



LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND FIELD ADMINISTRATION

Ramphal had left his village and come to a city in search of livelihood. His family also joined him there when he got a job. After a gap of 8 years, he and his son, Vijay visited his native village. Both were surprised to see a newly built primary school with a boundary wall, a volley ball ground and the village tube well with a park around it. All these had come up after they had left the village. Vijay also saw his younger cousins playing with the children of the high caste people the privileged class. It was a pleasant surprise for him, because earlier, they being poor and considered untouchables were not allowed to play with the children of the privileged villagers. He was curious to know how all that could happen. When he chanced to meet the school teacher, Vijay asked him the reasons behind the changes. The teacher said that those changes were the outcome of the efforts made primarily by the newly elected Sarpanch and Panches of the Gram Panchayat with the support from the field administration. Vijay felt still happier when came to know that one of his aunties had also been elected as a Panch. He wanted to know more about local government institutions like Gram Panchayat and field administration. In this lesson, the details as told by the teacher have been discussed.



OBJECTIVES

After completing this lesson you will be able to:

- recognize the need to establish Local Government in villages and cities;
- appreciate the efforts of people to strengthen the democracy through local governments;
- analyse the structure and functions of the local government in India (rural as well as urban);
- analyse the changes made by 73rd and 74th amendment of Constitution and appreciate the steps taken towards women's empowerment;

- recognize the necessity and importance of different officers at different levels of field administration for assisting the representatives for better functioning of local governments; and
- appreciate the role of local governments in our daily life.

18.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Vijay asked the teacher why a Gram Panchayat is called a local government institution. You must be aware by now that India being a federal system has governments at two levels, Union government at the Centre and State governments at the state level. Besides these two governments, the Constitution of India has provided for a set of institutions for rural and urban areas, commonly known as Local government. It is the third tier of the government aimed at development and social justice at the local level and acts as an instrument of decentralization of powers. This is said to be the best government largely because of its closet interface with the local people. It provides a forum to them to deliberate on the nature of local problems and devise appropriate solutions that are in conformity with the local situations. Local government is in fact a government of the local people, by the local people and for the local people. Being located nearest to the people, the local government institutions are under constant observation of the society. This goes a long way in enhancing local government's accountability. In fact, the role of local self-government institutions is so pervasive and the services provided by them is so closest to the daily lives of the local communities that it is said to serve the local citizenry from "cradle to the grave".

The teacher asked Vijay if he knew that right from ancient times there had been some sort of community based institutions in different parts of India. They had been variously known as Panchayats, Biradaries or by some other names. The eldest person or any other commonly accepted leader used to deal with different problems of the members of the village or community. In many films or T.V. serials you must have noticed Panchayats listening to the complaints of the members and making decisions to resolve the issues. A story 'Panch Parmeshwar' by renowned litterateur Prem Chand also depicts the role of Panchayat. That old traditional organization "Panchayat" is still prevalent and working in the villages. Keeping in view the importance, acceptance and utility of this traditional institution, the government of India has continued with this system to work for the welfare of the people.

18.1.1 Rural and Urban Local Government

He further shared that it is not only in the villages where local governments are working. In cities also there are local bodies which are working for the welfare of the city dwellers. The only difference is that rural local bodies have a smaller area



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Local Governments and Field Administration

and smaller population to look after but the local bodies of the cities have larger area and population to look after. The local governments in India thus are of two types, one for the rural areas and the other for the urban areas. The system of rural local government is known as the Panchayati Raj System and that of the urban local government has three kinds of institutional arrangements in different cities and towns. These are known as Municipal Corporations, Municipalities and Nagar Panchayats. The organization and functioning of both the Panchayati Raj System and Urban local governments have been greatly influenced by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts 1992.

18.2 PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM

As we have seen earlier that in the past, Panchayats used to be the seat of justice. Local disputes and other problems were referred to Panchayats and their decisions used to be respected by one and all. Our national leaders like Mahatma Gandhi had a firm faith in this system. The Constitution makers also considered this system to be very important and made provisions for it in the Directive Principles of State Policy. The Constitution states that the State shall take steps to organize Village Panchayats and empower them with such powers and authorities as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of local self government.



Figure 18.1

As a follow up, the present day Panchayats began functioning under the Community Development Programme introduced during the first Five year Plan. To make the system more effective a Committee was formed under the Chairmanship of Balwant Rai Mehta that went into its details. The Balwant Rai Mehta Committee in its report

submitted in 1957 recommended the establishment of a three-tier Panchayati Raj System: Gram Panchayats at the village level, the Panchayat Samitis at the block level or intermediate level and the Zila Parishad at the district level. In 1958, the National Development Council also recommended a similar structure of local government where village was at the bottom of the system and district at the top. However, it is the 73rd Constitutional Amendment 1992 that provided the present shape to the Panchayati Raj System. Now the Panchayati Raj Institutions in most of the States have been set up at three levels, village, intermediate and district levels. But in smaller States having a population of less than 20 lakh, there are only two tiers, the village level and the district level.



