CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

“As long as women of India do not take part in public life, there can be no salvation for the country. As long as women do not come to public life and purify it, we are not likely to attain swaraj.” – Mahatma Gandhi

Women make up 50 per cent of the world’s population, constitute 33.3 per cent of the official labour force, perform nearly 66.6 per cent of all working hours, receive 10 per cent of the world’s income and own less than one per cent of world’s property. Women throughout the world are discriminated and exploited. The intensity of subjugation and exploitation varies from society to society but in no society, it has been eliminated completely. For centuries, their presence has been affected and suppressed. The patriarchal system has confined them to specific areas namely the kitchen, stereotyped gender roles of bearing and rearing children, cooking and cleaning. Opportunities for self-development or for an outside career are denied to them. In feudal societies, the wife became a part of the belongings of the husband along with his land, cattle and tools. Even today, a woman is viewed as property and not a human being with likes and dislikes of her own. She is there to be viewed as an object of beauty and a commodity for men’s pleasure. Qualities such as passively, submissiveness and selflessness are expected from her. She should be an embodiment of virtue, tolerance and sacrifice. In simple term a women’s fundamental right to be her own self is denied to her.
1.1 Status of Women in India

A study of the status of women in India reveals that there were distinct stages of rise and fall in their status. Women in Vedic times enjoyed a very high status. They had as much rights to enjoy life as men had. Women were men’s friend, their co-workers and never their inferior; they had enjoyed the property rights and had access to the property of their father and husband. Women in the field of intellect were man’s equal. They used to discuss political and social problems freely as men. The partners in marriage were women who enjoyed equal rights. Pre-puberty marriages were unknown and there were references made to swayamvare marriages, where women were take the chance of selecting their partners.

After Vedic period, the position of women deteriorated considerably critical. The Hindu law given by manu had made women entirely dependent on men and subjected her authority of a father, husband and son in the different periods of their life as daughter, wife and mother. The manu’s dictum was that for women there was no freedom at any stages in life.

The British people at first followed a policy of non-interference in the social and religious life of the people in India, to win their co-operation in the administration of the country. Therefore, women went down imperceptibly in social status. They had to lead a cloistered life. They moved within the narrow sphere of their kitchen, cooking, child bearing, rearing and catering to the
relative-in-law and husband, under the thinking that is their work, life and activity. They had particularly no idea of the busy world outside except what they learned from their men folk.

Eventhough this position continued in the begining of the British period, the spread of English education, which was a characteristic of British rule, and the intermixture of western and eastern cultures enabled women to realize their legitimate status.

After the First World War, Mahatma Gandhi set the pace for the progress of Indian women in all spheres of life. He called manu’s dictum as a symbol of barbarism. He advised women to emancipate themselves from the drudgery of the kitchen. Adhering to Gandhiji’s appeal, women came out in thousands and flung them headlog in national movement.

An important factor that motivated more and more women to seek employment is the hard economic necessity. The urban upper and lower middle classess, were one in this inspiration. Some women from the middle classess take up employment to improve standard of living of the family through augmenting their family income.

The status of women is intimately linked with their economic position, which in turn mainly depends on opportunities for participation in economic activities. Now, the economic status of women is recoganized as an indicator of society’s swings in development. It is in the interest of a society to make full
and most effective use of its human resources. The full benefit of development can be realized only with women’s participation and the economic role, which cannot be isolated from the total framework of development. Maintenance of proper quantitative balance among various economic activities is one of the principal functions of the economic system, which should operate to give equal freedom of choice to men and women.

The orientation of a society regarding the desirability of the role of women should play in the country’s development was taken as very important pre-condition for the advancement of not only women but also the country as a whole. Changes in the age of marriage, size of families, urbanization, migration, level of literacy rates, health status and standard of living are important indicators which have to be recognized and analysed in order to understand the present status of women in India and to avoid social crisis.

