The then President of India Dr. ABDUL KALAM, in his public address, speaks about his Dream about India’s future where he says, “India will be a Developed country in 2020 in all its’ field”. He dreams of a nation India where there will be no poverty and no dependency on other multinational companies, since India itself will become self-sufficient through developed companies. India will be advanced in the field of science and technology. India will have remarkable growth and development in all the fields like socio-economy, politics, and science and technology. As a result, India will become a developed country with self-sufficiency. Now the question raised is, will that be possible and will his dream come true?

When we refer to the pages of history and the political journey of free India for the past 60 years (1947-2007), it is encouraging to come across the persons who have offered and dedicated themselves for the cause of the development of the nation and we feel proud to witness the tremendous growth and development of our country. It fills us with pride as we look back on the achievements in different fields like science, socio-economical and political aspects. The scientific advancement and the immeasurable technological growth are beyond doubt. Besides these, our nation also has spiritual growth as one of its developmental aspects since India is a spiritual land and the birthplace for many religions. When we rejoice over our innumerable achievements and our continual marching towards future advancement, we are also terribly threatened by the dark side of our country and its political atmosphere.

**India’s Development in 56 years of Independence**

One of the surveillances made in the year 2003 has come out with the following results of India’s growth and development which really encourages and strengthens each one of its citizen-thanks to all the freedom fighters who sacrificed their blood and sweat for the sake of the nation and to every citizen for his/her contribution be it small or great. In 1947 the problem of encroachment of Kashmir started between Pakistan and India and is still continuing though there had been wars in 1965, 1971 and 1999 in which many innocent people of both countries were
massacred. Pakistan, though defeated, still continues to instigate the terrorists and
intrudes into the affairs of India. Despite of these disturbances, India is making head
way in its progress and development.

An individual's income has increased triple the amount that was 50 years
before. Food production in 1950-51 was 5 crores of tones and today it is more than 21
crores of tones. Cement production in 1950-51 was 30 lakhs of tones and now more
than 10 crores of tones. Petrol and oil production in 1951 was 320 lakhs of tones and
now 500 crores of tones. Electricity production in 1951 was 500 crores kilo warts but
now 51,500 crores kilo warts. Once India was importing even ball pins but now is
exporting numerous products. Indian computer engineers are leading in the world
market. Doctors in 1950-51 62,000 were there but now more than 6 lakhs doctors are
there in the country. Government planning and project investments in 1951-52 was
Rs. 260 crores only, but is now more than 2 lakhs crores. The average life --span of an
Indian was 32 years in 1951 but now it has crossed 65 years.

There are 6, 39,000 primary schools in India. There are more than 2 lakh
middle schools and more than (1, 1/2) one and half lakh (1, 25,000) Higher secondary
schools. There are 8,000. Colleges and approved Technical institutes and medical
colleges are 2223. There are 254 Universities in our country. Women are encouraged
to enter in to so many fields like Army, Police, Offices, Thasildars, welfare
departments, etc... Literacy rate of India today is 65 % and this was just 18 percent in
1950-51).

In spite of the unassuming growth and development we have frightening forces,
which demand our attention. India has a population of 106 crores and one in six
persons in the world population is an Indian. It is also said that in 2050 the Indian
population will be 162 crores. The statistical information regarding the
underdeveloped sections makes us very sad and terrifies us. It is heart breaking to
know that we have more than 55% of the total population of India under poverty line
even after 60 years of independence. There are around 10 crores of people going to bet
without even one meal per day. The social analysts say that hardly 50% of the total populations are able to cross the poverty line even after 60 years of independence. (Narayanan, 2003)

**Education as Basic need but functions as Tradable Commodity**

The provision of education to the citizens of this land has become a tradable commodity. In 1951 there were 2,10,000 primary schools. If there has been real growth and development in education, by now there must be at least (20,00,000) twenty lakhs primary schools in India. Unfortunately, in 2005 there were only 5,81,000 primary schools. As a consequence the educational status is only 65% and it is to say that more than half of the total populations of the world illiterates are in India.

A government report says that among children of age group 6 to 14 years, 80% attend school. But the fact is, from the age of 5 to 9, only 56% children go to schools at present. Around 3 crores of children are not admitted in schools and 52% of the children do not complete 8th standard and become dropouts. There are only 17 crores of children who continue their education after 8th std but around 12 crores of children are unable to continue after 8th std. Those who join 1st std only 48% of them complete 8th std and 10% of them do their higher secondary. Among the Dalit and tribal communities, 80% to 90% female children do not study after 10th std. There are around 3 crores of children who are unable to pay the school fees and 9 crores of children do not have access to the schools since the schools are located far from their dwellings. The worst of all these is that there are 80% to 90% children who are unable to read and write properly and struggle to do it and the reason is that there is no Black Board in 81,617 schools in which 48,989 schools are primary schools (Venkada Subramaniyan, 2007)

In India, 42,000 schools have no building at all. 13,857 schools In Madhya Pradesh, 5,344 schools in Andhra Pradesh, 4,603 schools in Sathishkar, 1232 schools in Bihar and 1112 schools Uthra pradesh have no buildings at all. The total number of
schools in India is 10.4 lakhs in which (10%) 17,842 schools have only one class room. Among the 22 crore of children in India who are of the school going age only 12 crore children go to school. Among this 12 crore, those who complete their basic education are only 3 crores and it is certainly due to poverty that the children become drop outs (Planning Commission for Education and National Administration, 2007).

In the planning level, both the central and state governments allocate very minimum budget for the education. Basic right for education is deprived. Allocation of funds for education must be at least 10% from the central government and 30% from the state government as suggested by the educationalists though no one pays heed to it. We spend 30% of our total budget on the Indian Army but for producing the future leaders of India, only 3.4% is allocated. It is very painful to know that it is very much less than what they spend for V.I.P and V.V.I.Ps. (Kirishnamurthy, 2007)

Health and Malnutrition

Although we have attained remarkable growth in the field of medical advancement in treatment and medication, it is minimum in comparison with the population of our nation. Thousands of children die everyday due to malnutrition. The Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh in one of his addresses, mentioned the government scheme for providing nutrition to the new born baby and its mother until the baby reaches the age of six. There are 16 crores of children from the age group of 1 to 6 in India but only 5 crores of children benefit out of this scheme and the other 11 crores of children are not benefited by this. The reason given by the Prime Minister was that the money and the food materials allotted for these purposes are smuggled and stolen away by the ministers and the authorities responsible.(Manmohan Singh, 2007) This statement brings shame upon us and especially on the administration of our leaders how they are irresponsible and corrupted to the core to steal even from the mouth of the new born babies!
As regard to the health we have limited Hospice care and it is disproportionate to the increasing number of population. We had in 1951, at the time of independence, 62000 medical doctors and now we have more than 6 lakhs medical doctors but it is very minimum to treat 105 crores of people in India. Today in India there is only one doctor for 4162 persons while there is one doctor for 622 persons in developed countries like America and one doctor for 363 persons in Russia. In Cuba (Latin America) there is one doctor for 170 persons and the population is greater than that of America. In India there is one bed for 1480 persons. It is terribly shocking and unimaginable to think of becoming a developed country within some 12 years. It is unthinkable of such a dream unless we create some alternative approach to do so. (Christopher, 1998)

The Socio-Economic and Political Environment

The socio-political environment includes socio-cultural development, political administration, religious aspects, etc. India is a pluralistic and secularist country where every person has freedom of religion to adopt his/her own practice of religion. The Unity in Diversity, the greatest strength of India is observed and marveled by the world countries at large. But there is a threat to this greatest and unassuming force. The political leaders have begun to utilize this strength as their political weapon to achieve political power and position. The political parties have adopted religion as their weapon to acquire the power for which they instigate and stimulate the people with religious fanaticism. Instead of strengthening the unity in diversity they create disunity and utilize the same for their selfish motives. The ordinary people become irrational with religious fanaticism. The peculiar system of caste in India is another disunifying force, which has also become a source of vote bank for the politicians.

Social problems are on the increase every day. The social evil bribery has squeezed the blood of the poor and downtrodden. It has become a necessary evil among all the officials and non-officials. Nothing can be obtained from government
officials and non-governmental officials without bribe or donation. Human power, abilities & capabilities have lost their primacy.

**The demerits of Democracy**

Democracy has lost its original sense. It is not seen so much as the scope given to people to exercise their will to self direction, but as a wasteful exercise that ends up bringing power to the big and the rich leaving the rest weakened further and further. The demerits of democracy are predominant everywhere instead of the merits and goodness. It is well planned with selfish motive of the politicians and the rich.

Political science mentions that 20 percent of the population goes to college and holds important positions within the capitalist democracy. They are called the "Political Class", which is actually active in public and economic affairs. This roughly constitutes about 20 percent of the population, said Chomsky.

It is to be remembered that the United States is not a democracy- and has never been intended to be a democracy. It is called in political science literature, a polyarchy, a polyarchy being a small section of the population in control of essential decision making for the economy, the political system, the cultural system and so on. And the rest of the population is supposed to be passive and acquiescent. They are supposed to cede democracy to the elite elements who call themselves rather modestly the “responsible men”. “We are the responsible men and we take care of the affairs of the world.” The rest are sometimes called a “bewildered herd” Or a rabble or something like that said Walter Lipman, the leading figure in U.S. Journalism and a leading public intellectual of the 20th century.

James Madison (1751-1836), one of the main American constitution framer who was a democrat and very lucid and intelligent wanted to have a kind of democracy in which the primary role of the government is to protect the minority of the opulent against the majority. This is the fundamental role of government, what he
called "the permanent interests of the country" are those of property owners and that they must be protected. He was very concrete in his thinking and this was in 18th century and the model they had in mind was England and the question of the English framework of the constitution kept coming up.

Sir Thomas Moore who once served as the chancellor of the British Government and authored the much-maligned Utopia, views Government as a plot by the rich. Nobody needs to ask, "Against whom?" Naturally, it could only be against the poor.

Alex Carey, an Australian, in a scholarly analysis of corporate propaganda, wrote a book called 'Taking the risk out of democracy'. When you have a formal democratic system, when people have won rights after years of struggle, like the right to vote and participate in elections, you have to take the risk out of democracy by ensuring that there is very little substance to their democratic choices. (Edwin, 1997)

The Demerits of Democracy in Indian Context

In India we have the representative democracy system, which has the same system of democracy as it is mentioned above. It is very evident that the permanent interest of the country is to protect the rights and needs of the opulent and powerful 20% and the rest of the people 80 percent, it is just a rough number and not to be taken seriously – have to be distracted so that they do not interfere. There is a huge industry devoted to this purpose, developed primarily in the more democratic countries. It is called the public relations industry. The advertising industry is a part of it and their concern is to distract the public.

In the representative democracy, the people’s representatives are not willingly proposed and elected by the people themselves. Rather, the so called people’s representatives are nominated by some popular political party leader. He nominates (appoints) a person to a particular constituency based on the following criteria: the
candidate should have enough of wealth and money to buy the people’s vote; he should be a popular person by hook or by crook and he should have Dhathas, (Gundaism) to bring the people under his control by force or violence; he should be a faithful servant to the party leader under whose mercy he gets a nomination and he should never voice out his difference of opinion against the leader even if the leader decides some nonsense or commits criminal offence against the people at large; he should be able to contribute currency (lakhs and lakhs) whenever the party leader demands; he should cooperate with the leader without any objection to anything. The constituencies are concentrated based on the caste system predominant in the area and also the religion.

Therefore the people themselves do not propose the people’s representatives. The people do not know whom they are voting. Sometimes the representatives are sent from other constituency areas to some other place. For example, for the constituency of Trichy, a person from Vilupuram is appointed by the party and wins the election. In such a situation what does the person know about Trichy and the nature of the people and their needs? People are in a way forced to vote. When we look back the past few parliament elections there are only 40 % to 60 % or sometimes 65% of the people go for voting and the absolute majority in these percentages becomes the victorious party. Nobody seems to have bothered the 30 to 40 percent of population who are unwilling to participate in the election. In fact, these 30 to 40 percent should be the deciding factor. This factor is very evident that majority of the people are dissatisfied with the existing practice of democracy.

When the elected representatives occupy power, their primary concern and concentration is to accumulate enough wealth for their generations. They are least bothered about the people and their needs. They score the top most rank in corruptions. Thus the people lost their faith in the present practice of representative democracy. E. V. R. Periyar calls this present democracy as a Devil. He meant to say that as the devil is symbolized the combination of all evils, so also the present system of democracy is the total representation of all social evils (Rathinam, 2005). Therefore
we need to have an alternative structure, which would promote Direct Democracy and participation of everybody.

**Decentralization: A Prerequisite to Genuine Democracy**

(Panchayati Raj system)

**Decentralization** is generally understood to indicate devolution of powers and resources from a higher level government to a lower level government. As the process of centralization gathers momentum and frustrates people’s aspiration for influencing public decisions that vitally affect their lives, the demand for decentralization grows stronger. What this demand articulates is the need to open and expand public space at the local community level so that the people themselves can decide about what is to be done for the well being of the community and how is it to be done. The demand for decentralization thus is a demand for participation of the people in the governance.

Decentralization through the involvement of local level representative institutions in the formation of plans for development and also their implementation is being advocated in the interest of efficient utilization of resources and for ensuring a more equitable sharing of benefits resulting from the process of development. In India, the present concern for decentralization needs to be seen in the context of the slow rate of benefits flowing from infrastructure already built up as indicated by the slow growth of productivity and insufficient percolation of benefits to the poor and the socially disadvantaged sections, despite the persistent efforts in the direction. (Joshi, 200).

**The Historical Development of Panchayati Raj**

The Panchayats have for centuries formed an integral part of Village Administration in our country. In south India, especially in Tamil Nadu, the Panchayats had their roots in the past and as evident from the historical records, inscriptions and monuments, they played a vital role in the integration and
development of village life. Even the Sangam literature mentions about “Manralis” and “Podhiyil”, which are Grama Sabhas of those times. There were “Maha Sabhas” in Bhamadeya villages with enormous administrative powers. There are evidences of these sabhas even during Rig Veda period.

During the Chola regime, local bodies functioned as autonomous rural institutions with vigour and efficiency. In order to help the administration, a highly developed committee system called ‘Variam’ was established. Times to time elections were conducted by the system called ‘Kudavolai Murai’. The members thus elected would constitute themselves into various ‘Variams’ such as Eri Variam (Lake Committee), Thotta Variam (Gardem Committee), and Pon Variam (Gold Committee or Treasury/ Finance Committee). They duly discharged their respective function. The duration of membership was one year. A big banyan tree in the village or the village mandapam served as office/ venue for the meeting. The accounts were maintained by an officer designated as ‘Karanathan’ and he will submit the accounts in the Panchayat committee.

After the Chola rule, the Pandiyas and the Nayaks also encouraged the system and the panchayat system existed with slight changes. After the Nayak rule, Kanyakumari district was under the rule of Travancore kings upto 1949, and during their rule, there were three types of assemblies: at the village level there was a Village Assembly called ‘Tarakootam’; ‘Nadukootam’ was the assembly containing representatives of villages; and ‘Perumkootam’ was the National Assembly represented by the whole kingdom.