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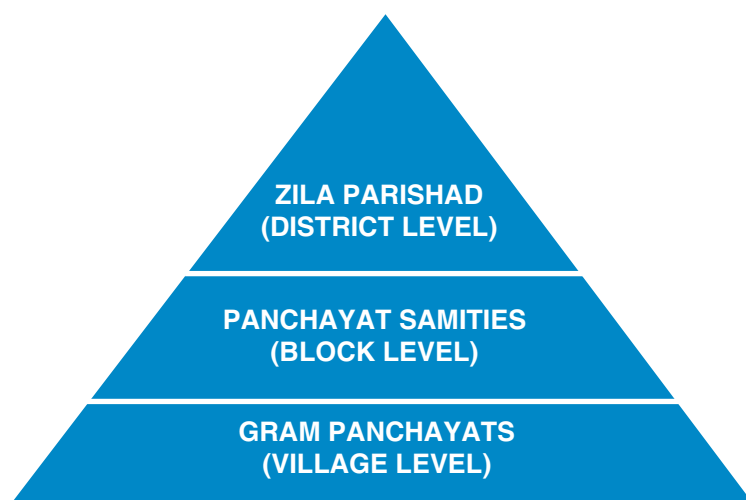


Figure 18.2 *The three tier structure of Panchayati Raj System*

18.2.1 The 73rd Constitutional Amendment 1992

The passage of the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 marks a new era in the federal democratic set up of the country and provides constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). The main features of the Act are:

- (i) establishment of a three-tier structure: Village Panchayat (Gram Panchayat); intermediate panchayat (Panchayat Samiti; and the district panchayat (Zila Parishad);
- (ii) regular elections, every five years;
- (iii) reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population;
- (iv) not less than one-third reservation of seats for women at three different levels of PRIs;
- (v) establishment of State Finance Commissions to recommend measures to improve the finances of panchayats;

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- (vi) establishment of State Election Commissions to conduct election to the PRIs;
- (vii) establishment of District Planning Committees to prepare development plans for the districts;
- (viii) preparation of plans for economic development and social justice and their execution concerning 29 subjects listed in the 11th Schedule of the Constitution;
- (ix) establishment of Grama Sabha (village assemblies) and their empowerment as a decision making body at the village level; and
- (x) rotation in accordance with the reservation of seats for women and the Scheduled Castes in the PRIs.

By the Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, the Panchayati Raj Institutions have been given such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function. It contains provisions for devolution of powers and responsibilities related to (a) the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice; and (b) the implementation of such schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them.

**Do you know**

Consequent upon the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, almost all the States/UTs, except J&K, NCT Delhi and Uttaranchal have enacted their legislation. Moreover, almost all the States/UTs have held local body elections. As a result, 2,32,278 Panchayats at village level; 6,022 Panchayats at intermediate level and 535 Panchayats at district level have been constituted in the country. These Panchayats are being manned by about 29.2 lakh elected representatives of Panchayats at all levels. This is the broadest representative base that exists in any country of the world.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 18.1**

1. Define local government. State two examples to justify the need for a local government.
2. Trace the evolution of Panchayati Raj System since the ancient days.
3. Identify the type of local government institutions that are set up in the area where you reside and name the institutions.
4. To what extent do you think the facilities and support provided by the local government impact our quality of life.
5. How has the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 impacted the Panchayati Raj System?

**ACTIVITY 18.1**

Find out the following by discussing with your teachers or elders in your family and/or neighbourhood or your classmates:

1. Names of local government institutions set up at the village level if you reside in rural area or in the town/city, if you reside there.
2. Designations of Office bearers in the concerned institutions and their number.

18.2.2 The Organisation, Functions and Sources of Funds of Gram Panchayats**A. Organisation**

Village Panchayat also called Gram Panchayat is the grass root institution of Panchayati Raj System. At village level there is a Gram Sabha or Village Assembly and a Gram Panchayat having a Chairperson known as Gram Pradhan or Sarpanch (Mukhia), a Vice Chairperson and some Panches. In fact, the Village Panchayats are organized and they function according to the Act passed by every State government. That is why, you may find variations in different States. But mostly, the Panchayati Raj Institutions are organized and they function as follows:

A **Gram Sabha or Village Assembly** consists of all the adults i.e. voters (persons above the age of 18 years) living in the area of a Gram Panchayat i.e., village or a group of small villages. The Gram Sabha has now been recognized as a legal body. It acts like the legislative body. In one year at least two meetings of the Gram Sabha are held. In its first meeting the Gram Sabha considers the budget of the Gram Panchayat. In its second meeting it considers the reports of the Gram Panchayat. The main functions of Gram Sabha are to review the annual accounts of Panchayat,



Figure 18.3 Meeting of Gram Sabha

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discuss audit and administrative reports and the tax proposals of its Panchayat and accept community service, voluntary labour and schemes for Panchayat. The members of Gram Sabha elect the members and also the Chairperson of Gram Panchayat. The States have to ensure that all the Gram Sabhas in their respective areas are functional.

The **Village Panchayat or Gram Panchayat** is the executive committee of Gram Sabha. It is the most important unit of rural local self-government. As we have seen, all the members of each Gram Sabha are voters who elect the members of the Panchayat by a secret ballot. In most of the States, a Village Panchayat has 5 to 9 members who are called Panches. In every Panchayat, one-third of the seats are reserved for women. However, there are States where the percentage of seats reserved for women is even more. Seats are also reserved for persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The Sarpanch (Mukhia) of the Panchayat is directly elected by all the voters of the village. Some offices of Sarpanches are now reserved for women, and some for persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Sarpanch calls the meetings of the Panchayat and presides over those meetings. He/She is to call at least one meeting of the Panchayat per month. The Panches can also request him/her for calling a special meeting. He/She has to call such special meeting within three days of the request. Sarpanch keeps the records of the meetings of Panchayat. The Panchayat can assign any special function to him/her. A Vice Chairperson is elected by the members of the Panchayat. The tenure of the Village Panchayat is of 5 years.