In 1971, the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI) analysed women participation in politics. Sisikar (1979) says, ‘By and large most political leaders are not very enthusiastic about the participation of women in politics. This could be seen from the membership of the constituent assembly\(^1\). The constitution makers recognized that women were there on sufferance. The scheduled castes or weaker sections of the society were provided with reservation in both the legislature and the services. Their failure to recognize women was obviously a result of the predominantly male composition of the constituent assembly. This situation has not changed despite
the one-third reservations for women in panchayats and urban local bodies introduced by amendment and the commitment to similar reservation for women in parliament included in party manifestos. The fate of the constitution amendment bill proposing reservation for women in parliament in the last Loksabha is well known but even the panchayats and municipalities, despite the state Acts for panchayats and urban local bodies, enacted or amended to meet the requirement of the 73rd and 74th Amendments, display the same lack of enthusiasm.²

Former president A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in his address on the eve (2007) of Women’s Day said, “Empowering women is a pre-requisite for creating a good nation. When women are empowered, societal change is assured. Empowerment of women is essential as their thoughts and their value systems lead to the development of a good family, good society and ultimately a good nation”. The strength of the chain is the strength of its weakest link. In a society, women are the weakest links. Therefore, they may be strengthened for strengthening the society as a whole and that is possible only by empowering them. Nehru said. “Woman should be uplifted for the upliftment of the nation, and if a woman is uplifted, society and the nation is uplifted”. According to Swami Vivekananda, “there is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of the women is improved. Therefore, women empowerment plays a vital role in the progress of a family, community, nation and the world as a whole”.³
1.1.1 Importance of Women

Women who constitute half of the world population are not fully harnessed as a human resource. Any society cannot go ahead if 50 per cent of the population does not participate in its development activities. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the former Prime Minister of India observed that the neglect of women would be criminal, since humanity has been deprived of half of the energy and creative talents. Right through history, in all religions and cultures women have been assigned a secondary status.

The world war proves to be a turning point in the history of mankind. The participation of women in work force started increasing since the war. This trend is observed in developing nations. In tune with the worldwide trend, Indian women are marching towards self-employs. In, India women played a secondary role for centuries together. During the colonial rule women lived a miserable and horrible life in diverse situation.

Mahatma Gandhi, father of Indian nation helped women to find a new dignity in public, a new place in the national mainstream, a new confidence and a consciousness that they could act against oppression. The socio economic changes were set in motion in India after Independence provided women with better educational and employment opportunities. Besides, a series of laws such as the Special Marriage Act 1954, the Hindu Marriage Act 1955, Equal Remuneration Act 1976 passed by the government of India helped to improve a lot of women. Today, educated Indian women have made a landmark in the
non-conventional field like consultancy, marketing, advertising; garment exporting, interior decorations, beauty parlours, road and building construction. Women have begun coming forward in considerable number in embracing of higher category jobs like civil service, judiciary, foreign service, medicine and architecture. In organized sectors like banking, insurance, communication and air transport women’s share in employment has recently doubled over the decade and government’s intervention played important role in this regard.

1.1.2 Role of Women

Women are at the heart of development. They control most of the subsistence agriculture, bearing and rearing children, domestic labour, trading and wage employment. Everywhere in the world, women are working both in organized and unorganized sectors.

a. Women in Organised Sector

The Organised sector in the Indian Economy comprises of all public sector establishments, which include services under the central and state government and local bodies and occupations in public enterprises in the field of industry, finance, public utilities and non-agricultural private sector establishment that employ ten or more persons. Certain laws and regulations relating to industries, services and other occupations govern this organized sector. According to the census 2011, women constituted 26 per cent of the total workforce in India.⁴
b. Women in Unorganised Sector

The term “unorganised labour” has been defined as those workers who have not been able to organise themselves to pursue their common interests due to certain constraints like casual nature of employment, ignorance and illiteracy, small and scattered size of establishments.

The unorganised sector provides employment to a very high proportion of working women in India. Most women workers in unorganised sector have never heard of a trade union. They never fight for equal pay or occupational justice. They are unaware of various welfare measures. Apart from ignorance, there are other causes too, like lack of spare time and faith in unionism, loyalty to the household, passiveness and fear of male member’s objection at home. Women working in unorganised sector require education and technical training to switch over to more specialized and high paying jobs. At the same time, they also need to be aware of their exploitation and claim equal treatment for equal work. During the period of acceleration in industrialization and urbanization, the most expensive economic opportunities for women were in service employment.

According to an estimate of the National Commission on Self Employment of Women, 96 per cent of the total female work force operates in the unorganised sector. They do arduous work as wage earners, piece rate workers, casual labourers and paid family workers. The two broad categories in
the informal sector in which women workers are concentrated are casual manual labour (wage labourers) and self-employment.

