CHAPTER-IV
THE MUSIRI PANCHAYAT UNION UNDER 1958 AND AFTER

Gandhiji’s dream of every village being a republic has been converted into reality with the introduction of three-tier system of Panchayat Raj where people’s participation in rural development is essential. Balwant Rai Metha Committee in its report suggested a three-tier system of Panchayat Raj namely Gram Panchayat at the Village Level, Panchayat Samiti at the Block Level, Zilla Parishad at the District Level.

Gram Panchayat:

In the structure of the Panchayat Raj in Tamilnadu, the village Panchayat is the lowest unit. The Gram Sabha as the general body of the village people consists of all the local voters alone 18 years of age or the adults residing in the jurisdiction of the Gram Sabha. Its members are elected by secret ballot. They are elected on a system of territorial wards. Provision is made for the reservation of seats for women. The Presidents of the Panchayat either directly or indirectly look after the functions of Gram Sabha. Functions of the Panchayats can broadly be divided into two categories viz., obligatory and discretionary.

Obligatory Functions:

The obligatory functions are those which a Panchayat shall perform, while discretionary functions are those which it may perform or shall have to perform if the

---


2 Interview with Mrs. Rani, E.P.O., Panchayat Union Office, Musiri, Dated on 15.02. 2007.
state government so directs. A representative list of obligatory functions is given below.

1. It should be the duty of every Gram Panchayat so far as its funds may allow making reasonable revisions within its jurisdiction for construction, repair, maintenance, cleaning, lights of public streets, medical relief, sanitation and taking creative and preventive measures to remove and stop the spread of epidemic.

2. Establishing and maintaining of public wells, tanks and ponds for the supply of drinking water, washing and bathing purpose.

3. Regulation of the construction of new buildings.

4. Assisting the development of agriculture, commerce and industry.

5. Maternity and child welfare and allotment of places for storing manure.

**Discretionary Functions:**

Discretionary functions include such work as planting and maintaining trees at the side of public streets and other places. The list of discretionary functions is given below.

1. The improved breeding and medical treatment of cattle.

2. Development of co-operation and establishment of improved seed and implements.

3. Maintaining libraries and reading rooms.

4. Regulating the collection, removal and disposal of manure, sweeping, through public radio and gramophone, etc.³

System of Election and Political Parties:

Panchayat elections are held once in five years. The members are elected on the basis of adult franchise. For purpose of election, every Panchayat is divided into wards. The basis for election is the Legislative Assembly electoral rolls for the area and the method of voting is by secret ballot, by the system of marking on ballot papers.\(^4\)

The Chairman of all the Panchayat Union, along with one non-official member from each Township Committee constitutes a Panchayat Union Council. The Panchayat Union Council also has a suitable reservation of the seats for women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In case a Panchayat Union has only one Panchayat or Township Committee, all its members automatically become members of the Panchayat Union Council. Any MLA or MLC within the jurisdiction of a Panchayat Development Block can take part in the deliberations of a Panchayat Union Council without voting right. Any MLA or MLC holding the office of a Panchayat President becomes a member of the Panchayat Union and stands for election as Chairman or Vice-Chairman as the Panchayat Union Council. Members are elected for a period of five years.

The Madras Panchayat Raj Act of 1958 and the rules issued under the Act lay great stress on the formal meetings of the Panchayats.\(^5\) As per the rules the Panchayat should meet at least once in every month and should be held in the office. The date and place of meeting should ordinarily be open to the public.

The Basic Principles of Panchayat Raj:

The following are the basic principles of the Panchayat Raj System;

(i) It should be a three tier structure of local self-Government from village to district;

(ii) There should be genuine transfer of powers;

(iii) Adequate resources should be transferred to the bodies and enable them to discharge the responsibility;

(iv) All development programmes at these levels should be channelled.

The primary objective of Panchayat Raj is to establish an integrated structure of local democratic body linking the village to district.

