

**PARTICIPATORY PROFILE OF THE RURAL WOMEN IN
LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT**

BY

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "**Participatory Profile of the Rural Women in Local Governance in Coimbatore District**" submitted to Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women (Deemed University), Coimbatore, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy in Home Science Extension Education** is a record of original research work done by **K.Karuna Sankari** during the period of her study in the Faculty of Home Science, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women (Deemed University), Coimbatore, under my supervision and guidance and the thesis has not formed the basis of the award of any Degree / Diploma / Associateship / Fellowship or similar title to any candidate of any university.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the matter embodied in this thesis entitled **“Participatory Profile of the Rural Women in Local Governance in Coimbatore District”** submitted to Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women (Deemed University), Coimbatore, is the result of investigation carried out by me in the Faculty of Home Science, Department of Home Science Extension Education, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women (Deemed University), Coimbatore, under the supervision of **Dr.Velmayil Kumaarasamy**, Reader, Department of Home Science Extension Education, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women (Deemed University), Coimbatore and has not formed the basis of the award of any Degree / Diploma / Associateship / Fellowship or similar title to any candidate of any university.

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Acknowledgement

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Chapter – 9

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

“Independence must begin at the bottom, thus every village will be a republic or panchayat having full power. It follows therefore that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world”.

- Gandhiji.

India lives in villages and village uplift is the key to the progress of the country. Since independence there has been a great exodus of population from the villages to the cities and towns. In spite of this the majority of our population still lives in villages (Sachdeva, 2000). Panchayat is an old and beautiful word. It means a committee of five persons elected by the people of the village. This system worked in countless rural republic ancient times (Singh and Pandey, 1998).

Panchayat implies a discourse on a particular issue relating to a community or a segment. The traditional panchayat system was mainly concerned with maintenance of peace and order in the community. However, today panchayat raj institutions are basically concerned with overall development of village community and empowerment of the rural people. Democratic institutions have flowered from the grass roots to every level of society. New content and meaning is being imparted to democratic processes through panchayat raj (Abraham, 1993 and Sharma, 1997).

Panchayats have been the backbone of the Indian villages, since the beginning of the recorded history. Gandhiji's dream of every village being a republic has been translated into reality with the introduction of the three-tier panchayat raj system (Year Book, 2001). The local level administration will be framed on gram panchayat at village level, panchayat union at block level and zilla parishad at district level (Ghosh and Pramani, 1999). The three-tier system exists in 14 states / union territories, two-tier system exists in four states and one-tier system exists in nine states / union territories (Nandini, 1992). Today, panchayat raj has narrowed the gap between modern and traditional cultures and synthesized the modern traditional idiom of Indian politics (Dwarakanath and Vikarabad, 2002).

India has a long history of local governance. But it was Gandhiji who emphasised the role of village panchayat as an important instrument of rural development and of promoting and nurturing democracy at the grass roots (Katarsingh, 1999). Women constitute nearly half the population of India. Around 81 per cent of the total female population of the country live in rural areas and out of the total 31 million female work force of the country, 65 per cent are living in rural areas (Rajkumar, 2000).

The year 2001 has been declared as a year of empowerment of women by the government of India. However women's empowerment is a multidimensional phenomenon. It includes not only economic and political empowerment, but it is a transformation of self society and community (Shalu Nigam, 2001).

Empowerment is the process of building capacities of creating an atmosphere, which enables people to fully utilize their creative potential in pursuance of a quality of life. It also deepens and popularizes the democratic process. Empowerment gives women the capacity to influence decision-making process, planning, implementation and evaluation by integrating them into the political system (Anand, 2001).

Political status of women can be defined as the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in the shaping and sharing of power and in the value given by society to this role of women (Mohan, 2000). The women presidents claim that in the past five years, rural local bodies headed by women have been more efficient, providing basic amenities and protecting the interests of the poor and weaker sections and common resources. The government can take the leadership in strengthening the local bodies and empowering them to serve the impoverished villages (The Hindu, 2001).

Panchayat raj institutions are basically concerned with over all development of village community and empowerment of the rural people as a whole rather than decision taken by a select group of people (Kumar, 1995).

In order to provide, greater opportunities to women to actively participate in the decision-making process, it is imperative to recognize the true nature to the social inequalities and disabilities that hamper them. This can best be achieved by providing them with special opportunities for participation in the representative structure of local government (Pruthi et al., 1999).

Rural local government with independent power and resources has become part of the constitution in 1993. The notification issued by the Union Government in May on the Constitution 73rd Act, 1992 on panchayat raj constitutes a landmark in the evolution of the grass root political institution in India (Manorama Year Book, 1994).

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has provision for the timely and regular election of panchayat bodies at village, block and district levels. It gives total responsibility to the panchayat bodies for social, economic and village development. There is also the provision of transfer of resources from the centre to the state governments and from the state governments to the panchayat raj institutions. The most important provision is the one third reservation for women in different levels of panchayat raj institutions and reservations for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in proportion to their populations (Laxmi Devi, 1998).

The one-third reservation for women in the panchayat raj is based on the view of empowerment of women in all spheres like social, economical, political, etc., by means of providing them the opportunity to participate in the administration of local government (Jeyapal and Dravidamani, 1997).

The Indian rural local government comprises 232,278 village panchayats, 5905 intermediate panchayats and 499 district panchayats, making a total of 2,382 at all the three levels (Sivasubrahmanyam, 2002). There are 12,617 village panchayats, 385 panchayat union councils (middle tier) and 28 district panchayats in Tamil Nadu. In Coimbatore district, out of

389 village presidents, 151 of them are women. There are totally 3336 ward members, in that 1110 are women (Government of Tamil Nadu, 2002).

Having all these in view a study had been undertaken to understand the participatory profile of the rural women in local governance – village, the basic tier of panchayat raj, in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu, with the following specific objectives : To

- i) analyse the 73rd Amendment Act and its impact on women, and
- ii) assess the participatory profile of the rural women in local governance, in Coimbatore district.

Chapter – 99

Review of Literature

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature pertaining to this study on the **“PARTICIPATORY PROFILE OF THE RURAL WOMEN IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT”** is studied as per the heads listed below :

- A. The 73rd Amendment Act
- B. Women and Political Empowerment
- and C. Related Studies

A. The 73rd Amendment Act

Panchayat raj in India is the life-line of rural development. Panchayats were described by Sir Charles Metcalfe, as little republic because of their autonomy and efficacy (Iqbal and Narain, 1994). Panchayat raj aims at establishing democracy at grass root level and giving a sense of involvement to the people at village level (Srivastava and Jai Prakash, 1996).

Decentralization is to be conceived as a step in the direction of a more integrated policy, a better performing economy and a model of social reconstruction necessary for a properly functioning democracy and a genuinely socialist state (Kothari, 1991).

The institution of panchayats in India is as old as Indian civilisation. The panchayats were fairly vibrant bodies but eventually various socio-political factors caused a decline of these bodies. The constitution of

free India envisaged organisation of village panchayats and endowed them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government (Singh, 1996).

Metha Committee suggested to establish village panchayat at village level, panchayat samiti at block level and zilla parishad at district level. This system came to be known as three tier system, thus started the panchayat raj system as a medium of the democratic decentralisation in 1959 (Singh and Pandey, 1998).

In 1989, Rajiv Gandhi took up the cause of democratic decentralisation and proposed to provide constitutional status to local bodies with the object of securing for them continued existence coupled with the empowerment of weaker sections of rural society as well as women. The provision of finances to the local bodies was proposed to be taken out of the absolute discretion of the state governments by the appointment of state level finance commission (Rao, 1995).

A village panchayat or gram panchayat is constituted for a minimum of five hundred population. Village panchayat has got members ranging from minimum of five to maximum of fifteen. For village panchayat the ward members and the president, are to be elected directly by the voters. Vice-President of the village panchayat is elected indirectly among the elected ward members of the village panchayat (Palanithurai, 1999).

Gram panchayat is the implementing agency at grassroot level of almost all the rural development programmes. IRDP, JRY, TRYSEM, DWCRA, MWS, EAS, IAY and several other programmes are being implemented at the village level for providing gainful employment to the rural poor and to generate community assets for accelerating the pace of rural development (Annamalai, 2000).

Panchayat elections are held once in five years. The members and the chairman of panchayat unions and the members and the presidents of the panchayat are elected on the basis of adolescence franchise i.e., voting by those who have attained the age of 18 years (Singh, 1994).

Gram sabha is a must in a village or group of villages (Government of India, 2001). Gram sabha means a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of panchayat at the village level (Ram and Verma, 1996). Gram sabha is to be constituted in each village, exercising such powers and performing such functions at the village-level as the state act may provide. It consists of all registered voters in the area of the panchayat (Reddi, 1998).

The gram sabha is important on the following several counts : It

- Can create local interest and local initiative and provide local supervision of schemes for development.
- Can ensure that benefits of development reach one and all particularly to those who belong to disadvantaged and deprived groups.

- Can see that the benefit of funds for rural development reach the target groups and intended beneficiaries and they do not percolate in the pockets of anti social elements.
- Can determine its needs and priorities and plan the direction of its own development.
- Can motivate people and mobilise resources of voluntary labour for supplementing the resources made available by the government for the development of the villages and
- Is the only body competent to formulate village plans (Devadas, 2001).

Gram sabha is a new development in Tamil Nadu. The 73rd amendment to the constitution has mandated that there shall be a gram sabha in each village panchayat consisting of all eligible voters in the panchayat (Joseph and John, 2001).

According to the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992, an act, (Kurukshetra, 1995) further to amend the Constitution of India, be it enacted by Parliament in the Forty-third Year of the Republic of India as follows : -

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1.(1) This Act may be called the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992. | Short title and commencement |
| 1.(2) It shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint. | |
| 2. After Part VIII of the Constitution, the following Part shall be inserted, namely : - | Insertion of new Part IX |

Part IX
The Panchayats

243. In this Part, unless the context otherwise requires :- **Definitions**

- (a) "district" means a district in a State ;
- (b) "Gram Sabha" means a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of Panchayat at the village level ;
- (c) "intermediate level" means a level between the village and district levels specified by the Governor of a State by public notification to be the intermediate level for the purposes of this Part ;
- (d) "Panchayat" means an institution (by whatever name called) of self-government constituted under article 243B, for the rural areas ;
- (e) "Panchayat area" means the territorial area of a Panchayat ;
- (f) "population" means the population as ascertained at the last preceding census of which the relevant figures have been published ;
- (g) "village" means a village specified by the Governor by public notification to be a village for the purpose of this Part and includes a group of villages so specified.

243A. A Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the Legislature of a State may by law, provide. **Gram Sabha**

243B. (1) There shall be constituted in every State, Panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels in accordance with the provisions of this Part. **Constitution of Panchayats**

(2) Notwithstanding anything in clause (1), Panchayats at the intermediate level may not be constituted in a State having a population not exceeding twenty lakhs.

243C. (1) Subject to the provisions of this Part, the Legislature of a State may, by law, make provisions with respect to the composition of Panchayats :

Composition of Panchayats

Provided that the ratio between the population of the territorial area of a Panchayat at any level and the number of seats in such Panchayat to be filled by election shall, so far as practicable, be the same throughout the State.

(2) All the seats in a Panchayat shall be filled by persons chosen by direct election from territorial constituencies in the Panchayat area and ; for this purpose, each Panchayat area shall be divided into territorial constituencies in such manner that the ratio between the population of each constituency and the number of seats allotted to it shall, so far as practicable, be the same throughout the Panchayat area.

(3) The Legislature of a State may, by law, provide for the representation -

- (a) of the Chairpersons of the Panchayats at the village level in the Panchayats at the intermediate level or, in the case of a State not having Panchayats at the intermediate level, in the Panchayats at the district level ;
- (b) of the Chairpersons of the Panchayats at the intermediate level in the Panchayats at the district level ;

- (c) of the members of the House of the People and the members of the Legislative Assembly of the State representing constituencies which comprise wholly or partly a Panchayat area at a level other than the village level, in such Panchayat ;
- (d) of the members of the Council of States and the members of the Legislative Council of the State, where they are registered as electors within –
 - (i) a Panchayat area at the intermediate level, in Panchayat at the intermediate level ;
 - (ii) a Panchayat area at the district level, in Panchayat at the district level.

(4) The Chairperson of a Panchayat and other members of a Panchayat whether or not chosen by direct election from territorial constituencies in the Panchayat areas shall have the right to vote in the meeting of the Panchayats.

(5) The Chairperson of –

- (a) a Panchayat at the village level shall be elected in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide ; and
- (b) a Panchayat at the intermediate level or district level shall be elected by, and from amongst, the elected members thereof.

243D. (1) Seats shall be reserved for –

- (a) the Scheduled Castes ; and
- (b) the Scheduled Tribes,

in every Panchayat and the number of seats so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct

Reservation of seats

election in that Panchayat as the population of the Scheduled Castes in that Panchayat area or of the Scheduled Tribes in that Panchayat area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

(2) Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes.

(3) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat shall be reserved for women and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.

(4) The offices of the Chairpersons in the Panchayats at the village or any other level shall be reserved for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide :

Provided that the number of offices of Chairpersons reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the Panchayats at each level in any State shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of such offices in the Panchayats at each level as the population of the Scheduled Castes in the State or of the Scheduled Tribes in the State bears to the total population of the State :

Provided further that not less than one-third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level shall be reserved for women :

Provided also that the number of offices reserved under this clause shall be allotted by rotation to different Panchayats at each level.

(5) The reservation of seats under clauses (1) and (2) and the reservation of offices of Chairpersons (other than the reservation for women) under clause (4) shall cease to have effect on the expiration of the period specified in article 334.

(6) Nothing in this Part shall prevent the Legislature of a State from making any provision for reservation of seats in any Panchayat or offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at any level in favour of backward class of citizens.

243E. (1) Every Panchayat, unless sooner dissolved under any law for the time being in force, shall continue for five years from the date appointed for its first meeting and no longer.