The first category covers a wide range of activities in which construction work, beedi rolling and domestic services are prominent. Women engaged in self-employment occupations in informal sector are retail trade of various products ranging from natural produce to processed products and undertaking self-employment in textiles, hosiery, garments, tailoring, vending and hawking, food processing, poultry and fish trading. The National Commission on self-employed women and women in the informal sector (1998) uses the following occupational categories viz. land based occupations such as agriculture, forestry, dairying, small animal husbandry, sericulture, mining, tobacco and beedi workers and other home-based workers eg. handloom, handicrafts, garments, vendors, hawkers, construction workers, domestic workers and factory piece rate workers.\(^5\)

1.2 Women in Tamil Nadu

In Tamil Nadu women are starting business and becoming major force today both in the traditional and the new global e-business market place. Women account for half of the world’s human resources. The contribution of Tamil Nadu government towards women’s development especially through ‘Mahalir Thittam’ is worth mentioning. It makes the women to think independently and helps to enrich their knowledge in social upliftment as
Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru dreamt. Women of today are no longer ready to remain peripheral actresses but they want to play their rightful role in all spheres of life. The political emancipation and social empowerment act as a main catalyst in achieving the total empowerment of women. When women come forward to take part in education, employment and economic field, they also try to get the political freedom. Education and the economic development raised their status in society. Now a number of women participate in the law making body and administration. It gives a great emancipation among the women in India as well as in Tamil Nadu.

1.3 Concept of Empowerment

Empowerment is a process, which helps people gain control of their lives by raising their awareness and helping them take action and work. In other words, empowerment facilitates changes and enables an individual to do what he or she wants. Empowerment is the feeling that activates one’s psychological energy to accomplish one’s goals. From the institutional perspective, empowerment is the process of setting the right environment and structure, as well as creating circumstances in which people can use their facilities and abilities to fully actualize their potential. This implies that institutions should recognize that people carry within them the potential for self-actualization. Individuals need to be encouraged and facilitated to take personal responsibility for improving their achievements.
Stormquist (1993) has identified four clear dimensions of empowerment. They are cognitive, psychological, economic and political. Cognitive empowerment involves an understanding of the subordinate conditions and their causes, and the ability to critically review one’s experiences in order to notice or identify patterns of behaviour which lead to dependence and hence, re-inforce subordination. Cognitive empowerment, therefore, calls for knowledge and an understanding of the self, as well as the need to make choices that may go against cultural and social expectations. Psychological empowerment is concerned with feelings and the belief that they can change their situation. It entails competence in making decisions at the personal and social levels in order to improve one’s situation. It, therefore, represents the development of self-esteem and self-confidence. Economic empowerment involves the ability to engage in income-generating activities that give them an independent income. Political empowerment entails the ability to analyse situations politically and mobilization for social change. According to Friedman (1992), collective action has been identified an important prerequisite for any meaningful political and social change. Cognitive, psychological and economic empowerment involves critical awareness, action and change at the personal level whereas political empowerment necessarily demands extending action and change at a macro level.9

Empowerment means ‘becoming powerful’. It is a process, by which individuals, groups and communities are able to take control of their
circumstances and achieve their goals. The term empowerment has the most conspicuous feature containing the word ‘power’ which means control over material assets, intellectual resources and ideology. According to M.C. Whirter (1991), empowerment is the process by which people, organizations or groups that is powerless,

a) become aware of the power dynamics at work in their life context,

b) develop the skills and capacity for gaining some reasonable control over their lives,

c) exercise this control without infringing upon the rights of others and
d) support the empowerment of others in their community.10

1.3.1 Women Empowerment

Women empowerment as a concept, it was introduced at the International Women’s Conference in 1985 at Nairobi, which defined it as redistribution of social power and control of resources infavour of women. Mass illiteracy, unemployment, ill health and their limited access to economic assets mark the position of women in India. Therefore, empowerment of women in India principally aims at enhancing their social functioning by a quantitative and qualitative change, particularly in the field of education, health and employment.