Administrative Set Up:

The Musiri Panchayat Union looks after mainly administration, legal rights, income and expenditure pertaining to the Panchayat Union. Besides the above, the Panchayat Union also pays great attention to the development of agriculture, improvement of cattle, public health and welfare and administration of school functioning under it. Usually a council named Panchayat Union Council is formed to take care of the administration of the Panchayat Union. The electorate of respective local areas elect the members of Panchayat Union.\(^6\)

Panchayat Union is an administrative body. It comprises an indirectly elected Chairman and specified number of members as the case may be. A government nominee will also be on the Union to look after the functions of the Panchayat Union by elected members. He is known as the Commissioner. Block Development Officer

---

(BDO) is the Executive Officer of the Panchayat Union Council. In addition to these elected members and the government nominee there is administrative staff like, Junior Assistants, Clerks, Sweepers, Operator to carry out the work of the Panchayat Union.\(^7\)

**Functions of Panchayat Union before 1994:**

The Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1958 cast on the Panchayat Union the entire responsibility for elementary education, including aid for private management and the school-meal service. The Act also provided for the raising of necessary funds to fulfil this responsibility. The powers of the Panchayat Unions and the Panchayat have been listed in Sections 63, 64 and 65 of the Act. The Panchayat Union was not a supervisory body of the Panchayats. It could supervise the works of the Panchayats only in the capacity of an agency that delegated functions to the Panchayats.\(^8\)

Generally, the structural relationship between the Panchayat Union and the Panchayats was federal, each being quite autonomous in its own allotted sphere.\(^9\)

The Government of Tamil Nadu framed the Panchayat development schematic budget which was a pooling of the financial provisions of different departments, as well as the local resources which have to be mobilized by the Panchayat Unions. The Panchayat Unions were also in charge of implementing the agricultural production programmes, animal husbandry, fisheries, village industries,

---

\(^7\) *Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act of 1958*, Madras, p. 21.  
\(^9\) Ibid., pp. 264-265.
elementary education, social education, village works programme, women's and children's welfare schemes, family planning programmes, etc.\textsuperscript{10}

The Panchayat Unions had been instructed by the Government to provide amenities such as water supply and link roads for the Harijans and Backward Classes under the village works grant, as a result of the entrustment of the village works programme to the Panchayat unions.\textsuperscript{11}

The Panchayat Unions were also responsible for the maintenance and repair of roads classified as Panchayat Union roads with the help of the local roads grant calculated at the rate of 40 paise per capita granted to each Panchayat Union under section 131 of the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act, 1958. The general feeling was that the local roads grant being paid to the Panchayat Unions was inadequate to maintain the works in a satisfactory condition.\textsuperscript{12}

The agricultural and animal husbandry programmes were being implemented by the Panchayat Unions, based on the yearly budget allotments. Each union was given a specific amount and full freedom to prepare its own plans in collaboration with the agriculture department. District Technical Officers assisted the Panchayat Unions to draw up schemes for implementation. The responsibility for the maintaining elementary schools had been placed entirely in the hands of the Panchayat Unions.\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid.,
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.,
Through the Panchayats and Panchayat Unions, the government had introduced the Mid-day Meals Programme (MMP). The scheme was in operation in almost all the elementary schools in Musiri Panchayat Union. Each school had a Mid-day Meals Committee with the President of the Panchayat as the Chairman and the headmaster of the school as the Secretary. The Panchayat Unions were responsible for the promotion of maternity and child welfare services in their areas. Two-thirds of the total expenditure was met by the government as grants-in-aid. The Panchayat Unions also maintain dispensaries with their funds. In addition to Panchayat Unions dispensaries there are also rural dispensaries in the Panchayats. The Panchayat Union Councils were also responsible for the successful implementation of the Family Planning Programme in their areas.14

Panchayat System under Kamaraj in Tamil Nadu:

On April 13, 1954, K.Kamaraj became the Chief Minister of Madras Province. To everyone’s surprise, Kamaraj nominated C.Subramanian and M. Bakthavatsalam, who had contested his leadership, to the newly formed cabinet. Kamaraj removed the family vocation based Hereditary Education policy introduced by Rajaji. He reopened the 6000 schools closed by previous government for financial reasons and also added 12000 more schools. The State made immense shades in Education and Trade. New schools were opened, so that poor rural students were to walk no more than 3 miles to their nearest school. Better facilities were added to existing ones. No village remained without a high school. Kamaraj store to eradicate illiteracy by introducing free and compulsory education up to the eleventh

standard. He introduced the Mid-day Meal Scheme to provide at least one meal per
day to the lakhs of poor school children for the first time in the whole world. He
introduced free school uniforms to weed out caste, Greed and class distinctions
among young minds.

