CHAPTER - IV

CASE ANALYSIS

CASE - 1

Tekkampatti Village Panchayat, Andipatti Panchayat Union

Socio Economic Background of the Panchayat President

Ms. Subbulakshmi, aged 44, is the President of Tekkampatti Village Panchayat. She is married and has two daughters and one son. She has studied up to 6th standard. She belongs to the Hindu religion and the Scheduled Caste (SC). Her family is nuclear and their occupation is agriculture. Eight acres of dry and two acres of wet land are the properties owned by her family. She lives in her own pucca house with facilities like electricity, toilet and individual household tap connection. She is an active member in the Federation of Women Leaders. She was the Secretary of the Elected Women Village Panchayat President Federation in Theni District from the year 2001 to 2006. She is also an active member in the DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) Party since 2001. She used to attend the DMK Party’s public meetings.

Village Society

Tekkampatti is a Village Panchayat of Andipatti Panchayat Union in Theni District. It has 3 hamlets namely, Adaikkampatti, T.Meenakshipuram and Muthurengapuram. This village has a 260 year
old history. The Gandamanoor Jamindars played a major role in the formation this village. In those days, the people made their settlements after felling the teak trees in that area. This is the reason for the name Tekkampatti. Initially this village was known as Iyyan Tekkampatti. The total area of the village is 519-70 hectare. The total number of households in the village is 565. Agriculture is the prime occupation of the people. Rearing milch animals is also an important occupation of many of the people in this village. According to the 2001 census the total population of the Panchayat is 2,181, which includes 1,092 males and 1,089 females. The Scheduled Caste (Pallar) is the majority community. The total SC population is 1,704, which includes 847 males and 857 females. The other communities such as Naidus, Sakkiliars, Chettiyars, Vanniyars, Christians and Muslims are also living in this village. Among the total population 1,374 are literates and 807 are illiterates. There are 20 temples in this Panchayat, including a common temple (Kali Amman temple), a church and a mosque. Maize, red-gram, green gram, beans and millet are the major agricultural crops in the village.

**Village Panchayat**

The Village Panchayat has four Wards and three hamlets. There are nine Ward Members. Out of them 6 are males. Of these 2 are from Backward Class and 4 are from Scheduled Caste. The other 3 are females who are all from Scheduled Caste. The total number of overhead tanks providing water is seven. There are 94 street lights (including three sodium vapour lights). There are four hand pumps, one open well, four borewells and 105 public taps. There are six milk producers societies,
one post office, one Self Help Group (SHG) building, one primary health centre, three ration shops. Fourteen SHGs are functioning in the village. There are three youth groups which are very helpful for the Panchayat activities.

**Political Parties in the Village Panchayat**

The DMK, the AIADMK, the Congress and the BJP are the main political parties in the village. But the majority of the people belong to the AIADMK party. The Andipatti constituency is always in the hands of the AIADMK party, which is actually the constituency of the Ex-Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, Selvi.J. Jeyalalitha. Ms.Subbulakshmi is an active follower of the DMK Party. The party people provide full support to the Panchayat. Most of the MLA and MP funds are utilized for the development of this Village Panchayat.

**Recruitment Process of the President**

When the election was announced under the New Panchayati Raj System in 2001, the Presidentship was reserved for women. The community leaders supported her and prompted her to contest in the election. During that time her family was settled in Theni. Initially she refused. But they explained the service rendered by her father-in-law in the Traditional Panchayat for her own caste. Since the contest became a prestigious issue she agreed to contest in the election. Three candidates contested against her. The community people led the election canvassing by visiting each and every house. Provision of drinking water, sanitation were the issues raised by the villagers. Ms. Subbulakshmi promised to fulfill these demands raised by the people.
She won the election by securing 1240 votes and with a difference of 105 votes. Her association with the DMK Party was very helpful during the election campaign. The political party sponsored the money for notices and wall posters. When the opportunity was given to her, she was happy to contest in the election as her husband explained to her and asked her to give the best of her ability to bring a good name to the Panchayat and to render good service to the people.

**Empowerment Process**

In the opening up (or) coming out stage, the village community as a whole asked her to contest in the Panchayat election. Especially her own caste people asked her to contest in the election. Initially she refused to contest in the election because before the election she was settled in Theni. Her husband is a government servant and he was working in Theni as a Revenue Inspector. Due to this reason she initially did not have the idea of contesting in the election. But her husband motivated her to contest in the election. Her village is 25 kilometers from Theni town. She used to go to the office four to five times a week. Due to the distance and domestic work she is not able to go to the Panchayat office daily. Her mode of travel to the office is bus.

After the sudden demise of her husband in 2004 she shifted her residence from Theni to her native place Muturengapuram, one of the hamlets of Tekkampatti Panchayat. She continues the Panchayat work. Even though she was asked and supported by her caste in the election, for her Panchayat activities and works she bears on all caste people equally. All other caste people have also accepted her leadership. She has concentrated on all hamlets equally. Through this she has gained the
support of all sections of the people. She conducts the Panchayat meetings and Gram Sabha meetings without fail. All the Ward Members extend their support and cooperation for organising these meetings. She is in the fifth stage of the empowerment frame work, i.e., work for the village community as a whole.

**Gram Sabha Meetings**

Subbulakshmi was serious about organising Gram Sabha meetings. All the Ward Members are extending their co-operation in organising Gram Sabha meetings. They used to mobilize the people for Gram Sabha meetings through drum beating (tom-tom), circulation of bit notices, informing the Gram Sabha members through the Ward Members, information through SHGs and village elders. Around 150 members attend the Gram Sabha meetings. The major issues discussed in the Gram Sabha meeting are drinking water, transport, road, drainage and sanitation. The participation of SHG members in the Gram Sabha meetings is much appreciated in the Panchayat area.

**Implementation of Development Schemes**

Under the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) 25 group houses were constructed. The selection of beneficiaries was properly done in consultation with the local political parties and the Ward Members. They used to allocate the works based on the population size of the hamlet. She used to treat all the three hamlets equally in rendering service. She has provided cement road, drainage facility, community hall at Meenakshipuram with the people’s participation. An over head tank was constructed in Thekkampatti of an estimate of 2 lakhs and 25 thousand rupees. One women sanitary complex was also constructed at Muthurengapuram. As the Panchayat is poor there are not many transactions on which serious discussion is needed. Within the available funds and scheme funds allocation they easily design and decide upon
their activities. In general they fulfill the basic needs like water and sanitation in all the hamlets.

Social Justice

After her election as a Panchayat President, she was accepted by all the caste group members. Untouchability was practiced in the village. She has organised several NSS camps for giving awareness about health and hygiene to the people. She thought of abolishing untouchability practices from her school days. Moreover Subbulakshmi is interested in improving the economic status of the Scheduled Caste (SC) people. She gave motivation to the SC youth and sent them for vocational training.

Presidents’ Perception on Panchayati Raj

When the Panchayat election was announced she didn’t know anything about the New Panchayati Raj System. After she assumed the position she went for a series of training programmes conducted by various training institutions and non governmental organisations. Through the training programmes only she gained knowledge about the salient features of the New Panchayati Raj System in Tamil Nadu, the roles and the responsibilities of a President. After that she joined the Federation of Women Village Panchayat Presidents in Theni District was elected Secretary. She has organised several meetings for the women Panchayat Presidents in Theni District along with the district administration.

Social Development Activities

There are four Panchayat Union primary schools in the Panchayat area. Subbulakshmi used to visit the schools twice a month. She
regularly attends the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) meetings. She has provided infrastructure facilities like chair, table to the schools. Playing materials like cricket bat, ball, skipping rope and badminton were also provided by her to the schools. She also sponsored 20 plate and tumbler sets to the Anganvadi. Earlier female infanticide was in practice. After she assumed the office of the Panchayat President she took several measures to eradicate the problem of female infanticide and foeticide. Now there is no such problem reported in that village. She often spoke with her village women. They normally posed demands relating to drinking water. Some of the women came to the President’s house and got solutions for their family disputes. Even though the President belongs to the Dalit community, she didn’t organise a separate meeting for Dalits in her village. The village youths are very helpful to her. She used to meet them. For cleaning the village streets, along with Nehru Yuva Kendra (NYK), the youth group and Fans Associations joined together and performed the activities. They demanded a playground. The Panchayat President allotted a land and supplied playing materials like cricket bat, ball, volleyball, skipping rope etc.

**Sectoral Linkages**

The President of the Village Panchayat has to function as a liaison officer between various sectoral departments of the government and the people. She/he has to visit the departments like TWAD, THADCO, Highways, Social Welfare, Police, Revenue, Agriculture, Union Office and the Collectorate. Subbulakshmi’s husband allowed her to go to the above said offices independently. Being an active member of the DMK, she herself deals with some public problems. She has established a
good relationship with the Union officials and the Union Chairman and the Councilors. She has conducted veterinary camps and camps for farmers regarding cultivation through approaching the concerned departments. She has also conducted NSS camp by contacting the nearby colleges and schools. Apart from this, along with the Public Works Department (PWD) the water tanks (kanmais) namely Aranmanaikkanmai, Gopal Nayakkar Kanmai, and supply channels of ooranis are desilted. Check dams were also constructed with the help of the PWD. The TWAD Board has helped in providing six mini motor sets in the Panchayat area.

**Summary**

Subbulakshmi is very much interested in rendering service to her people, especially providing adequate drinking water to all the sections of the people. Affiliation to political party has helped her in obtaining the welfare and development programmes to her Panchayat. At the Union level and the District level, the party affiliation helps her very much in getting the funds for the developmental activities in the Panchayat. Even though Subbulakshmi was asked and supported by her own caste people and the political party during her contest in the Panchayat election, but she has concentrated on all sections of the people. She has gained the support of the village community as a whole. She is in the fifth stage of Baviskar Empowerment Framework, i.e., work for the village community as a whole.
Socio Economic Background of the Panchayat President

Ms. P. Selvi is the President of Thimmarasanaickanur Village Panchayat. She belongs to the Scheduled Caste (SC) community. She is 24 years old. She has studied up to 3rd standard. She can affix her signature. She lives in a government group house which she got through Indra Awas Yojana (IAY), a centrally sponsored rural housing programme of the Government of India. She is an agriculture labourer. She is married and has two childrens. Her house has toilet and electricity facilities. But she does not have individual household tap connection. Her family does not have any land for agriculture. Her husband is also an agriculture labourer. She does not belong to any political party.

Village Society

Thimmarasanaickanur Village Panchayat consists of three hamlets, namely, Pillaimugampatti, Bomminaickanpatti and Mallaiyapuram. This village is 12 kilometers from Andipatti. The number of households in the Panchayat is 4,000. Agriculture is the primary occupation of the people in this Panchayat. According to the 2001 census, the total population of the Panchayat is 15,920, which includes 8,133 males and 7,787 females. The total population of Scheduled Castes is 3,610, which includes 1,788 males and 1,822 females. The total number of literates in the Panchayat is 9,682 and the illiterate population is 6,238. Most of the people are agriculture labourers and some of them are rearing milch animals and
goats. The total agricultural labourers in the Panchayat is 3,895, which includes 1,839 males and 2,056 females. Konar, Mooppar and Thevar are the dominant castes in the village. Other castes like Goundar, Maniyar, Servai, Chettiar, Vannar and Schedule Caste (Pallar) people also reside in the village. The Scheduled Caste (Pallar) are the minority people in the Panchayat.

Village Panchayat

The Village Panchayat consists of four Wards which were represented by nine Ward Members. Out of them six are males of whom four are from Backward Class and two from Scheduled Caste. The other three are females, among them two are from the Scheduled Caste and one is from the Backward Class. For water service delivery in the Panchayat area, there are ten overhead tanks (OHTs). Among this ten four have a capacity of 60,000 litres, another four have a capacity of 30,000 litres and the other two are have a capacity of 10,000 litres. Apart from these OHTs, there seven open wells, thirteen handpumps, nine mini motor sets. There are 140 public taps in the Panchayat. The Panchayat also gave 171 individual household tap connections. There are 86 street lights in the Panchayat. Among these street lights five are sodium vapor lights and others are tube lights.

Political Parties in the Village Panchayat

The AIADMK and the DMK are the dominant parties. The Puthiya Tamizhagam, the Viduthalaia Siruthaigal, the Congress Party are the other political parties functioning in Thimmarasanaickanur Village Panchayat. Selvi does not belong to any of the political parties. But
during the time of the Gram Sabha meetings, the Union Chairman and District Panchayat Chairman attend the meetings. If she approaches them for getting any development schemes/programmes for her Village Panchayat, they are not properly responding to her.

