CHAPTER -1
INTRODUCTION

In India women can no longer remain mere ornamental pieces. They are a productive human resource to be recognized with all their entitlements. But the stark reality is as follows: "Women make up 50 percent of the total population, produce half the world's food supply, account for 60 percent of the working force, contribute up to 33.3 percent of the official labor force, perform nearly 66.6 percent of all working hours, receive 10 percent of the world's economy. But, surprisingly, they own less than one percent of the world's real estate". This gives the deplorable position of women. Against this background the concept of empowerment of women is gaining momentum. There are path breaking policies and movements for the emancipation and empowerment of women in the world. But women in general lag behind in power, wealth and opportunity. By and large women are not part of the political decision making process. But they have been more active in the electoral process. In certain pockets they have repeatedly proved to be powerful vote banks. Slowly but steadily they have been participating in politics, electoral politics, public life, non-governmental organisations and social movements. Thus the process of empowerment of women slowly acquired momentum. Series of steps were taken collectively to project the issues of women. There were constant efforts to address the issues of women and their access to resources and powers at the global level. Equally efforts were taken at the national level. At the regional level also efforts were on far the emancipation of women. Constant efforts at the institutional level, national level and regional level have started changing the conditions of women positively. There are a number of new initiatives in the direction of empowering women. Of them one remarkable and positive development is the introduction of women’s quota in politics. Several countries have introduced reserved seats for women in local and district councils and Pakistan has done so even in the national and provisional assemblies. In India one-third reservation of seats for women in all positions at all the levels due to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1993 gained currency. This constitutional amendment has paved the way for women to participate in local institutions and change the development and governance landscape. Thus the act of strengthening the democratic institutions at the grassroots level has become more effective with the involvement of women. For the first time in the
national political history of India women’s participation institutions of decision making for their development is being legitimized and constitutionalised. The vital factor is such that the Dalit women who were deprived of their fundamental rights and kept far away from the mainstream of public life and on the margins of governance are being provided with a chance to involve themselves in the process of grassroots governance. Involvement of women in grassroots governance is inevitable because women in the rural areas, that too the Dalit women, are least bothered about matters of education, health, employment and productive resources. When women are provided with an opportunity, it is expected that there will be a change in the development paradigm and governance. This was rightly said by Somerset Maugham: “A woman will always sacrifice herself if you give her an opportunity. It is her favorite form of self-indulgence.” Nearly ten years have gone after the establishment of the grassroots institutions for governance. Women have been inducted into the institutions through electoral process. How are they performing is the major question. There are patriarchal assumptions, which bring bad news and poor news about elected women representatives, as bad news sells fast in the market. Women in governance have to be analyzed from the perspective of the process rather than the product. Of course academic institutions and development organisations are undertaking studies and they are bringing out both kinds of stories-positive and negative.

Women are performing well and moderately in certain areas and some are not able to perform their functions. The reasons behind this observation are very many and they are to be analysed. As the women are heading the grassroots institutions for the first time in history, they have certain inherent inbuilt problems in the system in which they live. To handle the institutions, they face a battery of problems. It is imperative that a study has to be conducted to understand to what extent they are successful in managing these institutions.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study makes an attempt to assess the performance of Village Panchayats headed by women against the backdrop of the powers conferred upon them through the New Panchayati Raj System in Tamil Nadu, as per the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act (1994) and the socio economic system in which they live.
The present study aims to answer the following:

a.) Have the socio, economic and political background of the women helped or hindered them to become Presidents of Village Panchayats?

b.) Have the Dalit women faced problems from the family, caste, political party to be in position?

c.) How are they politically socialized in this culture?

d.) How are they recruited to this position?

e.) How have they perceived development?

f.) Are they sensitive to the issues of women?

g.) How have they performed their roles in the Panchayat?

h.) How have they managed the institution by overcoming the problems?

This study will find out answers to all the above questions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1993 envisaged the Panchayati Raj Institutions (rural local self government) to be self-governing institutions with people’s participation as the major component. Governance and people’s participation are the two key principles underlined in the new dispensation. This was widely accepted. Almost two terms of office are going to be over since the inception of the New Panchayati Raj System. But the significance of the institutions is felt in each and every aspect of rural life and governance as it provided a lot of potential. Panchayat institutions have a long history, and it is observed that there are three phases of their existence and functioning after independence. The first phase was traditional in nature, which was influenced by the caste factor and no offered scope for women. The second phase was a transitional phase, which opened the platform for the entry of youth into politics. The third and final phase is the democratic phase wherein the political parties entered and women were also provided with a space in the context of rural local governance. The participation of women in the rural local government was constitutionally legitimized by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1992 and, as a result, significant studies are coming out.

Kalpana Roy, in her work “Women in Indian Politics”, states that women still face many obstacles in the process of acquiring representation. No
grassroots woman’s organisation specifically focuses on getting women elected at the national level. Unlike the earlier women activists most women have not had the economic freedom to choose their life and career. The material substance of their upbringing has made their choice for them and inhibited their participation in formal politics. Women’s cultural socialization and the fear of unsettling the family and their position in it have made them refrain from active politics. The family is considered women’s domain and this has also lessened many women’s desire to participate in politics. Many unattached young women may be politically active, but, once married, they disappear from the political scene. This study focuses on the problem of the elected women representatives at a higher level.

Raj Kumar,\textsuperscript{12} in his study on “Women in Politics,” explains that recent years have witnessed a worldwide concern for women. The image of women politicians is not always a correct reflection of the reality. The image perceived by ordinary people or projected by the media, is usually divided into two extremes. Women politicians are seen as either ‘man like’ iron ladies or as amateur, soft (indecisive) housewife-cum-politician or else they are identified through kin connections, i.e. Mr.X’s daughter or Mr.Y’s wife etc. Accurate portraits of their life as politicians and women and objective review of their work and achievements as professional politicians are needed. By documenting the work and life histories of some successful and capable women politicians and disseminating such information in popular form, one can present a role model for ordinary women citizens and change the stereotype image of women politicians. The present study also focus on women politicians looking for power at the central and state levels.

K.S.Saxena,\textsuperscript{13} in “Women’s Political Participation in India” writes that it is an established fact that since the Vedic age women have played a very important role in the decision making process. Their active participation in our freedom movement and their sacrifice will always be remembered. In the Constitutional Assembly, in parliament as well as in state legislatures, women’s participation has been of a very high degree. Women parliamentarian’s contribution has been very significant as they introduced a number of bills and actively participated in the debates and deliberations in both the houses of parliament. In India women have been holding a number of important positions, like Prime Minister and Deputy Chairperson of Rajya Sabha, Chief Ministers yet atrocities against women are increasing day by day in this male dominated
society. This study focuses on the problems of the women politicians holding higher positions.