Two tired system:

Rural Development was under the control of Chief Minister K.Kamaraj. He
introduced the two tire system in Tamil Nadu.

There were 25 districts boards in the State. Under the Madras Village
Panchayat Act, 1950. Panchayats with jurisdiction over a population estimated at
not less then five thousand and with an estimated annual income at not less than Rs.
10000 are classified as class-I Panchayat and the others as class – II panchayats.
According to this classification, there were 466 class-I and 8025 class-II Panchayat
at the end of the year.

In the Post independence era, the first enactment in democratic
decentralization in the state was Madras village Panchayat Act, 1950. Pursuant to the
white paper on the “Reform of Local Administration” in 1957, the Madras Panchayat
Act, 1958 was passed and following were salient features of the Act.

A) A two tier system of village Panchayat and Panchayat Unions.

B) Creation of Panchayat to Unions co-terminus with the Community
   Development Block.

C) Village Panchayat presidents become ex-officio members of the Panchayat
   Union councils with the chairperson of the Panchayat Union council
directly/indirectly elected.
D) Entrusting the Panchayat Unions and village Panchayats with a large number of development and welfare functions.

E) Abolition of Direct Boards.

F) Creation of District Development Council as an advisory body.

This two tier system operated very well till 1975 and elections were held regularly. Subsequently, the tenures of the Panchayat Unions and village Panchayat were extended up to 1.2.1977 and 12.9.1979 respectively. Thereafter special officers managed the rural Local Bodies till the next elections in 1991. Again no elections were held till October 1996 and the special officers looked after the rural Local Bodies. Though the Panchayat Raj Institutions were in existence in various forms in various States, these institutions did not acquire the status and dignity of viable and responsive people’s bodies due to a number of reasons including absence of regular elections, prolonged super cession, insufficient representation of weaker sections, devolution of powers and lack of financial resources.

During 1952, 561 Panchayats were constituted, No Panchayat was dissolved to be reconstituted or superseded during the period. The total number of Panchayats at the end of the year was 5,160. In nine cases, the presidents were removed from office for abusing their powers or for failure to discharge their duties properly.

There were also provisions that the term of office of members of Panchayats for which elections had not been held under the Madras Village Panchayats Act had been extended up to particular period or the date of election of members whichever was earlier.
Elections:

General elections to all the district boards in the State were held during the year. Elections to all the Panchayats except five were completed before the close of the year.

Works:

A grant of Rs.1.5 lakhs was placed at the disposal of the Inspector of municipal councils and Local Boards for the improvement of village communications in Panchayat areas, during the year 1954-55 out of this, an amount Rs.27,489-11-0 was discoursed to Panchayats till December 1954.

Panchayat Schools:

There were 1023 Panchayat schools at the beginning of the year; provision for 54 schools was sanctioned during the year and provision for four schools was withdrawn. Thus, there were 1073 schools at the close at the year. Provision for 71 additional teachers was sanctioned during the year and provision for 4 additional teachers as withdrawn. There were 2130 teachers at the end of the year. A sum of Rs.10,27,804-9-0 was disbursed by the Regional Inspectors under teaching grant and dearness allowance to Panchayat schools during the year.

Conference of Panchayat President:

A two day conference of the presidents of Panchayat in the entire state was held at Madras on 8th and 9th October 1961. The State Panchayat Presidents numbering about 12,000 the co-opted Harijan and women members of the Panchayat union councils. M.L.As. and M.L.Cs. participated in the conference. The conference was inaugurated by the Prime Minister of India on the 8th of October 1961.
The conference was held in order to make the fulfilment of the mandate laid on the Government by the Legislature under the Madras Panchayats Act, 1958. Three important resolutions bearing on (i) People’s participation (ii) Agricultural production and (iii) Family planning were passed at the conference.