**Recruitment Process of the President**

Selvi contested in the Panchayat election when the position of Village Panchayat President was reserved for SC women. She could not have contested in the election if there was no reservation for SC women. She is the first person in her family to contest in the Panchayat election in 2001. Her village community as a whole supported and encouraged her to contest in the election. Especially the other caste people encouraged her much. The major factor for her victory in the election is the encouragement and support given by the Traditional Panchayat. Though she was recommended and supported by the Traditional Panchayat, there were six candidates against her. She won the election with a difference of 1200 votes. She adopted a method of door to door canvassing in the election. The electioneering was led by the Traditional Panchayat. They spent more than Rs.20,000 for the election canvassing and other expenses like preparing bit-notices, wall posters and loud speaker propaganda.

**Empowerment Process**

Ms. P. Selvi, belongs to Thimmarasanaickanur hamlet. She regularly goes to the office with her husband. Her husband is always with her and looks after the works of the Panchayat. She is not allowed to conduct the Panchayat meetings. All the Panchayat meetings are conducted by
the traditional leaders of that the Panchayat. They are not allowing her to even sit in the chair which is meant for the President. During the time of election, the Panchayat President’s post was reserved for Scheduled Caste women. At that time, the Traditional Panchayat urged her to contest in the election. They also expected that she would follow the direction given by the Traditional Panchayat. But after the election, she did not keep to that agreement. So, the Traditional Panchayat started creating problems for Selvi.

The Traditional Panchayat which consists of other caste elite people strictly warned not to wear chappals in front of them. They strictly warned the President that not to come to the Panchayat office. They did not allow her to affix her signature in the files. The Traditional Panchayat threatened her and told her to hand over the cheque book and pass book to the Panchayat Clerk. The works were carried out by the Traditional Panchayat and they affixed the signature of Selvi and collected cheques. This was continued till the end of her tenure as Panchayat President. Still she fought with the Traditional Panchayat and attended to the works for the Panchayat regularly but there was no cooperation from the Ward Members and the Clerk. The struggles faced by Selvi as a Panchayat President are countless. Though she was supported by the non governmental organisations and Dalit organisations she was not allowed to acquire the symbolic features of power. In the empowerment framework she is in the first stage as framed by Baviskar.
Gram Sabha Meetings

Selvi organises the Gram Sabha meetings as per the directions given by the government. Some of the Ward Members are not extending their cooperation while organising Gram Sabha meeting. She mobilizes the people for Gram Sabha meetings through circulation of bit notices and wall posters. Around 90 members attend the Gram Sabha meetings. The major issues discussed in the Gram Sabha meeting are provision of street lights, cement concrete roads and public latrines.

Implementation of Development Schemes

Even though Selvi was threatened by the Traditional Panchayat and acted upon their directions, she has implemented certain developmental schemes in the Panchayat. Her husband, an uneducated man, was very much helpful to her in discharging the functions and responsibilities. While selecting the beneficiaries for various schemes she has followed the directions and guidelines given by the scheme. During her tenure she has constructed a community hall building with the assistance given by MPLAD (Member of Parliament Local Area Development Fund). Under the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) scheme, 20 houses were constructed. Under the PMGY scheme 14 houses were also constructed. She has provided cement concrete road, women sanitary complex. She installed an overhead tank (OHT) with a capacity of 90,000 litres in the Panchayat. With the installation of the tank she has provided water supply to the Adi-Dravidar colony. The Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) named, Arokyagam and Rudex are functioning in the Panchayat. Arokyagam laid the cement concrete road in the SC colony for about 50 meters. Rudex was engaged in the
construction of individual household latrines in all hamlets of the Panchayat area.

Social Justice

The Goundars and the Naidus are the dominant castes in this village and except these two castes, all other castes are having a common graveyard. But the Goundars and Naidus are having their own separate graveyards. The other castes like Konar, Nayakkar, Thevar, Maniyar, Servai, Chettiar and Vannar are also living in the Panchayat. All these castes are having a common graveyard. The SC people are having their graveyard in a separate place. All the Schedule Caste people are not allowed to wear chapels in the presence of other caste people. The dominant caste people control the Scheduled Caste people. In the case of Selvi also they didn’t allow her to sit in the chair of the Panchayat President. She approached the NGOs and Dalit organisations. But she could not to eradicate the untouchability practice.

Presidents’ Perception on Panchayati Raj

Before contesting in the Panchayat elections in the year 2001, Ms. Selvi did not know anything about the Panchayat and its administration. But after assuming power, initially for two years, she was directed by the community leaders. After two years she learnt the details of account maintenance procedure, tender procedure, meeting procedure and the role of the President in the Panchayat administration by attending the training programmes organised by various institutions.
**Social Development Activities**

Panchayats can bring about development through the proper maintenance of infrastructure facilities and provide basic amenities to the people. Ms. Selvi visits the primary schools twice a month. She attends the Parent Teachers Association (PTA) meetings. She convinced the parents of the 15 dropout children and enrolled them in the schools. Through the Panchayat, she has provided toilet facility, water facility, compound wall to the schools and the balwadis in the Panchayat area. In her Panchayat, women are treated on par with men. They are discriminated on the unequal wages. For agriculture work, men are paid Rs.80/- per day as wages and women are paid Rs.25 as wage. But the working hours are same for both of them. The work hours starts from morning 7 ‘o’clock to afternoon 2 ‘o’ clock. According to Selvi, women can be empowered only by giving education, giving opportunities to participate in public activities.

**Her Future Vision**

She plans to contest again as she is determined to do several tasks which include proper drainage system to all the streets, proper facilities at the burial ground. She is independent though she is living with her husband. She feels that she can give a clean administration that can be available at any time to serve the villagers. She is ready to face the problems created by the elites.

**Summary**

Even though she has studied only upto third standard, she shows interest to learn things and is ready to pick up any new knowledge
concerning the Panchayat. She has indomitable energy and enthusiasm to work for the people. She says that she derives pleasure from fulfilling the demands of the people. An understanding of the environment, adaptability to the community and sharing responsibility by means of extending care and support mostly on a moral basis will actually lead to positive results. Selvi was a benami of the elites of Thimmarasanaickanur Village Panchayat for the initial two years of her term and after that she started acquiring the symbolic features of powers. But the Traditional Panchayat didn’t accept her leadership. They threatened her. But with the support of local NGOs and Dalit institutions she tried to carry out the works of the Panchayat. But the Ward Members didn’t extend their support and cooperation to her. She does not belong to any political party. She has faced countless problems. She is in the first stage of the empowerment process known as opening up (or) coming out stage as given in the framework for analysis.

CASE -3

Lakshmipuram Village Panchayat, Periyakulam Union

Socio-Economic Background of the Panchayat President

Ms.P.Gnanamani, aged 50, is the Village Panchayat President of Lakshmipuram. She has studied up to postgraduate degree (M.A. Public Administration). She belongs to the Hindu religion and the Kammavar caste (Backward Class). She is a widow. She has one son. Her son completed his degree and is doing business. She is also doing agriculture in the village and lives in a pucca house with electric light
and toilet facilities with house tap connection. She owns vehicles like tractor, car and bike.

Gnanamani’s father was the Traditional Panchayat President for 15 years. He carried out many welfare activities in the village and helped the poor people. This helped her to win in the Panchayat election. This Panchayat was reserved for women. The villagers commonly decided the candidate and filed the nomination. Her family owns 35 acres of land. She is the President of the Elected Women Village Panchayat President’s Federation in Theni District. She is the Deputy Secretary of the AIADMK party in Theni District for the past 12 years. She has participated in the organisational works of the party, dhamas, struggles and actively worked for the party during election times.

Village Society

The village Lakshmipuram is located 7 kilometers from Theni District head quarters and 6 kms from Periyakulam Block. It lies between Periyakulam and Dindigul on the national highway. It is bounded by the Western Ghats on the West and the Kodaikanal Hills on the North of the village. It is bounded by natural background. Agriculture is the backbone of this village's economy. The total area of the village is 2033 hectares. As per the Jan 2006 statistics available in the Panchayat, the total population of the Panchayat is 7642, which includes 3789 males and 3853 females. Among 1070 families, about 950 families are living above the poverty line and 120 families are living below the poverty line. The caste groups like Kammavar, Naidus, Gavara Naidus, Asaris, Reddiyars, Dhobis, Muslims and Christians are living in the
village. Among these groups the Naidus are the dominant caste group in the Panchayat.

**Village Panchayat**

V.P. Lakshmipuram Village Panchayat has three Wards and three hamlets, namely, Lakshmipuram, Chettivadanpatti, and V.V.G. Nagar. There are nine Ward Members, consisting of six males and three females. Among these seven Ward Members are being elected from the Kammavar community and one Member from the Reddiyar community. Only one Ward Member (male) is elected from the Scheduled Caste. There are more than 12 temples in the Panchayat including a church and a common Kali Amman temple. Sugarcane, cotton, pulses and cereals, mango and coconut are being cultivated in the Panchayat area. The Panchayat has provided comprehensive services of sewage, drainage, street scavenging, street lights and sodium vapour lights, protected drinking water, cement concrete pavements and roads, roads for developing areas, sanitation in the newly constructed houses and existing old houses and rainwater harvesting structures in all houses. There are five Overhead Tanks (OHTs), eight power pumps (borewell fitted with electric motors and sintex tanks), 4 hand pumps, 125 public taps, 532 individual household connections, three wells, one storage sump, two reservoirs, two ponds, nine check dams which are meant for agricultural purposes in four locations. There are 18 factories which give employment to 650 people. The nature of the industries present there are milk societies, brick kiln, cotton ginning factories, textile mill (small unit), cone factory, colour mill, herbal factory.
Political Parties in the Village Panchayat

The AIADMK, the DMK, the Congress and the BJP are the major parties in the village. The majority belong to the AIADMK party. The Periyakulam constituency is always in the hands of the AIADMK. The party provides full support and channelises funds for several activities of the Panchayat. She earned a name among the AIADMK party members and she is a deputy secretary of Theni District AIADMK party.

Recruitment Process of the President

Ms.Gnanamani has been the Panchayat President since 2001. The Traditional Panchayat which consists of all community members commonly filed nomination for her in the election. The village community prompted her to contest in the election. They are responsible for her victory in the election. Apart from the community support, the political party also contributed to her victory in the election. The political party members led the election canvassing and spent money for the election campaign. She also got sponsorships from party people and from her relatives. There were two candidates in the election against her. She got 3250 votes and she won the election with a difference of 379 votes. There was some rivalry during the election which was not continued after the election.

Empowerment Process

The Panchayat office is very near to the house of the President. She used to go to the office daily and work in the office from morning 10'o clock to evening 5 to 6 o’ clock. She is available in the Panchayat office to attend to the needs of the people. She regularly conducts the
Panchayat meetings with the presence of all the Ward Members. She is not accompanied by her son during the Panchayat meetings. All the Ward Members extend their co-operation to organise the Panchayat as well as Gram Sabha meetings. The President presides over the Panchayat as well as Gram Sabha meetings. She got a prize at the district level for organising special Gram Sabha meetings. Through circulation of bit notices and drum beating they mobilize the people for the Gram Sabha meetings. Gnanamani, the President, receives the officials from Panchayat Union and District level who visit the Panchayat for official purposes. The officials also give respect while visiting on par with men Panchayat Presidents. She has learnt many things since her installation in office. They are planning and its different aspects, leadership, public relations and understanding the mindset of the people.

In the opening up (or) the coming out phase of the empowerment framework Ms. Gnanamani was supported by the village community as a whole which includes all sections of the people. The village community allowed her to acquire the symbolic features of power and accepted her leadership. Her position in the political party supported her in acquiring these leadership qualities. Affiliation with the political party helps in getting the government schemes and programmes. Apart from this she has participated in the various training programmes organised by State Institute of Rural Development (State Institute of Rural Development), GRU (Gandhigram Rural University) and the district administration. She has gone for exposure visits to model Village Panchayats in the states like Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh
and West Bengal. The exposure visits and the training programmes motivated her to make her Village Panchayat a model Village Panchayat in Theni District. The exposure visits were arranged by the training institutions and the district administration for other Village Panchayat Presidents from other districts and other states. She got the First Prize for Best Village Panchayat at the district level and the Second Prize for the Best Village Panchayat at the state level. Thus she is in the fifth stage of empowerment framework, i.e., work for the village as a whole.

**Implementation of Government Programmes**

She gave first priority to the sanitation programmes. She feels sanitation is a way of life. It is the quality of living that is expressed in clean house, clean neighbourhood, clean environment, clean farm and clean community. In order to implement the sanitation programmes, she has convened several special Gram Sabha meetings and other meetings. She has conducted Gram Sabha meetings as per government direction to discuss a wide range of matters including implementing total sanitation, establishment of composite yard, installation of waste baskets, waste bins, garbage carts, maintenance of the integrated sanitary complex for women and children.

The President of Lakshmipuram Panchayat has taken steps to bring all school dropouts back to school and ensure education. Tree saplings were planted on the road sides of the village. At present all the children are going to the schools. There are two nursery schools, one government higher secondary school, one government elementary school, one elementary school run by a Christian mission. There are 2400 students getting education through these schools.
In response to the instructions and directions of the state government, the Panchayat President organised Panchayat Council Meetings and the Gram Sabha meetings to implement the scheme to save rainwater in all the houses and government buildings. The members took a collective responsibility in implementing the scheme. As a result of it rain water harvesting structures are created in all the houses of the village with a view to increasing ground water level.

