CHAPTER-VII

LEADERSHIP IN GRAM PANCHAYATS

Traditional institutions are an integral part of rural India. There are numerous civil society organizations functioning at the village level. This chapter is concerned with the institution that deals principally with dispute resolution. The importance of this institution arises from the fact that it has a certain centrality in village governance. This body is known by different names in different regions on Tamil Nadu, a more generic term such as ‘customary Panchayat’ is used here to describe this institution, which mainly deals with dispute resolution along with other social functions. It is also necessary to point out that this institution is distinct from caste Panchayats that are restricted to a particular caste.¹

Kathleen Gough has analysed ritual ranking of castes in a traditional society like India. She argues that traditionally, ritual rank was in fact almost invariably supported both by wealth and by political power. Ritual rank inheres in castes by virtue of birth, and has connotations of worth. A high caste is often called a ‘good’ caste, and a low caste a “bad” one. Our problem is to investigate the relationships between the ritual ranking of castes and the distribution of political authority and wealth.²

¹ Niraja Gopal Jayal, Decentralization in India: precept and practice, Local Governance in India (Delhi, 2006), p.30.
The ranking of castes rests on the belief in ritual, purity and pollution. These concepts apply not only to castes; they run throughout the philosophy of the higher Hindu castes, particularly that of the Brahmans. Castes receive their ritual rank chiefly on the basis of their traditional occupations. In Tanjore in the Maratha period, this combination of the three bases of ritual rank (the ritual segregation of polluting occupations, the administrative hierarchy and the division of wealth) produced five categories of castes whose mutual rank was unequivocal and a sixth category whose rank varied with circumstances and was often in dispute. The five fixed categories were: (1) the Brahmans; (2) the non-Brahman castes of rulers, army officials, land-managers and Village administrators (Vellalas, some castes of Naidus and some castes of Kallans); (3) the 'clean' castes of non-Brahman villagers who managed no land (tenants, cowherds, artisans, etc.); (4) castes of non-Brahman villagers with 'polluting' occupations (toddy-tappers, oil-mongers, washer men, barbers, etc.); and (5) the castes of serfs (Pallans and Parayans). The mutual ranking of these urban castes undoubtedly varied with their economic strength and the political power of their guilds. Three circumstances, however, appear to have lent administrative and economic support to the ritual rank of the Brahmans. For centuries before the British period, some of all of these customs were shared by castes categories (2) and (6), and together with occupation, formed criteria of rank within each category. All castes above category (5) banned the eating of beef, the cardinal prohibition of Hinduism.  

3 Ibid., p.52.
Excellence in the fulfilment of dharma led to rebirth in a higher caste. It seems doubtful, however, whether the lower castes even traditionally subscribed to these beliefs. They appear chiefly to have provided the higher castes with a rationale for their privileges. What was characteristic of Kumbapetrai's hierarchy in Kathleen's work is also true of Musiri taluks includes castes of categories (1), (3), (4) and (5). 'Clean' non-Brahmans may enter the houses but not the kitchens of Brahmans; 'polluting' non-Brahmans, the street but not the houses. Pallans may not enter the street of Brahmans; they approach Brahman houses by the back door beyond the cowshed. Brahmans may enter the streets, houses and kitchens of 'clean' non-Brahmans, but may not, for fear of their own pollution, enter the houses of 'polluting' non-Brahmans or the streets of Pallans. Pallans may enter the streets but not the houses of non-Brahmans in general.\(^4\) Brahmans may in theory distribute cooked food to all below them. In the modern non-Brahman teashops, tea and coffee are served to all non-Brahmans irrespective of caste. In the one Brahman restaurant, vegetarian food is served to Brahmans and non-Brahmans in separate halves of the room, divided by curtains; Adi Dravidas are not admitted. Sex relations like marriage, are theoretically prohibited between the castes. However, it has been argued by Kathleen Gough that Brahmans rather frequently had relations with non-Brahman women. Relations between 'clean' non-Brahman men and 'polluting' non-Brahman women are quite often overlooked unless they led to quarrels. In some cases, ritual rank is fixed between certain castes of the same category. Thus, among 'polluting' non-Brahmans,

\[^4\text{Ibid.,p.53.}\]
Barbers and Washer men rank below all other castes, for they might be required to serve all in polluting occupations. Similarly, in category (5), Paraiyans are generally understood to rank below Pallans. As new castes entered the village they tended automatically to join the same caste-category from which they originally came. As the result of a change to new occupations, two other castes have recently ascended from categories (4) to (3). The Ambalakkarans another name for Padaiyachi or Vanniar (formerly Fishermen) are a caste whose 'clean' status is still debatable. All the castes of Ayyampalayam, Evoor, and Vellur cremate their dead bodies in their respective caste assigned places. Most households of these castes for the past fifty years, begun to employ a Tamil Brahman priest to conduct Vedic rites of marriage, death and ancestral propitiation for them after the fashion of the wealthy non-Brahman castes. The traditional pattern of mobility was for a small group to split off from the parent caste, change its occupation, reform its customs and attempt to 'pass' as an endogamous group of an existing higher caste. The modern pattern is for many endogamous groups of the same large caste over a wide area to adopt a wholly new, high sounding name and challenge the claims to rank of the castes above them. Widow celibacy and vegetarianism characteristic of Brahmanism is no longer prevalent. Widow Remarriage is encouraged clandestinely but not yet openly done. But it is done among their endogamous caste.\(^5\)

During the past twenty years, however, inter caste competition for rank has warned among non-Brahmans in the selected study areas. The multi-caste street

\(^5\) Ibid., p.54.
assembly arose out of this desire. This decline of caste restrictions is accompanied by a new ideology. By contrast, the new coalition of non-Brahman groups in place like Vellur was beginning to be characterized by total rejection of caste principles, particularly of the ritual supremacy of Brahmans. Bitter competition for work and caste rank existed between the Devendra Pallans and Paraiyans of all these four villages. Pallans and Paraiyans had abandoned all caste restrictions except endogamy. Worship at the caste shrine had been stopped, and younger men boasted their rejection of religious beliefs. Pallans recently refused to work for non-Brahman high castes.

PAPPAPATTI AND KEERIPATTI SYNDROME

The State Election Commission (SEC) always denied that it not has received any complaint by the people being prevented from filing nominations anywhere, including in areas where the posts of Panchayat president were reportedly auctioned. But this was only an announcement. But the reality was different.

In Tamil Nadu, reports speak that four of the five village Panchayats in the Madurai district, where the posts of president were 'auctioned', were Ayyanarkulam, S.Keelapatti and Nallaneram and Vagurani, villages. In these villages a deposit of Rs. 1 lakh from each contender was collected. The method was wherever there was single nomination for the post, it was usually auctioned.

