Chapter-I

Theoretical and Methodological Framework
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Introduction

Indian rural society had been the subject of discussion by British administrators, scholars from different disciplinary background and Indian nationalists since the beginning of the nineteenth century. In recent years, a large number of village studies have been conducted by anthropologists, economists, political scientists, and sociologists. These studies have resulted in critical appraisal of earlier views and conceptions about Indian rural society. These studies, conducted across the country, have brought out rich empirical material and have also shown the underlying uniformity across regions as also regional variations.

One aspect of rural society which has engaged the attention of academics in the recent years is power formation and its dynamics. Notable contributors to the subject, apart from others, are Bailey, Beteille, Gough, Harriss, and Srinivas. Some deal directly with the phenomenon of power in
rural areas taking it as one of the variables studied. Others have contributed to the related aspects of power formation like dominant caste, leadership, factionalism, etc.

These studies also comment upon the nature of power formation in terms of distribution of power and shift of power from one section of population to the other in the changed context of adult franchise and party politics, and various institutions like Panchayati Raj and Co-operatives.

Though these studies have commented upon the phenomenon of power, exclusive attention has not been paid to the inter-relationship between the sources of power and power holders. Hence the need for studying sources of power to understand which person(s) has/have what source(s) of power and how shifts or changes in sources of power affect power holders.

Further, there is a need for studying new areas so as to enhance our understanding of power formation and to find regional variations and patterns. In addition to this the study aims to capture the changes taking place in the power formation in the eighties.
Theoretical Framework

This section firstly discusses the concept of power in terms of its definitions and applications. Further, the relevant literature is reviewed to highlight the findings of other scholars and to identify gaps, if any, in them. Against this background the significance of the present study is stated and its objectives are defined.

Power: definitions and applications.

There are many concepts used in the present study, however, the concept of power is central one as the research focuses on its formation and dynamics. Power, like other related concepts such as influence, authority etc., has many definitions and so also their applications. Different definitions of power by scholars have been critiqued on methodological and theoretical grounds. The following section attempts to draw broad contours of the debate centred around this concept.

Broadly speaking, power as defined by various scholars refers either to characterise a capacity or to a relationship. When it refers to capacity it is the capacity to affect the actions of others or impose ones own will on others. In this context let us take up two well known formulations on power and analyse them.
For Weber "Power is the probability that one actor in a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance regardless of the basis on which this probability rest." For Dahl power means "A has power over B to the extent that he can make B to do something that he would not otherwise do".

There are certain similarities in these definitions. Firstly they assign power to individuals rather than to institutions or to entire societies. However, some sociologists like Parsons and Poulantzas disagree on this point.

For Parsons "Power is generalised capacity to secure the performance of binding obligations by units in a system of collective organisation, when the obligations are legitimised with reference to their bearing on collective goals and where in case of recalcitrance there is a presumption of enforcement by negative situational sanctions - whatever the actual agency of that enforcement." According to Poulantzas "Power is the capacity of a social class to realise its specific objective interests."

Both Parsons and Poulantzas view power as essentially a structural property manifest in an entire society rather than its constituent individuals. Thus,
the former tends to attribute power to individuals while the latter to social and collective relationships.

Secondly, apart from individualistic orientations in definitions of Weber and Dahl, there is another similarity which is the capacity of persons to impose a will on other persons despite resistance. However, Parsons argued that Weberian definition assumes conflict and antagonism in the process of exercise of power. It ignores the possibility that power relations may be relations of mutual convenience. This criticism is also applicable to Dahl's definition of power which also has the element of conflict built into it. Hence, power relations should be viewed as not only in antagonistic terms but also in mutually convenient terms.

Though there are certain similarities in the definitions of Weber and Dahl, there are differences as well between them. Weber defines power positively in the sense of enacting one's will. This is in tune with Russell's definition of power as "the production of intended effects" and the modified version by Wrong who treats power "as the capacity of some persons to produce intended and foreseen effects on others". In Dahl's definition, on the other hand, power is primarily negative in so far as it is
identified foremost with another person's will. However, this may not necessarily be the same as carrying out one's own will.