Drinking water to the people has been provided throughout the year without any failure. Even in summer people did not have difficulty in getting drinking water. Periodically chlorination has been done in all OHTs and protected drinking water is supplied to the public. For the better convenience of the public, the President has provided them house tap connections with the help of the Tamil Nadu Water and Drainage Board (TWAD) officials. The following are the details of the activities carried out in the Panchayat. They are 27 streets were furnished with proper concreted cement pavement roads, and 137 street water taps and hand pumps have been installed. As per the government directions, 1670 houses and 23 government buildings are provided with Rain Water Harvesting (RWH) structures. In two locations threshing floors are created for the farmers.

For sanitation, installation of waste disposal baskets, boxes, dustbins, garbage bins/can, trash can containers, dust cart and garbage truck for collection and disposal of the wastes were also purchased. 17 public toilets, 7 school toilets and two Anganwadi toilets were constructed. One integrated women sanitary complex was also constructed. The Panchayat took several serious efforts to generate
awareness among the people about the use of toilets and urged them to construct toilets in their houses. As a result, out of 1070 houses, 1058 houses have constructed the toilets. Apart from this all the government programmes were regularly implemented by the Panchayat administration. In the Gram Sabha meetings, beneficiaries of all government schemes were selected with the consensus of the members of the Gram Sabha.

Disposal of waste is now largely the domain of sanitation and public health engineers. Since the improper disposal of wasted constitutes a health hazard, proper steps should be taken to avoid environmental pollution. The Lakshmipuram Panchayat administration convened many meetings to discuss the issue of refuse disposal. The issue of disposing of the wastes was discussed in the Gram Sabha meeting. As a result, some methods were adopted for collection and disposal of wastes. Waste baskets, dustbins, boxes and garbage trucks and dust carts are put at every corner of the street for the collection of wastes. The villagers were instructed to classify the wastes as biodegradable and non-biodegradable and dump them in respective boxes. The biodegradable wastes are converted into manure by creating compost yards. Further trenches and manure pits are dug for dumping the wastes. These wastes are removed and disposed of through the tractor and the tricycles, dust cart and garbage cart owned by the Panchayat. The sanitary conditions are properly maintained and cleanliness is maintained in all the places of the village. The village stands as a model to other villages.
The bio-gas plant linked with the toilet through the application of the dung (droppings) of the cattle has been implemented in a few houses and through the bio-gas unit, the lights are also functioning. These bio-gas units are working effectively. The wastage from the outlet of the plant was utilized for the production of bio-fertilizer.

The biomass gasifier is a 100% wood agricultural waste biomass gasifier and it saves electricity charges upto 65% of the total consumption. The bio-mass requires ten tonnes of agricultural wastes per month. The President of the Panchayat is confident that the unit can be viable with the use of power generated from the gasifier to run the pumping motor for drinking purpose.

President’s Perception on Panchayati Raj

Gnanamani had some understanding of the Panchayati Raj System because her father was the President of the Panchayat in the previous era. This Panchayat was reserved for women. The village committee decided to make her contest in the Panchayat election. She won the election. But only after undergoing training at Gandhigram Rural Institute, she developed a proper perception about the Panchayati Raj System, Gram Sabha funds to the Panchayat and the role of the President, the Vice-President and Ward Members in administering the works of the Panchayat. She has attended many training programmes organised by institutions like the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Gandhigram Rural University (GRU) and by the district administration. She approached her party people, MLA and MP and got funds from them. The Village Panchayat mostly concentrated on
sanitation, health and hygiene. She has provided all basic facilities to the people and demonstrated her administration to be transparent.

**Sectoral Linkages**

She has established a good relationship with Panchayat Union officials and district officials. She has conducted free eye camps, veterinary camps, health camps. For the better convenience of the public, the President has provided them with house tap connections with the help of the Tamil Nadu Water Supply Board officials. With the help of the Public Works Department (PWD) she has taken steps to desilt three ponds in the village. Check dams were also constructed in four locations of the Panchayat with the help of the PWD. Apart from these, she has good rapport with the AIADMK party people at the district and the state level.

**Summary**

Gnanamani has depicted certain characteristics that can be considered some of the added values in the process of empowerment and performance of the elected women representatives. The reputation of the family name and the recognition for the past good work always get reflected in the future. In her case, her father's previous work and recognition and the respect that the family has in the village made her become a successful Panchayat President. Along with this political party support contributed and helped her in getting the funds and programmes very easily. The local MLA, MP and other elected representatives of the Panchayat Union and the District Panchayat helped her to reach the position of a successful leader. She has
participated in various training programmes organised by the State Institute of Rural Development (SIRD), Gandhigram Rural University (GRU) and the district administration. She has gone for exposure visits and interface programmes to states like Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. This motivates her to develop the Village Panchayat as a model Village Panchayat in Tamil Nadu. Now this village stands as a model to other villages. She is in the fifth stage of the empowerment framework, i.e., work for the village community as a whole.

CASE - 4

Ammapattl Village Panchayat, Bodi Panchayat Union

Socio Economic Background of the President

Ms. J.Kanimozhi, aged 39, is the President of Ammapatti Village Panchayat. She is married and has one daughter. Her daughter is also married. Kanimozhi has studied up to 8 standard. She belongs to the Hindu religion and to an Okkalikka Gounder family. Her family has no lands. Her husband is working as a head clerk in Theni District court. She lives in a pucca rented house with electricity, toilet and household tap connection facilities.

Village Society

Ammapatti Panchayat consists of four hamlets, namely, Ammapatti, Soundarajapuram, Visuvasapuram, Perumal Goundanpatti. The total number of households in the Panchayat is 2,854. The
population of the Panchayat, according to the 2001 census is 10,898, of which 5,435 are men and 5,463 are women. The total population of Scheduled Caste in the village is 1,467, which includes 748 males and 719 females. The total number of literates in the village is 6,303 of whom 3,705 are males and 2,598 are females. The total agricultural labourers in the Panchayat are 4,117, which includes 1,983 males and 2,131 females. There are four Wards with twelve Ward Members and of them eight are men and four are women. There are three community people living in the Panchayat. They are Thevars, Okkalikka Gounders, Scheduled Caste people. Among these caste groups Okkalikka Gounders are the majority. The proportion of SC population in the Panchayat is one third of the total population.

Political Parties **ill the Village Panchayat**

All the major parties, namely, DMK, AIADMK, Congress, BJP, PMK, MDMK etc., are having their units in the Panchayat area. Of them the AIADMK is the dominant group. There is no intense political activity and all activities are confined to the time of election. There is no rivalry among the political parties which are present in that Panchayat. Kanimozhi is the member of the AIADMK party for the past 5 years. She is an active member in the political party. She has contributed much to the field activities and to the election work in the Panchayat.

**Recruitment Process of the President**

Her husband is a clerk in the district court at Theni. Before the Panchayat election was announced, they were settled and stayed in a rented house at Theni. When the Panchayat was reserved for women
(General) the village community people asked her to contest in the election. Initially, she refused to contest in the election. The Traditional Panchayat which consists of all caste leaders collectively asked her to contest in the election. She finally agreed and contested in the election and won the election. One candidate contested against her. She won the election with a 1000-vote difference. Community support contributed much to her victory in the election. The canvassing techniques she adopted during the election campaign are circulating pamphlets, bit notices, pasting wall posters and door to door canvassing. She promised during election campaign: provision of safe drinking water and providing drainage facilities to all the streets in the village. The political party people led the election campaign. Her family spent money for the election. Her family spent Rs.23,000 for the election. She didn’t come across any problem during the election.

**Empowerment Process**

Kanimozhi belongs to the Ammapatti hamlet of the Panchayat. The Panchayat office is located in the Ammapatti hamlet. After her victory in the election, she shifted her house from Theni to Ammapatti because she feels it is very difficult to travel from Theni to Ammapatti regularly. After shifting the house, her husband goes to the office from the village. She daily goes to the Panchayat office. It will take five minutes’ walk to reach the Panchayat office from her home. Her husband didn’t interfere in the functions and powers of the President. She conducts the Panchayat and Gram Sabha meetings regularly. All the Ward Members are not extending their co-operation to organise the Panchayat as well as Gram Sabha meetings. While conducting
Panchayat meetings she presides over the meetings. She has a separate chair and table in the Panchayat office. She mobilizes the people for Gram Sabha meetings through circulation of bit notices, drum beating and informing through Ward Members.

She met with and talked to people daily. They usually demand infrastructural facilities like street lights, drainage and personal loans. Through an NGO called “VIDIYAL”, she arranged milch animal loan for the poor people. While implementing the works in the Panchayat, she came across problems like political pressure for the selection of beneficiaries for various schemes. From the government side she came across redtapism, i.e. delay in delivering service. Her husband helps her in administering the works of the Panchayat during the holidays. The works of the Panchayat were given on contract to her brother. While taking decisions regarding Panchayat administration she consulted the family members, relatives and the Traditional Panchayat. Under the support of the Traditional Panchayat she runs the Panchayat administration. She decides the beneficiaries for the government schemes through discussion in the Panchayat Council. She has concentrated on all her activities for all the people in the village. The Panchayat Assistant belongs to her caste. She appointed him. Seven Ward Members are from her own caste. She has formed seven standing committees in the Panchayat. The composition of the committees is decided by the Panchayat Council. Through the approach of consensus she satisfies the various segments of the people while selecting beneficiaries for government schemes. Her leadership is accepted by the village community. She is in the fifth stage of the empowerment
framework which is known as work for the village community as a whole.

**Gram Sabha Meetings**

Usually the Gram Sabha meetings are organised at the temple premises. Around 60 to 70 members, mostly women, attend and participate in the proceedings of Gram Sabha meetings. From Scheduled Caste thirty percent of them participate in the Gram Sabha meetings. They raise demands like drinking water, sanitation and loans. Most of the participants have a lot of expectations. They demand works which are very expensive. Since there are four hamlets the demands for basic facilities are large in number. To some extent the Panchayat administration has fulfilled the demands and needs of the people.

**President’s Perception on Panchayati Raj**

She did not know anything about Panchayati Raj before entering the Panchayat administration. She was under the impression that a number of officials would come and help her in running the Panchayat administration amicably. After becoming the Panchayat President she came to know that there are no permanent officials in the Panchayat for assistance. She has attended the training organised by the Gandhigram Rural University and by the district administration. Through these training programmes she has learnt the details like Panchayat meeting procedures, the role of the President in the Panchayat administration, powers and function of the Panchayat President, tender procedures, accounts maintenance procedure and relevant systems in Panchayat administration. The clerk is an experienced person. He properly
explained the details of Panchayat administration and she gradually learnt about the Panchayat administration.

**Social Development Activities**

Ms. Kanimozhi visits the schools in the Panchayat area once in a month. She has made contributions for the enrollment of dropouts in the Panchayat by creating awareness among the public, convincing the parents of dropout students and motivating the parents and children. She attends the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. She has provided facilities like pipeline, latrines to the schools in the Panchayat area. She also provided chairs to the balwadi and installed a water tank (sintex) in the balwadi.

She has taken a series of steps to improve the health and sanitation of the village through organising health camps with the help of an NGO which is known as ‘vidiyal’. She also organised many cultural programmes to generate awareness among the people about health and hygiene. She has organised eye camps and veterinary camps in collaboration with C.P.A. College as a part of their NSS programme. She has organised many agricultural camps for farmers. The youth groups are also extending their support to the Panchayat activities. They render help to the Panchayat during celebration times. The President has provided playing materials like volley ball, cricket bat and ball to the youth group. During the festival times, the President gives donation to the youth groups.
President’s Perception on Gender

Women after orientation in Self Help Groups come to understand the outside world. But still they do not give their time and mind to learn about themselves. Only one Ward Member is actively participates in the Panchayat meetings. The other women Ward Members just visit the office and affix their signature. In her village women are treated on par with men. But on many occasions they are sidelined. Most of the activities are managed by men in public meetings, celebrations and other common gatherings. But due to orientation in Self Help Groups (SHGs), she has a grip over women’s concerns with regard to Public Distribution System (PDS), drinking water supply and girl children’s education. She spoke with the women regarding their own problems. By giving vocational training and education, the women can be empowered economically, she opined. Women can be empowered politically through freedom of expression and by allowing them to participate in public activities, she added.

Linkages with Sectoral Departments

Kanimozhi is very much approachable to all the sectoral department officials and freely moves with them and discusses the problems in administering the schemes and programmes. She seeks their guidance and help. She has built a good rapport with the Panchayat Union officials and district level officials. Membership in AIADMK party helps her in getting funds from the MLAs and MPs. She has organised camps like animal husbandry camp, eye camp. Camps for the welfare of women and children are organised with the support extended by the concerned departments. The concerned department
approaches the Panchayat. But there is no permission to meet the expenses from the Panchayat. A public grievance day is organised in the Panchayat.