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6 The Hindu, 03 October 2001.
If this was the pattern of elections in the dominant caste villages, situation in reserved constituencies was pathetic. No Dalit had filed papers in both the Papapatti and Keeripatti reserved village Panchayats in the Usilampatti block. No nomination was filed even for the wards of these two villages. Till October 1, 2001, a total of 4.77 lakh nominations were received for 1.31 lakh posts in local bodies in the State. Of these, as many as 3.98 lakh nominations were for 1.17 lakh seats in rural local bodies and 79,044 for 14,354 urban local body positions. As many as 116 candidates filed papers for the six Mayor posts. Chennai topped the list with 30 nominations, followed by Tirunelveli (24), Coimbatore (19), Madurai (15), Salem (15) and Tiruchi (10). Also, 4,594 nominations were filed for 474 posts of corporation councilors, while 1094 nominations were filed for 102 municipal chairman posts. For the post of 609 town Panchayat chairmen, the election officials received 5,229 nominations.

The Dalit Panthers of India (DPI) on March 28, 2002, brought two villagers to file nominations for election to the post of president of the reserved village Panchayats of Pappapatti and Keeripatti, where polls were to be held after seven years.  

To counter the DPI's sensational attempt, Hindus mostly Piramalai Kallars, hurriedly brought two Dalits each from Pappapatti and Keeripatti to file their papers. Thanikodi (35), an agricultural labourer, and his wife, Pandiammal (30), filed papers for Pappapatti, while Karuthakannan (30) and Palusamy filed nominations for  

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Keeripatti. No one, however, came forward to file nominations in Nattamangalam nor were nominations for ward members in any of the three villages.\(^8\) Elections for the Pappapatti and Keeripatti panchayats could not be held since 1996 as the dominant, Piramalai Kallars, wanted the villages ‘dereserved.’

The State Election Commission notified elections for these village Panchayats for nine times, but no one filed nominations. While Nattamangalam elected a president in 1997, it did not allow any Dalit to file papers this time.

The DPI brought the agricultural labourers Subban for Pappapatti and Poonkodi for Keeripatti to the offices of the Chellampatti and Usilampatti panchayat unions for filing papers amidst tight police security. The DPI frontliners, including two joint general secretaries and one deputy general secretary, accompanied the candidates from Madurai. Both Thanikkodi and Karutha Kannan, who resigned as presidents of Pappapatti and Keeripatti village panchayats (both reserved for Dalits) respectively in Madurai district, had been filed in the elections by Hindus. Their papers were filed after the Dalit Panthers of India (DPI) managed to enter the fray, overcoming strong caste-Hindu resistance. Caste-Hindu resistance to Dalit empowerment has manifested itself in various forms since elections to local bodies were first held in 1996 under the revised Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994.

\(^8\) Ibid.,
When civic elections were held in 1996 and 2001, in several places caste-Hindu groups attempted to get their village Panchayats removed from the reserved category. When such attempts failed, they tried to derail the electoral process itself by preventing Dalits from filing nominations. If Dalits managed to file their papers, they were not allowed to campaign in non-Dalit areas. Non-Dalits also resorted to boycott the poll and even used force to scare away Dalits from polling booths. Caste-Hindu resistance continued after the elections. In several places, non-Dalits refused to cooperate with the elected Dalit presidents and ward members and humiliated them with the tacit approval of "upper caste" government officials.

The crudest expression of caste-Hindu intolerance was witnessed in the massacre of Murugesan, president of the Melavalavu village panchayat in Madurai district, and five other Dalits on June 29, 1997. Murugesan's crime was that he got elected as Panchayat president, a post reserved for Dalits, after defeating the caste-Hindu group's efforts to sabotage the election.

Besides Pappapatti and Keeripatti, elections to two more Panchayats reserved for Dalits, Nattamangalam in Madurai district and Kottakachiyendal in Virudunagar district could not be held in 1996 and October 2001 because of opposition from the predominant caste-Hindu groups in the villages - Piramalaikkallars (a sect of the Thevar caste). The run-up to the elections at Pappapatti and Keeripatti saw tense

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moments and some violence. As soon as DPI candidates Subban (Pappapatti) and Poonkodi (Keeripatti) filed their papers, several Dalit families left the villages fearing harassment by caste Hindus. Subban and Poonkodi were prevented from campaigning in non-Dalit areas despite the presence of a strong police contingent and top officials, including the District Collector. The State Committee of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) demanded that elections to be held again after extending full protection to Dalits. DPI general secretary R. Thirumavalavan said that the resignations demonstrated the intensity of caste prejudices in Tamil Nadu.

The State Election Commission announced on 17th September 2002 that polls to the Keeripatti, Pappapati and Nattamangalam reserved Panchayats in Madurai district, and the Kottakatchiyendal panchayat in Virudhunagar district (four village Panchayats and 27 Panchayat ward members) would be held on October 7.

The Dalit brothers, who filed nominations for election to the controversial reserved village Panchayat of Keeripatti in Madurai district, withdrew from the contest, rendering the grass roots exercise of democracy a farce.  

Barring these two candidates — Kattaraman (32) and Mayekalai (30) — no other Dalit came forward to file papers for the Panchayat. It once again demonstrated the stronghold of caste Hindus over Dalits in the village.

The villagers, mostly Piramalai Kallars, have been demanding that the Government 'dereserve' the Panchayats of Pappapatti, Keeripatti and Nattamangalam in Madurai district and Kottakatchiyendal in Virudhunagar district.

While no nomination was received for Nattamangalam and Kottakatchiyendal, the village committee of Pappapatti, as in Keeripatti, identified two Dalits, again brothers, as candidates for the polls. "These brothers were allowed to file papers primarily to prevent 'outsiders' from filing nominations. The Dalit Panthers of India, during the last polls, sprang a surprise by prompting two Independent Dalits to file papers for both Pappapatti and Keeripatti, for which the State Election Commission had issued election notification on 12 occasions since 1996. We filed a police complaint identifying the people who attacked the candidates. Even the people believed that neither the State Election Commission nor the State Government was serious about conducting of the elections, said Mr. Thirumavalavan. The Government and the Election Commission seem very clear in their approach. "I was prevented from entering the villages. The Dalit parties do have a few but drastic solutions. Dr. Krishnasamy of PuthiyaTamilagam said the Government and the Election Commission should announce that an elected scheduled caste member completed his or her term, the principle of rotation of reserved seats should be kept in abeyance. In the case of these villages, the Government should take a stand now."

So far, 12 times, the Election Commission had notified elections in the villages in Madurai district.
The last time chiefs were elected to two Panchayats they resigned immediately after the poll process was completed.