Another difference between these two definitions is that while overcoming the resistance is a secondary feature in Weber's definition in effect becomes the primary and the exclusive element of Dahl's definition.

From the above analysis of different conceptions of power by scholars it is evident that while some emphasise on individualistic aspect and others on structural aspect of power, some interpret power relations in terms of conflict and others in terms of consensus. While some conceptions of power emphasise on imposing ones will or affecting others behaviour despite resistance the others emphasise on willing compliance.

The definitions discussed above are narrow in scope because of their emphasis on some aspects of power while ignoring the other aspects. The present study sought to define the concept of power in a much more comprehensive manner. The study defines power as a capacity of person or persons or groups to affect others behaviour with or without resistance in a system of social relationship, institutional framework and socio-economic structure.
The study views that individual power is to a large extent dependent on institutional power. It is within the institutional framework that the individuals or power holders acquire power. Thus, the conception of power proposed by the study gives primary emphasis to the institutional bases of power exercised by different power holders.

The concept of power is not only varied in its definition but also in its application. Different conceptions of power advanced by sociologists and political scientists, particularly in the United States have resulted in their adoption of different approaches to the study of power. This has given rise to what has come to be called as 'community power debate' between elitists and pluralists.

Some scholars, on the one hand, who believe in elite model described American political life as being governed by a relatively coherent elite. Opposing this view is a group of scholars who believe that the plural model of countervailing power groups spread over desperate issues is the one which characterizes American political life.

Walton has noted that sociologists have tended to identify power structures as basically 'elitist'. They have largely depended on reputational method to identify the most influential people in the community. This method was first
used by Floyd Hunter in his study of community power (21) structure in Atlanta City, Georgia. The methodology adopted was to compare the lists of the people deemed most influential by the people chosen as judges then tally up the score for each person named to arrive at those thought to be powerful. In this way he identified forty key individuals as those who recurred across the different judges’ estimates. Hunter called these people local community political elite. The group, as Hunter found out, was not composed randomly but was heavily weighed towards business interest and found out pyramidical power structure.

This approach to the study of community power has been criticised for many reasons. One of the major criticisms, according to Clegg, is that "the reputational approach makes power equivalent to the average of some specifically chosen people's perception of it. What these people think power is may not accord with what it 'really' is, assuming that there is a reality to power outside people's perceptions of it." Similar criticism expressed (22) by Polsby who points out that the reputational method relies on the second hand opinions instead of studying the behaviour of the power holders.
Political scientists, however, have favoured decision making method. This approach involves the study of key decisions covering number of preselected issue areas. Those who successfully initiate or oppose key decisions are then regarded as the most powerful members of the community. The notable contributors of this method is Dahl, Polsby, Wolfinger and Jennings.

The central method used by Dahl in his study 'Who Governs' was to determine for each decision which participants had initiated alternatives that were finally adopted, had vetoed alternatives initiated by others or had proposed alternatives that were turned down. These actions were then tabulated as individual successes or defeats. The participants with the greatest proportion of successes out of the total number of successes were then considered to be the most influential. In short, according to Polsby, in the pluralist approach "an attempt is made to study specific outcomes in order to determine who actually prevails in community decision making". The stress is on the study of concrete, observable behaviour. The researcher, Polsby feels, should study actual behaviour either at firsthand or by reconstructing behaviour from documents, informants, newspapers and other appropriate sources.
The decision making method, like reputational method, has been subjected to criticism. Major criticism, particularly of decision making conception of power has emanated from Bahrach and Baratz who coined the term non-decision making. The crux of their criticism lies in the proposition that the study of power must not only focus on decisions but also non-decisions. They quote Schattschneiders in support of their view that all forms of political organization have a bias in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others because organisation is the mobilisation of bias. Some issues are organised into politics while others are organised out.

Both the methods as propounded by Dahl and Barach and Baratz try to identify power through the analysis of the actual outcomes of decision or non-decision making. They have provided a viable alternative to the earlier reputational approach. This alternative enabled them to examine more closely the powers that be and not just the power that people think there is.