P.Jeyabal and K. Dravidamani, in their work entitled “Women Panchayat Presidents”, has made an attempt to analyse the socio-economic conditions of the women Panchayat Presidents in Lalgudi Panchayat Union to find out their level of awareness of the New Panchayati Raj System, and to assess their planning and execution of Panchayat activities. The study concludes that the majority of women Panchayat Presidents were from the young age group (21-35), backward communities and Hindu religion. The respondents in this study were married, but had limited experience in political and social service activities, and were educated up to higher secondary level. The study also revealed that the majority of the Presidents were persuaded and guided by their husband or their relatives to contest in the elections and that they had a low awareness of the Panchayati Raj System.

Manu Baskar, in her work “Women Panchayat Members in Kerala - A Profile” attempts to sketch a picture of the socio-economic background and political motivation of women who became Panchayat Members in a Village Panchayat of Thiruvananthapuram District. The study has observed that the political leadership of women in grassroots democracy in Kerala has been influenced by caste and community representation in tune with the body politic of the state. The study has also found that variables like age, occupation and income determine entry into politics and that the influence of the political parties is strong during elections, while it plays an insignificant role in motivating women into politics.

K.Jeyalakshmi, in her case study entitled “Empowerment of Women in Panchayats - Experiences of Andhra Pradesh”, sets out to analyse the role of women as decision makers in the local institutions and to identify their priorities in bringing about development in Sanasthanpalli Panchayat, an all-woman Panchayat. The study concludes that reservation ensured opportunities for all social groups to participate in the governance of Panchayats, thereby promoting grassroots level leadership.

Snehalata Panda, in her study "Political Empowerment of Women: A Case Study of Orissa" attempts to explore the rural socio-political situation and the performance of women representatives in Panchayati Raj Institutions in Orissa, with the mandatory one third reservation for women provided by the New Panchayati Raj Act of 1994. The author concludes by stating that women
have entered politics due to the mandatory provision of one-third reservation. Most of the women are non-political and have entered into politics due to the persuasion by their family members or pressure from the village community or pressure from a political party and some entered politics due to personal interest. The study indicates that there is a positive change in the socio political dynamics of the rural society.

Dilip A. Ghosh,\textsuperscript{18} in his study “Grassroots Women Leaders: Who Are They? - A Study in West Bengal District”, tries to identify the class of rural women who were able to emerge as rural leaders by virtue of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 and their characteristics. The author has chosen Birbhum District as his study area and the women members of all Gram Panchayats were selected for the study. The study concludes that rural women participated in grassroots politics in large numbers irrespective of caste, creed and religion; mostly women of the younger age group with a low status in education, compared to their male counterparts, have come to the forum of Panchayati Raj Institutions. A large number of women leaders have come from agricultural families, while the majority of them are housewives.

George Mathew,\textsuperscript{19} in his article, "Will Reservation Ensure Participation?", has highlighted the experience of women in Karnataka as revealed in the study "The Women Representatives of Karnataka Panchayati Raj Institutions between 1987-1998" conducted by the Institute of Social Sciences, Bangalore. The study revealed that the majority of the elected women members of Zilla Parishads in Karnataka had no experience of active politics; usually a male of the family had been instrumental in persuading the women to contest; in many cases the women continued to devote all their time to household chores as usual while the men in their families were involved in discharging their political responsibilities on their behalf; and the elected women were very often the relatives of political leaders, young in age, low in educational status, with their occupation being agriculture, household work and social work. He also points out the fact that the total number of elected women was about 43%; 10% more than the mandatory one-third reservation for women have been elected.

V.B. Athreyar and K.S. Rajeswari,\textsuperscript{20} in their study "Women Participation in Panchayati Raj: A Case Study from Tamil Nadu" have made an attempt to explore the socio, economic and political background of women Panchayat leaders, their problems and the perspectives and the support they receive from various quarters in the election process.
Snehalata Panda attempts to explore the emerging pattern of women's leadership in Achatrapur Block of Ganjam District of Orissa in her study entitled 'Emerging Pattern of Leadership among Rural Women in Orissa'. She undertook this study following the amendment to the Orissa Gram Panchayat Act 1991, in tune with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act providing reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. The study reveals the following facts, i. Traditional social structure and cultural milieu have little influence on the perception of the rural people in choosing women as Panchayat Presidents, ii. Personal merit contributed significantly to the choice of women representatives, iii. Age relative freedom from family responsibilities and communication skills were determinants of their selection, iv. They possess the traits of leadership and capability to arrive at a decision, choosing from among several alternatives, v. Guidance from their male colleagues, family members and the villagers has helped them to develop their participatory skills, vi. Non-party background, responsibilities which they shared as change agents and above all the class from which they came indicated the positive direction of change in rural leadership.

G. Palanithurai, in his article, “The Genre of Women Leaders in Local Bodies - The Experiences from Tamil Nadu”, has focused attention on the problems faced by the women Panchayat Presidents in Panchayat administration. He has indicated the powerlessness of the Gram Panchayat Presidents, He further explains how the expected critical mass can not be achieved unless people are motivated to participate in the development process.

Nirmala Buch, in her article “Decentralized Government, Women’s Participation and Poverty Eradication,” has indicated the background with which the women leaders are combating problems with which they are functioning in the new Panchayati Raj System. She has analyzed the changes brought in by the women leaders despite the constraints. All her arguments are based on the field studies conducted in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

T.N. Saxena and Vanitha Mukherjee, in their article “Gender Governance and Citizenship in Decentralized Planning," analyze how women took part in the whole process of governance and how their interests are taken care of in the perspective plan. Unequivocally it states the initial importance of gender planning that takes into account women’s interests in a systematic manner at every stage of the planning process and the value of the affirmative
action of reservation in elections. Yet, the women are educated but not equipped adequately to handle the institution.

C.P. Sujaya and Devaki Jain, in their article “Role of Women in Decentralization” explicitly indicate the trends in Women Empowerment and Local Governance with the active participation of the women leaders. They have indicated the possible strategies to be adopted by the women leaders by following the success models from Kerala to face the problems faced by them in the institutions while administering development. They have specifically indicated the need of a federation for women to address their problems.

A.Celine Rani, in her book, Emerging Pattern of Rural Women Leadership in India writes that there are certain key factors that which contribute towards the emergence of the women leadership, especially in the Panchayat Raj Institutions. Socio-economic background, reputation of the family to which the emerging leaders belong are quite a few important factors in this context and also contribute to the performance of the emerged women leaders.

E.K. Santha, in her report, “Political Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj; Haryana, Kerala and Tamil Nadu,” explains the various contributing factors towards the effective functioning of the women leaders amidst the various problems faced by them. There are recommendations made towards the effective functioning of the elected women representatives.

G. Palanithurai, in his work “Capacity Building for local Leaders,” records the whole process of the Capacity Building Exercise organized by him for the elected representatives of the three tiers of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, which supported by different government and supporting agencies. This is a well-recorded exercise on the problems faced by the elected representatives and also the various measures to overcome the recorded problems. It is of much help in the context of analyzing the performance of the elected representatives.