To nobody's surprise, the newly elected Dalit president of the Pappapatti village Panchayat in Tamil Nadu, K. Azhagar, resigned within a minute of his swearing-in. A nominee of the dominant 'caste Hindus' of the Panchayat, Mr. Azhagar contested the election merely to prevent the only other candidate, K. Muthan, who had the backing of Dalit groups, from winning the presidency. Now, for the past seven years, the Pappapatti village Panchayat had not elected representative. 12

Dalit organizations demanded that the resignation of the elected Dalit presidents should not be accepted. Efforts by the State Election Commission to conduct byelection to the three reserved Panchayats of Pappapatti, Keeripatti and Nattamangalam are unlikely to produce the desired result, as caste Hindus are in no mood to relent. 13

The number of Dalit voters in Keeripatti, Pappapatti, Nattamangalam is 252 (out of 1,550 votes), 276 (1,142) and 347 (1,600).

No nomination was received for the reserved Panchayat of Kottakatchiyendal in Narikudi union of Virudhunagar district. Dalit votes in the three villages under the

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local body, Poovakani, Kottakatchiyendal and Kanayamarichan, are just 17, against the total number of 1,155 votes.

The Collector, D. Rajendiran, appealed to the people of Pappapatti, Keeripatti and Nattamangalam village Panchayats to contest the by elections for the post of presidents and ward members and make the democratic exercise a success.  \(^\text{14}\)

The Personal Assistant to Collector (Panchayat Development), Periasamy, and the Usilampatti Revenue Divisional Officer, Dinesh Ponraj Oliver, accompanied the Collector during the visit.

With six nomination papers filed for the byelection to the post of president for the Pappapatti and Keeripatti reserved Panchayats passing scrutiny, the village local bodies went for yet another ritual of over 3,400 voters exercising their franchise on April 2005.

According to locals, Hindus had made two Dalit candidates to file their nominations in each of the two Panchayats. For the Dalits are a minority in both Panchayats. Out of the 1,142 voters in Pappapatti, only 364 were Dalits. The possibility of a Dalit becoming the Panchayat president was non-existent as the candidates sponsored by the caste Hindus won the election only to resign even without entering their official chambers.

\(^\text{14}\) The Hindu, 05 April 2005.
The victorious candidates from Pappapatti — S. Thanikodi (in April 2002) and K. Azhagar (in October 2003) — resigned their posts "owing to personal problems." Similarly, Karutha Kannan, too, resigned after winning the Keeripatti panchayat election in April 2002.

The vote secured by the Dalit candidates of Pappapatti was just three in April 2002 and 47 in the next election. The fear of the voters in exercising their franchise did not to speak of their "active participation." Though the Hindus assured the District Collector, D. Rajendiran, that they would take “a good decision after consulting with village elders” and create an atmosphere conducive for the conducting of the election, it was only the DPI's announcement on the candidates filed in all the three reserved Panchayats in Madurai that has triggered a contest. The party failed to file a candidate in Nattamangalam as "no one came forward to propose as a candidate."

Candidate for the by-election to the Pappapatti panchayat president post, died at Karaiyanpatti. Tirumavalavan paid floral tributes to Mr. Narasingam. Tirumavalavan condemning the "recurring murder of democracy" in Pappapatti and Keeripatti village Panchayats said none of the political parties had taken any effort to restore democracy.

Residents queued up to cast their vote in the election to the Pappapatti Panchayat in April 2006. The local body elections to Pappapatti and Nattamangalam
panchayats, reserved for Scheduled Castes, in the district went off peacefully. In Keeripatti, M. Balusamy was elected unopposed as the Panchayat president.

While Pappapatti and Keeripatti could not elect a president for the past 10 years because Hindus were against a Dalit being a leader in the village, Nattamangalam faced a similar situation since 2001. In some instances, the elections were held but the successful candidates resigned immediately after assuming office. 15

Two candidates, P. Periyakaruppan and T. Palsamy, were in the fray in Pappapatti Panchayat as against five candidates in Nattamangalam Panchayat. The district administration had taken special interest to ensure successful conduct of the polls in these Panchayats.

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) urged the State Government to create a conducive atmosphere for ensuring uninterrupted continuance of local body representatives elected recently in Pappapatti, Keeripatti and Nattamangalam Panchayats, reserved for scheduled castes, in the district.

This time, the president as well as ward members in all the three Panchayats was all set to assume office on Wednesday, thanks to the joint efforts of the State Government, the District Collector, a section of people in these Panchayats and the CPI (M), he said.

M. Balusamy, who was elected unopposed as president of the Keeripatti Panchayat, stressed on the importance of improving water, road and drainage facilities in his village.

CHENNAI: “Thank you”, said Nattamangalam Panchayat president P. Ganesan. For giving life to democracy in our villages. Nattamangalam took a leaf out of these villages and refused to elect a Dalit village president. Mr. Ganesan thanked the Government for ensuring peace in their villages and for proper conduct of elections and sought its cooperation for speedy development of the villages. He evoked an overwhelming response from Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi and Local Administration Minister M.K. Stalin. The funds sanctioned by the Government would be used in the villages judiciously. An official team, headed by the Collector, would supervise the works.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) secretary N. Varadarajan wanted industries to be set up in backward areas to break down caste barriers. Communist Party of India secretary D. Pandian said a great mistake had been corrected. Dalit Panthers of India General Secretary Thol.Thirumavalavan said that for this feat, his party was conferring on the Chief Minister the title, 'Samathuva Periyar.'

Chief Secretary L.K. Tripathy said the Government had worked diligently on a plan to hold the elections ever since it assumed office.

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Kasturi Nattar, the President of Ayyamplayam Village Panchayat. His age is 61. He belongs to Nattar Community and had schooling only up to 9th standard. His parents are agriculturalists. There are seven hamlets including Ayyampalayam in his Village Panchayat. He was the candidate from Ayyampalayam and spent a lot of money for the election.

The villagers of Ayyampalayam helped the president to win the Panchayat board election by canvassing.16 His relatives and friends also joined him when visiting the other six hamlets for votes. He assured the people that he would provide basic facilities to the people, particularly drinking water. Wall posters were printed and pasted and notices were distributed assuring that necessary welfare facilities would be provided to the villagers. The expenditure for election was below Rs. 30,000. The canvassing was smooth but his counterpart took it as a serious challenge. Hence even after the election he maintained a feeling of enmity with him. His faction resorted to disturbing the Panchayat activities. They disputed the identification of a site for the construction of a balwadi and a ration shop in their village.

But, with a sense of responsibility as president, he did not do any thing which might militate against the interests of villagers of Senthamangudi from which his opponent came. He carried out the necessary work in Senthamangudi village also. He said in an interview that he patiently maintained calmness instead of reacting to the

16 Interview with Kasturi Nattar, Ayyampalayam Panchayat President, dated on 10.11.07.
anti Panchayat activities of his opponent. After a period of two years, the villagers of Senthamangudi now shed their enmity with the president.

