congress leader Chacko P Mani, this is because he has already established an image, and the public is unfamiliar with the candidates (Mani 2019). The Manifesto states the objective of twenty20 is “to make Kizhakkambalam a model Panchayat among the 2,72,000 Panchayats in India is our dream.” Moreover, the aim is “systematic development in every field with foresight and the scientific method.” The 20-point manifesto had all the points in the objectives of the society twenty20 bye-law and CSR policy of Kitex garments limited.⁶

In the declaration to call back candidates, the contesting candidates have promised that if they get elected and “the voters lose trust in the working and responsibility of the member, they will have authority to recall them” (Toms 2015; Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2015g). Soon after the candidates were declared, twenty20 published its list of accomplishments since its inception. They claimed that within two and a half years, they could solve the people’s basic problems, which led to the development of Kizhakkambalam and the people. The main achievement highlighted was providing daily essentials for half price, through which they arrested inflation and eradicated starvation. The list of protests was also numbered among the achievements (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2015g; Toms 2015).

The Opposition parties filed a complaint against the twenty20 for violating the Model Code of Conduct (MCC). The twenty20 started selling essential daily items at half the market price to the members through the food security market during the election as a violation of the Model Code of Conduct. Though the returning officer reported it as a violation of the model code of conduct, the twenty20 got a favourable verdict from the Kerala High Court (Kitex Garments Limited 2015).

6 For the Full text of the Electoral Manifesto of twenty20, see Annexure-III

Meanwhile, twenty20 tried all possible means to get the electoral hype. Since twenty20 is not a political party, and the candidates contest as independent candidates, their demand for a single election symbol was rejected; Mango, Grape, and Pineapple were allocated as symbols. Twenty20 protested against it in front of the election officer, demanding anyone symbol or pineapple as a symbol for all the candidates. All the candidates were arrested and released for disrupting the work of a public official (*Mangalam* 2015c). Photos of the candidates behind the bar and Sabu M Jacob's consolation were circulated on social media (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2015d). When they were released, a procession was taken out through the town at midnight, and a grand welcome was organised (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2015e). Tactically, this problem was utilised as electoral propaganda; consequently, the images from the prison were shared the next day with the caption: *Nammudae Sahodharimar Aarkku veandi Jayililayi... Ee Naadinu Veandi... Namukku Veandi...* (Our sisters went to prison for whom?) (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2015f).

Major Political Parties and the 2015 Elections:

By the time of the election, the Panchayat President, Jolly Baby, said our chief rival was still the Left Democratic Front, and the vice President, who was the UDF Presidential candidate, said that twenty20 would not pose any threat to the fortunes of the UDF (Sethunath, K P 2015). The UDF panel consisted of 19 candidates (2 from the Muslim league), two district Panchayat members, and the Panchayat President contested as a district Panchayat member (*The Hindu* 2015, 20).

In a pamphlet dated October 16, 2015, published by the name of Congress, *Mandalam* Secretary N C Varghese defended the UDF candidates Elias Karipra and

M B Rajan, who have a clean image, and criticised twenty20 for attacking their leaders. He claimed that the INC- led by UDF, Congress leaders, and the people who cooperated- led the locality (*naadu*) to prosperity. UDF's objective was to lead our village to spectacular development and called everyone to "come together for a Kizhakkambalam with good basic infrastructure, unparalleled serviceability; above all pollution-free and intoxicants-free Kizhakkambalam" (A. C. Varghese 2015a).

UDF came up with its 24-point election manifesto on October 23, countering the activities of twenty20. The main promises made in the UDF Manifesto are: providing vegetables and groceries for half price; completing the housing programme by making *laksham veedu* into single houses; creating a special project for cancer-kidney-heart patients; Ensuring drinking water for all; growth and development of Kizhakkambalam; Make the Panchayat intoxication free; Complete organic farming Panchayat. The Manifesto stressed the Grama Panchayat candidates, especially mentioning vice President Elias Karipra who asked for votes for the locality's (*naadu*) development and families' future (Karipra 2015).

UDF claimed that they (the Kitex group) are afraid of the UDF Panchayat administration because the UDF denied permission for the Anna-Kitex Company's unnatural acts and attempts to purchase the people. Additionally, the Manifesto accuses Sabu in person for acting as if he is above law. The Manifesto claims that "if anyone grows like an autocrat, it will be like when the English East India Company which came here and made the rulers fight among themselves and looted all the wealth and freedom which made the population slaves" and warns people not to repeat such mistakes (Rajan and Mathew 2015).