During the British regime, Lord Rippon, the then Governor General of India, who was rightly called the father of local self government in India, passed two resolutions on local self government: one in 1881 and the other in 1882. According to these, the provincial governments were directed to transfer considerable revenues to the local bodies. Lord Rippon was of the opinion that generating local knowledge and local interest improved the efficiency of the system. There might be initial failures but
substantial progress would follow. On this basis local boards were formed in all the districts, with one thirds of officials and two thirds of elected members. Administration was carried out according to the resolutions passed by the board. Necessary amendments were made so that provincial governments could not dictate or interfere unnecessarily with the local bodies. (Raj, 2007).

**Constitutional and Local Government**

India’s Constitution has been a subject of great appreciation from various quarters. Right from its Preamble to the latest amendments, the spirit of democracy and republicanism has prevailed, thanks to the political acumen of the far-sighted leadership and wisdom of the masses. Yet one of the grey area of Indian Democracy where much is needed to be done in terms of laying stronger foundations of democracy and encouraging popular participation, was left to the mercy of State Governments by endowing them authority to decentralize and delegate powers with the Constitution makers limiting themselves to the ideas enshrined in the Preamble and article 40 of the Directive Principles of State Policy which stipulated that “The state shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self government.” Whatever reforms thereafter were either embodied in various reports and sketchy legal provisions of various Acts of State Governments until revival of the debate on the 64th constitutional amendment in 1989 and district level governance in the late seventies. The debate for strengthening local bodies finally culminated in the passage of 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments which begins from grassroots although these cannot be considered perfect and foolproof constitutional reforms (Joshi, 2001).

**The background**

During our freedom struggle the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, propounded the idea of panchayati raj for India as an integral part of Hindu Swaraja.
In fact, his vision of panchayath raj became an essential part of Indian psyche during the freedom struggle and when our founding fathers were drafting the Constitution of India they enshrined Gandhi’s ideal in Article 40, part II under “Directive Principles”. The article says: “The State shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.” Thus, establishment of panchayats as ‘units of self-government’ became an obligation, the guiding principle and the ultimate motto for every successive government. Though a major deficiency of Article 40 is that it is not wide enough to cover local government outside of village panchayats and thus it was a symbolic concession to Mahatma Gandhi’s criticism of the neglect of panchayats in the draft constitution of independent India. However, it was in the pursuance of this ideal that successive governments, from Jawaharlal Nehru to Rajiv Gandhi, tried to establish and operationalize panchayat raj Institutions as the corner-stone of Indian polity. Without going into details of the long journey of Panchayat Raj Institutions in the country, let it be briefly stated that each model of Panchayt Raj, when introduced, was found wanting in one aspect or the other, & especially when judged against the touchstone of ‘people’s participation’ and ‘self-government at grassroots level’.

Appointment of successive committees such as the Balwant Ray Mehta Committee, Ashok Mehta Committee, GVK Rao Committee and Dr. LM Singhvi Committee, were efforts to improve upon the earlier or existing models, their objective being the democratization and decentralization of panchayat raj institutions and to make them truly participatory. All these efforts helped in improving and redesigning the Panchayati Raj model so that it could inexact the lofty ideal of panchayats as the ‘units of self government’. Taking stock of the earlier efforts, the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi launched the most intensive campaign for reviving the three-tier system of governance and paid maximum attention to the problems that beset the panchayati raj institutions. With a burning zeal to strengthen Rajiv Gandhi Government came forward with plans to reorient panchayati raj system with the objective of devolution of more power and resources to panchayats and to make them truly representative and participatory.
Here it would be pertinent to quote portion of a speech of Rajeev Gandhi in which he said, after independence we had promised in the Constitution to strengthen the third level of our democracy. The third level, however, is weak and it affects the first two levels also. People at the top level have become paper tigers and the structure has become hallow. This has to be set right by strengthening the panchayati raj institutions. To strengthen our democracy at Delhi and the state capitals, it is essential to strengthen the democratic institutions at the panchayat level. This shows his commitment to the strengthening of the panchayati raj system in the country. (Joshi, 2001).

**Different Phases of Transformation**

Panchayati Raj in India has passed through four distinct phases within its short span of life – the phase of ascendancy (1959-1964), the phase of stagnation (1964-1969), the phase of decline (1969-1983) and phase of revival (1983 onwards). Thus, in the renewed phase of revival of panchayati raj institutions, a constitutional amendment bill was introduced in Parliament by Rajiv Gandhi Government. Since that bill was not passed by the Parliament finally, another bill was introduced by P.V. Narsimha Rao Government in 1991 and it was passed by the Parliament on 22nd December 1992. Subsequently, the bill thus passed became the Constitution Seventy-third Amendment Act, 1992 which came into effect from 24 April, 1992. This constitutional amendment has generated a strong wave of awareness and expectations among the people. It has been widely welcomed by one and all as it opens the door to restore freedom, autonomy, power and self-governance to the masses, enlarge and deepen democracy in the country and facilitates people-centred participatory development. The salient features of the Act are: Gram Sabha in each village; a three-tier system of the panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels; direct and regular holding of elections of members of panchayats at all levels; reservations of seats for SCs/STs and reservation of one-third of the total seats for women; five year tenure for every panchayat and in case of dissolution, elections to be held within six months and
The amendment thus provides for certain far reaching steps to strengthen panchayats. Article 243 (G) thus recognizes panchayats as 'institutions of self-government' with prime responsibilities of promoting economic development and ensuring social justice. It reads:

"Subject to the provisions of the Constitution, the legislature of a State by law, endows the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government and such law may contain provisions for the devolution of powers and responsibilities upon panchayat at the appropriate level, subject to such conditions as may be specified therein, with respect to-(a) the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice; and (b) the implementation of such schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule". (Joshi, 2001)

Similarly Article-243 H of the Constitution empowers the state legislatures to enact laws: (a) to authorize a panchayat to levy, collect and appropriate some taxes, duties, tolls and fees. (b) to assign to the panchayat, some taxes, duties, tolls levied and collected by the State government; (c) to provide for making grants-in aid to the panchayats from the Consolidated Fund of the State; and (d) to provide for constitution of such funds for panchayats for crediting all money received by or on behalf of panchayats and also the withdrawal of such money there from.

Article 243-I of the Constitution provides for constitution of a State Finance Commission to review the financial position of panchayats and make recommendations to the Governor regarding the principles governing the major issues mentioned in Articles 243-H.
Going one step ahead towards the direct democracy the parliament passed the Panchayat (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996. This Act came into force from 24 December 1996. It extends panchayats to tribal areas of eight States of India namely, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan, which intends to enable tribal society to assume control over their own destiny to preserve and conserve their traditional rights over natural resources. State legislatures were mandated to amend their own panchayath laws to give effect to this parliamentary legislation. As yet only Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan have enacted the laws whereas in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra action has been initiated in this regard. However, the state of Orissa has not yet initiated any action so far.

With these features, panchayats have come to stay as an integral part of our constitutional polity. Constitutional status and framework have been hailed as a revolutionary step towards establishing grassroots democracy. It also ensures people’s participation and self-governance. Article 243 (G) devolves the powers, functions and responsibilities to panchayats in respect of 29 items to prepare their schemes and development plans and implementation of programmes of economic development and social justice. All these efforts will enable the panchayats to function as instruments of vibrant and viable rural local self government and thus acquire the capacity to learn, to respond, to change and to mobilize better people’s participation in managing their own affairs (Joshi, 2001).

The Initiatives of State

With the introduction of the Constitution’s Seventy-Third Amendment Act, 1992, all the State governments have amended or repeated their existing laws to establish panchayats at village, intermediate and district levels. The State Acts are inconsistent with the provisions of the said amendment. Except for West Bengal State Panchayat Act, all other State governments have enacted new laws. The State Government of Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Karnataka have also
amended their newly enacted laws more than once to further strengthen them. These efforts have infused a fresh wave of life in the country as the powers of control, inspection, supervision and implementation appertain various departments has been entrusted to Panchayat raj Institutions.

A glimpse of the initiatives taken to ensure bottom up approach in order to see the dream of decentralized planning becomes a reality corroborates the fact that there is a dire need to look at all the aspects seriously and sincerely.

**The implementation of Local self Government in Tamil Nadu state**

The local self government of Panchayat Raj system is being practiced in Tamil Nadu and this is the administrational structure as seen in the election held in the year 2007. Local government practices the three tier system and the state is divided accordingly for the devolution of the power in administration. There are six Corporations namely Chennai, Salem, Coimbatore, Thirunelveli, Madurai, Tiruchirapalli where in 474 councillors are elected. There are 1,30,962 representatives to form the local government in Tamil Nadu. The total numbers of panchayats are 12,618 from which 97,485 ward members are to be elected. The panchayat unions are 385 out of which 6,570 ward members are needed. District panchayats are 29 out of which 656 members are to be elected. The town panchayats are 561 out of which 8,807 members to be elected. The municipal governments panchayats are 50 and 987 councilors are elected for the same. The townships are 102 where 3,392 councilors are elected. The system is very attractive and impressive for the decentralization and devolution of power in order to create effective participation of the people but in actualization it is a big question? (Narayanan, 2007).

**Achievements and Apprehensions**

The post-73rd constitutional amendment experience of the working of panchayat raj institutions has brought to light a fundamental fact that the three active participants
of the panchayat system — (i) the elected panchayat raj Representatives, (ii) the Officers of the State administration, and, (iii) the elected MPs/MLAs of the area — looked at each other with apprehension. Bureaucrats are known for their resistance to change and this becomes even more obvious when the change involves the bureaucratic machinery itself. They faced that the strengthening of panchayats may deprive them of the powers they enjoined and make them totally redundant or subordinate to the whims and wishes of the elected representatives. Elected representatives, on the other hand, express apprehension that some local officers, through their action, tend to destroy the very fabric of self governance at district/intermediate and local levels for their narrow ends, while some MPs/MLAs of the area view at the new system of panchayats as a threat to their authority. However, with the passage of time and increased awareness of the process of decentralization these apprehensions are on the wane.

Devolution of functions and powers to the panchayats is also an area where confusion still persist. The Eleventh Schedule provides a list of subjects to be allotted to Panchayati Raj Institutions. This list is illustrative and not exhaustive in nature. Based on this list, the State legislatures were expected to chalk out the details of functions under each of those 29 listed subjects and distribute them among different tiers of panchayats. But barring a few states, this expectation was belied. Most of the States copied all the 29 subjects mentioned in the eleventh schedule and appended with their respective Panchayat Acts. What is needed is to work out in detail all the related works and distribute them among different tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions according to their capacity.

The overall functions of panchayat reveal both positive and negative trends. It is an important fact that although people at large have become aware about democratic decentralization of powers after the seventy-third constitutional amendment, yet due to their rights, responsibilities and also remaining busy in managing two meals a day, majority of them are still indifferent and inactive. Even the perceptions of Panchayati Raj representatives, particularly of those belonging to the weaker sections who got an
opportunity to participate in the decision-making process for the first time, are not clear. However, after going through the various aspects, it can safely be said that the constitutional amendment has at least succeeded in hastening the process of decentralization in a systematic manner. It would be too much to expect changes or spectacular results within a short period of time. The achievements may appear to be limited but the impact is significant, particularly in (i) ensuring durability and providing direction, dignity and sustainability, (ii) opening up of avenues for weaker sections in decision making process, (iii) bringing the process of planning at the doorstep of the people, and (iv) in generating awareness of their needs and rights among the masses. If viewed in a positive perspective, these are into small gains. Therefore, the present situation should be considered promising for the future growth of the ‘little republics’.

To conclude, it can be said that a great deal in regard to the future scenario of the PRIs would, therefore, depend upon the political will of the State governments and the PRIs themselves strive hard to utilize the provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment for activating the PRIs and making them live organs as local governments and development bodies. Sustained efforts in this direction would certainly give a boost to the cause of decentralization governance (Singh, and Pandey, 1994).

**Focus On Convergence**

Undoubtedly, Panchayats, as the third tier in self-governance have come into focus on the centre stage as critical and vital instrument in delivery of services meant for the poor and the weaker sections including women and children. A new model of sustainable rural development based on local assets and resources, therefore, needs to be evolved by a few collectors who can take initiative to organize workshops at district and Panchayat levels to be attended by field functionaries and public representatives. Hopefully, such workshops will evolve convergence mechanism at Panchayat level for delivery of services and implementations of schemes in all
integrated approach. The scope of this mechanism should include micro-planning prioritization of felt needs and schemes, location of new facilities in close proximity to the existing infrastructure, evolution of work culture based on the guiding principle of ‘share work’ and ‘share facilities’ by field functionaries so as to emphasis the interdependence. The strategy to be adopted for operationalising convergence mechanism should include joint meetings of Panchayat level functionaries every fortnight or every month to begin with, joint touring in the area, joint inspection off community assets and infrastructure, adoption of the particular village by a senior officer at the district level to guide the convergence team at Panchayat level. The convergence mechanism would eventually institutionalize the working relationships among field functionaries so as to lead towards convergent community action by the team.

In the context of developing convergence mechanism and the coordination team, it would be necessary to re-examine a number of Panchayat and village level committees set up by various departments of the government for such purposes as education, ICDS (Aanganbari), PDS, Joint Forest Management Committee, Watershed development etc. After re-examination, an umbrella coordination team would be required to be institutionalized at Panchayat level so as to facilitate operationalization and implementation of various schemes and services presently administered by functionaries within a narrow, fragmented framework based on rigid departmental rules and guidelines.

Briefly, Panchayats which are an integral part of our ancient cultural heritage should be revitalized so that local needs and problems are addressed locally and self-governance at grass-root democracy becomes a reality. In this context, it would be useful to quote Gandhiji’s dream of village republic so as to keep a constant focus in our objective of establishing rural republic.

If my dream is fulfilled, and every one of the seven lakhs of villages becomes a well-living republic in which there are no illiterates, in which no one is idle for want of work, in which everyone is usefully occupied and has nourishing food, well-
ventilated dwellings, and sufficient Khadi for covering the body, and in which all the villagers know and observe the laws of hygiene and sanitation, such a state must have varied and increasing needs, which it must supply unless it would stagnate (Srivastava, 2001).

Limitations or Weakness in the Working of Panchayati Raj System (PRS)

The provision of the Panchayati Raj System as a framework of rural local government, which has inbuilt decentralizing tendencies, was incorporated in the non-justifiable Part IV of the Directive Principles of the State Policy Constitution of India. Article 40, which is a directive to the states, stipulates, “The states shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.” Thus the panchayati raj system is nothing but a set of institutions placed at different levels that function to accomplish the multiple goals and tasks assigned to rural local self-governments.