**Duration of
Panchayats etc.**

(2) No amendment, of any law for the time being in force shall have the effect of causing dissolution of a Panchayat at any level, which is functioning immediately before such amendment, till the expiration of its duration specified in clause (1).

(3) An election to constitute a Panchayat shall be completed –

- (a) Before the expiry of its duration specified in clause (1) :
- (b) Before the expiration of a period of six months from the date of its dissolution :

Provided that where the remainder of the period for which the dissolved Panchayat would have continued is less than six months, it shall not be necessary to hold any

election under this clause for constituting the Panchayat for such period.

(4) A Panchayat constituted upon the dissolution of a Panchayat before the expiration of its duration shall continue only for the remainder of the period for which the dissolved Panchayat would have continued under clause (1) had it not been so dissolved.

243F. (1) A person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being, a member of a Panchayat –

**Disqualifications
for Membership**

- (a) if he is so disqualified by or under any law for the time being in force for the purpose of elections to the Legislature of the State concerned :

Provided that no person shall be disqualified on the ground that he is less than twenty-five years of age, if he has attained the age of twenty-one years ;

(b) if he is so disqualified by or under any law made by the Legislature of the State.

(2) If any question arises as to whether a member of a Panchayat has become subject to any of the disqualifications mentioned in clause (1), the question shall be referred for the decision of such authority and in such manner as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide.

243G. Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the Legislature of a State may, by law, endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government and such law may contain provisions for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon Panchayats at the appropriate level, subject to such conditions as may be specified therein, with respect to-

**Powers,
authority and
responsibilities
of Panchayats**

- (a) the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice ;
- (b) the implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule.

243H. The Legislature of a State may, by law, -

- (a) authorise a Panchayat to levy, collect and appropriate such taxes, duties, tolls and fees in accordance with such procedure and subject to such limits ;
- (b) assign to a Panchayat such taxes, duties, tolls and fees levied and collected by the State Government for such purposes and subject to such conditions and limits ;
- (c) provide for making such grants-in-aid to the Panchayats from the Consolidated Fund of the State ; and
- (d) provide for constitution of such Funds for crediting all moneys received, respectively, by or on behalf of the Panchayats and also for the withdrawal of such moneys therefrom.

Powers to impose taxes by, and Funds of, the Panchayats

as may be specified in the law.

243-I. (1) The Governor of a State shall, as soon as may be within one year from the commencement of the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992, and thereafter at the expiration of every fifth year, constitute a Finance Commission to review the financial position of the Panchayats and to make recommendations to the Governor as to -

Constitution of Finance Commission to review financial position

- (a) the principles which should govern –
 - (i) the distribution between the State and the Panchayats of the net proceeds of the taxes, duties, tolls and fees leviable by the State, which may be divided between them under this Part and the allocation between the Panchayats at all levels of their respective shares of such proceeds ;
 - (ii) the determination of the taxes, duties, tolls and fees which may be assigned to, or appropriated by, the Panchayats ;
 - (iii) the grants-in-aid to the Panchayats from the Consolidated Fund of the State ;
- (b) the measures needed to improve the financial position of the Panchayats ;
- (c) any other matter referred to the Finance Commission by the Governor in the interests of sound finance of the Panchayats.

(2) The Legislature of a State may, by law, provide for the composition of the Commission, the qualifications which shall be requisite for appointment as members thereof and the manner in which they shall be selected.

(3) The Commission shall determine their procedure and shall have such powers in the performance of their functions as the Legislature of the State may, by law, confer on them.

(4) The Governor shall cause every recommendation made by the Commission under this

article together with an explanatory memorandum as to the action taken thereon to be laid before the Legislature of the State.

243J. The Legislature of a State may, by law, make provisions with respect to the maintenance of accounts by the Panchayats and the auditing of such accounts.

**Audit of
accounts of
Panchayats**

243K. (1) The superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to the Panchayats shall be vested in a State Election Commission consisting of a State Election Commissioner to be appointed by the Governor.

**Elections to the
Panchayats**

(2) Subject to the provisions of any law made by the Legislature of a State, the conditions of service and return of office of the State Election Commissioner shall be such as the Governor may by rule determine :

Provided that the State Election Commissioner shall not be removed from his office except in like manner and on the like grounds as a Judge of a High Court and the conditions of service of the State Election Commissioner shall not be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment.

(3) The Governor of a State shall, when so requested by the State Election Commission, make available to the State Election Commission such staff as may be necessary for the discharge of the functions conferred on the State Election Commission by clause (1).

(4) Subject to the provisions of this Constitution the Legislature of a State may, by Law, make provision with respect to all matters relating to, or in connection with, elections to the Panchayats.

243N. Notwithstanding anything in this Part, any provision of any law relating to Panchayats in force in a State immediately before the commencement of the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act, 1992, which is inconsistent with the provisions of this Part, shall continue to be in force until amended or repealed by a competent Legislature or other competent authority or until the expiration of one year from such commencement, whichever is earlier.

Continuance of existing laws and Panchayats

Provided that all the Panchayats existing immediately before such commencement shall continue till the expiration of their duration, unless sooner dissolved by a resolution passed to that effect by the Legislative Assembly of that State or, in the case of a State having a Legislative Council, by each House of the Legislature of that State.

243-O. Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution –

- (a) the validity of any law relating to the delimitation of constituencies or the allotment of seats to such constituencies made or purporting to be made under article 243K, shall not be called in question in any court ;
- (b) no election to any Panchayat shall be called in question except by an election petition presented to such authority and in such manner as is provided for by or under any law made by the Legislature of a State.

Bar to Interference by courts in electoral matters

3. In clause (3) of article 280 of the Constitution, after sub-clause (b), the following sub-clause shall be inserted, namely :-

**Amendment of
article 280**

“(bb) the measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement the resources of the Panchayats in the State on the basis of the recommendations made by the Finance Commission of the State”,

4. After the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution, the following Schedule shall be added, namely :-

**Addition of
Eleventh
Schedule**

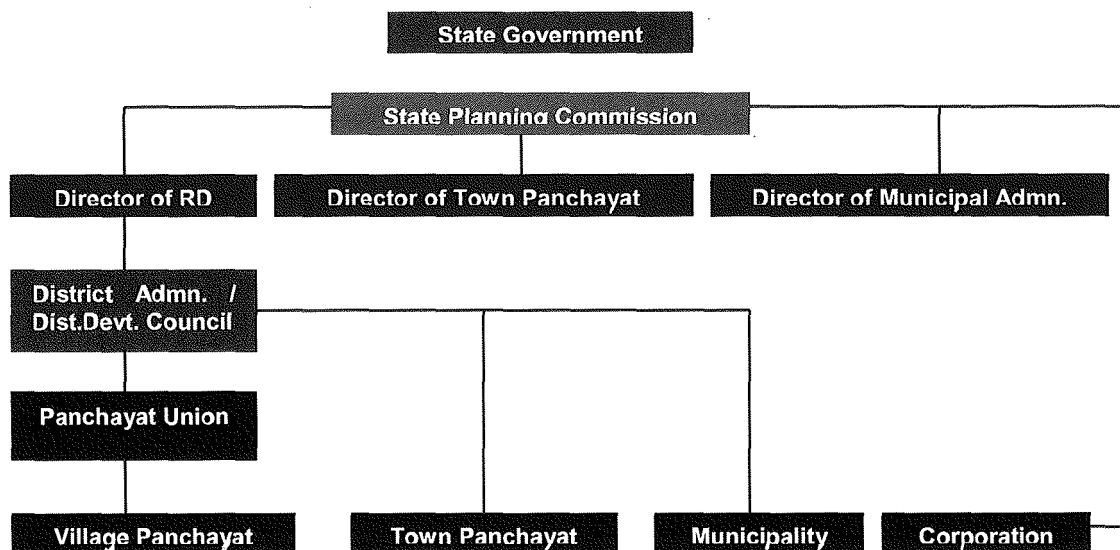
Figure 01. indicates the 29 items present in the eleventh schedule (Article 243(a)) .

Figure 02, explains the institutional frame work before and after the constitutional amendment.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

(Before Constitutional Amendment)

(For the purpose of Planning)



(After Constitutional Amendment)

(For the purpose of Planning)

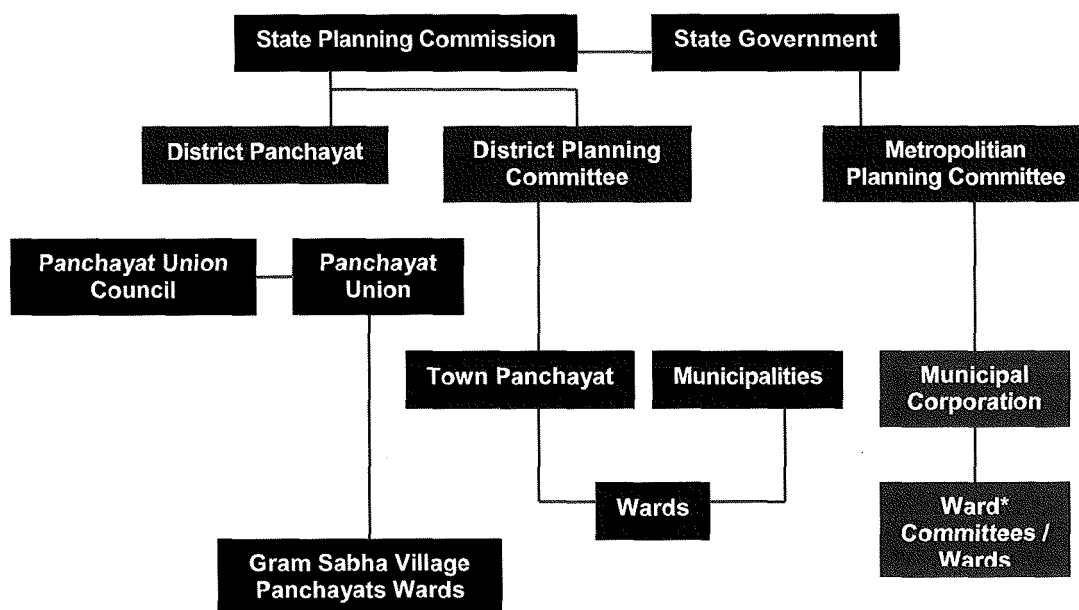


FIGURE 02

Source : Report of the working group on decentralised planning and Panchayat Raj, State Planning Commission, Chennai, October, 1997.

B. Women and Political Empowerment

Empowerment in its simplest form means the manifestation of redistribution of power that challenges, patriarchal ideology and the male dominance (Chandra and Kohli, 1997).

Empowerment as a concept was introduced at the International Women's Conference in 1985 at Nairobi. The conference defined empowerment as a redistribution of social power and control of resources in favour of women. The programme of action 1992 has comprehensively given the following parameters of empowerment of women.

- Enhance self-esteem and self-confidence in women.
- Build a positive image of women by recognising their contribution to the society and economy.
- Develop in them ability to think critically.
- Foster decision making and action through collective process.
- Enable women to make choices in areas like education, employment and health.
- Provide information, knowledge and skill for economic independence.
- Enhance access to legal literacy and information related to their rights and entitlements in the society with a view to enhance their participation on an equal footing in all areas (Devadas, 2001).

Empowerment gives women the capacity to influence decision-making process. This implies political participation which includes right to vote, contest, campaign, party membership and representation in political offices at all levels and effectively influence decisions thereby leading to political empowerment (Bhargava and Subha, 1996).

The movement for empowerment of women, as a part of major civilization transformation has been one of the significant social and political developments of the closing decades of the twentieth century (Gupta, 2002). Empowerment of weaker sections goes back to the constitutional provisions which provide for developmental and protective safeguards for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes (Doshi and Jain, 1999).

Women have played a very significant role in the history of India since ancient times. There had been rulers women statesmen, women saints and reformers, women writers and artists, queens, princesses and courtesans. This is all the more remarkable considering the many restraints under which Indian women had to work, particularly during the medieval times to the early decades of the present century (Saxena, 1989).

Rural development and panchayats are the most talked about and researched areas in social sciences. The theory and practice of panchayat raj, however, suffer from concern on the part of academicians, policy planners and practitioners for what is actually involved, what is at state and what is to be done to facilitate genuine people's participation and empowerment (Sundar Raj, 2001).

The rural women have to reap the full advantage of the opportunities now given to participate in rural affairs through the medium of panchayat raj institutions. A woman by nature, is an honest person and perfect in balancing the family budget. This quality could usefully be employed in managing the financial resource of the panchayat raj institution (Joshi, 1994).

Today panchayat raj institutions are basically concerned with overall development of village community and empowerment of the rural people as a whole rather than decisions taken by a select group of people (Sharma, 1994). Women's entry into the rural political system would ensure changes in the political systems of the village, the perception of the role of women and develop grass roots leadership among women (Panda, 1995).

Women should be encouraged and should help each other to exercise their rights to vote and to be elected to and participate in the political process on equal terms with men (Rajkumar, 2000). The participation of women in the panchayat raj institutions is considered essential not only for ensuring political participation in the democratic process but also for realising the development goals for women (Jain, 1994).

'Politics' is often defined in very narrow terms as the electoral participation in a democracy. The varied activities that are performed by a person in an elected position or as a part of the voters duty are defined as political participation (Raj Kumar, 2000). The political status of women can be defined as the degree of equality and freedom enjoyed by women in the shaping and sharing of power and in the value given by society to this role of

women (Bhatt and Sharma, 1992). Women, though half of the population in country, hardly think of political participation, political problems, political climate and climax. They are wedded to routine simple way of living (Jain, 1993).

The political empowerment of women is crucial not only for the development of women themselves but the availability of their creative potential is socially importance and without it the country cannot hope for any sustainable development (Sudha Pillai, 2001). The political empowerment of women and weaker sections demands that they must be able to think and act according to their conscience. Education and training being the sources from which they can access knowledge and understanding, the government may provide functional literacy to the illiterate elected women members of the panchayats after their election (Siva Subrahmanyam, 2002).