Congress questioned twenty20's charity by enslaving the vulnerable, ordinary, poor beneficiaries by providing modest incentives and concealing the element of CSR mandated by the Government of India. The Kitex falsely claims credit for the present state of Kizhakkambalam. It is not because of Kitex. It is because of people's political, social, and cultural efforts. The UDF Manifesto asked people: "do we want to make Kizhakkambalam like one of the endosulfan victims? Do we need to take the last supper (*kolachoru*) from Kitex and welcome slavery of the locality (*naadu*)? UDF urges the people to join them to protect democracy -overall freedom and development of the territory (*naadu*) (Rajan and Mathew 2015).

On the Left Front, the CPI, who was supposed to contest for six seats, decided not to contest and asked CPI (M) to contest in those seats and supported LDF (P. D. Varghese 2019). The LDF manifesto, which came out in October 2015, focused on issues like corruption and slavery, inflation, and communalism. LDF came up with a long-term development plan by overcoming challenges through cooperation and cooperating. LDF asked the people to vote for them to bring the development of Panchayat by completely utilising central and state government projects.

Compared to a 20-point manifesto of twenty20 and a 24-point Manifesto of UDF, the LDF came up with a manifesto divided into 11 segments which consisted: agriculture, governance, drinking water, general development, health, Harijan welfare, industry and employment, energy, education and sports, women's welfare, elderly welfare. The items addressed to counter twenty20 are self-sufficiency in agriculture, farming in fallow lands, 75 percent of subsidy or farmers, protection of brooks, solving drinking water issues, houses for homeless, *Laksham veedu* double houses to single homes, road development and construction of ring roads to ease traffic, renovate

Kizhakkambalam market, utilisation of CSR fund of different agencies for development, awareness against alcohol and intoxicants, stop water pollution, women welfare through *kudumbashree* and SHGs, fixing street lights, raise the standard of schools. Other items included compliance with Gram Sabha and corruption-free governance, ensuring Gram Sabha's once in 3 months, increase participation, SMS information related to Panchayat notifications, timely service delivery, and people being allowed to view Grama Panchayat meetings (P. P. Baby 2015a).

The UDF warns people to keep their eyes wide open enough to see that the corporate group laid its foundation by fraud, and it is the second generation of feudalists disguised as compassionate. If a corporate takes up the welfare of the locality (*naadu*), it will cease to be corporate. Hypocrites being at the centre stage, future and present, is described as a graveyard for the whole people is being dug, the capitalist is serving sweets with poison to kill rats, what is visible here is walking off a slaughterer with a bunch of leaves in front of the goats to the slaughterhouse, the real picture of the wolf who is guarding the sheep is yet to wait and see. However, the attack on twenty20 looks pretty vague, like the employees in the company are underpaid, and the ten conditions for the candidate is more challenging than the ten commandments in the Bible (P. P. Baby 2015b).

The request for votes of two LDF candidates also covers vague issues instead of focusing on local specific issues and merely concentrated on the apolitical nature of twenty20. As per the campaign material of Neena Santosh, who contested from ward no 14, Thamarachal, "to arrest corruption in governments and to protect the threatened secular heritage of India, a governing council with an ideological base and orientation is necessary." She promises equally irrespective of religion and locality,

fight against corruption, implement *janahita* projects for the locality's development (*naadu*), and renovate the agricultural sector if elected (Santhosh 2015).

Similarly, Jolly Baby, President in office and Kizhakkambalam block 5th division candidate to Vazhakulam Block Panchayat, also addressed the same issues. She touches the issues like how foreign and Indian corporates are working together in looting the people, inflation, educated youths have become a commodity with no value in the job market and private and professional education institutions. She claims that, a political organisation with commitment can deal with these pressing problems. She asserts that she became a candidate in UDF panel because she is aware that LDF is capable of handling that task (Mathai 2015).

The Electoral Victory of twenty20 in 2015:

When the results were declared on November 7, 2015, twenty20 had a stunning victory. Of the 19-Grama Panchayat constituencies, 17 candidates won, and two out of three block division candidates won by a huge margin. Kizhakkambalam Grama Panchayat reported the district's highest polling percentage of 90.5 percent (*Mathrubhumi* 2015b). Soon after the election, Sabu M Jacob disclosed his intention to register twenty20 as a political party (Basheer 2016b). In the Kavungaparambu ward, SDPI candidate and Action Council President Abdul Rahaman won with a lead of 200 votes against twenty20 candidates. In Chelakulam ward ⁷, Anoop P H of Congress contested as an independent candidate in the UDF and won with 48 votes majority against twenty20 candidate. In the 2010 election, the LDF candidate won in Chelakulam with 527 votes against the Muslim League candidate.

