CHAPTER II

THE SETTING
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This chapter consists of two sections. The first section is devoted to a brief history of local bodies in Tamil Nadu. The second section presents the profile of the study area, namely Dindigul District in the State of Tamil Nadu.

Panchayati Raj Institutions in Tamil Nadu

The structural pattern of Panchayati Raj adopted in Tamil Nadu and the functional arrangement—constitutional, financial, administrative etc., have undergone several transformations from time to time. The factors leading to the adoption of a particular pattern of Panchayati Raj in Tamil Nadu are traceable more to local conditions than to central directions.

Madras Municipal Corporation, 1688

Tamil Nadu has the unique distinction of having the earliest formed Municipal Corporation in the country. In 1688, a Municipality was established at Madras with a Mayor and twelve Aldermen, including several Portuguese and Indians.

Rural Local Government in the Madras Presidency (1864-1870)

Much attention was paid in the Madras Presidency to the revival and development of rural local bodies. In 1864, Lord Robert, the Madras Governor, replaced the exploiting local chieftains with a new class of District Collectors. Distinguished Collectors like Lionel Place, Col. Alexander Read, John Hodgsen and Sir Thomas Munro penetrated into the “impregnable mysteries” of the villages and found by experience that it was possible and advantageous to work through the indigenous institutions, reforming and adapting them to suit their ends. In particular, they attempted to revive the indigenous system by a series of resolutions.
With Rippon’s Resolution on Local Self-Government, a network of local bodies came into existence. The Madras Local Boards Act V of 1884 provided for a three tier self-government system consisting of District Boards, Taluk Boards and Union Boards. The Madras Local Boards Act of 1920 gave an independent status to each class of local board and eliminated the ex-officio official elements. The Madras Village Panchayats Act of 1920 was passed with the object of providing for the “administration of the village by the villagers themselves, thereby developing the system of self-government in the rural areas”. By 1920, the foundation for a three-tier system of local government was well laid with the Village Panchayat as the basic unit.

Inaugurating the Conference of Provincial Ministers on Local Self-Government in 1948, the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru observed that “Local Self-Government is and must be the basis of any true system of democracy”.

Article 40 of the Indian Constitution, which came into force in 1950, directs the States to “take steps to organize Village Panchayats and endow them to function as units of self-government”. The Madras Village Panchayats Act of 1950 was enacted in pursuance of this objective. Adult suffrage was introduced by the Madras Village Panchayat Act 1950. Seats were reserved for SCs/STs and Panchavats were given judicial powers. District Boards were formed. However, only a very little breakthrough was made between 1947 and 1957 when the Report of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee was published. The Bahvantrai Mehta Committee (1957) suggested the integration of the Community Development Programme and the National lixtension Service Scheme with a popularly elected democratic decentralized body. This paved the
way for the formation of a new three-tier Panchayati Raj-Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Union at the block level and Zilla Pari shad at the district level.

When the District Boards were abolished in 1957, District Development Councils were set up in all the districts by the District Development Council Act 1958. The District Development Council’s role was basically advisory in nature, with respect to both the local bodies and the government.

The Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act 1958, based on a White Paper of 1957, introduced a number of changes. All Panchayat Presidents were made members of the corresponding Panchayat Union Councils. It bis provided an organic link between the two tiers. The Inspector of Panchayats was given the power to co-opt at least one woman member to any Panchayat body wherever there was none.

In 1989 an amendment was introduced to reserve thirty per cent of the total seats at the level of the Village Panchayat for women. In 1991, by another amendment, it was stated that if women were not elected to these seats women could be co-opted to ensure 30 % representation in the Village Panchayats. Depending on the number of Village Panchayats in a Panchayat Union a maximum of five seats were to be filled by women in the Panchayat Union Council. In addition the District Collector could nominate a maximum of two women to the Panchayat Union Council.

Local Body Elections in Tamil Nadu

After Independence elections were held only four times to the local bodies in Tamil Nadu as per the Madras Panchayats Act 1958. The first elections were held in 1960 followed by the second in 1965 and the third in 1970. The next Panchayat elections were due in 1975. But they were not conducted under some pretext. After an interval of 16 years, the fourth
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Panchayat elections in Tamil Nadu were held in 1986. Again the elections that were due in 1991 were put off due to various reasons. After the enactment of the 73rd Constitution (Amendment) Act 1992, the Village Panchayat elections in Tamil Nadu were conducted in October 1996 as per the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act 1994.