Summary

Kanimozhi gained the support of the people which is the root cause of her contesting in the election. By providing infrastructure facilities like providing black topped roads, extension of street lights, improvement in water supply, houses to the poor people, employment opportunities to women she gained a good name among the people. She is easily approachable and anything can be tackled, the villagers felt. She maintained communal harmony among the various castes. The NGO, VIDIYAL, also helped her in implementing the programmes of the state and central governments. Willingness to learn and practice and support base from different sections of the society have facilitated her empowerment in Panchayat administration. The training programmes also helped her in understanding the duties of a President. Kanimozhi’s membership in the political party also helped her in getting various funds from the government. Her party MLAs’ and MPs’ funds were also channelised to the Panchayat. Her performance was accepted and appreciated by all the sections of the people. She is in the fifth stage of working for the village community as a whole.
Socio Economic Background of the President

Ms. G. Jeevarathnam, aged 40, is the Village Panchayat President of Veppampatty. She has studied up to 5th standard. She belongs to the Hindu religion and Okkalikka Gounder (backward) community. She is married and has one son and a daughter. They are doing their graduation. Her family is a joint family which consists of nine members. Her family has five acres of land fully irrigated by well water. Her husband is doing agriculture. She lives in a tiled rented house with electricity facility. She does not have toilet facility but she has household tap connection. She is a member of a Self Help Group for the past four years. She attends the meeting of that SHG regularly. From the year 1980 onwards, she has been the village level member of the political party known as AIADMK. She is an active member who participates in the field work and works during the election.

Village Society

The village Veppampatty is located thirteen kilometers from Chinnamanur Panchayat Union. It is bounded by nature. Agriculture is the primary occupation of the people in this village. The total households in the village are 504. As per the 2001 census, the total population of the Panchayat is 1,983, which includes 946 males and 1,037 females. There are three communities living in this Panchayat.
They are Okkalikka Gounders, Asaris and Scheduled Caste (Sakkiliars).
The total population of Schedule Caste in the Panchayat is 173, which includes 88 males and 85 females. The total number of literates in the Panchayat is 1,011, which includes 586 males and 425 females. Total number of agricultural labourers in the Panchayat is 917, of which 387 are male labourers and 530 are female agricultural labourers. The Okkalikka Gounder youth organisation is working with the Village Panchayat during the time of carrying out drainage construction, road and pipeline laying and removal of encroachments. Whenever the Village Panchayat seeks their help they extend their support and cooperation. The Village Panchayat President is encouraged and assisted by an NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) named MMS (Mahalir Munnetra Sangam) located at Chinnamanur. This village has a post office, office of the Village Administrative Officer (VAO), Self Help Group building and a part time library which is run by the Tamil Nadu Forest Department.

Village Panchayat

Veppampatty Village Panchayat has two Wards and six Ward Members. Among the six Ward Members, there are three males and the other three are females. All the members are from one community known as Okkalikka Gounders. Since the size of the Village Panchayat is small, it does not have any hamlets. There are four common temples in the Panchayat. There are fifty seven street lights including 6 sodium vapour lights in the Panchayat. There are five Overhead Tanks (OHT’s) are available in the Panchayat to store the water. Out of the five OHTs, two of are having 60,000 litres capacity and another two have the
capacity of 10,000 litre and one has the capacity of 30,000 litres of water. For the supply of water, there are 75 public taps, 105 individual household tap connection, 5 hand pumps, 3 bore wells. One open well is created and maintained by the Panchayat.

**Political Parties in the Village Panchayat**

The AIADMK, DMK, TMC, MDMK, BJP and Congress I parties are present in this Village Panchayat. Among these parties the AIADMK is dominant followed by the DMK. The AIADMK helped the Panchayat by giving more funds to the Panchayat. She got MLA and MP funds for this Village Panchayat. The political party members engage in party work only at the time of election campaigns.

**Recruitment Process of the President**

Ms. Jeevarathnam was compelled by the Traditional Panchayat which consists of elders from all castes. Her husband was involved in political activities (AIADMK) and did some social service to the public such as helping in getting group houses, ration cards, government schemes and loans. He is well known to the people since 1980. When this Panchayat was reserved for women, the villagers held a meeting along with the political party (AIADMK). This meeting ended with the selection of Ms. Jeevarathnam as a candidate to contest in the election. If there was no reservation for women in the Panchayat, her husband would have contested in the election. She was the first women in her family to contest in the Panchayat election. The village community as a whole prompted her to contest in the election. The village community and the political party are the supportive institutions for her contest and
her victory in the Panchayat election. The political party spent money for printing notices and wall papers. The political party support was the major factor which contributed much to her victory in the Panchayat election.

Three candidates contested against her in the Panchayat election. She won the election with a difference of 165 votes. During the election campaign she went to each and every household along with her own caste people. She circulated pamphlets and bit notices during the election campaign. While canvassing votes, she gave a promise that she would provide adequate infrastructural facilities to the people. Her own caste people and the political party led the election campaign. She spent Rs.2 lakhs during the election time. She didn’t face any problem during the election.

**Empowerment Process**

When she entered the Panchayat she did not know the roles and responsibilities of the Village Panchayat President. The Panchayat office is very near to her house. The goes to the office once in a week. She didn’t face any problems in going to the Panchayat office. But she faced problems in going to the Panchayat Union and the district office. During that time she was dropped by her spouse or other family members. She has a separate chair and table for her in the Panchayat. She used to sit in that chair. Her husband assists her in discharging the functions of the Panchayat. She conducts the Panchayat monthly meetings regularly. The Panchayat meetings are presided over by her husband or the Vice-President. In the absence of her husband and the Vice-President, a male Ward Member presides over the Panchayat meetings. She conducts the
Gram Sabha meetings regularly as per the government instructions and directions. All the Ward Members are extending their cooperation in organising the Gram Sabha meeting. The Panchayat President mobilizes the people for Gram Sabha meetings through the following techniques: circulation of bit notices, informing the people through drum beating, giving advertisement in daily newspapers, pasting wall posters, giving advertisement through loud-speaker, informing the people through SHG members and through Ward Members. If a government official visits her house, she along with her husband receives that official. At that time of her visit to the government for any meeting, the government officials gave respect on par with male Village Panchayat Presidents. She regularly met the people in the village and spoke with them. While speaking with them, they usually raise the some demands. They are demands related to infrastructural facilities. They are about drinking water, sanitation and drainage. The Scheduled Caste people demanded a separate graveyard for them. She has given a promise of fulfilling that demand. In some extension area, people demanded drainage facilities. Her husband is very helpful and gave her more freedom to carry out and decide upon things. Earlier, before contesting in the Panchayat, her family did not allow her to go outside of the house. But now, as a Panchayat President, she moves to many places and meets many people.

While implementing the works of the Panchayat, she faces many problems. The most important problem is the lack of people’s participation. Her husband was involved in implementing the works. The contract works were taken and carried out by her husband. With his
support she runs the Panchayat administration. While taking decisions related to Panchayat functions, she regularly consults her husband. Her Panchayat Assistant belongs to her caste. For deciding upon the beneficiaries of various government welfare schemes, they have established a task force committee which consists of Ward Members and some key persons in the Panchayat. They collectively sit and decides upon the beneficiaries. Her own caste people demand some things from the Panchayat. They regularly demand drinking water, drainage and street lights. She didn’t consult the community leaders for taking the decisions related to the Village Panchayat. She didn’t constitute the standing committee in the Panchayat. She even did not know the importance of the committees. She caters to the needs and welfare of her own group, caste and political party. She is in the fourth stage of empowerment in the framework for analysis.

**Gram Sabha Meetings**

The Ward Members participate in the Gram Sabha meeting. The Gram Sabha meeting is arranged through the Panchayat clerk and the Panchayat workers. The people are informed through loud speakers. The President personally invites the community leaders, Self Help Group (SHG) leaders, village VIPs, departmental officials. Nearly 200 to 250 members attend the Gram Sabha meeting and participate in its deliberations. The President feels that there are lot of resolutions passed in the Gram Sabha meeting, but only some resolutions are executed while more than 3/4 of the resolutions are not executed. In the next Gram Sabha meeting people ask the reasons for not executing the works or resolutions which were taken or resolved upon in the previous Gram
Sabha meeting. While selecting the beneficiaries for various government programmes, the members of the Gram Sabha show their feelings and suggest the beneficiaries. She finalizes the list of beneficiaries only after having consultation with her own caste elite people.

**President’s Perception on Panchayati Raj**

When she assumed charge as Panchayat President, she did not know the powers and functions of the Panchayat. She did not know about the maintenance of various records and accounts etc. She got three days’ training in the Gandhigram Rural University and understood the roles to be played by her in exercising the powers and functions in the Panchayat. She knows about the reservation of seats for women and Dalits, the importance of the Gram Sabha, the procedures to be followed in conducting the monthly meetings, procedures to be followed in conducting the Gram Sabha meetings. During the Gram Sabha meeting she got experience about how the people participate and raise questions and how she should answer the public. Earlier she did not know anything about the Panchayati Raj System but now she knows that the Panchayat has the money for basic needs and activities. “The New Panchayati Raj System is very much useful to improve or to provide the basic infrastructural facilities of the people at the grassroots level”, she opined.

**Social Development Activities**

Jeevrathnam visits the schools in the Panchayat area once in a month. There is a government primary school and a private primary school. She has created awareness along with the primary school
teachers for enrolling the dropout children in the Panchayat area. She personally convinced and encouraged the students to go to school and study at least up to the level of higher secondary. Especially she encourages the girl children to study at least up to tenth standard. Then only they will realize the world at least, she shares. There is a balwadi in her Panchayat area. By her own effort she has provided small chairs, plates, tumblers, mats and some playing materials for the children. She has provided drinking water facility to the primary school and the balwadi. She did not establish a rapport with youths in that Panchayat area. She did not have any plans and proposals for income generation activities of unemployed rural youth in the Village Panchayat. The youths are not supportive to the functions of the Village Panchayat. She has concentrated on the welfare of women and children through giving proper guidelines about food and medicines.

Sectoral Linkages

Jeevarathnam moves with the sectoral departments very closely. She has established a rapport with the Panchayat Union Councillors, Chairman and the District Panchayat President and District Councillors. She has taken steps to improve the health and sanitation conditions of the people through organising health camps, eye camps. She has built a community hall and a storage godown with the help of funds from the Panchayat Union. There are five ooranis (water storage tanks) in the Panchayat. All these ooranis are desilted and maintained by the Panchayat with the help of Public Works Department (PWD). The PWD also helped the Panchayat in building check dams for storing water for agricultural purposes. She has organised many veterinary camps with the help of the Animal Husbandry Department. Two mini motors with
electricity connection and a sintex tank have been established with the help of the TWAD Board.

**Summary**

Since the Panchayat President belongs to a major group, she got elected in the Panchayat election because of her husband. He is well known to the people. With her own community support and the political party she won the election. Her husband is supportive in executing the Panchayat activities and implementing the programmes of the Panchayat. She is interested in providing cement roads and colony houses for the villagers and a burial ground for the Scheduled Caste people. Her membership in the political party helped her in many ways. For instance, if she goes for approaching MLA and MP fund for her Panchayat, she does not get delayed in getting the funds. Jeevarathnam is actually a benami of her husband. She runs the Panchayat administration under the guidance of her husband. She caters to the needs and welfare of her own group, caste and political party. She is in the fourth stage of empowerment in the framework for analysis.

**CASE - 6**

*Kamatchipram Village Panchayat,*  
*Chinnamanur Panchayat Union*

**Socio Economic Background of the President**

Ms. R. Aathikannu, aged 37, is the President of Kamatchipuram Village Panchayat. She belongs to Scheduled Caste community (Pallar) and the Hindu religion. She has studied up to 8th standard. She is married
and has two children. Her husband is doing agricultural work (coolie). Her children are studying in schools. Her family does not have lands. Her family occupation is agriculture coolie. She has a tiled electrified house but without toilet facility and individual household tap connection. She does not belong to any political party. But she has affiliation with two Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), namely, Mahalir Munnetra Sangam (MMS) and GREEN. For the past three years, she attends the meetings of the NGOs.

Village Society

Kamatchipuram Village Panchayat consists of four hamlets, namely, S. Marugapuri, Kamatchipuram, Erakottaipatti and S.Azagapuri. According to the 2001 population census, the total population of the Panchayat is 3653- Among this 1940 are males and 1713 are females. The total number of Scheduled Caste population is 300 which includes 164 males and 136 females. The total literate population in the Panchayat is 2655, of which 1564 are males and 1094 are females. The total illiterate population in the village is 998 of which 376 are males and 622 are females. The President belongs to the S.Marugapuri hamlet of the Kamatchipuram Village Panchayat. This village is 28 kilometers from Theni and 12 kilometers from Chinnamanur Panchayat Union. Most of the people in this Panchayat are dependent on agriculture. Some of them are rearing milch animals. Okkalikka Gounder, Naiker and Kallar are the dominant castes in this village. The Scheduled Caste (Pallar) also reside in the village. 25 to 30 men and women go over to Theni for employment in building construction work as masons helpers and painters.
Village Panchayat

This Village Panchayat consists of five Wards represented by nine Ward Members. Out of them, six are males and three are females. Three are from Scheduled Caste and six are from Backward Class. There are four overhead tanks, seventy eight public taps, three hand pumps available for water supply. There are ten mini motors with sintex tanks also available for delivery of water to the public. There are 98 street lights in the Panchayat. Among these street lights four are sodium vapour lights and the others are tube lights.