Since the Balwant Ray Mehta Committees recommended the panchayati raj system in India way back in 1945, several attempts have been made at the national and state levels to strengthen panchayati raj in the country. But there are certain limitations/ills such as the domination of the panchayati raj institutions by the bureaucracy and the upper rich strata of the rural community, absence of scientific basis of the planning process at the panchayat level and programme implementation and devolution of financial and administrative powers, apathy of citizens towards local problems, factions, partisan groups, lack of intergroup adjustments, lack of technical competence, lack of people’s participation, lack of inter departmental coordination and structural overlapping of functions underlying the functioning of the panchayati raj System. Besides these, traditional leadership entrenched in caste and land ownership is still in dominance. Functional leadership has not yet emerged. Vested interests, corruption, inefficiency, groupism, unhealthy rivalry, misuse of power, motivated decisions and actions have already affected the functioning and limited the
utility of Panchayati Raj to an average villager. However, the potential of Panchayati Raj System has to play a very important role in the overall development of the economy, policy and development administration of the country. But being denied the constitutional status and financial support, and a lack of political will on the part of political masters besides public apathy and indifference, the panchayati Raj Institutions have failed to deliver goods. These bodies suffered from lack of resources and had to function in a state of perpetual neglect.

Though the state governments have started taking initiatives there are certain issues which need a cautious approach. Converting of Gram Sabha meetings, setting up position of panchayats, ensuring cordial relationship among officials, MPs/MLAs and elected panchayat representatives, devolution of functions and powers and accountability are such issues which need special mention. In these areas the Panchayati Raj Institutions are facing a lot of problems.

The Government of India has observed the year 1999-2000 as the “year of Gram Sabha”, as the Gram Sabha is potentially the most significant institution for participatory democracy and decentralization. The Gram Sabha, comprising the assembly of all people living in a village was given a special place in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, so as to enable the people to manage their affairs collectively. As such, the functioning of Gram Sabha will certainly ensure a vibrant democracy with transparency and accountability. However, in practice, the Gram Sabha is not attracting the people though these have been regarded as the ‘soul’ of panchayati raj system. The main reason for such a situation is that the Gram Sabahs play only recommendatory role. The decisions arrived at in the Gram Sabha meetings are not mandatory on Gram Panchayats in most of the laws enacted by the State Governments. People feel that if the decisions taken at the Gram Sabha are not implemented, then the meetings are for namesake and attending them is unimportant. To cope with this situation there seems to be a need to vigorously launch an awareness campaign on a large scale.
Most of the State governments have not yet made the DPC functional. Only a few States – Madhya Pradesh, Kerala and West Bengal have enacted separate legislations to constitute DPCs. This failure on the part of the State governments to set up DPC is not a healthy sign in advancing the process of decentralization at the State level and below.

Financial independence and availability of adequate resources are the prerequisites for any institution in general and for the agencies involved directly in the overall development like the Panchayat Raj Institutions in particular. It is a pity that the PRIs have very little resources of their own. It is one of the weak and negative aspects of panchayati raj institutions that collection of tax revenues by them is far from satisfactory. They remain dependant on State and Central governments for grants that too received for specific proposes only. This practice has created a situation where PRIs feel accountable to these governments and not to the people for whom they are meant. In order to deal with such a situation, the state finance commissions have been set up in all the States to evolve suitable criteria and make appropriate recommendations to strengthen the financial base of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Several state finance commissions have submitted their reports so far and some of the Sate governments have also accepted their recommendations wholly or partly. The Eleventh Finance Commission set up by the Government of India has recommended on the devolution of resources for five years commencing from April 1, 2000. It has been mandated to evolve a suitable pattern to distribute the financial resources between the centre, states and panchayats. It is believed that the panchayats would get a reasonable share to do justice to the people of the countryside.

When we speak of the direct participation of everyone, at the national and state level, or at the panchayat parliamentary system, it cannot be achieved so, because the constituency which we consider to be the talking forum for the people, is too big and only the big people’s (Rich, wealthy, powerful, Caste group etc.) voice will be heard and not that of the poor and needy. They become automatically voiceless and helpless. The panchayat government also has the same defects and therefore we need to go for
alternative governance where everybody gets opportunity to participate (Prasad, 1998).

**Statement of the Research Problem**

There is a deep urge and hunger among the people to participate in Direct Democracy rather than in the present system of representative and indirect democracy. In the representative democracy, the people are active and given opportunity to participate just few minutes once in five years. Among the predicaments in the modern socio-economic and political scene we note the following:

1. **A sense of helplessness among people**
   People feel cheated, pushed around, let down. They don’t know whom to approach and how to effectively get things done.

2. **A sense of alienation**
   Not just economical alienation but also socio-political and cultural, wherein one feels one is a nobody, but chaff pushed around by forces over which he has no control-a feeling like: “Anything could happen to anybody in this world without my being able to do anything about it”. Or a feeling where he says, “It is not my world; it is someone else’s. It is the world of big shots”.

3. **A sense of depersonalization**
   People feel they cannot afford to be persons. To be a person is more than just to be human. To be a person is to be somebody. It is to be counted, to be taken into account, to be taken seriously, to be consulted, to belong, to be integrated, and to find one’s place as someone of worth. To be a person is also to be a giver and contributor and not just be a recipient, to be a subject and an agent rather than be just an object and a faceless unit of a vague crowd. To be a person is also to claim to be a participant, a participant in everything that affects one.

4. **Growing loss of credibility of political parties**
   An unsettling question that raised its head in various ways during the elections was: Can we continue to trust political parties to ensure the health of the nation or
to put it differently to ensure the well being of the people of India? We saw unimaginable types of criss-crossing, alliances and betrayals of trust by parities and party leaders of various hues. Even “ideologies” were thrown to winds.

The situation made political thinkers wonder if there was any more any relevance left in the very concept of political parties. Some called it, “The end of the party”. Amrita Abraham wrote in Indian Express commenting on '96 elections: “It seems likely to go down in history as the terminal phase of the party system we have known since 1957”. The answer is not, yet another party. Not even another ideal leader taking reins from the existing parties. Given the present structure and arrangement of things, every party runs the risk of encountering the same problems. And every leader, of getting submerged by the pressure of ground realities in the parties.

5. **Loss of control over market forces**

Letting the market “liberalized” ends up with a situation where no market is left for the vast majority of people. A market controlled by a few could also mean poverty and loss of personhood for the vast majority.

6. **Loss of faith in Democracy itself**

Democracy appears in the minds of many as road that leads no where. It is not seen so much as the scope given to people to exercise their will to self direction, but as a wasteful exercise that ends up bringing power to the big and the rich leaving the rest weakened further and further.

7. **Inadequacy of panchayat structures**

Panchayats, no doubt, are a step in the right direction and a step towards decentralization. It brings quite a lot of power to forums supposedly more accessible at lower levels. But as forums of participation they are not small enough for “small” people to handle. And as long as the participatory forums continue to be big, only the big shots will have their say and their game. The small and the poor could really continue to feel alienated.

8. **Lack of adequate channels to ensure**

that help reaches those who need most rather than those who influence most. Influence, of course, takes various shapes leaving those without the where withal to influence desperate.
9. **Disorientation among NGHOs**

Non-Governmental Humanitarian Organizations (NGHOs) too seem, of late, to develop a tendency to empower themselves rather than empower the people. They too in growing number, tend to become another set of middlemen dividing people and slowing down people’s process of empowerment.

10. **Over-dependence on bureaucrats**

In the absence of people’s own viable structures for participation in decision-making, a good lot of the decisions are left to bureaucrats and politicians. But even the well-meaning bureaucrats initiate relevant programmes and processes, leave the people frustrated when they leave on transfers and are succeeded by someone who does not share their ideals and commitments and turns the whole process upside down. And they are transferred often enough depending on the whims of the various politicians.

11. **Inadequacy of trade unions and similar organizations**

Though such advocacy organizations have indeed played and continue to play and will continue to play a great role you cannot expect them to handle the ordinary nitty-gritty of day to day decision making that living as a people involves. Again, each such organization with its specialized emphasis and being open only to special interest sections could neither be universal in its concerns nor speak on behalf of all.

12. **Monopolizing and alienating trends of the media**

Media tend to be more and more monopolistic accumulating vast communication power in the hands of just a handful. Traditional values of media ethics, based on right to information and the role of public opinion, are giving way to commercial considerations. Of equal seriousness is the media-created situation where people are made to be more passive recipients than agents of communication. They become so to say objects on the receiving end of “messages” aimed at them by those in or with power, rather than subjects who decide together in partnership.

The media communication, in addition, tend to play an evasive preventing them from facing up to the painful fact that the world is slipping from under their feet and pushing them to inaction.
Now the **DREAM** of our statement of problem is this. "We need to bring the world back to people. And by people, we mean not just the moneyed and the powerful, but the vast majority of those who are poor and voiceless". They too must feel that it is their world. And the world, being theirs, must respond to their needs. This means the poor, the people at the grassroots, must have their say and what they say must carry weight. And when decision-making power is shared or decentralized this way, the people will be able to circumvent the various problems listed above and live with dignity and peace (Edwin, 1996)

**People are in Governance and Eradicate Poverty**

While more of us enjoy better standards of living than ever before, many others remain desperately poor. Nearly half the world's population still has to make do on less than $2 per day (Indian Rs. 80). Approximately 1.2 billion people -500 million in South Asia and 300 million in Africa –struggle on less than $1. People living in Africa south of the Sahara are almost as poor today as they were 20 years ago. With that kind of deprivation comes pain, powerlessness, despair and lack of fundamental freedom—all of which in turn perpetuate poverty. Of a total world labour force of some 3 billion, 140 million workers are out of work altogether, and a quarter to a third are underemployed (Agbetse, 2007).

Can Poverty be eradicated in India? This was a question addressed in a symposium conducted by Health Action, the monthly magazine of Catholic Health Association of India. The symposium was held in Secunderabad in 1996, in preparation for the special 100th issue of the magazine, under the title, “Poverty: the Ruthless Killer”. It was inaugurated by the late Mr. Krishna Kant, the then Governor of Andra Pradesh who later became the Vice-President of India. The participants were experts and scholars from some of the leading institutions of the country, who have been specializing on the subject. What did these specialists have to say in response to our question?
"Poverty is very much eradicable" they said. "Not only that it should have been eradicated long time back. We had everything required to eradicate it". If so, the missing element was "the Political will" to eradicate poverty.

Political Will: The meaning of "Political Will" can be simply understood in this sense. "Those who have the power do not have hunger and those who have hunger do not have the power. Hence, the urgency to remove hunger was missing among the power circles- the circles that govern". A statement made by the then Prime Minister Vajpayee makes an intriguing illustration. He said they would eradicate poverty in 20 years. Now the question is why 20 years? Why not now? When we try to answer to this we find that for Prime Minister Vajpayee, it was not that urgent a problem. It is one among the many problems for him that along with other problems could wait. It is as if saying "well, we know poverty exists but what could we do? We have more urgent problems to attend to than this". He does not feel the pinch of the hunger of the poor.

Suppose the Prime Minister's next meal is not assured, what would be the number one problem that the Prime Minister of the nation would address? Naturally it would be his own hunger. But when it is the hunger of the millions, it becomes for the one in governance, a distant problem, a problem that could wait. This is what would keep happening, if power is with the abundantly fed. Could we, on the other hand, ensure that power is with people who have hunger or in other words, could we ensure that it is the people at the base who do the governance? It seems very much possible.

Tools of Power: For the poor to exercise power and thus to govern, the requisite is that the tools whereby power is exercised in societies and nations go to the poor, to the people at the base.

The Definition of Power: when we define power in the practical sense it would mean "To have one's say in such a way that it matters". I say, "Let it be done" and it is done and that is power. It is to have in other words, an effective say.
How does one can exercise this power? The answer should be simple. If power is having an effective say, the first thing to assure oneself is to have a forum where he/she too will have his/her say. One needs to have “talking-forums”. Hence the role of parliaments in democracy is the same. The root word in Latin for parliaments is Parlare and it means to talk. Parliaments are talking-forums through which people exercise their right to have an effective say. We could see various such talking forums in democracy like Rajya Sabha, Lok Sabha, Legislative Assembly, and Legislative Council.

Even more important are the parliaments that are not even called parliaments. Here we mean the electoral constituencies. Each electoral constituency is a parliament where people, though in a token way and though just once in five years or so, do the talking. This way every citizen being equipped with a parliamentary constituency, a legislative constituency and a panchayath constituency, is supposed to be powerful. But does it occur in practicality? According to various analytical reports of various authors as we have mentioned earlier, there is not enough adequacy.

Because, without power even conscientisation leads to cynicism and conscientisation is a matter of power equation. A French politician says, “Revolution we don’t bother, it will fizzle away in no time, But we will be worried if they come up with an alternative structure that represents the goal of the revolution”. The reason, “The structures will stay, for there is a struggle for democratic participation”. No power is from below. And thus the concept of Neighbourhood parliament system is a better alternative approach, which provides better talking forums to make everybody to have an effective say (Edwin, 1997).

Neighbourhood Parliaments and Governance by people

“Participation” on the way - out? The much-touted word, “participation”, is fast loosing its glamour among social change agents. True, the concept had its heyday. In a world where only a few people determined the destiny of the world and where a vast
majority of people felt alienated-socially, economically, and in various other ways, the concept of a world where everybody is an equal partner in decisions that affect one, held its appeal. The dream is still valid. But the problem is one of the meanings and connotations the word evoked in the minds of certain people. And the meaning, theoreticians of semantics would say, is not in the world, but in the minds of the people-Right?

The word participation itself tended to give in the minds of certain people, a secondary role to people at large. “Participation for what? Participation with whom?”—such were the questions they asked. Certain ill-oriented governments too could walk away, giving people just a token role at nearly the fag end of the implementation of programmes, and still boast that they ensured the participation of people! Such aspects of participation as getting the people themselves identify the problems and solutions, involving them in decision making etc. could easily be overlooked.

Hence, the search for a more powerful word that would represent with more impacts the all-inclusive ideal of a participatory world.

“Governance” in!

The incoming ruling deity in this regard is the word governance. Here the people, especially the presently disadvantaged, are not just to participate. They are, rather to “Govern”. That reminds me of a dictum of St. Thomas Moore who once served as the chancellor of the British Government and authored the much-maligned Utopia. Utopia represented the vision of a more just and humane world, which, for those not adequately concerned about such values, were too idealistic. Thus the word “Utopian” became along the process a synonym for the impractical. St. Thomas Moore, had a very thought-provoking statement when it comes to governance.

St. Thomas Moore views Government s as a plot by the rich. Nobody needs to ask, “Against whom?” Naturally, it could only be against the poor. What really is the modus operandi of this plot or the trick on which the plot is based? It is simple. That is, to make the tools of governance unreachable to the poor. The tools of governance
in a democracy are the various decision making forums like parliaments – House of Lords, House of Commons, Rajya Sabha, Lok Sabha, Legislative Assembly, and Legislative Council etc. where the fate and rights of the people are mostly decided. A clever ploy to deep refusing accessibility to those who needed most the backing of the decisions of such forums.

Big Constituencies for Big Voices: the ploy was to make the electing constituencies too big to be handled by the poor and get elected. Thus governments ended as governments by the Rich, of the Rich and for the Rich. It is not hunger, nutrition, health, clothing and such basic issues of the poor that preoccupied such governments of the rich but rather the concerns of the rich. Like making profits, more comforts, status in international realms, the most up-to-date gadgets and the like. And the plot was so effective that the people could be kept poor even after years and years and centuries and centuries of “Democratic” governance.