B. Functions of Gram Panchayats

Vijay showed greater interest in knowing more about Gram Panchayat and asked the teacher about the functions and sources of funds of this institution. The teacher explained the details. All the major functions of Gram Panchayat are related to the welfare and development of the village. With a view to fulfill the needs and requirements of the villagers every Gram Panchayat has to perform some important functions such as provision of safe drinking water, paving of streets, developing and maintaining good drainage system, ensuring cleanliness of the village, upkeep of street lights, dispensary, etc. These functions are known as obligatory functions. Some other functions are discretionary and can be performed, if the Panchayat has the resources and funds. These are plantation of trees, setting up and maintenance of insemination centre for cattle, developing and maintaining play ground for sports and setting up and running the library. From time to time some other functions can be assigned to Panchayats by the State government or Union government. But along with these functions of Panchayats, every member of the village also has the duty towards his/her village. One should keep the surroundings of his /her home clean, not waste drinking water and plant more and more trees.



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C. Sources of Income of Gram Panchayats

Financial resources are essential for performance of the functions by Panchayats, whether these are obligatory functions or developmental work. Gram Panchayats can work better, if they have adequate funds to spend. Over and above the Grants-in-aid, State governments have empowered Panchayats to levy taxes and collect funds. Some of the sources are as follows:

1. taxes on property, land, goods and cattle;
2. rent collected for facilities like Barat Ghar or any other property of panchayat;
3. various types of fines collected from the offenders;
4. grants-in- aid from the State government and Union government;
5. a part of the land revenue collected by the State government given to the Panchayats; and
6. donations collected from the villagers for some common cause.



ACTIVITY 18.2

Have you ever thought of the impact young persons like you can make on the society? Read the following experience of a young person:

Vimla Devi is the 43 year old Sarpanch of the village Sundergaon. She has studied only up to sixth class. After she became the Sarpanch, she initiated several developmental works, be it construction of roads, drainage system or parks or spreading awareness about agricultural and health facilities. She has also played a major role in resolving cases of domestic violence. As she said, she had never dreamt of becoming a functionary like Sarpanch in her male dominated village. But now she is confident of bringing about many positive changes in her village.

In the context of this experience write answers to the following questions:

- Which Constitutional Amendment made this possible for Vimla Devi to do what she did?
- What do you think has been the impact of this amendment on women's empowerment?
- Write about at least 2 issues related to your society, which bother you.
- Talk to your friends and make a list of various actions you would like to take to positively impact the society you live in.



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18.2.3 The Organisation and Functions of Panchayat Samiti**A. Composition**

Panchayat Samiti is the intermediate or the middle tier of the Panchayati Raj System. These are named differently in different States. Its organization and functions also vary as these are determined by the Act passed by the concerned State. It coordinates all the activities of the Panchayats in a Block. A Panchayat Samiti is constituted by the following members:

- all the Sarpanches (Mukhias) or Chairpersons of the Gram Panchayats within the Block
- MPs, MLAs and MLCs of that Block
- some directly elected Members
- the elected Members of Zila Parishad from that Block
- some Officers of that Block

**Do you know**

A Panchayat Samiti is created at the Block level. Each Block consists of the areas of several Panchayats. In different States it is known by different names: in Andhra Pradesh Mandal Praja Parishad, Assam the Anchalik Panchayat, Gujarat the Taluka Panchayat, Karnataka the Mandal Panchayat, Madhya Pradesh the Janapada Panchayat, Tamil Nadu, the Panchayat Union Council, and Uttar Pradesh the Kshetra Samiti. However, its most popular name happens to be Panchayat Samiti.

The term of each Panchayat Samiti is five years in all States. In its very first meeting, each Panchayat Samiti elects two of its members as Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. Chairpersonships of at least 1/3rd Panchayat Samities stand reserved for women members. Likewise, some of the offices of Chairperson are reserved for members belonging to Scheduled Castes. The tenure of the Chairperson is co-terminous with the tenure of the Panchayat Samiti. The members of a Panchayat Samiti can remove the Chairperson by passing a resolution supported by 2/3rd majority. A Panchayat Samiti usually meets at least six times in one year. There cannot be a gap of more than two months between its two meetings. A meeting of Panchayat Samiti is either ordinary or special. The date of every meeting is fixed by the Chairperson of the Panchayat Samiti and in his/her absence by the Vice-Chairperson. Its chief administrative officer is Block Development Officer popularly known as BDO.

B. Functions of Panchayat Samiti

Panchayat Samiti performs a number of functions. Some important functions are: agriculture, land improvement, watershed development, social and farm forestry, and



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technical and vocational education. Besides, the Panchayat Samiti implements certain schemes and programmes for which specific funds are allocated by the State government or Central government. It promotes and coordinates different development programmes of its areas. It also has the responsibilities like (a) provision of drinking water in the villages, (b) development and repair of rural roads, (c) framing of rules and regulations for the markets, (d) provision of improved seeds and chemical fertilizers, pesticides, agricultural tools and implements, (e) promotion of cottage industries such as handlooms, handicrafts, traditional art and artisans, (f) the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Tribes and other backward classes, and (g) promotion of the self employment schemes in the rural areas.