The political commitment to establish, modify, expand or enforce a comprehensive legal base for the equality of women and men must be strengthened (Rajkumar, 2000). Panchayat Raj Institutions as instruments of empowerment can realise the objectives only through the training programme. Training imparts information, develops skills for planning, implementation and supervision of programme (Dutta, 1993).

Political participation of women is necessary not only for their development and improving their status, but also for their mass participation in the national development. Political empowerment leads to realise their creative potential and make them economically independent. Therefore there

is a need to create political consciousness among women and motivate them to actively participate in the democratic process. Entry into political process will constitute the first step for their empowerment. Once they are politically empowered they will realise themselves as full, equal citizens and play their role in changing the political structure in their favour (Das, 2002) (Figure 03).

C. Related Studies

A study conducted by Shiviah and Srivastava (1987) from National Institute of Rural Development on "Factors affecting development of the panchayat raj with the objective of identification and analysis of factors on the development of the panchayat raj system, in three states, viz., Gujarat, Rajasthan and Karnataka, reveals that in the perception of respondents, the interest of political leaders had a very significant bearing on the pattern of panchayat raj. A structurally stronger and sound system of panchayat raj makes a substantial contribution to making the development administration machinery responsive and accessible, promoting a more co-operative relationship between officials and non-officials. A high degree of psychic identify with panchayat raj, coupled with a critical attitude towards gaps in leadership and performance and a supportive attitude towards its continuance and strengthening, are factors which would facilitate the development of panchayat raj system on sounder lines.

A case study had been conducted by Sivanna (1990) on the role of Taluk Development Boards in rural development with reference to Koratagre Taluk in Thumkur district of Karnataka state and came with the following findings :

The major constraints for the better performance of the TDB were, lack of sufficient power and functions, especially in the financial sphere and the political pattern reveals that the power game is centered around a few economically well of individuals and groups.

The participation of the SC / ST and women members was not up to the expected mark and desirable level in the meeting. The relationship among the officials and non-officials was dubious in nature. The major constraint for the existing planning activities at the TDB level was dependent nature in the financial sphere. The decision making process is conditioned by many pressures and pulls (i.e.,) made by presidents and block development officer. It is also seen that the lack of uniformly in respect of income and expenditure, existing sources of income were inadequate to meet the grouping needs of the taluk.

The study conducted by Raju Abraham (1993) in Kerala with the objective of finding out the socio-economic and political status of panchayat reveals that in spite of the under representation of SC and ST, it is interesting to see that there was 3.66 per cent representations among SC / ST in panchayat presidents. The study also reveals that an overwhelming majority of the panchayat presidents had entry in the politics when they have been

students either in schools or colleges. This shows that the representing agency for the political leaders in the rural social situation is the educational institutions in the state.

An elaborate study was ventured in this direction by Chakraborty and Bhattachary (1993) in Nabagram village of Hoogly district in West Bengal with the aim of showing whether the panchayat raj has been able to effect any tangible change in the village leadership structure and to study a set of related issues viz., the power structure and power mobilisation of the various forces, the sources and forms of conflicts and cohesion among various groups and the actual ways in which the leaders try to win over the common villagers. The study reveals bifurcation of leadership between formal and informal leaders. Though, panchayat raj and universal adult suffrage, the base of power and the mode of its exercise have totally changed, informal leaders mostly come from the families of the traditional leaders while the formal leadership positions are shared by the members of the families of the traditional leaders along with the others who too must often come from the relatively well off in the village. However, the poor of the village are still far from the seat power. Because of party politics in panchayat raj system, the popular participation in village decision making is extremely limited.

An empirical study had been attempted by the Department of Economics and Public Administration, University of Rajasthan, about the working of panchayat raj in Jaipur district, Rajasthan (1994). The study concluded with the following findings :

- Establishment of PRIs has given a tremendous fill up to emergence of local leadership and dynamic burst of enthusiasms and energy on the part of rural people.
- SCs and STs have managed to secure adequate representations but many of these leaders are back benches even at the panchayat level.
- The panchayat raj leaders at all the three levels have seldom taken interest or initiative for preparation of general, long – range plans such as village production plans or five year plans under the scheme of planning from below, they have on the other hand, been keen on attracting the maximum possible schemes, projects, goods and services of these are together with grants, grants-in-aid, subsidies, etc.
- As a result of introduction of PRIs, the political consciousness of the rural masses and leaders for sharing political and economic benefits has increased.
- The PRIs have been successful in attaining a pace and drive which no other scheme or project of rural development had been able to do so in the history of Rajasthan and
- The basic weakness of the PRIs in Rajasthan patterns, relates to paucity of resources and lack of institutional dynamisms.

An interesting study was conducted by Bhargauva and Raphael (1994) on working of gram sabhas in Karnataka for a period of five years (1987-92) by a selection of two districts viz., Bangalore (rural) and Dharwad. It reveals that the structural arrangement for people's participation in the decentralized

planning process through gram sabha at grass root level became almost a defunct mechanism or a non-strater in the study area. Similarly the cases from Dharwad district show that the same down fall has already started to happen in 1990 as in the case of Devangodhi Mandal Panchayat in Bangalore rural district. The discussion with higher officials of state head quarters in the concerned departments reveals that performance of gram sabha is not up to the expected extent at operational level all over Karnataka state due to various reasons, though it is reported that gram sabha functions better in certain pockets of the state especially in the coastal districts.

Ghosh (1994) in his study on the socio-economic background of gram panchayat members of Burdwan district in West Bengal reveals that there is adequate representation of downtrodden in the power structure. The state institute of panchayats, West Bengal has conducted a study on 71,000 elected members of the PRI in West Bengal. In Burdwan district there are 278 gram panchayats. The number of gram panchayat members was 5,409 and the study has been conducted on 5,361 members ie., 99.11 per cent of the total members. From the economic status of gram panchayat members it is evident that there is a considerable representation of the poorer sections of the society in the gram panchayat. The occupational pattern of the gram panchayat members confirms the adequate representation of the poor people in the rural poor structure. Forty two per cent of the panchayat members were poor and only 1.5 per cent of them were relatively rich.

A study was conducted by Gowda et al. (1996) on developmental role of women members of PRIs in Karnataka. The statutory reservation of seats in the PRIs provided an opportunity to rural women to formally involve themselves in the development process at grass root level and to secure as many development benefits as possible to the local community. The present study has attempted to examine the extent to which women members of Mandal Panchayats (the lower tiers in the PRIs of Karnataka state between 1987 and 1992) secured development benefits to the people in their villages under different development programmes. The study covered 250 women members who were selected purposively at the rate of 130 and 120 respectively from the developed and backward taluks of Bangalore rural district.

The women members of the developed taluk were found to play a better developmental role than their counterparts in the backward taluk. The study reveals that among the socio-economic attributes such as age, education, caste, annual household income and land holdings of women leaders only education and annual household income had a highly significant and positive relationship with their developmental role performance.

The findings of the study lead one to infer that women members of the PRIs could play an effective developmental role if they are given adequate recognition and encouragement.

A study was conducted by Jeyapal and Dravidamani (1997) on women panchayat presidents in Tiruchirapalli district, Lalgudi panchayat union.

The study result shows a different reality as most of the women panchayat presidents were not having previous experience in politics and having low awareness on PRIs and also purely depending upon their husbands or others for planning and executing the panchayat raj activities which will not develop the women leadership but may lead to corruption in panchayat administration.

An interesting study was conducted by Sinha and Sinha (1997) on recent studies on panchayats. Some of the major findings are : There has been a clear impact of reservation reflected the population profile. In Maharashtra and Gujarat, the panchayat system has greater legitimacy and reservation for imprivileged groups and has made some impact. In Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh the dominance of caste has been very strong.

Shivanna (1997) conducted a study on role of panchayat poverty alleviation programmes in the state of Karnataka. The following aspects, keeping in view of the plan formulation and implementation make an attempt to evaluate the poverty alleviation programmes such as IRDP, JRY as formulated and implemented by the panchayats. For meeting this objective the paper examines the instructions of both process evaluation and impact evaluation. This two way analysis has brought forth many important visits relating to governance and planning, some are positive and some negative. Panchayats were able to observe some norms and procedures laid down by the Act. However there were many operational constraints which came in the way of meaningful planning process. Added to this inter-relationship between

the officials and non-officials which was seen as one of the love hate relationships, also came in the way of the effective implementation of the programmes. Notwithstanding all these, one of the significant aspects of the process was about calling gram sabha meetings a venue for all the electorate to participate. Through this mechanism people could participate as beneficiaries of the programmes. The respective village panchayats had made sincere efforts to call gram sabha meetings to identify works relating to infrastructural development. All this speaks of meaningful process of decentralised governance and planning.

A study was conducted by Kalyani (1998) with 500 women elected to local bodies in Coimbatore district. Forty five per cent of the leaders and 37 per cent of the members were aware of the availability of resources in the local bodies. Only a meagre per cent of leaders (10) and members (11) could utilize the resources for various activities. The problems expressed were male dominance, negligence of their views and their illiteracy and ignorance.

Romadevi (1999) conducted a study on "Performance of women elected to local bodies, in Imphal District, Manipur State", having a sample size of 200 women elects in local bodies using an interview schedule. The panchayat raj at district and village levels have been formed in Manipur in 1997. There are only two tiers of panchayat raj system functioning in the state. The major findings indicate that more than 76 per cent of the leaders and 31 per cent of the members were fully aware of the 73rd and 74th amendments. Majority 63.5 per cent of the women elects attended the

local body meetings once in a month and 27.5 per cent of them attended meetings twice in a month. About nine per cent of the women elects attended meetings more than twice in a month. Interestingly, they seem to be encouraged by their male counterparts and other members in the local bodies.

Shanmugapriya (2001) studied the "Participatory approach for need identification and programme planning in a woman headed panchayat". The Keeranatham village panchayat in Sarkar Samakulam panchayat union, Coimbatore district, had been selected to understand the extent of participation of the members of the gram sabha and panchayat in need identification and programme planning. The respondents included 50 members of the gram sabha and 10 elected members including the woman president to the village panchayat. Their awareness about the 73rd amendment act was only four per cent amongst the members of gram sabha and in the case of the members of panchayat, none of them was found to be known about this act. Fifty members of the gram sabha and nine members of the panchayat rated the qualities of the woman president in panchayat. Self confidence, good administration, responsible, hard working, selfless and intelligent were the qualities observed by these respondents in their woman president in performing her duty in the local governance.

Siva Sundari (2001) conducted a study on "Participation of women elected to local bodies in Thiruvaur District, Tamil Nadu", having a sample size of 200 women elects in local bodies, using an interview schedule.

The major findings indicate that more than 62 per cent of the women elects (20 leaders and 42 members) were unaware of the 73rd constitutional amendment. Majority 66 per cent of the women elects attended the local body meetings once in a month and 10 per cent of them attended meetings twice in a month. About 24 per cent of them had no idea about the meetings held and about the heads at three levels. About 12 programmes / schemes of the central and state governments are carried out by the local bodies. Namakku Naame Thittam, Anna Marumalarchi Thittam, providing street lights and water supply, laying roads, formation of self help groups, swarnajayanthi gram swarozgar yojana, providing sodium vapour lamps, Employment Assurance Scheme, Rural Housing Credit cum Subsidy, Indira Awas Yojana and Marriage Scheme were taken by these selected representatives in the local bodies which ranged from 47 per cent (Indira Awas Yojana) to 100 per cent (Namakku Naame Thittam and Anna Marumalarchi Thittam).

A study was conducted on "Panchayat for a Fishing community – A Performance Analysis" by Sheba Ponmalar (2003). Leasing of fish farm, house tax, government fund, property investment and public contributions were the sources of income for the panchayat. The funds were spent for building bridges, construction of fish farm, laying road, providing sodium vapour lamp, water pumps and pipes, construction of public lavatories, drainage, providing street lights and building anganwadi. About five programmes / schemes of the central and state governments were taken care of by this elected panchayat.

A study was conducted on "Performance of selected panchayats in Kannur district" by Vijisha Kumaran (2004). It was found from the respondents that all the panchayats had provided the facilities such as public health centres, rural libraries, anganwadis for children, primary and secondary schools, veterinary dispensaries, post offices and agriculture offices. It was mentioned by the respondents that 80 per cent of the panchayats were having high schools and 24 per cent of the panchayats were having colleges.

Chapter – 999

Methodology

III. METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for the study on the **“Participatory Profile of the Rural Women in Local Governance in Coimbatore District”** included the following :

- A. Study area
- B. Samples
- C. Method and tool
- D. Data collection and
- E. Analysis and interpretation of the data

A. Study Area

The Coimbatore district was selected for the study on **“Participatory Profile of the Rural Women in Local Governance in Coimbatore District”**. As per the newly enacted panchayat act, panchayats at three different levels viz., district level, panchayat union at the panchayat development block level and the village panchayat at the grass root level, have been formed in this district in October, 2001.

B. Samples

A sample is any portion of the population selected for study and the number of individuals in a sample is called the sample size (Bhat et al., 1996 and Gupta and Kapoor, 1996). Two categories of women* – one, the

presidents and the other, the councillors were the samples for the study, initially in 2002. A 10 per cent sample (five presidents and 15 councillors) were studied in 2005 as a follow-up of the research.

There are 1765 women elects to local bodies at village level in Coimbatore district. They include 151 village panchayat presidents and 1110 village panchayat ward members. Of these women, 1/3 of the village presidents (50) were selected for the study. In addition a little less than 1/7th of the women ward members (150) were also selected as the sample for the study. Totally there were 200 rural women elects surveyed.

There were three categories** of the women elects in the study-those elected in 1996, in 2001 and both in 1996 and 2001.

Sampling methods can be classified into various categories. Random sampling method is one of the most useful methods among them. Random sampling from a finite population refers to that method of sample selection which gives each possible sample combination an equal probability of being picked up and each item of the entire population to have an equal chance of being included in the sample (Kothari, 2000, Krishnaswamy, 1998 and Sharon, 1999).

Table 01 gives the list of the study areas and the number of respondents covered under each area (Figure 04).

Note : ** Three categories – those elected in 1996, in 2001 and both in 1996 and 2001.