G. Palanithurai, in his study “New Panchayati Raj System at Work - An Evaluation”, discusses the functioning of the New Panchayati Raj Systems in Tamil Nadu. The major focus is on the structural and functional aspects as compared with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. In addition the problems that emerged in the context of establishing these institutions are also studied. The perception of the elected leaders about this new dispensation, the outlook of the officials on this new system, the participation of the people in the
development programmes and process, the relationship between the state
government and the local institutions, the linkage between the MPs, MLAs and
the local body leaders, the linkage between bad functioning of the three tiers
and Gram Sabha are explained through case analysis.

G. Palanithurai, in his book entitled, Perception of Grassroots Democracy and Political Performance has made an in-depth study of the perception of the elites which comprises of the elites and functionaries of the administrative system who handle power. Here he has made an analysis of the factors which are responsible for the proper positing, and functioning of the institutions at the grassroots.

G. Palanithurai, in his book New Panchayati Raj System in Tamil Nadu, in Tamil, deals with the basic details of decentralizations of powers, the history of local governance, the problems involved in the decentralization of power, how women can make use of the reservation of seats for women, and how Dalits can make use of the reservations of seats for Dalits. Subjects like education, health and employment have been discussed in the context of devolution of powers. The changes to be made in the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Act 1994, the basic details of the schemes and programmes of rural development and the steps taken to devolve the powers to Panchayats have been elaborately discussed in the book.

S. Saraswathi, in her pioneering work, “The Madras Panchayat System” Vol. I, projects the historical foundation of the Panchayat system in the Tamil province. It brings to light the provisions of the Panchayat legislation of 1958. The author has extensively analyzed finance and administration through some case studies. Rural development schemes and their implementation have been thoroughly examined from the perspective of the involvement of the local communities. The work brings out the efficacy and efficiency of the local body system in delivering services to the people. The author clearly indicates the operative objective of the British, the Central and State Governments, varied perceptions and intentions of these institutions. It gives a complete picture of the Panchayati Rai System in Tamil Nadu prior to the establishment of the new system after the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act.

G. Palanithurai, in his monograph, “Empowerment of the Women-Experiences of the Elected Women Representatives in Grassroots Institutions” brings out the issues of the women leaders who have been in power for the past seven years in both urban and rural local bodies. He begins the backdrop
of the new dispensation. He questions the logic of reservation by asking whether reservation of seats for women in local bodies was made with the perception that they are going to form a critical mass which will perform a critical function whether the critical function has been performed and, if not, why. This work is the outcome of a Capacity Building Exercise conducted in Gandhigram for elected women representatives.

G. Palanithurai,\textsuperscript{34} in his article titled “Implementation to Empowerment of Women: Experience of Elected Women Representatives in Panchayats in Tamil Nadu” has investigated the problems faced by the elected women representatives while they manage the local body institutions. He has classified the nature and intensity of the obstacles and hurdles in the process of governance and explained how these problems are being tackled by them and with whose support. The article has brought to light the ways and means by which the problems can be met by external agencies.

G. Palanithurai,\textsuperscript{35} in his article “Capacity Building Exercise for Elected Representatives in Tamil Nadu,” has underlined the need for building the capacity of the local body leaders as roles and responsibilities have been fixed for the leaders of the three tiers of the Panchayati Raj System. He also indicates the methodological nuances to be adopted to conduct capacity building programmes for Panchayat leaders by keeping in mind the leaders’ level of understanding as they come from different socio economic backgrounds.’ He has indicated the necessity for preparing a module and a manual for training, which should be state-specific. More particularly, the training institutions have to be identified and they are to be equipped. The training programme should be conducted throughout the state and to all categories of leaders of the Panchayati Raj System.

G. Palanithurai,\textsuperscript{36} in his article, “Needing Social Actions for Panchayati Raj Functioning” indicates the fact that in the process of democratic decentralization of power, initiatives come form the center and not from the people. But, to ensure the success of this dispensation, initiatives have to come form the people. Social Action, Community Participation, owning the institutions and taking responsibilities are the imperatives for the success of the Panchayati Raj System. In the process of devolution of powers, people have come to the forefront by pushing the government to the background. He has also underlined the importance of conscientisation of the people on the role of people in governance at the grassroots.
G. Palanithurai, in his article, “Empowerment of Women-A Novel Exercise,” shares the experience of an exercise conducted in a village with rural women. The perception of the women of the institutions involved in development and the role of development functionaries and the people has been analyzed. The missing link between the people and the government is identified. It clearly demonstrates to what extent women can take up responsibilities under the new dispensation. The capacity level of women has also been highlighted in the course of the sharing of experiences.

G. Palanithurai, in his article, “Women Leadership and Women Empowerment,” stresses the need for leadership training before providing training in Panchayati Raj. Given the environmental backdrop of the women leaders in the rural setting, the mindset of the leaders has to be changed. It requires a clear understanding of the condition of women in Indian society and the role expectations of the women leaders. Specific programs have to be evolved, modules have to be developed and thereby their leadership quality has to be developed. Empowerment of women can be made possible only by bringing the right kind of women leaders to the institutions at the grassroots.

G. Palanithurai, in his article, “Glittering Women Leadership” has studied the impact of the training program conducted for the elected women leaders of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Tamil Nadu. While evaluating the impact of the training of the women leaders, it is found that now they are conscious about their role and responsibilities and that they are serious about the issues of women and the poor. More particularly, there are certain skills they have acquired very fast while performing their roles in Panchayat administration. It indicates that there is discrimination against women in managing the institutions at the grassroots.

G. Palanithurai, in the article in Tamil entitled “Role of Women in Panchayati Raj System” indicates the possible roles to be taken up by the women in the rural areas both individually and collectively in the Panchayat activities by which women and Dalit issues can be effectively solved. An array of activities have been indicated which have no financial implications. The Panchayats can make use of such resources for administering development.

G. Palanithurai, in his article entitled “Capacity Building for Women Local Body leaders”, explains the aspects to be considered for preparing a training module for women Panchayat leaders. It clearly explains the circumstances in which the leaders are drawn towards Panchayat institutions.
and also their socio-economic background. Realizing the role expected of the women leaders, the gap has to be identified and what skills they require to fill the gap and what has to be instilled in their minds have to be indicated in the module.