The term ‘empower’ means ‘to give power or authority to someone’, ‘to make or cause power’ and ‘to provide ability or enable’, All these meanings
imply that power is given, permitted or allowed. However, empowerment of women is a process in which a woman develops her own power or even demands and seizes them. It is a radical transformation of power relations between men and women so that women have greater power over their own lives and men have less power over women’s lives. Hence, it is a kind of rearrangement of power, which brings a positive change in society. This power cannot be transacted or translated and it cannot be bought or sold. It has to be acquired by the individual woman, exercised and sustained. Empowerment is actually the ‘power to’ and not ‘power over’ something. Women empowerment results in equity and equality in society that is the foundation for human liberation and empowerment. Women have a distinct role to play in the development of a nation. As a mother, a woman shapes the personality and character of children and hence the ‘character of nation’. As a house wife, she maintains the productivity of the human capital of making contribution to the economy of the nation. Empowerment is a process that generates changes in our ideas and perceptions and creates awareness about one’s rights and opportunities for self-development in all important spheres of life. Women were considered as a weaker section of the society. According to Manusmiriti, “she is protected by the father in her child hood, by the husband in adulthood and by the son in her old age”. Women in India are less endowed than men with education, health, employment, politics, administration, medical, skill and productive assets.\textsuperscript{11}
Empowerment is a multidimensional process. The seeds for women empowerment were sown as early as the 1830s. Many American women demanded the decrease of working time and increase of wages. This spread to Britain, Russia and other countries, where women succeeded in getting their rights through united struggle.\textsuperscript{12}

In 1907 the first conference of socialist women was conducted in Germany. On 8\textsuperscript{th} March, 1909 about 30,000 women struck work in New York. In the second conference of the socialist women held in Copenhagen in 1910 demanding to declare a particular day as working women’s day. In the conference of the socialist congress women held in Russia in 1910, 8\textsuperscript{th} March was proclaimed as International Women’s Day. The charter of the United Nations Organisation was the first international document to mention equal rights for men and women. The UNO declared 1975 as the women’s year, 1990 as the year of the girl child and 1975-85 as the international decade of women. The Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in 1979 and came into force in 1981. This helped in the creation of an awareness of women’s rights all over the world. India is one of the countries that officially accepted CEDAW. This convention was instrumental in bringing about changes in the constitutions of many countries. The Vienna declaration 1993 was the first UN document to state that women’s human rights are indivisible and integral part of human rights.\textsuperscript{13}
There are five levels in women empowerment. They are control, participation, conscientisation, access and welfare.

1. Control

Women must attain control by which they will achieve power to decide and to assess their strategic benefits in the long run. Women will not be a separate entity but will be co-workers in the community.

2. Participation

It is the heart of all programs for women development. Women must participate in all socio-economic and political activities and in the process in which decisions are made and implemented. Women should influence decisions and contribute to national growth.

3. Conscientisation

One must consider that women are not very responsible for subordination and distressing condition. This subordination is neither natural nor biological. It is the outcome of social conditions. Society has structured this subordination of women to men.

4. Access

Women indeed do not have due control over resource neither as owner nor as user. They should have the right to access to assets and resources.
5. Welfare

Provision of some basic facilities is very important for women, as they need to have education, health, sanitation, income and economic liberty where women are completely discriminated. At the sametime, they will have to be organized and attempt to eliminate obstacles to the provision of these facilities. Empowerment of women is possible by,

i. Creating an environment through positive economic and social policies for full development of women to enable them to realize their full potential.

ii. The de-jure and de-facto enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedom by women on equal basis with men in all spheres such as political, economic, social, cultural and civil.

iii. Equal access to participation and decision making of women in social, political and economic life of the nation.

iv. Equal access to women on health care, quality education at all levels, career and vocational guidance, employment, equal remuneration, occupational health and safety, social security and public office.

Empowerment of women has five dimensions such as economic, political, social, personal and familial empowerment. Political empowerment of women is necessary because women who alone mainly work in their home and hence know the problems that they have to confront in that realm. Women also often work outside the house and so they are aware of largely, the problems that are present outside the home. As women are knowledgeable about
challenges on the home front and outside, they need political empowerment so that they can be in a position to do something for problems both inside and outside the home.\textsuperscript{14}

1.3.2 Stages of Women Empowerment

There are six stages of women empowerment. They are,

a. Awareness Building Stage

Ideology is the absolute platform for those who want to challenge others to establish their own rights. They must think that they are humans and not such submissive social beings as they are taught and made by patriarchal values. It is to be understood by women that men will not eradicate women’s problems unless men are questioned and challenged.

b. Skill and Capacity Assessment Stage

The powerless and sufferers have to be informed about their rights and causes of their distress. They may not demand their dues spontaneously since they have been under male domination for years that has been imprinted in their mind.

c. Capacity Building and Skill Development Stage

Movement has to be launched as an integrated one where all classes of women will take part in achieving the target. What one woman can change is micro factor. Women from all walks of life have to be brought into one stream
to augment social movement in order to change the present discriminating society because collective movement is the most powerful and effective way.