What if instead the hungry and the poor are made to govern? Naturally, the first issue they will address will be the hunger of the people. Would it be possible to make the hungry and the poor govern? Is it possible to bring them too to parliaments so that what they talk matters? This would need redefining the scope of parliaments.

**Neighbourhood Parliaments:** Parliaments must come to where people are, rather than make the people go to the parliaments. Parliaments should come to the grassroots, to neighbourhoods in streets where people live. They must also be of the right size for the “small” people themselves to participate. The bigger the forum the more difficult the small voices would find to get across. These parliaments at the base, again should allow scope for direct intervention by people. The pity is people talk only indirectly in the existing parliaments. That is, except for a token intervention during elections, people do not have parliaments where they can talk directly. This is not enough. People must have the scope for intervening directly at least in some forum on an on going basis. The gram sabhas as provided in Panchayat Raj Act are supposed to offer this scope for direct participation by people.
But gramsabha as provided in the above mentioned panchayat Raj Act is supposed to be normally an inter-village affair, where all the eligible voters are to participate and as such, it is unwieldy for participation by people. Suppose a panchayath has 6,000 voters or even 500 voters for that matter. How do you get all of them to discuss together seriously in a grama sabha? It could end up as a mere token exercise. It could even lead to violence and bloodshed in unmanageable crowds (Edwin, 1997).

The How and Why? (Rationale)

In order to bring the above said Dream true we should propose the means of How and Why? The assumption of the NCN association is that people do not have their say because they do not have adequate and viable forums to express themselves. The present participatory forums are too big. And this seems to be the crux of the problem. And, the bigger the forums, the bigger the voices you need to have to get yourself heard. Bigger in terms of volume, back up provisions, etc.

When the forum on the other hand, is small, any small person can express himself and be heard. He will also feel at home there. The forum, being small, can afford to listen to his problems however small they might be. He will feel that he too is somebody. He will also feel competent to affect the course of decisions made there.

The forums we have now, i.e. parliamentary constituencies and assembly constituencies, are so big that you need to be really big, even to be seen throughout the constituency let alone be listened to. And thus “big people” with big voices get elected for parliaments and legislative assemblies and end up having governments “By the Big, For the Big, Of the Big”, leaving the small and the poor helpless. Even the panchayat wards for that matter, as we mentioned earlier, are not small enough for such small people and are thus inadequate.
The solution then lies in going beyond panchayats and setting up forums that are even smaller ensuring that the small do talk, and in networking them in such a way that what they talk matters. And the participatory provisions should be such that they talk not just once in five years but throughout, having a constant monitory and directive role over the course of affairs that affect them (Edwin, 1996).

The Origin of Neighbourhood Parliaments

It is a fast growing movement, begun first in Latin American countries. There are already hundreds of thousands of such communities throughout the world. Actually, there are efforts throughout the world where in units of about 30 families people share in decision-making. Being Christian countries they came together and organized themselves in the name of BCC. (Basic Christian Communities) The families around fifteen to 30 came together and formed different BCCs. The member families are the neighbouring families. The nature of these groups are that people meet together, celebrate together, learn together, discuss the problems together, decide together, implement together, do the follow up together, etc.

This approach had reached its culmination by obtaining liberation and freedom to Latin America. It became the practicable forum where the aspiration of the people to obtain freedom was remarkably strengthened. There was a spirit of unity and vitality in these forums. Basing on this ground there are efforts throughout the world where in units of about 30 families people share in decision making. They call it by various names like BASIC COMMUNITIES, GRASSROOTS DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITIES, GRASSROOTS ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES, NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUPS, NEIGHBOURHOOD SABHAS, HOLISTIC HEALTH COMMUNITIES etc. But the present concept of NEIGHBOURHOOD PARLIAMENT had its origin on the basis of Basic Christian Communities.
Twenty-four years back M. J. Edwin, a Catholic priest belonging to the diocese of Kottar, Kanyakumari district has first initiated this concept of Basic Christian Communities for the first time in Tamil Nadu for the Christian population only in the beginning. The fruits of the effective functioning of the BCC groups were really marvellous. The functions of BCC have brought remarkable growth in their economical development of the people and in strengthening their relationships. It increased the bond of fellowship among the neighbouring families. Besides organizing the elders as BCC, the children were also motivated to form themselves to grow with the same spirit of brotherhood and common fellowship and the fruits of these forums were really sustaining and encouraging.

After having cherished the reward of this particular forums of BCC among the Christian population Fr. M.J. Edwin, a deep and a well known social thinker and a Journalist himself was inspired to initiate a new forum which invites everybody irrespective of Religion, Caste, Social status, Rich or Poor, Learned and unlearned, Literate or Illiterate, under one umbrella which he called as “NEIGHBOURHOOD PARLIAMENT”. This initiative was to avail the opportunities to everybody in the society without any discrimination so that the whole Humanity can journey towards its complete development with sustainability.

Unlike BCC the Neighbourhood parliaments are different in its approach and nature. He wanted to adopt the modality of the BCC but different in its total approach and characters. He desired that not only the Christians should benefit by this structure but the whole humanity and accordingly the modality and structures and the characteristics to be adopted. Already there exists thousands of such communities sponsored both by the government and voluntary agencies. Some of the samples are the Urban Basic Services Programme, promoted in the areas of the cities has just this framework of neighbourhood groups and their networks. So, too, programme like Community-Based Nutrition Programme (CBNP) and Community-Based Convergence Services (CBCS), which are experimentally pioneered by the governments in some districts in collaboration with UNICEF.
But these community based programs are to promote economical development or health or in general to provide the Basic Amenities to the individuals. The Neighbourhood Parliaments in actuality calls for the **TOTAL SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION** wherein it insists the following aspects:

1) It leads to a Structural Change in the society. It provides an alternative participatory power structure.
2) Provides structures for people, especially those at the base, to come together, discuss together, decide together and act together- structures for people to participate meaningfully and adequately.
3) Promotes attitudinal changes among the citizens, especially to the coming generation who would form a better society.
4) Promotes Direct Democracy and unlike the present representative democracy it avails forums for the participation of everybody.
5) And thus create a new society where power operates from below and as a result, Planning, Budgeting, Organizing, Implementing, Monitoring and almost everything is from below. Such a world will be a place where especially the least and voiceless matter and have a voice.

They are natural neighbourhood communities where every family in the neighbourhood is automatically made a member though all may not be equally active and involved. They elect their representatives in terms of office –bearers or persons-in-charge for various concerns. And these people are networked through representative structures at various levels like those of the Villages, Panchayats, Panchayat unions, District etc. the representative networks could go up to state, national, continental and global levels.
THE CONCEPT: "NEIGHBOURHOOD PARLIAMENTS"
(Dream of a New World Governance)

It is a dream of a New World where no direct elections to national parliaments, nor to state assemblies or even to panchayath councils take place. It is, instead, a dream where parliaments come to the streets.

The whole world gets organized into neighbourhood parliaments of about 30 neighbouring families each neighbourhood of 30 families becomes a kind of a mini-world or a mini-nation.

Each neighbourhood parliament has a neighbourhood cabinet, with a neighbourhood chief minister and ministers for various concerns like Health, Hygiene, Environment, Income generation, Children’s welfare, Adolescents guidance and whatever those are relevant at its level.

Each neighbourhood parliament chooses its delegates to represent them at the village parliament. It too has its cabinet with a village chief minister and village ministers for concerns that pertain at village level. Next comes the third level parliaments, panchayat parliaments and their cabinets. Thus come about block parliaments, District parliaments, State parliaments, National parliaments, International regional parliaments and finally the world parliament, (it is not only United Nations but a world parliament) each with its cabinet. The whole process is guided by certain principles:

Principle one: PRINCIPLE OF NUMERICAL UNIFORMITY.

This principle speaks about the defining of the village, panchayath, panchayath union, district, state, nation and even to the international global level. Generally we can define the village as a community of people living together with certain social norms and principles specific to them most of the time. We do not have any authentic
measurement or a kind of uniformity and principles on which a community of people can be defined or categorized as a village. There are villages which have more than few thousands of families or hundreds of families and at the same time there also villages with just 10 families, also counted as one of the villages in the panchayath level. There is no specific number or boundary to define a village. The panchayath is the fundamental authenticated boundary accepted by the panchayath laws and civil laws. In most of the places, it is conspicuous and most of the time the distribution is not done with justice. There is vast number of the unrecognized villages which indicates that the community of people is not at all counted even as the citizens of this country. We need to have a consensus on this. If there is a community of people, they do have some characteristics with fundamental rights that has to be respected and each community has to be understood basing on some of the guiding principles.

1. A community is not a crowed. It is not a transient aggregation of passers-by. Community has a certain amount of permanency.
2. A community presupposes commitment to one another and this commitment is actually the most identifying factor.
3. A community has a shared vision. Consensus on objectives holds the community together. In this sense, a community works together.
4. A community means its members feel with one another. A community devoid of feelings is not yet a community. It may be just a task force.
5. A community celebrates together. It brings imagination, feelings and art to play in the collective affirmation of persons and events and mysteries of life.
6. A healthy community heals not only by the explicitly therapeutic programmes it offers, but also by its process of affirmation and the strength of relationships. Community is an antidote against alienation, loneliness, insecurities, and the resultant psychosomatic problems.
7. A liberating community, consequently a healing community is a participating community. Participation in decision making is what makes a mass into a people. When people decide together they become conscious of their dignity as partners in progress, as subjects and equals and not just objects and the ruled.
8. A community that is empowering, hence liberating and healing makes its members not only to decide on the choice of various solutions proposed but also to see the problems together. Knowledge is power. A community that has been enabled to identify the problems and constantly to evaluate them is an empowered community. Few will dare to exploit that community.

9. A community that is effective is necessarily small. This follows from our earlier principles. A big community can neither offer powerful relationships nor scope for participation.

10. A community that intends to have wider macro level impact ensures linkage with other similar communities through representative structures at various levels. This ensures not only the smallness of the community and the wider level effective action but also effective grassroots participation for the various campaigns undertaken (Edwin, 1997).

When these communities (villages) have such creative powers and fundamental characteristics, it has to be defined adequately from grassroots level.

1. **Participation is to be the hallmark of these communities**

The function of the first principle is to provide certain practicable suggestions to define not only the village from the grassroots level but to the national and to the global level even in order to establish justice, equality and peace. This will also pave way for making the DIE to Die. This is nothing else than the social evils that are persisting to make the world die. They are: **DEPENDENCY, INEQUALITY AND EXPLOITATION**. There will be equal sharing and distribution of the wealth and resources among the people from grassroots level to global level. All the natural national resources will be in common for the common growth and development once this principle is brought into practice.

The principle: Once you have a certain number of neighbourhood parliaments you can automatically have a “village”-Parliament; and once you have a certain number of “village parliaments, you can have a Panchayat” parliament and it is
structured further in this manner to the State, National and global level. Hence there can be no big “villages” and “small villages” and big “districts” and “small districts” and so on.

Actually the present territorial designations like that of block, district, state, nation and world are not in vogue any more. What we would rather have are various “tiers” or “levels” of parliaments like first level parliament (meaning Neighbourhood parliament), second level parliament and the like. It consists of Multi Tier system. For example, the village will not be defined based on the territory or boundary or just by mere collection of families. It will be confined as a village with certain number of Neighbourhood parliaments. A neighbourhood parliament is formed with 30 neighbouring families only and not more than that. It is done in the grassroots level in the streets. If we decide upon a principle that 20 neighbourhood parliaments constitute a village and every village should have the same policy. If a panchayat has 10 villages then the panchayat will be constituted with $10 \times 20 = 200$ neighbourhood parliaments and the panchayat Union will be constituted with $200 \times 10 = 2000$ neighbourhood parliaments. When the district has approximately 10 panchayat unions and the district will be confined by $2000 \times 10 = 20,000$ neighbourhood parliaments and it proceeds with the state, nation and global level in the similar approach. The above presented numerical values are only approximate to explain the concept.

Principle two: **PRINCIPLE OF SMALLNESS OF SIZE**

No more are parliaments with 500 and more members. It is a small, discerning community at every level. Mr. M.P. Parameswaran who works with the concept of Ayal Kootam in Kerala said, “Not more than eighty five”. Observes Guruji Rishi Prabhamkar, “Eighty five would be too much. It will still give a lot of scope for majority –minority confrontations. Why not the scout number that is, 36?” The neighbourhood parliaments alone, in that case, can have a bigger number i.e. 30 families and not 30 individuals. Here in our principle we encourage Adult, Youth and Children to be organized separately which means, in the process of formation of neighbourhood
parliament with 30 families, the Adults will form a separate parliament youth and children separately as all together three neighbourhood parliaments in a given circumstance of 30 families. It could be one street or a ward.

The advantages of this principle are to be understood clearly.

1) Everyone knows everyone face to face and everyone’s weakness and strengths. One cannot go on fooling, as Gandhiji observed, a face to face community for long.

2) Since it is a small forum inclusive of everybody without any discrimination by caste, religion, social status, rich or poor, learned and unlearned, male and female, the voice of the voiceless will be heard. The anguish and feelings of every body is being respected.

3) It is a smaller forum for the smaller people where the participation of everybody is promoted and the advantages are availed to everyone to express and communicate what one feels to do for the betterment of their living geographical area.

4) The real participatory and direct democracy is practiced here.

5) Everybody is enabled to feel their worth and assert his/her human dignity and human rights.

6) The people are made to realize that “people’s health is in people’s hand”.

7) People are liberated from their heavy heart of social injustices and assured of their health.

8) People are also saved from all the anti social activities like terrorism, revengeful attitude and all the social injustices in general.

9) There are also tremendous psychological healing for the individuals, families and also societal healing at large.

Herewith one should understand how all those above mentioned advantages are obtained and how could these healing take place?

World Health Organization (WHO) defines that the health is not merely the absence of disease, but a state of physical, mental and social well being and it adds a tag at the
end that to achieve these total health to all, each one has to voice out his or her needs not only to get fulfilled of it but to have it sustained and for this the suggested means are recommended (Wada Na Todo Abhiyan, 2007).

**Joules Nearer as quoted by Sullay (1997: P247)** According to him people cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves. Man develops himself by what he does, by making his own decisions, by increasing his own knowledge and ability, and by his full participation as an equal in the life of the community he lives in (CHAI, 2003).

There are two more elements to be noted here. The first one is that the present existing panchayat system. As we have mentioned earlier though the panchayat is the last decentralized form of the administration in our democratic ruling but the participation of everybody is impossible due to its vastness in geographical existence. The forum is big that the last person’s voice is lost. Nobody could be blamed for this situation since provided forum is such that all cannot be availed time to express their feelings and opinions for the development. When the Grama Sabha is called four times in a year, all do not participate in it because it is once again only a recommendatory forum and not a mandatory one as we have already mentioned earlier, and people get vexed and they are not encouraged to part take in the same. And even if everybody attends the meeting, can the panchayat leader avail time for everybody to speak in a forum where there are some few thousands gathered? Can they come to a consensus as easily to decide upon? Again it is impracticable as the researcher felt it.

