

73rd Constitutional Amendment

Gandhi calls it Panchayati Raj or village Swaraj. He wants to see each village a little republic, self-sufficient in its vital wants, organically and non-hierarchically linked with the larger spatial bodies and enjoying the maximum freedom of deciding the affairs of the locality.

Evolution of Panchayati Raj in India



- The village served as the primary administrative unit in the Vedic state, which was a rural state.
- Gramini was the name of a prominent village official. He was a respectable official instrumental in the king's coronation ceremony.
- There are few direct references to village institutions in the major epics like the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

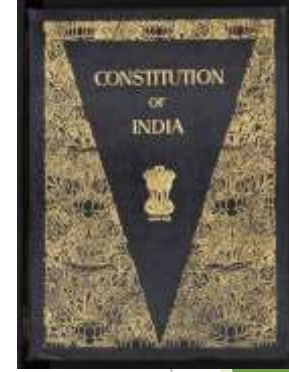
Some new concepts entered Indian soil during the **Muslim era**. The new rulers adopted new practices and beliefs. There were pronounced variations concerning

- The Mukkaddam handled the village administration, the Patwari handled revenue collection, and the Choudhrie handled conflict resolution with the support of the Panch.
- Regarding taxation and land management, there were considerable variances.
- The district level was in the administration's grasp. The village communities persisted.
- The settlements had adequate self-government authority inside their borders.
- British rule weakened the long-standing economic self-sufficiency of the village communities, and the sense of community was severely damaged.

- The Panchayati Raj system first took on its current form in 1959, following independence. Panchayats were viewed as being owned by the people by the Indian National Congress. Being the true voice of democracy, local self-governance was regarded as essential.

Mahatma Gandhi, in particular, pointed out that independence had to start from the grassroots. Every village should be a republic (Gram Swaraj), with a panchayat having complete authority.

Constitutional Provisions of the 73rd Amendment Act



- Long before the act was implemented in 1992, village panchayats were already in use in India, but the system had a number of flaws that prevented it from serving as the people's government or responding to their demands. This was caused by a number of things, including a lack of funding, the absence of regular elections, and the underrepresentation of weaker groups, such as women and scheduled castes and tribes.
- The Indian Constitution's Directive Principles of State Policy Article 40 mandates that the government make it simpler for gram panchayats to establish themselves and function effectively.
- The central government of India introduced the 73rd Amendment Act in 1992 to solve these problems and enhance local self-government. Both chambers approved the law and went into effect on April 24, 1993.
- Part IX: The Panchayats is a new chapter that was added to the Constitution as a result of this Act.
- Some of the act's primary characteristics include the following:
 - The Panchayati Raj institutions in the nation are now constitutional bodies thanks to this Act.
 - **Art.243-B** It is mandatory for every state to establish the Panchayati raj system within its territorial jurisdiction.
 - **Art.243-G** It shall be the duty of every state government to provide jurisdictions, powers, functions and responsibilities to panchayats in their states .
 - **Art. 243-E** The term of the three-tier Panchayat system is fixed at five years.
 - **Art. 243-D** It mandates the representation of women, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Panchayats.

Gram panchayat



Gram Panchayat is a basic governing institution in Indian villages. It is a political institution, acting as the cabinet of a village or group of villages. The Gram Sabha works as the general body of the Gram Panchayat. The members of the gram panchayat are elected directly by the people. The gram panchayat is headed by an elected President and Vice President, assisted by a Secretary who serves as the administrative head of the panchayat. The president of a gram panchayat is known as a "Pradhan" or "Sarpanch" in Northern India. There are about 250,000 gram panchayats present in India. Gram Panchayat elections in India occur every five years. The village is divided into wards, and people in each ward vote for their representative.

Functions-

- Public work and welfare functions, such as maintenance, repair and construction of roads, drains, bridges, and wells.
- Install and maintain street lamps.
- Provide primary education
- Construct libraries, marriage halls, etc.
- Establish and run fair-price shops and cooperative credit societies.
- Establish gardens, ponds, and orchards.

Panchayat Samiti

Panchayat samiti or block panchayat is a rural local government (panchayat) body at the intermediate tehsil (taluka/mandal) or block level in India. It works for the villages of the tehsil that together are called a development block. The panchayat samiti is the link between the gram panchayat (village council) and the zila parishad (district council). These bodies are responsible for providing various services to the people in their respective areas, such as sanitation, healthcare, education, and infrastructure.