G. Palanithurai,42 has edited a book titled New Panchayati Raj System: Status and Prospectus which is the outcome of a state level conference held in Gandhigram on 17th September 1994 to exert pressure on the Government of Tamil Nadu to hold elections to Local Bodies in Tamil Nadu. Academics, representatives from NGOs, social activists, Gandhians and representatives from the Government presented at the conference their perspectives on how the Panchayat system could be established and indicated the way forward. In the book, Rameshwar Thakur, State Minister for Rural Development, Government of India, has outlined the framework of the democratic decentralization of powers in India through the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India. V. Padmanabhan, in his article, has indicated how it is deceptive to call it empowerment of the people while officials retain powers in their hands. G. Palanithurai, in his six articles, has analyzed the existing socio-political and administrative scenario in Tamil Nadu in terms of devolution of powers. He has suggested an action plan for all concerned to develop a grassroots movement for the devolution of powers to the people. K. V. Palanithurai, Member, Planning Commission, has projected the planning scenario at different levels in the local bodies against the backdrop of the existing practices such as decentralized planning and district planning. N. Markandan has explained his micro plan experience in his article. Lakshmi Krishnamoorthy has indicated the potential for women’s empowerment in the devolution package and she has indicated the strategies to make use of this opportunity to develop the womenfolk in the rural areas. A. V. Rangachari, R. Elango and V. Ragupathy have visualized the financial implications of the devolution package and rural development activities. T. R. Natesan has indicated how educational institutions can play a crucial role in the process of devolution of powers. S. Narayanasamy has brought to light the need for peace and prosperity and suggested ways and means to achieve the same by linking the new institutions with the traditional institutions evolved by society over a period of time. B. S. Bhargava and V. Venkata Krishnan have underlined the fact that the whole process of the devolution of powers is constitutionalized and have suggested how it could be utilized for the benefit of the people. The work is almost a vision building exercise based on past experience.
G.Palanithurai, B.R.Dwaraki and S.Narayanasamy have edited a book entitled *Major Issues in New Panchayati Raj System*. This work is the outcome of a sub-regional workshop conducted by the Department of Political Science and Development Administration, Gandhigram Rural Institute - Deemed University, sponsored by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, to review the situation in Tamil Nadu with regard to the implementation of the New Panchayati Raj Act. The first part comprises of the articles presented at the workshop. G.Palanithurai's article "New Panchayati Raj: Defects by Design" indicates the defects in the conformity Act enacted in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly in 1994. “Revolution in Rising Expectations in Rural Areas”, by G.Palanithurai, illustrates the rising expectations of the people due to the market economy. Despite the grim economic scenario in the rural areas, the expectations of the people have gone up and it will provide enough scope for placing consumer goods in the rural markets. T.Karunakaran’s articles “Structural Imperatives for Realizing the Objectives of Panchayati Raj” presents a unique framework of action at the community level based on the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India. In his article entitled “Centrality of Globalization of Economy and Decentralization of Powers”, G.Palanithurai has explained the links between the two processes. In another article “Non-Conventional Resource Mobilization in New Panchayati Raj System,” G.Palanithurai has explored the potential of the Panchayat to mobilize resources from within. He has indicated a variety of opportunities for prosperity to the Panchayats. S.John Joseph, in this article “Common Property Resources”, has explained the utility of the common property resources to the community and indicated how they can be effectively managed by the community and the Panchayats M.Sundaramari and T.Ranganathan, in their article “Role of New Panchayati Raj in Agricultural Development”, have explained the nuances to be adopted by the Panchayats to increase agricultural productivity and have exactly defined what role the Panchayat can play in agricultural development. "Panchayati Raj: Redefinition of Women's Power" by A.Suriyakanthi, brings to light the opportunities available for empowerment of women. N.Markandan, in his article “Designing Development Plans—A Bottom Up Process”, has examined the process of planning from the grassroots and indicated its merits. B.R.Dwaraki has illustrated how PRA is an effective tool for empowerment. P.Arumugam, in his article "Resources and Panchayat Planning," has emphatically argued for resource mapping for planning at the Panchayat level as an imperative. S.Narayanasamy, in his article, has indicated the possibilities of social conflict as the process of localization of power is on and suggested methods by which
violence can be avoided and peace established. M.P.Boraiyan has outlined the possible links between the NGO sector and Panchayats in his article "Nexus between NGOs and New Panchayati Raj Institutions". The second part of the book comprises the reactions of the participants to the presentations and the major recommendations of the workshop.

G.Palanithurai’s book, *Grassroots Democracy in Indian Society* analyses the present scenario of governance in India and its implications for Indian society from the perspective of people’s participation in the process of development. It is a collection of essays touching upon a wide variety of subjects, namely, election, governance, people’s participation, development, devolution of powers, reconstruction of the political structure, planning exercise done by the people, food security and building the capacity of the people and their leaders at the grassroots. It focuses mainly on the positive aspects of the devolution of powers and people’s participation in the process of economic development and social justice.

G.Palanithurai’s book titled *Empowering People: Issues and Solutions* is a collection of articles circulated among the participants of a workshop organized in Gandhigram from 26th to 28th May 1995. There are fourteen articles covering the entire gamut of the Panchayat system in India with the focus on Tamil Nadu. “New Panchayati Raj System: A Phenomenon in Indian Politics” by G.Palanithurai analyses the new system of governance at the grassroots from a historical perspective. In the analysis he has brought out the pitfalls in the process of devolution of powers. He has indicated the barriers to the devolution process and suggested ways and means to remove them.

B.S.Bhargava and V.Venkata Krishnan, in their article “Panchayati Raj Movement: An Analysis of its phases,” have presented the historical evolution of these institutions over a period of time. V.A.Vasudeva Raju, in his article, distinguishes Panchayati Raj democracy from Parliamentary democracy and highlights the merits of the former. A Devendra Kumar, in his article "Decentralization and Development", has brought out the resilience of democracy in achieving development through the Panchayati Raj System. V.Ragupathy has touched upon an important area of Panchayati Raj and brought out its significance in Panchayat management.

“NGO and Grassroots Democracy”, by an NGO named Pradhan, has contextually examined the relationship between the NGOs and the Panchayats. It has suggested ways to improve the relationship between the Panchayats and the NGOs. N.D.Mani and P.Arumugam have clearly explained the need for
geographic information system for grassroots level planning. A.Rajeswari, in her article “Panchayati Raj Institution and Women”, has examined the role of Panchayat Institutions in empowering women. N.Narayanasamy and R.Ramesh, in their article “Participatory Planning in the New Panchayati Raj System”, have explained the scope for participatory planning at the grassroots and projected the steps to be followed in this exercise. S.Narayanasamy has explained the scope for establishing participatory governance at the community level through the Gram Sabha in his article “Gram Sabha in the New Panchayati Raj System in India: Major Issues” and in “Issues of New Panchayati Raj System” he has extensively analyzed the major issues emerging in the process of the establishment of institutions at the grassroots for governance46.

G.Palanithurai’s47 “Empowering People for Prosperity: A Study in New Panchayati Raj System” realistically examines the scope for establishing a governing system at the grassroots to deliver services and goods with the active participation of the people. It examines the reasons for the establishment of the New Panchayati Raj System. It further analyses the difficulties involved in the process of establishing the first government at the grassroots. This book suggests a variety of means to overcome the problems and hurdles in the process of decentralization of powers. It analyses the people’s perception of grassroots democracy. On the whole it envisages a new economic scenario in the rural areas if decentralization is perceived properly. It maintains that the establishment of institutions at the grassroots for governance creates a new scenario in India federalism. The desirable relationship among the three tiers of governance has been discussed.