The second would be the psychological disturbances which affect the person to become hard hearted. It leads some to become terrorists who want to attain their basic rights by force and violence, some to become corrupted with all kinds of social injustices like bribery, smuggling, stealing and what not, and some to become psychologically ill, depressed and helpless. It is purely due to the non-participation.
One of the statistical information presented by one of the NGOs we come across that India is in the 18th place in the world level scale of corruption. Another world statistical information tells us that the causative factors for such corruptions are primarily the politicians, political parties and they form the 70 percent of the corrupted population. The police departments, department of justice and the business people actuate 55 percent of corruptions. (Radhakrishnan, 2007)

Information regarding the various government departments and the learned officers who work as responsible persons makes us to re-evaluate our administrative system itself. One sample which was published in Dhina mani on 15-03-2006 regarding the department of rehabilitation. The government had allotted Rs. 952 crores for the welfare activities of the differently abled people in the state for the year 1997-2002). But the utilized amount was Rs. 754.74 crores and the unutilized fund of Rs.197.80 crores was sent back to the government. It is very evident that 20 percent of the totally allotted fund has not reached the poor disabled people. This unhealthy situation is prevalent in not only in this one department but in every department. This reveals that there is no appropriate base for the decentralized administration and execution of the plans.

It is proved undoubtedly that the prime cause for all these corruptions and injustices are the learned officers who hold the responsibilities top to bottom. It is only the illiterates and ordinary poor farmers, landless labourers and others become prey to the cunningness of those irresponsible heartless persons who cheat them with selfish motto.

All those malpractices are occurring since there is no participation of everybody specially the poor and needy, the downtrodden, the voiceless and the present availed forum is so big that they become unnoticed. Here in these neighbourhood parliaments there is no room for all these social injustices and it can not happen since it is a face to face community and small in size to handle easily.
Principle Three: PRINCIPLE OF RECALL

You don't need to wait for five years to call back a candidate whom you "elected" from one level of the parliament to the next. As you are a small community at each level of the parliament, you can convene your parliament any time you want and decide together to send someone else who would explain and represent your concerns better. This practice is present in the neighbourhood parliament.

In the history of world and India we too come across such principle was in existence in order to rectify the corrupted circumstances. Few years back When Natwar Singh resigned from his power, there was a terrible commotion in Delhi parliament because there was TV news telecasted by one Anirutha Bahel and Sugasini Raj. The news was that 11 of the parliament members received bribes to speak in the parliament in favour of some big business traders and company owners. In 1951 H.G. Mudagal did the same malpractices and when it was proved by the parliament members, he was dismissed from the power and responsibility. In British parliament the same kind of event had taken place some 10 years back and the then prime minister John Major appointed a commission to make a study and enquiry. The commission came out with the decision that the parliament members who commit such crimes like getting bribery, carrying dangerous weapons to the parliament should be sentenced with severe punishment.

In 1990 the parliament members in Briton committed the same and the magazine London Sunday Times revealed this crimes. In America when Nivat Ginjrich was a speaker her submitted a false account report of his travel. This was proved and he was asked pay fine and made to ask pardon in the parliament.

In India there were so many accusations brought against the members of parliament like Pophers, Havala, J .M. M Bribery. In 1998 when Mr. Narasima Rao was the Prime Minister J. M.M. members joined hands with him and supported in proving that the M Ps did receive bribes but the court came out with the statement that
the MPs need not respond to such enquiries by using the provision of law of immunity.

When the elected representatives of the people are not functioning up to the satisfaction of the people and when they commit such crimes there should be provision in the law to call them back from their power and responsibility and this should be made compulsory practice by force of law. The present speaker of our Indian parliament Mr. Somnath Chatterji is constantly insisting that this Call Back principle be brought into to force by law but nobody heeds to it. In 1970 Mr. LogNayak Jayaprakash Narayanan insisted that this Call-back right be given to the people. When M. G. Ramachandran the then Chief minister of Tamil Nadu started his movement, he too was insisting on this principle (Jeyaprakash, 2007).

Although there is lot of hesitations to bring this principle to effect, the Governor of California Gray Davis was called back from his position and power. In America Mr. Lion J. Brazer was called back before completing his tenure and this took place some 82 years back. It is not an unusual or unpractised principle but the ruling class people are not really concerned about the people or the nation. They all function with full of selfish motives.

The practice of the principle of Recall is more feasible in the proposed alternative structure of neighbourhood parliament since the forum is smaller it is easy to gather the members and decide upon and there by making it more democratic in nature. Whereas, in the existing structure which is by the Rich, For the Rich and Of the Rich, they will not accept this possibility.

Principle Four: **PRINCIPLE OF SUBSIDIARITY**

Subsidiary units get the focus here. Vitality, dynamism and power are concentrated more at the lowest levels possible. No business that could be handled at a
lower level is taken to any level above it. Higher levels deal only with those matters that the lower levels cannot handle.

The real decentralization of administrative power and actualization or execution of planning is done here. The responsibility is laid upon everyone here. The first one is the responsibility of those at the base. Here whatever is possible within the capacity and capability of the local community is implemented by local neighbourhood parliaments. The responsibility is shared with everyone and everyone is made to feel that it is his/her own duty to perform. The respect for the self is promoted here again. The negative dimensions of social evil DEPENDENCY is overthrown here. They need not depend on the higher level members for everything.

The second one is the responsibility of those at the higher level. When the request is made from the lower level for that thing which is beyond the reach of those at the base or beyond their achievability then the higher level people intervene to support. This intervention of the higher level members is need based and not based on the power and thus the social evil of INEQUALITY is also eliminated.

Principle five: PRINCIPLE OF CONVERGENCE

This means once you have such a network everything converges at this network. Everything is done through it. This reinforces the structures further and further. Thus whether children’s programmes, adolescents’ programmes or self-help groups everything is referred to neighbourhoods and their representative networks.

The very important aspect to be noted here is that everything is channelised through the neighbourhood parliaments and not directly through the higher level medium. The present decentralized forum of panchayath has this medium to certain extent but even this system has its own shortcomings, drawbacks and limitations because of the political influences and political suppressions. The panchayath leaders, councilors and ward members are not free to act but caught up in the clutches of the
political pressures from MPs, MLAs, Ministers and other local pressures as we have mentioned in the previous pages regarding the limitations of panchayath system. Even though the panchayath leaders plan out, most of the execution of the plans are recommendatory and not mandatory and can not be enacted by themselves or according to the need of the people. Again there is no people’s planning but from above.

But in the proposed neighbourhood parliament system the complete planning, budgeting, implementation and evaluation is done at the base. The higher level members only support what is suggested by the lower level. For example, for this year, the availing of DRDA loan for a village to buy milk animals is around Rs. 50,000 where five families get Rs.10,000 each. In panchayath system the panchayath leader and the ward members, councilors decide upon whom to give. But here in neighbourhood parliament system, the village level parliaments come together and they decide among themselves whom to give the loan this year. Therefore there is no opportunity for any social evil like bribery, partiality based on religion or caste, it is not distributed based on political pressures etc... there is no EXPLOITATION by any force here. The real Direct Democracy is practiced in this alternative structure of neighbourhood parliament where everybody is participating (Edwin,1996).

Participation is to be the hallmark of these communities. Participation levels differ. One can be a participant just by being a recipient. Surely, this is not the type of participation we aim at. We rather want people to be agents of their well being. Levels of this agent-participation can also differ. Fr. M.J. Edwin suggests that we can have people participate just at the level of implementation while few others do the planning. Or, a step further, we can have people participate at the level of decision making, while someone else has offered the various alternative solutions.

A step or two still further, we can have people beginning to participate in searching for various alternative solutions to the problems identified and presented by others.
We have the ultimate level of participation when the people are involved not only in finding solutions to problems but also in the very process of identifying problems. When people involve themselves in the very process of identifying the problems they will tend to be more equipped, thus more empowered, to handle vicissitudes that arise while implementing a decision, than those who just hop in to make a decision while alternatives have already been found.

In the same way those who were associated with the very process of identifying the problem tend to be more capable of coming up with further creative and still more relevant solutions than those who were limited to what others have reported about the problem. And NETWORKING should be at various levels: Neighbourhood sabhas lead to Gram Sabhas and successively to panchayat, mandal/union, district, state, national and global links. Such a network could be an alternative political structure that could demand that the government provisions be routed through them.

Such a network could also mean:-

1) Structures for people’s response to and co-operation with government programmes.
2) Structures for people to help themselves.
3) Accountability and fixing of responsibility by people themselves.
4) Infrastructures where benefits go to those who need them most as per the high-risk scores concerned.
5) Effective functioning of panchayats.
6) Scope for people at the base to derive utmost benefit out of every penny allotted for them by Government and other agencies.
7) Better spirit of working together, better participation and better self-reliance.
8) A permanent scope for watchdog role by people at various levels.
9) Scope to undertake economic self-help programmes like thrift societies and income generation projects at various levels of the network.
10) A freedom for people from the middleman role of politicians, bureaucrats and evenNGHOs.
A new role for NGHOs i.e. as catalysts and empowerers and assistants at people’s empowerment and liberation process.

**The Assumptions of Neighbourhood Parliament**

Neighbourhood parliaments are constituted based on these assumptions.

1) People themselves are the best agents to ensure their own well-being.

2) Processes and programmes for people’s well being deliver best results when people themselves have the scope to participate in, monitor and control such processes and programmes.

3) Such participation, monitoring and control by people presuppose that people have the forums to come together as people and to identify, discuss and decide on the challenges they have and the options before them.

4) The forums meant for such participation should necessarily be of the right size that people do not find them difficult to handle or manage.

5) The bigger the forum the more the small voices of the small people get the lost and will leave people feel alienated and helpless.

6) Forums that are small enough for the small voices to be heard and at the same time big enough to sustain themselves, when networked for wider impact, can bring the world back into the hands of the poor.

7) Making such forums neighbourhood-based ensures,

   - Better representative character as it includes all.
   - More transparency.
   - More answerability and accountability.
   - Permanency and sustainability (people stay around in the neighbourhood and the structure cannot fall down because it is already at the base)
   - Better accessibility.
   - Better organization.
   - Better coverage.
The structure of Neighbourhood Parliament

- International level Parliament
- National Level Parliament
- State Level Parliament
- District Level Parliament
- Block/Union Level Parliament
- Panchayatt Level Parliament
- Village Level Parliament
- Neighbourhood Parliament
8) Once networked adequately, most constructive action, campaign or struggle can effectively be handled through such networks to ensure total well-being to all (Edwin, 1997).

NEIGHBOURHOOD PARLIAMENT OF CHILDREN

The need for the Neighbourhood parliament of Children

The pages of history states that social work, social welfare services and social service have been practiced since centuries ago even before Christ, bearing the name of Dharma Salas. Philanthropic activities [philo=love, Anthropos=man, =Love for man] have been rendered by the great man like Rajaram Mohan Roy who started the Brahma Samaj in the year 1822 to practice this ideology. He based his services on the three principles of Universal Brotherhood, Equality and existence of one single God. He precisely fought against the system of Sati and Rabindranath Tagore and Kesava Chandrasan became his followers.

In reference to Bhrama Samaj, Arya Samaj was started by Dayananda Saraswathi in the year 1877. Ramakrishna Mission was started by Vivekananda whose thrust was on realizing the glory of Ancient Hindu religion and to promote science of progress. Harijan Sevak sangha by Gandhi for the welfare of Harijans and for the removal of untouchability, for the Tribal welfare, to provide villages with sanitation facilities, to reduce illiteracy rate and to increase industries had been initiated. Besides, before and after independence there were so many developmental works that had been done in various experimental basis. The Christian Missionaries have initiated innumerable charitable services from the beginning of its missionary activities all over the world and especially in India. Today, there are 1, 50,000 (one and half lakhs NGOs) Non Governmental Organizations in India whose objectives are to perform social works and welfare activities in order to eradicate poverty and promote peoples’ participation (Christopher, 1998).
But, the deep analytical study of our research on all the above mentioned administrative structures of our democratic India, its parliamentary systems, its decentralization in the form of local self government, the functions of Governmental and non governmental organizations with its planning, budgeting, implementations, monitoring etc. picturizes the following insight clearly. There is no doubt that all those structures and those who involved and dedicated themselves for the improvement of the life struggles of the people and development of the country have contributed a lot until now but not reasonably.

All these approaches and efforts are just like a Hospice services where there are specialists for various illnesses and do the services. And nobody can deny the fact that most of those services are rendered not on Humanitarian values or at least as the duty for duty sake (Nishkaama Karma) but in view of selfish motives though there are also number of self sacrificing service minded souls who really offer themselves for the sake of the nation. As the sick people go to a hospital and get treated of their various sicknesses from various specialists so also do the governmental and non governmental approaches to the people who have been affected sociologically, psychologically, physically and economically (either for the aged people, children unsafe situation, the differently abled, the blind, the destitute, They just perform the Band Aid service to the created and existing affected wounds as the doctors and nurses do with injection and medicines for which they get their remunerations for their services.

And the social evil bribery has intruded in every department of government and non-government, practically it has become more than 90 percent have become slaves to it. The people feel helpless and the poor and needy can only cry and lament over it. There seems no remedy from this human killer practice. In this approach most of them do not bother annihilating the root causes for the social evils and problems although some social reformers and social thinkers who aspire for the transformation of the society do take initiatives for it.
It is compared to a farmer who cultivates in the field and looks for the hundredfold harvest. Let us take the example of a paddy field. The saplings are planted once it reaches the stages of yielding we find that the plants are affected by sever sickness; the worms and insects have eaten away the leaves etc. Now the farmer tries to spray medicines and manure it. Will he be able to get the hundredfold yield as he aspired to? Certainly not. On the contrary, if the farmer paid enough attention to the paddy field from the time of sowing the seed by watering properly, manuring, spraying medicines etc then he would certainly gain the hundred percent crops.

The same methodology is being adopted for the children parliament. The grown up generations are attuned to the world of corruption and injustices, the social crimes like bribery and social discriminations like caste system and social status. We can not expect hundredfold fruits or changes in creating a better world free from all those social evils and crimes. This may be impossible with them but we concentrate on the children who would be the future generation to rule the world. Instil in them the values of social justice, the right leadership qualities, enrich them with positive thinking and approach, the love for the nation, the love for the poor and needy, to stand for the human rights starting with the children’s rights, create analytical frame of mind to understand the right and wrong, good and evil, encourage them to overcome all the discriminations whatever it be and thus make them to feel that this is their state, nation, world and it is their responsibility to make it a world of peace, justice and equality. When these children take up the leadership the world will surely be a better world and a new world in the future where all those social evils, crimes and problems will disappear. And it is possible only through the children.

The Formation of Neighbourhood Children Parliament:

The formational structure and principles are of the same of the Neighbourhood Parliaments. The children 20 to 30 from every neighbourhood families come together and get formed as a children parliament where they have cabinet of ministers for various concerns and try to attend to the needs of their own neighbourhood areas.
They are formed irrespective of any discrimination by caste, religion, status like rich or poor and gender. They too have their networking of parliaments starting from Neighbourhood children parliament, Village level children parliament, Panchayat level, Union level, District level, State level, National level and global level as its culmination. Each level has its own cabinet of ministers for various concerns. Right now in Tamil Nadu the children parliament has formed up to the State level. The children have formed the State level children parliament with cabinet of 30 ministers and 30 parliament members. They are all elected by the direct participatory democracy approach of election method called “Sociocracy”. This election method does not need thousands of crores of rupees to be spent to conduct it. There is direct participation of everybody, no bribery to get vote, people are not bought for the votes, no unwanted influences from out side, and no commotions in the society. Another important factor to be paid attention is that here there is no opposite political party. Rather, there exists only one body of ministers and members. This parliament will surely bring a world of solidarity, peace, love and concern for each other. Their achievements are numerous which one can understand from the chapter Analysis and Interpretation.