The Panchayat Raj Scheme initiated on October 2, 1960 had the initial draw backs and shortcomings The 3 tier local Government institutions-Village Panchayats, Panchayat union councils, and district development councils functioned satisfactorily. The financial resources of Panchayats and Panchayat unions have been taken care of by vesting in them the power to levy specific imposts to increase their income for discharging their responsibilities and development functions which were relatively the more important aspects of the scheme of democratic decentralization and to improve the rural economy. Funds are being made available under the “Community Development Programme Schematic Budget” for blocks for education, health and medical relief, development of communication, rural industries, housing and the welfare of the socially and economically depressed sections of the population. Special allocations were also made for minor irrigation, including digging of wells and tube wells, Social conservation from the additional grants, besides the schemes of the agricultural development, which is the basic constituent and determinant of rural prosperity and development.

**Panchayat Raj under M.G.R.:**

No local body election was held from 1975 to 1986, and during this period local administration was under the control of officials.
In 1986 M.G.R conducted the local body elections.

**Panchayat Unions and Primary Education:**

Elementary education is an important item of work entrusted to Panchayat Unions. There has been a significant rise in the enrolment of school going children year after year. During the year 1986, 45,36,000 pupils were enrolled. 28,118 schools were functioning. The number of teachers employed in these schools was 132,145.

Out of 28,118 Panchayat Union schools 20,997 schools accommodated buildings of their own. With a view to complete the construction of school buildings, in a phased programmed, the Government have drawn up a comprehensive programmed for construction of school buildings for both the Elementary and higher Elementary schools.

The Elementary Education Budget for the Panchayat Unions was approximately of the order of Rs.3,532 lakhs. Out of this, a sum of Rs.3, 360 lakhs was met by Government in the form of statutory grant to the Panchayat Unions. A sum of Rs. 372 lakhs was raised by the Panchayat Unions themselves to meet the cost of elementary education in their areas.

**Rural Industries Project Programme:**

The Rural Industries Project Programme is a centrally sponsored scheme designed to encourage the growth of cottage and small scale Industries in Rural Areas so as to provide larger employment opportunities to the landless and weaker sections of the village communities.
On the basis of the criteria indicated by the planning commission, New Delhi, Government of Tamil Nadu selected the following places for implementation of the programme:

1) Rural Industries project, at Sriperumbudur.

2) Rural Industries project at Omalur.

3) Rural Industries project at Nanguneri.

The following schemes were implemented under the programme:

Training Programme: Training centres were started to impart training to local artisans in Blacksmithy, Carpentry and allied trades in these areas. After prescribed period of training, all the training centres were closed; 1,500 artisans were benefited by the training. Common Facility Centres: Sixteen Common Facility Centres were opened to undertake servicing works for the benefit of the village artisans at nominal rates. All the 16 centres are now functioning in Tirunelveli District. Other Development Schemes: A Demonstration silk Farm was started in Panagudi to demonstrate methods of cultivation and silk-rearing, etc, and it was closed on 1st September 1973.

The state banks of India are offered financial aid under liberalized credit facilities to the private industries started in the Project Areas. The Project Officers rendered necessary assistance to the industrialists for obtaining loans from the Bank Authorities in this regard. Loan assistance at a low interest of 3per cent and 2 1/2 per cent per annum was granted to the private industries and Industrial Co-Operative respectively for the growth or expansion of industries in the Project Areas.
The Government extended Rural Industries Project Programme to the whole of the districts of Chingleput, Salem and Tirunelvili and Ramanathapuram and Dharmapuri Districts from the Fifth plan period. The project officers in the grade of Regional Deputy Director of Industries and Commerce were appointed to these five projects with necessary supporting staff to implement the programme. The District Industries Organisation of the respective districts has been merged with the Project Organisation to avoid friction and duplication of work in their efforts in industrializing the areas.