G.Palanithurai’s48 “Panchayati Raj in Tamil Nadu: Acts, Rules, and Schemes” (in Tamil) is a manual for Panchayat leaders. It includes the basic framework of the decentralization of powers, the features of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, how the spirit of the Amendment can be translated into action, the updated Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act 1994, rules to operationalize the provisions of the Acts and updated rural development schemes and programmes of both Central and State Governments. This has been prepared with the idea of catering to the needs of the Panchayat leaders, more specifically the Gram Panchayati leaders. In this work suggestions have been given as to how best the Panchayats can work within the limited powers devolved to them.
G.Palanithurai has edited the first volume of *Dynamics of New Panchayati Raj System in India*. It is a collection of articles written by various scholars on the experience of the devolution of powers in different states. G.Palanithurai, in his article “Towards Decentralization of Powers”, underlines the imperatives and implications of democratic decentralization of powers in the world. He has highlighted the promises proffered in devolution of powers. E.S.Venkataramiah’s article, “Panchayati Raj Institutions in India,” has given a total historical picture of the evolution of Panchayati Raj Institutions in India. K.V.Sundaram, in his article “The Local Planning Process: Evolution and Transition to a New System”, touches upon the important aspect of decentralization of powers, namely, planning from below. He indicates the need of the hour to shift the exercise from top down planning to bottom up planning.

“The Panchayats of the Scheduled Areas” by B.R.Purohit explains the distinct characteristics of tribals in India and the system of Panchayats to be established in the tribal areas through this new provision of the Constitution. M.P.Boraian, in his article, “Governance from the Grassroots”, succinctly explains the nexus between the people and the Government in the new context. Prabhat Datta and Chandan Datta examine the functioning of the Panchayati Raj System in West Bengal. Sunny George and K.N.Lalithabhai analyze and evaluate the performance of the Panchayati Raj System in Kerala. N.Sivanna, in his article, has taken Karnataka as a case for analysis and evaluated the current status of the Panchayati Raj System there. M.Sarumathy, in her article, has brought out the details of the working of the Panchayati Raj System in Andhra Pradesh. Scholars who have written articles on the states have touched upon the history, structure, functioning and performance of the Panchayati Raj Institutions of the respective states.

B.S.Bhargava, “Restructuring and Reform of Rural Administrative Institutions in Mizoram: A Study in the New Panchayati Raj System” by R.N.Prasad, “Democratizing Democracy” by Manu V.Kulkarni, and “Panchayati Raj System in Madhya Pradesh: An Appraisal” by Yatindra Singh Sisodia record the experience of the respective states in terms of the devolution process. The authors have covered the history, structure, functioning, performance and the difficulties involved in the process of devolution of powers.

C.Gnanprakasham’s “Local Government in Tamil Nadu” (in Tamil) covers both rural and urban local bodies in Tamil Nadu prior to the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India. The historical background of these institutions is traced and their actual functioning is examined. They are compared with those of other states. Local Body elections, reforms in Local Body elections, personnel administration in Panchayats and state control over Panchayats have been extensively analyzed.

G.Palanithurai’s Dimension of New Panchayati Raj System (in Tamil) touches upon the conditions under which the new dispensation was thought of, how the promises of decentralization can be realized and what can be done at the state level, at the level of officials, local body leaders and the people. As the New Panchayati Raj System has come up with several promises, it has been perceived differently by different segments of the society with their own perspectives. But the promises will be realized only if the new institution is perceived properly. The major activity areas have been underlined for popular comprehension. It will dispel the clouds surrounding the Panchayati Raj System.

G.Palanithurai’s article “The Genre of Women Leaders in Local Bodies: Experience from Tamil Nadu”, explains the process of recruitment of women leaders to the local bodies and how they handle power in their institutions. It analyses the problem of the women leaders while performing their roles and responsibilities. Different types of leaders with varying backgrounds and intentions have come to these positions. How they struggle to perform their functions in the given environment has been analyzed in this work. It indicates the need of the hour for the women leaders to perform their roles, efficiently. How the women leaders look at their space and how they design their public life at the end of the five year’s tenure have also been analyzed in this article.

G.Palanithurai’s article “Plan Preparation with the Participation of People in Tamil Nadu” (in Tamil) highlights the importance of people’s
participation in the process of development of rural society. It underlines the efficacy of people’s participation in preparation of perspective plan for the development of rural society. It indicates the methodological nuances to be adopted in plan preparation. It outlines the steps to be followed in the planning process.

G.Palanithurai’s article “Planning in People’s Panchayats” (in Tamil) explains the importance of empowering people. The Panchayat brings power to the people. Now the Panchayats are under the clutches of the bureaucracy. This position has to be changed. Development activities are being carried out in a supply driven mode and this is to be reversed. Unless the activities are changed to a demand driven mode, people cannot own the responsibility. To perform this task, planning has to be done at the grassroots where people’s needs and priorities will be identified and their vision protected. The article indicates planning as an instrument to empower the people.

G.Palanithurai, in his article “Need for Revitalizing Panchayati Raj Institutions in Tamil Nadu” has drawn up a road map for the establishment of the Panchayati Raj System in Tamil Nadu based on the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India. He has stressed that the Madras Panchayat Act of 1958 was a landmark Act and the same can be followed with the addition of the third tier, namely, the District Panchayat. He has underlined the basic principles to be taken into account for enacting the conformity legislation in Tamil Nadu.

G.Palanithurai’s article “Empowering People or Bureaucracy” is a review of the Tamil Nadu Panchayati Act 1994. The author has critically evaluated the main provisions of the Act in terms of the basic framework developed by the Central Government for devolution of powers through the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India. He has indicated the major deviations of the Tamil Nadu Act from the spirit of the Constitutional Amendment. The bureaucracy has been given the power of control over the Panchayati institutions. People should have been given supervisory and control power over the Panchayats. It indicts the overriding power of the District Collector. It makes a fervent plea for changing supervisions.

G.Palanithurai, in his article “New Panchayati Raj System in the Development Process” (in Tamil) has explained the process of development at present and indicated the opportunities available for Panchayats to make use of them for the benefit of the people. Panchayati leaders should enhance their capacity and understand the process and take initiatives at their level to tap
these opportunities. The article posits that the Panchayat, by its proactive function, poses a challenge to globalization.

G.Palanithurai, in his article “New Panchayati Raj and Rural Economy” (in Tamil) has highlighted the existing economic conditions of the rural areas and suggested ways and means to reconstruct the rural society through the New Panchayati Raj System. A new system has been created which has to be perceived as a system for development and not for politics. By playing a critical role both the leaders and the people can improve the rural economy substantially, for which Local Body institutions have to be perceived properly.

G.Palanithurai’s article “Planning for Village Development” (in Tamil) highlights the steps to be followed in plan preparation. It indicates the essential conditions for effective involvement of the people and officials in the process of preparation of the perspective plan. It explains the two-way process involved in this exercise. It should be both an annual and a five year integrated plan. The article underlines the importance and the implications of the process and pleads for such an initiative.