7 Where the effluent treatment plant of Kitex is located.

In Kavungaparambu ward, a slip of the tongue by an election campaigner of twenty20 is said to be the reason for the candidate's defeat in the Kavungaparambu ward. Dr T O Poulouse, a college lecturer and motivational speaker who was hired by Kitex group to train Sabu M Jacob and Bobby M Jacob to deal with the public, was a regular presence in election campaign meetings of twenty20 (J. George 2019). He brought up a biblical reference saying, "those with 2020 are Deers, and others are Pigs." Since it is a Muslim-majority area, it hurt the sentiments of the people. People got agitated, and the meeting got chaotic. The organisers, including Sabu M Jacob, were allowed to leave only after apologising (Group conversation with people of Kavungaparambu Ward 2019). Later on, he was removed from the charges of twenty20.

While in the 2010 General elections to Grama Panchayats, a total of 20235 votes were polled in Kizhakkambalam, 17 UDF (Congress candidates) won with a total of 10121 votes (50.01 percent), LDF won two seats (Karukulam and Chelakulam) and came second with 7755 votes (38.32 percent), SDPI got 392 votes (1.93 percent) in 3 wards, and BJP with 37 votes (0.18 percent) in one ward (State Election Commission 2010).

However, in the 2015 Gram Panchayat election, out of the total 21670 votes polled, twenty20 got 11901 votes (54.91 percent), UDF came second with 6377 votes (29.42 percent), LDF third with 2211 (10.20 percent) votes, followed by SDPI with 628 votes (2.89 percent), BJP with 448 votes (2.06 percent), 102 votes (0.47 percent) of independent candidates and three invalid votes. The highest vote of twenty20 was in ward No 8 Choorakkode with 838 votes (in 2010, the UDF candidate won with 641 votes, and LDF finished second with 454 votes) and the lowest with 310 votes in ward No 5 Kavungaparambu (in 2010, the UDF candidate won for 460 votes and LDF finished second with 433 votes) (State Election Commission 2015).

Congress finished second in all wards except in Makkinikkara. The UDF received 511 votes in ward number six, Chelakulam, which their candidate won (whereas in 2010 Muslim League candidate lost with 356 votes against 572 votes of LDF), and the lowest was in ward No 18 Oorakkadu with 212 votes (whereas in 2010, the UDF candidate won for 478 votes against 424 votes of LDF).

LDF failed to receive more than 100 votes in 10 of the 19 wards. For LDF, the highest was in 291 votes in ward No 3 in Makkinikkara (in 2010, where they lost with 295 votes against 682 votes of UDF) and lowest in ward No13 Kizhakkambalam with 14 votes (in 2010, where UDF won 563 votes against 366 votes of LDF). In Kizhakkambalam ward CPI (M) was criticised for “not even able to mobilise its party members’ votes” (Group conversation with people of Kavungaparambu Ward 2019).

At the Block Panchayat level, two of the three candidates put forward by twenty20 won. While the Block Panchayat constituency consisted of 8 Panchayat wards, the candidate who contested from the Chelakulam division had only two wards within the Panchayat. Out of the total 27576 votes polled, twenty20 got a total of 11155 votes (40.45 percent) from the three block division, UDF with 8834 votes (32.03 percent), LDF with 5495 votes (19.92 percent), BJP with 1061 votes (3.84 percent), SDPI with 751 votes (2.72 percent), independent candidate with 280 votes (1.01 percent).

In the Pukkattupady block division, the total votes polled for the Grama Panchayat candidates in the eight wards (Ambunadu, Malayidamthurth, Makkinikkara, Karukulam, Malekkamolam, Kanampuram, Oorakkadu, Pukkattupady) was 8656. The vote share of twenty20 was 4815 votes (55.62 percent), UDF was 2439 votes (28.17 percent), LDF was 1214 votes (14.02 percent), BJP was 153 votes (1.76 percent), and

independent candidates was 35 votes (0.40 percent). The vote shares of block division candidates also showed the same trend. The total votes polled for Pukkattupady block division candidates was 8712 votes, where the share of twenty20 was 4556 votes (52.29 percent), UDF 2478 votes (28.44 percent), LDF 1382 votes (15.86 percent), BJP 232 votes (2.66 percent), and 64 votes (0.73 percent) for the the independent.