Both the reputational and decision making methods, however, were criticised by Lukes as one and two dimensional views respectively. Firstly, these approaches have the bias of methodological individualism which places the focus
of power processes on a series of individually chosen acts instead of locating it in the "socially structured and culturally patterned behaviour of groups and practices of institutions". Lukes argues that a more adequate view of power should consider the many ways in which manifest and potential issues are being influenced, through the operation of social forces and institutional practices. He calls this view as a three dimensional view of power.

Another criticism by Lukes against both the views is that they have associated power with—and only with—the presence of observable conflict of interest. However, his conception of power says: A may exercise power over B by getting him to do what he does not want to do but he also exercises power over him by influencing, shaping or determining his very wants. Indeed is it not the supreme exercise of power to get another or others to have the desires you want them to have, that is, to secure their compliance by controlling their thoughts and desires? By shaping or determining the desires and wants of the community no issue would ever arise in the first place and consequently there is no need to resort to non-decision making. The power which is there now work through the consensual values which it has created. In this third dimensional realm of power, no resistance needs to be overcome because resistance has been removed.
Thus, both reputational and decision making approach to study community power structure have proved to be limited in their applications. The former emphasises on second hand opinion of what people think power to be may not accord with what it really is. The latter tends to emphasise on the behavioural conception of power by treating power with its actual exercise and confining themselves to its manifestations.

The studies which employed these methods have located power holders on the basis of their reputation or their role in decision making. They, however, have neglected on their base or source of power which make it possible for them to exercise power. The present study, therefore attempts to place greater emphasis on sources of power thereby locating power holders. In other words different sources are to be studied so as to identify who has what source of power. There are two underlying assumptions to the approach. Firstly, it is the various sources of power which enable the power holders to exercise the same. Secondly, the emphasis on the sources of the power holders presupposes that subjects lack these resources and that the inequality in control over resources is the basis of the power relations.
Thus, the present study examines various sources of power to identify power holders. In this context, the research conducted on power formation in India is reviewed as a background to the present study.

Relevant Studies: A Review

Many village studies have been conducted with different disciplinary backgrounds enquiring into various aspects of Indian villages like caste, class, Panchayati Raj, Co-operatives, religion, politics etc. While some studies focused on the social and economic structures, culture, religion and institutions in the villages, the others dealt with the changes brought about by the outside forces. These studies helped in broadening our understanding of the macro-level and micro-level realities as well as inter-relationship and interactions between these two levels. Further, these studies highlight the regional diversities in terms of local structures, processes and histories.

Among these studies, there are some which focus directly on power formation and its dynamics and others not dealing directly with power formation as a central focus of their enquiries, but provide valuable insights into the power related issues like leadership, dominant caste, factionalism,
patron-client relationship etc. The studies which focused on power formation either solely or as one of its many aspects of enquiry have not come to an agreement on the nature of power formation, the different sources of power and the changes in the sources of power that effect power holders.

Beals in his study on the changing leadership of a Mysore village found that there was movement away from social hierarchy and caste domination to more liberal and democratic tradition. In 1952, while age, heredity and wealth continued to be important in determining social position, the dominant class in the village was a middle class group of educated small businessmen, farmers, teachers and factory workers. The emergence of new leadership was attributed to the increasing education and close proximity of the village to a large city. This group which had educated in schools, where English and Gandhian ideals of democracy and social equality were taught, placed little faith in traditional ideals of caste and social stratification. Beals has noted that this educated new middle class is the power holder in village though they had to face the attack once in the wake of famine by the village Patel- a village headman chosen by the Government on the basis of heredity. During this time village Patel attempted to assert the superiority of his caste and to pronounce himself the supreme authority in the
village. However, Patel lost in the struggle. Thus, Beals study shows that there is a shift in power holders and that the role of rich landowners, priestly castes and money-lenders has come to an end in the village.

Bailey in his book "Caste and Economic Frontier: A Village in Highland Orissa" reveals that power has shifted from upper caste to lower caste and it is no longer monopoly of one segment of the community but it is dispersed. He feels that the shift in power has occurred because of changes in the economy and recognises the economic changes since the coming of British administration in 1855 to the village. He observes two fold changes in the village economy viz., (a) Coming of land into the market (b) Commerce, trade and jobs entering the village economy. Before 1855 political power and wealth were concentrated in the hands of upper caste. There have been changes in the distribution of lands among various castes because of the breakdown of the joint family system and the coming of commerce, trade and jobs to the village. Thus, the shift in wealth has affected the political structure of the village.