C. Sources of Income

The main source of income of Panchayat Samiti is the Grants given by the State government. Besides, it also levies taxes, levies and receives a fixed percentage of land revenue.

18.2.4 The Organisation and Functions of Zila Parishad

A. Composition

Zila Parishad is at the apex, being the third tier of Panchayati Raj System. It is situated at the district level. Zila Parishad also has a term of 5 years. Some of its members are directly elected and the Chairpersons of the Panchayat Samitis are ex-officio members. MPs and MLAs belonging to the district are also the members of Zila Parishad. Chairperson of the Zila Parishad is elected from the directly elected members. Not less than 1/3rd of the offices and seats are reserved for the women members. Seats are also reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.



Figure 18.4 Zilla Parishad Latur (Maharashtra)

**Notes****B. Functions of the Zila Parishad**

The following are the major functions of the Zila Parishad, though you may find some variations across the States:

1. providing essential services and facilities to the rural population, planning and executing the development programmes for the district;
2. supplying improved seeds to farmers, informing them of new techniques of farming, undertaking construction of small-scale irrigation projects and percolation tanks, and maintaining pastures and grazing lands;
3. setting up and running schools in villages, executing programmes for adult literacy, and running libraries;
4. starting Primary Health Centers and hospitals in villages, managing mobile hospitals for hamlets, conducting vaccination drives against epidemics and family welfare campaigns;
5. executing plans for the development of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, running ashram for adivasi children, and setting up free hostels for scheduled caste students;
6. encouraging entrepreneurs to start small scale industries like cottage industries, handicrafts, agriculture products, processing mills, dairy farms, etc., and implementing rural employment schemes; and
7. constructing roads, schools and also taking care of the public properties;

C. Sources of Income of Zila Parshad

As you have seen, the Zila Parishad performs a number of important functions. For exciting them it needs money. This is arranged through its sources of income that are as follows:

1. income from taxes levied by Zila Parishad, license fees and market fees;
2. a share is given to Zila Parishad from the collected land revenue;
3. income from various properties of Zila Praishad;
4. grants from the State and Central governments; and
5. funds allotted by the State for developmental activities.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 18.2**

1. How is Village Panchayat constituted? What is the role of Gram Sabha or Village Assembly?



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2. List the important functions of a Gram Panchayat. Which of these functions are very essential? Are there certain functions which you feel the local governments need not take up? If so, why?
3. Describe the different sources of income of a Village Panchayat.
4. Based on the functions of Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad, draw a Plan of Action for one year to be implemented in a district by these institutions.
5. Collect information regarding reservation of seats for women in Panchayats from published Articles on Panchayati Raj or internet or your teachers or elders or your friends/classmates and list the names of States where the reservation for women in Panchayati Raj System is more than one-third.

18.3 URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

While Vijay was trying to appreciate various aspects of the Panchayati Raj System, the teacher asked him if he knew about the local government institutions functioning in the city where he and his family had shifted from the village. Vijay wanted to know, if such institutions exist in urban area, too. The teacher said, “Yes, they do.” As Panchayati Raj System is meant for rural area, similarly there are institutions of urban local government. There are three types of urban local bodies – (a) *Municipal Corporations* for the big cities, (b) *Municipal Councils* for all other cities with smaller population and (c) *Nagar Panchayats* for transitional areas (semi urban areas). But a significant difference between Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and the urban local bodies is that while the PRIs are closely linked with one another, the urban local bodies are independent. In one State there may be all the three types of urban local bodies: in one big city a Municipal Corporation, in another small city a Municipal Council and in yet another small town a Nagar Panchayat. But they are not linked with one another.

It was during the British colonial rule that the first urban local government came into existence in 1688 when a Municipal Corporation was formed in the city of Madras (now known as Chennai). Later on, similar bodies were formed for the administration at Calcutta (Kolkata) and Bombay (Mumbai). At that time these municipalities were formed to help in the matter of sanitation and prevent epidemics. These Local bodies also had a few civic functions like managing water supply and drainage. But these bodies were not given the required powers, finance and authority. Initially most of the members were nominated. Our national leaders also had felt the importance and need of such an organization for the local administration and linked these bodies to the planned development of the country. But nothing fruitful could be achieved without finance and the finance was missing. But even then this system proved to be an effective tool of administration. During the British rule many changes were made in urban local bodies. Gradually certain structural changes were made, powers of the local bodies were enhanced and some funds were also provided.



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After independence four types of urban local bodies were functioning: (i) Municipal Corporations, (ii) Municipalities, (iii) Town Area Committees and (iv) Notified Area Committees. But the 74th Constitutional Amendment 1992 brought about major changes in the system of urban local government. Now three types of urban local governments are functioning: (a) Municipal Corporations for the big cities, (b) Municipal Councils for smaller cities and (c) Nagar Panchayats for those areas that are in transition from rural areas to urban areas.

