CHAPTER – II

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
Significance of the Study

The study on this concept “Neighbourhood Parliaments and Practice of Direct Democracy” is highly relevant today. It is the need of the hour and it has become a must because the Democracy that is practiced in the so-called democratic countries has become a big question to the people at large. It is transparent that the present practice of democracy leads to annihilation of humanity and E.V.R. Periyar says, “Democracy is a Devil”. He explains, just as devil is not true but attributed with all evil elements and corruptions, so also democracy is not true here but with full of corruption and injustices, malpractices, misuses of power, disrespectful of human rights etc. St. Thomas Moor said, “Governments are a plot by the rich against the poor.” It is to protect the minority rich the majorities poor are exploited. This concept of neighbourhood parliament is an alternative approach to promote people’s complete participation with direct democracy. It is just contrast to all those inhuman values which we mentioned above and this will surely rectify the situation pave way for creating a new society in contradiction to all those anti social values. Doing a research on this approach is realistic and constructive study to the present and future society.

Formulation of the Research Problem

India is the largest country that bases its law of constitution on democracy and the nature of the nation is Democratic and Secularistic. There exists other than the fundamental rights, freedom to practice his/her own religion. The great strength of India is Unity in Diversity. There exists different religious practices, various cultures, hundreds of languages, and the unique culture of Caste system which numbers more than three thousand communities. In spite of these differences India asserts with its uniqueness and accomplishments as a threatening force to many developed countries. There are innumerable and marvelous growth and development in 60 years of its independence.
Despite the remarkable growth and developments there are terrifying factors which leads to the destruction of the nature of the country. The destructive forces of the country are increasing day by day in many forms. The demerits of democracy has penetrated in every field and every walk of life of the people and reached its culmination in demerits. Democracy has lost the original sense and the misuse of the same has crossed the border of beyond control. The politicians who suppose to practice it effectively have become the prime causative factors of misusing it. The existing political structure does not favour in any way for the eradication of poverty that becomes a curse for the poor and needy. The politicians and the rich of the nation that is the 20% of the total population, never bother to eradicate this social problem of the poor. Rather they would prefer to have them because it is they who work for the welfare of the rich and the political leaders. Corruption has infiltrated in to all Government and nongovernmental departments. Politicians misuse the religious freedom and instigate religious fanaticism among the people and make people fight among themselves.

Religion has become a political weapon to capture the power politics and the political leaders are ready to shed any murder of the innocent people’s blood and never feel prick of conscience. People are divided based on Caste, religion, social status for the sake of the individual’s personal development. Divide and rule policy plays the vital role at present. The individuals’ become a threat to each other in ordinary walks of life for each other’s existence. The power is with the twenty percent (20%) population called the rich and politically involved people. There is no real peace among the neighbours because in the present atmosphere the neighbour becomes a threat to the other due to the misuse of the power and democracy. All the constructive powers and forces of democracy have become destructive forces by the misuse of the same. The people have become disconcerted.

Therefore, there is a deep urge and hunger among the people to participate in Direct Democracy than in the present system of representative and indirect democracy. In the representative democracy the people are active and given
opportunity to participate just once in five years. There is a sense of helplessness among the people. People feel cheated, pushed around, led down and they do not know whom to approach and how to effectively get things done. There is a sense of Alienation among the people. There is a sense of depersonalization, growing loss of credibility of political parties. There is loss of control over market forces, which leads to poverty, and there is terrible loss of faith in Democracy itself. Inadequacy of panchayat structures and lack of adequate channels has led to disorientation among NGOs and over dependence on bureaucrats. Thus the neighbourhood parliaments are the better alternative approach to find solution to all the above-mentioned problems. The research study tries to discover if this approach is truly an appropriate channel to create Direct Participatory Democracy.

General Objective

The general objective of this research study is drawn as “To assess the level of Participation and achievements of the people in people’s Governance through Neighbourhood Community Network and Neighbourhood Parliament with Neighbourhood Children Parliament in K.K. District, Tamil Nadu, S.India”.

Specific Objectives

➢ To study the concept of Neighbourhood Community Network (NCN) and Neighbourhood Parliament with its functions.

➢ To study the achievements of NCN and NP in K.K.District.

➢ To study the relationship between the government governing system and NCN & NP.

➢ To find out the problems, Issues, Concerns affecting the people’s governance (NCN).
➢ To study the opinion and experiences of field level functionaries (Animators) involved in N.P activities

➢ To suggest innovative interventions for the better implementation of NCN and NP in wider circle (at the State and National level)

Assumptions

➢ The Neighbourhood community network and Neighbourhood parliament is one of the most reliable tool in promoting / achieving people's participation with direct democracy in all the levels.

➢ Democracy is strictly practiced in NCN and NP.
   (By The people, For the people, Of the people)

➢ Neighbourhood community network and NP can intervene in the governments three tier system of Rural development administration to make it function more effectively with still more grassroots level decentralization with multi tier federation.