**Rural Manpower Programme:**

The Rural Manpower Programme was implemented in 72 blocks during 1973-74. The works which were taken up under the programme include digging and deepening of community irrigation wells, improvement to minor irrigation sources such as desilting, strengthening and raising of bunds etc, improvement to existing roads, formation of roads reclamation of lands vested in Panchayats, construction of thrashing, floors etc.

The main motives in taking up works were that they should give employment to as many persons of the locality as possible. The work should be executed through the local Labour Co-operative Society, by which a person should register himself in the functioning of the village. If there was no such society, the work should be taken up by the Panchayat for development. The land contribution of 10 per cent of the estimated cost should be collected either from the beneficiary or from the villagers. This could also be met by the Panchayat Union Councils.
The total sum of Rs.49.60 lakhs was distributed to the Panchayat Unions under Rural Manpower Programme during the year 1973-74. The entire allotment distributed to Panchayat Unions was spent.

**Applied Nutrition Programme:**

Applied Nutrition Programme sponsored by the Government of India with the aid of UNICEF was first implemented in Tamil Nadu during 1962-63. Under this Programme assistance was given to the Panchayats for developing community, school and kitchen gardens, poultry and pisciculture. The produce was distributed free of cost to expectant and nursing mothers and pre-school children along with skimmed milk supplied by UNICEF.

During the year, the programme was in operation in 22 blocks. A sum of Rs.21 lakhs was spent in all the 22 blocks. Under this programme training was conducted for 295 non-officials. 19,026 kgs of vegetables, 136,355 eggs and 207kgs of fish were distributed.

Panchayat Raj in Tamil Nadu is based on three-tier system with District Development Councils (DDC) at the district level, Panchayat union councils at the block level and the Panchayats at village level. Through the district development council was a statutory body; no executive functions were entrusted to it. It other words district development council functioned only as an advisory body at the district level and greatly influenced the formulation of policies and programmes of the district concerned. It also served as an effective forum for voicing public grievances and for spotlighting the immediate problems confronting the development district. The D.D.C had not been entrusted with executive functions as such, the
three-tier system had virtually become a two-tier one so far as executive functions were concerned. There are two district development councils in some districts.

In 1975 an account of emergency imposed in Tamil Nadu, the need for the extension of the term of office of the members and presidents of Panchayats in the state of Tamil Nadu arose.

In exercise of the powers conferred by section 3 of the Tamil Nadu State Legislature Act, 1976 (41 of 1976), the President enacted the Tamil Nadu Panchayats (Extension of term of office), Act, 1976.

This ordinance stated that notwithstanding anything contained in the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1958 or in the Tamil Nadu Panchayats Union Councils Act, 1975, or in other law for the time being in force, the term of office of the members and the presidents of all the Panchayats in the state of Tamil Nadu, holding office as such on the 31st day of July, 1976, would extend up to 1st October 1979.

However after 1977 M.G. Ramachandran became Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, and he placed great emphasis on social development, especially education. One of his most successful policies was the re-introducing of the "Mid-day Meal Scheme" in the Government-run and aided schools in Tamil Nadu, which encouraged underprivileged children to attend schools.
The following flow chart indicates the administrative set up of the Panchayat Union.

Commissioner

→

Block Development Officer (BDO)

→

Assistant Block Development Officer (ABDO)

→

Deputy Block Development Officer (DBDO)

→

Extension Officers (EO)

Administration, Account, Village Panchayat Planning, Savings, SC/ST, Social welfare

→

Village Welfare Officer (VWO)

Accountant, Clerk, Office Assistant and Night watchman
The Commissioner as Per 1994 Act:

The post of Commissioner was created by Governor in 1954. The Government appoints a full time Commissioner for every Panchayat Union. He has powers to take part in all discussions of the matters made in the Panchayat Union Council. The heads of departments designated by the Panchayat Union also take part in all discussions relevant to their departments.\(^{15}\)

The Commissioner was appointed by the government in case of each Panchayat Union Council. Such Commissioner should ordinarily be the Development Officer (DO) appointed in pursuance of the National Extension Service Scheme of Community Development for the Panchayat block.

