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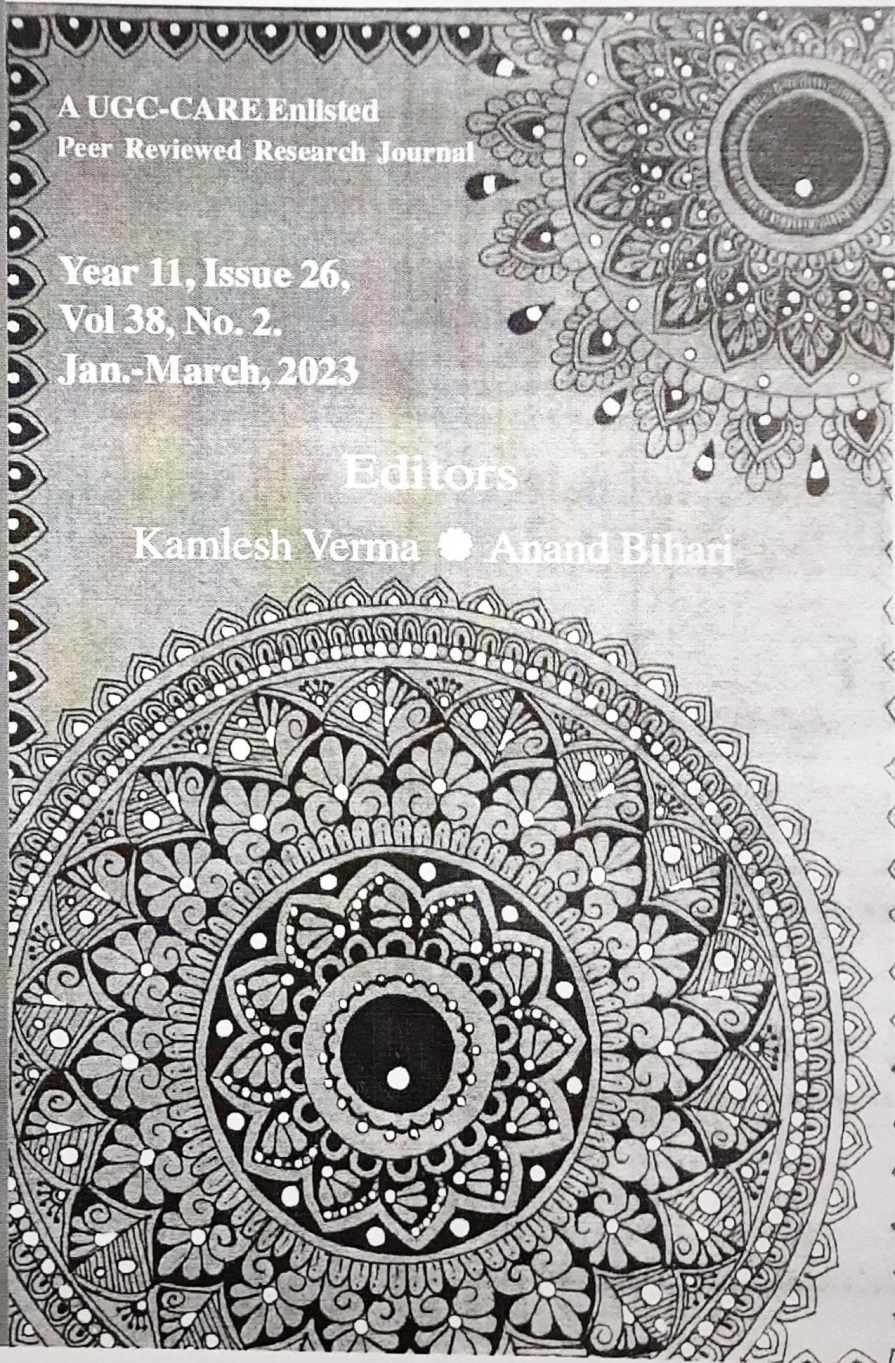
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Kamlesh Verma • Anand Bihari



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Local Self Government - An Overview of Kerala State

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Abstract

From ancient days, Local Government institutions existed in India. Kerala has a strong Local Government system as compared to other States. Local Governance system is playing an important role by successfully supporting the daily life of common people. As a grass root governing system, most of the needs relating to the day to day affairs of its citizens are executed through the Local Self Government Institutions. They are fulfilling the development and welfare needs of the People. Through Democratic decentralization of power, the Local Bodies are transformed into independent Institutions. Grama Sabha in Rural Local Bodies and Ward Sabha in Urban Local Bodies are the democratic platforms where common people have the controlling power. Institutions and its officials were transferred to Local Bodies and put under its control. Local Self Institutions are inevitable part of the daily life of the people.