➢ Neighbourhood community network and Neighbourhood parliaments along with Neighbourhood children parliament brings structural changes in the present society and attitudinal changes in the minds of the growing and future generation.(The Children)

Pilot Study

Prior to the actual data collection and in view of preparing the data collection tools more effectively, detailed discussions were held with the guide concerning the selection of areas for data collection and regarding the sampling technique. Besides,
the researcher made a visit to the proposed area and the concerning people who work in the field. The researcher also had intervention with the Director and the animators of NCN (Neighbourhood Community Network) that is inclusive of Neighbourhood parliaments and Neighbourhood children parliaments and this intervention had broadened the vision of the researcher to prepare the data collection tools better. This study had helped to formulate the research title and to reaffirm it. It helped to determine the size of the sample from the total population of the areas selected for the study, sampling method, the relevance and possibilities for the success of the research. It also assisted the researcher in budgeting of resources like personnel, time and money. The pilot study was duly conducted by the researcher in the month of May 2004 and collected all the information needed for preparing the data collection tools.

Research Design

The nature of the research design is Exploratory, since the researcher wanted to make a discovery of ideas and insights about Neighbourhood parliament and highlight its existing features. The researcher made an attempt to investigate the structure and methodology of neighbourhood parliaments, its federation, the practical application and implementation of this alternative system for the societal change, its approaches for the societal change, its functions, achievements in the personal life as well as in the society etc. It involves the researcher’s survey of concerning available literature, his experiences of survey and analysis of insight stimulating examples. All the more the researcher is in the field of implementing the same all over the state of Tamil Nadu as president of NCN NGO Network for promoting neighbourhood parliaments and neighbourhood children parliaments Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry.

Universe of the Study

The universe of the study consists of all the different Neighborhood parliaments in Kanyakumary district, which is the birthplace of this concept, and Rev. Fr. J. Edwin was the founder who evolved this concept. Since then this concept has
been introduced first in this district in Tamil Nadu. There are altogether 7034 Neighbourhood parliaments in the district. It includes various types like Children’s parliament, Youth parliament and Adult parliament both male and female.

Selection of Respondents

The researcher has used Area Sampling method for selection of respondents for the research study. In Kannyakumari district there are 97 village panchayats (996 wards), 9 panchayat Unions (113 wards), 1 District panchayat (11 wards), 56 Town panchayats (912 wards), and 4 Municipalities (117 wards). And there are 2247 seats, 1,219,035 voters in the districts. Initially from the total number of 9 blocks and 4 municipalities in Kannyakumari district, the researcher selected two blocks and one municipality by using lottery method. There were 845 number of Neighbourhood parliaments in the selected blocks and municipality. From the list of 845 NP members of the selected areas the researcher selected a sample of 500 members by using simple random sampling procedure (lottery method). The final sample of 500 members included 67 members of children parliament, 284 members of youth parliament and 149 members of Adult parliament (male and female). Using Ex-census method the researcher also selected all the 60 field level functionaries in charge of parliament activities of Kannyakumari district for assessing the opinions and experiences of the field level functionaries regarding NP activities.

Source of Data

The researcher has used mainly primary data, which he collected directly from the respondent by administering a questionnaire. Besides, the researcher also had used secondary source of data such as official records of NGOs and NP. The related concepts that are closely linked with this neighbourhood parliament like decentralization system of Panchayat Raj, the researcher in order to compare and contrast the proposed system has adopted Kudumbashree in Kerala state. The secondary sources of data were also collected from Documentaries, Books,
Magazines, Journals and Articles. The researcher also used direct observation for assessing the functioning of NP. In addition to these tools the researcher also employed case study method to assess the functioning of three selected NPs (one extremely well functioning parliament, one moderately functioning Parliament, one poorly functioning parliament. The researcher also used a separate questioner and collected data from the 60 selected animators of the implementing agency.

**Tools of Data Collection**

The researcher has used self-prepared questionnaire in Tamil, which covered the following areas.

**The Socio-Demographic Particulars**

The socio demographic particulars of the respondents and members of the neighbourhood parliament includes the personal profiles, their age group, Educational status, Gender, their Occupational information, their Income pattern and the number of NCN groups in their panchayat etc.

**The Concept**

This part of tools includes understanding of the concept of NCN by the respondents, the duration of its existence, the modality of admitting the members into the neighbourhood parliament, the election of the ministers, frequencies of meeting, Regularities of members, relating the concept with panchat system, comparing and contrasting the nature and the characteristics of Panchayat Raj system with Neighbourhood parliament system.
Functional Aspects

Functional aspects of Neighbourhood parliaments deal with the purpose of the NP groups, efforts undertaken to achieve the purpose, financial aspects, linkages with other NP groups such as frequencies of meeting, cooperation among the members, reasons for non-cooperation, activities of the groups, relationship and linkage with other NGOs or GOS etc.

Achievements

Under the classification of achievements, the realistic achievements of the neighbourhood parliaments are brought out. Here the along with their success stories the reasons for the failure in achieving the purpose, problems faced in the parliaments, how the problems were handled, tie-up with the promoting or implementing agency, the approaches adopted in their joint ventures, their involvement and achievements in panchayat election and administration, the implementation of government schemes through neighbourhood parliament, the resource pattern, etc. are studied.