Singh observed in his study on changing patterns of stratification system in six villages of Uttar Pradesh that the upper castes (Rajputs, Brahmins and Bhumiars) and classes
(ex-landlords and money-lenders) continue to hold power in villages. He showed that the key offices of village President and Vice-President in almost all the six villages are with the upper castes. The class background of these elected leaders reveals similar trend of upper class domination in various offices. Further these villages continue to be deeply affected and determined by the pattern of economic deprivation and privileges of the various castes and classes. The power system has a tendency to incline in favour of the groups who can control the expectations of the people in villages.

Beteille has found out from his study in Thanjavur village in Tamil Nadu that power has shifted much more decisively from Brahmins to non-brahmins. Earlier Brahmins were the landowners and monopolised political power. The political power has shifted to non-brahmins whose strength lies in their numerical superiority and political connections. Ownership of land as the basis of power is less decisive, he feels in acquiring power. According to him, these new bases of power are, to some extent, independent of both caste and class.

Beteille concludes that in addition to economic superiority acquired from the Brahmins the capacity to
patronise lower castes is now vested with the non-brahmins. This gives them a following and also numerical strength which are necessary for sustaining power. Like Bailey, Beteille has demonstrated that power has shifted from upper to the middle castes. Further he states that the lower castes are yet to benefit from this power transformation.

Bhatt in his study enquires into the inter-
(45)relationship between caste, class and political power. He observes that before independence there was close relationship between all the three variables and most of the power holders were from upper caste and class. He has pointed out that the situation has undergone changes. The study demonstrated that an individual's socio-economic and political life today is not entailed by his caste position in any significant measure.

Sinha in his study of two villages in Bihar found out that in one village wealth, caste and age continue to be sources of power and the same set of individuals continue to hold power despite introduction of adult franchise, election, community development programmes and elected village councils. In another village it was found that power is not a clear mark of wealth, caste and information. In this village it is evident that change taking place from "status
to contract" and this is largely result of accelerated communication facilities, adult franchise election, party organisation and wider political linkages.

Sharma establishes that the upper castes possess the maximum extent of total village land. According to him although there is monopolisation of land by a few families of upper caste, the political development taking place is going against their interest day by day. He has noted a tendency for competition in the Gram Panchayat elections since 1955 instead of unanimous elections. He observes that as the contest will increase, the importance of unanimous election will decrease. He concludes that because of this trend the domination of upper caste will decrease.

Harris in his study of a village in North Arcot district in Tamil Nadu found that non-brahmin caste is controlling not only lands but also informal and formal Village Panchayats. They had also come to occupy important positions in political parties at the local level.

For Oommen the castes which are numerically superior as well as economically dominant are politically the most powerful, if they are not divided into competing factions. Even if a caste is numerically insignificant its economic importance will facilitate the capturing of a number
of positions in what he calls "power pool". Sheer numerical superiority of a caste will facilitate the recruitment of at least a few members into the power pool, even when the caste is economically underprivileged and ritually depressed.

Oommen classifies the power wielding groups into three distinct categories: a) those who derive their source of legitimacy from tradition. (b) Those who occupy positions in organisations introduced in the context of development activities and active political workers and (c) those who have reputation for certain personality attributes, particularly ethical qualities.

The studies reviewed above touches the nature of power formation in terms of distribution of power and also shift of power from one section of population to the other in the wake of introduction of adult franchise and party politics and also introduction of various institutions to facilitate development. In a majority of the villages studied various scholars have shown that power formation has been undergoing changes across the country. Though these studies have contributed immensely to understand power formation in rural areas there are a few gaps in these studies.
Need for the study

Though the studies reviewed above have commented upon the phenomenon of power, exclusive attention have not been paid to the inter-relationship between the sources of power and power holders. Hence, the need for studying sources of power to understand which person(s) has\have what source(s) of power and how changes in sources of power affect power holders.