In the Kizhakkambalam block division, the total votes for the Grama Panchayat (in Kummanode, Choorakkode, Njaralloor, Kunnathukudy, Vilangu, Poyyakkunnam, Kizhakkambalam, Thamarachal) was 9218. The vote share of twenty20 was 5711 votes (61.95 percent), UDF was 2691 votes (29.19 percent), LDF was 432 votes (4.68 percent), BJP was 267 votes (2.89 percent), SDPI was 50 votes (0.54 percent), and independent candidates was 67 votes (0.72 percent). The vote shares of block division candidates also showed a similar trend. The total votes polled for Kizhakkambalam block division candidates was 9239 votes, where the share of twenty20 was 5304 votes (57.40 percent), UDF 2822 votes (30.54 percent), LDF 733 votes (7.93 percent), BJP 322 votes (3.48 percent), and independent candidate was 58 votes (0.62 percent).

The Chelakulam block division consisted only of Kavungaparambu and Chelakulam wards, where 2774 votes were polled, but 9625 votes were polled in 8 wards for the block division candidate. The vote shares from both the wards in the Grama Panchayat election: twenty20 was 778 votes (28.04 percent), UDF was 876 votes (31.57 percent), LDF was 512 votes (18.45 percent), BJP was 27 votes (0.97 percent) and of SDPI was 578 votes (20.83 percent). The vote share of block division candidates of twenty20 was 1295 votes (13.45 percent), UDF 3534 votes (36.71 percent), LDF was 3380 votes (35.11 percent), BJP was 507 votes (5.26 percent), SDPI was 751 votes (7.80 percent), and the independent candidate was 158 votes.

The District Panchayat constituency of the Vengola division consisted of two Panchayat, the UDF Panchayat President of Kizhakkambalam Jolly Baby was the UDF candidate who won. The total votes polled for the district Panchayat candidate was 48123 votes. UDF candidate won 19881 votes (41.31 percent), followed by twenty20 candidates with 12731 votes (26.45 percent) in the second position. PDF finished third with 12055 votes (25.05 percent votes), followed by BJP with 2604 (5.41 percent) and an independent candidate with 811 votes (1.68 percent).

The presiding officer in one of the polling stations narrated his experience, saying that though the polling agents of all political parties came, when he talked to them, they said to him that, in twenty20, we all are one (*nammal ellam ottakettanu*) there is no CPI (M), Congress, BJP in it. In elections other than Panchayat, they can contest on party lines. Here we are contesting as one, and it showed the result. From this election duty, he understood that twenty20 is being supported by the people irrespective of politics. That is why they won with a huge majority.

Why twenty20: Peoples Response

Most people other than the office bearers of twenty20 responded that they feel good because they supported twenty20. Sandeep from ward No. 11 Vilangu, who works as a cook, usually votes for LDF but supports twenty20 in Panchayat elections because of their incentives and services. He said people would be there where they get something that worked here (Sandeep 2019). Devasya from ward No. 14 Thamarachal also has responded that people left the political parties because of the benefits associated with twenty20 (Devasya 2019). Shibu, a painter from ward No 15

Pazhanganad, expressed that “if the company has benefited or not, why should we ask? We should only consider if we have a profit. This is my policy” (Shibu 2019).

Stanley, a resident of ward No 2 Malayidamthurth, stood with twenty20 and responded that if someone comes and does a good thing, we cannot say not required, but he is doubtful whether it may change in the future (Stanley 2019). According to Anil Kumar, the words of twenty20 are not like politicians; they say they will do it (A. Kumar 2019). A female teacher of ward No 3 Makkinikkara commented that Jayalalitha might have stolen but did many good things. The people before had promised many things, but none did anything. Most people wanted to maintain the organisation to have the card and take benefits (Maya 2019).

Mary Joseph, who is economically well off, a retired teacher from ward No 2 Malayidamthurth, responded that we might feel that they are mad. However, they will react to those who are hostile to them (Mary Joseph 2019). Mohanan, a security guard from ward No 11 Vilangu, who politically supports whoever does good and benefits only from the market, comments, “when they lead us, will do like what they say” (Mohanan 2019a). Biju, an auto driver from ward No 18 Oorakkadu, claims to be a supporter of communist party, narrates that when his “father was ill and was hospitalised for around one and a half years people from Congress and Communist party used to pass in front of the house, but have never done anything.” When twenty20 was started, his mother asked Sabu M. Jacob for money to finish the ongoing house development, and he graciously obliged. He asks, “what will one gain from waving flags, shouting slogans, and being physically assaulted working for political parties?” (Biju 2019).