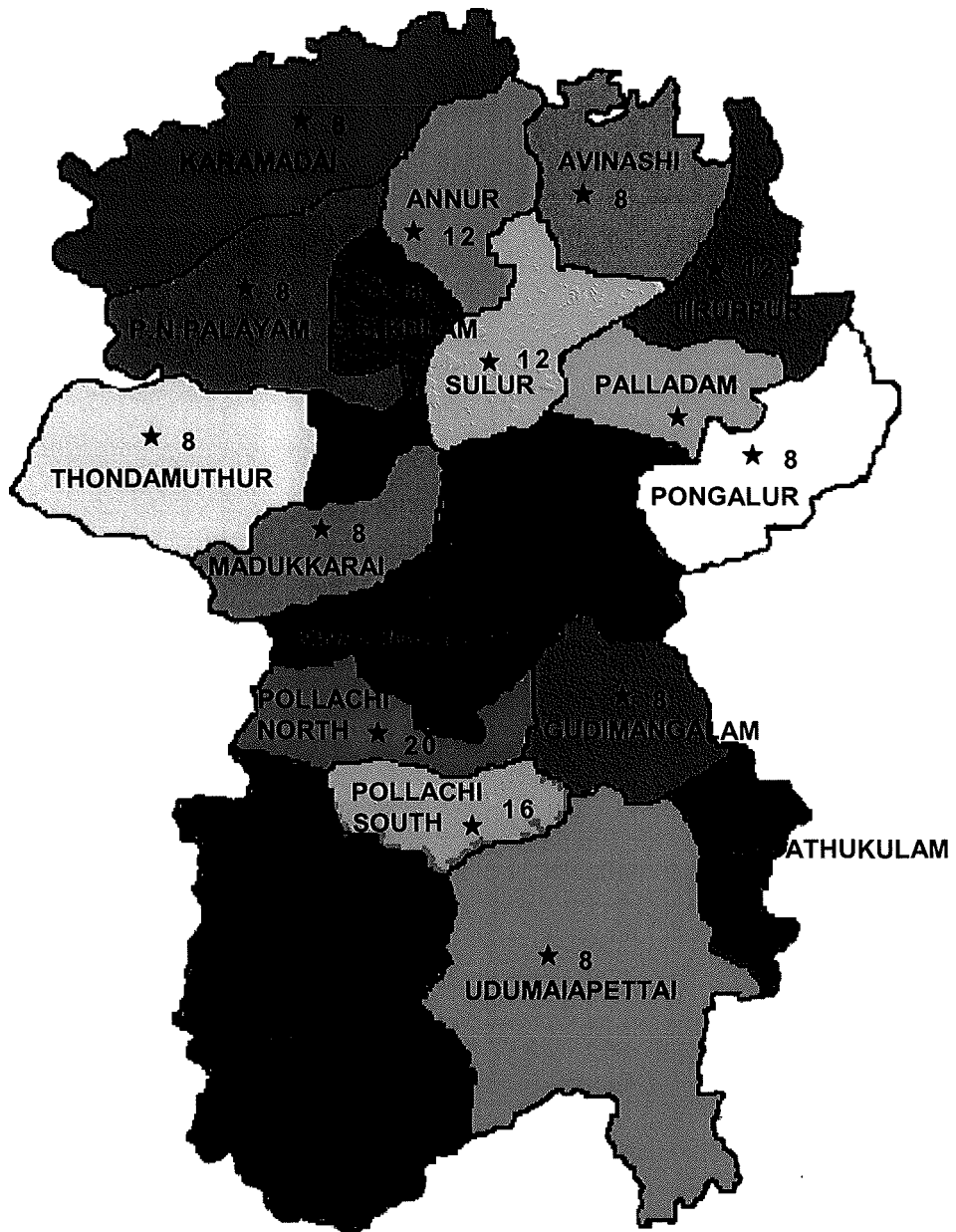
* Two categories – the presidents and the councillors. These terms are used in IVth and Vth chapters.

TABLE 01. AREAS AND NUMBER OF THE RESPONDENTS

S.No.	Name of the area	Presidents (N : 50)	Councillors (N : 150)
1.	Anaimalai Panchayat Union a) Subbe Goundan Pudur Village Panchayat b) Thattharauddin Pudur Village Panchayat	2	6
2.	Annur Panchayat Union a) Kunnathur Village Panchayat b) Ottar Palayam Village Panchayat c) Pacha Palayam Village Panchayat	3	9
3.	Avinashi Panchayat Union a) Kannur Village Panchayat b) Karuvalur Village Panchayat	2	6
4.	Gudimangalam Panchayat Union a) Koshavampalayam Village Panchayat b) Poolavadi Village Panchayat	2	6
5.	Karamadai Panchayat Union a) Bella Palayam Village Panchayat b) Tholam Palayam Village Panchayat	2	6
6.	Kinathukadavu Panchayat Union a) Andipalayam Village Panchayat b) Devanampalayam Village Panchayat c) Kondampatti Village Panchayat d) Sirukalanthai	4	12
7.	Madathukulam Panchayat Union a) Kaaraththolluvu Village Panchayat b) Vedappatti Village Panchayat	2	6
8.	Madukkarai Panchayat Union a) Mayileripalayam Village Panchayat b) Pichanur Village Panchayat	2	6
9.	Palladam Panchayat Union a) Chitthambalam Village Panchayat b) Karadivavi Village Panchayat c) Panikkampatti Village Panchayat d) Velampalayam Village Panchayat	4	12

S.No.	Name of the area	Presidents (N : 50)	Councillors (N : 150)
10.	Pongalur Panchayat Union a) Mathapur Village Panchayat b) Perunth tholluvu Village Panchayat	2	6
11.	P.N.Palayam Panchayat Union a) Chinna Thadagam Village Panchayat b) Nanchundapuram Village Panchayat	2	6
12.	Pollachi (North) Panchayat Union a) Eripatti Village Panchayat b) Mannur Village Panchayat c) Rasipalayam Village Panchayat d) Thalakkurai Village Panchayat e) Jothampatti	5	15
13.	Pollachi (South) Panchayat Union a) Ambaram Palayam Village Panchayat b) Komangalam Village Panchayat c) Palayur Village Panchayat d) S.Malaiyandi Pattinam Village Panchayat	4	12
14.	Sulur Panchayat Union a) Karavali Mathapur Village Panchayat b) Peedam Palli Village Panchayat c) Rasi Palayam Village Panchayat	3	9
15.	Sultanpet Panchayat Union a) Ragampatti Village Panchayat b) Varapatti Village Panchayat	2	6
16.	S.S.Kulam Panchayat Union a) Kallipalayam Village Panchayat b) Keeranatham Village Panchayat	2	6
17.	Thondamuthur Panchayat Union a) Narasipuram Village Panchayat b) Vellimalaipattinam Village Panchayat	2	6

**LOCALE OF THE STUDY
(COIMBATORE DISTRICT BLOCKS)**



Total number of respondents - 200

FIGURE 04

S.No.	Name of the area	Presidents (N : 50)	Councillors (N : 150)
18.	Tiruppur Panchayat Union a) Kallipalayam Village Panchayat b) Muthalipalayam Village Panchayat c) Sokkanur Village Panchayat	3	9
19.	Udumalpet Panchayat Union a) Kodingium Village Panchayat b) Thimmalapatti Village Panchayat	2	6

All the respondents of the study were rural women elected to local bodies. There were 50 presidents and 150 councillors.

C. Method and Tool

To collect appropriate data an interview schedule was utilized.

An interview schedule means a schedule which is used as a tool for interviewing (Krishnasami, 1998). Personal interview method was used to collect data. Under this method the required data are collected by the investigator personally by asking questions pertaining to the enquiry from persons from whom the information is to be obtained (known as informants) (Gupta, 1995 and Pillai and Bagavathi, 1996) (Plate I).

A detailed schedule was prepared for the collection of required information from the respondents (Appendix – I). The schedule included details regarding the socio-economic profile of the respondents, details of election, their knowledge on 73rd amendment and local bodies and the functions and functionalism of women in the elected bodies, the problems they face and the suggestions of the respondents for future course of action.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study on the **“Participatory Profile of the Rural Women in Local Governance in Coimbatore District”** are presented and discussed as under :

- A. Personal Profile of the Respondents, and
- B. Participatory Profile of the Women Elects

A. PERSONAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

The personal profile of the rural women elected to the panchayats is given in Table 02.

TABLE 02. PERSONAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

S.No.	Details	Presidents N : 50	Percentage	Councillors N : 150	Percentage
1.	Age in years				
	a) 20 – 25	06	12.00	18	12.00
	b) 26 – 30	11	22.00	33	22.00
	c) 31 – 40	14	28.00	37	24.66
	d) 41 and above	19	38.00	62	41.34
2.	Caste				
	a) Scheduled tribe	-	-	02	01.33
	b) Scheduled caste	15	30.00	34	23.00
	c) Most backward caste	11	22.00	38	25.33
	d) Backward caste	18	36.00	59	39.33
	e) Forward caste	06	12.00	17	11.01
3.	Religion				
	a) Hindu	49	98.00	137	91.32
	b) Christian	01	02.00	11	07.34
	c) Muslim	-	-	07	01.34
4.	Marital Status				
	a) Married	45	90.00	137	91.34
	b) Unmarried	02	04.00	06	04.00
	c) Widowed	03	06.00	07	04.66
5.	Type of Family				
	a) Nuclear	34	68.00	117	78.00
	b) Joint	16	32.00	33	22.00
6.	Education				
	a) Primary School	11	22.00	33	22.00
	b) Middle School	13	26.00	54	36.00
	c) High School	09	18.00	20	13.34
	d) Higher Secondary School	05	10.00	15	10.00
	e) Graduates	04	08.00	12	08.00
	f) Professionals	-	-	06	04.00
	g) Illiterates	08	16.00	10	06.66
7.	Occupation				
	a) Agriculture	26	52.00	75	50.00
	b) Business	05	10.00	17	11.34
	c) Private firm	11	22.00	37	24.66
	d) Unemployed	08	16.00	21	14.00
8.	Monthly Income				
	a) Upto Rs.1000	10	20.00	45	30.00
	b) Rs.1001 to Rs.5000	19	38.00	62	41.34
	c) Rs.5001 to Rs.10000	09	18.00	10	06.66
	d) Rs.10000 to above	04	08.00	12	08.00
	e) Not having any income	08	16.00	21	14.00

The age range of the presidents and the councillors presents the fact that these women elects belonged to different levels of age, indicating young and old participating in the panchayat.

2. Caste

The presidents belonging to most backward and backward castes command a comfortable majority by sharing 22 and 36 per cents respectively, allowing the scheduled castes to have 30 per cent representation. The members are also following the same track. They form 25 per cent among the most backward castes, 39 per cent among backward castes and nearly 23 per cent among the scheduled castes. A meagre one per cent of the councillors were scheduled tribes.

3. Religion

Out of the 200 respondents, majority are Hindus, followed by Christians to a considerable extent and Muslims, the least.

4. Marital Status

A vast majority (90 per cent) were married, followed by unmarried, four per cent and widows, eight per cent among the presidents and four per cent among the councillors.

5. Type of Family

About three fourth of them were in nuclear families while the rest were in joint families in both the categories (presidents and councillors). The traditional joint family system is slowly disintegrating here.

6. Education

About one fourth of them had an education upto the middle school level. Eight per cent of the presidents and the councillors were graduates while 16 per cent of the presidents and seven per cent of the councillors were illiterates.

7. Occupation

For half of the families of the surveyed presidents and councillors agriculture was the major occupation. Around one fourth of them were working in private firms while the rest were involved in business. Sixteen per cent of the presidents and 14 per cent of the councillors were unemployed.

8. Monthly Income

The monthly income of the women elects ranged from Rs.1000 to above Rs.10000 per month. About 38 per cent of the presidents and 41 per cent of the councillors were having an income around Rs.1001 to Rs.5000 per month. About 16 per cent of the presidents and 14 per cent of the councillors were unemployed and did not have any income.

B. PARTICIPATORY PROFILE OF THE WOMEN ELECTS

This aspect is studied as under :

1. Elections to the panchayats
2. Trainings undergone
3. Involving the gram sabhas in panchayat activities
4. Participation in local governance
5. Achievements
6. Constraints and suggestions
- and 7. Case studies

1. Elections to the Panchayats

The details regarding the rural women's elections to the panchayats are produced in Table 03.

TABLE 03. ELECTIONS TO THE PANCHAYATS

S.No.	Details	Elected in 1996				Elected in 2001				Elected in 1996 and 2001			
		Presidents N : 15	Percentage	Councillors N : 45	Percentage	Presidents N : 15	Percentage	Councillors N : 45	Percentage	Presidents N : 20	Percentage	Councillors N : 60	Percentage
a.	Reasons for participating in Elections*												
	1) Motivation by the husbands	11	-	35	-	10	-	28	-	13	-	32	-
	2) Personal interest	09	-	30	-	08	-	22	-	10	-	28	-
	3) Political background	07	-	27	-	07	-	21	-	06	-	17	-
	4) Family interest	03	-	05	-	05	-	13	-	04	-	12	-
b.	Initiators*												
	1) Husbands	12	-	31	-	10	-	26	-	12	-	51	-
	2) Public	10	-	25	-	12	-	83	-	18	-	54	-
	3) Political parties	06	-	15	-	06	-	15	-	10	-	36	-
	4) Personal interest	04	-	10	-	05	-	11	-	08	-	25	-
	5) Friends	01	-	03	-	01	-	02	-	02	-	03	-
c.	Help in Elections												
	1) Family												
	a) Full	13	86.66	40	88.88	12	80.00	41	91.11	18	90.00	56	93.33
	b) Partial	02	13.34	05	11.12	03	20.00	04	08.89	02	10.00	04	06.67
	2) Public												
	a) Full	12	80.00	40	88.88	11	73.33	40	88.88	18	90.00	57	95.00
	b) Partial	03	20.00	05	11.12	04	26.67	05	11.12	02	10.00	03	05.00
d.	Money spent in each election												
	1) Up to Rs.20,000	09	60.00	40	88.88	08	53.33	38	84.44	12	60.00	55	91.66
	2) Rs.20,001 to Rs.30,000	03	20.00	05	11.12	02	13.34	04	08.89	04	20.00	05	08.34
	3) Rs.30,001 to Rs.40,000	02	13.33	-	-	03	20.00	03	06.67	03	15.00	-	-
	4) Rs.40,001 to Rs.50,000	01	06.67	-	-	02	13.33	-	-	01	05.00	-	-

* Multiple response.