Political Parties in the Village Panchayat

Many people in the Village Panchayat are the followers of AIADMK and the DMK parties. The other parties like MDMK, TMC, Puthiya Tamizhagam, CPI, CPM and Congress I also have some followers. The party people play a vital role during the election time to support their party to win in the election. During the election time the parties are very vibrant and active. After the election there is no serious political activity.

Recruitment Process of the President

The Tamil Nadu Government announced the Panchayat elections. This Panchayat was reserved for SC women. She contested against Seeniammal, aged 65, who was the President of Kamatchipuram till August 2003- Earlier Aathikannu was defeated by Seeniammal. In the month of December 2003, due to the demise of Seeniammal, bye-election was announced in Kamatchipuram for the Village Panchayat President. The village community approached Aathikannu and asked her
to contest in the election. Since there was no opposing candidate for Aathikannu in the election, she was selected by the community for the remaining period. In the selection of the candidate for the election, her community people played a pivotal role. Her husband’s support was the major factor for her selection as President in the Panchayat election.

**Empowerment Process**

The Panchayat office is located in the Kamatchipuram hamlet of the Village Panchayat. The distance from her home to the Panchayat is less than two kilometers. She regularly (daily) goes to the office on foot. She has a separate chair and a table for her in the Panchayat office. She sits in the chair which is meant for the Panchayat President. If the other caste people visits the Panchayat office, she stands up and gives respect to them. Her husband does not interfere in the Panchayat activities. He does not go the Panchayat office. She conducts the Panchayat monthly meetings with the cooperation extended by the Ward Members. They are very helpful and cooperative while organising Gram Sabha meetings.

The President mobilizes the people for the Gram Sabha meeting through circulating bit notices among the people, through drum beating and advertisement through loud speakers. She goes to the office of the District Collector and Panchayat Union and other sectoral departments without the assistance of other family members or her husband. Suppose a government officer visits her Panchayat office, she receives that officer in the presence of other Ward Members. She speaks with the village people once a week. While speaking with the village people, they demand mainly drinking water and drainage facilities. After entering to the Panchayat administration she personally learned many things. Before
entering the Panchayat administration she was not allowed to go out of her village. But now she can move independently. She also gained courage and self confidence to face any situation in life.

The major issue she has encountered while implementing the Panchayat works is poor of people’s participation. During the implementation of Panchayat works, one of the Ward Members from her own caste helped her very much. She gave contract works to outsiders. She consults her husband regarding Panchayat administration. With the support of the Traditional Panchayat her caste she runs the Panchayat administration. While deciding upon the beneficiaries for various government programmes, the Traditional Panchayat gives directions and the list of beneficiaries to the Village Panchayat. The Traditional Panchayat members sit along with the Panchayat Council members and decide upon the beneficiaries. Based on the consultation with her caste leaders, she executes the activities and functions of the Panchayat. She has fulfilled all the demands raised by the caste leaders. They have demanded toilet facility to the high school, cement concrete road to their area. Based on the framework for analysis, she is in the stage of using power for the benefit of one’s own group, community or political party.

**Gram Sabha Meetings**

Ms.Aathikkannu organises the Gram Sabha meeting in front of the Panchayat office. She conducts the meetings regularly as per the direction given by the state government. All the Ward Members are attending the Gram Sabha meetings. She mobilizes the people for Gram Sabha meetings by informing them through drum beating (tom-tom), circulating bit notices and informing the Self Help Group (SHG)
members to mobilize the people for Gram Sabha meetings. Thirty five percent of the women participate in the Gram Sabha meetings. There are nine SHGs functioning in that Panchayat. They attend the meetings and demand adequate drinking water supply from the Panchayat. Twenty percent of the Dalits participate in the Gram Sabha meetings. They demand infrastructural facilities for their area. To some extent she has satisfied the needs of the village people.

**President’s Perception on Panchayati Raj**

She did not know anything about the Panchayati Raj System at the time of the election, even though she contested in the election in 2001. After entering the Panchayat administration in 2003, she was under compulsion to go to the Block Development Officer’s (BDOs) office and the District Collectorate. She slowly learnt the roles and responsibilities assigned to her. Now she knows about the Gram Sabha, the cheque power of the Village Panchayat President, the role of the Panchayat in providing the basic amenities to the people and the reservation for women and Scheduled Castes in the Panchayats. “Gram Sabha is an instrument to understand the feelings of the people”, she feels. The Gram Sabha plays an effective role in getting people’s support and cooperation for implementing the Panchayat works, according to her.

**Social Development Activities**

Each and every individual does not show much interest in involving themselves in the Panchayat activities. They are not ready to contribute to the common cause. They expect money and welfare programmes through the Panchayat. Most of the people belonging to
this area mainly depend on agriculture. In recent days agricultural production is very poor and farmers are affected. A large number of farmers are uneducated. There is no regular wage fixation for the agricultural labourers. Sometimes moderate wages are given to the farmers. Some of the people are rearing milk animals. For agricultural works, the males get rupees seventy five for their work in the field from morning 7 o’clock to evening 3 o’ clock. For the same time duration the female agricultural labourers are paid thirty five rupees for the same work. Sometime due to inadequate employment people do not go to work regularly. They sit in tea stalls and gossip.

Ms.Aathikkannu visits the schools in her Panchayat area once a month. For attending the PTA meetings she goes to the school. There are four primary and one high school, four balwadis and one balar school is in the Panchayat area. She has provided water facilities to all these institutions. By convincing the parents of the dropout children she has enrolled three children in schools. She speaks with the village youth and collects their demands. She has provided playing materials to the village youth. The village youth demanded a play ground from the Panchayat. She has allocated a site for them for sports and games. She informed the youth and told them to join the Vayalogam Scheme of an NGO known as DHAN Foundation.

**Linkages with Sectoral Departments**

Ms.Aathikkannu has successfully completed the Panchayat works with the help rendered by the sectoral departments at the state, district and the Union level. She has organised several camps for the well being of the people. By the support extended by the Health Department she
has organised many health camps for women and children, aged and handicapped people. She also arranged an eye camp with the help of Aravind Eye Hospital, Madurai. She has organised many camps for improving the health and sanitation of the people. There are four ooranis in the Panchayat area which are all properly desilted and maintained by the Panchayat with the help of Public Works Department. She has constructed a community hall with the MP fund. She has organised a veterinary camp with the help of the Animal Husbandry Department. The Tamil Nadu Water and Drainage Board (TWAD) has helped the Panchayat in establishing ten electrified mini motors with sintex tanks in different locations of the Panchayat.

Summary

Though she does not belong to any political party, she tries and struggles to get and carry out the government programmes and schemes. She gave first preference to her own caste leaders. Each and every activity of the President was directed and influenced by the caste leaders. She feels comfortable with the existing Panchayat administration. She has only three years of time in the Panchayat administration. That too she got an opportunity through the demise of Seeniammal. She could not mobilize all round support from people for the development activities in the village environment. She faced problems in getting the Union Councillor, MLA and MP funds for the Panchayat development activities. She was associated with NGOs and her own caste elite people. This helps her in running the Panchayat administration. As per the framework for analysis she is in the stage of using power for the benefit of one’s own group and community.
Socio Economic Background of the President

Ms. Ranganayaki is the President of Govindhanagaram Village Panchayat. She has studied up to SSLC and is aged 47. She belongs to the Hindu religion and the Backward Class (Vadugar community). She is married and has one son and a daughter. She lives in a tiled rented house with electricity facility. But the house does not have toilet facility and household tap connection. Her husband is doing business. Her son is employed in a software company. Her family’s annual income is Rs. 45,000/- She has association with SHGs. She is a DMK party member for the past 15 years. She has affiliation with non governmental organisations. They are known as LAW, MYTHIRI Society. She attends the meetings and programmes of these NGOs.

Village Society

Govindanagaram Village Panchayat is 13 kilometers from Theni. Earlier this Village Panchayat was known as ‘Pattalathupatti’. In the year 1855 an ex-military man known as Govindhappa Naickar created this village. Even today Govindappa Naickar’s family members give the name ‘Govindasamy’ to the first male child in memory of him. Earlier there were seven freedom fighters living in this Village Panchayat. Now two of them are living in this Panchayat. In the year 1952, Govindanagaram was declared as a separate Panchayat without any
hamlets. If we look at the village from its entrance, the streets are straight and the village is situated around a temple. The whole village looks like a lotus flower. Since the village is situated in the Vaigai river bed, the majority of the people are engaged in agriculture. The total number of households in the Panchayat is 1,552. The total area of the Village Panchayat is 10.29 hectares. As per the 2001 population census, the total population of the Panchayat is 5,662, which includes 2,735 males and 2,927 females. The caste groups like Naidus, Thevars and Asaris and Scheduled Caste people are living in this Village Panchayat. Among these caste groups the Naidus are the major caste group. The total population of Scheduled Caste is 1,402, which includes 706 males and 698 females. The total number of literates in the Panchayat is 3,888 and the total illiterate population is 1,774.

Literacy rate is high in this village. Many people studied catering management course and settled in foreign countries. The economy of the Village Panchayat depends on agriculture. At the same time foreign employment helps in the improvement of their standard of life.

**Village Panchayat**

There are four Wards and nine Ward Members in the Village Panchayat. Out of them 6 are males and 3 are females. Two are from Scheduled Caste and others are from Backward Class. Seven members belong to the Village Panchayat President’s caste. There are three noon meal centres, 14 hand pumps, 112 public taps, 5 overhead tanks (OHTs). 2 ground level water storage tanks have been created in the Village Panchayat. In addition to this, there are two ration shops, one primary health centre, one branch library, Indian Bank and a primary
agriculture co-operative bank functioning in this Panchayat. An Ayyan Thiruvalluvar library is available and the key is handed over to the youth group. They are keenly interested in maintaining the library. Almost all the daily newspapers come to the library. Women are engaged in small savings activities through Self Help Groups (SHGs). The NGOs known as LAW, MYTHIRI Society are functioning in this Panchayat and they are helping SHGs in terms of giving awareness and providing vocational training.

**Political Parties in the Village Panchayat**

The AIADMK is the dominant political party followed by the DMK in this Panchayat. During the election time some quarrels occur between these two parties with each party spending money. The AIADMK party members discuss the Village Panchayat President about some important schemes and programmes.

**Recruitment Process of the President**

Renganayaki’s family members prompted her to contest in the Panchayat election in the year 2001. She came to public life to render service to the people. The political party extended the support to her in the election campaign. The Self Help Group members were also helpful to her during the election campaign. According to the opinion of the Panchayat President, the support given by the village community as a whole was the major factor for her selection in the Panchayat election as an unopposed candidate. The Traditional Village Panchayat supported and selected Renganayaki because of her previous work in development activities. The election expenditure was Rs.25,000/- for bit notices and
refreshments. The Traditional Panchayat along with the village community as a whole was responsible for her victory in the Panchayat election.

**Empowerment Process**

In the opening out or coming out stage of the Baviskar framework, the village community as a whole along with the village elders supported her much in the election. Being an active member of the AIADMK party, she has rendered service to the people in the Panchayat. This helps her in getting the popular opinion of the public for their selection as an unopposed candidate. In the second stage, acquiring symbolic features of power or signs of empowerment stage, the family and the village community permitted her to acquire the symbolic features of powers. She has a separate seat in the Panchayat office and she used to sit in that chair in the presence of all Ward Members and village elders. All the Ward Members are extending their support and cooperation in organising Panchayat and Gram Sabha meetings. They mobilize the people for Gram Sabha meetings through circulating bit notices among the Gram Sabha members, through drum beating (tom-tom) and giving advertisement about Gram Sabha through announcement from loud speakers.

The Panchayat contract works were carried out by the other persons who do not have any connection to that Village Panchayat. She didn’t use her power for the benefit of her own welfare or of her family. The Panchayat Assistant does not belong to her caste. But her caste people demand facilities like threshing floor, water tank, pipelines and road facility. She fulfills the demands raised by them only after
consultation with the Panchayat Council members. She carry out the Panchayat works for the development of the village and the people. Her activities and approach are highly accepted by different sections of the society in the village. In the framework, she is in the stage known as “working for the village as a whole”.