Impacts

This part of data collection tools deals with impacts of the NCN groups among the members as well as in the society, the impact of Tsunami, NCN impact on the Tsunami affected people, the difficulties encountered by the groups as well as the individuals, the future suggestions for the better implementation of the future society.

Pre-Test

Pre-test was conducted in order that the authenticity of the tools for data collection to be proved. It was done in the month of July 2004. The researcher has distributed the questionnaire to 30 respondents duly to 10 Adults, 10 Youth, 10 children and collected their responses. Based on the responses of the respondents
certain corrections had been made in order to make the respondents to respond effectively.

- Some of the irrelevant questions had been deleted.
- Some of the open ended questions had been converted into closed ended ones so as to make easy access for the respondents to understand the content.
- Certain questions were rearranged to have a flow of thought and to have coherence in the responses.
- Certain questions had to be converted into qualitative approach.

Actual Data Collection and Duration

The actual data collection was held from June to July 2005 at the proposed area of Kannyakumari district. This was done after due discussion and consultation with the guide regarding the corrections made in the questionnaire during the pre-test. The researcher had collected the needed relevant information from the chosen 500 respondents and 60 field level functionaries. The researcher had been to all the selected areas and visited the respondents in person in the NCN groups, explained the questionnaire to the respondents so as to value the authenticity of the data collected with genuine interest and involvement.

Data Analysis

The data collected was edited and fed in the computer and statistical package for social sciences was used for the classification and tabulation. There are number of multi response questions which were dealt accordingly and related tables, Chi-square test of independent variables were used to present the data with appropriate interpretation.
Operational Definitions of the Terms

The title of the research “Neighbourhood Parliaments and Practice of Direct Democracy” is an alternative constructive approach which promotes everybody’s direct participation in planning, budgeting, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and reimplementing with the Governance by the people.

Neighbourhood the term neighbourhood refers to the 30 neighbouring families only. It includes not the families from other streets or other villages, those liked by some and disliked by some other but it consists only the families living around each other either in one same street and if there are no 30 families in one street, they can include some from the just next street.

Parliaments The term Parliament is derived from the Latin word ‘Parlare’ which indicates a place where people sit and talk, share with each other. The term has been adopted in this sense to the parliament where the peoples representatives come and sit, plan together, discuss and decide, implement the same. These events are taking place in the neighbourhood parliaments where people come together, speak and discuss together, do the planning, budgeting, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and reimplementing etc.

NP refers to Neighbourhood Parliament where the people from the neighbouring families come together to form a forum to govern themselves and to practice direct democracy with the fraternal concern of their neighbours.

NPC denotes the Neighbourhood Parliament of Children where the children from the neighbouring families come together to form a forum to learn on governance by themselves and to practice direct democracy with the fraternal concern of their neighbours.

Neighbourhood Community Network (NCN) refers to the networking of all the neighbourhood parliaments not only in Kannyakumari district but all over the state of
Tamil Nadu and in the national level of India. It is inclusive of the structure starting from the neighbourhood, and federated with Villages, Panchayats, Unions, Districts, States, National level and goes up to International level.

Direct Democracy would mean here the personal participation and involvement of everybody in all those above-mentioned factors like planning, budgeting, etc. There is no indirect participation and representative participation as we have in the present democratic system in India. The legislative sense of democracy—By the people, For the people and Of the people—has its full existence only in this practice of system of neighbourhood parliaments.

Difficulties Encountered

The researcher had to encounter certain difficulties during the time of data collection. The respondents were available only at the weekend holidays and on other holidays. Therefore the researcher had to seek for the holidays to do it and it consumed two months to collect the data. Due to the personal responsibilities and demands the researcher had to go for the extension of six months to submit the research work although the processes of preparing the same have been done systematically with the able guidance of the guide. During the data collection it was easy to do it with the adults and youths but when it was to be done with the children’s parliament the researcher had to make them to understand certain questions in order to get clarity of answers.

Limitations

Although the participation and involvement of the respondents were excellent, there were some limitations in the research study.

The samples were taken from two blocks and one municipality by using lottery method out of 9 blocks and 4 municipalities in K.K district. As there were 845 number of Neighbourhood parliaments in the selected blocks and municipality from where the
researcher selected a sample of 500 members by using simple random sampling procedure (lottery method) and this may be disproportionate. The researcher has limited his research study with the concept of Neighbourhood parliament and practice of Direct Democracy in Kanyakumari district alone. He too had compared and contrasted this concept with some related existing systems like Panchayat Raj and Kudumbashree in Kerala, other existing developmental groups, associations but not engaged into the complete analytical part of every system.

Chapterisation

Chapter One deals with the Introduction to the study and the related literatures, since this is the first research study made on this concept.

Chapter Two discusses the Methodology adopted in the study.

Chapter Three deals with the Analysis and Interpretation of overall sample.

Chapter Four brings out the results of the Case study made on three groups.

Chapter Five enlightens the Major Findings, Suggestions and conclusions arrived at.