The Objectives of Neighbourhood Parliament of Children Network:

1. To concentrate on the holistic growth of the children in children parliaments.
2. To have a better personality development through various seminars and training programmes.
3. To improve the educational standard by better organizing of themselves.
4. To make the children own responsibilities to implement the scheme “Education to all”.
5. To make the future generation as responsible citizens.
6. To make the children feel their responsibilities at their home and in the society.
7. To create the future leaders of authenticity, sincerity, creativity who will fight against all injustices in the society.
8. To inculcate in them the right leadership qualities with the sense of justice, peace and equality.
9. To make them responsible for their own personal cleanliness, neighbourhood areas cleanliness as well as environmental cleanliness.
10. To encourage the children to develop their talents, skills, intelligent in view of forming their future.
11. To inseminate awareness on socio-economic, political conditions, merits and demerits of the growth and developments of our country.
12. To eliminate discriminations of caste, religious fanaticism, social status from the childhood.
13. To impart social analytical perceptions to the children.
14. To increase direct participatory approach and participatory attitude in the growth and development of self, society and nation.
15. To direct them to march towards direct participatory democracy.
16. To animate children towards creating a new society where peace, justice and equality exist.
17. To make all the children be aware of their rights and thus enabling everybody to live with their rights.
18. To promote effective participation of children in planning, budgeting, implementing, evaluating, monitoring, etc.

The Functions of the Children Parliament Ministers

Prime Minister

She/he as the prime minister of C.P (children parliament) in their area, she/he holds the responsibility for all the children of their locality. Of course the state prime minister as responsible for the whole Tamil Nadu & Pondicherry. In the particular specific area anything happens to any child the Prime Minister has the responsibility towards this child and take initiative rectify the same. The state PM will have to do it in the state level. He should be able to move the things happen in collaboration with
all the other ministers and members. He should encourage every body indiscriminately to participate and to grow better. The state Prime Minister has the responsibility to encourage the C.P children throughout Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry. In the absence of Prime minister, the Vice Prime minister runs the whole show.

The Children Parliament Speaker

The prime minister usually proposes him and he discharges his duties on the request of the PM. His task is greater and inevitable in animating and conducting the parliament. The successful functioning of the parliament, the role of the Speaker is highly essential. He should be a leader with presence of mind and person who could heed to everybody irrespectively. It is his duty to control and guide the parliament. The children do really grow in this aspect of leadership to the greater extend.

Home Minister

With deep concern and respect she/he has the responsibility to encourage the C.P children. Has the responsibility to form the group in their area and the state minister in the state level and to discuss on the current issues in view of arriving at the correct decisions and conclusion. He/she has the responsibility to decide the venue of the meeting, and fixes the dates for the meeting. The minister has to register the minutes of the gathering and read the minutes at the end and also to present the report of the meeting in the next gathering. The minister has the obligation to give guidelines for the rest of the ministers.

Finance Minister

The Finance minister is responsible for the finance available in their parliaments. The minister has the responsibility to keep aside certain amount of money for the state level too. Has the responsibility to know the details of the amount of money that is set apart for the children’s education by the government. And further
has the responsibility to study whether that particular amount is spent for the education of children. This is not only with regard to education but for all the other purposes too. The Minster has to see that the money is being used properly for the particular specified purposes. The state C.P and all the other C.P must have certain amount of money being set apart for their C.P expenses. And further the C.P can make effort to get certain amount of money from the government for their expenses. He has to read out the position of the finance at every meeting whenever it is conducted and maintain accurate accounting to the money he receives.

**Education Minister**

The minister has to be aware of the government schemes for the education of the children. The Minster has the responsibility to voice out the children’s opinions about the teaching methods, presentations of the teachers, the regular attendance of the teachers and students as well. He also should be able to bring the defects to the limelight and try to rectify and if needed inform to the government and also has the responsibility to suggest to the government their expectations on the qualities of a teacher. In many places there are lot of suicides due to the negligence of teachers, corporeal punishments, verbal abuses, etc. and therefore the minister has the responsibility to take action for the victims of children in state level on these issues. The minister has to take into consideration mainly on the issues like lack of proper basic facilities, insufficiency of teachers, water, toilets, healthy food, state of illiteracy in the state, etc. in the schools. For any child in any corner of the state being neglected the needed education the Minister has the responsibility to take in to consideration. He should take initiative to make everybody in their parliament area to go to school and improve in their educational status.

**Health Minister**

The minister has two main responsibilities in this regard and they are: One is to look after the needs to create an environment for the children to grow and the other is
to look after the **medical needs**. He has to work to eradicate the problem of Child Labour. The main reason for child labour is that the parents are unemployed and therefore it is necessary to work towards providing employment for the parents through the help of government. This minister has to work mainly to provide good health for the children. There are not enough doctors and hospitals in many places. And therefore it is necessary to work towards it. And also it is necessary to change the timings for the attending of the patients’ needs according to the convenience of the patients. It is necessary to bring to the notice of the government about the ill effects of the cool drinks like coco cola, Pepsi, chemical food items etc, which are prone to create cancer and therefore it is necessary to make effort to do away with them. Further induce the government to encourage the progress of healthy food like, millet, corn, beans, and all other nutritious food items.

**Environment Minister**

Today we are going to be the victims of the Global Warming which in turn will increase the sea level. And especially the coastal areas will get submerged into the water. It is necessary to make the awareness of lack of rain due to deforestation and therefore it is necessary to encourage the people to plant trees. For every house there should be at least three trees have to be planted. The uses of plastics have to be curtailed. We need to protect the natural resources like water, river, sand, etc. and to make the government to act against the misuse of natural resources. The uses of chemical fertilizers to grow things in the agricultural field have to be reduced.

**Children Parliament Affairs Minister**

The minister has the responsibility towards all the C.P in all over the state. It is necessary to take immediate action in times of any affect on the Children Parliament in local and the state as well. In case of any conflicts in C.P of any competition or other problems it is necessary to solve them for which the intervention of CP Affairs
The minister is indispensable. It is also the responsibility of the minister to see the parliament gathering go on in the right direction.

**Sports Minister**

The sports minister has to concentrate on the need of the sports and physical exercises for the children in their area. He has to take initiative for the provision of a play ground for their village, sports materials needed for the children through the intervention with the local government like Collector, Conducting sports and games on the special occasions like State and National festival days, finding prizes and gifts to encourage the winners etc are the responsibilities of this departmental minister. There are other ministers and similarly every minister has his/her own responsibilities to carry out for the welfare.

**Authenticity of Neighbourhood Children Parliament**

Neighbourhood parliament of Children bases its authenticity on UN promulgation of Children's rights. India is one of the countries, which has agreed upon and made signature in the decisions. Thus the children in India have legal provision to concentrate and claim on their rights. They are divided into four major divisions.

Accordingly: 1. Zero to eighteen (0-18) years is called as children.

2. Children are Human beings.

3. Children have their own uniqueness and own individuality.

4. Children have their own needs, likes and dislikes.

5. Children have their own Rights.

**The four major divisions of children's rights**

1) Right to Life.

2) Right to Protection.

3) Right to Participation.

4) Right to development.

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Article 1 (Definition of the child): The Convention defines a 'child' as a person below the age of 18, unless the laws of a particular country set the legal age for adulthood younger. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, the monitoring body for the Convention, has encouraged States to review the age of majority if it is set below 18 and to increase the level of protection for all children under 18.

Article 2 (Non-discrimination): The Convention applies to all children, whatever their race, religion or abilities; whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from. It doesn't matter where children live, what language they speak, what their parents do, whether they are boys or girls, what their culture is, whether they have a disability or whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis.

Article 3 (Best interests of the child): The best interests of children must be the primary concern in making decisions that may affect them. All adults should do what is best for children. When adults make decisions, they should think about how their decisions will affect children. This particularly applies to budget, policy and lawmakers.

Article 4 (Protection of rights): Governments have a responsibility to take all-available measures to make sure children's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled. When countries ratify the Convention, they agree to review their laws relating to children. This involves assessing their social services, legal, health and educational systems, as well as levels of funding for these services. Governments are then obliged to take all necessary steps to ensure that the minimum standards set by the Convention in these areas are being met. They must help families protect children's rights and create an environment where they can grow and reach their potential. In some instances, this may involve changing existing laws or creating new ones. Such legislative changes are not imposed, but come about through the same process by which any law is created or reformed within a country. Article 41 of the
Convention points out the when a country already has higher legal standards than those seen in the Convention, the higher standards always prevail.

**Article 5 (Parental guidance):** Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of families to direct and guide their children so that, as they grow, they learn to use their rights properly. Helping children to understand their rights does not mean pushing them to make choices with consequences that they are too young to handle. Article 5 encourages parents to deal with rights issues "in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child". The Convention does not take responsibility for children away from their parents and give more authority to governments. It does place on governments the responsibility to protect and assist families in fulfilling their essential role as nurturers of children.

**Article 6 (Survival and development):** Children have the right to live. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.

**Article 7 (Registration, name, nationality, care):** All children have the right to a legally registered name, officially recognised by the government. Children have the right to a nationality (to belong to a country). Children also have the right to know and, as far as possible, to be cared for by their parents.

**Article 8 (Preservation of identity):** Children have the right to an identity – an official record of who they are. Governments should respect children’s right to a name, a nationality and family ties.

**Article 9 (Separation from parents):** Children have the right to live with their parent(s), unless it is bad for them. Children whose parents do not live together have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might hurt the child.

**Article 10 (Family reunification):** Families whose members live in different countries should be allowed to move between those countries so that parents and children can stay in contact, or get back together as a family.

**Article 11 (Kidnapping / Trafficking):** Governments should take steps to stop children being taken out of their own country illegally. This article is particularly concerned with parental abductions. The Convention’s Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography has a provision that concerns abduction for financial gain.
Article 12 (Respect for the views of the child): When adults are making decisions that affect children, children have the right to say what they think should happen and have their opinions taken into account. This does not mean that children can now tell their parents what to do. This Convention encourages adults to listen to the opinions of children and involve them in decision-making -- not give children authority over adults. Article 12 does not interfere with parents' right and responsibility to express their views on matters affecting their children. Moreover, the Convention recognizes that the level of a child’s participation in decisions must be appropriate to the child's level of maturity. Children's ability to form and express their opinions develops with age and most adults will naturally give the views of teenagers greater weight than those of a preschooler, whether in family, legal or administrative decisions.

Article 13 (Freedom of expression): Children have the right to get and share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or others. In exercising the right to freedom of expression, children have the responsibility to also respect the rights, freedom and reputation of others. The freedom of expression includes the right to share information in any way they choose, including by talking, drawing or writing.

Article 14 (Freedom of thought, conscience and religion): Children have the right to think and believe what they want and to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Parents should help guide their children in these matters. The Convention respects the rights and duties of parents in providing religious and moral guidance to their children. Religious groups around the world have expressed support for the Convention, which indicates that it in no way prevents parents from bringing their children up within a religious tradition. At the same time, the Convention recognizes that as children mature and are able to form their own views, some may question certain religious practices or cultural traditions. The Convention supports children's right to examine their beliefs, but it also states that their right to express their beliefs implies respect for the rights and freedoms of others.

Article 15 (Freedom of association): Children have the right to meet together and to join groups and organisations, as long as it does not stop other people from enjoying
their rights. In exercising their rights, children have the responsibility to respect the rights, freedoms and reputations of others.  

**Article 16 (Right to privacy):** Children have a right to privacy. The law should protect them from attacks against their way of life, their good name, their families and their homes.  

**Article 17 (Access to information; mass media):** Children have the right to get information that is important to their health and well-being. Governments should encourage mass media – radio, television, newspapers and Internet content sources – to provide information that children can understand and to not promote materials that could harm children. Mass media should particularly be encouraged to supply information in languages that minority and indigenous children can understand. Children should also have access to children’s books.  

**Article 18 (Parental responsibilities; state assistance):** Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their children, and should always consider what is best for each child. Governments must respect the responsibility of parents for providing appropriate guidance to their children – the Convention does not take responsibility for children away from their parents and give more authority to governments. It places a responsibility on governments to provide support services to parents, especially if both parents work outside the home.  

**Article 19 (Protection from all forms of violence):** Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and abused, physically or mentally. Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them. In terms of discipline, the convention does not specify what forms of punishment parents should use. However any form of discipline involving violence is unacceptable. There are ways to discipline children that are effective in helping children learn about family and social expectations for their behaviour – ones that are non-violent, are appropriate to the child's level of development and take the best interests of the child into consideration. In most countries, laws already define what sorts of punishments are considered excessive or abusive. It is up to each government to review these laws in light of the Convention.
Article 20 (Children deprived of family environment): Children who cannot be looked after by their own family have a right to special care and must be looked after properly, by people who respect their ethnic group, religion, culture and language.

Article 21 (Adoption): Children have the right to care and protection if they are adopted or in foster care. The first concern must be what is best for them. The same rules should apply whether they are adopted in the country where they were born, or if they are taken to live in another country.

Article 22 (Refugee children): Children have the right to special protection and help if they are refugees (if they have been forced to leave their home and live in another country), as well as all the rights in this convention.

Article 23 (Children with disabilities): Children who have any kind of disability have the right to special care and support, as well as all the rights in the Convention, so that they can live full and independent lives.

Article 24 (Health and health services): Children have the right to good quality health care – the best health care possible – to safe drinking water, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment and information to help them stay healthy. Rich countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

Article 25 (Review of treatment in care): Children who are looked after by their local authorities, rather than their parents, have the right to have these living arrangements looked at regularly to see if they are the most appropriate. Their care and treatment should always be based on “the best interests of the child”. (see Guiding Principles, Article 3)

Article 26 (Social security): Children – either through their guardians or directly – have the right to help from the government if they are poor or needy.

Article 27 (Adequate standard of living): Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. Governments should help families and guardians who cannot afford to provide this, particularly with regard to food, clothing and housing.

Article 28: (Right to education): All children have the right to a primary education, which should be free. Wealthy countries should help poorer countries achieve this right. Discipline in schools should respect children’s dignity. For children to benefit
from education, schools must be run in an orderly way – without the use of violence. Any form of school discipline should take into account the child's human dignity. Therefore, governments must ensure that school administrators review their discipline policies and eliminate any discipline practices involving physical or mental violence, abuse or neglect. The Convention places a high value on education. Young people should be encouraged to reach the highest level of education of which they are capable.