The reasons behind the women elects' participation in the elections to the panchayats are, motivation by the husbands for the majority in all three categories followed by personal interest, political background and family interest. No doubt, husbands motivating majority women presidents and the women councillors to take part in elections, will lead only to proxy politics.

It is seen in all the three categories, those initiators for the rural women to be elected to the local bodies were the husbands, public and political parties. For their elections, their family members and public helped fully.

More than half of the presidents and 3/4th of the councillors spent upto Rs.20,000 for their elections in all the three categories. It is found that the presidents spent more than the councillors in these elections.

2. Trainings Undergone

Table 04 gives the details of the trainings undergone by the respondents for the local governance.

TABLE 04. TRAININGS UNDERGONE*

S.No.	Details	Elected in 1996		Elected in 2001		Elected in 1996 and 2001	
		Presidents N : 15	Councillors N : 45	Presidents N : 15	Councillors N : 45	Presidents N : 20	Councillors N : 60
a.	Content						
	1) Awareness on 73 rd Amendment	12	32	11	29	18	48
	2) Role of women in local governance	08	28	09	27	15	32
	3) Implementing programmes	07	21	08	18	11	24
	4) Administration in panchayat	05	15	05	15	08	15
	5) Agriculture and allied subjects	02	08	03	07	05	10
b.	Methods used in training						
	1) Lecture	12	27	13	24	19	55
	2) Exhibition	10	25	08	21	17	49
	3) Discussion	09	18	06	18	15	31
	4) Field Trips	07	11	05	15	12	28
	5) Demonstrations	05	08	03	10	10	22
	6) Video Lessons	03	05	02	08	07	17
	7) Participatory techniques	01	02	-	03	05	09
c.	Duration						
	1) One day	12	38	10	28	18	51
	2) Two days	08	22	05	12	15	42
	3) Three days	05	14	02	06	12	33
d.	Place						
	1) Coimbatore	10	41	09	38	18	54
	2) Chennai	04	03	-	-	05	03
	3) Gandhigram	02	01	-	-	04	02
e.	Opinion about the Training						
	1) Gain in knowledge	08	33	07	28	15	50
	2) Developed managerial ability	06	27	05	21	12	44
	3) No idea	04	13	12	32	07	15
f.	Suggestions for improvement in Training						
	1) Want more information	08	10	12	23	15	52
	2) Increase in the duration of training	10	12	11	21	10	30
	3) Training in different places	07	08	09	28	12	35

* Multiple response.

Regarding the training details of the respondents, the content included awareness on the 73rd Amendment, role of women in local governance, skills in communication, implementing programmes and administration in panchayat.

The methods of training were lecture, exhibitions, discussions, field trips, demonstrations, video lessons and participatory techniques.

For majority of the respondents in all the three categories, the training was one day followed by two days to a considerable number and three days, to a meagre percentage.

The training places for the presidents were Coimbatore, Chennai and Gandhigram, whereas majority of the councillors were trained in Coimbatore alone.

Gain in knowledge and developing managerial ability were the outcomes of the training as opined by the presidents and the councillors. A minority of the presidents and councillors had "no idea" about the outcome.

Want more information, increase in the duration of the training and training in different places were the suggestions given by the presidents as well as the councillors for improving trainings in future.

The 10 per cent samples interviewed (5 presidents and 15 councillors) in 2005, got six more trainings in service, developmental and administrative aspects for the past three years from 2002-2005.

3. Involving the Gram Sabhas in Panchayat Activities

The extent of involvement of the gram sabhas in panchayat activities is illustrated in Table 05.

TABLE 05. INVOLVEMENT OF THE GRAM SABHAS IN PANCHAYAT ACTIVITIES*

S.No.	Details	Elected in 1996		Elected in 2001		Elected in 1996 and 2001	
		Presidents N : 15	Councillors N : 45	Presidents N : 15	Councillors N : 45	Presidents N : 20	Councillors N : 60
a.	Meaning						
	1) Conducted in a village or group of villages	12	31	10	28	18	52
	2) Meeting of the local people	10	26	08	19	15	48
	3) No idea	-	-	02	05	-	-
b.	Purpose						
	1) To provide facilities	12	32	07	29	19	51
	2) To solve problems	10	21	08	24	12	42
	3) No idea	02	08	10	18	05	08
c.	Place of meeting the gram sabha						
	1) Government school	11	28	13	30	15	51
	2) Temple	09	24	10	21	12	42
	3) Under the tree	08	15	08	15	10	33
	4) Near panchayat office	06	10	05	09	08	21
	5) Community hall	04	08	03	05	05	18
d.	Number of meetings conducted per year						
	1) 3 times	02	03	04	04	03	04
	2) 4 times	15	42	13	42	18	58
	3) 5 times	02	06	05	05	04	05
e.	Other Agencies participating in the meetings						
	1) Self Help Groups	10	32	10	28	16	53
	2) Non-governmental organisations	05	12	06	08	08	18
	3) Makkal Nalapaniyalars	02	08	03	04	05	10
	4) No idea	01	03	02	06	03	04
f.	Functions						
	1) Taking decisions to solve problems	12	40	11	38	18	51
	2) Identifying the benefits enjoyed through the panchayats	10	31	09	27	15	40
	3) Deciding the location of street lights, water taps, minor irrigation, etc.	09	24	07	22	10	29
	4) Implementing and evaluating programmes	07	18	06	18	08	18
	5) Creating awareness on first aid, reproductive and child health, cleanliness etc.	05	09	05	10	03	15
	6) Abolishing social evils such as corruption in public life.	02	07	01	04	02	10

* Multiple response

The involvement of gram sabha is a requirement in village panchayat when asked about the meaning of the gram sabha, following were the responses of the respondents.

- Conducted in a village or group of villages and meeting of the local people. Some women elected in 2001 did not have any idea regarding this.
- and
- Providing facilities and solving the problems, are the purposes of the gram sabha, as viewed by a majority of women elects in general. A meagre percentage had no idea about this in all the three categories.

The government schools were the major meeting places for the gram sabhas followed by temples, under the trees, near panchayat office and community hall, to certain extent.

All the presidents elected in 1996 and 2001 gave a correct answer that a gram sabha should meet atleast four times a year. The new presidents elected in 2001 had some problem in expressing the correct fact. Same is the case with the councillors too. All of them said that the presidents conduct the gram sabha meetings.

The other agencies found participating in the gram sabha meetings were Self Help Groups, Non-governmental organisations and makkalnala paniyalars. Some of the presidents and councillors did not have any idea on this.

Taking decisions to solve problems, identifying the benefits enjoyed through the panchayat, deciding the location of street lights, water taps and irrigation etc., Implementing and evaluating programmes, creating awareness on first aid, reproductive and child health, cleanliness etc. and trying to abolish social evils such as corruption in public life are the functions of the panchayats as listed by the women elects.

The involvement of the gram sabhas in panchayat activities was found to be improving year by year as viewed by the selected 10 per cent samples. Now that, the next panchayats elections are fast approaching, which will be held in 2006, it is encouraging to see and hear that the gram sabhas have started understanding their role in panchayats and taking part in the programmes for rural development.

4. Participation in Local Governance

Majority of the women presidents and the councillors were found to be unaware of the 73rd Amendment in all the three categories. More than 50 per cent of the presidents and councillors in all the three categories had 'no idea' about the 11th schedule which gives 29 items to be taken care of in the panchayats.

The extent of the awareness on 73rd amendment and participation of the women elects in local governance are presented in Table 06 and Figures 05 and 06.

TABLE 06. AWARENESS AND PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE*

S.No.	Details	Elected in 1996		Elected in 2001		Elected in 1996 and 2001	
		Presidents N : 15	Councillors N : 45	Presidents N : 15	Councillors N : 45	Presidents N : 20	Councillors N : 60
a.	Essential features of the Amendment						
	1) One third reservation for women	06	12	06	10	09	25
	2) Equal power	06	09	04	08	08	20
	3) Gram sabha and three tier system	05	07	02	06	05	15
	4) Taking care of the basic needs of the village	03	04	-	02	04	09
	5) Uplift of rural poor	-	-	-	-	-	02
b.	Items known						
	1) Drinking water	06	12	06	10	09	25
	2) Rural housing	05	11	05	10	09	24
	3) Road and bridges	04	11	05	10	08	22
	4) Rural electrification	04	10	05	09	08	20
	5) Health and sanitation	04	10	05	09	08	17
	6) Schools	04	09	04	08	07	16
	7) Agriculture	03	09	04	08	07	15
	8) Animal husbandry	03	09	04	08	07	15
	9) Dairying	03	08	03	08	06	13
	10) Poultry	03	08	03	07	05	12
	11) Fisheries	02	08	03	07	05	12
	12) Social forestry	02	08	03	06	05	10
	13) Small scale industries	02	07	02	06	05	08
	14) Family welfare	02	06	02	05	04	06
	15) Women and child development	01	05	02	04	03	05
	16) Social welfare	01	04	01	04	03	04
	17) Poverty alleviation programmes	01	03	01	03	02	03
	18) Maintenance of community buildings	01	02	01	02	02	02
	19) Welfare of the weaker sections	01	01	01	01	02	02
	20) No idea	10	38	12	40	09	35
c.	Sources of Income for the panchayat						
	1) House tax	14	37	14	35	19	52
	2) Water tax	14	30	12	29	17	45
	3) Land tax	13	24	10	21	15	39
	4) Government fund	12	21	09	18	14	31
	5) M.L.A / M.P. funds	10	15	08	15	10	22
	6) Business tax	08	10	07	12	08	18
	7) Vehicle tax	06	08	07	10	07	15
	8) Public contributions	05	05	06	08	05	10
	9) Bus and car stand tax	04	03	04	05	04	08
	10) Leasing of dam for fishing	01	02	02	03	02	04
d.	Schemes implementing						
	1) Water	12	37	11	34	19	56
	2) Road / Concrete road	10	31	05	14	15	42
	3) Street light	09	28	08	24	13	38
	4) Formation of self help groups	09	22	07	20	10	32
	5) Namakku Namme Thittam	08	20	03	10	08	21
	6) Anna Marumalarchi Thittam	08	22	02	05	08	20
	7) Indira Awas Yojana	07	20	05	12	07	19
	8) Marriage Scheme	05	12	05	10	07	18
	9) Swarna Jayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana	04	08	02	05	05	12
	10) Employment Assurance Scheme	02	05	-	-	02	08

* Multiple response.

One third reservation for women, equal power, gram sabha and three tier system and taking care of the basic needs of the villages, are the essential features of the 73rd Amendment as per the views of the women elects in all the three categories.

Nineteen items were listed by some of the women elects. Majority had 'no idea' about the items. They were found to be more ignorant than knowledgeable, requiring more intensive training on these items for better functioning.

Majority in all the three categories could list the sources of income for their panchayats. House tax, water tax, land tax, funds from the government, M.L.As and M.Ps, business tax, vehicle tax, public contribution and leasing of dam for fishing were the sources of income for the panchayats.

The schemes implemented by the panchayats included water supply, laying roads, providing street lights, formation of Self Help Groups, implementing programmes such as Namakku Name Thittam, Anna Marumalarchi Thittam, Indira Awas Yozana, Marriage Scheme and Swarna Jayanthi Gram Swarozgar Yojana (Figure 06).

The interviewed presidents and councillors in 2005 could express better understanding and awareness on the significance of panchayats – the amendments, reservation, 29 items, sources of income and schemes implemented for the uplift of the rural masses.