Changes after twenty20

The twenty20 managed to change the buying habits of the people. Usually, people in rural areas purchase daily essentials in small quantity and tries to limit their use. People began purchasing in bulk after the food security market was initiated. They contend that there is no scarcity because of the half price. Majority are happy that they are getting goods for half price. Since “a four-member family can be managed with monthly expense of 2500 against 5000,” they call it profit (Stanley 2019), there are no constraints in purchasing, and it increases their savings.

People also argue that standards have increased, development, and good roads have been built. Regarding service delivery, they claim that they are now aware of the Panchayat’s services (Sandeep 2019), and there is no corruption in Panchayat (Beeran 2019). A supporter of Congress opined, “It’s not the old Kizhakkambalam”.

A few respondents gave a neutral response that there isn’t much of a change. Some residents from ward No 15 Pazhanganad said there is “nothing special.” Gopalakrishnan (gulf returnee and owner of a farm) from ward No 7 Kummanode; for him, changes mean getting grocery items at less price. A resident of ward No 10 Kunnathunad sees development as the construction of good quality roads, but as a side effect, water pollution comes from the companies in Vilangu Choorakkode wards. Gangadharan, retired from PWD of ward No 17 Kanampuram, responded that the household expenditure depended on changing market rates. Now there is a reserve stock of 50 percent, and in every house, the housewife is 110/100 percentage satisfied. He is of the opinion that this should be taken to the state level. However, he further confesses that it is being done for the advantage of the company, that Sabu M Jacob has acquired almost one-quarter of the lands in the Panchayat (Gangadharan 2019).

CONCLUSION

Post globalisation and liberalisation political process in India witnessed a trend of depoliticisation and redefinition of power relations by strengthening neoliberalism. Power shifted in the system from people and people representatives to the capitalist class. Though a withdrawal of state is demanded through deregulation, a strong state in creating territories of exception is also demanded parallel. Governments lost power and became unable to find solutions to contemporary problems. The system of governance that came to manage the system reduced the governments to stakeholders where the decision is taken with the market as a reference. Here the decision-makers got limited to economic actors and excluded those without capital from the market. It resulted in leaving the decision-making power with the capitalist and governments as mere actors who are supposed to manage conflict and facilitate negotiation. Advocating individual liberty and freedom through the market, neoliberalism and its governance secured the power of the capitalist class and ignored issues like social justice, equality, and environmental sustainability.

The category of citizens is redefined as a consumer in the market, where individual identity is expressed by consumption. The former system of politics was discarded for not attending to the new consumer citizens. In their attempts to accommodate the changes, political parties alienated people from the political process.

Globalisation opened up more venues of profit where governments of developing countries competed among themselves to attract investment by offering incentives to the MNCs in search of the most hospitable location to maximise profit. Corporations, since their establishment, have tried to influence governmental decisions in favour of

them to maximise profit. Market and non-market strategies are used to maintain competitive advantage and profitability. Corporate involvement in politics kept on increasing and eroding democratic principles worldwide. However, the increasing impact of corruption due to corporate influence proved the neoliberal assumption that corruption in regulated countries will reduce by competition.

Development remained merely an ideological expansion of Post- Second World war capitalism. The compulsion of development in the third world in the form of aid and advice did not deliver the promised results. In the third world, leaders embraced development as a liberating force. Development in the third world came with exclusion and discrimination, and modernisation got limited to make favourable conditions for the private sector to profit, leaving no room for the state in economic development. It was only the local elites who benefited from it. Failure of development resulted in economic crisis, environmental damage, poverty, and social and cultural crisis. Though it did not meet the expectations of the people, the states continued its mere role of technological modernisation to catch up with the world.

When modernisation through development failed, international agencies kept altering the theories of development, which reached radically opposite standpoints. It moved from the state and market intervention and search for a single policy to a complimentary approach of both state and market, discarding the idea of meta policy. Institutions are to be constituted for such mechanisms where globalisation and localisation were advocated to balance the shortcomings of previous development experience. In the new model, decentralisation and urbanisation were given importance as the ideas like decentralisation are taken as if it deepens democracy. However, on the contrary, it puts pressure on backward classes of society to find

solutions for their fundamental problems. Decentralisation in developing countries came as part of pressure from international lending agencies.

