

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT FOR SOCIO ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION. THE KERALA DEVELOPMENT MODEL, INDIA

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Abstract

The Kerala development model has been debated over the past 3 decades. This writing is an attempt to illustrate the extra ordinary development indices of Kerala through comparing it with other states in India and some of the developed countries. The efforts of the renaissance movement leaders like Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, Sahodaran Ayyappan, Chattambi Swami, V.T.Bhattathirippadu etc and the political reforms of the first communist Government of Kerala under the leadership of Mr. E.M.S. Namboothirippadu during the past century are also well acknowledged. Unlike the other Indian states, Kerala have its human development indices equaling with the developed countries such as USA, Norway, Serbia, France, Finland, Japan, Ireland, Canada, Germany, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, and Russia. Other than this the high level of democratization, secularism and political education of the society also enables the state to be in a distinctive position among the rest of India.

The state has 93% of education, health facilities available in every corner of the state and has no slum dwellers. All children under the age of 14 are enrolled to school and has almost 100% electrified houses. The revolutionary political reformations of the first communist ministry such as Land Reform Act, Free Public Education and Free Public Health facilitated the state in its present HDI achievements. The renaissance movement leaders started school education in the state which was further more widened by the government after the states formation. The role of Christian missionaries was also acknowledged in the educational achievement of the state. Total literacy campaign in 1990s by the government with the support of civil society and Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad lead the state to achieve highest literacy rate in the country. This enabled the people with social capital as well as financial capital to attain upward social and economic mobility. Health system of the state and governments comprehensive and continuous support also played a key role in the Kerala Development Model.

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Abstracto

El modelo de desarrollo de Kerala se ha debatido en las últimas 3 décadas. Esta escritura es un intento de ilustrar los índices de desarrollo extra ordinarios de Kerala a través de su comparación con otros estados en la India y algunos de los países desarrollados. Los esfuerzos de los líderes del movimiento renacentista como Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali, Sahodaran Ayyappan, Chattambi Swami, V.T.Bhattathirippadu, etc. y las reformas políticas del primer gobierno comunista de Kerala bajo la dirección del Sr. E.M.S. Namboothirippadu durante el siglo pasado también son bien conocidos. A diferencia de los otros estados indios, Kerala tiene sus índices de desarrollo humano igualados con los países desarrollados como Estados Unidos, Noruega, Serbia, Francia, Finlandia, Japón, Irlanda, Canadá, Alemania, Suiza, España, Portugal y Rusia. Aparte de esto, el alto nivel de democratización, secularismo y educación política de la sociedad también permite al estado estar en una posición distintiva entre el resto de la India.

El estado tiene un 93% de educación, instalaciones de salud disponibles en cada rincón del estado y no tiene habitantes de barrios marginales. Todos los niños menores de 14 años están matriculados en la escuela y tienen casi el 100% de casas electrificadas. Las reformas políticas revolucionarias del primer ministerio comunista, como la Ley de Reforma Agraria, la Educación Pública Gratuita y la Salud Pública Gratuita, facilitaron al estado en sus logros actuales del IDH. Los líderes del movimiento renacentista comenzaron la educación escolar en el estado, que fue ampliado aún más por el gobierno después de la formación de los estados. El papel de los misioneros cristianos también fue reconocido en el logro educativo del estado. La campaña de alfabetización total en la década de 1990 por el gobierno con el apoyo de la sociedad civil y Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad llevó al estado a alcanzar la tasa de alfabetización más alta en el país. Esto permitió a las personas con capital social y capital financiero alcanzar una movilidad social y económica ascendente. El sistema de salud del estado y el apoyo integral y continuo de los gobiernos también jugaron un papel clave en el Modelo de Desarrollo de Kerala.

Palabras clave: Desarrollo, Reformas políticas, Modelo de Kerala, Democratización, Reformas políticas y sociales.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Located at the south western end of the Indian peninsula, Kerala continues to be the forerunner in all aspects of socio economic development among all Indian states. Kerala development is evidence that even most poor societies can attain high living standards. It is one of the smallest states in the country. Despite of being a small state of India, Kerala shares its development statistics with some of the leading developing countries of the world. The state has a population of 34.8 million which is 2.76% of the total population of the country. Even though, the population of Kerala is greater than some of the developing countries like Canada, Australia, Denmark, Sweden, and is as big as some of the third world countries like Sri Lanka, Malaysia etc. (Parayil. G, 2000)

