

Lesson 16

LOCAL GOVERNMENT: URBAN AND RURAL

Summary:

There are three types of urban local bodies: Municipal Corporations in big cities, Municipalities in medium and small towns and Nagar Panchayats in semi-urban localities. Urban local government is the major supplier of essential civic services and facilities in our urban areas, and it represents grassroots democracy at the local level. Panchayat is the most ancient institution at the village level in our country. Panchayats have been functioning as primary institutions of democracy at the grassroots level.



- Municipal administration is necessary to provide basic civic facilities
- Municipal government has made possible participative urban development and local management of civic facilities

Reforms Introduced by the 74th constitutional amendment

Municipal corporations & municipalities are now regulated in a uniform manner in all the States,

- ✚ Provide framework for the States in respect of local government.

- ✚ Each State has its own Election Commission which conducts elections to all local bodies after regular intervals of five years.
- ✚ Each State has its Finance Commission to regulate finances of the local bodies.
- ✚ For Scheduled Castes and Tribes seats are reserved.
- ✚ One-third seats are reserved for women in all local bodies – urban and rural.

Composition - The persons chosen by direct election from the territorial constituencies in the municipal areas:

- 1) seats reserved for weaker sections and women,
- 2) the offices of chairperson reserved for SC/ST and women,
- 3) at least one year out of five-year duration of Municipal Corporation of Delhi the office of Mayor is reserved for a woman,
- 4) one year is reserved for a Councillor of Scheduled Caste.

Function & Financial Resource of Urban Local bodies –

1) **Obligatory Functions** - water supply construction and maintenance of roads, streets, bridges, subways and other public works street lighting drainage and sewerage garbage collection and disposal prevention and control of epidemics



2) **Discretionary functions** - construction and maintenance of rescue homes and orphanages, housing for low-income groups, organising public receptions, provision of treatment facilities



Financial Resources - revenue sources are: -income from (i) taxes, (ii) fees and fines, and (iii) earning from municipal enterprises like land, tanks, markets, shops, & receive grants from the State.

Panchayati Raj Institutions-

✚ Concept based on the ancient Indian belief that “God lives in the Panch”, enthusiastically propounded by Mahatma Gandhi ji.

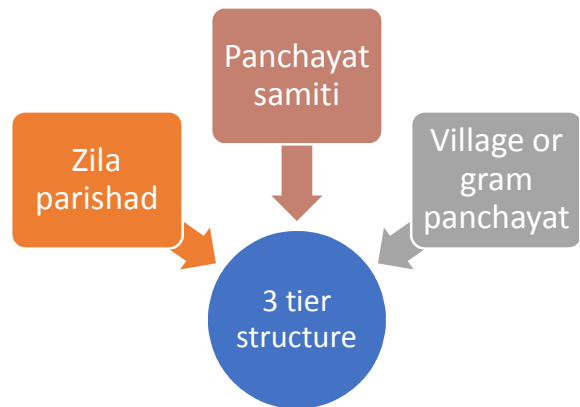
Importance of Panchayati Raj-

- ✚ One of the Directive Principles of State Policy directed the Union and State Governments to take steps to organise village panchayats and give them such powers and authority to enable them to act as self-government.
- ✚ Panchayat system has a constitutional status.

Recommendations of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee Structure of Government & Ashok Mehta Committee -

The Committee (1957) suggested ways of democratic decentralisation in a three-tier structure of Panchayati raj –

1. Zila parishad at district level,
2. Panchayat samiti at intermediate or block level,
3. Village or gram panchayat at village level.



The Ashok Mehta Committee - reviewed the Panchayati raj & submitted its report in 1978, Committee suggested a two-tier structure of Panchayati raj: -

1. Zila parishad at district level.
2. Mandal Panchayat - an administrative unit between village panchayat and panchayat samiti.

In the two-tier system the main emphasis was laid on zila parishad and not on panchayat samiti as in the case of the earlier committee report.