The powers and functions of the Commissioners were as follows;

1. The Commissioners would have the right to attend the meetings of the Panchayat Union Council (PUC) or any Committee meeting, he takes part in the discussions but without the right to move any resolution or to vote;
2. carry into effect the resolutions of the PUC;
3. furnish to the PUC such periodical reports regarding progress and in the collection of taxes as the council might direct;
4. control all the officers and servants of the PUC; and
5. Perform all the duties.\(^{16}\)

The executive authority or the Commissioner might in cases of emergency direct the execution of any work or any act which required the sanction of the Village Panchayat or the PUC.

---

\(^{15}\) *Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act of 1958*, Madras, p.37.

\(^{16}\) *Tamil Nadu Act Civil Court Manual*, 1957, Madras, p.4616.
The Commissioner had many administrative responsibilities. He had to give effect to legal resolutions passed by the Panchayat Union Council. In case of difference of opinion regarding resolutions he had to refer the matter to the Government for orders and adhere to the discussion by the Government. He had authority to control all the workers in the office. He had special powers to appoint temporary workers in the office if necessary. He had to strictly enforce the Government Orders in this regard. The appointments made by the Executive Officers were purely temporary.\textsuperscript{17}

The Commissioner had powers to punish an employee working under him. He had to sanction all leave applied for by the workers. He had powers to stop the increment of a staff member if he was found to have committed any offence or not discharged his duty well, and he could also suspend him for a certain period. The Sanitary Inspector, Cholera Vaccination Inspector, scavengers were placed under his direct control. His powers could not be modified or interfered with by the Panchayat Union Council.\textsuperscript{18} In situation of seriousness he had emergency powers to take decisions; expenditure incurred in this regard would be met from the general fund of the Panchayat Union Council. He had to submit a detailed report on his action.

Powers and Functions of Chairman and Vice-Chairman in the 1994 Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act:

Every Panchayat Union has a Chairman and a Vice-Chairman. The Chairman is elected by the Panchayat Union Council from among its elected members. Vice-Chairman is also elected in the same way.

\textsuperscript{17} Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act of 1958, Madras, p.37.
\textsuperscript{18} Tamil Nadu Act Civil Court Manual, 1957, Madras, p.4616.
The Chairman was the real head of the Panchayat Union. He had enormous powers. The powers and functions of the Chairman were as follows:

1. Convene the meetings of the Panchayat Union Council; and

2. Discharge all the duties of the Panchayat Union Council.\(^{19}\)

The Chairman has the power to have full access to all the records of the Panchayat Union Council (PUC) and no official correspondence between the council and the government is conducted except through the Chairman. The Chairman is barred to transmit communications addressed through the Chairman by the Commissioner to the government or by the government to the Commissioner. He is elected for 5 years. When the office of the Chairman is vacant, the Vice-Chairman is to exercise the functions of the Chairman until a new Chairman assumed the office.\(^{20}\)

Panchayat Union Council:

Panchayat Union Council is constituted for each Panchayat Union. The administration of the Panchayat Union is vested in the hands of Panchayat Union Council. The Panchayat Union Council is also exercising all the powers including the power of taxation, discharge duties, perform other functions.\(^{21}\)

Musiri Panchayat Union Council consists of the following members:

1. Elected members of the Panchayat Union Council.

2. The members of the House of the People and members of the State Legislative Assembly.


\(^{20}\) Ibid.,p.19.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.,p.10.
3. The members of the Council of States who are registered as electors within the Panchayat Union.

