

## Local Body Election in Tamil Nadu - A View

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### KEYWORDS

Uravai system,  
Kudavolai system,  
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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the evolution and current structure of local governance and election practices in Tamil Nadu, tracing back to the historical Uravai system of village councils, where community-elected elders adjudicated local disputes. With roots in ancient Tamil society, local self-governance evolved significantly under the reign of Tamil kings, particularly during the Chola period, where the Kudavolai system—a forerunner to modern democracy—allowed villagers to select council members for self-administration. Following independence, the Indian government initiated reforms to decentralize governance, notably through the Balvantrai Mehta and Ashok Mehta Committees. These committees advocated for a three-tier rural governance model, later enshrined in the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. Tamil Nadu, aligning with these democratic principles, enacted the Panchayat Act in 1994, establishing a modern framework for local elections with distinct advancements, including reserved seats for women to enhance political inclusion. The article highlights how Tamil Nadu's local governance structure, blending historical customs with contemporary democratic reforms, promotes public welfare through elected municipal bodies, demonstrating progressive strides in gender representation and local political participation.

## 1. Introduction

India is a large agricultural country, a country with many ethnicities and many religions, the system of regulating the common problems and family problems among the villagers was called Uravai. Appointed by the people of the village, this committee has the power to hear and adjudicate appeals and the meeting place is usually under a tree or a temple.

Those who do not obey the decision of the Uravai are kept away from the village and this restriction is practiced in many villages even today. Uravais were practiced in every town in Tamil Nadu. In ancient Tamil Nadu, the system of people choosing from among themselves those capable of maintaining the procession and handing over the responsibility of government to them was in practice. The panchayat system came as an incentive for this.

### The Period of kings

During the reign of the kings, the kings of that time helped the local government system to develop in an excellent manner. The Sashanas state that the village councilors were elected by Kudavolai and the councilors were given names like Aeriwariyar, Ponwariyar, Panchawariyar etc.

It is known that the villagers have resolved their grievances under the leadership of an elder who is the best of them, selfless and lovable. As far as Tamil Nadu is concerned, the village councils were powerful during the Cholas rule. It can be seen that this GramaSabha has assumed autonomy and independence.

The details of the village election through Gudavolai system can be found from the UttaraMerur inscription. It is significant that this Kudavolai system was the basis of today's democratic system in ancient Tamil Nadu. Gram Sabhas or Panchayats were administered by representatives elected by the people. After the demise of the sabha and samiti systems that functioned throughout the country, village councils and panchayats continued to function as autonomous bodies even after the rule of the Hindu Muslim rulers and even after the British rule.

### Panchayat organization

The panchayat system is divided into several parts namely Nagar, Chaturvedi, Mangalam and Ur. Each section was called a family. A member of each family was elected. The Board was constituted with several elected members. There was also a limit on how many members a board could have. 12 people were elected in the divisional board and 6 people each in the lake board, panch board and Pon board. The elected members were respectfully called by the people as Purumas. from this; The demands of the people were met quickly and directly in the panchayat committee.

Panchayat Committees meet in public places to be full of villagers. The public places where announcements are made to the group and people in advance are named as Ambalam and Forum. All over the country these organizations were indelible. The problems of the people were presented to the king and the government. Even if there was something wrong in the king's rule, the councilors did not hesitate to tell it to the king. The objective of the panel was to have a general idea of better governance in the country. These were the conditions of ancient local government.

After independence, the Indian government made several attempts to bring about reforms in local government and elections, which resulted in the appointment of the Balvantrai Mehta Committee and the Ashok Mehta Committee. In this the Balvantrai Mehta Committee submitted its report in 1957. Democratic elements must be decentralized if development plans are to be implemented smoothly. For that, there is a need for three-tier rural organizations so that people can communicate directly.

A pluralistic system of governance should rely on local government bodies made up of representatives elected by the people by law. These suggested a three-tiered system, namely,

1. Rural Panchayats
2. Panchayat Union
3. District Panchayat

These were first followed in the state of Rajasthan.

In 1977, the Janata Party came to power in India. The Janata Party leaders wanted local bodies to play an important role in national development. So the central government appointed a committee in 1977 under the chairmanship of Ashoka Mehta (1977) to revive the local bodies. It submitted its report in 1978. These made two main recommendations. They are District Parishad-Mandal Panchayats.

Later, during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure as Prime Minister, a few changes were made to the Local Government Amendment Bills, which were introduced in Parliament in 1991 as the 73rd and 74th Political System Amendment Bills. These bills were passed in the Lok Sabha on 22 December 1992 and in the Rajya Sabha on 23 December 1992. After that it got the approval of 17 state legislatures and got the President's assent on April 20, 1993 and came into force from April 24.

Coming to the listing of functions which are assigned to a Municipal Corporation, there are two board practices in vogue in the country. The status governing the corporation of Kolkata and Chennai prescribe functions in general terms while those of Mumbai, Delhi, Kaval Cities in Uttar Pradesh and GIRJ cities in Madhya Pradesh engage in a detailed enumeration.

Secondly, there is a tendency to Load Corporations with all conceivable responsibilities and the outcomes is a long list of functions which they are expected to address themselves to.

Thirdly, the statutes generally include two lists of functions – obligatory and discretionary. The discretionary list in all the statutes ends with an omnibus function : “any other matter likely to promote public safety, health, convenience or general welfare”.

Panchayat elections were held in 1996 based on the Panchayat Act of 1994 in Tamil Nadu. These are completely different from previous local body elections.

## **2. Conclusion**

At present Tamil Nadu has brought many reforms in the local government elections to conduct the local government arena based on the model of local government elections of ancient times. Our Tamil Nadu government followed the system of 50% seats reservation for women in the current elections. It also shows the contribution of women in local government elections, their political awareness and political participation. Thus Tamil Nadu local government and elections are working well.

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