d. Participation and Greater Control on Decision-Making Stage

Women empowerment is not confined to any particular point. It is a process. The process of women empowerment takes lot of turns to women. It also deserves recognition nationally and internationally since a good number of global factors are associated with women empowerment.

e. Action for Change Stage

Disagreement is there as to the process of women empowerment. Development agencies and representatives want immediate solution to the problems of women; others want to obliterate those traces that cause women problems.

f. Evaluation Stage

Women empowerment is not a one-way traffic; rather it is a never-ending process. The whole process of women empowerment, therefore, has to be evaluated to continue through feedback mechanism maintaining a dynamic process.14

1.3.3 Five Year Plans and Women Empowerment

Our government through its Five Year Plans recognizes the history of women’s participation in the development of our country.
i. First Five Year Plan (1951-1956) set up the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) in 1953 to promote welfare work through voluntary organizations and charitable trust.

ii. Second Five Year Plan (1956-1961) supported the development of mahila mandals to work at the grassroots. This plan recognised the need for ‘organisation of women as workers and the need to perceive the social prejudices from which they suffer.

iii. Third Five Year Plan (1961-1966) centered mainly on women’s education, maternity benefits, childcare, wealth, nutrition and family planning.


v. Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-1974) recommended a programme of ‘functional literacy’ to equip women with skills and knowledge to perform the functions of a house-wife including child care, nutrition, health care and home economy.

vi. Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-1978) brought a major shift in the approach towards women, from welfare to development.

vii. Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-1985) accepted women’s development as a separate economic agenda and took multi-disciplinary approach with thrust on health, education and employment.

viii. Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-1990) had the objective of bringing women into the mainstream of national development.

ix. Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-1997) aimed at a paradigm shift from development to empowerment and benefits to women in the core sectors of education, health and employment.
x. Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) had empowerment of women as its strategic objective.

xi. Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) suggests specific strategies, policies and programmes for the empowerment of women.

xii. Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012) gives importance to the women in export sector, agricultural activities and other tiny industries.

xiii. Twelth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) launched National Mission for empowerment of women.15

1.4 Panchayati Raj Scenario

The Panchayati Raj is a South Asian political system prevailing mainly in India, Pakistan and Nepal. The word ‘panchayat’ literally means assembly of five (panch) and respected elders chosen and accepted by the local community. However, there are different forms of assemblies. Traditionally, these assemblies settled disputes between individuals and villages. Modern Indian government has decentralized several administrative functions at the local level, empowering elected gram panchayats. ‘Raj’ literally means governance or government. Mahatma Gandhi advocated Panchayati Raj as a decentralized form of government where each village is responsible for its own affairs, as the foundation of India’s political system. The term for such a vision was Gram Swaraj (village self-governance).16

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have been recognized as the vehicles of socio-economic transformation of the rural India. They are the grassroot units of self-government playing a pivotal role in bringing changes in power,
structure and functions of both male and female members in the rural communities. According to Heyzer (1985), social and economic conditions in the developing regions of the world are changing rapidly because of the worldwide multisectoral development process. Development in many cases had negative impacts on a large proportion of women in general and rural women in particular. This situation may be attributed to traditional attitude, socio-economic and psychological conditions of women, which prevent the entry of rural women into Panchayati Raj Institutions to contribute and to serve for the development of their locality.\textsuperscript{17}

Panchayati Raj is an Indian political institution and it is a part of our ancient civilization. Panchayati Raj Institutions is the need of the hour. It gives voice to voiceless and power to powerless. People irrespective of caste, creed, sex and religion living in six lakhs villages of India and the new PRIs provide “power to the people and not power to a few people”. No doubt, PRIs in India can create a history for the generations to come. The Panchayati Raj system in India aims to mobilise the effective participation of rural public in decision-making and in the implementation of rural welfare programmes.\textsuperscript{18}

The revitalization stage of Panchayati Raj, which had set in the late 70s, brought several structural and functional changes in the system. One significant change is the passing of the 73\textsuperscript{rd} constitutional amendment in 1993, which provided for reservation of not less than one-third of seats and chair positions.
to women in the Panchayati Raj bodies. The achievement, which could be regarded as one of the important achievements of the Indian women’s movement, created high hopes among all those concerned about the increased and active involvement of women in grass roots politics, especially in decision-making. The expectation is that reservations to women could facilitate improved share to them in the whole process, infuse democratic way of fluctuating in local government, help for decline in corruption and provide a space for women in the male dominated political sphere. Reservation is also considered to be responsible for offsetting and unsetting the status quo for beginning the process of bringing out simple women in the task of governance.