Keywords : Local Self Government Institutions, Grama Saba, Decentralisation, Ward Sabha.

Introduction :

Kerala is a state with a strong Local Governance System (LSG) A Local self-governing system which is responsible for the local administration and development activities of a particular area is called a Local Governance System. When the Constitution of India came into force, two strata of administration came into existence viz. Central Government and State Governments. As a result of long years discussions and deliberations, a Local Self Government System was included in the Constitution in 1992; as a three tier of administration system. Panchayati Raj Institutions and Nagarpalika Institutions became the part of the

Constitution through 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) respectively. With the amendments, all Panchayati Raj Institutions and Nagarpalika Institutions have got Constitutional backup like State and Central Governments.

Review of Literature :

1. **Silvasahu, Evolution of Local Self Government in India, (Legal Service India, 2021)** reported that India is a country of villages which is to be strengthened by democracy. Mahatma Gandhi strongly believed in Grama Swaraj which pleaded for transfer of power of the rural masses

2. **T.N. Srivastava, Local Self Government and the Constitution(Economic and Political Weekly, 2002)** opines that local Self Government paves the way for a proper delineation of functions and powers for the smooth flow of funds from State Government and also ensure community involvement in activities.

3. **PVV Satyanarayana, Local Self Government and Human Rights in India (Research Gate, 2014)** argues however that as isolation of villages if forever broken by inroads of media, technology and spatial mobility, the existing local government systems will only help weave the village into the broader social fabric. It also analysis the interface of human rights and Local Self Government

4. **Puneet Kumar, Dharminder Kumar, Narendra Kumar, ICT in Local Self Government; A Study of Rural India(International Journal of Computer Application, 2014)** depicts the journey of Local Self Governance from antediluvian time to 21st Century. It also throws light on necessity of ICT in Self Governance which leads towards strengthening of Panchayati Raj Institutions in rural reforms.

Objectives :

- To understand Local Governance system in Kerala
- To study evolution and different dimensions of Local Governance System

Research Methodology :

The study depends on Secondary Datagathered from KILA (Kerala Institute of Local Administration), Local Self Government Articles, Handbook and website.

Research Gap :

There are number of articles related to Local Self Government in India, Analysis of Local Self Government in Urban Areas. But studies related to Local Self Government in Kerala are not found. So, an academic base is being provided regarding the topic through this article.

Analysis :

Kerala Panchayati Raj Act and Kerala Municipality Act :

Panchayati Raj Act (1960) and Kerala Municipal Corporation Act (1961) were the

two laws in force before the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments Act(CAA). But in 1994, the new Panchayati Raj Act and Municipality Acts were passed by the Kerala Legislative Assembly in conformity with the CAA in 1992. All the three tier Panchayati Raj Institutions and Nagarapalika Institutions in Kerala are now functioning according to these two new Acts passed in 1994.

Decentralisation of Power-Features of Kerala :

Indian Constitution directs the State Governments to transfer certain powers from the State Government to the Local Self Government Institutions to accomplish decentralisation of powers. Kerala is the only State which actually implemented the decentralisation of power in its letter and spirit as envisaged in the Constitution. Decentralisation of powers means devolution of powers from the higher levels (Centre/State) to the lower levels(Grassroots or local level). Decentralisation must provide wide scope and opportunities to the Local Self Government Institutions (LSGIs) to work as institutions. For that, a Local Self Government Institution needs the following:

- i. Autonomy (Freedom)
- ii. Specific Functions
- iii. Resources (Fund)
- iv. Institutions & Officials (Functionaries)
- v. Acts and Rules