AWARENESS ON 73rd AMENDMENT ACT

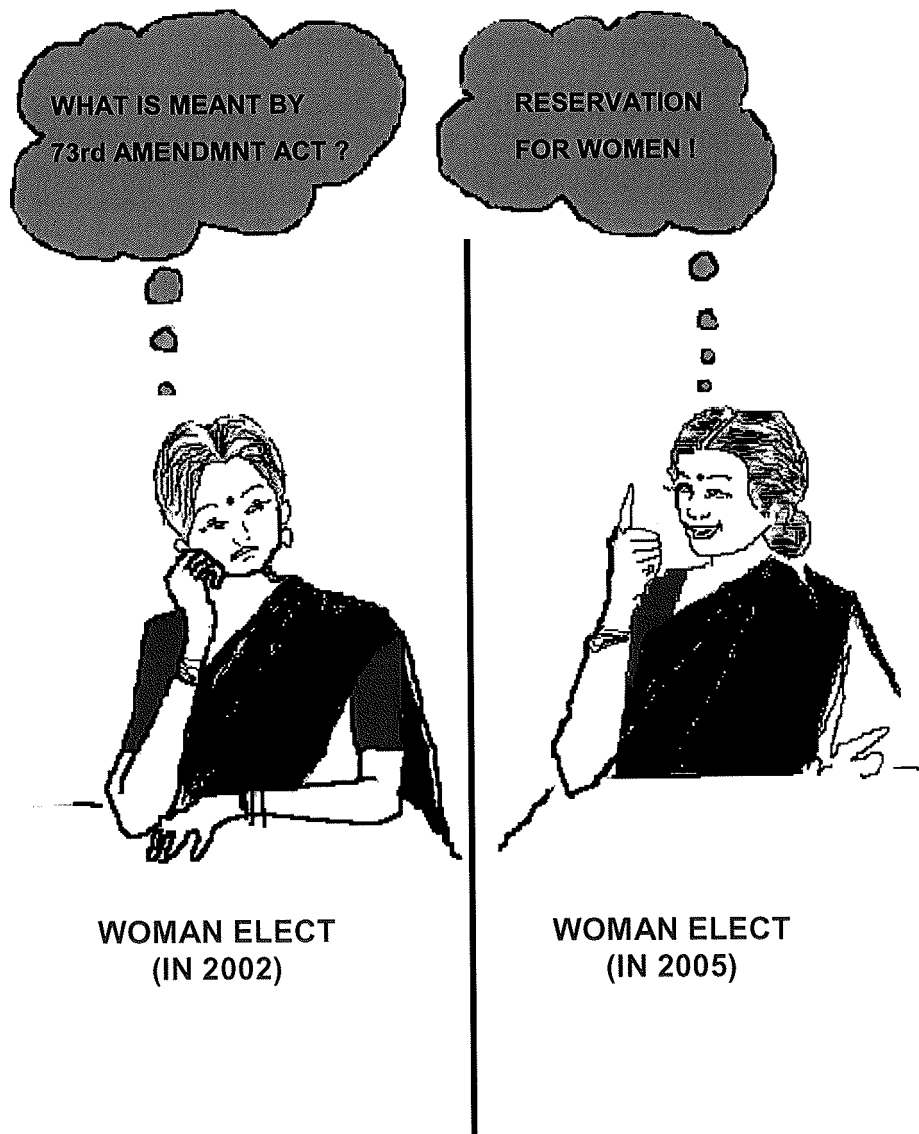
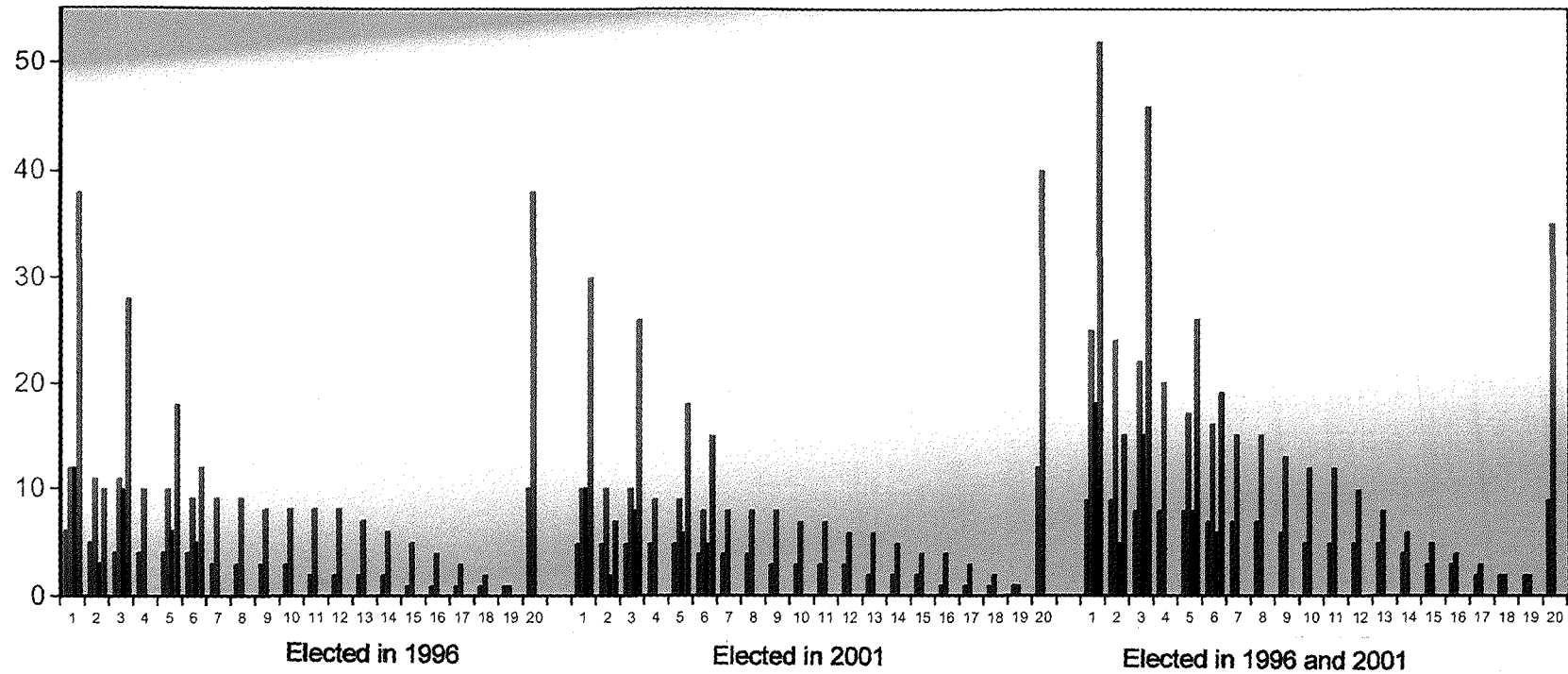


FIGURE 05

PARTICIPATION OF THE WOMEN ELECTS IN LOCAL GOVERNANCE



Presidents
 Councillors
 Presidents (performed)
 Councillors (Performed)

- 1 - Drinking water
- 2 - Rural housing
- 3 - Road and Bridges
- 4 - Rural Electrification
- 5 - Health and Sanitation

- 6 - Schools
- 7 - Agriculture
- 8 - Animal husbandry
- 9 - Dairying
- 10 - Poultry

- 11 - Fisheries
- 12 - Social Forestry
- 13 - Small Scale Industries
- 14 - Family Welfare
- 15 - Women and Child Development

- 16 - Social Welfare
- 17 - Poverty Alleviation Programmes
- 18 - Maintenance of Community
- 19 - Welfare of the Weaker Sections
- 20 - No idea

FIGURE 06

5. Achievements

The achievements of the panchayats are listed in Table 07.

TABLE 07. ACHIEVEMENTS *

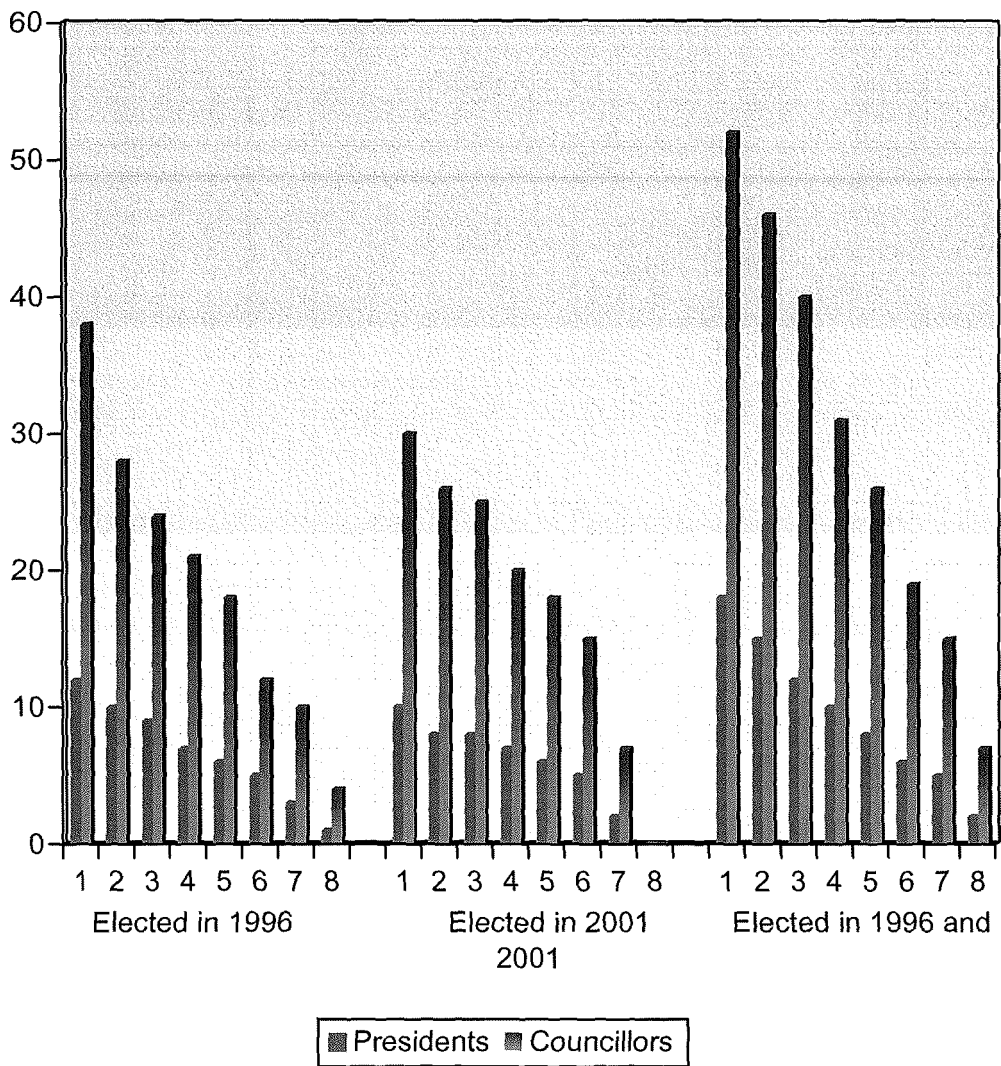
S.No.	Achievement	Elected in 1996		Elected in 2001		Elected in 1996 and 2001	
		Presidents N : 15	Councillors N : 45	Presidents N : 15	Councillors N : 45	Presidents N : 20	Councillors N : 60
1.	Providing potable water	12	38	10	30	18	52
2.	Laying link and concrete roads	10	28	08	26	15	46
3.	Shelter at the bus stop	09	24	08	25	12	40
4.	Drainage	07	21	07	20	10	31
5.	Health and sanitation	06	18	06	18	08	26
6.	Latrines for the public	05	12	05	15	06	19
7.	Group housing	03	10	02	07	05	15
8.	School building	01	04	-	-	02	07

* Multiple response.

The achievements of these panchayats include providing potable water, laying link and concrete roads, providing shelter at the bus stops, drainage, implementing health and sanitary measures, constructing latrines for the public, group housing and construction of school buildings. The achievements speak, the efficiency of the panchayats. Still they need to go a long way to reach the maximum (Plate II and Figure 07).

The achievements continued during the later period too, with the improvement in knowledge and exposure to challenges by the elected women as expressed by the interviewed women elects in 2005.

ACHIEVEMENTS



- 1 - Providing potable water
- 2 - Laying link and Concrete Roads
- 3 - Shelter at the Bus Stop
- 4 - Drainage
- 5 - Health and Sanitation
- 6 - Latrines for the Public
- 7 - Group Housing
- 8 - School Building

FIGURE 07

ANALYSIS FOR PRESIDENTS

Group 1 : Group EQ 1.0 Group 2 : Group EQ 2.0
(1996) (2001)

t – test for : NO. OF ACHIEVEMENTS

	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Group 1	15	5.5333	0.516	0.133
Group 2	15	3.9333	0.704	0.182

T value	Degrees of 2-Tail	
	Freedom	Prob.
7.10	28	**

Group 1 : Group EQ 2.0 Group 2 : Group EQ 3.0

t – test for : NO. OF ACHIEVEMENTS

	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Group 2	15	3.9333	0.704	0.182
Group 3	20	7.4000	0.598	0.134

T value	Degrees of 2-Tail	
	Freedom	Prob.
-15.73	33	**

Group 1 : Group EQ 1.0 Group 2 : Group EQ 3.0

t – test for : NO. OF ACHIEVEMENTS

	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Group 1	15	5.5333	0.516	0.133
Group 3	20	7.4000	0.598	0.134

T value	Degrees of 2-Tail	
	Freedom	Prob.
-9.67	33	**

** - Significant at 1 per cent level for the Presidents in all the three categories.

ANALYSIS FOR COUNCILLORS

Group 1 : Group EQ 1.0 Group 2 : Group EQ 2.0
 t – test for : NO. OF ACHIEVEMENTS

	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Group 1	45	5.4889	0.549	0.082
Group 2	45	3.8444	0.706	0.105

T value	Degrees of 2-Tail	
	Freedom	Prob.
12.34	88	**

Group 1 : Group EQ 2.0 Group 2 : Group EQ 3.0
 t – test for : NO. OF ACHIEVEMENTS

	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Group 2	45	3.8444	0.706	0.105
Group 3	60	7.4000	0.558	0.072

T value	Degrees of 2-Tail	
	Freedom	Prob.
-28.82	103	**

Group 1 : Group EQ 1.0 Group 2 : Group EQ 3.0
 t – test for : NO. OF ACHIEVEMENTS

	Number of Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
Group 1	45	5.4889	0.549	0.082
Group 3	60	7.4000	0.558	0.072

T value	Degrees of 2-Tail	
	Freedom	Prob.
-17.48	103	**

** - Significant at 1 per cent level for the Councillors in all the three categories.

6. Constraints and Suggestions

The constraints and suggestions of the respondents are highlighted in Table 08.

TABLE 08. CONSTRAINTS AND SUGGESTIONS*

S.No.	Details	Elected in 1996		Elected in 2001		Elected in 1996 and 2001	
		Presidents N : 15	Councillors N : 45	Presidents N : 15	Councillors N : 45	Presidents N : 20	Councillors N : 60
a.	Constraints						
	1) Lack of funds	12	37	14	41	18	53
	2) Lack of training	10	29	12	36	15	44
	3) Interference of the political parties	07	21	08	25	12	34
	4) Male dominance	05	16	04	14	08	22
	5) Lack of co-operation among the female members	02	06	03	08	06	15
	6) Discouragement by the high caste people	02	07	02	08	04	10
b.	Suggestions						
	1) More reservation for women	10	32	10	28	12	35
	2) Increased allocation of funds for local bodies	08	22	12	34	14	40
	3) Independent power to take decisions	06	19	07	20	10	28
	4) Intensive training on panchayat	05	14	08	23	08	22

* Multiple response.

Lack of funds and training, interference of the political parties, male dominance and lack of co-operation among the female members in the panchayats were the major constraints expressed by these women elects in all the three categories. Discouragement by the high caste people was a

major constraint faced by the women elects belonging to scheduled castes tribes.