1.5 Need for Study

The present study is an attempt to know the extent of participation of women elected representative in Panchayats and the factors influencing participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. This study sees that the reservation for women can be an important impetus to women’s empowerment in Kanyakumari district, on local level but it is not a guarantee for participation of the elected women. Women are actively prevented from participating in panchayat activities by male family members and other members of the panchayat itself. The male members often insist on attending meetings in place of Elected Women Representatives (EWRs). Male panchayat members take advantage of the low levels of literacy and lack of knowledge and experience to take decisions in the absence of EWRs and try to keep them out of important
meetings. Many elected women complain that their suggestions are not considered seriously nor are they consulted while decisions were being made. Some feel that their views are ignored only because they are women. The goal of women’s empowerment will not be accomplished by reservations alone. The study also tries to find out the factors influencing the decision making of women elected representatives. To expedite and speed up this process it is essential to implement some supplementary policies which encourage the self-confidence of women, build women’s capabilities and remove operational obstacles. To enable women to participate and function effectively at every stage, capacity building support is needed from the beginning of the election process and through the tenure of the elected representatives.

1.6 Statement of the Problem

Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have been recognized as the vehicles of socio-economic transformation of the rural India. They are the grassroot units of self-government playing a pivotal role in bringing changes in power, structure and functions of both male and female members in the rural communities. Development impact on women and men are different and the past few decades of development have been an alarming degree of feminization of poverty. Development in many cases has had negative impacts on a large proportion of women in general and rural women in particular. This situation may be attributed to traditional attitude, socio-economic and psychological conditions of women, which prevent the entry of rural women into Panchayati Raj Institutions to contribute and to serve for the development of their locality.
Women are the source and resource of the nation for development. Their contribution to development cannot be set aside without due consideration. Even after five decades of planned development in India, women are compelled to fight for their right. There is gross discrimination against women and they are deprived of enjoying many benefits, which their counterparts enjoy in the present social and political set up. There have been various shifts in the policy approaches of the Central as well as the State Governments from the concept of ‘welfare’ to ‘development’ and then to ‘empowerment’. However, the fate of half of the population (women) remains unaltered. Even now, procreation and maintenance of family are considered as the foremost duties of women. Larger family size compels them to do some external work to supplement the income earned by their husband to maintain their family. Overwhelming majorities of women are engaged in the informal sector and mostly remain unorganized. They are compelled to work for long hours at a minimum wage under insanitary surroundings. But they have not been recognized as producers of their own right. Under this situation, the 73rd amendments to the constitution provide women one-third of the total representation in all the local bodies. Now many questions emerge out of the prevailing conditions in the Panchayati Raj Institutions. Do they properly reserve seats to women? Do they get due importance and equal rights in planning and implementing various welfare programmes? Do female members are given chances to participate in meetings without any hesitation? Do they actively participate in decision making? The
present study is an attempt to find answers to the above questions. This study also analyses the role of women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions and the resultant empowerment of women.

1.7 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to analyse the Panchayati Raj Institutions and women empowerment in Kanayakumari district.

The specific objectives are:

1. To know the socio-economic conditions of the sample respondents participating in the PRIs.
2. To study the factors inducing sample respondents to participate in the PRIs.
3. To know the extent of involvement of sample respondents in the activities of PRIs.
4. To find out the problems of sample respondents involved in PRIs.
5. To make possible suggestions to overcome the problems.

1.8 Hypothesis of the Study

1. There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of women PRIs members and their level of performance.
2. There is no significant impact on the contribution of income by PRIs members to their family income.
3. There is no impact on economic, social, and decision-making empowerment by women PRIs members.
4. There is no difference in the perception on indicators of women empowerment before and after election in home environment.

5. There is no difference in the perception on indicators of women empowerment before and after election in home and at work environment.

6. There is no difference in the way situations are handled depending on PRI membership status and position of PRIs.

7. Awareness level among PRI members is present irrespective of before and after election.

8. Services provided in the ward have no significance in respect of before and after election.

1.9 Methodology of the Study

A research study in any field is an investigation of the unknown factors based on the known factors. Research studies require appropriate and suitable methodology. The methodology is a systematic method, which makes the researcher telling the truth about the happenings in the research, and not what he or she wishes to happen in his or her research.