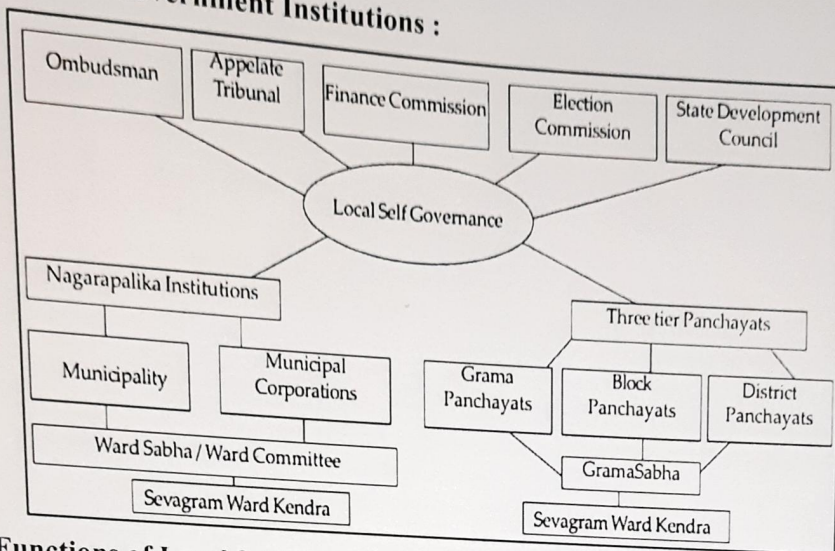
All these are provided to the LSGI's in Kerala. "Power to the People" is the motto of

Decentralization in Kerala. The initiative of Kerala with regard to decentralization is not just transferring of powers to grass root level, but it is based on broad democratic principles. Decentralisation process was started and established in Kerala through a campaign mode as People's Plan Campaign (PPC) during the 9th Five Year Plan. PPC gave a momentum for decentralized planning and flooded with involvement of common people in planning, implementation and monitoring of projects.

Local Self Governments and the Local Governance System :

Local Governments included the Elected Representatives, Institutions Official and Grama Sabhas. But Local Governance system included, in addition to the above the neighbourhood group, various wards level committee, various Local Government level Committees, various people's organisations, voluntary organisations, social workers etc.

Local Self Government Institutions :



Functions of Local Self Government Institutions :

Schedules 3, 4 and 5 of Kerala Panchayati Raj Act describe the functions of Grama, Block, and District Panchayats respectively. Schedule 1 of Kerala Municipality Act describes the functions of Municipalities and Municipal Corporations. As per these Schedules, the Grama Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies have 3 categories of functions. i.e. i. Mandatory functions, ii. General functions, and iii. Sector - wise functions

Local Governance System and Democratic Platforms :

The public confidence in democratic system is based on the opportunities provided by the system to its people to participate in the administrative process. People shall not become passive civilians or mere beneficiaries. A democratic system shall be effective only when the people participate in the decision making, implementation and evaluation of the activities. Many democratic people's organisations other than Grama/Ward Sabhas, Working Committees, Sub Committees, Ward Committees, etc. are also actively functioning in LSGI's. PatasekharaSamithies, Parent Teachers Association, Hospital Management Committees, Anganavadi Welfare Committees, Kudumbasree Community based Organisation (Ayalkkootam, ADS, CDS), Beneficiary Committees, etc. are functioning according to the guidelines issued by the State Government. Democratic People's Organisations like Clubs, Libraries, Union of Students/ Youth/Women/Old Age/Farmers/Workers, Pensioner's Associations, Service Associations, etc. and a large number of other Voluntary and Non-Government Organisations are also functioning in Local Governance. These groups must be linked with the activities of Local Self Government Institutions for ensuring more transparency and accountability

Government Institutions and Officials :

As a result of Decentralisation of power, the State Government has transferred the concerned Government Institutions and its Staff to LSGIs. Agriculture office, Veterinary

Hospital, Allopathis/Ayurveda/Homeopathic Hospitals, Anganwadi Centres, Government Primary Schools, etc. are under the control and management of Grama Panchayat or Urban Local Body where they are situated. Like this, institution at Block Panchayath and District Panchayath respectively. The staff of these institution are now under the control of Local Self Government Institution. The different activities of the LSGIs under various heads(Education, Agriculture and Health) are implemented through the respective offices of that area. It is the responsibility of these officials transferred to LSGI's to give expert advice regarding technical, legal and financial matters to the LSGI's to take decisions.

Conclusion :

“To realize self reliant Local Self Governments committed to function as people's Institutions, driven by democratic principles and seamless participation of citizens in decision making, planning and creation of a vibrant environment where concerns of each and everyone are valued is the vision of Local Self Government. It is clear that the concept of “Decentralisation of power” as directed by the Indian Constitution is well implemented in the State of Kerala.

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