4. All Presidents of the Village Panchayats.

They are to be entitled to take part in the proceedings of, and vote at the meetings of the Panchayat Union Council.\textsuperscript{22}

Every Panchayat Union Council unless sooner dissolved is to continue for five years from the date of appointment for its final meeting after each ordinary election and no longer. If the Panchayat Union Council is dissolved before the expiration of the said period of 5 years, election to reconstitute such Panchayat Union Council is ordered.\textsuperscript{23}

**Duty of the Panchayat Union Council:**

The duty of a Panchayat Union Council, within the limits of its funds, to make reasonable provision for carrying out the requirements of the Panchayat Union in respect of the following matters, namely:

a) the construction, repair and maintenance of all public roads in the Panchayat Union which are classified as Panchayat Union roads and of all bridges, culverts, road-dams and cause ways on such roads;

b) the establishment and maintenance of dispensaries and the payments of subsidies to rural medical practitioners;

c) the establishment and maintenance of maternity and child welfare centres, including the maintenance of service and offering advice and assistance to mothers in family planning;

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p.11.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p.12.
d) the construction and maintenance of poor houses, orphanages, shops, stalls, plinths, the training and employment of vaccinators, the removal of congestion of population and the provision of house sites;

e) the opening and maintenance and expansion or improvement of elementary schools, including the payment of grants to private managements in respect of elementary schools;

f) preventive and remedial measures connected with any epidemic or with Malaria;

g) the control of fairs and festivals classified by the Panchayat Union Council as those reserved for control by it;

h) the opening and maintenance of public markets which are classified as Panchayat union markets;

i) the maintenance of statistics relating to births and deaths;

j) improvement of agriculture, agricultural stock and the holding of agricultural shows;

k) the promotion and encouragement of cottage industries; and

l) Such other duties as the government may, by notification, impose.\textsuperscript{24}

Musiri Panchayat Union Council has submitted its consolidated report to the Tiruchirappalli District Panchayat by the end of the year and on the administration of all Village Panchayats in the Panchayat Union each year. The report is to be prepared by the Commissioner and the Panchayat Union Council.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p.39.
Finance of Panchayat Union:

A sound financial base is a must for the successful administrative of any institution. This is very much true with regard to the Musiri Panchayat Union. The Panchayat Union derives its revenue from different sources to meet out its financial obligations. Every Panchayat Union, to operate efficiently and to have a successful administration must have a sound financial base. It's not an exaggeration that Musiri Panchayat Union really has to derive income to implement all its social welfare schemes. The Panchayat Union derives its revenue from different sources to meet its financial obligations. The Panchayat Union has major resources of revenue such as, house tax, professional tax, etc. The Panchayat Union spends the revenue thus collected for the welfare of the people.  

Policy of Taxation:

As has been stated earlier, a sound financial base is essential for the proper administration of any institution. Finance is derived from many sources. The major source of revenue for Panchayat Union is obtained through tax. This has been levied in every Panchayat Union Development Block, a local tax at the rate of 45 paise on every rupee of land revenue payable to the Government in respect of any land for every facility. The Government in turn has to pay each Panchayat Union in turn a sum of one rupee for every individual of the population of the Panchayat Development Block concerned from out of the total land revenue collected during that year. Every Panchayat Union and every Town Panchayat derives its main income from the following taxes viz., house tax, professional tax and vehicle tax.

---

The Panchayat Union may also levy in addition to these taxes mentioned above, agricultural land tax for specific purpose.\textsuperscript{26}

**House Tax:**

The house tax which is the main source of income is levied on all houses in the Panchayat. The tax is levied on the basis of classified plinth area at the rate specified in schedule I of the Act.\textsuperscript{27} The house tax shall, subject to the prior payment of the revenue if any, due to the Government in respect of the site if the house, be a first charge upon the house and upon the movable property, if any found within or upon the same and belonging to the personal liable to such tax.\textsuperscript{28}

In colonial period the tax on agricultural land in any village was levied every half year. This tax was levied for specific purposes such as; Construction, maintenance, repair, extension or improvement of water works; Street lighting by gas or electricity; and For the construction of building intended to be used for cultural, educational, medical or and other allied purpose.\textsuperscript{29}

**Functions of Musiri Panchayat Union:**

Musiri Panchayat Union has been doing the following functions. They are,

(i) Constructions and maintenance of roads, bridges, dams within its jurisdiction,

(ii) Opening and maintenance of elementary schools and public markets,

(iii) Establishment and maintenance of dispensaries and child welfare centres for public and sanitation,

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p.25.
\textsuperscript{27} *The Panchayat Act XXXV of 1958*, Madras 1959, P.35.
\textsuperscript{29} *Tamil Nadu Act Civil Court*, Manual, P.4750.
Maintenances of statistics relating to births and deaths,

Promotion and maintenance of village and cottage industries,

The smooth and successful functioning of the Panchayat Union depends on the close and cordial relationship between the commissioner (Block Development Officer) and the Chairman.