Throughout the world, conventional political mechanisms (state, traditional political parties, and democracy) are weakening. Because of its absorption into the market, it cannot command the economy and successfully act on behalf of the people. Politics and individual politicians were devalued due to the compromises made in this process. As a result, people lost interest and trust in these mechanisms. Political parties focused more on short-term goals to be in power by occupying the ideological centre and employing new means to mobilise funds, resulting in the devaluation of politics and politicians. The withdrawal of the state from organised politics and economics severely impacted the political process and role of the state. The role of the state in social transformation got undermined. It resulted in vacuums in the structure of the state, which reinforced depoliticise among people. As democracy got inflicted with issues like corruption, criminalisation, inefficiency, etc., the survival of ordinary people depended on staying out of the political process, and their vulnerable economic state incapacitated them from entering the normal economic process.

In this context, the present was taken up to study the corporate sector entry into the local self-governance institutions in one of the southern states of India, Kerala. The Kerala state, which is known for its vibrant civil society, the electoral victory of Communists, decentralisation with the people's campaign programme, and all the more known for its Kerala model of development in achieving the highest Human Development Index in India, witnessed a corporate capturing the local self-governance institutions by defeating the mainstream political parties in the electoral system.

Thus the entry of a corporate company through electoral victory is the puzzle this study tries to understand critically. The present study was conducted in the Kizhakkambalam Panchayat of the Ernakulam district of Kerala. The political entry of twenty20 sponsored by a corporate company demonstrated that when power is delegated to lower levels of people in the third world, the corporates are left with no other option than to appropriate those means of power. Thus, its political entry through the local body elections created a discourse. It seems closer to people and more responsive when it is in power. Twenty20 was effective in articulating the neoliberal idea of the state regarding efficiency, accountability, transparency, addressing citizens as a consumer in the market by creating needs and promoting to consume of the goods and services that they offer by taking advantage of existing depoliticisation and unrest against policies and politicians and also employing the mechanism of surveillance.

The study found that when the population was affected by pollution from the company, the people approached the political parties and local authority, the Panchayat. The Panchayat administration and Political parties took a stand in favour of the people, which was obviously against the company's interest. In Kerala, immense powers were devolved to Panchayats. Panchayat, the legitimate source of the people's power, questioned the company's functioning, thereby making the survival of the company uncertain. Though the company management tried to solve it through corporate political activity, the strength of people's protests was intense.

Moreover, political parties and politicians, being responsible to the people in a democracy, stood in favour of the people. Since the lion's share of the company's employees under question were migrant labourers who were not unionised. There was

no local resistance against it by the employees to protect their employment. Dejected by the dilemma and understanding of the power of people in a democracy, the company appropriated it by expanding its corporate capital.

The study found that, with its corporate management style, the company accumulated the data needed to make plans devised by understanding the needs of the people. They managed to spread political education to the people by building credibility and portraying themselves as an alternative to the existing system. Since the company has its industrial base in Kizhakkambalam, it was a straightforward process in Kizhakkambalam. The company streamlined the people's dissatisfaction and addressed them as consumers appropriately. The company's monetary and human resources were used for the purpose. Because of the political corruption inducted by the corporates, people had difficulty trusting the politicians. Where he openly claimed that he had to bribe them. Corporations generally give money to political parties to shape political opinion. Dissatisfied with the results of political parties, they expended the money directly to the people without the mediation of political parties.

Initially, Twenty20 managed to acquire people's support with its cooperation with political parties. The Left Political parties, primarily because of their ideological comprise followed by resource constraints, tried to take up this opportunity for their political advantage by ensuring primarily their supporters are the beneficiaries of the programmes of twenty20 and tried to reach the maximum number of people through them. Thus the Left political parties tried to expand their base with the company's support and win the next election. Remarkably, the political parties failed to recognise that the loyalty and trust of their people shifted to the company.

Initially, Sabu M Jacob began criticising the ruling Panchayat for interfering with the developmental works undertaken by the company, and he was able to rally a huge number of people to oppose the Panchayat. Only a few months earlier, people severely affected by pollution emissions from his own company staged a massive protest.

Though Congress, which ruled the Panchayat, tried to restrict the company's activities over time, the local leadership divided. The other mainstream political parties that protested against the company ended up silent, and eventually, politicians in general. As political differences widened, political parties left the twenty20, limiting this to the leadership. Including the CPI (M), looks failed to comprehend the seriousness on the ground.