G.Palanithurai’s article “Synergization of Institutional Arrangements for Development and Social Justice at the Grassroots: A Case Analysis” in S.P.Jain’s, Emerging Institutions for Decentralized Rural Development is an in depth analysis of different types of organizations functioning very harmoniously in a village, delivering services to the maximum level. There are a variety of organizations and institutions functioning in the rural areas along with Panchayati institutions and performing their roles and responsibilities to deliver services to the community. At times one finds conflicts among the organizations and institutions and many a time one finds harmony among them. The conflict and the harmony depend on the kids of leadership and so also the quality of the services delivered to the people. Panchayat institutions have worked in tandem with other organizations very effectively where the Panchayat leaders perceive these organizations as supportive. The article indicates the factors which are essential for the success of the organizations.

G.Palanithurai’s article “Gram Sabha: A Civil Society at the Bottom”, in R.C.Choudhry and S.P.Jain’s Strengthening Village Democracy explains the basic principles of the Gram Sabha and its place in the Panchayati Raj System. He has analyzed the actual functioning of the Gram Sabha in Tamil Nadu. The gap between the intent and the reality has been explored as per the perception
of the leaders and the people about the Gram Sabha and its implications. The major deviations have been indicated. Inferences have been drawn from a case analysis of eleven Gram Panchayats. Suggestions have been made to set right the malady in the functioning of the Gram Sabha.

G.Palanithurai’s article “Corruption at Micro Level and Ways to Contain It” in N.Narayansamy, M.P.Boraian and M.A.Jeyaraju’s Corruption at the Grassroots: The Shades and Shadows contains an action plan for eliminating corrupt practices in the process of development. Corruption in grassroots institutions has been reported as being on the increase and against this backdrop a case study has been undertaken. Vadugampadi Gram Panchayat has been selected and analyzed for the dimension of corruption and its root causes. Ways and means have been suggested to root out corruption at the Panchayat level. This Gram Panchayat has been identified as a test model and the experiment has been reported in this work.

M.Aram and G.Palanithurai, in their article “Tamil Nadu”, in George Mathew’s, Status of Panchayati Raj in the States and Union Territories of India 2000 reflect the state of the art in Panchayati Raj System in Tamil Nadu. The article deals with the historical background and the genesis of the Panchayat system before and after Independence and the pre 73rd and post 73rd Amendment scenarios. A detailed discussion is made of the structure and the functions of the Panchayati institutions created through the Tamil Nadu Panchayati Act of 1994. The contradictory provisions in the conformity legislations have been analyzed and to some extent, the performance has also been analyzed. It is a text presenting the status of Panchayati Raj System in Tamil Nadu.

G.Palanithurai’s “Capacity Building for Local Body Leaders” is an assessment of the performance of the Panchayati Raj System in Tamil Nadu. The author conducted a sample survey of Panchayati leaders for evaluation. Major achievements, weaknesses and potential have been indicated. Corrupt practices developed in the system have also been brought to light. The major problems have been discussed and projected for solution. He has developed a methodology to evaluate the performance of the Panchayati institutions at different levels.

G.Palanithurai’s manual on “Good Governance at the Grassroots” has been prepared for Gram Panchayati leaders with the objective of identifying the activities needed to achieve social development. The manual posits that even
without investing more money activities can be carried out in villages with the support and the active involvement of the people.

G.Palanithurai’s monograph “Towards Decentralization of Powers” explains the details of the different kinds of motives behind the ongoing democratic decentralization process. The decentralization process varies from one society to another, one country to another and one community to another. It promises several things to several individuals and groups. These promises have been explained in this work.

G.Palanithurai’s monograph “Recommendations for Effective Functioning of Panchayati Raj System in Tamil Nadu” gives details about the loopholes in the Panchayati system in Tamil Nadu and recommends suggestions to make it conform to the spirit of the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India. It highlights the structural and functional weakness and suggests methods by which the loopholes can be plugged.

G.Palanithurai’s article “Empowerment of Women: Problems Faced by the Elected Women Representatives—Experience from Tamil Nadu” is a report on the problems faced by the women Gram Panchayati leaders in managing Panchayats and public affairs. The problems have been taken from the reports of the training programme conducted for the women leaders by the Rajiv Gandhi Chair for Panchayati Raj Studies; it shows how the women leaders have been facing the problems on different fronts, namely, family, society, party, bureaucracy, Panchayat Council and Gram Sabha. The women leaders have indicated their needs. They strongly demand a support structure. The report gives the details of the issues involved in Panchayat administration while dealing with women's problems.

G.Palanithurai’s article “Empowering People: An Agenda for Immediate Action” underscores the implications of people’s participation in the process of development of the rural areas. He has outlined the framework of devolution of powers in which he has indicated that empowering people is the focus of this new dispensation. The steps to be taken to realize the basic objectives and spirit of the 73rd Amendment have been indicated.

G.Palanithurai and V.Ragupathy, in their report “Empowering People through Panchayats: Problems Faced by Elected Panchayat Leaders in Tamil Nadu”, have indicated the administrative, financial and political problems faced by elected Panchayat leaders while administering development through the Panchayat. It is a report prepared out of the reports on the training
programmes conducted for Panchayati leaders during the first period after implementation of the 1994 Act in Tamil Nadu. In all the training programmes, the leaders were asked to indicate the problems faced by them in managing the Panchayati affairs. This was done purely for policy advocacy. The needs of the leaders have also been indicated.

G. Palanithurai’s article on “State of the Art: A Status Report on a New Panchayati Raj System in Tamil Nadu” gives the details of the perception of the state level leaders on devolution of powers and the steps taken by the State Government in devolving powers to the Panchayats. It indicates the gap between the destination and where they are now. It is a report to project the state of the art in Tamil Nadu with regard to devolution of powers.

In all these studies the scholars have concentrated much on the socio economic background of the leaders and not the issues connected with the recruitment, socialization, perception and performance etc. And hence this study is going to analyze the linkage between the background factors and the performance of the elected women representatives of the Gram Panchayats. This study tries to analyze the process of the experience of women leaders and achievements of them. This study is different form others in focusing the attention on the process not the target.

FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

Performance of any individual depends on his/her role perception. Roles are being assigned and assumed. By capacitating himself or herself one would be able to respond to the calls of the public. Role perception is being influenced by many factors such as the individual’s recruitment process, socialization process and the socio economic background. When ‘performance evaluation’ is being the exercise, one has to take note of some methodological issues in the context of India. For about three decades since independence, evaluating the performance of the governments is neglected subjects despite there have been pleas and requests. Economists have evaluated the performance of the governments so far but their analysis is always on growth and development. Comprehensive evaluation of performance has not been carried out in any one of the states or for the central government so far. Many reasons are attributed for this neglect. But, of the reasons attributed, non-availability of standardized performance scale for such evaluation is a major
one. This being the explanation for the evaluation of the performance of state and central government, one can imagine what would be the efforts of the social scientists in evolving a standardized scale for the evaluation of performance of the grassroots institutions. Of course, the commitment towards decentralization of power is being the imperative; it could be based on scientific knowledge. Against this background, an attempt is made to evaluate the performance of the grassroots institutions. To theorize the decentralization of powers and to eliminate the deterrent factors for the success of decentralization of powers, an analysis of the performance could be made scientific and hence methodology for evaluation is subjected for scrutiny before using it for evaluation of performance of grassroots institution. Thus against this background the performance of the elected women representatives of the Gram Panchayats is analyzed, Here the performance is assessed in terms of role performance. While assessing the role performance the factor that governs the process is the role perception of the elected women representatives of the gram Panchayats. This concept of role orientation and its types were originally evolved by Wahalke and his associates.74 Enough care has to be taken while adopting the frameworks developed by the western scholars as they have evolved them in the western context. But this study fundamentally relies on the concept role and role performance Role is termed as actions of an actor pertinent to others in accordance with the expectations or norms of behavior that are closely associated with a position in a social structure. Thus, based on the above-discussed theoretical frameworks the analysis of the performance of the elected women representatives of Gram Panchayats is done according to the framework as mentioned below.
DIAGRAM 1 – A FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