After becoming the President, he attended the training programmes, meetings and other programmes convened by officials. Slowly he was able to make out from the deliberations of the officials what Panchayats were.

Regarding awareness of the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act, he was unaware of the provisions of the Act and the rules before his election. But now he knows the provisions to the extent that is essential in the day-to-day administration to escape from administrative hassles. He listed a number of major and contentious issues in the Panchayat administration, namely, joint signature system, convening of the Grama Sabha, insufficient fund allocation, increasing expenditure on electricity, very limited powers conferred upon the Panchayat etc. The president learnt all these only from first hand experience.

One of the complaints he made in the interview was that if more opportunities and encouragement are given to Panchayat presidents, they will perform well. They will carry out successful experiments in their villages. He has suggested that the sectoral departments have to consult the Panchayats for effective implementation of their programmes. By doing so effective delivery could be achieved. He explained that because of his rapport with various sectoral departments he was able to bring certain benefits to the deserving villages.

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Development:

His perception of development as Panchayat president rooted in his village centred around agriculture and employment opportunities for youth and women in the villages. He observed that those who worked hard in agriculture were getting less profit and those who migrated to other places earn a lot. He said that by getting more information through mass media, particularly TV and radio, quite a number of families have improved their economic status. Infrastructure facilities, training and financial assistance are the major factors of the development. He said, special and specific need based programmes pertaining to villages would be very useful at the grassroots.

With regard to the village economy he suggested that irrigation sources need to be improved and women SHGs should be guided properly. They are eagerly forming groups and initiating micro financial activities. He emphasised that agriculture and employment opportunities are the means of development. He felt that if a party is built up from below, it would be a successful one. He did not belong to any party.\footnote{Interview with Panchayat Office Clerk, dated on 11.11.07.}

He guided the villagers in getting Government schemes for women and the poor. He gradually understood the social issues. After becoming the President, he improved his relationship with women and men. He constituted a vigilance committee to monitor the eradication of drinking alcohol among the villagers. By visiting various offices, he cultivated the practice of interface with officials. Now he could deliver an
address on the stage without any difficulty. Thus he has improved in his socialization processes.

He stated that the society’s perception about the women in public life has not yet changed. But the society is trying to understand the women leaders when they achieve success in their career.

He took seriously the villager’s requests and resolutions in the Gram Sabha meetings. He took up the issues with the concerned officials, higher political representatives and the district authority and succeeded in his attempts. During the period 2005-2006 construction of a TV room and cement concrete road were undertaken in Ayyampalayam. All the pending works were executed by him and the Vice-President who happened to be a member of the same community. He made all the accounts transparent and hence the Vice-President extended his whole hearted support to him.

Performance:

During 2005-2006 he tried his best to get a new transformer installed in his Panchayat by influencing the Electricity Board. Retaining wall construction and improvement of a few roads was successful done. By influencing the Highways Department, he tried to provide BT roads in the villages. During 2005-2006 attention was given to roads which had not been taken up earlier. Electricity was provided to a hamlet where no service connection had been given. He provided toilet facility to the primary school and extended water supply pipeline to the toilets.
Anna Marumalarchi Thittam:

When the innovative programme of Anna Marumalarchi Thittam was announced, he encouraged the local community leaders to undertake desilting and maintenance work in two ponds. A volunteer came forward to undertake this assignment on a donation provided he was permitted to execute the contract. As the villagers agreed to this desolating was done by the donor. He got notebooks and uniform dress for poor students from a few voluntary clubs in neighbouring villages.

Allocation for roads, noon meal centre, school building and small bridges were given to his Panchayat from the Union General Fund. He concentrated his efforts on achieving sanitation in his Panchayat under CRSP in his Panchayat jurisdiction. Because of his efforts, 20 toilets were provided. Now all are in use. Under the new scheme 274 toilets were provided but the beneficiaries planned to modify them by spending additional money. So most of the toilets built under this scheme are being utilized. He periodically meets the village health nurse. The nurse hands over the tablets and medicines to president, who gives the same to the deserving persons. With the help of the Makkal Nala Paniyalarkal i.e., members of people welfare, he maintains the library. He permits a few persons to take books home for reading also.19

Panchayat Resources:

As the house tax is a main source of Panchayat, a sum of Rs.30000/- was collected. The major source of income was stamp duty, i.e., Rs.60000/- The income

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other than taxes are auction of tamarind trees for Rs.10000/ and coconut trees for Rs.50000. Most of the coconut trees are getting old and so it is proposed to replace them by young ones. After he became the President, he talked with the local people who used to bid in the auction amount. So about Rs.5000 was additionally collected over the previous year. But due to poor prices for coconut, the auction amount was reduced.

With regard to the Panchayat fund and work under this fund, there is no issue except the joint signature of the Vice-President, whereas the scheme funds can be operated only with the permission of union officials. Moreover, the Union engineer and his staff play a significant role. They have to prepare estimates, issue orders, check the measurements, maintain the ‘M’ book and recommend payment. Advance is not permitted for the work execution. Through personal efforts, the materials are arranged by the President. Any undue delay in release of the bill amount will complicate the work as well as payment for the materials. Understanding this trap, the Union engineering section staff demands money. When he executed a road work, he suffered a loss. When the officials expected bribes he explained his inability to give any money.20

Accounting and Auditing:

All the year’s accounts have been audited and no major objections have been raised in the audit. The official’s instructions and guidance change when new officials

20 Interview with Kausturi Nattar, Ayyampalayam Panchayat President, dated 12.11.07.
take charge. Hence the president thinks that he should be provided with clear rules and regulations with regard to various procedures in account maintenance. Panchayat meetings are properly conducted. The Grama Sabha has met 46 times with a maximum attendance of 121 and a minimum of 13. President said that the villagers are not showing interest in attending the Grama Sabha meetings. He takes necessary efforts, but in spite of that, only poor attendance is recorded. The accounts are read out at the meeting. The people expect wage compensation to attend meetings as they are unwilling to forgo livelihood for a day.

**GUNASEELAM GRAMA PANCHAYAT**

The President of the temple Village Panchayat, aged 35, belongs to the Iyyangar community. He possesses one tea stall. He studied up to B.Com., degree. Since his boyhood days he was a fan of M. Karunanithi, Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, and after his college studies, he joined the DMK party. He claims that the leadership of M. Karunanithi and his concern for the poor are the guiding principles in his life. Since 1986 he has been associated with the DMK Party and involved in its agitations, meetings and other programmes and he was even in prison for a brief period.\(^{21}\)

Through this political orientation he understood the public needs, government’s functioning and various welfare programmes pertaining to the poor people. Along with political activities, he is associated with the social institutions like

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\(^{21}\) Interview with N.Laxmikantham, *Ex-Vice-President, Gunaseelam*, dated, 12.11.07.
Village Committee also. He is one of the eight office bearers of the Village Committee.