Democratic decentralization as a policy and principle has deep roots in Indian society. Historically Tamil Nadu has promoted the decentralization of powers to strengthen community governance. Democracy can be functional only if the public, irrespective of caste, creed or religion, have an opportunity to participate directly in their own governance. This is possible only through the strengthening of Panchayati Raj institutions. When during the Community Development era, Tamil Nadu was in the forefront to popularize the philosophy of community participation in developmental activities.

Tamil Nadu is one of the few States to bring out a new legislation, namely, the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act 1994 in tune with the 73rd and the 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, 1992. Thereafter a series of initiatives have been taken starting from the sub-committee of the State Planning Commission recommending various activities to delegate the powers, functions and finances to the three-tier Panchayati Raj Institutions in the rural areas to make them self-governing administrative units. Since democratic decentralization and devolution of powers is a dynamic concept and the degree and magnitude of delegation changes over time, the State of Tamil Nadu appointed a High level Committee under the Chairmanship of the Honorable Minister for Rural Development and Local Administration to explore further possibilities for decentralization and delegating more responsibilities to the three-tier rural local bodies, the Committee submitted its recommendations in January 1999 and within a short time the Government of Tamil Nadu took decisions. Several
Government Orders were issued to delegate further powers as per the recommendation of this Committee. Adequate powers with varying degrees of responsibilities for the 29 items listed in the 11th Schedule of the Constitution have been entrusted to the three-tier Panchayats in Tamil Nadu.

New Panchayati Raj System

73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, 1992

1. After the 1989 Parliamentary elections the 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill introduced by the Government could not be enacted as the Rajya Sabha did not approve the Bill. However, in 1992, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act was passed on 23.12.92. The 73rd and the 74th Constitutional Amendments came into effect: on April 24, 1993. Section 243-G of the Constitution was incorporated in the 73rd Amendment which determined the scope and sweep of the mandate for devolution of powers and functions to Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Tamil Nadu Panchayats Act, 1994

State Governments were required by law to enact new legislation before 24.4.94 on Panchayats in tune with the said Constitutional amendments. Accordingly the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act 1994 was enacted and came into force from 22.4.94 in Tamil Nadu. The 1994 Act brought in a number of changes in the Tamil Nadu Panchayati Raj structure. The three tier system, viz., Village Panchayat, Panchayat Union (Block Panchayat) and District Panchayat came into existence. ‘Panchayat’ as a generic term was used for all the three tiers. Town Panchayats were excluded from the purview of the Act and brought under the Nagarpalika Act. The members of the three-tier rural local bodies and the Presidents of the Village Panchayats are directly elected by the voters. Chairpersons of Panchayat Union Councils and District Panchayats are elected indirectly from among the elected members. All the three tiers of...
the Panchayati Raj System are made independent of each other. There is no link or representation for the Presidents of the Village Panchayats in the Panchayat Union Council and the District Panchayat.

Reservation of seats and offices for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is made in proportion to their population in every local body. One third of total number of seats and offices are reserved for women. Rotation of officers in all these categories in all three-tiers shall be once in 5 years. The uniform term of 5 years is fixed for Members and Chairpersons of all the three-tier local bodies. The power of supercession of the Panchayats by the Government is taken a way. Ordinarily elections shall be conducted within six months from the date of occurrence of a vacancy. The Tamil Nadu State Election Commission was constituted as an independent body under Section 239 of the Act to conduct elections to the local bodies regularly. The electoral rolls of the Legislative Assembly elections is adopted for the Panchayat election.

A State finance Commission, under the mandatory provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, should be constituted as per Section 1998 of the Act of 1994. A District Planning Committee shall be constituted under Section 241 (1) of the Act to consolidate the plans prepared by the Panchayats and the Municipalities in the district to prepare a development plan for the district as a whole. The concept of Grama Sabha, consisting of all persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a Village Panchavat, is revived and the State provides powers and functions to be performed by such Grama Sabha.

