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Panchayati Raj Institution

- The Panchayat Raj is the **Rural Local Self Government**.
- It was not in a part of original constitution.
- It was made a constitutional body through the 73rd amendment Act of 1992.

Before Panchayati Raj:

- The government has launched **Community Development Programme (CDP)** in the year 1952 and **National Extension Service (NES)** in the year 1953.

Background:

- Appointment of **Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957)** to look into the functioning of CDP and NES.
- The Committee submitted the report in November, 1957.
- The committee recommended the establishment of the scheme of “**Democratic Decentralisation**” which is also known as **Panchayati Raj**.
- BR Mehta Committee recommended for the establishment of 3 tier structure Panchayati Raj system.

- **Gram Panchayat** at Village level, **Panchayati Samiti** at Block level and **Zilla Parisad** at District level.
- The Village Panchayat should be constituted with directly elected representatives.
- The Panchayat Samiti should be constituted with indirectly elected members.
- The Zilla Parisad also to be constituted with indirectly elected members.

- All the planning and development activities should be entrusted to the Panchayat raj bodies.
- There should be genuine transfer of powers and responsibility to these democratic bodies.
- These bodies should be transferred with adequate resources.

- The recommendations were accepted by NDC in January 1958.
- **Rajasthan** was the first state to establish Panchayati raj in India on **October 2, 1959**.
- It was followed by **Andhra Pradesh** and other states.

- There were many differences among the states in the structure and functions of the Panchayati Raj.
- The states like Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh adopted 3 tier system.
- West Bengal adopted 4 tier systems.
- Tamil Nadu adopted 2 tier system.
- W.B. abolished Anchalik Parisad in 1973 and adopted 3 tier system.

Ashok Mehta Committee:

- Establishment of **Ashok Mehta Committee** (1977)
- **Ashok Mehta** was the chairman of that committee.
- The submitted the report in August 1978.
- To strengthen the Panchayati Raj System the committee made 132 recommendations.
- The committee recommended for the adoption of 2 tier structure: **Zilla Parisad** and **Mandal Panchayat**.

- The chief electoral officer in consultation with chief election commissioner should conduct elections of the **Panchayati Raj**.
- Seats for **SC** and **ST** should be reserved on the basis of their population.
- **No action was taken** on the recommendations of the Ashok Mehta Committee report.

GVK Rao Committee:

- In the year 1985 the Planning Commission appointed a committee on “**Administrative Arrangement for Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation Programme**”
- The committee recommended for the **revitalization of the entire Panchayati Raj System.**

LM Singhvi Committee:

- In the year 1986, the Prime Minister appointed a committee on “**Revitalisation of Panchayati Raj Institutions for Democracy and Development.**”

Recommendation:

- the PRI should be **constitutionally recognized**, protected and preserved.
- the constitutional provisions to ensure regular, free and fair elections to the Panchayati Raj bodies.

- Prime Minister made an attempt to provide the constitutional status to the PRI.
- In July 1989, Government introduced **64th Constitutional Amendment bill** in Lok Sabha.
- The Lok Sabha passed the bill in August 1989.
- The bill was opposed in Rajya Sabha and not passed.

- In the year 1989, **National Front Government** was formed at the Center.
- PM **VP Singh** announced the steps to strengthen the Panchayati Raj.
- In Sept 1990, a constitutional amendment bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha. But Government collapsed.

- In 1991 **PV Narasimha Rao** became the Prime Minister of India.
- The bill was introduced in the form of **73rd amendment bill**.
- The bill was passed in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in **December 1992**.
- President gave his assent on April 20, 1993.
- 73rd Amendment act also added **11th schedule** to the Constitution of India.

Three Tiers of PRI

- Village Panchayat
- Panchayat Samiti
- Zilla Parisad

Gram Panchayat

The Village Panchayat is the lowest unit in the structure of the PRI.

The Panchayat chiefly consists of representatives elected by the people of the village.

Gram Sabha:

The Panchayat is accountable to the general body of the village known as **Gram Sabha**.

It meets at least twice a year.

The Gram Panchayat must present its budget, accounts of the previous year and annual administrative report before the Gram Sabha.