1.9.1 Choice of the Study Area

Kanyakumari district is the second smallest of the districts of Tamil Nadu. It is divided into two revenue divisions, viz., Padmanabhapuram and Nagercoil. It consists of four taluks viz, Agasteeswaram, Thovalai, Kalkulam and Vilavancode, nine blocks namely Agasteeswaram, Killiyoor, Kurunthencode, Rajakkamangalam, Thovalai, Thuckalay, Thiruvattar, Munchirai and Melpuram. It also consists of four municipalities, viz.,
Nagercoil, Colachel, Padmanabhapuram and Kuzhithurai six assembly constituencies and one parliamentary constituency. The researcher has selected Kanyakumari district as the study area.

1.9.2 Sampling Design

Stratified Proportionate Random Sampling technique has been adopted to select the sample respondents for the present study with Kanyakumari district as the universe, panchayat union as the primary units and the women panchayat members as the ultimate units. The study area consists of 1097 members spread to all the nine blocks of the district. Of which 695 members (63 per cent) are male and the remaining 402 (37 per cent) are female. From each block, fifty per cent of the female members are taken as sample. The sample design is presented in table 1.1.

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<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
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<th>Total No. of Women Members</th>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Thuckalay</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Thiruvattar</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Killiyoor</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Munchirai</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Melpuram</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>402</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Data
Table 2.1 shows that there are 56 women members in Munchirai block and 28 were selected as sample. Out of the 53 women members in Thovalai block 26 were selected as sample, out of the 46 women members in Agasteeswaram block 23 were selected as sample, out of the 50 women members in Rajakkamangalam block 25 were selected as sample, among the 45 women members in Kurunthencode block 22 were selected as sample, from the 36 women members in Thuckalay block 18 were selected as sample, out of the 38 women members in Thiruvattar block 19 were selected as sample and among the 43 women members in Melpuram block 22 were selected as sample. Out of the 35 women members in Killiyoor block 17 were selected as sample.

1.9.3 Collection of Data

The present study based on both primary and secondary data.

1.9.3.1 Primary Data

Primary data forms the basis of the study. The researcher had selected Kanyakumari district to study about Panchayati Raj and Women Empowerment. A group of 200 women panchyat ward members were selected as sample respondents. A pre-tested interview schedule was used to collect primary data from the respondents. After the collection of data, it was processed, tabulated and analysed with the help of statistical tools.
1.9.3.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data are those data which have been collected and analysed by someone else. Secondary data regarding this study was collected from books, magazines, journals, reports, relevant projects and internet.

1.9.4 Period of Study

The survey for collecting the primary data was conducted during the year 2012. The data were collected after the completion of panchayat election in 2011.

1.10 Tools of analysis

For analyzing the data collected, the following statistical tools were used.

1.10.1 Percentage Analysis

Percentage analysis is one of the basic statistical tool which is widely used in analysis and interpretation of primary data. It deals with the number of respondent’s response to a particular question and percentage is arrived from the total population selected for the study. It is one of the simple form of anlaysis which is very easy for anyone to understand the outcome of research.

1.10.2 Chi – Square Test

In order to examine the association, chi-square test was used. It is calculated by adopting the following formula,
Chi-square = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}

With (r-1) (c-1) degrees of freedom

Where

\[ O = \text{Observed Frequency} \]
\[ E = \text{Expected Frequency} \]
\[ c = \text{Number of columns in a contingency table} \]
\[ r = \text{Number of rows in a contingency table} \]

\[ E = \frac{\text{Row Total} \times \text{Column Total}}{\text{Grand Total}} \]

**1.10.3 Multiple Regression Analysis**

In order to assess the contribution of the respondents to family income, the following mathematical formula were used for multiple regression analysis,

\[ \log y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \log x_1 + \beta_2 \log x_2 + U \]

Where,

\[ Y = \text{Per-capita income in Rupees} \]
\[ X_1 = \text{Income of the respondents in rupees} \]
\[ U = \text{Error term} \]

\[ \beta_0, \beta_1, \beta_2, \text{are the parameters to be estimated.} \]
1.10.4 T- Test

Paired t-test is used when the sample units are paired, for comparing the equality of means before and after membership in panchyats. In paired t–test, if the calculated t value is greater than the table value of ‘t’ for (n-1) degrees of freedom at 5 per cent level of significance then the null-hypothesis is rejected.