Though there were some solutions found for the problems by the women elects the issues concerning lack of funds, male dominance and interference remain unsolved till 2005 which need to be solved for the smooth functioning of the panchayats in future.

More reservation for women, increased allocation of funds for local bodies, independent power to take decisions on their own and intensive training on panchayats were the suggestions given by the presidents and the councillors in general.

It is observed that no difference was found between the presidents and the councillors and the women elected in 1996, in 2001 and both in 1996 and 2001. They need to be given more awareness on local bodies and training in the proper functioning of the panchayats. The analysis done between the presidents and between the councillors for their achievements in panchayats in 1996, in 2001 and in 1996 and 2001 endorses it. There is an increase observed in mean score among the women, elected both in 1996 and 2001 regarding their achievements. Of course experience has weightage.

Figure 08 illustrates 'snake and ladder' for the rural women elects in local bodies.

‘SNAKE AND LADDER’ FOR RURAL WOMEN ELECTS IN LOCAL BODIES

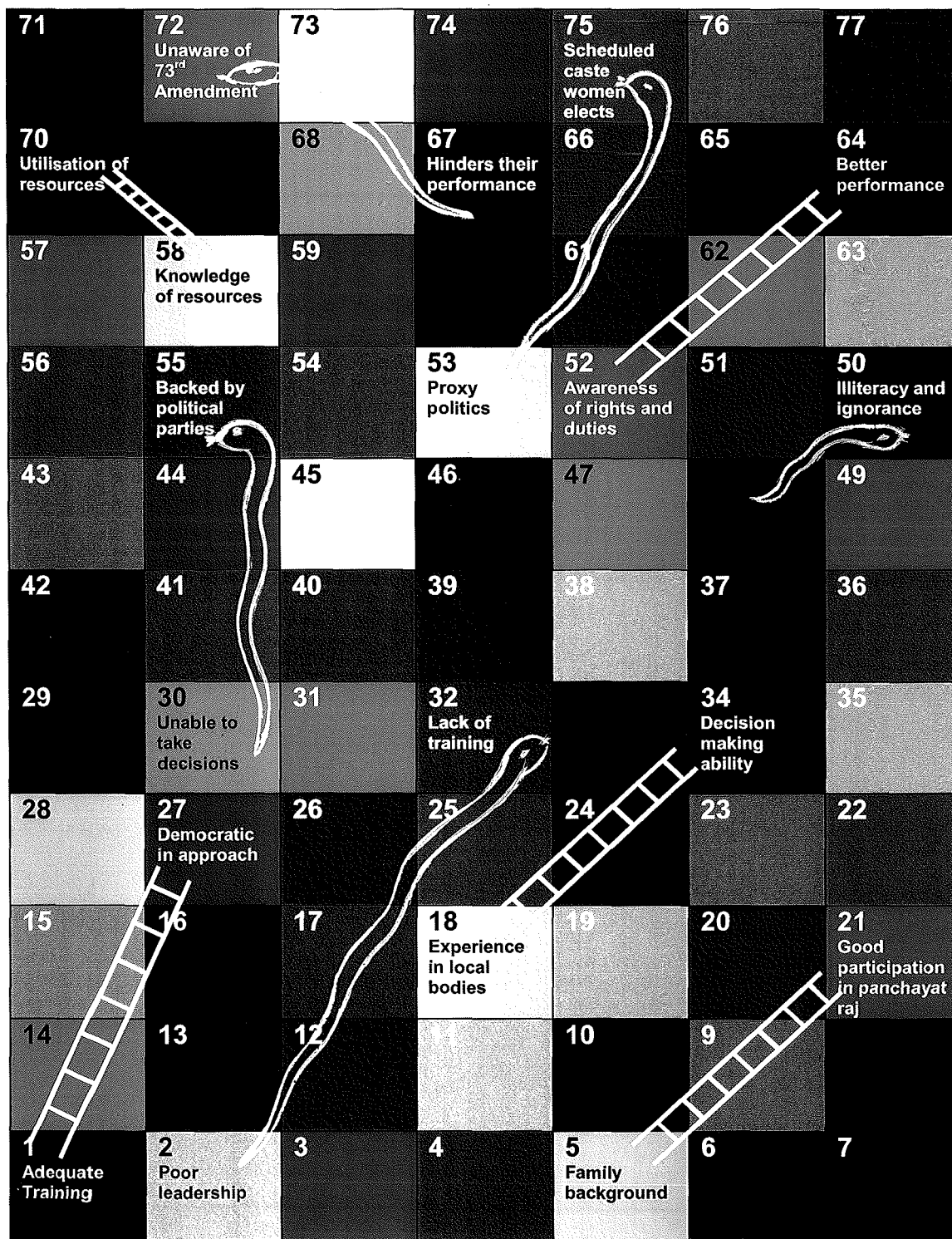


FIGURE 08

Two case studies conducted by the investigator are detailed as under :

CASE : 01

BACKGROUND, A BOON !

It is always a true fact that background is a boon. To Mrs. V.R.Suganya, the President of the Vellimalai Pattanam Village in Thondamuthur Panchayat Union, that background has helped much. She is 57 years old. Born in a rich landlord family, she was given education upto graduation. She got married to a popular family in that village and gave birth to a daughter and a son. Her daughter got married to a doctor and her son has completed a special course at the capital of the state.

Having lost her husband at the age of 45, she manages to cater to the needs of a lunatic sister-in-law at home. Her personal problems are not hurdles for her. The one third reservation for women, helped her to take part in elections and win. She is a popular figure among the villagers. She got elected twice in 1996 and 2001 as the village panchayat president.

She spends from her pocket apart from the funds she receives from the government and other sources. She constructed four overhead tanks for water supply, laid link road in her panchayat, improved 'Vaidehi falls'- a tourist attraction in her panchayat, provided drainage facility in her villages, organised 450 SHGs in collaboration with a local NGO, put concrete roads and is a best administrator. She is the secretary of the Association of the

women presidents of the western region covering Salem, Erode, Namakkal, Ooty and Coimbatore.

She was awarded the best woman village president for the year 1999-2000 at the district level. She is bold, enthusiastic and a successful president. She belongs to a high income family and has a political background too.

No doubt, her background is a boon for her (Plate III).

Chapter – V

Summary and Conclusion

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

A study entitled **“Participatory Profile of the Rural Women in Local Governance in Coimbatore District”** had been carried out during the year 2001-2002. It was updated in 2005.

There were three categories of the women elects in the study – those elected in 1996, in 2001 and those elected both in 1996 and 2001. An appropriate interview schedule was used to collect data from these samples. The findings are summarised below.

A. PERSONAL PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

- The age range of the presidents and the councillors presents the fact that the women elects belonged to different levels of age, indicating young and old, participating in the panchayat.
- The presidents belonging to most backward and backward castes command a comfortable majority by sharing 22 and 36 per cents respectively allowing the scheduled caste to have 30 per cent representation.
- Majority of the women elects were Hindus, followed by Christians to a considerable extent and Muslims, the least.
- Majority (90 per cent) of the women elects were married, followed by unmarried, four per cent and widows, eight per cent among the presidents and four per cent among the councillors.

- About three fourth of them were in nuclear families while the rest were in joint families in both the categories (presidents and councillors).
- About one fourth of them had an education upto the middle school level. Eight per cent of the presidents and councillors were graduates while 16 per cent of the presidents and seven per cent of the councillors were illiterates.
- For half of the families of the surveyed presidents and councillors, agriculture was the major occupation.
- The income of the women elects ranged from Rs.1,000 to above Rs.10,000 per month. About 38 per cent of the presidents and 41 per cent of the councillors were having an income between Rs.1,001 and Rs.5,000 per month. About 16 per cent of the presidents and 14 per cent of the councillors were unemployed.

B. PARTICIPATORY PROFILE OF THE WOMEN ELECTS

1. Elections to the Panchayats

- The reasons behind the women elects' participation in the elections to the panchayats were, motivation by the husbands for the majority in all the three categories (elected in 1996, in 2001 and both in 1996 and 2001) followed by personal interest, political background and family interest.
- It is seen in all the three categories, those initiators for the rural women to be elected to the local bodies were their husbands, public and

political parties. For their elections, their family members and public helped fully.

- More than half of the presidents and 3/4th of the councillors spent upto Rs.20,000 for their elections in all the three categories. It is found that the presidents spent more than the councillors in these elections.

2. Trainings Undergone

- Regarding the training details of the respondents, the content included awareness on the 73rd Amendment, role of women in local governance, skills in communication, implementing programmes and administration in panchayat.
- The methods of training were lecture, exhibitions, discussions, field trips, demonstrations, video lessons and participatory techniques.
- For majority of the respondents in all the three categories, the training was one day followed by two days to a considerable number and three days to a meagre percentage.
- The training places for the presidents were Coimbatore, Chennai and Gandhigram, whereas majority of the councillors were trained in Coimbatore alone.
- Gain in knowledge and developing managerial ability were the outcomes of the training as opined by the presidents and the councillors.

- Want more information, increase in the duration of the training and training in different places were the suggestions given by the presidents as well as councillors, for future improvement.
- The 10 per cent samples interviewed (5 presidents and 15 councillors) got six more trainings in service, developmental and administrative aspects for the past three years from 2002-2005.

3. Involving the Gram Sabhas in Panchayat Activities

- Regarding the meaning of the gram sabha, the women elects said that it is conducted in a village or group of villages and it is the meeting of the local people. Some women elected in 2001 did not have any idea regarding this.
- Providing facilities and solving the problems, are the purposes of the gram sabha, as viewed by a majority of women elects in general.
- The government schools were the major meeting places for the gram sabhas followed by temples, under the trees, near panchayat offices and community halls, to certain extent.
- Majority of the presidents elected in 1996 and 2001 gave the correct answer that a gram sabha should meet atleast four times a year. The new presidents elected in 2001 had some problem in expressing the correct fact. Same is the case with the councillors too.
- The other agencies found participating in the gram sabha meetings were self help groups, non-governmental organisations and makkal

nala paniyalars. Some of the presidents and councillors did not have any idea on this.

- Taking decisions to solve problems, identifying the benefits enjoyed through the panchayat, deciding the location of street lights, water taps, irrigation etc., implementing and evaluating programmes, creating awareness on first aid, reproductive and child health, cleanliness etc. and trying to abolish social evils such as corruption in public life, are the functions of the panchayats as listed by the women elects.
- The involvement of the gramsabhas in panchayat activities was found to be improving year by year as viewed by the selected 10 per cent samples, in 2005.

4. Participation in Local Governance

- One third reservation for women, equal power, gram sabha and three tier system and taking care of the basic needs of the villages, are the essential features of the 73rd Amendment, as per the views of the women elects in all the three categories.
- Nineteen items were listed by some of the women elects. Majority had 'no idea' about the items under the 11th schedule.
- Majority in all the three categories, could list the sources of income for their panchayats.
- The schemes implemented by the panchayats included water supply, laying roads, providing street lights, formation of self help groups, implementing programmes such as Namakku Name Thittam, Anna

Marumalarchi Thittam, Indira Awas Yozana, Marriage Scheme and Swarna Jayanthi Gram Swarojkar Yojana.

- The interviewed presidents and councillors in 2005 could express better understanding and awareness on the significance of panchayats. The amendments, reservation and 29 items.

5. Achievements

- The achievements of the panchayats include providing potable water, laying link and concrete roads, providing shelter at the bus stops, drainage, implementing health and sanitary measures, constructing latrines for the public, group housing and construction of school buildings. The achievements speak, the efficiency of the panchayats. Still they need to go a long way to reach the maximum.
- The achievements continued during the later period too, with the improvement in knowledge and exposure to challenges by the elected women as expressed by the interviewed women elects in 2005.

6. Constraints and Suggestions

- Lack of funds and training, interference of the political parties, male dominance and lack of co-operation among the other female members in the panchayats were the major constraints expressed by these women elects in all the three categories. Discouragement by the high caste people was a major constraint faced by the women elects belonging to scheduled castes and tribes.

- More reservation for women, increased allocation of funds for local bodies, independent power to take decisions on their own and intensive training on panchayats were the suggestions given by the presidents and the councillors in general.
- The analysis done between the presidents and between the councillors for their achievements in panchayats in 1996, in 2001 and in 1996 and 2001 indicated no difference among these categories. There is an increase observed in mean score among the women, elected both in 1996 and 2001 regarding their achievements.
- Two case studies were built based on the performance of those women village presidents in the study area.
- Though there were some solutions found for the problems the issues concerning lack of funds, male dominance and interference remain unsolved till 2005 which need to be solved for the smooth functioning of the panchayats.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- As the panchayats are gaining momentum after the implementation of the 73rd Amendment Act, it is imperative to study the performance of the panchayats at various levels (three) to understand the positive and negative aspects of the system

- and
- It is observed that lack of training to the newly elected in general and the women in particular had certain problems leading to proxy administration in local bodies. Studies can be taken up on these lines for suggesting suitable measures to improve the training aspect in local bodies.

CONCLUSION

'Panchayat' administration at the grass roots is not new to us. The traditional panchayat set up has been undergoing changes starting from the Mughal period, then British and now the modern concept has emerged with the constitutional implementation of the local body acts. We have at present the emergence of women to participate in local body elections and take up leadership in the administration. Though they are new to the system, their participatory profile seems to be better. If given appropriate training and decision making powers, no doubt, they will emerge as successful leaders and efficient administrators in future (Figure 09).