18.3.1 The 74th Constitutional Amendment 1992

As stated above, the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act 1992 brought about significant changes in the structure and functioning of urban local government. The following points are noteworthy:

- constitution of urban local bodies (namely, ***Municipal Corporation***, ***Municipal Council***, and ***Nagar Panchayat***) in every Indian State;
- constitution of **Wards Committees** within the territorial area of a municipality, to ensure people's participation in civic affairs at the grass-root level;
- regular and fair conduct of **municipal elections** by State Election Commissions;
- provision for supersession of municipal governments for not more than 6 months;
- adequate representation of weaker sections (i.e., Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes) of the society and women in municipal governments through **reservation** of seats;
- specification by law, through the State Legislatures, of the **powers** (including financial) and **functional responsibilities** to be entrusted to municipalities and wards committees;
- constitution of **State Finance Commissions**, once in every 5 years, to review the financial position of municipalities and to make recommendations on the measures needed to improve their financial position; and
- constitution of a **District Planning Committee** at the district level and a **Metropolitan Planning Committee** in metropolitan areas of every State, for the preparation and consolidation of development plans.

18.3.2 Municipal Corporations

A. Composition

Municipal Corporations are established in big cities according to the provisions made in the Acts enacted by the State Legislatures. The Councillors of Municipal Corporations are elected for 5 years. The elected Councillors elect one of them as Mayor annually. The Mayor is known as the first citizen of the city. The 74th Constitutional Amendment has provided for reservation of not less than 1/3rd of the

total seats for women. There is also a provision of reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections in proportion to their population. Out of these reserved seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, one-third would be reserved for women belonging to these communities. In the event of dissolution of Municipal Corporation, the elections will be held within six months. There is an official post of Municipal Commissioner, who is the Chief Executive Officer and is appointed by the State government. In case of Union Territories like Delhi it is done by the Central government.



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Figure 18.5 *Municipal Corporation*

B. Functions of the Municipal Corporations

The main functions of the Municipal Corporation are as follows:

1. **Health and Sanitation:** Responsible for cleanliness of the city, disposal of garbage; maintenance of hospitals and dispensaries; promoting and conducting vaccination drives; checking of adulteration etc.
2. **Electricity and Water Supply:** Provision and maintenance of street lights, supply of electricity, supply of safe drinking water; construction of infrastructure and providing facilities for water supply, maintenance of water tankers etc.
3. **Educational:** Establishment of primary schools, provision of mid-day meals and other facilities for the children.
4. **Public works:** Construction, maintenance and naming of roads; framing rules for the constructions of houses, markets, restaurants and hotels; removing of encroachments and demolition of dangerous buildings.
5. **Miscellaneous functions:** Maintaining record of Births & Deaths; provision and maintenance of cremation grounds/burial grounds, night shelters; making arrangements of scooter & taxi stands and public facilities.



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6. Discretionary functions:

- (a) *Entertainment*: Provision of parks, auditoriums etc.;
- (b) *Cultural*: Organizing music, dramas, painting and other art shows; and activities like maintenance of libraries and museums;
- (c) *Sports Activities*: Provision of play grounds for various games and also arranging sports competitions & tournaments;
- (d) *Welfare Services*: Setting up and maintaining Community halls; running public distribution system; implementing family welfare schemes and also schemes for the welfare of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes & backward classes.

C. Main Functions of Mayor

Mayor is elected as the head of the Municipal Corporation and performs the following important functions:

- presides over the meetings of the Corporation and maintains decorum and discipline in the meetings;
- acts as a link between Councillors and the State government;
- receives foreign dignitaries visiting the city.

D. Sources of Income of Municipal Corporation

Like Panchayati Raj System, Municipal System also requires funds for the development and welfare activities in its area. Provision is made in the Municipal Act for generating the required funds. Some of the sources of income are as follows:

- *Income from taxes*: Municipal Corporation imposes taxes on various items such as – house tax, entertainment tax, tax on hoardings and advertisements, registration fees, tax on building plans etc.
- *Other fees and charges*: These include water supply charges, electricity charges, sewer charges, license fee from shop keepers, and toll tax and octroi duty.
- *Grants-in-Aid*: State government and Union government provide grants-in-aid for various projects and programmes related to development.
- *Income from Rents*: Corporations rent out the properties and get rent for various shops, kiosks, community centres, Bara Ghats and various sites for fairs, marriages or other exhibitions.

18.3.3 Municipal Councils

A. Composition

Cities which do not have very large population have Municipalities known as Municipal Councils to look after the local cities, their problems and developmental



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work. After the 74th Amendment, the constitution of Municipalities is obligatory for every concerned city. Every Municipal Council has Councillors who are elected by the adult voters of the city for 5 years. Only those persons can be elected as Councillors who fulfill the conditions laid down by the State Election Commission. If in any case, the Municipal Council gets dissolved before completing the full term of 5 years, the elections for a new Municipal Council will have to be held within six months. Chairperson or President of the Municipal Council is elected by the Councillors from among the elected members. Chairperson holds the office till he/she enjoys the confidence of the majority of the elected members. Every Municipal Council has an Executive Officer who is appointed by the State government. He/She looks after the day-to-day work and also the administration. The Health Officer, Tax Superintendent, Civil Engineer are the other important officers.