After the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Act 1994 was enacted a three-tier Panchayati Raj System with 12617 Village Panchayats at the grassroot level and 384 Panchayat Unions at the intermediate level and 28 District Panchayats at the district level were constituted and elections were held in October 1996. The structure of the three-tier Panchayati Raj System is shown hereunder.
Out of the total seats and posts one third were reserved for women and posts and offices were reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the basis of their proportionate population. Elections were held simultaneously to all the there-tiers of the local bodies during October 1996. 1,16,747 elected representatives were successfully put in position. Subsequently causal elections were held on 28.12.96, 26.6.97, 21.11.97, 18.6.98, 17.12.98 and 26.5.99 to fill up vacancies in the case of 9 District Panchayat Wards, 83 Panchayat Union Wards, 222 Village Panchayat Presidents and 4178 Village Panchayat Wards.
Table 2.1

Details of reservation and number of elected representatives as on October 2, 1999 in all three tiers of local bodies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ST(W)</th>
<th>ST(G)</th>
<th>SC(W)</th>
<th>SC(G)</th>
<th>General (Women)</th>
<th>General</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Village Panchayat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presidents</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>1078</td>
<td>1875</td>
<td>3153</td>
<td>6401</td>
<td>19607</td>
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<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>478</td>
<td>6297</td>
<td>13038</td>
<td>26250</td>
<td>51077</td>
<td>77378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>7375</td>
<td>14913</td>
<td>29403</td>
<td>57478</td>
<td>14953</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Panchayat Union</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairpersons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>534</td>
<td>824</td>
<td>1750</td>
<td>3350</td>
<td>6471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>1857</td>
<td>3552</td>
<td>6683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. District Panchayat</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairpersons</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>337</td>
<td>641</td>
<td>918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>676</td>
<td>1037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>7997</td>
<td>15867</td>
<td>31439</td>
<td>61381</td>
<td>1717</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Computed from the information provided by the Department of Rural Development, Government of Tamil Nadu - 1999.

Legend: G. General, W. Women, SC. Scheduled Castes, ST. Scheduled Tribes
NILAKKOTTAI BLOCK

LEGEND

DISTRICT BOUNDARY

TALUK BOUNDARY

REVENUE VILLAGE BOUNDARY

LOCATION OF STUDY AREA

Fig.1: Map of Nilakkottai Block
Profile of Nilakottai Block

Dindigul District was carved out of the composite Madurai District and it became a separate entity on 15.9.85. The area of the district is 6266.64 sq.km. It comprises 3 revenue divisions, 7 taluks and 14 Panchayat Unions. According to the 1991 census its population is 17,60,601. The district lies 14 blocks, among which Nilakottai Block is chosen for this study. It is situated in the south of Dindigul District between Kodai Road and Batlagundu. This block has 23 Gram Panchayats and 2 Town Panchayats. The selected block has 184 villages (1991 census) with a population of 1,31,63.

The details of the reservation in the 23 Village Panchayats are as follows:

11 Village Panchayats are of the General category, 3 are of SC Women category, 4 are of SC General category, and, 5 are of General Women category.

The following are the salient features of this block. On the east of Nilakottai Block are located the Sirumalai Hills and Vadipatti Union, on the west Batlagundu Union, on the north Athoor Union and on the south Usilampatti Union. The major occupation of the people in this block is agriculture. Agriculture depends upon natural rain sources. Only 3 Gram Panchayats have adequate water sources as the Yaigai River crosses them. They are Vilampatti, Mattaparai and Ramarajapuram. other important details of the block are given hereunder.

Agriculture is the major occupation of this block. This block is famous for the cultivation of flowers and grapes, bruits and flowers are sent to different parts of the country. There is a paper manufacturing unit between the Ethilodu Panchayat and the Anaipatti Panchayat, providing employment: opportunities to the people of the local area. A famous Hanuman Kovil is situated on the banks of the Vaigai River in S. Mettupatty Panchavat. Now-a-days, the Hanuman Kovil is considered a tourist centre of Nilakottai Block. A
popular Infant Jesus Church is situated at Kavirayapuram in Silukkuvarpatty Panchayat. Two hundred years ago a palace was constructed by Koolappa Naicker at Nilakottai. The Kalkottai and the palace were considered significant places in those days. The name Kalkottai changed into Nilakottai later on.

Nilakottai Town is famous for manufacturing of brass vessels and jewelry.