Salient Features of 73rd Amendment -

1. Organisation of Gram Sabhas
2. Creation of a three-tier Panchayati Raj Structure at the Zila Block and Village levels
3. All posts at all levels to be filled by direct elections
4. Minimum age for contesting elections is twenty-one years
5. The post of Chairman at the Zila and Block levels filled by indirect election
6. Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes/ Scheduled Tribes and for women in Panchayats up to one-third seats
7. State Election Commission to be set up in each State to conduct elections to Panchayati Raj institutions
8. The tenure is five years, if dissolved earlier fresh elections to be held within six months
9. A State Finance Commission is set up in each State every five years.

Provisions which are not binding on the States but only guidelines: -

- ✚ Giving voting rights to members of the Central & State legislatures in these bodies
- ✚ Providing reservation for backward classes
- ✚ Panchayati Raj institutions should be given financial powers in relation to taxes

- ✚ Levy fees and efforts shall be made to make Panchayats autonomous bodies.

Composition of Panchayats-

three-tier structure based on direct elections at all the three tiers - village, intermediate and district.

- (i) **Term** - term of five years. If dissolved earlier, elections are held within six months.
- (ii) **Powers & responsibilities-** endow panchayats with powers and authority as may be necessary to enable the panchayats to become institutions of self-government at grassroots level.

Three-tier Structure of Panchayati Raj -

1. Panchayats at Village Level

- includes:

- (a) Gram Sabha, the symbol of direct democracy.
- (b) Gram Panchayat and
- (c) Nyaya Panchayat,

2. Panchayat Samiti -

- ✚ Second or middle tier of the Panchayati raj is Panchayat Samiti which provides a link between Gram Panchayat and a Zila Parishad.
- ✚ The strength of a Panchayat Samiti also depends on the population in a samiti area.

3. Zila Parishad –

- ✚ At the district level this is uppermost tier of the Panchayati raj system.
- ✚ This institution has some directly elected members whose number differs from State to State as it is also based on population.

Functions of Panchayati Raj Institutions–

Functions of Gram Panchayat

- ✚ The civic functions relating to sanitation, cleaning of public roads, drains and ponds, primary health care, vaccination, supply of drinking water, street lighting, social health, and primary and adult education, are obligatory functions of village panchayats.

Functions of Panchayat Samiti–

- ✚ Headed by Block Development Officers its functions are entrusted to them like agriculture, land improvement, watershed development, social and farm forestry, technical and vocational education.

Functions of Zila Parishad –

- ✚ Zila Parishad links panchayat samitis within the district. It coordinates their activities and supervises their functioning.
- ✚ It prepares district plans and integrates samiti plans into

district plans for submission to the State Government.

- ✚ In addition, Zila Parishads perform functions entrusted to them under the Central and State Government sponsored programmes.

Sources of Income -

Gram Panchayat –

- ✚ House tax, tax on cattle, immovable property, commercial crops, drainage tax, sanitation fee, tax on produce sold in village, fee for supply of water to households, also income from property owned by them as common grounds, jungles, cattle ground etc.

Panchayat Samitis –

- ✚ Can impose tax on facilities provided by them as water for drinking or irrigation purposes, lighting arrangements, tolls for bridges maintained by them.

Zila Parishads –

- ✚ Can impose taxes on persons carrying on business in rural areas for six months, taxes on brokers, commission agents in markets established by them also tax on sale of goods in these markets.

Evaluation of Panchayati Raj–

- ❖ It is necessary that the people participate actively in democratically elected panchayats.
- ❖ This can be ensured through Gram Sabhas. Through Gram Sabhas, the people can question and demand explanation from panchayats.
- ❖ Gram Sabha can harmonise needs and priorities of people and plan direction of village development.
- ❖ The Gram Sabhas can successfully play the role of securing democracy at the grassroots if they are endowed with sufficient authority.

Evaluate yourself –

1. Write down the sources of income of Urban Local Bodies.
2. Mention any two reforms introduced by the 74th Amendment.
3. Write a short note on the importance of the Panchayati Raj system in your own words.