

Chapter 11: Grassroots Democracy - Part 2

Local Government in Rural Areas

The Big Questions (Page 163)

1. What are Panchayati Raj institutions?

Answer:

Panchayati Raj institutions are a system of self-government at different levels in rural areas. They aim to bring governance closer to the people by enabling active participation in the management and development of rural areas. These institutions include:

- (i) Gram Panchayat at the village level.
- (ii) Block Panchayat at the block level.
- (iii) Zila Parishad at the district level.

2. What are their functions?

Answer:

The functions of Panchayati Raj institutions are:

- (i) Managing water resources for irrigation.
- (ii) Resolving disputes within the village.
- (iii) Maintaining roads, water supply, and sanitation.
- (iv) Implementing welfare schemes for women, children, and marginalized sections of society.
- (v) Providing education and healthcare facilities.
- (vi) Creating awareness about government schemes and implementing them.

3. Why are they important in governance and democracy?

Answer:

Panchayat Raj institutions are important in governance and democracy because:

- (i) They enable villagers to take an active part in management and development of village.
- (ii) They ensure that the benefits of the government schemes reach grassroots level.
- (iii) They reduce the dependence on State and Central governments for addressing local issues.
- (iv) They empower people to raise their problems and take leadership roles.

Think About It (Page 167)

1. How do you think can these old maps be helpful for us? Can they tell us something about the past and the present?

Answer:

These maps are used to settle land ownership disputes. They provide insights into past and present land ownership, land usage, and changes in the landscape layout over time.

Let's Explore (Page 169)

1. As a class activity, let four or five students form a Bal Panchayat and the rest of the class imagine they are the villagers. What issues will the Gram Sabha discuss? What challenges could it encounter? What solutions will it propose?

Answer:

Issues Gram Sabha might discuss:

- (i) Teacher shortages in schools.
- (ii) Installation of better street lighting.
- (iii) Lack of clean drinking water.
- (iv) Enhancement of school infrastructure.
- (v) Improvement in the quality of mid-day meals.

Challenges Gram Sabha might encounter:

- (i) Lack of resources.
- (ii) Insufficient funds.
- (iii) Disagreements on certain issues.
- (iv) Lack of awareness among villagers.

Proposed solutions:

- (i) Educating villagers through awareness campaigns.
- (ii) Encouraging active participation.
- (iii) Seeking support and funding.
- (iv) Organizing cleanliness drives.

Think About it (Page 170)

1. Why do you think it is more important for the government to pay more attention to the needs and problems of the disadvantaged sections of society?

Answer:

It is more important for the government to pay greater attention to the needs and problems of disadvantaged sections of society because they often lack sufficient resources and opportunities, making them more prone to poverty and social discrimination. By supporting them in education, healthcare, and employment, the government can help uplift them and improve their status in society.

Let's Explore (Page 171)

1. What similarities and differences do you notice between the governance system at the Central level and at the Panchayat level? (*Hint: refer back to Chapter 10 if required.*)

Answer:

Similarities:

- (i) Both the Central Government and Panchayati Raj institutions have representatives elected by the people.
- (ii) Members at both levels are elected for a period of five years.
- (iii) Both levels of government are accountable and answerable to the people.

Differences:

- (i) The Central Government governs and makes policies for the entire country, while Panchayati Raj institutions handle local or village-level issues.
- (ii) The Central Government has vast resources at its disposal to address defence, foreign affairs, and the economy, whereas Panchayats work with a limited set of resources to carry out development projects in villages.

2. If you get an opportunity to meet a few Panchayat members, what questions would you like to ask them? Discuss in small groups to create a questionnaire. Meet some Gram Panchayat members or invite them to your school. Ask them the questions in your questionnaire and write a short report.

Answer:

I would ask Panchayat members the following questions:

- (i) What inspired you to become a member of the Panchayat?
- (ii) How often does the Panchayat hold meetings to discuss village issues?
- (iii) What matters fall under the jurisdiction of the Panchayat?
- (iv) Who is the youngest member of the Panchayat in your area?
- (v) What challenges does the Panchayat face in implementing development projects?
- (vi) What are your plans for improving education and healthcare facilities in your area?
- (vii) How do you raise awareness about the latest government welfare schemes?

Questions, Answers and Projects (Page 171)

1. Test yourself — without looking at the text above, can you name the three tiers of the Panchayati Raj system? What are the key functions of each of the three tiers?

Answer:

The key functions of the three tiers of Panchayati Raj institutions are:

(i) **Gram Panchayat (Village level)** – Looks after local development activities and implements government schemes.

(ii) **Panchayat Samiti (Block level)** – Coordinates and supervises the work of different Gram Panchayats in a block. It acts as a link between the Zila Parishad and Gram Panchayats.

(iii) **Zila Parishad (District level)** – Manages all Panchayat Samitis in a district and executes large development projects.

2. Write a letter to the Sarpanch regarding the issue of plastic bags lying on the roadside in the village.

Answer:

Arjun
XYZ Village

To
The Sarpanch
ABC Village

Subject: Concern Over Plastic Waste in Our Village

Dear Sir/Madam,

I hope you are doing well. I am writing to bring to your attention an emerging problem in our village—plastic bags being dumped along the roadsides. These bags spoil the village's appearance, harm animals, and pose a serious threat to the environment in numerous ways.

I kindly request you to take measures to raise awareness among villagers about the harmful effects of plastic bags and encourage them to adopt eco-friendly alternatives. Additionally, please arrange for sweepers to ensure the cleanliness of our village.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Arjun.

3. In your view, what type of person should be a Gram Panchayat member?

Answer:

A Gram Panchayat member should be honest, truthful, hard-working, educated, cooperative, empathetic and a problem solver.

4. Let us suppose that you study in a village school. The school is located next to a highway and students find it difficult to cross the road when they come to school or leave at the end of the day. What are the options to solve this issue? Which institutions in the Panchayati Raj can help you? What can the students do?

Answer:

The issue can be resolved by:

- (i) Constructing a pedestrian overbridge.
- (ii) Developing an underground pass.
- (iii) Installing traffic lights and speed breakers.
- (iv) Marking a zebra crossing.

The villagers should raise the issue in the Gram Panchayat, which can discuss it in the Gram Sabha to finalize a solution. The Panchayat can then propose a plan to the Panchayat Samiti for funding and approval. Since the construction of an overbridge or an underground pass involves the highway, the project is presented before the Zila Parishad to seek support from district and state-level agencies.

The students can present the matter to the school administration and write letters to government officials to address their issue.