**Village Setting:**

Gunaseelam is reputed for its Sri Prasanna Vengatalapatthi temple known as Chinna Thiruppathi. It is a central place for ten villages and many marriages are being conducted there. Apart from Iyyangars, there are Vellalars, Muthurajas, Asaris, Chettiars and SCs. About one thousand families are non-SC families. A car festival is conducted during the temple celebration. The temple is under the control of the Hindu Religious and Endowment Board.

**Village Economy:**

Villagers are engaged in farming. Around 30 per cent SCs hold land and the source of irrigation is Cauvery river water. Paddy, banana and sugarcane are the major crops. The landless labourers used to migrate to other states like Kerala and cities like Mumbai and Chennai for employment, particularly in the constructed industry when there is no rain.

**Caste Association:**

Muthiraiyar Sangam, Devendrakula Vellalar Sangam and Viduthalai Siruthaigal are the three caste based organisations functioning in the Village Panchayat. Each of the above mentioned caste institutions works for its own caste people’s welfare and self-respect. There is no youth association in this Panchayat but there is a Sports and Recreation Committee organised by the Panchayat. The youth
enrolled as members of this committee are now demanding a site for them. Women’s associations are five in number.\footnote{Interview with T. Channasi, \textit{Ex,President, Gunaseelam}, dated, 13.11.07.}

**Educational Institution:**

Primary and middle schools are available in the Panchayat area. Children come from hamlets like Manjakorai, Kallur and Vepanthurai. There is scope for a high school and efforts have been taken by the Panchayat. But the Hindus is not supporting the efforts. Hindus want the SC’s as source of agricultural labour in this area.

The DMK and AIADMK are the major parties. Other parties like DMDK, the Viduthalai Siruthaigal, the MDMK and the Congress are also functioning in the Panchayat.

The office bearers of the political parties used to visit the Panchayat office and the President maintains rapport with them by maintaining harmony and thereby utilises their services for the Panchayat. The office bearers of political parties help the Panchayat to avail of funds for additional school building and deepening of tanks.

There were two opponents, one from G.K.Vasan group and another from the E.V.K.S.Elangovan group in the Congress party. The opponents did not have much experience in public life and so people in general preferred Raman during the canvassing. He is a DMK Party activist. His service as a trustee and his traditional leadership were the major attractions. Moreover, in spite of the ill-feeling among the Hindus, he used to maintain tolerance and open sharing, and get supporters among the
Hindus. He spent Rs.30000, for the election for various activities including the food and maintenance expenses for his supporters.23

His perception of Panchayatraj was that it is an opportunity to serve the people and as President, Raman felt that the needs of the people could be met. He also knew that the Panchayat Raj became significant due to former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. Now the official control is less and work is executed immediately and the people have a say in the Panchayats.

He feels that education and credit facilities are two important aspects in the development of the poor. Providing necessary infrastructure will bring a change in the socio-economic life of the poor. The water sources and the supply channels need proper maintenance. A lot of money is needed. So he demands that the MLA and the MP fund allocation have to be earmarked for this type of capital intensive work. The skill of the people has to be utilised and enhanced.

He has a practical notion of social justice which is in line with the DMK ideology. Revolution will not come just by protest but only by a process of individual empowerment. Unnecessary disputes or agitations are meaningless but steady and concerted solidarity among the SCs will do wonders. Moreover the minority population of the SCs cannot overturn hierarchy of the Hindus who are the majority in the village. He feels that the Panchayat President alone could not affect social

23 Interview with M.Perumal, a villager of Gunaseelam Panchayat, dated 13.11.07.
justice. The increase in the cost of essential commodities in the public distribution system or increase in the house tax is anti-social. There has been no change in the house tax since the New Panchayat Raj System was introduced.

**Panchayat Meeting:**

The members regularly attend the meetings, but the majority members are Hindus and most of the decisions are taken keeping in view of their position. The womens do not show interest in any activity other than the drinking water issue. Work is allocated to all streets including the SCs in habited areas.

People attend the Grama Sabha meetings. To encourage their attendance food packets are distributed to the participants. The majority of the participants used to highlight the problems in the agricultural sector. Deepening of the tank, cleaning of bushes and weeds in the tank, maintaining of inlet channel are major activities of the Panchayat. Cement concrete road, new approach road, colony houses, individual loan assistance are the other demands of the public.

**Schemes Implemented:**

Road improvement, realignment of drinking water supply system to prevent frequent damages, construction of TV room is the major activities in the year 2003-2004. The major expenditure was for pipeline as Rs.1.00 lakh was spent towards this work. In the year 2004-2005, culverts were constructed. The village is situated on a slope and so, there are small streams and drain ways at several places. For an easy access

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24 Interview with S.Raman, *President, Gunaseelam Panchayat*, dated, 12.11.07.
transportation, necessary culverts are provided. More than 10 culverts were constructed at a cost of Rs. 23000 each. To improve the water supply, 30 public taps and 26 individual tap connections were provided.

From the TWAD allocation 3 Over Head Tanks were provided. To avail of the fund from TWAD, the MLA was contacted and he discussed this problem with the officials concerned. That is how the work was sanctioned. From the Union fund, house repair fund was given to 25 poor people at the rate of Rs.5000 each and 15 group houses were provided to 15 families. After the community meeting the eligible beneficiaries were selected without any dispute. When single light connection was given, the President enlisted 120 beneficiaries and helped them to get the electricity connection without any corruption.26

Retaining wall construction, balwadi and primary school repair work were done. Union fund of Rs.14000 was spent for repair work. In 2004-2005, 15 group houses were provided from the District Panchayat fund, 15 streetlights were provided; Rs.75000 was spent towards this work. The MLA sanctioned Rs.75000 for desilting the tank. The MP did not provide anything in spite of requests made to him. Under NNT one and half kilometre of road work was executed at a cost of Rs.1.00 lakh.

There are 140 streetlights of which 12 are sodium vapour lamps. People see the Panchayat work only in the provision of water supply and streetlights. But the electricity board does not realise the felt needs of the people and for quick service, a

26 Interview with K.Rajaram, a villager of Manchakorai, dated, 13.11.07.
separate worker is employed for streetlight maintenance and Rs.300 per month is given to him. The electricity bill is heavy as the meter and its accessories are not showing proper readings. In spite of repeated complaints, the employees of electricity board do not take any efforts to repair. Rs.1.50 lakh is spent towards electricity charges. From the Union Councillor's fund activities like bathing ghat construction, retaining walls, cement concrete road, metal road were executed. But none of these activities were discussed with the Panchayat. From the Panchayat fund, 2 new motor pumps were purchased as the old motors became defunct.27

The office building is maintained well after undertaking necessary repair work. It is situated on the roadside. Whenever the President opens the office, ordinary people, village leaders and known persons used to enter and spend their time wastefully.