Table 2.2

i. Study Area and Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Area Sq.Km.</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Urban Male</th>
<th>Urban Female</th>
<th>Total Population Male</th>
<th>Total Population Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>259.78</td>
<td>1998</td>
<td>117744</td>
<td>59255</td>
<td>58539</td>
<td>105854</td>
<td>53178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>259.78</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>131630</td>
<td>66803</td>
<td>64827</td>
<td>116860</td>
<td>59203</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SCs</td>
<td>31203</td>
<td>15847</td>
<td>15356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>STs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Agriculture

1. Soil Classification: Red Loam and Latcrite Soil

2. Land Utilization

   Forest : 1842 hec
   Barren and uncultivable : 1342 hec
   Land put to non-agricultural use : 3967 hec
   Permanent pasture and other grazing lands : 92 hec
   Land under miscellaneous tree crops and groves : 120 hec
   Current tallows : 2315 hec
   (j)ther tallows : 3286 hec
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Area (hectare)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Net area sown</td>
<td>14646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total cropped area</td>
<td>16210</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**a) Area under crops**

1. Cereals          | 6660
2. Pulses           | 7796
3. Oil seeds        | 1550
4. Fibers           | 304
5. Other crops      | 4996

**b) Horticulture**

1. Fruits
   - Mango       | 198
   - Guava       | 677
   - Banana      | 115
   - Grapes      | 132
   - Lemon       | 5
   - Sappota     | 142
   - Others      | 10
2. Vegetables
   - Tapioca     | 9
   - Sweet potato| 4
   - Tomato      | 38
3. Spices
   - Chilics     | 46
   - Tamarind    | 36
   - Betelviue   | 12
   - Flowers     | 1354
   - Others      | 3
3. Irrigation- Source of water supply

Canals : 1
Wells used for irrigation purpose only : 7602
Wells used for domestic purpose only : 546
Tanks : 511

4. Total workers population

Cultivators : 17513
Other workers : 37548
Total : 55661

5. Electricity

Nos. Electrified

1. Electrification
   a) Revenue villages : 28
   b) Hamlets : 156
   c) Towns : 2

2. Population covered : 1,31,630

6. Highways

   National Highways : 1.5 km
   State Highways : 2.5 km

7. Animal husbandry

   Veterinary Hospitals : 2
   Sub centres : 7
   No. of livestock inspectors : 9
8. Industries
1. Agro based industries 3
2. Textile based industries 4
3. Engineering based industries 6
4. Chemical based industries 2
5. Engineering based industries 6

9. Banks
1. State Bank of India 1
2. Canara Bank 3
3. Indian Overseas Bank 2
4. Co-operative Bank (DADCB) 1

10. Communication
   Posts and Telegraphs
   Offices and Telephones
1. Post offices doing postal business alone : 57
2. Posts and Telegraphs offices : 7
3. Letter boxes : 146
4. Telephone Sub-Exchanges : 3
5. No. of Telephones in use : 2238
6. No. of public call offices : 34

11. Educational Institutions
    Pre-Primary Schools : 135
    Primary Schools : 87
    Middle Schools : 18
    High Schools : 5
    Higher Sec. Schools : 4
    Matriculation Schools : 1
    ITI : 1
    Govt. Arts & Science College for Women : 1
12. Hospitals

Siddha Hospital : 1 (GH attached)

Primary Health Centers : 5

Sub-centers : 27

13. Civil Supplies

No. of family cards : 3653
No. of fair price shops : 48

14. Social Welfare

a) Nutritious meal programme

No. of beneficiaries : 19812
Organizers : 109
Helpers : 229
No. of noon meal centers : 110

b) Essential Services

National Banks : 6
Agriculture Co-operative Banks : 17
Police stations
Railw.-iv Station : 1
Village stationeries : 28
Travellers Bungalows : 2
J abranes : 5
TV Sets distributed : 62
Biogas plants distributed : 38
Pelrol Bunks : 4
15. **Handicrafts**
No. of families engaged in handicrafts

16. **Legal Services**
   - M. Court in Nilakottai
   - No. of advocates practicing in courts

17. **Mining and Quarrying**
   - No. of mining and quarrying units
ENDNOTES


3. District Statistical Hand Book, Dindigul District, Year 1998.