B. Functions of the Municipal Council

Functions of the Municipal Council are as follows:

1. *Health and Sanitation* - Managing cleanliness of the town, disposal of garbage, prevention of sale of unhygienic and adulterated food items, and maintenance of dispensaries or hospitals;
2. *Electricity and Water Supply* - Ensuring supply of electricity and safe drinking water, maintaining water tanks and also water tankers;
3. *Education* - Maintaining and running of primary schools and literacy centres.
4. *Birth and Death Records* - Keeping the records regarding registration of birth and deaths in the city/town and also issuing the certificates for the same;
5. *Public Works* - Paving of streets, repairing and maintenance of municipal roads, construction and maintenance of Barats Ghars, Community Halls, Markets, Public facilities etc.

C. Sources of Income

No work can be done without money. Municipal Councils have got different sources of income. These sources can be grouped as under:

- *Taxes*: Taxes on properties, vehicles, entertainment and advertisement;
- *Rents and fees/charges*: Charges for water supply, sewer system; Licenses fees, Rents of the community Halls, Barats Ghars and Shops etc.;
- *Grants* from the State government;
- *Fines*: Fines from the tax offenders, law breakers, on encroachments etc.

18.3.4 Nagar Panchayats

An urban centre with more than 30,000 and less than 100,000 inhabitants has a *Nagar Panchayat*. However, there are some exceptions. All the previous Town Area

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Committees (urban centres with a total population of more than 5,000 and less than 20,000) are designated as *Nagar Panchayats*. It is composed of a Chairperson and Ward Members. It may have a minimum of ten elected Ward Members and three nominated Members. Like other municipal bodies, Nagar Panchayat is responsible for (a) Cleanliness and disposal of garbage; (b) Supply of drinking water; (c) Maintenance of public amenities like street lights, parking space and public conveniences; (d) Setting up and maintaining fire services; and (e) Registration of deaths and births. Its sources of income are: Taxes such as house tax, water tax, toll tax; License fees and fee for approving building plans; Rents collected by renting Barats Ghars and other properties; and Grant-in- Aid from the State government.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 18.3**

1. How many types of urban local bodies were functioning before the 74th Constitutional Amendment 1992? What changes did the Amendment make?
2. What are the functions of a Municipal Corporation? Why are these functions important?
3. What are the sources of income of a Municipal Corporation?
4. Urban local bodies take responsibilities for providing services to their respective areas. Do you think the citizens also have certain responsibilities? What are those?

**ACTIVITY 18.3**

Make a list of important Office bearers of a Municipal Corporation, Municipal Council and Nagar Panchayat. If you have ever met any of them, name those Office bearers and also state the purpose of your meeting.

18.4 DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Since Vijay was a student of class IX in a school in the city, the teacher tried to explain him the role of district administration. He did so, because it was important to know that apart from the above stated rural and urban local self governments, there is administrative machinery in every district. This not only contributes to the functioning of the local bodies directly and indirectly, but also performs administrative and development functions. In every district there are Sub-Divisions and Blocks or Talukas and the officials posted there assist the district administration. He asked Vijay, if he was aware of the key Officials of his district. Finding him fumbling, the teacher explained various aspects of the district administration. The key officials at the district level are: District Magistrate, Superintendent of Police, District Education Officer, District Agriculture Officer, District Forest Officer etc. All these officers are the heads of their departments in the district.

**Notes****18.4.1 District Magistrate**

However, it is the District Magistrate who is in-charge of the whole district administration. This post is also named as Deputy Commissioner, District Collector or Upayukta. He/She belongs to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). District administration is responsible to implement the policies and programmes of the State and Central governments. Especially after independence, the district administration is responsible not only for collection of revenue or taxes and maintenance of law and order, but is also for various activities related to welfare and socio-economic development of the district.

District had been an important unit of administration since long. During the British colonial period, it was mainly responsible for maintaining law and order and collection of revenues. But at present, state administration has been decentralized and the district administration is playing multi-faceted role. The District Magistrate, therefore, has been assigned various important powers and functions to perform on behalf of the State government. The main functions of District Magistrate are as follows:

1. maintaining law and order and ensuring peace in the district;
2. implementing various policies and programmes of the State government and the Central government;
3. acting as the main link between State government and district level institutions and offices;
4. co-ordinating the activities of different departments such as education, health, welfare, land management, police, jail and culture;
5. taking adequate and appropriate measures during emergencies and disasters and conducting relief work;
6. ensuring the conduct of free and fair elections for various representative bodies, such as Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha, Block Samities, Zila Parishad, Municipalities, etc.;
7. managing collection of the revenue and other taxes;
8. performing judicial functions and deciding various disputes and even imposing penalties and fines;
9. listening to the grievances of the people and redressing them.

18.4.2 Sub Divisional Officer

For better administration each district is divided into smaller units called Sub Divisions. Although the sub divisions of the district are under the District Magistrate, an officer called the Sub Divisional Officer (SDO) is made in-charge of this unit. The SDO is there to assist the District Magistrate in the field of administration and also



Notes

works as his/her representative. The SDO belongs to the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) or to the cadre of State Civil Service. He/She keeps the land records and collects land revenue. He/She has the power to issue licenses for armed weapons like guns and pistols, and is also authorized for the issuance of Driving License, Certificates regarding the domicile, Schedule Castes/Schedule Tribes and other Backward Classes.