Accounts/Auditing:

The Panchayat accounts are maintained by the clerk who is a young person. If problems were reported, Panchayat President used to personally meet the officials and offer clarifications. The officials used to expect money and he had to give. The officials are treating the President well. But the activities can go on only if the President meets the officials frequently and explains the position in the village. The Rajiv Gandhi Water Mission Scheme is implemented in the village and Rs. 24000 has been paid from the Panchayat fund as 10 per cent contribution for the sinking of a

bore well. As per the instruction of the officials separate records and registers are 
maintained in respect of the water supply scheme. A separate committee is formed as 
per the guidelines of the officials.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE AYYAMPALAYAM AND GUNASEELAM 
PANCHAYATS

Gunaseelam Panchayat president’s age is only 35, because of his higher 
qualification he has been successful President in comparison with Ayyampalayam 
President. Another reason is that Gunaseelam president has a strong political 
orientation and he has been associated with the DMK party. But Ayyampalayam 
president is an independent candidate, this is not a draw back for this independent 
initiatives, but he has to depend on political wings to initiate welfare measures, he 
does not belong to any political party. Gunaseelam is famous for Sri Prasana 
Vengatachalapathi temple known as Chinna Thiruppathi, Gunaseelam temple is under 
the control of the Hindu Religious and Endowment Board, Ayyampalayam president 
formed a vigilance committee to monitor the eradication of alcoholism, but such kind 
of committee is not formed in Gunaseelam panchayat. Ayyampalayam Grama Sabha 
has met with maximum attendance of 121 villagers for political backup does not in 
any way issue people’s participation only. Gunaseelam Grama Sabha has met with 
maximum attendance of 56 villagers only. In Gunaseelam Pancayat primary and 
middle schools only available, but in Ayyampalayam high schools also available.
EVOOR PANCHAYAT RESERVED FOR WOMEN

One third reservation of Seats for women in Local Bodies through the constitutional amendments had opened a channel in the power structure for women. The new entrants are large in number and they have definite roles, to play in the given structure. The inherent impediments and hurdles associated with the women in Indian Society in the political and economic structure are common to the elected women leaders also. Yet, they are in position to perform their role and discharge their responsibilities.

Empowerment of women refers to the process which women are acquiring due recognition as men, to participate in the development process of the society through the political institutions as a equal partner with human dignity. The barriers which had been very active in the process of development of women have to be removed and for which interventions are imperatives at different levels. Reservation of seats in the local bodies is one of the steps in this direction and this is not the only way to ensure the participation of women in the development process. It has a long way to go in the process of development in society.

The respondent Smt. P. Shanthi, belongs to Muthuraja Community (MBC). Her husband Sri.Paramasivam is an active local leader involved in the farmers association. Smt.P.Shanthi, the President of Evoor Gram Panchayat, studied up to tenth standard, married a farmer. She is thirty years old and she has two children. She has two acres of land for agriculture.
When the village President position was reserved for women (general) the people of Muthuraja Community decided to nominate the wife of Sri. Paramasivam to contest in the election. The respondent informed that she along with her supporters visited each house. Her main campaign focussed on the village. The respondent gave assurance to the people that the long pending needs of villagers like infrastructure facilities to the Schools and primary health centre, drinking water provision etc., could be fulfilled if she were elected to Panchayat.

**Panchayat Meeting:**

Monthly once the Panchayat meeting is conducted. The respondent’s husband is also available during the meeting, to guide her. Her relatives used to visit the hamlets, ensure the provision of drinking water and street lights at the main entrance, etc,. The Panchayat passed resolution and sought help from the Chief Minister by informing him that the Village is continuously neglected by the successive governments for the past ten years.

**President’s New Role:**

A vigilance committee is formed in which the president of village Panchayat has to be the president of the committee on which VAO will serve as secretary along with 3 to 4 local members. The president has further role to play in other vigilance committees like Nutrition Noon Meals Programme implementation, PDs and Flood Relief works. The president further informed that the supply of free dhotis and sarees, rice and kerosene during the flood relief needed close monitoring by the president so as to enable the eligible beneficiaries to get their shares.
The president’s husband further informed that when highway authorities cleared the roadside, the Panchayat planned to plant 13 trees but the people tried to encroach upon the place. But the president and members tried and avoided the encroachment. But the local traditional leaders and political party leaders did not support the Panchayat.

Her main grouse was that the People not evince interest in public activities. The ward members too did not immediately bring the problems to the notice of the Panchayat. Hence she along with her the family members visited various hamlets.

The residents in the village informed that she used to visit union office and collector’s office frequently. She attends the association meeting of the village presidents association.

Programme Implementation:

The president informed that the demands of all ward members have been passed as resolutions. Works are generally allotted to all wards irrespective of presence.

Steps on desilting tanks, deepening of wells, cleaning of ponds, improving drainage system, maintaining road, providing clerks, consulting TV room, retaining wall, and water supply provision are the major works undertaken in the Panchayat at the cost of about Rs.1,25,000.

Occupation:

Agriculture is the main occupation and animal husbandry especially goat rearing is the supplementary occupation. The nearby town Musiri is the important
market for agricultural products. Hence the village farmers transport their commodities to Uzhavar santhai (farmer’s market) in Musiri and earn a lot through vegetable cultivation.

Crops:

Paddy, brinjal, chilly, jowar are the crops. As the scope for regular transportation is more, most of the farmer’s posse’s tyre carts. It is told there is about eighty tyre carts six tractors are in the village.

Most of the land is owned by Muthurajas. Some families of scheduled caste communities own land. In addition to this economic disparity, there is the traditional mentality of dominating the SC community by the majority Hindus. Hence the community relationship is not so good. It is found that the people from SC community have taken steps to strengthen their unity with the help of Ambedkar movement.

Problems of the women Leader:

1. Presidents of Gram Panchayat are not aware of all the rural development programmes and schemes. They come to know only a few programmes from the officials. Even for a few schemes they are not able to get the details from the officials.

2. Needs of the people are kept on increasing which need enormous amount of resources. To meet all their requirements there is no comprehensive plan and moreover they have no adequate resources.
3. Employees and teachers working in the purview of Panchayats, are not employees of the Panchayats and they are all employees of the Government and hence the employees are not accountable to local bodies; as a result schools are not properly managed. Yet the presidents are made accountable to the people for the proper functioning of the schools in the villages.