2.1 EARLY HISTORY

Having liberated from the British colonial rule in 1947, India found itself as one of the poorest countries in the world. India shared the world economy with 23% of GDP when Britain arrived at its shores and by the time they left it was down to 4%. The deliberate loot and De-industrialization of India literally put the country under extreme poverty. The state of Kerala was formed in 1957 through combining the three provinces of Travancore, Kochi and Malabar. Alike other Indian states Kerala was having low human development indexes and the socio economic condition was also similar to the other Indian states. Following the first legislative assembly election in 1957, a communist party lead government was formed. The government put forth revolutionary policies which made deeper impact to the social fabric of the state. The land reforms act, free public health and free public education where the most revolutionary policies. The socio cultural history of Kerala also has significant contribution in the development history. Social renaissance movements, state policies and the education attainments during the colonial era have enriched the socio political fabric of the state.

Kerala also has a unique history of democratization which none of the other Indian states have. There was a mass campaign lead by Sree Narayana Guru in 1907 against religious superstition, caste and religious discriminations. This campaign resulted in social collectivism and democratic participation of the people in public matters. The later part of the country is

still facing the problems of religious polarization, discrimination and lack of proper democratization of people.

3.1 KERALA AND OTHER INDIAN STATES

Kerala model of development is the bedrock that inspired the United Nations to come up with the Human Development Index parameters that is used to measure the social development of a region. Even though not much emphasis is given on industrial development, the first world indices shown on social parameters are something that needs to be replicated in rest of India. Unlike the other Indian states, there are no slums in Kerala and no poor people sleep on the road. The greater parts of India have generations of people living on the street or slums. Kerala is a perfect example of communal harmony, it is the only state where Hindus, Muslims and Christians are on equal strength and yet live without any problem for so long. Kerala holds a distinct position among the 29 states and 7 union territories in India in almost all aspects of human development. The human development of the state is 0.79 followed by Delhi with 0.750. The literacy rate is 93.91% in Kerala whereas the second position is the state of Goa with 87.4%. Social innovation in public education campaign lead by the government in the 1990s was the first of its kind in the world. A premier Peoples Science movement called Kerala Sasthra Sahithya Parishad [KSSP] pioneered this movement by organizing half a million people volunteering this movement. KSSP was awarded the Right Lively Hood award in 1996 for this extra ordinary effort. The same has been replicated later all over India.

Table 3.2 Showing HDI ranking of 10 leading Indian states.

Rank	State	HDI	Literacy rate	Life expectancy	Open defecation	Poverty rate	Electrified houses	Sex ratio
1	Kerala	0.792	93.91	74.9	2.3	7.05	99.9	1084
2	Delhi	0.750	86.34	73.2	12.1	9.91	99.8	868
3	Himachal Pradesh	0.670	83.78	71.6	8.5	8.06	99.5	972
4	Goa	0.667	87.40	71.6	4.1	8.09	99.8	973
5	Punjab	0.665	76.68	71.6	7.1	8.26	99.6	895
6	Maharashtra	0.664	82.91	71.6	42.8	17.35	92.5	929
7	Tamil nadu	0.660	80.33	70.6	54.1	11.28	98.3	996
8	Haryana	0.663	76.64	68.6	11.4	11.16	91.7	879
9	Jammu and Kashmir	0.649	68.74	72.6	35.4	10.35	97.4	889
10	Gujarat	0.616	79.31	68.7	47.1	16.63	98.9	919

Source NSSO Data. Censuses Data Government of India, Kerala.

4.1 KERALA AND DEVELOPED NATIONS

Being a part of one of the poorer countries in the world with an annual per capita income below 1000\$, Kerala is even poorer by the Indian standards too. This is one by twenty six of USA. Still there are some very significant points to be considered. Life expectancy in Kerala is 74 years which is 2 less than the USA's 76. The contemporary world is facing the bigger problem of population inflation while it is perfectly under control in Kerala. The fertility rate is just 1.7 births per woman which is way lower than Sweden or the USA. (Kapur 1998) India ranks 131 in the HDI with a score of 0.624 while that of Kerala is 0.792. The human development index of Kerala equals with that of Malaysia, Bahrain and Russia. It shoulders with Portugal and Spain in terms of literacy rate of 93% while the Indian average is 74%. Poverty rate is 7.05% which is similar to Switzerland or Germany. The infant mortality rate of the state is 12/1000 births as of USA or Canada while India stands with 44/1000 births. The state holds a record of having 100% domestic electrification and shares the credit with Japan which is the only 100% electrified country so far in the world.