The studies also show that there are certain similarities and variations in the power formation within regions which makes the task of generalisation difficult even at regional levels. Even within Tamil Nadu variations are noted in the sources of power, shift in the importance of these sources and its impact on the power holders. There is also shift of various powers from one group to another. This necessitates conducting an inquiry on different region to broaden the base of understanding. Accordingly, Pudukkottai district of Tamil Nadu was selected where study of this nature has not been carried out.

Secondly, studying a new region helps in comparing the findings with that of other scholars who did research on power formation and its dynamics in rural areas.
Lastly, though the present research is a case study of a Panchayat village it is hoped that it will contribute towards understanding the regional diversity and also help in theory building at macro-level.

**Objectives of the Study**

The present study attempts to achieve two objectives—overlapping yet divided for analytical purposes. The first objective is to explore different sources of power and analyse these sources giving rise to different power holders. In other words it attempts to identify which power holder/s has/have what source/s of power. For this purpose, different sources of power like caste structure, landholding in terms of caste-wise ownership and holding size, institutions like statutory Village Panchayat, Co-operatives and political parties have been examined.

The second objective is to probe and analyse the inter-relationship between sources of power and power holders. This involves studying of the process of acquisition and exercise of power by different power holders, changes in the sources of power and their impact on power holders.
The following section explains the methodological framework for collection and analysis of data to achieve the above mentioned objectives.

Methodological Framework

The methodological details of the study are as follows: types of data collected and their sources, process of data collection and analysis, organisation of the study and the limitations of data collection and analysis.

(a) Types of data and their sources.

The study of this nature necessitates mainly collection of qualitative data. However, quantitative data was also collected, whenever it was felt necessary and relevant, as a basis for or as a support for qualitative data. For instance, the landholding details of various landowners in terms of caste and category were collected from revenue records, of the Panchayat. This served as a basis for understanding and validating qualitative responses. The study also elicited qualitative responses to cross-check the quantitative data on landholding, agriculture and irrigation, etc.
There have been debates in the recent years about the strength and limitations of qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis. While some scholars view them as antagonistic, others view them as complementary. According to Patton quantitative and qualitative methods involve differing strengths and weaknesses, they constitute alternative, ' but not mutually exclusive, strategies of research. Patton feels that both qualitative and quantitative data can be collected in the same study. Thus, the present study views both the types of data as mutually complementary rather than antagonistic in nature. In the study, however, primary emphasis is laid on collection of qualitative data because of the nature of the study. The collection of qualitative data involves detailed description and indepth enquiry into the phenomenon under study. Accordingly a descriptive account of various aspects of the phenomenon of power in rural areas is presented. Further, qualitative data is supported by direct citation of respondents' personal comments, views, perspectives and experiences. According to Bryman, "many qualitative researchers prefer to employ verbatim quotations from interviewees' replies in order to illustrate general points".
Both the qualitative and quantitative data have been gathered from primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include interviews, individual and group discussions and observations. For this, the researcher met a cross section of people so as to get a representative picture of the situation under study. The cross section of respondents included persons from various castes of all social ranking, landowners with different landholdings, agricultural labourers, petty shop owners, artisans, women and youth.

Apart from these persons, officials of various departments from village to district levels and persons from the voluntary organisations working in the area were also interviewed. Prominent persons from the adjacent villages were interviewed to strengthen the data derived from the respondents of the Panchayat. Further, certain key informants were also selected on the basis of their access to confidential information, their trust in the researcher, and their knowledge of the past history of the village and the area. The researcher also stayed in the area for many months where he had chance to observe certain events like village and family festivals, disputes between different persons or groups etc.
The secondary source covers gathering of relevant materials from books, articles, journals, newspaper clippings and so on. Secondary data was also collected from the district Gazetteers, land records of the revenue village, census reports and government publications which include annual reports of various departments. These were useful in collecting data on agrarian condition particularly on landholding, cropping pattern, agricultural seasons, level of mechanisation of agriculture, agricultural labour and irrigation, economy, population, caste groups and structure, results of assembly elections, Acts of and information on Panchayati Raj, Co-operatives and various rural development programmes.