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Appendices

APPENDIX - I

AVINASHILINGAM INSTITUTE FOR HOME SCIENCE AND HIGHER
EDUCATION FOR WOMEN (DEEMED UNIVERSITY)
COIMBATORE – 641 043

“PARTICIPATORY PROFILE OF RURAL WOMEN IN LOCAL
GOVERNANCE IN COIMBATORE DISTRICT”

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Name :
2. Address :
3. Age :
4. Marital Status :
5. Education :
6. Religion : Hindu Muslim
Christian Others
7. Caste / Community : FC BC MBC
SC ST
8. Occupation, if any :
9. Income / month (in Rs.) :
10. Type of family : Nuclear Joint

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

S.No.	Name of the Family Member	Age	Sex		Educational Qualification	Occupation	Monthly Income (Rs.)
			M	F			

III. ELECTION TO PANCHAYAT

A. Details of Election

1. What made you to take part in panchayat election ?
 - A. Personal interest
 - B. Husband's suggestion
 - C. Political background
 - D. Influence of the family members
 - E. Others (son, daughter, public, etc.) if any specify.

2. Who helped you to take part in the past election (1996) ?

A. Husband	D. Personal interest
B. Public	E. Political party
C. Friends	F. Others if any, specify.

3. Who helped you to take part in the present election (2001) ?

A. Husband	D. Personal interest
B. Public	E. Political party
C. Friends	F. Others if any, specify.

4. Did your family members help in election work ?

Yes No

If yes,

 - A. Fully
 - B. Partially
 - C. Some what.

5. Did the public help you in the elections ?

Yes No

If yes, how ?

 - A. Fully
 - B. Partially
 - C. Some what

6. How much did you spend (in Rs.) for local body elections ? (1996)

Upto Rs.10,000

Rs.10,001 to 20,000

Rs.20,001 to 30,000

Rs.30,001 to 40,000

Rs.40,001 to 50,000

Above Rs.50,001

7. How much did you spend (in Rs.) for present elections (2001)?

Upto Rs.10,000

Rs.10,001 to 20,000

Rs.20,001 to 30,000

Rs.30,001 to 40,000

Rs.40,001 to 50,000

Above Rs.50,001

8. How much did you spend for the 1996 and 2001 elections ?
(for the category elected both in 1996 and 2001)

B. Details of Training to Local Governance

1. Did you undergo any training ?

Yes No

If yes, give the details

S.No.	Details	1996	2001
1.	Content		
2.	Place		
3.	Agency		
4.	Duration		
5.	Any other, specify		

2. What is the outcome of the training ?

3. What is your opinion about the training ?
4. How many training programmes have you attended so far ?
- 1996 2001

5. Is the training helpful in your functioning ?
- Yes No

If yes, how ?

6. Do you want to have more training on Panchayat Raj ?

C. Details of the Gram Sabha

1. What is meant by a gram sabha ?
2. What is the main purpose of gram sabha ?
3. Where do you conduct the gram sabha meetings ?
4. How many times the gram sabha meetings are conducted in an year in your village ?

3 times 4 times 5 times 6 times

5. Who organises the gram sabha meeting ?
6. Which are the other agencies actively involved in the functioning of the village panchayat ?

SHGs NGOs
 Makkal Nala Paniyalar Others, if any specify.

7. Do you think gram sabha is important ?
- Yes No

If yes, in what way ?

8. What are the functions of the gram sabha ?

E. Information regarding Local Governance

1. What is the importance of panchayats ?
2. Are you aware of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act ?

Aware Unaware

3. What are the essential features of the Act ?
4. List the items under the 11th schedule ?
5. What are the items you have taken for action in your panchayat ?
6. What are the sources of income to your panchayat ?
7. What are the schemes you implement in your area / panchayat ?

F. Achievements of the Panchayat

1. What are the achievements made during the previous period (1996-2001) ?
2. What are the future plans of your panchayat ?

G. Problems of the Panchayat

1. What are the problems faced by you in panchayat ?

H. Suggestions for Future

1. What are your suggestions for future improvement ?

APPENDIX - II

‘t’ TEST FOR THE ANALYSIS OF ACHIEVEMENTS FOR THE PRESIDENTS AND THE COUNCILLORS

1996 and 2001	Presidents	Number of achievements	Councillors (N : 60)	Number of achievements
Number of Presidents : 20	1	7	1 2 3	7 6 7
	2	8	1 2 3	8 6 8
	3	7	1 2 3	7 7 7
	4	7	1 2 3	7 7 7
	5	8	1 2 3	8 7 8
	6	7	1 2 3	7 7 7
	7	8	1 2 3	8 8 7
	8	8	1 2 3	8 7 8
	9	7	1 2 3	8 7 7
	10	8	1 2 3	7 7 8
	11	6	1 2 3	6 7 7
	12	7	1 2 3	7 7 8
	13	8	1 2 3	8 8 7
	14	8	1 2 3	8 8 8
	15	7	1 2 3	7 7 8
	16	7	1 2 3	7 7 8
	17	8	1 2 3	8 8 7
	18	7	1 2 3	7 7 8
	19	7	1 2 3	7 7 8
	20	8	1 2 3	8 8 7

1996	Presidents	Number of achievements	Councillors (N : 45)	Number of achievements
Number of Presidents : 15	1	6	1 2 3	6 5 6
	2	5	1 2 3	5 5 6
	3	6	1 2 3	6 6 6
	4	5	1 2 3	5 5 5
	5	6	1 2 3	6 6 6
	6	6	1 2 3	6 6 5
	7	5	1 2 3	5 6 5
	8	6	1 2 3	6 6 6
	9	6	1 2 3	6 6 6
	10	4	1 2 3	5 5 5
	11	4	1 2 3	4 5 5
	12	3	1 2 3	6 6 5
	13	4	1 2 3	5 5 5
	14	5	1 2 3	6 6 6
	15	4	1 2 3	5 5 5

2001	Presidents	Number of achievements	Councillors (N : 45)	Number of achievements
Number of Presidents : 15	1	4	1 2 3	4 4 3
	2	4	1 2 3	4 4 4
	3	3	1 2 3	4 3 3
	4	5	1 2 3	5 5 4
	5	4	1 2 3	4 4 3
	6	5	1 2 3	5 5 4
	7	3	1 2 3	3 3 4
	8	4	1 2 3	4 4 4
	9	3	1 2 3	3 3 3
	10	4	1 2 3	3 3 3
	11	4	1 2 3	4 4 3
	12	3	1 2 3	3 3 3
	13	4	1 2 3	4 4 3
	14	5	1 2 3	5 4 5
	15	4	1 2 3	4 5 3

TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE RURAL WOMEN ELECTS

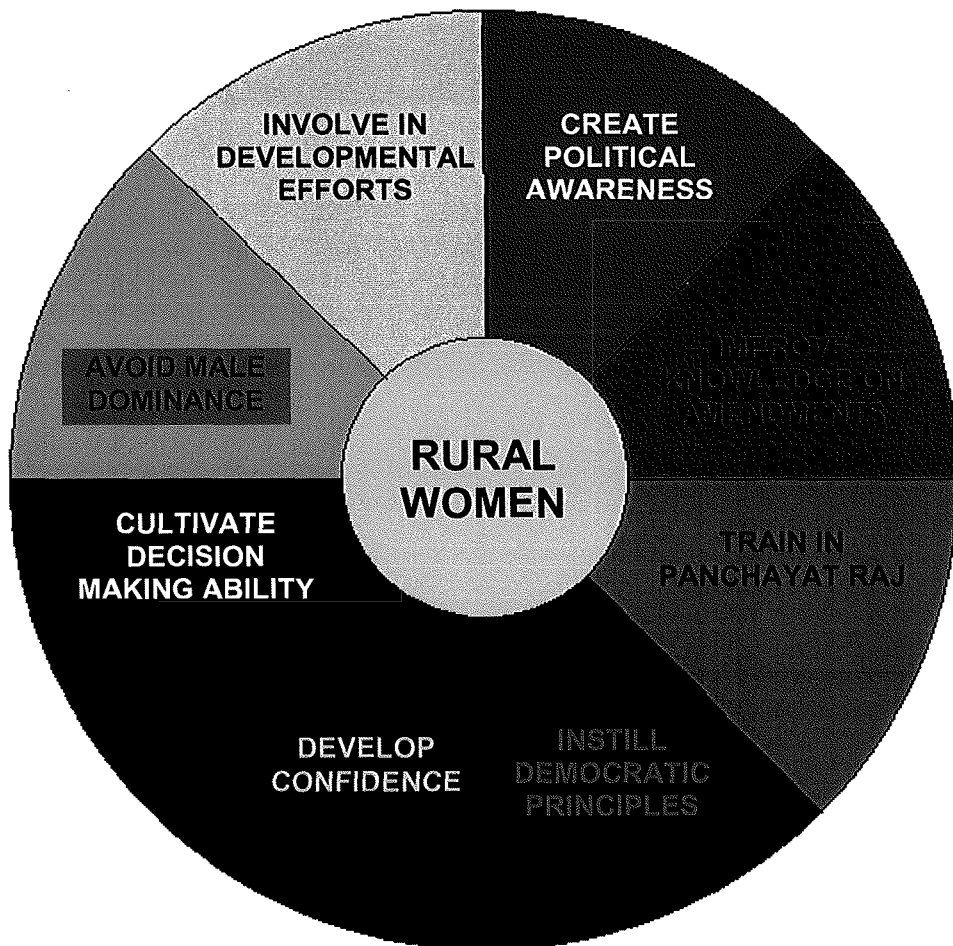


FIGURE 09

CASE : 02**CASTE, BOTH A BARRIER AND A BOON !**

This case study of Mrs.J.Sarojini, the president of Varappatti Village panchayat, Sultanpet panchayat union in Coimbatore district speaks of the barriers she faced in her service and the boons she enjoyed in her life.

Born in a scheduled caste family, she had school education up to SSLC. She was given in marriage at the age of 23. Her husband is a bank employee. Both for herself and her husband, the caste helped - for her, entry into local bodies and for her husband, getting a job in a nationalised bank – no doubt, a boon to open their opportunities in social life. Her husband earns more than Rs.10,000 per month.

Now she is 53 years old. The implementation of 73rd Amendment and one third reservation for women and one third for the SC women among the one third quota for women in general has paved the path for her entry into the panchayat. She got elected twice in 1996 and 2001. Her husband and her family encouraged her to take part in the elections as an independent.

Her election as independent and her background as a scheduled caste woman posed certain barriers in her functioning. She has to manage eight hamlets which belong to her panchayat. The Gram Sabha is always a head ache to her. She says, even the low grade workers in the panchayat do not give respect to her as she is a 'dhalit'. This is a perennial problem in her panchayat.

She is also the head of the Village Education Committee. As a president she has taken steps to provide houses for Harijans, street light, water, concrete roads, rain harvesting and latrines in her panchayat.

She fears that she could not take any stern steps against anybody in the village because she has got three daughters. They are studying at colleges and in a local school. She wants to avoid the untoward situations against her daughters that might occur due to her actions against any higher caste people in the village.

Thus caste seems to be a boon as well as a barrier for her (Plate IV).

D. Data Collection

A social survey has been defined as a fact-finding study dealing chiefly with working class and with the nature and problems of the community (Thanulingam, 2000). The required data was collection from the samples twice first in 2002, to understand the functioning of the selected samples in local bodies and the second in 2005 to update the data regarding the contributions of the samples to the local governance.

Case Building

Case study is an important tool of social investigation. It has been used extensively in psychology, education, sociology, economics and political science.

Two case studies were carried out in addition to the survey. Case study is a method of exploring and analysing of life of a social unit, be that a person, a family, an institution, cultural group or even entire community (Devi, 1998).

E. Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

The data thus obtained were consolidated and statistically analysed and are presented and discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter – 9V

Results and Discussion

BACKGROUND A BOON



PANCHAYAT OFFICE



HEALTH CENTRE



GRAM SABHA MEETING



VAIDEHI FALLS



BEST PRESIDENT AWARD

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE DALIT PRESIDENT



CHECK DAM



SCHOOL BUILDING



COMMON LATRINE

ACHIEVEMENTS



OVERHEAD TANK



CONCRETE ROAD



BUS SHELTER



DRAINAGE



GROUP HOUSING

INTERVIEW WITH THE DALIT PRESIDENT



PLATE I

PRESS NEWS ON PANCHAYAT RAJ

CASTE HINDUS NOT CONVINCED / GOVT. BID ABSENT

Poll in reserved panchayats a futile exercise?

By R. Hegde

Reserved panchayats where Dalits are to contest elections

Devolve adequate powers to local bodies, Govt. told

MADURAI, MARCH 15. Panchayat presidents urged the State Government to devolve adequate powers to local bodies, Govt. told.

Training course for panchayat raj staff

Union	Population	
	Total	Dalits
Chempatti	1,336	397
Attil	1,589	467
	2,374	716
	772	236

Stress on role of women panchayats

MADURAI, MARCH 15. Women panchayat presidents stressed the role of women panchayats in the development of the State.

Democratic governance

MADURAI, APRIL 16. Women panchayat presidents stressed the need for democratic governance in the State.

Women chiefs seek more powers for panchayats

MADURAI, MARCH 16. Women panchayat presidents sought more powers for panchayats.

CHENNAI, APRIL 16. Women panchayat presidents in the State today reiterated their demand for further empowerment of panchayat governments and

Spell out stand on devolution: panchayats

CHENNAI, MARCH 19. Panchayat presidents Statewide are up in arms for, they have little powers and less money. The fiscal year is drawing to a close, but the State Government has refused to

Representatives of non-governmental organisations involved in rural development note that immediately after the new regime took over in May 2001, the State Government presented its report

the loans and advances," says a resolution passed by the federation, which met in Madurai recently. The women presidents claim that in the past five years, rural local bodies (RLBs) headed by women have been more efficient, providing basic amenities

PANCHAYAT CHIEF ELECTION / MOB GOVT

Panchayati raj institutionalised but not empowered, says Aiyar

"We can bring about a revolution; it needs to be central point for development"

NEW DELHI: Equipped with a staff of 66 personnel, Panchayati Raj Minister Mani Shankar Aiyar believes he can expedite establishment of

enough powers to these institutions and Pondicherry, Bihar and Jharkhand were yet to begin the process. List of recommendations

Chief Ministers on devolution of powers to these institutions about three months ago. He presumed that they have been accepted by States, as there were no objections. "Panchayati raj impacts

FIGURE 03

TWENTY NINE ITEMS



FIGURE 01