**Gram Sabha Meetings**

As per the direction given by the state government the President organizes the Gram Sabha meetings without fail. Before fixing the agenda for the meetings, she consults the Traditional Panchayat leaders in the Panchayat. If they suggest anything to include in the agenda for the Gram Sabha meeting she includes their views, opinion and suggestions in the agenda. 25 per cent of women Gram Sabha members participate in the Gram Sabha meetings. During the deliberations of the Gram Sabha meeting, they raise the demands like regular and adequate drinking water supply and street lights.

**Implementation of Government Welfare Programmes**

Under SGRY, a centrally sponsored scheme, the President has taken steps to provide cement concrete roads to the Adi-Dravidar colony. For this work she has spent Rs.90,000/-. For the same work in Subbaiah Street she has spent Rs.80,000/- She has spent Rs.6,50,000/- for the provision of metal road to the Mangammal Street. She has spent Rs.2 lakhs for laying of metal road from Kasivishvanathar temple to Vaigai river bed. Under a centrally sponsored scheme known as Indira Awass Yojana (IAY), she has spent 3 lakh and forty thousand rupees for the construction of ten group houses. For the repair and maintenance of 20
(kutcha) tiled houses, she has spent Rs.3 lakhs. Under Namathu Gramam (our village) scheme she has allocated rupees one lakh for laying of cement concrete road and rupees twenty five thousand for the repair and the maintenance of the street lights. She got ten lakh rupees from the state government. The people contributed 25 percent of the amount. The following works were carried out by the President with the above mentioned fund. They are laying of block topped road, cement concrete road to the main street, cement concrete floor to bus stand and construction of a threshing floor.

Under the Tamil Nadu Rural Drinking Water Scheme she got Rs.13 lakhs in which the villagers have contributed ten percent of the amount. She has utilized this money for the repair and maintenance of the drinking water sources. She has demanded three hand pumps, one threshing floor from the government for the benefit of the villagers as a whole. She also asked for repairing of drinking water pipeline for about 1.5 kilometers, three bore wells, cement concrete road for about 3000 meters, retaining wall for 600 meters, 2 additional school buildings and four sanitary complexes for women and children. Regarding these facilities she has written a letter to the government.

**Social Justice**

One of the most important objectives of the Panchayati Raj is to ensure social justice at the village level. Ms.Renganayaki has taken several measures to ensure social justice in her village. Before her entry to the Panchayat office as President, the Scheduled Caste people were not allowed to enter the Panchayat office. But she allowed them and visited their area and spoke with them about their problems. While
speaking with them, they explained their family problems to her. She used to give them suggestions and advice. Sometimes with the help of the village elders she has taken steps to solve some family disputes. She has delivered services without any disparity and discrimination. She did not favour a particular section in her Village Panchayat. In her perception she looks after the affairs of the whole village.

President’s Perception on Panchayati Raj

Mr. Renganayaki feels that the responsibility of the Panchayat is to provide and maintain all the basic amenities in the village. Soon after she assumed the office of the Panchayat President, she didn’t know much about the role and responsibilities entrusted to her. Through the block officials and newspapers she came know about the New Panchayati Raj System. She has attended the training given by the Gandhigram Rural University and she learnt about the functions of the Panchayat. According to her views, the Panchayati Raj System is an important and effective instrument to cater to the needs of the village people and for the effective implementation of all rural development activities and programmes.

Social Development Activities

The Panchayat administration has concentrated much on the cleanliness of the village streets. The streets and drainages are properly cleaned and maintained. The Panchayat puts some restrictions on the people regarding the pasting of wall posters on the walls of households and public buildings. Nobody is allowed to paste wall posters on the walls. Even during the time of election, the political parties are not
allowed to display their banners in the streets and are not allowed to write on the walls. Till today the villagers are following these restrictions. The basic intention for this restriction is to keep the village clean and hygienic. She visits the schools the schools in her Panchayat area once in a month. She has enrolled two drop-out children who belong to the family of jipsies in the school. By convincing and explaining the importance of education she has done that. She has provided water facility to the schools and the anganwadi. She said that the women are economically empowered through their membership and participation in the Self Help Groups.

Linkage with Sectoral Departments

With the help of various departments at the Panchayat Union and the district level Renganayaki has done useful things for the development of the Panchayat. She has utilized the MLA/MP fund and carried out all the schemes within the stipulated period. Her membership in the political party has helped her much in getting the schemes and programmes very easily. Regarding health and sanitation she has organised many health awareness camps and cultural programmes related to health with the help of the Public Works Department (PWD). She has desilted the village ponds and properly maintains the trees in the ponds. The Tamil Nadu Water and Drainage Board (TWAD) has helped the Panchayat in establishing hand pumps and mini motor sets in the Panchayat. For her functioning at the Panchayat level as a President, the officials at the Panchayat Union and the district level are encouraging and cooperative.
Summary

The high level of people's participation in the implementation process of the government policies and programmes was the energetic factor for the President to carry out various development activities. From the contribution made by the foreign settled people from her village she has built a school building in the Panchayat. Renganayaki's membership in the political party also led to attaining more benefits to the village. For each and every activities she used to get consensus from the people. Her approach and activities are highly accepted and appreciated by all the sections of people in that village. She is at the stage of working for the village as a whole in the framework.

CASE – 8

Kottur Village Panchayat, Theni Panchayat Union

Socio Economic Background of the President

Ms.S.Indira Gandhi, aged 47, is the President of Kottur Village Panchayat. She hails from the Dalit community (SC Pallar). She has studied upto 10th standard. Her family is nuclear and their occupation is agriculture. She is married and has two daughters and two sons. One acre of fertile land and six acres of non fertile land are the properties owned by her family. She lives in a pucca house with facilities like electricity, toilet and individual household tap connection. Her husband is a tomato merchant who operates a tempo for his business purposes. She has been affiliated to the DMK party since the year 1996. She is the
Village level office bearer of that party. She attends the works and the meetings of the party.

Village Society

Kottur is a Village Panchayat of Theni Panchayat Union in Theni District which is located 13 km from Theni. It lies on the Theni - Kumuli highway. Agriculture is the major occupation of many of the people in this village. For irrigation the farmers depend on the Vaigai river. They cultivate crops like paddy, sugarcane, coconut and tomato. The total households in the Panchayat are 1,826. As per the 2001 census, the total population of the Panchayat is 6,575, which includes 3,313 males and 3,262 females. The communities like Pillamars, Naidu, Servais, Muslims, EC Christians and SC (Pallars) are living in the Panchayat. Population wise the Pallars are the major caste group in the Village Panchayat. The total population of Scheduled Caste in the Panchayat is 5,134 which includes 2,591 males and 2,543 females. The Panchayat President was constantly assisted and encouraged by an NGO known as SEVA NILAYAM located Andipatti. The total number of literates in the Panchayat is 4,405, which includes 2,541 males and 1,864 females. The total illiterate population in the Panchayat is 2,170 which comprises of 772 males and 1,398 females. The total agricultural labourers the Panchayat are 2,402, which includes 1,049 males and 1,353 females.

Village Panchayat

Ms. Indira Gandhi has been the President of Kottur Village Panchayat consecutively for two tenures since 1996. Kottur Village Panchayat has five Wards and nine Ward Members. Out of them six are
male and the remaining three are female who all belong to the Scheduled Caste. Among the male Ward Members four belong to the Scheduled Caste and the remaining two are from other caste groups. Putting than together, among the nine Ward Members, seven are from the Scheduled Caste. This Village Panchayat was started in the year 1938. This village does not have any hamlets. There are four temples for Hindus, one mosque and an RC Church in the village. Apart from these religious institutions, there is a common temple known as Nandagopala Swamy temple is being celebrated and worshipped by all the people irrespective of any caste or religion.

The infrastructure facilities available in the Panchayat are as follows: There are nine hand pumps, five open wells, three power pumps, 205 street lights, six television rooms. The Institutions like Primary Health Centre (PHC), health sub centre, animal husbandry centre, post office, agriculture office, branch library are being established in the Panchayat area. Apart from these facilities there is a government higher secondary school, a middle school (upto 8th standard) and separate hostels for boys and girls. There are three primary schools, three public toilets for women, two mid-day meal centres, two nutrition centres, two ration shops, two cooperative milk societies in the Panchayat. With regard to infrastructural facilities this village is furnished with all the adequate basic facilities.

**Political Parties in the Village Panchayat**

The DMK, AIADMK, Congress, TMC (Tamil Manila Congress), DMDK (Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam), MDMK (Marumalarchi Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, Puthiya Tamizhagam and Viduthalai
Siruthaigal (Liberation Panthers) are the political parties functioning in the Panchayat area. Among these parties, the DMK and the AIADMK are the dominant parties. The DMK party is very helpful and cooperative to the Panchayat activities.

**Recruitment Process of the President**

Indira Gandhi’s father served as Panchayat President for about 25 years. He belongs to the DMK party and served as a MLA. Indira Gandhi also wanted to continue her father’s work. Before 1996 she voluntarily involved herself in various activities like medical campaign, school development, street maintenance and other developmental works for the welfare of the village through the political party known as DMK. When the Panchayat election was announced and the position of the Panchayat President was reserved for SC women, her caste people suggested to her to contest in the Panchayat election. The DMK party people are also urged her to contest in the Panchayat election. Her husband encouraged her entry into politics. She took it as an opportunity to serve humanity. Only one candidate contested against her. The political party led the election campaign. Her caste people helped her during the election. She adopted door to door canvassing method during the election. Her father’s social service, her educational status and the socialization process are well known to the villagers. While collecting votes during the time of election she projected the creation of infrastructure facilities in the village. Her family spent Rs. 15,000/- as election expenditure. She didn’t face any problem during the election. According to her, the major factor that contributed to her
success in the Panchayat election is the support rendered by her own caste leaders and the people.

**Empowerment Process**

In the opening out or coming out stage of the Baviskars framework, her own caste people and the political party supported much her emergence as a Village Panchayat President. In the Panchayat election one candidate contested against her. She didn’t face any problems during the election. She goes to the Panchayat office daily. In the second stage of acquiring symbolic features of power or signs of empowerment stage, she acquires all the symbolic features of powers such as sitting in the Panchayat office, regulating and conducting of Panchayat as well as Gram Sabha meetings. The villagers permitted her to acquire these symbolic features of power, Ms.Indira Gandhi’s husband didn’t interfere in her activities related to the Panchayat affairs. She discusses the matters related to the Panchayat affairs with her own caste people.

All the Ward Members are extending their support and cooperation for the Panchayat administration. All of them attend the Panchayat meetings and the Gram Sabha meetings. They mobilize the people for the Gram Sabha meetings. The Panchayat (clerk) Assistant belongs to her own caste. After she assumed the office, she replaced the earlier Panchayat Assistant and made a new appointment. While contracting out the developmental works of the Panchayat, she consults her own caste people and gives contract to her own caste people. One of the Theni Panchayat Union Councillors known as P.T.Muthuvel is a close relative of the President who belongs to her Panchayat. He also
channelises the Panchayat Union Councillor and District Panchayat Councillor funds to the Panchayat. She runs the Panchayat administration under the support and help extended by the Union Councillor. While deciding upon the beneficiaries for various government schemes and programmes, she consults Union Councillor and her own caste leaders. After the consultation with them, she gets approval from the Panchayat Council. In the Panchayat office, there is a chair and a table for the Panchayat Union Councillor with his name board. As per the direction given by him, the President has constituted seven standing committees with five members in each committee. She has settled all the demands raised by her own caste people. They raised demands like adequate infrastructure facilities in all their streets, provision of graveyard with burial and burning ground and fencing for the graveyard. “The intervention of her own caste people in her functional jurisdiction is helpful for the Panchayat functioning”, she feels. Thus, she is in the fourth stage of the framework known as using power for the benefit of one’s own group, community or political party.

**Gram Sabha Meetings**

The Government of Tamil Nadu in its order gave the details about conducting Gram Sabha meeting compulsorily in each and every Gram Panchayat. The dates are January 26th, May 1st, August 15th and October 2nd. Apart from the above mentioned dates, if a Panchayat requires Gram Sabha meeting it can organise special Gram Sabha meetings. In case of any emergency situations, the Panchayats are empowered to organise emergency Gram Sabha meetings. The Tamil Nadu government circulates the agenda for the Gram Sabha meetings and the proceedings
are decided by the Village Panchayat President. Ms. Indira Gandhi organizes Gram Sabha meetings as per the direction and guidelines given by the state government. Before fixing the agenda and the venue for the Gram Sabha meetings, the President consults her own caste leaders. Among the total members of Gram Sabha, 65 percent of the people participate in the Gram Sabha meetings. Of whom 30 percent of them belongs to the category of Scheduled Caste. During the Gram Sabha meetings, the Gram Sabha members regularly raise demands related to the provision of infrastructure facilities for their areas.