18.4.3 The Block Development Officer

The Block is the unit of administration at the lowest level. The officer in-charge of the Block is called Block Development Officer (BDO). He/She belongs to State Civil Service cadre and looks after various activities of the Block. The BDO is linked with the middle tier of Panchayati Raj as he/she is the ex-officio Secretary of the Panchayat Samiti and keeps the record of the meetings, prepares budget and coordinates various developmental activities.



ACTIVITY 18.4

The District Magistrate of your District is considering to take up the activities stated in the table below. Prioritise these activities based on what you feel is the most important and what you feel is the least important.

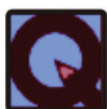
Sl.No.	Activity	Priority 1 to 10
1.	Construction of a new cinema hall in the district	
2.	Improve roads	
3.	Improve Health services	
4.	New schemes for the development of scheduled castes and tribes and other backward castes	
5.	Renovate the municipal office	
6.	Recruit more doctors for the local municipal hospitals	
7.	Revision of electoral roles	
8.	Improvement of the drainage system	
9.	Recruit new teachers to the municipal schools	
10.	Hire experts for developing a contingency plan for disasters like fire, draught etc	

Note: While assigning priority, give justification for the number you are assigning to the activity.

18.5 OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

In view of the above, will you not agree that the rural and urban local bodies have opportunities for every citizen to actively participate in the decision-making process? These are the best institutions to impart political education to citizens and enable them to acquire leadership qualities. When citizens participate, they learn to realize and plead for issues and concerns of self as well as others. Since these local government bodies are nearer to them, the citizens can easily have access and seek solutions through personal initiative and intervention. Women in particular have greatest opportunities. Owing to reservation of seats for them, greater number of women participates in the running of these institutions. This has been one of the best ways to empower women and provide them opportunities to prove their capabilities.

On the other hand the local government bodies have put forth a number of challenges. Being closest to the people, these institutions have raised the aspirations and expectations which they are not able to fulfill because of various constraints. The tasks of these institutions are challenging, but the resources are limited. This situation quite often leads to feuds and dissensions. Promoting and ensuring qualitative participation of citizens in the political process have been constrained by factors like poverty, illiteracy, social inequalities and the trends of criminalization of politics. The elements of casteism and communalism also create problems. The increasing trend of corruption and nepotism has been great challenges to the effective functioning of the local bodies.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 18.4**

1. Examine the significance of District Administration in governance.
2. What are the major functions of a District Magistrate?
3. What opportunities do local bodies provide to citizens? What are the major challenges of local bodies?

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

- Local self government in India is the third tier, the first and second being the Central government and the State governments. There are two sets of Local government bodies, one for rural areas and the other for urban areas. Panchayati raj System is for rural areas and Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils and Nagar Panchayats are in urban areas.

**Notes**

MODULE - 3

Democracy at Work



Notes

Local Governments and Field Administration

- Although setting up of Village Panchayat was mandated by the Directive Principles of State Policy, Local government bodies got constitutional status by the 73rd & 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts passed by the Parliament in 1992.
- These Amendments made it mandatory for all State governments to have Local government bodies and to ensure that they function effectively and continuously. Over and above reserving seats for Scheduled castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections, these Acts promote empowerment of women by reserving seats for them
- Panchayati Raj System is a three tier system, having Gram Panchayats at village level, Panchayat Samities at intermediate or Block level and Zila Parishad at district level. These institutions work for the welfare and socio-economic development of the people of their respective areas. They also provide basic facilities such as safe drinking water, sanitation, dispensaries, paving of lanes & roads, primary schools, old age homes and other local needs of the areas.
- The urban local bodies, Municipal Corporations in big cities, Municipal Councils in smaller cities and Nagar Panchayats in transitional areas have been strengthened by the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act 1992. Like Panchayati Raj Institutions, they have also reserved seat for Scheduled castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections, as well as for women.
- These local bodies provide basic facilities to the people, develop and maintain infrastructure, conduct developmental activities and look after the welfare of the people of their respective areas.
- Both rural and urban local bodies are closest to the people and function as the truly grassroot democratic institutions. They provide opportunities to the people to be a part of the decision-making process, they have challenges like casteism, corruption, shortage of needed financial resources and indifference of the people.
- The District Administration headed by the District Magistrate not only performs traditional functions of maintaining law and order and collection of revenues, but also does significant development work. It is the real implementation tool for the implementation of development and welfare programmes of State and central governments.



TERMINAL EXERCISES

1. Why are Local governments important? Express your own view point.
2. Explain the composition and functions of Panchayati Raj Institutions and examine their roles.



Notes

3. Explain briefly the structure and functioning of urban local bodies.
4. What are the major changes brought about by the 73rd & 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts 1992 in the structure and roles of the Panchayati Raj System and Urban local bodies?
5. Do you think that the 73rd & 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts 1992 empowered women in true sense of the term? Give justifications.
6. A widow with two children works as a domestic help in a village. She wants to educate her children, but is unable to do so. Suggest the ways in which the Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat can ensure that her children and such other children get education.



ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

18.1

1. Local government is a government of the local people, by the local people and for the local people.

The local government institutions provide a platform for the common people to participate and contribute to development and social justice at the local level.

It provides a forum to them to deliberate on the nature of local problems and devise appropriate solutions that are in conformity with local situations. Local government is in fact a government which functions at the grassroot level.