■ Typically, a taluka panchayat is composed of elected members of the area: the block development officer, members of the state's legislative assembly, members of parliament belonging to that area, otherwise unrepresented groups (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women), associate members (such as a farmer, a representative of the cooperative societies and one from the agricultural marketing services sector) and the elected members of that panchayat block (tehsil) on the zila parishad (district board). The samiti is elected for five years and is headed by a chairman/president and deputy chairman/vice president elected by the members of the panchayat samiti. One sarpanch samiti supervises the other gram panchayats. It acts as a coordinating body between district panchayat and gram panchayat.

Funtions-

The panchayat samiti collects all the prospective plans prepared at gram panchayat level and process them for funding and implementation by evaluating them from the angles of financial constraints, social welfare, and area development. It also identifies and prioritizes the issues that should be addressed at the block level.

Zilla Parishad

The Zila Panchayat or District Development Council or Zilla Parishad or District Panchayat or is the third tier of the Panchayati Raj system and functions at the district levels in all states. A Zila Parishad is an elected body representing the entire rural area of a district. A District Panchayat is headed by a President, who is an elected member. Block Pramukh of Block Panchayat are also represented in Zila Parishad. The members of the State Legislature and the members of the Parliament of India are members of the Zila Parishad. The Zila parishad acts as the link between the state government and the village-level Gram Panchayat.

Zila Parishad are Panchayats at Apex or District Level in Panchayat Raj Institutions, and Gram Panchayat is the base unit at village level in Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Functions

- The Zila Parishad is an official body that coordinates the activities of the Panchayats in all its developmental activities, such as minor irrigation works, vocational and industrial schools, village industries, sanitation and public health among others.
- It advises the State Government on all matters relating to the Gram Panchayats and Panchayat Samitis under its supervision and the needs of the rural population living therein.
- It also supervises the work of the Panchayats.
- It functions mostly through various Standing Committees, which oversee and coordinate the common programmes of the villages under its jurisdiction.

Sources of Income

Taxes on water, pilgrimage, markets, etc. Fixed grant from the State Government in proportion with the land revenue and money for works and schemes assigned to the Parishad. The Zila Parishad can collect some money from the panchayats with the approval of the government.

Women Empowerment and Panchayati Raj in India



Political Empowerment of women starts with the active participation of women in political institutions. The grass-root level democracy entails due importance to initial participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions. Even though in today's political system where some reservations have been provided to women in local bodies, that has been misused by some i.e. women have been used as rubber-stamps. Actual decisions are being taken by their male family members. Women may have stormed the male bastion under the Panchayati Raj system, but in many cases it is the husbands or male members of their families calling their shots. Elected women representatives have reportedly been reduced to proxies of their male relatives. Political system and decision making process is seen clearly in the changes incorporated in the Panchayati Raj Institution. The objective of bringing improvement in the socio-economic condition of women could be successful only by taking suitable initiatives and measures for empowering them. Empowerment of women will not be possible unless they are provided proper representation in the political system. This objective should be achieved at desired level through making the provision of linking and associating maximum number of women in political affairs even at the lowest level of political activity. In recently introduced Panchayati Raj Institutions, the policy for reservation in favour of women has therefore, been thought of as an important approach to maximize their participation in the local level.

Under the 73rd amendment of constitution of Panchayati Raj Institution, one third of the total seats for scheduled caste, backward class, scheduled tribes and general caste women members in Grampradhan of village Panchayat, Block Panchayat, District Panchayat are reserved for women candidates. Conceptually, providing representation to women in Panchayati Raj Institutions could be accepted as an important planning approach regarding minimizing the traditional feeling of people about the status of women in our society, particularly in terms of keeping women under the subjugation of men, imposing restrictions by the households and society against them in the availing of certain opportunities and several other social, cultural and traditional bindings disavouring them for improving personal life style and status in existing social and economic setting.

Initiatives for active participation of women in PRIs:

- Measures have to be adopted to enhance the participation of women in governance in higher numbers.
- The elected leaders of these institutions need to be at least literate, so that they could guide and tell the villagers about the various provisions of the PR-Act.
- Literacy plays an important role in educating rural women and helps to detail about system of governance. Hence, steps to improve female literacy particularly in rural areas is the need of the hour.
- Need to develop women's leadership and communication skills for enhancing social mobilization.
- Essentially, to train them, find ways and means to interface with other layers of local self-governance within the state and claim the Panchayat's entitlements.
- Familiarize them with the rural/women/child development programmes of state and central governments.
- There should not be any factions and party politics in terms of planning i.e. selection and location of schemes rather genuine implementation of the projects are necessary for strengthening the decentralized planning.
- To empower them to identify and break cultural barriers and improve their socio-economic condition.
- Systematic awareness is needed for enhancing rural women's capacity to take up their new responsibilities as local legislators.

Thank you

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