**Article 29 (Goals of education):** Children’s education should develop each child’s personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect others, human rights and their own and other cultures. It should also help them learn to live peacefully, protect the environment and respect other people. Children have a particular responsibility to respect the rights their parents, and education should aim to develop respect for the values and culture of their parents. The Convention does not address such issues as school uniforms, dress codes, the singing of the national anthem or prayer in schools. It is up to governments and school officials in each country to determine whether, in the context of their society and existing laws, such matters infringe upon other rights protected by the Convention.

**Article 30 (Children of minorities/indigenous groups):** Minority or indigenous children have the right to learn about and practice their own culture, language and religion. The right to practice one’s own culture, language and religion applies to everyone; the Convention here highlights this right in instances where the practices are not shared by the majority of people in the country.

**Article 31 (Leisure, play and culture):** Children have the right to relax and play, and to join in a wide range of cultural, artistic and other recreational activities.

**Article 32 (Child labour):** The government should protect children from work that is dangerous or might harm their health or their education. While the Convention protects children from harmful and exploitative work, there is nothing in it that prohibits parents from expecting their children to help out at home in ways that are safe and appropriate to their age. If children help out in a family farm or business, the tasks they do be safe and suited to their level of development and comply with
national labour laws. Children’s work should not jeopardize any of their other rights, including the right to education, or the right to relaxation and play.

**Article 33 (Drug abuse):** Governments should use all means possible to protect children from the use of harmful drugs and from being used in the drug trade.

**Article 34 (Sexual exploitation):** Governments should protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. The Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography augments this provision in the Convention.

**Article 35 (Abduction, sale and trafficking):** The government should take all measures possible to make sure that children are not abducted, sold or trafficked. This provision in the Convention is augmented by the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

**Article 36 (Other forms of exploitation):** Children should be protected from any activity that takes advantage of them or could harm their welfare and development.

**Article 37 (Detention and punishment):** No one is allowed to punish children in a cruel or harmful way. Children who break the law should not be treated cruelly. They should not be put in prison with adults, should be able to keep in contact with their families, and should not be sentenced to death or life imprisonment without possibility of release.

**Article 38 (War and armed conflicts):** Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war. Children under 15 should not be forced or recruited to take part in a war or join the armed forces. The Convention’s Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict further develops this right, raising the age for direct participation in armed conflict to 18 and establishing a ban on compulsory recruitment for children under 18.

**Article 39 (Rehabilitation of child victims):** Children who have been neglected, abused or exploited should receive special help to physically and psychologically recover and reintegrate into society. Particular attention should be paid to restoring the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

**Article 40 (Juvenile justice):** Children who are accused of breaking the law have the right to legal help and fair treatment in a justice system that respects their rights. Governments are required to set a minimum age below which children cannot be held
criminally responsible and to provide minimum guarantees for the fairness and quick resolution of judicial or alternative proceedings.

**Article 41 (Respect for superior national standards):** If the laws of a country provide better protection of children’s rights than the articles in this Convention, those laws should apply.

**Article 42 (Knowledge of rights):** Governments should make the Convention known to adults and children. Adults should help children learn about their rights, too. (See also article 4.)

**Articles 43-54 (implementation measures):** These articles discuss how governments and international organizations like UNICEF should work to ensure children are protected in their rights. (UN Convention on Human Rights and Children’s Rights).

**NON-VIOLENT GOVERNANCE—Sociocratic approach in election.**

**Background**

The term sciocracy refers to a decision-making and governance method that allows an organization to manage itself efficiently while incorporating the wisdom of every member. To make this possible, sociocracy enables every sub-part of the organizational system to have a sovereign voice in the management of the organization. In contrast, modern corporations are legal persons with certain rights, but the exercise of their corporate rights is the sole authority and responsibility of a majority of the board of directors – not the organization as a whole or even the board of directors as a whole.

The word “sociocracy” was coined by August Comte, an early nineteenth century French philosopher and founder of the science of sociology. Sociocracy literally means rule by the “socios,” the people who have a social relationship with each other. In contrast, democracy means rule by the “demos,” the general mass of people. Along with the idea of a sociocracy, Comte proposed a system of thought and organization known as positivism that he hoped would provide the basis for a stable
society and personal fulfilment in the context of the then emerging industrial evolution. Unfortunately, Comte did not suggest a practical structure for his ideas.

Later in the 1800's John Stuart Mill advocated worker cooperatives in which the workers controlled all the equity and selected their own management: the beginning of the co-op movement that has had some limited success. In the 1920's, a pioneering management scientist Mary Parket Follett, noted that in the most productive companies, workers strongly identified with the organization as “their” company, and dedication to how to make it run effectively. She noted, however, that no structure existed which allowed such dedication to be founded on anything other than a difficult to maintain illusion. It remained for work later in the 20th century by Wiener, Nash (featured in the movie A Beautiful Mind), Peregine (who won a Nobel Prize for his work on self-organization) and others to lay the intellectual foundation for such a structure, the structure offered by sociocracy.

Beginning shortly after World War II the famous American social psychologist, Rensis Likert, integrated extensive empirical social science research into a concept dubbed “system 4.” His ideas, which both promote upward feedback and recognize the importance of hierarchies, have been very influential. A number of recent American plant start-ups, particularly joint ventures with Japanese firms, have been patterned on System 4 concepts. Before he died in 1981, Linkert was beginning to articulate ideas for “system 5,” including such concepts as greater managerial authority vested in the work force. Professor Robert Ackoff off the Wharton School of Business suggested a similar idea in the early 1980’s. He suggested a scheme for the establishment of a corporation’s long range planning by multi-staged majority vote of management and workers.

More recently, John Naisbitt popularised such ideas as participatory corporations, networking as an alternative to traditional hierarchical organisations, and “intrapreneuring.” Naisbitt and other writers seem to reflect a general societal mood that reaffirms the value of profit making while pushing for a broader base in the
management of our business and institutions. The legislation passed in the U.S.A over
the last few decades that promotes employee ownership reflects this perspective. In
Leading the Revolution, Gary Hamel makes a strong case for getting everyone
involved in developing new business strategies. In mid 2004, American Airlines
announced a profitable quarter after teetering on bankruptcy two years before. How?
Their new CEO, Gerard Arpey, has been finding ways to involve the workers and
unions in finding new, innovative, and profitable business strategies. Prior to the
development of sociocracy's practical structure, however, cultivating an environment
that consistently maximises the involvement of every member has, in general,
remained in the hands of a few gifted managers.

Sociocracy offers clarity as to how this inclusive partnership model can be
accessible more broadly. The sociocratic circle-organisation method solves the
problem of how to organise sustainable and holistic worker involvement with
management and investors. Gerard Endenburg developed this simple, logical
structure, inspired by experiments by Kees Boeke, a Dutch educational reformer and
management scientist. In practical operation for more than thirty-five years, the
method is well past the initial experimental stage and is serving successfully in The
Netherlands in organisations as diverse as an electrical contracting company, a
municipal police department, a Buddhist monastery, a nursing home, a chain of
hairdressing shops, a local public school system, and numerous others. In formal
studies, such organisations are reporting innovation, productivity increase of up 30%
to 40%, reduction in the number of meetings, reduction in sick leave and higher staff
commitment to the organisation. Both workers and managers like working in
sociocratic companies. Quite simply, they are easier to manage and seem to have an
unusual capacity for initiative, self-regeneration and repair. The method is operating
well in organisations of up to 1500 people and substantially larger organisations are
trying it out on a limited basis.

Although Endenburg developed the sociocratic methodology with no direct
knowledge of Linkert's work, it has several striking similarities to Linkert's System 4
and 5 ideas. These similarities are very remarkable if one considers that sociocracy, based on applied systems theory, relies very little on the social psychology theories used by Linkert. Sociocracy is quite unlike the ideas underlying quality circles, socio-technical analysis, cooperatives, or employee stock ownership plans because it focuses on altering the boss-servant "power-over" structure that underpins modern organisations – whether profit or non-profit.

Sociocracy has developed most in the Netherlands and has attracted interest elsewhere in Europe, in Latin American, in certain Moslem countries, and in the United States.

Introduction to the Governing Principles

The sociocratic circle-organization method relies on four governing principles derived from recent discoveries in system theory: specifically dynamic steering, fractal concepts, and the phenomenon of self-organisation. Any company or organisation can implement them without changing the layout of the organisation’s existing hierarchical structure. Once in place they eliminate the “power-over” element of a traditional corporate hierarchy and provide a flexible means to develop that structure. Figure 1 lists these basic principles and gives brief definitions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Governing Principles</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consent</strong> – The principle of consent governs decision-making. Consent means no reasoned and paramount objection. In other words, a policy decision must be within the range of tolerance of every member of the circle. Decisions need not represent the preferred strategies of all members, but must satisfy the basic needs of all. Day-to-day decisions don’t require consent, but there must be consent about the use of other forms of decision-making.</td>
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**Election of Persons** – Election of persons for functions and/or tasks takes place in accordance with the principle of consent after open discussion.

**Circle** – The organisation maintains a structure for decision-making, consisting of semi-autonomous circles (i.e., groups of individuals). Each circle has its own aim and organises the three functions of leading, doing, and measuring/feedback. A circle makes its own policy decisions by consent, maintains its own memory system. A circle makes consent decisions only in special circle meetings (also called roundtable meetings).

**Double-Linking** – A circle is connected to the next higher circle with a double link. This means that at least two persons, one being the functional leader of the circle and at least one delegate from the circle, are full members of the next higher circle. (Buck and Villines, 2007)

*Figure 1: The Governing Principles of Sociocracy*

The sociocratic circle-organisation method provides specific procedures for using these principles – much the same as *Roberts Rules of Order* guides majority vote decision processes. We will illustrate these procedures with two detailed examples based on actual companies. The first example focuses on the consent, election, and circle principles. The second example demonstrates the double-linking principle. (Sociocratisch Centrum, 2005).

**First Example: A Hairdressing Shop**

Right after closing time, the staff of a hairdressing shop gathered for a roundtable meeting. The shop was part of a growing, sociocratically organised Franchise Company. Nine of the ten full time workers and one part time person were present and ringed the room.
It had been six weeks since the last meeting. Donna, an experienced stylist and regular facilitator of the meeting, followed the sociocratic roundtable format. See Figure 2. Starting with an opening round, she asked each person in turn to say briefly how they were doing and, if they wished, to make any comments on the agenda. As each person spoke, bringing him or herself into the meeting, there were nods, some good-natured laughter, and other indications of empathy. The opening round complete, Donna dealt with administrative matters. She asked if everyone had received a copy of the decisions made in the previous meeting. Susan, an apprentice, said she'd forgotten hers, and Charles, a stylist and secretary of the circle meetings, handed her an extra copy.

### The Order of a Sociocratic Meeting

A. Opening round – a time to check in, to bring oneself into the room and connect with others, to attune – like an orchestra just before the concert.

B. Administrative concerns – such as announcements, time available for the meeting, date of next meeting, acceptance of the agenda.

C. Content

   - Agenda item
   - Second agenda item
   - Etc.

Closing round – a time to measure the meeting process – e.g., was time used effectively, did the facilitator maintain equivalence, how could the decision-making have been more efficient, did everyone arrive prepared? Also, this is a time to propose agenda items for the next meeting. (Buck and Villines, 2007)
Donna watched them scan the list of prior decisions and after seeing several nods said, "Since no one seems to have a problem with the minutes, let's go on to the agenda. As all of you know, I'm greeting a promotion and will be managing the new shop opening over by the lake (some good natured cheers erupt); so, I would like us to elect a new circle chair today. Second, several of you mentioned that you're concerned about our competitor's salon that's opening in the other wing of this shopping centre. The only other agenda item I have is Mildred's request to talk about coverage of our shop on Sundays." Mildred, the manager, supervised the shop and presided over routine weekly staff meetings, but, the circle's choice, she did not chair the sociocratic circle meetings.

Everyone implicitly consented to this agenda and Donna started into the content part of the meeting. She introduced the first agenda item by saying, "Now then, let's proceed with selecting a new circle facilitator to replace me." She then proceeded to follow the template for conducting sociocratic elections. (See Figure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sociocratic Election Process</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Task: Establish job description and the period of time the person will perform the job.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Ballots: Fill out ballots and hand over to election leader.</td>
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<td>3. Public Comment: Each person says why they made their nomination.</td>
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<td>4. Changes: Election leader asks each person if they want to change their nomination based on the arguments they heard.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Discussion: Election leader usually proposes a name after step 4. However, he/she may ask for discussion if the arguments are very unclear.</td>
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Consent round: election leader asks each person if he or she consents to the proposed person, asking the person proposed last. If there is an objection, go back to step 5 and then try another consent round. (Buck and Villines, 2007)
Addressing the first step, Task, she said, "We will be electing the person for a one-year term. The duties are to prepare for and lead our roundtable meetings." As everyone seemed satisfied with this short description of the job, she continued to the second step. "Charles, would you please hand out the Ballots?" Figure 4 shows a typical sociocratic ballot.

![Sociocratic Ballot](Buck and Villines, 2007)

Each member of the circle took a few moments to fill out his or her ballot and then handed it to Donna. Proceeding with the third step, Donna picked up the first ballot from the stack and reading it said, "Linda, you nominated John. Would you give your reasons for choosing him?" Linda gave a short explanation. Donna asked the next person and continued reading the ballots until everyone had presented his or her reasons. Other people gave arguments for John and others spoke in favour of Mildred, Joyce and Charles, mentioning how each had contributed to the organisation.

After every one had given an initial comment without discussion, Donna asked if anyone wanted to change their vote based on what they had heard, the fourth step. Two people said that they liked the reasons given for Charles, including a person who had objected to him in an election several months earlier on the basis of his experience. This "self-organised" movement toward a particular person occurs frequently in sociocratic elections. The strength of the arguments for Charles convinced Donna to skip the fifth step, Discussion, and propose Charles. She then initiated a "Consent Round," asking each person in turn, "Do you have any objection to Charles as the new chair?" She asked Charles last. As on one objected, she
announced that the circle had selected Charles. Donna paused for a moment, as everyone in the room seemed to experience a moment of satisfaction at the completed election.

Charles suggested that Donna chair the rest of the meeting, and she moved on to the next topic on the agenda: the new competition. Following the template for making policy decisions by consent, Figure 5, Donna asked Michele to give her report.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision Making Process</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Consent to the issue (s) to be decided (what's the picture?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Generate a proposal (what's our opinion or request?) Often a person or persons may be asked to prepare a proposal and bring it to the next meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Consent to the proposal (what's our decision?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. a. Present proposal – Clarifying questions only.</td>
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<tr>
<td>b. Quick reaction round – quick feedback about the proposal, if appropriate, needs met or unmet.</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Amendments – proposer amends proposal, if appropriate, based on the questions and quick reactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Consent round – record any objections on a flip chart – no discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Discussion – improve proposal to deal with any objections.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Consent round – go back to step 3rd if there are more objections.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 5: Template for Making Policy Decisions By Consent
(Buck and Villines, 2007)
In the previous meeting, the circle had decided it was very concerned about a competitor's new styling shop that would be opening on the next block (step 1 of figure 5). It had asked Michele, a stylist and the shop's elected representative to their franchising company, to investigate and propose what they should do to handle the new competition. (Step 2 of Figure 5). Michele said she had spoken with the franchising company main office and to a number of other people, and it seemed that the competition was coming in because their own shop had so many customers. The new shop would try to take their customers with newspaper ads offering 20% discounts on haircuts in addition to a free manicure – at least for a time. She proposed (step 3A in Figure 5) that their shop offer special promotions for the first few months after the store opened and that they talk with their customers about what new services they might like to have. After some clarifying questions, Donna asked for quick reactions (Step 3.B) to Michele's proposal. Most felt it was a good idea, and some asked how much the special sales promotions would cost. Donna asked Michele if she wanted to amend (step 3.c) her proposal based on the questions and quick reactions.