Environment

Socio-Economic Background

Political Socialization

Perception of Leaders

Performance of Leaders

Political Recruitment

Environment

Environment
DIAGRAM 2 – A FRAMEWORK TO STUDY EMERGING WOMEN LEADERSHIP
NEW FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION

Based on the framework of analysis explained above a broad framework to analyze the women leadership is evolved.

The aspects to be taken into consideration while evaluating the performance have to be incorporated in the evaluation scale. The performance of the institutions can be assessed based on the activities carried out and recorded. The recorded performance cannot be evaluated unless the individuals and groups involved in the activities are analyzed.

Women representatives’ role is one of the aspects in decentralization. There are a number of issues and aspects akin to decentralization of powers. But on many occasions, questions have been raised as to what extent elected women representatives have performed in Panchayats. Nobody is sure as to what extent powers have been devolved, functionaries have been given and finance has been devolved. Curiosity is centering around the capacity and capability of the elected women representatives. There is no curiosity to raise questions on the capacity and capability of the officials, women MLAs, women MPs, women IAS officials, and women doctors. The curiosity is always around the elected women representatives of the grassroots institutions as they are drawn from the poor segments that too with poor socio economic background. It is a general assumption that women at higher levels are having the needed capability and women at the grassroots do not have the needed capability. When poor women are elected to legislative assembly and are appointed ministers, questions are not raised. In India questions have been raised on the capacity and capability of the elected women representatives of the grassroots institutions only. From these questions one can infer that the women elected for local body institutions are having more problems and barriers. In the beginning, before the conduct of the local body elections after enacting the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India, an argument was projected that we cannot get this number of candidates to local bodies. But reality was different and it has surpassed the constitutional limit and women started moving into open constituencies also. Now that movement all positions are filled with women, a different argument is projected: as the women are driven to the public space by a number of offeres they cannot function independently and the forces which had driven them would act powerfully by keeping the elected women leaders confine. If the above argument is sound, how come women leaders have set a new agenda for governance and how come they have put
Up an alternative governance paradigm? The whole process is to be studied and explained for the benefit of the researchers.

The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution of India provided an unprecedented opportunity to the women and the Dalits to take on power to govern the society at the grassroots. It is only an opportunity but to utilize the opportunity for their advantage they have to play a critical role in the process of the devolution of powers. The forces which are holding and keeping powers at present, realize the full implications of the two amendments. As a result, they work out a design by which they want to keep the power in their hold. Having reserved the seats these forces have driven the women to the public space.

As per the evaluation of the profile of the women leaders who have attended the training programme factors such as the family, community, political parties, NGOs, castes and SHG leaders have played a critical role in pushing the women leaders. After the elections, the elected women representatives have come to the office of the Panchayat and occupied the seat. It is not true that all elected women leaders have come to office. The elected women leaders who have come to office and public institutions have started interacting with officials, public, media, NGOs and others and they are drawn to training institutions and they are oriented to public office to manage the institutions and to administer development and social justice.

But leaders those who have been confined to their houses because of the non-cooperation of the family members continue to remain in their houses, allowing their male family members to hold the office and do the activities. The elected women representatives who have started their work have to face the music as barriers are in their way. Many of them have started their work and assumed responsibilities in the Panchayats. Equally another half or more than half are confined to their houses and allows the males of their family to run the administration. There are agencies that have started training programmes. They have conducted training programmes for the women leaders and the same institutions and organisations have started functioning as a support structure. As a result the women leaders who have come out from their families have enhanced their capacity and skill in managing the Panchayats. Further these above category of women leaders have carved out their own organisations to raise their voice on their problems.

The capacitated elected women representatives establish linkages with officials, media, and party leaders, MLAs, MPs and NGOs and in the same way
they establish linkages with the difficult segments of the society. With the enhanced capacity and with the support of organisations and institutions, the elected women representatives are breaking records in governance, administration, management and development. Their management, administration and governance are different from those of the earlier leaders. Thus this study focuses more on the process than on the output. Process analysis will take time and it can be done very effectively through case analysis.

To evaluate the performance of the Panchayat leaders there are certain factors which are essential to be studied carefully. They are: a. Socio-economic background, b. Political socialization process, c. Political recruitment process, d. Role perception of the leaders, e. Their perception of development, f. Their perception of democracy, g. Their perception of gender, h. Their perception of the marginalized, i. Their perception of participation,]. Capacity of the leaders, k. Interface between leaders and the councils, l. Interface between leaders and officials, m. Interface between leaders and people, n. Performance on the assigned roles, o. Performance on the assumed roles.

In a democratic polity the above variables do play a significant role in determining the success and failure of the individuals. All those aspects have got both quantitative and qualitative variables. They are to be assessed.

The assumed functions are those functions that were carried out based on the perception of the leaders and their understanding about what they have to perform. Assigned functions are those functions which are to be performed through the powers devolved on them. The powers devolved by the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act of 1994 to Gram Panchayats are depicted in the activity map.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>29 SUBJECTS</th>
<th>POWERS &amp; FUNCTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Agriculture including Agriculture Extension</td>
<td>a. Assisting and identification of beneficiaries under various agriculture related schemes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. Advice in setting up godowns/ cold storage facilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c. Contact market officers for the benefit of farmers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Land improvement, implementation of land reforms,</td>
<td>a. Land ceiling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. Reallocation of land less labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land consolidation and soil conservation.</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. **Minor irrigation, water management and water shed development**
   - a. Desilting tank
   - b. Reconstruction of supply channel
   - c. Implementation of watershed development program

4. **Animal Husbandry and Poultry**
   - a. Assist in identification of beneficiaries for various schemes scheduled in this head.
   - b. Facilities created for cooperative societies and financial assistance

5. **Fisheries**
   - a. Identification of beneficiaries under this head.

6. **Social Forestry and Farm forestry**
   - a. Coordination with forest department
   - b. Establishment of social forestry
   - c. Implementation of Farm forestry scheme

7. **Minor forest produce**
   - a. Permission to collect minor forest produce

8. **Small scale industries including food processing industries**
   - a. Identification of beneficiaries under this head.

9. **Khadi and Village industries**
   - a. Identification of potential activities and formulation of projects
   - b. Formulate schemes for crafts men etc.