The Corporate political activities of twenty20 are indirect, where public opinion was manipulated for their gains. Twenty20 established the corporate legitimacy of Sabu, Kitex companies, and twenty20. By the time of the elections in 2015, an image of Sabu M Jacob, the managing director, and coordinator of twenty20, was established hegemonically. Once the hegemony was established, the ideas manufactured were communicated to the people, and the company took over the people's consent.

The functioning of twenty20 is not less than that of a political party. The only thing that makes them stand out is the use of professional services. These professional services are affordable only because of the monetary resources at the sponsoring company's disposal. The study found that the candidates put forward by twenty20 and the qualities and qualifications denote a shift from a candidate's already existing perspective to that of a manager, which people accepted. Though these characteristics

were put forward, the community/caste considerations were also given due importance without much publicity. The loss of the Kavungaparambu ward due to a communal reference made by a campaign in 2015 and electoral victory in 2020 substantiates it further. The population affected by pollution from the company rejected the candidates.

The study found that the people voted for twenty20 because of their problems with politics and politicians, and the incentives are given by twenty20. The strong organisation structure of twenty20. The intense surveillance and biopolitical compulsion over those who could not avoid the twenty20.

The study found that the electoral victory of twenty20 in Kizhakkambalam materialised when the corporate acted as a pressure group and took over the Panchayat. The company could bring changes in power relations because of neo-liberalism advantage. CSR made corporate entry into local governance possible by turning citizens into consumers and biopolitical surveillance. Though political parties initially cooperated with the corporate, later on, the company took over after ensuring people's support, which was achieved by expending money. The cancellation of membership cards for the people who voted in Service cooperative banks against the organisation's decision seems to have put more compulsions on people.

The people were more attracted to work with twenty20 than politicians, and once they entered the other side system, compulsions and coercions were used to maintain people's allegiance. Tough decisions are taken on popular consensus; it is built upon the framework constructed by Sabu M Jacob, the company MD. The organisation is strict, and there is no space for flexibility, and freedom for people to act of free will is

restricted. Actions against the so-called collective condescension taken come with strict action of removal from the beneficiary list. Many anti-democratic decisions were taken, and members who did not comply with those were met with actions. The study found that three things are coming together: firstly, the ordinary people's disappointment with political parties and with established political processes; secondly, a new model of administration or an alternative to established process which is coming from this company; lastly, the biopolitical surveillance and compulsion to act in a certain way.

The political parties could not withstand the neoliberal pressure and cope with the activities of the corporate company. The Left political parties later accepted that they had gone wrong in associating with twenty20, which could have been avoided.

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ANNEXURE-I

Production Unit of Kitex Garments Limited:



Source: (Sonu Surendran 2019)

ANNEXURE-II

Discounted items offered by twenty20:



ഇനം	തുകൾ / അളവ്	മാർക്കറ്റ് വില	ട്വന്റി20 വില	ഒരു കാർഡിന് പരമാവധി വാങ്ങാവുന്നതും
1 പച്ചക്കറി കിറ്റ്	1 KIT	200	100	ആഴ്ചയിൽ ഒന്ന്
2 അരി (വടി പ്രിയം ക്വാളിറ്റി)	1 Kg	34	15	20 Kg /മാസം
3 അരി (വടി എക്സ്പോർട്ട് ക്വാളിറ്റി)	1 Kg	40	20	
4 അരി മട്ട	1 Kg	42	25	
5 പഞ്ചസാര	1 Kg	38	15	3 Kg /മാസം
6 വെളിച്ചെണ്ണ	1 Ltr	200	100	4 Ltr /മാസം
7 പാമോയിൽ	1 Ltr	80	40	
8 ചായപ്പൊടി	250gm	70	35	1 Kg /മാസം
9 അപ്പപ്പൊടി	1 Kg	60	25	8 Kg /മാസം
10 പൂട്ടുപൊടി	1 Kg	60	25	
11 ദാൽ കിറ്റ് ആവശ്യപ്പെട്ട് 500 ഗ്രാം, കടല 500 ഗ്രാം, വസ്തിപയർ 500 ഗ്രാം, ചെമ്പുപയർ 500 ഗ്രാം	2 Kg	180	90	4 Kg /മാസം
12 മുളക് പൊടി	500gm	80	40	1 Kg /മാസം
13 മല്ലിപ്പൊടി	250gm	44	22	500gm/മാസം
14 മഞ്ഞൾ പൊടി	100gm	17.5	9	200gm/മാസം
15 ഇറച്ചി മസാല	100gm	28.5	15	1 Kg /മാസം
16 ചിക്കൻ മസാല	100gm	29.5	15	
17 ഫിഷ് മസാല	100gm	27.5	14	
18 പച്ചക്കറി മസാല	100gm	26	13	
19 സാമ്പാർ പൊടി	100gm	25.5	13	
20 രസം പൊടി	100gm	27	14	
21 ഏത്തപ്പഴം	1Kg	50	25	2Kg/ആഴ്ച
22 ഞാലിപൂവൻ	1Kg	50	30	2Kg/ആഴ്ച
23 ഉപ്പ്	1Kg	15	8	1 Kg/മാസം
24 പാൽ	500ml.	20	10	4Ltr/ആഴ്ച