Michele thought for a moment and said, “I imagine the advertising and specials will be pretty expensive, and I'm not sure how expensive. But, it is really important that we keep as many customers as we can during the other store's big opening extravaganza. So, I will add to my proposal that we authorise Mildred to spend up to 20% of our expected profits over the next three months on advertising and special promotions. She can propose an additional budget to us if she sees it costing even more money than that.” Michele glanced at Mildred, the shop manager, to try to gauge her reaction. The others were quiet for a moment as they considered the effect on their own monthly profit-sharing payments.

Donna broke the silence saying, “All right, let's see if we have a consent for Michele’s proposal.” She did a consent round (step 3.D), that is, asked each person in turn whether they have any paramount objection to Michael's proposal. To Michael's surprise no one had an objection to the money part of her proposal, but Charles rejected because he felt it would not give them enough information about the services
of the other shop – what they were really offering and their quality – and the way to react quickly if there was some new gimmick. Donna summarised Charles’ objection on a flip chart and continued the round without further discussion.

In the end the only objection was Charles’. Donna initiated a discussion focussed on Charles’ objection (step 3 E) by asking Charles if wanted to elaborate further. “Well” he said, “we do not have any way to research or learn from them – when they were doing better than us – what they were not doing well as well.”

Several other people made comments. After a bit Donna saw that a strategy was starting to take shape (self-organising). She stopped the discussion and summarised, “So, I am hearing that in addition to Michael’s proposal, we want, Mildred to organise an ongoing effort to check out the other shop. Each of us will take turns going to the other shop as customers to make our professional assessments of what they are doing. Mildred will get other people to go, too, who will talk their other customers to find out what they think and why they are going there rather than here. We will get training or change or advertising depending what we find.” Donna did another consent round (step 3 F), and this time no one had any objection. The decision was made.

Donna then moved the discussion to the third topic, coverage of the shop on Sunday afternoons – an unpopular time to work. He needs previous meeting the circle had created a new assignment schedule after intense discussion. Mildred reported that she had received no complaints so far except her own: namely, the new schedule was difficult for her to manage. To keep decision at a minimum the circle had closely limited her authority to modify the schedule unilaterally. She said she now objected to those tight reins because the schedule was unworkable without more latitude. She described the charges she wanted. As no one seemed against the idea of giving more flexibility or inclined to discuss it extensively, Donna did a consent round that encountered no objections.( Buck and Villines, 2007).
KERALA MODEL FOR POVERTY ERADICATION

One of the chief reasons cited for failure of poverty eradication programme is lack of emphasis on women. Men have hitherto dominated the planning of the programmes and have also been the prime beneficiaries of the programmes. Women are the mentors to families in this country. This all important ecological variable was never taken into account. Isolated efforts in the form of DWCRA were launched. Besides, the programmes were highly compartmentalized addressing one or the other issue connected with poverty. Lack of co-ordination among the agencies in charge at the implementation level was thus axiomatic. Besides the potential of people to work for their own welfare was completely ignored and paternalistic attitude persisted with it.

Refreshingly a different tune is being sung in a few isolated quarters in Kerala. The new question however is the replication on nationwide scale of these isolated experiments.

A new body by the name of Community Development Society (CDS) that is a formally registered society of women from poor families within the jurisdiction of the nagar palika/panchayat has been formed. Planning and implementation of all antipoverty programmes has been delegated to it. Poverty has been defined in a scientific way. Prevalence of the following risk factors qualify a family as being poor, calling for ameliorative assistance.

1. Family belonging to a scheduled caste or tribe.
2. Family with children under five years.
3. Family having one illiterate adult.
4. Family with one or no adult employee.
5. Family living in kutchha house.
6. Family without a household latrine.
7. Family with no access to safe drinking water.
8. Family consuming only two or less meals per day.
9. Family with an alcoholic or a drug addict.

A positive co-relation was unearthed between malnutrition and families thus identified after an in depth sample study. The organizational structure puts women at the forefront of all planning efforts. The basic unit is the neighbourhood group consisting of women from 25-40 families. The ward level women are members of the area development society. The CDS is the third tier body. Officials of local bodies are involved as member secretaries of the ADS and CDS and relevant officials or functionaries of various programmes of department are co-opted to the governing bodies of the CDS and ADS. The beneficiaries themselves implement the programmes for the poor. They directly access the Government, NABARD.

The results have been astoundingly positive. One of the prime reasons is the absence of bureaucratic interference. It is totally a self-help effort and is definitely recommended for replication on a nationwide scale.

The above are two-isolated reference. Experiments have not stopped here. They continue to be made and the results of all of them are remarkably positive.

What comes out of this discussion is that there is not much wisdom in persisting with the old archaic fashion of governance. Bureaucracy has to retreat and self-help communities at the micro level have to proliferate. The government has to function as a catalyst (reinventing government) (Dixit and Chaturvedi, 2001).

KUDUMBASHREE

What is Kudumbashree?

Kudumbashree is multi faceted women based participatory poverty eradication, programme organized by Government of Kerala and NABARD. It is implemented by Community Based Organisations of poor women in co-operation with Panchayat Raj institutions. Kudumbashree has bagged CAPAM International Innovations award for 2000.
Mission Statement

"To eradicate absolute poverty in ten years through concerted community action under the leadership of Local Governments, by facilitating organisation of poor for combining self help with demand led convergence of available services and resources to tackle the multiple dimensions and manifestation of poverty holistically".

The Objective

"To wipe out absolute Poverty from the state within next 10 Years".

PURA

(Providing Urban-amenities in Rural Areas)

We are one billion + people. There are 6, 00,000 villages with 700 millions people. India has 220 million as below the poverty line. There are 36 million who are in need of Employment. How to uplift these people? With a deeper sense of patriotism the former Indian President Dr. Abdul Kalam has contributed a beautiful concept called “PURA”- meaning “Providing Urban-Amenities in Rural Areas”. He proposes that through the process there should be Integrated Simultaneous, connected actions in order to rectify this situation. It is a cluster based approach to achieve uniform development for rural and PURA is to be implemented in 4,130 rural clusters across the country in the next five years. He says that we should concentrate on HABITAT, INFRASTRUCTURE, HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, MARKET CONNECTIVITY, QUALITY OF LIFE. In order to actualize and bring to effect, Dr. Kalam prescribes the following approach and methodology.

Physical Connectivity

It includes the improvement of the existing roads thereby ensuring safe & fast transport facility, uninterrupted, rural marketing, job opportunity, besides improving health and hygiene, and ensuring a hale and hearty life to the villages.
Electronic Connectivity

This is to establish mass communication systems such as telephone, community radio, Internet etc., ensuring the latest information exchange. To make the people be aware of daily market rate for their products, weather, Agri information, Government schemes and latest technology that could be adopted. To make the villagers interact with experts on agriculture, doctors and other officials.

Knowledge Connectivity

It is to offer training and guidelines to the villagers to do cultivation and allied professions intensively and identify the entrepreneurs and offer training with proper motivation and necessary assistance. It aims to plan for need-based education and enable all the villagers including children to learn. To apprise the villagers about various government schemes and employment opportunities and also to offer training on advanced available technical education to the village students.

Economic Connectivity

Here the provision is availed to create job awareness by providing training on entrepreneurship and handicrafts and to provide opportunities for marketing the products of agriculture and allied professions imparting technical skills. It undertakes developmental activities instilling the concept of saving and utility. It also encourages the villagers to involve in simple new and profitable business. For the further clarification we can classify those elements in the following manner.

Road, Power Connectivity

- Fast movement for rural to fetch services
- Better transportation implies efficient transaction with outside market and processing centres
- Power enables improvement in input and output of their livelihood
Electronic Connectivity
- Source of IT services & e-commerce for marketing their goods for rural
- Can help reduce a lot of time-wastage due to bureaucracy
- IIT Roorkee coordinating with government agencies to develop e-connectivity

Knowledge Connectivity
- Good education for children
- Trainings for farmers
- Agro based Industries
- Improve literacy

Market Connectivity
- Together with previous factors, kisaans can get best price for their crop by better access to markets
- Enables other artisans and craftsmen too to improve their business

The PURA complex would have transformed into a dynamic rural complex with focus on employment potential for all the families of PURA cluster with all the connectivities. This PURA complex will have its umbilical connectivity with the nearest university. Let us visualize how the PURA cluster will transform into, by the year 2012, based on the already operational PURA a) Provide dwelling units to all the village citizens with clean water supply and sanitation facilities. b) The village complex will have 100 percent literacy, c) Apart from upgrading existing schools, the complex will have a few colleges, world class vocational training institutions in construction, carpentry, welding, natural art; computer maintenance and services, IT Enabled Services, BPO and a Call Centre. d) People in the PURA complex will be able to get quality healthcare through tele-medicine and also through mobile clinics via Primary Health Centres. They will be brought under a corporate medical healthcare scheme, e) Each PURA village complex will be free from diseases like polio, TB, leprosy and malaria and other waterborne diseases. The infant mortality rate will be less than 10, f) The PURA complex will promote horticulture and
floriculture products, apart from agriculture in collaboration with nearby agricultural universities and research institutions, g) There will be agro-processing industries in each PURA complex for value addition to horticulture produce, h) Creation of dairy and fish farms in each PURA complex for providing additional non-farm revenue to farmers. They can also produce other dairy products, i) Revival of all existing water bodies in the PURA cluster, j) Provision of employment to all employable people of the village through additional jobs in dairy, agro-processing, construction, handicraft and tourism enterprises, k) Overall, per capita income of the PURA cluster should increase by three times and people living below the poverty line should come down to zero in six years.

Of course to achieve the above performance, a dynamic, empowered PURA management board structure is very vital. This has to be evolved with the active participation of State Governments, district authorities, societal transformers, educational institutions, small scale industries or an enterprise in association with the Panchayat. Finally, it will be managed as a viable and sustainable business proposition through the local entrepreneurship.

**PURA as a Business Model.**

It is a business proposition of Rs. 100 crores with public and private partnership over a project period of 5 years. Government (Bharat Nirman Programme, Rural Development Ministry, Prime Minister Sadak Yojana, Prime Minister Rojkar Yojana, Sampoorna Graha Yojana, Navodaya Schooling, 100 days Employment Guarantee Scheme and State Government Employment programmes); Banks- NABARD, ADB, WB, UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO; Venture capitalists can fund PURA components. However, initially Rural Development ministry is planning to create 2 PURA clusters in each of 600 districts in the country with seed funding. This may attract the public-private participation for providing value added services in the three sectors of the economy and run as sustainable business propositions. Already certain states like Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, and Kerala have taken up the PURA as a programme for
implementation as Government initiatives and also certain private initiatives have established working PURAs in Tamilnadu, Maharastra, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh.

**Periyar PURA (Tamilnadu)**

Periyar PURA complex pioneered by Periyar Maniammai College of Technology for Women, Vallam, Tanjore is functioning near Vallam having a cluster of over 65 villages in Tamilnadu which involves a population of 1 lakh. This PURA complex has all the three connectivities - physical, electronic and knowledge - leading to economic connectivity. The center of activity emanates from the women engineering college that provides the electronic and knowledge connectivity. Periyar PURA has health care centers, primary to post graduate level education and vocational training centers. This has resulted in large-scale employment generation and creation of number of entrepreneurs with the active support of 850 self-help groups. Two hundreds acres of waste land has been developed into a cultivable land with innovative water management schemes such as contour ponds and water sheds for storing and irrigating the fields. All the villagers are busy in cultivation, planting Jatropha, herbal and medicinal plants, power generation using bio-mass, food processing and above all running marketing centre. This model has emanated independent of any government initiative. The committed leadership has been provided by the engineering institution. Recently, 5 of Periyar PURA villages are connected through Wi-MAX Wireless and having minimum 4 mbps connectivity with the Periyar PURA nodal centre. It provides a sustainable economic development in that region. (Kalam, 2007).

In 1995, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty for 1997-2006 (Resolution A/50/107, 20 December 2005). In 1998, in accordance with Resolution A/53/198, the then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan published a report(A/54/316) on the implementation of the first UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. Progress was not what was
expected and the challenges faced were only mounting. As a result, the report made recommendations suggesting certain concrete measures and initiatives that could be taken at the dawn of the new millennium. The steps needed to eradicate poverty are highlighted: “All countries should set poverty eradication goals. Only 35 countries have done so, according to the UNDP poverty report, overlooking human development 1998”. (Report of the secretary-General-A/54/316, 7 September 1999).

Adoption of the Millennium Development Goals

The United Nations 189 Member states met in September 2000 at the Millennium Summit to reflect on the transitions, challenges and the high stakes, but also, the opportunities in a changing world. The States set out ambitious goals to be reached by 2015. They aimed to work for a culture of peace, to enhance the defense of peace and to ensure peace is well rooted. The office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights also created an “MDG Unit” to oversee implementation of the goals. ((Buck and Villines, 2007) Agbetse, 2007).

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.
2. Achieve universal primary education.
3. Promote gender equality and empower women.
4. Reduce child mortality.
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development.

In designing and implementing the policy and programme options for improving the conditions of the poor in an increasingly global context, three factors are essential for success: 1. Good Governance 2. An efficient administrative and institutional support structure at both the national and local levels for the effective delivery and monitoring
of social development programmes. 3. Adequate human and financial resource capacity and active partnership among all development actors. (Recommendations for possible action and initiatives for the eradication of poverty eradication towards the new millennium, 2007)

In consideration with all the above mentioned concepts, facts and its implementations and the outcome results, the researcher finds some inadequacy in Panchayath System which is the existing available decentralized form of administration. As it has been dealt in detail regarding its advantages, achievements and defects, limitations, it cannot be an adequate platform for the real social transformation we aspire for today and as the need of the hour. Secondly the Kudumbashree in Kerala is a still more decentralized form of the administration and its unique approach to have concern on everybody is to be appreciated. Thirdly the PURA proposed by the then President of India Dr. Abul Kalam is another approach to make the people to overcome their poverty and have a better future. It more concentrates on the Economical development of the people. The Millennium Development Goals also aim at all the important factors associated with the daily walks of life. The question is this now: Once the people obtain all the provisions availed by the above mentioned four forms, will there be peace among the people, in the society? Although they all mention people's participation, none of the above mentioned system directly aims at rectifying the present corrupted administrative system in the name of Representative democracy. The real social transformation is possible not by mere economical development and making everybody to overcome their poverty but the complete social transformation can be attained by an Alternative Administrative system which would bring Structural change and Attitudinal change which is possible only through the NEIGHBOURHOOD PARLIAMENTS AND NEIGHBOURHOOD CHILDREN PARLIAMENTS.