4. Resource (both in the form of money mobilized from within and drawn from outside) is limited.

5. Capacity of the workers in the rural areas is inadequate to meet the problems in the rural society. Attending to the repair works in the street light or motors fixed in over head tanks is not in time and the technicians cause inordinate delay. Rates for the repairing work are very low and hence nobody turns up for these works. For the purchase of materials for the repairing works and replacement, presidents have no option but to give more money than the market rate. Naturally, this forces them to indulge in corrupt practice. Even if they want to be honest the system would not permit them to be honest.

6. Providing shelter is a major problem in the rural areas. Whether it is providing patta or getting housing schemes president has to face lot of problems as needs are more and available resources are limited. Moreover while providing these facilities discretion of officials plays an important role rather than the procedures of the programmes.

7. Getting the village map is very difficult from the revenue officials because large number of irregularities have been committed by the revenue officials
in the matter of common properties. Absolutely there is no co-operation from the revenue department and other sectoral department in this regard.

8. It is difficult to remove encroachment from the common properties. It requires the support of Revenue Department and Police. As per the government order they have to support the Panchayat to remove all encroachments of the common properties. It is unfortunate that officials are not co-operating with the Panchayats for eviction.

9. Common property resources have not been maintained well to yield income to Panchayat since they are not under the control of the local bodies. They are being encroached by influencing individuals.

10. Needs are unmet even after the Panchayats came into being.

11. No relationship between the needs and the schemes.

12. Still we have complicated administrative procedures at the lower level.

13. Difficult to provide employment opportunities to the needy.

14. Official’s domination over the elected leaders is evident and they dictate terms to the leaders.

15. People’s mind-set is that everything has to be done by the government people are only to receive. They expect each and everything to be taken care of by local body leaders.

16. Common property resource management should be given to local bodies. Sand, quarry and other natural resources are the properties of the community.
But now on a single order they are taken away from the people without getting the consent of the community.

17. Presidents are elected by the people and vice-president of Gram Panchayat is elected by ward members. But to sign the cheque, it was made that vice-president should also sign. It disturbs the atmosphere and administration. Vice-president demands money to put his or her signature.

18. Women presidents are not respected by the officials. Sometimes they were ill-treated in the offices. They face lot of problems in the offices of the government.

19. More flexibility should be given in the schemes to local body leaders to meet the basic needs of the people.

20. Public distribution system should be supervised by the Panchayats in the villages.

21. For each and every transaction officials in the Panchayat union demand money openly.

22. There is no coordination between Panchayat and the co-operatives.

23. Makkal Nala paniyalargal are in the Panchayat and they have to work under Panchayats and they have to get their salary from Panchayats. Yet, in practice they are not working in co-ordination with the president. Now only governments have now realised and they are brought under the control of the Gram Panchayat.

24. Ration cards are to be distributed through Gram Sabha to eliminate bogus cards.
25. For making estimate and settlement of bills, officials take lot of time but to execute the programmes and schemes officials give very short duration to the leaders. This has to be avoided.

26. Birth certificate, death certificate, community certificate should be issued by the Panchayats through resolution. Erring leaders have to be punished. Now these certificates are given by the officials (revenue) after getting Rs.300 as brief.

27. There is no coordination between the revenue department and the development departments.

28. The role of district Panchayat is not known to Gram Panchayat presidents.

29. Panchayat are advised to take up works without claiming any advance. Where do they find money for work? Even after completing the work the presidents have to move from pillar to post to get their money from the offices and for which they have to give bribe to officials at all levels.

30. Allocation of money to MP, MLA, District Panchayat Members, Block Panchayat members tempted the Village Panchayat ward members to pose that they should also be given some amount of money for works.
VELLUR PANCHAYAT RESERVED FOR SCHEDULED CASTE.

One third of position at all levels of the bodies is reserved for women. Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes get reservation of positions at all levels of the bodies in proportion to their population.

The village president said that the fund allocation was distributed in the ratio of 70% to SC’s welfare and 30% to others. He further told that the share extended to SC community in the schemes like Jeevandhara, Group Housing, TRYSEM are also considerably more than other communities. Home sites allocation, distribution on sari and Dhoti, IRDP loan are very much helping SC community. He further informed that the educated in the SC community are evincing keen interest in developing themselves. He feels that others in the same community are not really having self motive or self initiative to develop them.

For empowering the scheduled castes, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment implements various programmes, which encompass welfare, development and protective measures. All the programmes related to empowerment of SC’s are implemented through the State Governments. S.Ponnusamy is a active and most respected leader of Vellur reserved Gram Panchayat. He is 49 years old. He completed seventh standard and then took the responsibility of cultivating the lands, bequeathed from his ancestors. He has two acres of wet land and one acre of dry land. He recollected his experiences of earlier days that he was very much interested in farming, and even after school hours, visited farm site and engaged in all farming activities.
The president Sri. Ponnusamy belongs to DMK. He had a tough competition during the election. There were two candidates filed against him from the AIADMK and the independent.

In general the people from SC community as well as the lower economic group among Muthurajas do not support the authoritative activities. In the tough competition, he won the election. The president explained that the people supported him and at the same time they felt insecure.

Leading the agitation for drinking water:

When a joint action committee of all political parties was formed to take necessary steps for getting drinking water for Vellur and it was dedicated to organize a road rokho. But none of the members came forward to take the leadership. He stepped in during that crisis and led the demonstration. And they succeeded in their attempt and they got over a water scarcity even during the summer.

Major Problems in his Village:

1. A great deal of demand is for housing to Hindus belonging to economically poor section.

2. Fund available to repair hand pump and water tank is not adequate.

3. Drainage is yet another problem in the villages which needs the attention of the government.

4. Jeevanthara grant is not sufficient to meet needs of the village.

He is not aware of the schemes available in DRDA or in Panchayat union. Moreover the procedure adopted in the union office is cumbersome. He feels that he
needs periodical training to handle the institution. He does not know the real implications of the New Panchayat Raj. He is not getting the Government Orders regularly and even to get the G.O. one he has to struggle a lot. He felt that women leaders need an exclusive training programme to overcome the inherent problems. Classes should be handled by the lecturers. More members of NGOs and academics have to be involved in the training programme.

He suggested the following for the success of the Gram Panchayat.

(a) Giving adequate training to the president in the Panchayat accounts and maintenance of records.

(b) Exclusive programme for women could be arranged and leadership training should be given to the women leadership.

(c) Rules and regulations should be given to the women leaders.

(d) Most of the genuine demands of the people could not be met in the government sponsored programmes and they could be met only through exclusive programme for villages.

(e) Provision should be made to allocate more amount of money to meet the demands of the people.

(f) Government orders and information should reach the leaders in time without any delay and impediment.