Market price of daily essential items and that offered by twenty20 in the market along with purchasing limit of individual items.

Source (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2015)



Market price of vegetables and that offered by twenty20 long with the discount percentage.

Source: (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2015)

ANNEXURE-III

Election Manifesto of twenty20 released during the 2015 elections:

- 1) solve drinking water issues for all
- 2) house for all eligible through the 'ente veedu' project
- 3) electricity and toilet for all,
- 4) daily essentials for half price, arrest inflation, eradicate poverty, where each household will benefit per year 25,000-50,000,
- 5) special programme for pregnant ladies and kids,
- 6) free food and medicine to the poor and needy,
- 7) social health security for kidney and heart cancer patients,
- 8) raise the standard of every school and ensure excellent education for each kid. May construct a school of a high standard if needed.
- 9) equal justice for all,
- 10) complete eradication of corruption,
- 11) install CCTV cameras for security,
- 12) will make the Panchayat intoxication free,
- 13) implement schemes to nourish kudumbashree and NREGA,

- 14) digital education for housewives,
- 15) implement a special package to ensure the welfare of auto/taxi, coolie, and others engaged in similar kinds of jobs.
- 16) take steps to achieve self-sufficiency by promoting farming, fish, poultry, cattle, vegetables, fruits, etc.
- 17) will make the Panchayat waste-free.
- 18) will ensure safe and comfortable travel by rubberised tarring main roads and putting tiles on minor roads.
- 19) will take measures to increase the income of small and large-scale traders three times by attracting people by constructing cinema halls, play areas for kids, and increasing basic infrastructure like roads, pavements, parking areas, public toilets,
- 20) will change Kizhakkambalam to a high-tech internet Panchayat by providing free WIFI and computers for a low cost.

Source: (Twenty20 Kizhakkambalam 2015h)

ANNEXURE-IV

Road development project of twenty20:



Ongoing work of developing Panchayat roads to BM&BC standards (National Highway standards).

Source: (Sonu Surendran 2019)

CONFERENCE CERTIFICATE



BHAGWAN MAHAVIR UNIVERSITY
Bhagwan Mahavir College of Management



NATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY E-CONFERENCE

ON

"VOCAL FOR LOCAL TO GLOBAL"

Certificate

This is certify that DR./MR./MRS SONUSURENDRAN
of DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF HYDERABAD

has participated and presented a paper entitled " GROWTH OF A LOCAL VILLAGE AND GLOBAL BUSINESS OF

A CORPORATE FIRM: AN ANALYSIS OF THE CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF KITEX GARMENTS LIMITED IN KIZHAKKAMBALAM GRAM PANCHAYAT, KERALA.

in NATIONAL MULTIDISCIPLINARY E- CONFERENCE on " Vocal For Local to Global " Organized by Bhagwan Mahavir University on 27th June 2020. We appreciate his/her valuable contribution in enriching the event.

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by Sonu Surendran

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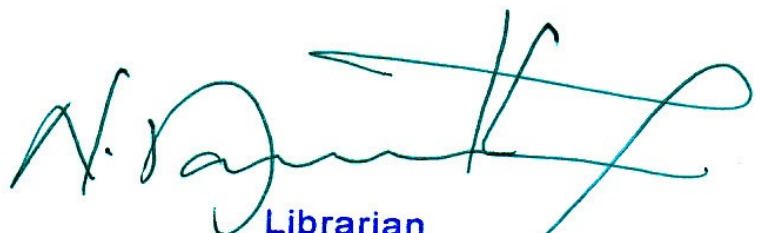
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