b) Process and methods of data collection and analysis

The data collection and analysis was done in many stages. In the first stage, based on the emerging trends in the existing literature, broad theoretical areas to be enquired into were identified. During that stage it was decided to take up the study in Pudukkottai district of Tamil Nadu. This is the region where no indepth analysis has been carried out. In addition, the researcher belongs to the same cultural milieu. This helped not only in the process of data
collection but also in analysis. Further, earlier experience of the research in various projects particularly 'Farmers Agitation in Tamil Nadu' conducted in the northern part of Tamil Nadu has been utilised not only in the initial stage but throughout the study.

In the next stage, a Panchayat village comprising of cluster of hamlets was identified and selected for the inquiry. In the selection of the Panchayat (a) a Panchayat with population range of 1500 to 2500 and (b) multi-caste composition were taken into account. The criterion of population was based on census report of 1981. In the census report it was mentioned that in Pudukkottai district most of the villages fall within the population range of 1500 to 2500. Additional reason for identifying the Panchayat of this range was that the village under enquiry should not be too large for a single researcher to cover in view of the constraints of time and resources available. At the same time it should not be too small to have a meaningful coverage. The purpose of selecting village with multi-caste composition is to have castes from various social ranking and to capture the complexity of power.

Adopting these criteria and with the help of friends working in the Kulathur taluk of the district, several villages were identified for possible selection of
the sample Panchayat. The researcher also had discussion with block level officials to get an idea about different Panchayats. With the required background information the researcher visited various Panchayats for selection.

Some villages were rejected as they had large or small population. Some villages were rejected on the ground that they were mainly inhabited by either a single or a few castes without all the social rankings. Finally, Udayallipatti Panchayat consisting of a main village and five hamlets was selected. In 1981 its population was around 1800. It is a multi-caste village occupied by castes of all social rankings with persons from upper level castes—mainly cultivators, middle level castes—artisans and service castes and lower level castes—agricultural labourers.

At this stage of field work secondary data for the Panchayat in particular and the area in general was collected. Data on the Panchayat includes details of agriculture and irrigation, occupational classification, Panchayat elections, Co-operatives, electoral list etc., were collected. Apart from these details secondary data was also collected for block and district levels to provide background to the study. The process of collection of secondary data and identification of the Panchayat took fifteen days.
With the help of secondary data about the Panchayat, block and district, the researcher could acquire a broad picture of various aspects of the district in general and the Panchayat in particular. This helped in sharpening the issues to be inquired into regarding power formation and its dynamics. Further, having identified the issues for inquiry, questions—with some close ended and others open—were designed to make the interviews flexible.

The second stage of field work involved staying more than three months in the study area. The primary data was collected through semi-structured and indepth interviews, group discussions and observations. Before elaborating on these techniques of data collection, it is necessary to discuss about the selection of respondents for interview.

From the electoral list (1986) of the Panchayat population, different caste groups were identified and listed with the help of local persons. In this way nineteen caste groups were listed. There were 1337 voters living in 379 households in 1986. Subsequently key informants were identified and interviewed for the purpose of eliciting descriptive accounts of the various aspects of the Panchayat. Further, by using snowball sampling method they were in turn asked to identify their friends and relatives with whom the interviews could be held. To get representative picture
of the situation, the researcher interviewed a cross section of the respondents in terms of caste, occupation, landholding, age, gender, and youth. Data on socio-economic background of power holders was also collected not only from other respondents but also from the power holders themselves.

As mentioned above, three research techniques were used mainly for collection of the primary data. The foremost among them is semi-structured in-depth interviews. This strategy was adopted based on the earlier research experience in applying standard and formal questionnaires which leave little flexibility eliciting sensitive information and probing into further details. Though questionnaire has the advantage of easy analysis by quantification, it imposes a preconceived and rigid design on the social reality. Semi-structured interview method, on the other hand, employs a set of themes and topics to frame questions for the purpose of interview. This strategy by now is familiar to the students of qualitative research. Apart from flexibility in its design it allows the process of enquiry to probe the unexpected which cover up issues which are difficult to envisage at the stage of questionnaire finalisation.