2. Panchayati Raj System was functional in ancient time in our country. They had been variously known as Panchayats, Biradarries or by some other name, generally headed by village elders. By 73rd Constitutional Amendment Panchayati Raj System got constitutional status and consists of elected representatives of the people.
3. Find out the local government institutions in your area and note down their names.
4. Local Government provides for maintenance of water, drainage system, provision of drinking water etc. Thus impacts your quality of life in many ways.
5. (a) Established three tier Panchayati Raj System.
(b) Establishment of District Planning Committees to prepare development plans for the districts;
(b) Establishment of Gram Sabha (village assemblies) and their empowerment as a decision making body at the village level; and

**Notes**

- (d) By ensuring reservation for Scheduled Castes, Schedule Tribes and women, the act has given them the opportunity to participate in the decision making process of local government and hence has empowered them
- (e) Established state finance commission, state election commission.

18.2

1. Village Panchayat or Gram Panchayat is the grassroot institution of Panchayati Raj System. In the Panchayats, one-third of seats are reserved for women. Seats are also reserved for persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Schedule Tribes. The Panchayat has a Sarpanch (Mukhia) who is directly elected by all the voters of the village. The panchayat also has panchs and a Vice Chairperson elected by the members of the Panchayat.
2. Three functions of the Gram Panchayat are :
 - (i) provision of safe drinking water,
 - (ii) paving of streets,
 - (iii) developing and maintaining good drainage system.

Discretionary functions are some of the functions which the Panchayat may not necessarily take up. These functions can be performed only if the Panchayat has the resources and funds. These include plantation of trees, setting up and maintenance of insemination centre for cattle, developing and maintaining playground for sports and setting up and running the library.

3. Some of the sources of funds for a Panchayat are as follows:
 - (i) taxes on property, land, goods and cattle;
 - (ii) rent collected for facilities like Barat Ghar or any other property of panchayat;
 - (iii) various types of fines collected from the offenders;
 - (iv) a part of the land revenue collected by the State Government given to the Panchayats; and
 - (v) donations collected from the villagers for some common cause.
 - (vi) grants-in-aid from State and Union government.
4. Try and collect this information from different sources to write this answer.
5. Collect the information from the the sources mentioned in the question itself.

18.3

1. After independence four types of urban local bodies were functioning:
 - (i) Municipal Corporations, (ii) Municipalities, (iii) Town Area Committees and



Notes

- (iv) Notified Area Committees. But the 74th Constitutional Amendment 1992 brought about major changes in the system of urban local government. Now three types of urban local governments are functioning: (a) Municipal Corporations for the big cities, (b) Municipal Councils for smaller cities and (c) Nagar Panchayats for those areas that are in transition from rural areas to urban areas.
2. These functions are very important as they improve the quality of lives of the citizens. Health, water supply or electricity are all of critical importance in every persons life, by ensuring that the city is clean, or providing for hospital and safe drinking water, the municipal corporation helps in improving the quality of life of citizens.
 3.
 - (i) Income from taxes – Housing tax, entertainment tax, tax on hoardings etc.
 - (ii) Grant-in-Aid from State and Union Government
 - (iii) Income from rents – Municipal corporation rent out properties like shops, kiosks, community halls etc.
 - (iv) other fees and charges like toll tax, sewer charges, water and electricity charges etc.
 4. Write the answer based on your own understanding of the role of the urban local bodies and the responsibilities that the citizens can take up to support the local government.

18.4

1. District administration is headed by District Magistrate other officials of the District Administration are Suprintendent of Police, District Education Officer, District Agriculture Officer, SDOs etc.

Sub Divisional Officer

The SDO assists the District Magistrate in the field of administration and also works as his/her representative.

He/She keeps the land records and collects land revenue and has the power to issue Certificates regarding domicile, Schedule Caste/Schedule Tribes and other Backward Classes.

The Block Development Officer

The BDO is linked with the middle tier of Panchayati Raj as he/she is the ex-officio Secretary of the Panchayat Samiti and keeps the record of the meetings, prepares budget and coordinates various developmental activities.

2. The main functions of District Magistrate are as follows:
 - (i) maintaining law and order and ensuring peace in the district;

MODULE - 3

Democracy at Work



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Local Governments and Field Administration

- (ii) implementing various policies and programmes of the State government and the Central government;
 - (iii) acting as the main link between State government and district level institutions and offices;
 - (iv) co-ordinating the activities of different departments such as education, health, welfare, land management, police, jail and culture;
 - (v) ensuring the conduct of free and fair elections for various representative bodies, such as Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha, Block Samities, Zila Parishad, Municipalities, etc.
3. Local bodies are the best institutions to impart political education to citizens and enable them to acquire leadership qualities. When citizens participate, they learn to analyse and plead for issues and concerns of self as well as others. Since these local government bodies are nearer to them, citizens can have access and seek solutions through personal initiative and intervention. Women also have great opportunities to participate as members of local bodies.

The challenges to the effective functioning of local government bodies are – Being close to the people, these institutions have raised democratic aspirations and expectations which they are not always able to fulfill because of various constraints. These constraints include factors like poverty, illiteracy, social inequalities and the trends of criminalization of politics. The elements of casteism, communalism and the increasing trend of corruption and nepotism have been great challenges to the effective functioning of the local bodies.