Kerala shares the average of 97% of domestic sanitation facilities with Finland while that of India is a mere 46.9%. A nationwide campaign is continuing in India for total sanitation. State also shares the gender ratio of 1080 female for 1000 male which is very much similar to that of the French average. To achieve as much as Kerala has done for a population of its size is no mean record in world history. (Sen 2001)

Interestingly the achievements of Kerala can be very well compared to Cuba. Kerala, like Cuba, is a rare example in the Global South of a society reaching the third stage of the demographic transition, a stage of zero population growth, achieved without much modern industrialization or use of such draconian measures as forced sterilization in China. Notable also is Kerala's record of reducing poverty and hunger. (Tharamangalam 2011) Each day in the world 200 million children sleep in the streets. Not one is Cuban. (Lage, Carlos 1998) similarly in Kerala the children are likely to beg for books and pen, not money, their classrooms clean, well maintained and filled with students in brightly colored uniforms and are found seemingly every few miles throughout the state. (Kapur 1998)

5.1 HISTORICAL WAY POINTS TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT IN KERALA.

The Indian mainland has always been shackled in caste-ism and religious polarization. The very partition of Pakistan as a separate nation itself can prove this notion. But Kerala had a lot of progressive thinkers like Sree Narayana Guru, Ayyankali V.T.Bhattathirippadu etc during the early 1900s broker away the shackles of caste-ism and religious dogma from the socio cultural fabric of Kerala. This helped Malayalees (inhabitants of Kerala) to attain a level of intellectual freedom and social equality. Kerala has a unique history of democratization and social development. Its social history is also closely connected to the educational history which has a critical role in the later manifested social and economic development. (Tharakan 2000)

The socio religious reform movements started their interventions with the reformations within their caste and religious systems (Paniker 2009). Women had equal rights and education as men and as they say, educate a man to educate a man but educate a woman to educate a family. Sree Narayana Guru fought against all kind of discriminatory practices within the religious system based on caste and un-touchability. These practices or rather social evils declined in Kerala in the early 1900s itself. But in other states of India these practices still prevailed.

5.2 Formation of the State and political reforms

In 1957 the state was formed and the first democratically elected communist ministry came in to power with Mr. E.M.S.Namboothirippad as chief minister. This was the first of its kind in all of Asia. There were three revolutionary policies or political reforms which this ministry initiated. Land reformation act, free public education and free public health. These three elements had greater impact on the progressive growth in development indices of Kerala. Along with the social reformation activities the renaissance movement leaders started schools all over the state during the pre-independence period which later on extended to the establishment of higher education institutions all over Kerala. Along with this the role of Christian missionaries in establishing education institutions all over the state is also well acknowledge. Policies of the first democratically elected communist ministry laid the foundations for further social development. Majority of the government higher education

institutions in the state also formed in this period. This enabled the younger generation of the state to attain the most important goal in development, education. Land reform act restricted the quantity of land to be in a single personal possession. The excess land has to be distributed among farmers or peasants. This helped the downtrodden sections of the society and marginalized groups to be land owners. Using this land as capital and the educational qualifications acquired the next generations from all segments of Kerala achieved an upward social mobility.

Strengthening of health sector aided the Kerala society in its way to development. By the early 1970s health centers and hospitals were established in every look and corner of the state. At the time of formation of the present Kerala state on 1 November 1956, the foundation for a medical care system accessible to all citizens was already laid. One indicator of the government's commitment to health services provision is the proportion of government expenditure set apart for health. From the time of the state's formation, the government's budget allocation for health was considerable. Social sectors, mainly comprising education and health, accounted for a large share of the government development expenditure. The period from state formation to the early 1980s was characterized by great growth and expansion of the government health services. (Ramankutty 2000)

As a result of the efforts taken by many movements and democratically elected governments from the 1900s, Kerala stands to be a very distinguished example of development in the world. Even though there are many a number of problems which demands much more efforts and determination, like the living standards of fishermen community and tribal community in Kerala has to be increased. Environmental sustainability too needs a lot of attention. Above all the state need to change its status of being the biggest consumer states of India. The immediate need of increasing agricultural production has to be addressed with predominant consideration.

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