Education and People’s Participation : Two main pillers of the Kerala’s Resistence

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1. Kerala has succeeded in confronting the pandemic in the initial stages. But This was possible not because of any spontaneous policy magic.
2. Several socio, cultural and political movements have been at work in Kerala for several decades. Social reformation movements under the leadership of the renowned social leaders including Sri Narayana Guru,
3. Various streams of Gandhian and Marxian political thought that merged into our freedom movement,
4. Powerful trade union and agrarian movements that helped to organize large sections of unorganized sections have all contributed to developing the public sphere .
5. All these movements have laid great stress on education from the very beginning.
6. The key message of Sri Narayana who led epoch making fight against the the cast system ( Indian version of racism in one way) put forward the slogan Empower through Organisation and Education.
7. The spirit of this slogan reverberated across all socio political movements in Kerala.
8. Socio political movements gave birth to various educational movements including the unique Village Library movement which has spread out to every nook and corner of Kerala.
9. Large number of Public schools were established with public contribution ( in cash, kind and labour) .
10. KSSP, the people’s science movement, was also a powerful off shoot of these participatory processes. KSSP could contribute substantially to the formation and development of both AIPSN and BGVS in association with various other science and educational movements in the country.
11. The culture of voluntary participation in various development programs by ordinary people that evolved through all these movements still the back bone of many of our achievements including the present resistence against the Pandemic.
12. Starting from late 1980s , the same voluntary participation had helped Kerala achieve the

distinction of becoming the first totally literate state in India in 1991.More than 200,000 volunteers most of them women worked selflessly to run literacy centers across the state. This ability and willingness to work selflessly for the betterment of society has helped kerala achieve many so called un achievables.

1. Another major achievement was the implementation of Decentralisation of governance and Planning in the state. Though the state and central governments had come out with necessary facilitatory regulations and policy decisions for decentralization, there were various kinds of vested interests social as well as political , opposing this move.
2. This was overcome , to a large extent through a major peoples movement for participatory planning at the grass root s level. It helped to explain the significance of decentralization to the ordinary people and also to involve them organically in the process of planning.
3. Peoples science movement ( KSSP) which came into existence in the 1960s to take science to the people benefitted a lot from various earlier peoples movements and it contributed a lot to expand the peoples movement mode to different areas like health, environment, education and development. KSSP is basically a people’s movement which works with the help of hundreds of thousands of volunteers . we primary depend on book publication and sales to run the organization. The awareness of science and the concept of peoples health that KSSP has been trying to develop among the people has certainly helped during the pandemic resistence. KSSP also played leading role in the literacy campaign as well as the participatory planning movements
4. Over the past two decades globalization and consumerism had affected various peoples movements and processes in Kerala. Competition and consumerism enterd all field including education and health. Privatisation of Health and Education became the order of the day despite strong resistence raised by various movements including kerala .
5. Kerala had the tradition of an excellent Public Distribution system, one of the best health delivery system and an excellent Public education systems.
6. There were times when all these public domains were on the verge of collapse due to various neoliberal policies of our central government. One important development during the fight against the pandemic was the re vitalization of all these public systems .
7. suddenly people and government realized the importance of the public systems in the massive covid resistance programs. Every body was talking about government hospitals . They took over the frontline resistance with commendable support from the people, especially youngsters.
8. The private health care system was almost completely paralised. The public distribution system suddenly became the central nervous system for free ration distribution to the needy. Majority of the population including the migrant workers were covered through this system.
9. The local governments which were getting beaurocratised and routinised to some extent also got an opportunity and reenergize through the multipronged activities assigned to them during the pandemic. Local self governments and the voluntary peoples groups came together and the magic was again at sight.
10. Thus awareness and peoples participation are the two key elements behind the success so far. This does not mean that we have solved the problem fully. As we have very promising strengths so do we have serious challenges. A major challenge is large number of migrants in foreign countries, especially gulf countries..several thousands of people are returning every day and many of them are carrying infection. Government and people feel confident that they will be able to face this challenge as well through various measures .
11. There are some serious challenges that we are facing. On the covid front Kerala has a large number of migrant keralites returning from different countries, especially Gulf countries. This return cannot be prevented in any manner but it is a adding to the number of infections..but we are confident still. Second is the rurban character of Kerala. Almost all our villages are like towns . thus kerala behaves like a big extended town and this has its severe implications in covid control. Extreme political rivalray in the state ( an over growth of our political consciousness!) has ruled out joint , collective action even during such pandemic situations. It is leading to absurd mud slinging among political parties and leaders
12. Finally action with respect to climate change is still slow and superficial. There are some notable achievements are there with respect to waste management, revival of and restructuring of agriculture, agro forestry etc, especially under the leadership of the local self governments. But the spirit of sustainability at all levels , policies and actions which accept the serious consequences of climate change is still missing. Kerala experienced unprecedented floods in 2018 and 2019. The peoples action during the rescue and rehabilitation was absolutely thrilling . The entire Kerala, especially the Youth united to help the people who suffered . But that spirit was not consolidated into along term program of climate action. Leaders and parties took sudden Uturns and started talking about development versus environment. Challenging this and developing a peoples movement for sustainability at all levels will be our most crucial challenge in the coming days. Bringing traditionsal political parties especially left, will be the toughest part!