**Implementation of Government Welfare Programmes**

Basic infrastructural facilities have been provided to the people by implementing the centrally sponsored and state sponsored schemes and programmes. The basic amenities like drinking water, street lights, drainage, toilets for women, cement roads, community hall, threshing floor, culverts and hand pumps have been completed through the centrally sponsored programme known as SGRY. All the streets are provided with adequate street lights, public taps and drainage facilities. Under the SGRY schemes the following works were carried out. They are construction of drainage in all the streets, construction of compound walls for the grave yard, construction of retaining walls, construction of toilets for women near the community hall, construction of building for Self Help Group members, maintenance of irrigation tank, construction of a community hall, maintenance of drinking water pipelines and construction of a women sanitary complex.

Apart from the SGRY scheme funds, the Panchayat President has also spent Eleventh Finance Commission funds for the following
developmental works in the Panchayat. They are construction of cement concrete roads, culverts, construction of drainages, maintenance of street lights, establishment of rain water harvesting ponds, construction of a ground level water tank and maintenance of public latrines for women.

**Social Justice**

According to Ms. Indira Gandhi social justice is possible in her Panchayat. She has taken several measures to attain social justice. Though the Panchayat consists of the caste groups like Pillamars, Naidus, Asaris (carpenter), Thevar, Servai, Muslims, Christians and Scheduled Caste (Pallar), they are having a common temple known as ‘Nandagopalasamy temple’. Even Muslims and Christians participate in the festival celebrations. The other caste people are giving respect to her and extending their cooperation for the smooth functioning of the Panchayat administration.

**President’s Perception on Panchayati Raj**

Indira Gandhi has awareness about the 73rd Amendment and the Tamil Nadu Panchayati Raj Act. Before assuming the office of the Panchayat President, she didn’t know much about Panchayat. After becoming Panchayat President, she has attended several training programmes since the year 1996. For the past ten years she has learned many procedures for the regulation of Panchayat administration. She pointed out that the following are the major issues in the New Panchayati Raj System. They are, planning at the grassroots level, selection of beneficiaries for various government schemes, provision of
basic amenities to the people, provision of group houses for weaker sections and Gram Sabha activities.

**Social Development Activities**

Indira Gandhi said basic education is essential for all sections of the people. She visits the schools in the Panchayat area twice a month and attends the meetings in the school. By creating awareness and convincing the parents she has contributed the enrollment of school dropouts in the Panchayat. She has provided infrastructural facilities like drinking water, toilets and compound wall to the school. There are three primary schools, one middle school and a higher secondary school in the Panchayat area. She has provided toilet facilities to all these schools. There are three anganwadis in the Panchayat. The President has provided toilet facility to the anganwadis and she has supplied playing materials to the children. According to the views of the President, “the education process lead to individual development and social development”. With regard to the village economy she emphasized that it can be developed in the following ways: agriculture, animal husbandry and village industries.

**Linkage with Sectoral Departments**

Being a member of the DMK party, she has channelised MLA fund and MP fund to the Panchayat. Apart from these funds she got District and Union Councillor funds for the developmental activities in the Panchayat. With the help of the Health Department she has organised several awareness generation camps, health camps and eye camps. The Tamil Nadu Water and Drainage Board (TWAD) installed 12 mini motors
in the Panchayat. The village tanks were desilted with the support of the Public Works Department (PWD). She has also organised several veterinary camps in collaboration with the Animal Husbandry Department. Agricultural officers are cooperating with the Village Panchayats in issuing seeds and information related to agriculture. For animal husbandry, a separate building is required for a veterinary centre. Vocational training and loan facility should be provided to the needy people with assistance from the concerned department.

Summary

Indira Gandhi has taken much effort for the Panchayat’s development. She has close association with DMK political party people, block officials and district level officials. They support the Panchayat activities in different ways. She herself is equipped very well by attending various training programmes organised in different places by different agencies. Openness to learn, adaptability, accountability and fearlessness are some of the key characteristics exhibited by Ms. Indira Gandhi. She runs the Panchayat administration with the support rendered by her own caste people and the political party to which she belongs. The intervention of her own caste people in her functional jurisdiction is helpful for the functioning of the Panchayat. Indira Gandhi is a typical case of the fourth stage of the framework which is known as using power for the benefit of one’s own group, community or political party.
Megamalai Village Panchayat,

K. Mayiladumparai Panchayat Union

Socio Economic Background of the President

Ms. V, Vasuki, aged 35, is the Village Panchayat President of Megamalai. She has studied up to 8th standard. She belongs to the Hindu religion and (Thevar) Most Backward Community. She is married and has two sons and a daughter. They are doing their school education staying in hostels at Theni. Her family is nuclear and family consists of five members. Her family has four acres of wet land and two acres of wet land in the forest. Her husband is doing agriculture. She lives in her own, tiled house with solar light facility. In her house, she does not have the facilities like toilet and the household tap connection. She is a member of a Self Help Group organised by Kalanjiyam Foundation, a Madurai based pioneer institution in organising Self Help Groups in the southern regions of Tamil Nadu. She attends the meeting of that SHG regularly. She has been the village level member of the political party known as AIADMK for the past fifteen years. She took participate in the election works.

Village Society

The village Megamalai is located twenty five kilometers from K. Mayiladumparai Panchayat Union. It is bounded by hills. The total households in the village are 2281. As per the 2001 census, the total population of the Panchayat is 8669, which includes 4569 males and
4100 females. There are seven caste groups living in this Panchayat. They are Piramalai Kallar, Naidu, Kappilia Gounder, Kurumba Gounder, Chettiar, Maravar, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes. The total population of Scheduled Caste in the Panchayat is 2239 which comprises of 1170 males and 1069 females. The total population of Scheduled Tribes in the village is 85, which includes 47 males and 38 females. Among the total population 3846 are literates and 4823 are illiterates. Agriculture is the major occupation of the people in this village. They grow vegetables like beans, tomato and brinjal. Since the Panchayat is located in a hill area, there are several coffee plantations situated in this Panchayat. Some of the people cultivate cardamom in their estates. The total cultivators in the village are 1140, which comprises 685 males and 455 females. Some of the hamlets in the Panchayat are situated in the forest. Wild animals like lion, tiger, elephant, wild pig, deer and hare are also living in the forest. The people didn't have electricity facilities in many of the hamlets. Instead of electricity facilities, they are having solar lights which was provided by the Village Panchayat. For irrigation they heavily depend on hill water sources. Some of the farmers are using diesel engine for irrigation. The total agricultural labourers in the village are 2387, which includes 1209 males and 1178 females.

**Village Panchayat**

Megamalai Village Panchayat consists of four Wards and nine Ward Members. Among these six are males and three are females. One male and a female Ward Member’s position is reserved for Scheduled Caste people. This Panchayat has 18 hamlets. They are Kombaitholu, Anna Nagar, Muthuramalingapuram, Posanthepuram, Mallingapuram,
Koraiyoothu, Thirupur (Varusanadu), Ottukkal @ Muthulingapuram, Manjanoothu, Indira Nagar, Rajiv Nagar, Bommarajapuram, Yaegenjaagaraj Board (Kulikkadu), Arasardi, Noatchiodai, Megamalai and Velampuri. Except the hamlet Arasradi almost all the hamlet people are having patta for their lands and their settlement area. The Arasaradi hamlet is situated in the reserved forest, which is 12 kilometers away from Megamalai Panchayat office. The Forest Department didn't allow them to get patta for their lands and their settlement area. The Forest Department told them to vacate that place. The Panchayat President also belongs to the Arasaradi hamlet. They are regularly visiting many government offices to get patta for their lands.

**Political Parties in the Village Panchayat**

AIADMK, DMK and Congress are the major political parties functioning in the Panchayat area. The other political parties like Moovander Munnetra Kazhagam (MMK), Viduthalai Siruthaigal are also functioning in the Panchayat. All the political parties are helpful to the Panchayat activities. With the support of the political parties, the Panchayat President has carried out several developmental activities in the Panchayat.

**Recruitment Process of the President**

When the Panchayat election was announced as the Panchayat was reserved for women the village community people belonging to four hamlets, namely, Kombaitholu, Manjanoothu, Muthulingapuram and Arasaradi suggested to her to contest in the election. Ms.Vasuki is the first candidate in her family to contest in the Panchayat election. Her
husband encouraged her to contest in the Panchayat election. She took it as an opportunity to serve the people. There were two opponents. Both of the opponents were less educated. Five days of intensive canvassing was done in all the hamlets of the Megamalai Panchayat. The village community led the election canvassing. Since the hamlets are located in the hills, they cooked food before going for election canvassing and made food packets and took them during election canvassing. Door to door canvassing was resorted to. While canvassing for votes, she projected the issues like provision of drinking water, solar lights and supply of power to the people. Many of the hamlets were not connected with electricity facility at that time. The village community people spent Rs.25000/- for the election campaign. She didn’t come across any problem during the time of election. According to her, the support rendered by the village community including Scheduled Caste people was the major factor that contributed. She secured 2500 votes and won the election with a difference of forty four votes.

Empowerment Process

In first stage of the empowerment process, the family and community support helped her much to emerge as Panchayat President. She goes to office once in two days. Her Panchayat office is five kilometers away from her home. Due to the distance and non availability of adequate transport facility she is not able to go to the Panchayat office on a daily basis. She has a separate chair and table in the office. She used to sit in the chair. She conducts the Panchayat monthly meetings regularly. Sometimes her husband also visits the Panchayat and he will be with her the whole day. All the Ward Members
attend and extend their cooperation in organising the Panchayat meetings. The village community allows her to acquire the symbolic features of power. In the third stage of empowerment process, i.e., using power for one's self or one's family, she didn't use the power for the advantage of her own family. She gave contract works to the professional contractors. But for the implementation of the Panchayat works, she seeks the help of her husband. While taking decisions regarding Panchayat administration she consults her family members and the villagers. She concentrated on all the Panchayat activities for the people in the Village Panchayat. She is in the stage of working for the village as a whole. She has satisfied the demands of the various sections of the people in the Panchayat. While selecting beneficiaries for various government programmes, she decides upon the beneficiaries in the Gram Sabha meetings. For the developmental works in the Panchayat she consults the village people and implements the works.

**Gram Sabha Meetings**

Vasuki was interested in organising the Gram Sabha meeting as she could explain to the people the financial position of the Panchayat. Circulation of bit notices, intimation to Self Help Group members and village elders, giving letters to the Ward Members about Gram Sabha meetings through sweepers are resorted to mobilize the members for the meeting. The agenda contains items like drinking water supply, transport, road and drainage. The participation of Self Help Group members is high in the Gram Sabha meetings. The village elders suggested to the President to meet the local MLA, MPs and other
important persons for getting patta for the people in the Arasaradi hamlet.

**Implementation of Government Welfare Programmes**

Under the I AY (Indira Awaz Yojana) 32 group houses were constructed. The beneficiary selection was done with the Ward Members and local political party leaders, Among these houses ten houses were allotted to Scheduled Caste people. 22 beneficiaries were also selected for the kutcha house upgradation. Among these 17 beneficiaries were Scheduled Caste people and rest of them were BC. She has taken steps to provide ration cards to the Scheduled Tribes (ST). For getting ration card for them, she has approached the District Collector and the local MLA. She has provided cement concrete road to the Panchayat. For drinking water supply she has constructed over head tanks (OHT) and mini motor sets.

With regard to street lights, she maintains the street lights in almost all the hamlets. Some of the hamlets didn’t have electricity connection. So she approached the local MLA for the provision of solar lights for those areas. Especially the people in the Arasaradi hamlets are not having electricity facilities. For irrigation purposes, they are having diesel motors. She has provided 375 solar lights with the support given by the DRDA (District Rural Development Agency) a registered society functioning at the District Collectorate which is responsible for the installation of solar lights. Vasuki was very careful in spending Panchayat money and tried to save money. After a huge amount was saved works were executed from the Village Panchayat fund periodically.
Social Justice

While selecting beneficiaries for various government schemes and deciding the place of the Panchayat to be carried out, Ms. Vasuki adopts the principle of social justice. She treats all the segments of the people in the Panchayat equally. Before entering to the Panchayat administration as a President, she helped the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) people in many ways by her membership in the political party. The SCs & STs are responsible for her victory in the Panchayat election. They invite the President for their family functions. She attends and dines in their homes. The degree of untouchability is very low in the Panchayat.

President’s Perception on Panchayati Raj

Before entering to the domain of the Panchayat administration, she attended the meetings and works of the political party to which she belongs. At the time of the contest she didn’t know anything about the Panchayat administration. But after assuming the position as Panchayat President through her Panchayat clerk she slowly start learning about the Panchayat administration. By attending various training programmes organised by different agencies, she gained knowledge about the roles and responsibilities of the President, the importance of Gram Sabha, maintenance of accounts and audit system in the Panchayat.

Social Development Activities

Vasuki has concentrated on the cleanliness of drainages and streets. She has created awareness among the people about the importance of growing trees. During the time of Gram Sabha meetings,
with the help of village youth volunteers, tree saplings were planted in the school campus and road sides. The Panchayat President facilitated this activity. Once in a month and during celebration times she visits the schools in the Panchayat area and attends the PTA (Parent Teachers Association) meetings. By convincing the parents of the school dropout children she has taken steps for their enrollment in the schools. Toilets and water facility were also provided in the school by the Panchayat.