With the tentative questions a few of the respondents were interviewed. The emphasis in these interviews was to get descriptive accounts of various aspects
of phenomenon under study. After a few interviews, areas of enquiry became more focused and question became more precise and sharper. Though at times the respondents deviated from the main line of enquiry, the researcher tactfully brought back the process of interview to the desired direction. This process yielded not only descriptive but also rich and indepth data.

The interview data were collected using more than one method. (a) Tape recording the interview (b) taking notes on the interview as it progressed and writing a full report later and (c) making notes after the interview. The different methods used in this context were dependent on the situation. For instance tape recorder was used whenever the respondents showed enough of trust and were willing to go on record. One of the advantages of using this method was that interviews could be conducted without disruption. Another advantage with the method is that the recorded interview could be preserved and that the exact words of respondents could be retrieved. This may not be possible in the conventional method of making notes after the interview. The disadvantage with the method is that some people might not like to go on record on certain matters like land holding, corruption, local politics and so on. Faced with the situation the researcher resorted to either taking notes
during the course of interview or after the interview was
over.

Simultaneously group discussion method was also
adopted to elicit primary data. These were conducted
generally in tea shops where people assemble frequently and
also during the time of village festivals. The researcher
used to initiate discussion on various relevant topics and
issues to elicit various view points. This method was not
only useful for generating fresh data but also to cross check
the data gathered through other methods.

To supplement these techniques observation method
was also used. This method is generally known in
anthropology and sociology as participant observation
method. This has been employed to study Indian villages even
by eminent sociologists. In this technique of data
collection the researcher may have to be active and at times
passive. Gold has devised four ideal types of field
roles: the complete participant, the participant observer,
the observer as participant and the complete observer.

On the participant observation method Burgess
remarks that the extent of participation can change
overtime. In some cases the researcher may begin as an
onlooker and gradually becomes a participant as the study
progresses or vice versa. The researcher during his stay in the village, depending on the context played either the role of a complete participant or a complete observer. For instance in the village festivals the researcher did participate completely. In certain instances, the researcher chose to maintain an onlooker's position. For instance, during the quarrels among the people the presence of the researcher was always noted. An intervention would have affected the entire situation.

Along with these methods of data collection the field notes were taken every day. The field notes consisted of recording of events, situations and conversations in which the researcher involved. It also consisted of the observations and comments of the researcher. These notes were classified under different themes. These were complimentary to data gathered through other methods.

To make the data more reliable and to cross-check the data gathered through other methods, certain informants were contacted frequently. These individuals were selected for frequent contacts as they had reposed trust in the researcher. They were also useful in getting confidential and sensitive data which were otherwise difficult to collect from other respondents.
Apart from these data, case studies were also collected. The case studies related to family disputes, inter-caste quarrels, disputes regarding temple affairs, land disputes and factional fights so on. These were useful additions to the existing data. These also helped in understanding the role of power holders in settling the disputes.

Data about the other Panchayats were also gathered so as to compare and cross validate the observations on the Udayallipatti Panchayat. Data gathered particularly included caste groups, landholding pattern, caste background of Panchayat Presidents and Chairmen of various Co-operatives.

The use of multiple methods for investigation has not only helped data collection but in validation of data as well. The process of triangulation of methods has also helped in generating reliable data.

Secondary data were collected at this stage of field work particularly land records of Udayallipatti Panchayat which is also a single revenue unit. This process of secondary data collection was carried over several field visits as information sought was not readily available.
After the field work both quantitative and qualitative data was processed. Tables were formulated to consolidate quantitative data covering aspects of agriculture, population, households and voters, Panchayat and assembly election results. Land records were analysed for nearly 1500 landowners in terms of caste and categories of landowners.

Regarding qualitative data, recorded interviews were transcribed and classified under broad themes and sub-themes. Further, data gathered through other methods were also added to the existing data. The broad themes and sub-themes, classified are caste groups and structure, landholding in terms of caste and categories of landowners, informal ‘Ur’ panchayat and formal statutory Village Panchayat, Co-operatives, education, religious activities, role of political parties, and tentative identification of power holders.