(g) Panchayat president should be given salary every month as the Panchayat president is almost a full time employee.
Vellur Gram Sabha Meeting:

The following points have been raised during the Gram Sabha meeting.

1. The space at general site belonging to Adi-Dravida community is not sufficient. Hence additional place has to be earmarked for them.

2. The streets are not properly maintained and they should be maintained.

3. Contract works can be taken jointly by these who are in village. And the quality of works carried out through contract has to be properly monitored.

4. When important events are being telecast on TV, the TV operator does not keep on the TV. After a particular time he switches off the TV. Events like cricket are demanded by the youth. Hence TV operator has to be instructed to keep the TV on during those programmes.

5. Electricity supply to all dwelling units has to be given.

6. Transporting facilities has to be provided adequately.

7. Sodium Vapour lamp at main road junction in the village has to be given.

8. Bribery in public service institutions has to be checked by the Panchayat.

9. Pathway to common ground has to be provided.

10. Sanitation facilities to all streets should be provided.

11. Library facility is to be provided.

12. In some streets, a few street lights are not functioning and they are to be repaired.

13. Lamp posts are discriminately used and hence it should be stopped.

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The women who attends Gram Sabha meeting is very limited in number. They did not directly speak. They expressed their opinions through other male members and requested toilet facilities and village industries.

Welfare of the weaker Sections, in Particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes:

1. Planning and review of the schemes being implemented by others for the welfare of SC/ST.
2. Review of the provision of path ways to burial grounds and burning ghat.
3. Electrification of ST and Adi-Dravida and Tribal houses planning review.
4. Planning and review of the assistance scheme for inter-caste marriages implemented by social welfare Department.
5. Planning and review schemes for assistance to petty traders.
6. Planning and supervision of educational concessions extended to the School going children of SC/ST (books, uniforms, scholarship etc).
7. Planning and supervision of the construction of community halls.
8. Planning and supervision of propagating the evils of untouchability to the public.
9. Planning and supervision of training programmes and special coaching for SC/ST
PANCHAYAT PRESIDENTS ELECTION RESULTS ANALYSIS

Panchayat Election:

The superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for the conducting of all elections to the Panchayats shall be vested in a State Election Commission consisting of a State Election Commissioner to be appointed by the Governor. The Governor of a state shall, be requested by the State Election Commission, make available to the State Election Commission, such staff as may be necessary for the discharge of the functions conferred on the State Election Commission. However, subject to the provisions of this constitution, the legislature of a state may by law, make provision with respect to all matters relating to, or in connection with, elections to the Panchayats. In addition to the 73rd amendment there are additional features of elections of every state, which are being given in the State Panchayat Acts.

The constitution of Panchayats as per the Act of 1958, polls to these bodies was held only twice in 1965 and 1970. After a gap of fifteen years elections to these bodies were again held in 1986. After 73rd amendment elections for 12,607 Village Panchayats, 384 Panchayat Unions and 28 District Panchayats in Tamil Nadu were held in two phases on 9 and 12 October 1996. Although the State Election Commission claimed that the elections to the Panchayati Raj Bodies were by and large peaceful, this was not exactly the case. The caste clashes are not a new
phenomenon in these districts. Intolerance of the high castes towards the dalits continues to fester village life to detriment of Panchayati Raj in southern Tamil Nadu.

The results of Panchayat election in 2006 of Musiri block indicated a swing in favor of the independent candidates as is obvious from the table. These elections proved the political maturity of Tamilnadu masses (particularly Musiri block) who could distinguish between the state legislative and local politics.

In the Tamil Nadu state election held in 2006 DMK managed to capture the power. Consecutively the Panchayat elections were held. The above table clearly states the result of Panchayat election of 2006 of Musiri block. The block comprises of 33 Panchayats to which the local election was held to elect the president for each Panchayat.

The seats were assigned on the basis of reservation in which 18 seats for general, 9 for women general, 2 seats were reserved for women scheduled caste and 4 were allotted for scheduled caste in general. The total contestants in all the 33 Panchayats was 131 out of which 26 won on their own influence, 3 & 2 candidates won with the support of AIADMK and DMK support respectively. Two were elected unanimously.

Generally the nature of contest in each Panchayat was between 3 to 4 persons, but the number was more in some Panchayats, that shows a healthy political contest among the people. Since the election is within the limit of Panchayat the winners’
leads have a small difference in their vote bank. Sometimes the contest becomes an interest that a candidate would win by only one vote.

In general people prefer to contest and get elected independently especially in Panchayat election. Moreover, they prefer to have non-party intervention in the local elections for the benefit of a common welfare.

Till October 1, 2001, a total of 4.77 lakh nominations were received for 1.31 lakh posts in local bodies in the State. Of these, as many as 3.98 lakh nominations were for 1.17 lakh seats in rural local bodies and 79,044 for 14,354 urban local body positions. As many as 116 candidates filed papers for the six Mayor posts. Chennai topped the list with 30 nominations, followed by Tirunelveli (24), Coimbatore (19), Madurai (15), Salem (15) and Tiruchi (10). Also, 4,594 nominations were filed for 474 posts of corporation councilors, while 1094 nominations were filed for 102 municipal chairman posts. For the post of 609 town Panchayat chairmen, the election officials received 5,229 nominations.
ALLOTMENT OF SEATS

NUMBER OF SEATS

General 18
Women General 9
Women SC 2
SC General 4
RESERVATION
Nature of winning parties

Number of seats

Category

Independent  AIADMK  DMK  Unanimous

26  3  2  2
## PANCHAYAT ELECTION RESULTS 2006 – MUSIRI BLOCK

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<th>S. No</th>
<th>Name of the panchayat</th>
<th>Name of the elected member</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Party Support</th>
<th>Total Contestant</th>
<th>Total Votes polled</th>
<th>Difference of winning</th>
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The results of Panchayat election 2006 of Musiri block indicated a swing in favour of the independent candidates as is obvious from the table. These elections proved the political maturity of Tamil Nadu masses (particularly Musiri block) who could distinguish between the state and local politics.

In the Tamil Nadu state election 2006 DMK managed to capture the power. Consecutively the Panchayat election was conducted.
### Social and Educational Profile of Sitting Presidents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste Group</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Illiterate</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Middle</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>BA (or Higher)</th>
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Total: 126
## SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL PROFILE OF PREVIOUS PRESIDENTS

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<td>President</td>
<td>Vice-president</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>No of Ward members</td>
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</table>
The broadening of the base of the formal Panchayat leadership that has emerged is the most striking change in the post 73rd Amendment Scenario. A high proportion of the elected leadership from the lower castes and from among women was made possible by statutory amendment. The lower level of educational attainment of the presidents of worse an important problem does not correlate with the high level of social understanding. This is striking among all communities.