- Every Panchayat elects a President or Sarpanch or **Panchayat Pradhan** and a Vice-President or Upsarpanch or **Upapradhan**.
- The **Panchayat Secretary** and the **Village Level Worker** are the two officers at the Panchayat level to assist the Pradhan in administration.

- The ***Panchayat Secretary*** assists the Panchayat in recording decisions, keeping minutes, preparing budget estimates and reports, and preparing notices, explaining circulars, organising Gram Sabha meetings etc.

- The ***Village Level Worker*** now called ***Village Development Officer*** assists the Panchayat in drawing up **agricultural production plans**, helps farmers in securing **loans for agriculture**, arranges the supply of inputs like **seeds and fertilizers**, and educates farmers about modern agricultural practices.

Income of Gram Panchayat

- The GP can *levy certain taxes and duties* to meet their expenses.
- tax on animals, vehicles, house, vacant lands and professions.
- duty on transfer of property situated in the area under their jurisdiction.
- The fees paid for presenting civil criminal cases before the Panchayats and
- fines on account violation of Panchayat laws are other sources of its income.
- But they have to depend on the state government for further finances.

Functions

- The principal functions include *maintenance of roads, wells, schools, burning and burial grounds, sanitation, public health, libraries, reading rooms, community centre* etc.
- The Panchayat also **keeps records of births and deaths**.
- It makes necessary provisions for the **promotion of agriculture and animal husbandry, cottage industries, co-operative societies** etc.
- The minor **disputes among residents of village are also settled** by the Village Panchayat.

Panchayat Samiti

- A Panchayat Samiti (block panchayat) is a local government body at the tehsil or *block* level.

The Panchayat Samiti generally consists of-

- About **members** elected from the Panchayat Pradhan of all the Panchayats falling in the block area;
- **Two women members** and **one member** each from the SC and ST to be co-opted, provided they do not get adequate representation otherwise;
- Two local persons possessing experience of public life and administration, which may be beneficial for the rural development;
- Representatives of the Co-operatives working within the jurisdiction of the block;
- One representative elected from the members of each small municipality lying within the geographical limits of a block;
- The MLAs and MPs representing the area

Departments:

The common departments in the Samiti are as follows:

- General Administration
- Finance
- Public Works
- Agriculture
- Health
- Education
- Social Welfare
- Information Technology
- Water Supply Department
- Animal Husbandry and others

- There is an officer for every department. A government-appointed **Block Development Officer (BDO)** is the executive officer to the Samiti and the chief of its administration and is responsible for his work to the CEO of ZP

Functions:

- Implementation of schemes for the development of agriculture and infrastructure
- Establishment of primary health centres and primary schools
- Supply of drinking water, drainage and construction/repair of roads
- Development of cottage and small-scale industries, and the opening of cooperative societies
- Establishment of youth organisations
- coordinate the activities of the various Panchayats within its jurisdiction.
- supervises the work of the Panchayats and scrutinises their budgets.
- suggest measures for improving the functioning of the Panchayats.

Zilla Parishad

The Zilla Parishad stands at the apex of the three-tier structure of the Panchayati Raj system.

Composition

- Representatives of the Panchayat Samiti;
- All the members of the **State Legislature** and the **Parliament** representing a part or whole of the district;
- All district level officers of the **Medical, Public Health, Public Works, Engineering, Agriculture, Veterinary, Education** and other development departments.
- Representative of **women**, members of **SC** and **ST**
- The Collector is also a member of the Zilla Parishad

Functions:

- Provide essential services and facilities to the rural population
- Supply improved seeds to farmers and inform them of new farming techniques
- Set up and run schools and libraries in rural areas
- Start primary health centers and hospitals in villages; start vaccination drives against epidemics
- Execute plans for the development of the SC and ST; run ashram shalas for Adivasi children; set up free hostels for them
- Encourage entrepreneurs to start small-scale industries and implement rural employment schemes
- Construct bridges, roads and other public facilities and their maintenance
- Provide employment

Sources of income:

- Taxes collected locally such as on water, place of pilgrimage, local *mandirs* (temples), and markets
- A fixed grant from the State Government in proportion to the land revenue and money for works and schemes assigned to the Parishad