1.10.5 F- Test

The calculation of the F- Test measures the ratio of variance between groups to the variance within the groups, the variance between the sample means the numerator and the variance with the sample means the denominator. This denominator is computed by combining the variance within the K samples into a single measure.

\[
F = \frac{\text{Between Column Variance}}{\text{Within Column Variance}}
\]

Symbolically,

\[
F = \frac{S_1^2}{S_2^2}
\]

1.10.6 One way Anova

An attempt has been made to examine the variation in annual income, annual savings, assets of the respondents and for that one way annova is applied.
1.10.7 Economic and Social Empowerment Index

In order to quantify the economic and social impacts on women members, the Economic and Social Empowerment Index was computed for each member combining the social and economic parameters using the scoring technique applied by Sing, Padam and Rattan Chand (2000).\(^{19}\)

The index of social indicators of \(h\)th member \(S_h\) is given by

\[
\frac{\sum S_i}{\sum S_i(\text{max})} \quad \ldots \quad (1)
\]

And the index of economic indicators (\(E_n\)) is given by

\[
\frac{\sum E_j}{\sum E_j(\text{max})} \quad \ldots \quad (2)
\]

Combined index (ESE model) \(SLI_h\) is given by

\[
W_1S_h + W_2E_h \quad \ldots \quad (3)
\]

Where \(S_i\) and \(E_i\) represent \(i\)th social and \(j\)th economic indicator, respectively. \(S_i(\text{max})\) and \(E_j(\text{max})\) are the maximum scores of \(i\)th social indicator and \(j\)th economic indicator can take.

Weight \(W_1\) is given by \(\frac{\sum S_i(\text{max})}{\sum S_i(\text{max}) + \sum E_j(\text{max})}\) and \(W_2\) is \((1-W_1)\).

The values of \(\sum S_i(\text{max})\) and \(\sum E_j(\text{max})\) worked out to 7 and 20 respectively. \(W_1\) and \(W_2\) are 0.26 and 0.74 respectively.

1.10.8 Garrett’s Ranking Technique

An attempt has been made in the section to rank the factors according to Garrett’s Ranking Technique, which is used to identify the problems of women
The order of merit assigned to the respondents was converted into scores by using Garrett’s ranking technique.

The following formula was used to find Garrett’s ranking,

\[
\text{Percentage position} = \frac{100 (R_{ij} - 0.5)}{N_j}
\]

Where,

\( R_{ij} \) – Rank Given for the \( i^{th} \) variables by the \( j^{th} \) respondents.

\( N_j \) – Number of Variables ranked by the \( j^{th} \) respondents.

By referring to Garrett’s table, the estimated percent was converted into scores. The scores of various respondents were added and the mean values were calculated. The mean values were arranged in descending order. The factor with the highest mean value was considered to be the most important, followed by the second, third and so on.

1.11 Limitations of the Study

The present study is subject to the following limitations.

i. The study is confined only to the viewpoint of women members in the selected study area.

ii. The results of the study may not be applicable to other regions of the country, since the administrative set up differs.

iii. There are certain constraints regarding the selection of sample. It depends on the reservation category of the women participation in PRIs. Selection of women in PRIs depends on Roaster system.
iv. The respondents do not maintain proper records of income, expenditure and saving.

v. The primary data used for this study were collected after 2011 election. Hence, the conclusions are based on the conditions and situations which prevailed in that year.

1.12 Chapter Scheme

The contents of the study has been arranged and presented in seven chapters. The introduction chapter explains the concept of empowerment, women empowerment, stages of women empowerment, five year plans and women empowerment, women in organised sector, women in unorganised sector, Panchayati Raj scenario, evolution of village administration, need for the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, hypothesis of the study, methodology of the study, sampling design, primary data, secondary data, period of study, limitations of the study and chapter scheme are presented in the first chapter.

A brief review of related studies are analysed in the second chapter.

Profile of the study area and profile of panchayati raj system in kanyakumari district is given in the third chapter. Overview of panchayathi raj in India, ministry, provisions, local self- government in India, panchayati raj system during British period, post – independence period, committees related to Panchyat raj in India are given in the fourth chapter.
The socio-economic conditions of sample respondents are described in the fifth chapter. Panchyathi raj women members and their empowerment, obstacles and decision making are analysed in the sixth chapter. A summary of findings, suggestions and conclusion are given in the seventh chapter.
REFERENCES