Statutory Institutions:

**GRAMA SABHA**

Under section 3 of Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994, Grama Sabha is envisaged for every village Panchayat consisting of persons registered in the electoral roll relating to the Panchayat village comprised within the area of the same village Panchayat. Grama Sabha is foundation of the grass root level democratic institution. It is an instrument through which public directly enjoy the power and guides the Panchayat Raj Institution in their planning and execution of developmental functions. Social auditing is an integral part of Grama Sabha which ensures transparency in administration and accountability of Panchayat Raj Institutions to public.

Functions of Grama Sabha:

Grama Sabha is a collective body in the village level self government. It approves the various plans, promote the social harmony, mobilise the labour and funds, etc. The important functions of the Grama Sabha are as follows,

- Approves the village plan
- Approves the village Panchayat budget
- Approves the audit report on village Panchayat
• Reviews the progress of all schemes implemented and entrusted to the village Panchayat

• Approves the list of beneficiaries selected for various programmes.

• Approves and selects location of facilities to be created in the village.

• Reviews the completion of works executed by the village Panchayats and scrutinise the list of works undertaken for the year.

• Promotes communal and social harmony among various group of people in the village.

• Mobilises voluntary labour and contribution in cash and kind for implementation of various development programmes.

Statutorily, Grama Sabha shall be conducted in such a way that intervening period between two Grama Sabha meetings shall not exceed more than six months. However, the Government of Tamil Nadu have issued instructions to conduct Grama Sabha meeting at least on four important days on 26th January, 1st May, 15th August, and 2nd October in a year. Grama Sabha was made effective by amending the Act suitably to reduce the quorum from 1/3rd of electors to 1/10th of electors in the Village Panchayat.30

Musiri Panchayat:

The Musiri Panchayat which was formed on 12.07.1886 and the Panchayat had got selection grade.31 The mechanism of the Town Panchayat system has come to play a very important role in modern government and administration. Perhaps, the

30 Available at http://www.rural.tn.gov.in/PRI-statutory_institutions-Grama_Sabra.htm-06.02.2006.
31 Interview with Mrs. Rani, E.P.O., Panchayat Union Office, Musiri, Dated on 15.02.2007.
useful part played by this contrivance obliges the new Panchayat Raj scheme to think that this arrangement would be of considerable help in the working of the Panchayat Raj bodies, hence, the provision for setting up of committees. In fact the committee system was there under the earlier Panchayt Raj institutions that was in existence in 1960, and became the 1st Grade Town Panchayat in Musiri.\footnote{Town Panchayat 1st Grade, Government Letter No.87865/1960, Dt, 23.05.60.}

**Town Panchayat-Selection Grade:**

The jurisdiction of the Panchayat union is co-terminus with the area of the Panchayat development block. The average area per block is nearly 150sq. miles and the average population roughly 75,000. The Panchayat development block in turn is sub-divided into Panchayat villages. Town Panchayats are constituted, where the population is not less than 5,000 and the normal annual Panchayat income is not less than Rs.10,000. The Village Panchayats and Town Panchayats are the local units of the federal structural organisation of Panchayat administration while the Panchayat union is the apex of this organisation. Musiri became the Town Panchayat-selection Grade in 1970.\footnote{Town Panchayat-Selection Grade, Director of Rural Development, \textit{Chennai Letter No.167716/70,Dt: 20.10.1970.}} In 1994 upgradation was given to Musiri Town Panchayat as selection Grade.\footnote{Town Panchayat, \textit{G.O.No.709,Dt. 29.03.1994.}}