10. **Rural Housing**
    - a. Identification of beneficiaries under this head.
    - b. Assist cooperative societies for house construction

11. **Drinking Water**
    - a. Maintenance and supervision of water source and supply
    - b. Implementation of drinking water supply scheme

12. **Fuel and Fodder**
    - a. Encourage public for using Non Conventional energy source
    - b. Fire wood and fodder plantation
    - c. Execution of TNADP

13. **Roads, Culverts, waterways and other means of communication**
    - a. Formation and maintenance of roads and culverts
    - b. Removal of encroachments and impose penalty
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Program Area</th>
<th>Sub-Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 14  | Rural electrification including distribution of electricity | a. Maintenance of Street lights  
b. Identifying the theft of electricity |
| 15  | Non Conventional Energy Sources                             | a. Creating awareness  
b. Identification of beneficiaries under this head. |
| 16  | Poverty Alleviation Programs                                | a. Identifications of beneficiaries under this head.  
b. Preparation of plan  
c. Inform authorities misuse of funds / grants by beneficiary |
| 17  | Education including Primary and Secondary Schools           | a. Create infrastructure for schools  
b. Recommend opening of new schools  
c. Setup education Committee |
| 18  | Technical training and Vocational Education                | a. Dissemination of information  
b. Recommend necessary steps |
| 19  | Adult and Non Formal Education                              | a. Select beneficiaries and implement programs |
| 20  | Libraries                                                   | a. Opening of reading rules and libraries |
| 21  | Cultural activities                                         | a. Take necessary steps to avoid social evils  
b. Financial contribution to Sports' development |
| 22  | Markets and Fairs                                           | a. Issue of license to shops  
b. Coordinate cooperative marketing society |
| 23  | Health and Sanitation including hospitals Primary Health Centres and Dispensaries | a. Identifications of beneficiaries under this head and implementation of various schemes under this head  
b. Regular health appraisal of school children and health camps  
c. Provision of drainage, sanitation and disposal of waste  
d. Set up village health committee |
| 24  | Family Welfare                                              | a. Identifications of beneficiaries under this head and implementation of various schemes under this head  
b. Awareness campaign for the benefit of Pregnant women and others |
<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Women and Child development</td>
<td>a. Identifications of beneficiaries under this head and implementation of various schemes under this head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>Social welfare including welfare of handicapped and mentally retarded</td>
<td>a. Identifications of beneficiaries under this head and implementation of various schemes under this head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Welfare of weaker sections and in particular the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes</td>
<td>a. Identifications of beneficiaries under this head and implementation of various schemes under this head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>b. Action taken on bonded labourers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>c. Civil Rights protection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Public Distribution System</td>
<td>a. Inspection of Ration shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Maintenance of community Assets</td>
<td>a. Protection of Community Assets from misuse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This activity mapping is derived from the Government Orders passed over a period of time.

**OBJECTIVES**

The study has the following objectives based on the research questions

a) To study the socio economic conditions of the elected women representatives of Gram Panchayats.

b) To study the socialization process of the elected women representatives.

c) To study the political recruitment process of the elected women representatives.

d) To study the role perception of the elected women representatives.

e) To study the perception of elected women representatives on development.

f) To assess the level of performance of elected women representatives of Gram Panchayats.

g) To examine the strategies adopted by elected women representatives to overcome the barriers in managing the institution.
HYPOTHESES

The study has the following hypotheses:

a) The social and economic background, political socialization, political recruitment pattern and role perception have a bearing on the performance of the elected women representatives of Gram Panchayats.

b) The development perceptions of the leaders and their leadership skills have a bearing on the performance of the elected women representatives of Gram Panchayats.

VARIABLES USED IN THE STUDY

This study primarily focuses on the management of Panchayats by the elected women representatives against the backdrop of their social and economic conditions, socialization and recruitment process and their perception of development. The following are derived as independent variables: socio-economic background, political socialization, political recruitment, role perception, and perception on development. Performance is the dependent variable.

Indicators of performance are as follows

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted by adopting the case study method. Cases were selected from ten districts. Since it was a study of the process and performance it took considerable amount of time to cover the cases. An appropriate interview schedule was designed to collect the primary data from the Gram Panchayat women Presidents. Further data collection was carried out through participant observation, field visits and verification of Panchayat records and discussions held with Panchayat officials. The collected data were analyzed critically and the linkages among variables were analyzed descriptively. The study was carried out in ten districts of Tamil Nadu, covering all the geographical regions. Cases were selected for the study from each district on the basis of records available in the district collectorate in terms of performance.

DATA BASE

This study relies on both primary and secondary data. Face to face interview has been conducted with the help of a well-structured interview schedule. For meaningful interpretation of the results of the analysis, secondary sources have been used. They are drawn from reports, articles and books.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION

Socio-Economic Background:

The socio-economic background comprises of the variables like education, occupation, income and ethnic origin of the elected women representatives.

Political Socialization:

The political socialization is a process by which values are being transmitted from one generation to another generation.

Political Recruitment:

The political recruitment is defined as the process by which individuals are recruited for the positions in the Panchayat system.
Role Perception

Role perception is the understanding of the Panchayat Presidents about their roles and responsibilities to be performed by them in the capacity of Panchayat Presidents.

SELECTION OF STUDY AREA

One-third (10) districts in Tamil Nadu were selected on a random basis for the study. The names of the districts selected for the study include:

Table 1.2 - Area of the study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No</th>
<th>Name of the Districts</th>
<th>Name of the Block</th>
<th>Name of the Gram Panchayat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ramanathapuram</td>
<td>Ramanathapuram</td>
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<td>Kallal</td>
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<td>Bodi</td>
<td>Rasingapuram</td>
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<td>Karur</td>
<td>Karur</td>
<td>Vetttamanagalam</td>
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<td>5.</td>
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<td>Manapparai</td>
<td>Samudiram</td>
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<td>6.</td>
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<td>Anaimalai</td>
<td>SubbaiahGoundan Pudhur</td>
</tr>
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<td>7.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mudichur</td>
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<td>8.</td>
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<td>Sirkali</td>
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<td>10.</td>
<td>Pudukottai</td>
<td>Annavasal</td>
<td>Idayapatti</td>
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In the sampling method, simple random sampling was followed and the criteria used for the adoption of this method are:

a. The emergence of independent elected women representatives as performing their duties on their own

b. The continuous interaction with the NGOs and government officials working in the villages has helped to arrive at the conclusion of the identification of these ten cases.
CHAPTERIZATION

The second chapter forms the background or setting of the thesis. The background or setting is defined in two different sections. The first section deals with the status of women in the Indian polity and the second deals with the history of Panchayat Raj Institutions in India with special reference to Tamil Nadu. The third chapter forms the case analysis. The fourth chapter presents an integrated analysis. The fifth chapter forms the conclusion and suggestions for further research.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

8. ibid p.109
25. C.P. Sujaya and Devika jain, “Role of Women in Decentralisation’
46. Ibid.


52. C. Gnanaprakasam, Local Government in Tamil Nadu in Tamil, Madurai: Madurai Kamaraj University Publication Division, 1986