Vasuki is worried about the economic status of the people. Due to the lack of employment in agriculture several of them have gone to Tirupur, Coimbatore, Chennai, even Kerala for employment. Especially for the people from this Panchayat area through buses are available from Kombai Tholu to Tirupur, Kombai Tholu to Coimbatore and Kumanan Tholu to Chennai. Educated SC and ST youth need proper motivation and skill training. With regard to health and hygiene Vasuki has organised several health and eye camps. During the immunization programme the Panchayat took much effort to mobilize children from all hamlets to avail of the polio vaccine. Through the concerned Ward Members the message was passed on for ensuring maximum attendance from the public.

**Sectoral Linkages**

In connection with the activities of the Panchayat, the Panchayat President has to visit the departments and the offices like police, revenue, agriculture, animal husbandry, social welfare, TWAD, highways, Panchayat union and the collectorate periodically. Vasuki has established good rapport with union officials, union chairman, district councilors and the district Panchayat chairman. Being an active member
in the AIADMK party she has a good relation with the MLAs and MPs. She visits revenue and forest department for getting patta for the people living in the Arasaradi hamlet. For installation of solar lights she has approached the district collectorate. They took responsibility for the completion of the work.

**Summary**

Ms. Vasuki is sensitive to the empowerment of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes. The village community as a whole, which includes SC & STs, was responsible for her victory in the Panchayat election. Her membership in political party has helped her much in mobilising various funds from different sources. For each and every activities of the Panchayat she seeks the opinion of the different segments of the people. She selects the beneficiaries of various programmes of the central and the state governments through the Gram Sabha. Vasuki is in the stage of working for the village as a whole. After becoming a President, she learned and got awareness about Panchayat administration. Her self confidence and courage level has increased. Affiliation with the political party has helped in getting more benefits and to overcome many hurdles.
CASE - 10

**Thangammalpuram** Village **Panchayat**,  
**K. Mayiladumparai Panchayat Union**

**Socio-Economic Background of the President**

Ms. S. Shanthi, aged 27, is the Village Panchayat President of Thangammalpuram. She has studied up to 11 standard. She belongs to the Hindu religion and (Thevar) Most Backward Community. She is married and has a son and a daughter. Her family is nuclear family and consists of four members. She has four acres of agricultural land and her husband is doing agriculture and working as a noon meal organizer. She lives in a tiled, own house with electricity facility. She does not have toilet facility but she has household tap connection. She is a member of a Self Help Group for the past six years. She attends the meetings of the Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) functioning in the Panchayat. Her husband is the union secretary of the regional political party known as Moovendar Munnetra Kazahagam (MMK). She is also an active member of the MMK since 1998 and she attends the party meetings periodically.

**Village Society**

The village Thangammalpuram is located fifteen kilometers from K. Mayiladumparai Panchayat Union. The total households in the village are 1328. As per the 2001 census, the total population of the Panchayat is 4625, which includes 2525 males and 2100 females. This Village Panchayat consists of six hamlets, namely, Thangammalpuram,
Kovilpatti, Vaaikaalparai, Aathukkadu, Pudur and Pachaiyappapuram. Shanthi belongs to the Thangamalpuram hamlet of the Village Panchayat. This village is surrounded by hills. The village economy is based on agriculture. The total agricultural labourers in the Panchayat are 3145. The major crops cultivated are paddy, sugarcane, grapes, banana, green gram and maize. Some of the people are rearing milch animals and the majority of the people are rearing goats. Piramalai Kallars are the dominant caste group in the Panchayat. The caste groups like Mooppar and Scheduled Caste are also reside in the village.

**Village Panchayat**

Thangamalpuram Village Panchayat has four Wards and eight Ward Members. Among the Ward Members four are males and the other four are females. Out of four female Ward Members two are reserved for Scheduled Caste. The rest of the members are from Maravar caste. There are four primary schools, one higher secondary school, one high school. Three women sanitary complexes were constructed for women and children and a primary health centre is also functioning in the Panchayat. Using the Union Councilor fund a community hall was constructed in the Panchayat. There are four ration shops, one cooperative society also functioning in the Panchayat. For drinking water supply, with the help of TWAD, mini motor sets have been installed by the Panchayat. There are two milk societies operated by private milk vendors. For the establishment of milk society Kalanjiyam, a pioneer Madurai based micro credit institution, took the initiative and rendered monetary support.
Political Parties in the Village Panchayat

In this village, ninety percent of the people belong to Maravar community. They are all the members of their own caste based political party which is known as MMK. The AIADMK, DMK, BJP and Congress are present in the Village Panchayat. The parties like Viduthalai Siruthaigal (Liberation Panthers), Puthiya Tamizhagam are also followed by the Scheduled Caste people.

Recruitment Process of the President

When the Panchayat election was announced in the year 2001, Shanthi was chosen by her own caste people. Since her husband is working as a noon-meal organiser (state government employee) he could not contest in the election. From the year 1996 to 2001, her father-in-law held the post of Ward Member. Including Shanthi four candidates contested in the election. Expect her all other candidates were males in 2001. Shanthi is the only woman candidate who contested in a general constituency and won the election in Theni District. The major factor for her victory in the election was the support and encouragement given by her own caste people because of her husband’s affiliation with the party known as Moovendar Munnetra Kazhagam (MMK). Shanthi is also a member of that party. Before the election Shanthi was a home maker and leader of an SHG known as ‘Thamarai’. She attends the SHGs federation meetings periodically. She also attends the meetings and activities of MMK party along with her husband. This helps her to gain popular acceptance among the people. During the election campaign, she adopted canvassing techniques like going to each and every house, circulating pamphlets and bit notices among the people. The election
canvassing was led by her own caste people. Her family spent Rs.60000/- for refreshments and other expenditures during the election. She didn’t come across any problem during the time of election.

**Empowerment Process**

In the opening up or coming out stage, she was chosen and supported by her own caste people. In her family, her husband gave enough freedom and prompted her to contest in the Panchayat election. The Village Panchayat office is located near her house. She goes to the office daily. Sometimes she seeks the help of her husband for executing some of the Panchayat activities. She conducts the monthly meetings of the Panchayat Council. All the Ward Members attend the Panchayat Council meetings without fail. While conducting Panchayat meetings Shanthi presides over the meetings. She was assisted by the Panchayat clerk. Her husband didn’t participate in the Panchayat meetings. If a government officials visits the Panchayat office, she receives them. At that time the Panchayat clerk and all the Ward Members are present along with her. She has acquired the symbolic features of power. In the third stage, i.e., using power for oneself or one’s family stage, she didn’t use the advantage of her position for the benefit of her family. She gave contract work to the Ward Members after consultation with the Panchayat Council.

Shanthi is in the stage of using power for the benefit of one’s own caste group or political party. With the support of her own caste people she runs the Panchayat administration. While selecting beneficiaries for various government programmes she consults the people of her own caste and the political party people for the execution of the
programmes. She has fulfilled all the demands raised by her own caste and party people. For instance her caste people demanded the upgradation of the existing government high school as a higher secondary school. She has taken steps for the upgradation and that school was upgraded as government higher secondary school. Likewise they demanded the infrastructure for their area. She has settled all the demands raised by her own caste in comparison with the demands raised by other caste people. She has constituted seven standing committee in consultation with the caste members. But at present all these committee are not functioning. “The intervention of the caste people in her functional jurisdiction is helpful”, she opined.

**Gram Sabha Meetings**

Shanthi organises the Gram Sabha meetings as per the direction given by the state government. She conducts the meeting on rotation basis in all the hamlets. She mobilizes the people for the Gram Sabha meetings through circulation of bit notices, by giving advertisement in newspaper, informing the people through tom-tom (drum beating). Around 10 percent of the Scheduled Caste people attend the Gram Sabha and they express demands like, supply of regular and adequate drinking water supply, proper maintenance of street lights for their settlement areas. Almost 25 percent of the women attend and participate in the Gram Sabha meetings. They normally demand provision of adequate drinking water through public taps. She invites the Panchayat Union Councillor, Panchayat Union Chairman, District Panchayat Councillor and District Chairman for the Gram Sabha meetings. She fixes the agenda for the Gram Sabha meetings in consultation with the
caste people. Around 90 percent of her own caste people attend and take part in the deliberations of the Gram Sabha meetings. The SHG members attend the Gram Sabha meetings and raise their demands.

**Implementation of Government Welfare Schemes**

Under the Indra Awas Yojana Scheme, a centrally sponsored programme, she has provided fifteen group houses to the people who are living below poverty line. Among these fifteen houses ten houses were allotted to her own caste people and the other five houses were provided to other caste people. She has approached the Union Councillor for the construction of an integrated sanitary complex for women and children. She has provided cement concrete road facility to almost all streets in the Panchayat area. She has taken steps to upgrade a high school as a higher secondary school by contacting the Education Department. For this activity her membership in the political party was very much helpful. For the delivery of adequate water supply, she has provided mini motor sets with a syntex water tank in all the streets of the village. Proper drainage facility was provided to all the streets of the Village Panchayat.

**Social Justice**

Shanthi tries to ensure social justice in the Village Panchayat by abolishing double tumbler system in tea shops. Earlier there were two tumblers used in the tea shops, one for Scheduled Caste people and the other for other caste people. During the Gram Sabha meeting Shanthi insisted on the abolition of the double tumbler system. Instead of double tumbler, she has suggested the use of plastic cups in the tea shops. The
Scheduled Caste people are not allowed to enter the main hall of the village temple known as Kaliamman temple. She spoke with her own caste people about their entry into the main hall. But they did not agree to her proposal.

**President’s Perception on Panchayati Raj**

Shanthi is a young lady. After her 11th standard education she got married. When the Panchayat election was announced her husband and the caste people asked her to contest in the election. At that time she didn’t know anything about the Panchayati Raj System. After she went to the Block Development Office and the Collector’s Office and attended the training programmes organised by different agencies and NGOs she learnt about the Panchayat and its activities. Now she knows about the reservation for women and Scheduled Caste, the importance of Gram Sabha, the cheque power of the President, basic responsibility of the President in the Panchayat. “For the better understanding of the feelings of the people the Gram Sabha is an effective instrument and also to get their support for doing the work”, she opined.

**Social Development Activities**

Shanthi gave more focus to the education of children. She visits schools twice in a month and attends the PTA (Parent Teachers Association) meetings. She approached an NGO known as LAW to start schools with hostel facility for Scheduled Caste and other caste people. Based on her request two primary schools were started for Scheduled Caste people. She has played a vital role in the enrollment of dropouts by creating awareness among parents about education through the
NGOs. She has provided toilet facility, water facility and site for playground through the Panchayat to the school. As a woman Panchayat President, she regularly spoke with women in the Panchayat about their own problems. Most of the people also share their family problems with the President. Due to lack of education among the public, all women are not treated equally with men. Women, after orientation in SHGs, come to understand the outside world and are empowered economically. If the women are allowed to take independent decisions, they will be empowered politically. In earlier periods female infanticide was practiced by villagers. It is not witnessed at present.

She spoke with the youth of the Village Panchayat periodically. The youth are helpful to the Panchayat for carrying out the Panchayat activities. They did not have a playground. The President took interest in providing a playground for the village youth. The youth groups are helpful in collecting census data. She also concentrated on the sanitary condition of the village. She has provided proper drainage system to almost all streets with cement concrete road.

Sectoral Linkages

With the assistance of the Union Councillor a lot of works were carried out in the Panchayat. The President’s membership in the political party helped her to influence the Councillor at the Panchayat Union level and at the district level. From the MLA fund a building was constructed for women Self Help Group members. From the MP fund one bus shelter was provided. She organised several camps like health camp, AIDS awareness campaign and veterinary camp. The concerned department approached the Panchayat. But there is no permission to
meet the organisational expenses from the Panchayat. Yet Shanthi met the expenses though it was difficult. A public grievance day was organised in this Panchayat. She met the Public Works Department for desilting the tank (kanmai) which is meant for irrigation purposes. There are four non governmental organisations functioning in this Panchayat. They are Kalanjiyam, Mahasemam, Vasantham and LAW. Shanthi attends the meetings of these NGOs. She requested these NGOs to start a free residential school for Scheduled Caste people. Based on her request two of the NGOs have started their schools and the Panchayat gave land for the establishment of those schools. Apart from these she has a linkage with police, revenue, TWAD Board for the Panchayat activities.

Summary

Shanthi is in the stage of using power for the benefit of one’s own caste, group or political party in the empowerment process. With the support of her own caste people she runs the Panchayat administration. Her membership in the political party helped her in getting funds for the developmental activities in the Panchayat. Association with NGO and formation of Self Help Group (SHG) has opened a new chapter in her life. She gained the confidence and won the support of the people which prompted her to contest in the next election also. She has attended the training organised by the NGOs and other state government institutions. That also helped her in the empowerment process. Her brother-in-law helped her in public activities.