A member of the self-help women's group with the rabbits she is rearing at Thohur in Thanjavur district. — Photo: R. Shivaji Rao

Women's SHG takes to rabbit rearing at Thohur

By Our Staff Reporter

THANJAVUR, MARCH 26. Members of the Annai Women Self-Help Group of Thohur near Grand Anaicut in Thanjavur district have taken up rabbit rearing as a means of earning income.

Motivated by Thanjai Janseva Bhavan, a non-governmental organisation, Sahaya Selvi and other women of the village spent Rs. 10,000 to get three male rabbits and seven female rabbits and a cage for them from a rabbit farm in Pudukottai district and reared them at Thohur.

Now there are 34 rabbits of varying age. "Ours is going to be a profitable venture as the Pudukottai farm is purchasing the rabbits back from us," said Ms. Selvi.

There are different species of rabbits. "White giant" and "Cin-cell" are some of the varieties reared by the women. Species from New Zealand, California is also available. Akkora is used only for its hair. People buy the animals for their meat and some species for the hair, which is used for making leather goods.

A herbivorous animal, Rabbit's meat is low on fat and rich in protein. It is good for blood pressure and heart ailments.

The members are also interested in teaching rabbit rearing to women self-help groups.
In service of rural women

She may be rightly called a 'pudumaipen,' as visualised by the social reformer, Periyar, and the Tamil poet, Bharathi. Both in her personal life as well as profession, she has proved that she is a reformer.

H. Parveen, secretary, Periyar Organisation for Women Empowerment and Renaissance (POWER, a non-governmental organisation) in Thanjavur, is engaged in empowering rural women, forming self-help groups and transferring technology to them. Amidst her tsunami relief work in Nagapattinam, Parveen, a native of Thanjavur, speaks to G. Srinivasan about how she turned a social worker from an academician.

"My complete concentration is on rural women and their empowerment."

Parveen got a Doctor of Philosophy in Medicinal Chemistry from the Regional Engineering College, Tiruchi. She also got an MBA degree from the Madurai Kamaraj University.

A community-based approach of the Periyar educational institutions and the constant encouragement given by K. Veeramani, Chairman, Periyar Educational Institutions, pulled her towards social work.

"My complete concentration is on rural women and to empower them. My main objective is to provide them with technology for use in their day-to-day life."

"It is just not enough, if we initiate women empowerment. We should see that it is sustainable. That is why Veeramani created POWER to work for the sustainable development," says Parveen.

POWER, a household name in the rural areas of Thanjavur district, has established 840 self-reliant women groups in the district, thanks to the efforts made by Parveen.

POWER developed linkages between self-help groups and lending institutions. More than helping them get bank loans and revolving funds to start their own trade, craft or business, it is concentrating on transfer of technology to them.

"Thus rural women in the 840 self-help groups now know cost-effective construction technologies, computer operations, etc. They have a tremendous awareness of water and sanitation, health and hygiene, gender sensitisation, women rights and law, social and economic empowerment."

Women self-help group members among the potters in the Budalur and Orathanadu areas are using modern 'chulas' to prepare pottery works. Weavers of the Thirubuvanam area are using ultra modern printing technology.

Many know how to prepare paper cups and use jutes to prepare art works. Many women know driving and many have gone to the bakery industry and some others have become beauticians.

The first thing we did for tsunami victims was to install an equipment to supply protected drinking water to them at the Nagapattinam Government Hospital.

A US-based company supplied the equipment through the Periyar Centenary Polytechnic.

The equipment supplies ozonised pure drinking water, said Parveen.

Many tsunami victims were introduced to low-cost brick making and carpentry in a bid to wean them away from the traditional fishing industry, say as an alternate employment, she said.