The purpose of the classification was to bring under broad themes and sub-themes various responses of the respondents and to find patterns for analytical treatment. On the basis of the classification of responses, a report of the provisional findings was prepared. This report was given to experts for their comments. This
helped in grounding the findings and identifying the gaps in data collection. This also in turn generated analytical questions to be posed at the next stage of field work.

The next stage of field work stretching over two months was conducted primarily for filling up gaps in the collected data. Some additional persons were interviewed to clarify the provisional findings. Analytical questions were also posed to respondents for deeper understanding of various aspects of the phenomena under enquiry. The provisional findings were also discussed with some of the key respondents in the process of validation of the data. The disagreements were duly recorded and taken into account in the final analysis.

The remaining data gathered during the last stage of the field work was integrated into the analytical framework. Findings of other scholars regarding power formation and its dynamics were also compared to find out variations and commonalities among these findings.

Limitations of the study

Since it is a study of one Panchayat, drawing generalisations is difficult and premature. However, attempts have been made to collect data on other Panchayats of the Panchayat Union to compare and consolidate the findings.
Other limitations of the study flow from the paucity of time and resource at the disposal of the researcher. Though it was conceived as a case study, collection of details on land transactions over the years, income and expenditure of the households could have contributed in terms of depth to the study. However, these could not be done in view of constraints like time and resource available to the researcher.

Organisation of the Study

The first chapter discusses about the theoretical and methodological framework of the study. In the section on theoretical framework concept of power in terms of its definitions and applications, as it is central to the study, is discussed. Further, the existing literature is reviewed to highlight the findings of other scholars and to identify gaps in them. Significance and objectives of the study are also stated in the theoretical framework.

Though the present work is a study of a Fanchayat village it was necessary to have a broad picture of the area in which the Udayallipatti Panchayat is located. This would help in highlighting the similarities and variations between the broader area and the sample Panchayat. Hence second chapter presents various features of Pudukkottai district
like position and topography, agriculture and irrigation population characteristics, Panchayat system, Co-operatives, performance of political parties.

Though broader contours are drawn in the earlier chapter it is important to sketch the local milieu as it provides for an indepth understanding of the various features of the Udayallipatti Panchayat. The third chapter, hence, (62) gives descriptive account of the study Panchayat.

Fourth chapter focuses on various sources of power so as to identify power holders and their sources of power. Fifth chapter, on the other hand, sketches and compares the profile of various power holders and their sources of power.

The mere identification of power holders and comparison of their profiles may not be sufficient for understanding power formation and its dynamics. It was necessary to probe into the inter-relationship between power holders and their sources in terms of changes in sources affecting various power holders. The sixth chapter is devoted to study the inter-relationship between sources of power and power holders. The last chapter summarises the findings of the study.
Notes and References


16. Sik Hung Ng, *op. cit.*, pp. 103-104.

17. Ibid.


26. N.W. Polsby, op.cit.


30. N.W. Polsby, op.cit., p.113.


32. N.W. Polsby, op.cit., p.121.


34. Ibid, pp.947-952.

35. Sik Hung Ng, op.cit., p.108.

36. For detailed criticism of both reputational and decision-making methods see Steven Lukes, op.cit., pp.11-20.

37. Ibid, p.23.

38. Sik Hung Ng, op.cit., pp.109-120.


40. Dennis H. Wrong, op.cit., p.125.

42. F.G.Bailey, op.cit.


44. Andre Beteille, op.cit.


48. John Harriss, op.cit.


50. See for detailed discussions on quantitative and qualitative methods in social research Alan Bryman, Quantity and Quality in Social Research (London : Unwin Hyman,1988), Bruce L.Berg, Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences (Boston : Allyn and Bacon, 1984) and A.L.Strauss, Qualitative Analysis for


52. Ibid, p.40.

53. Ibid.


59. Ibid.

60. For a discussion on triangulation of methods see Robert G. Burgess, op.cit., pp.143-167 and Bruce L. Berg, op.cit., pp.4-6.


62. The use of study Panchayat or study village refers to the Udayallipatti Panchayat.