

## Local Self-Governance

### Panchayati Raj

- ❖ The Panchayati Raj System is the first tier or level of democratic government.
- ❖ The term Panchayati Raj in India signifies the system of rural local self-government. It was constitutionalized through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992.
- ❖ The development of the village was the immediate problem faced by our country after independence. Hence the Community Development Programme was launched in 1952 with a view to carrying out the integral rural development work.
- ❖ Rajasthan was the first state to set up Panchayati Raj System in 1959 followed by Andhra Pradesh.

### Main Provisions of 73rd Amendment Act

- ❖ This act has added a new Part-IX to the Constitution of India.
- ❖ It is entitled as 'The Panchayats' & consists of provisions from Articles 243(A) to 243 (O). In addition, the act has also added a new Eleventh Schedule to the Constitution. It contains 29 functional items of the Panchayats.
- ❖ Fixing tenure of five years for Panchayats at all levels & holding fresh elections withing six months in the event of super session of any Panchayat.
- ❖ Reservation of 1/3 seats (both members & chairpersons) for women in Panchayats at all the levels.
- ❖ The Act provides for a three-tier system of the Panchayati Raj in the states namely:
  - (i) Gram Panchayat at the Village level.
  - (ii) Panchayat Samiti at the Block level.
  - (iii) Zila Parishad at the District level.

### Compulsory Provisions for Panchayati Raj Institutions

1. Organisation of Gram Sabha in a village or group of villages.
2. Establishment of Panchayats at the village, intermediate & district levels.
3. 21 years to be the minimum age for contesting elections to Panchayats.
4. Reservation of seats (both members & chairpersons) for SCs & STs in Panchayats at all the three levels.
5. Reservation of one-third seats (both members & chairpersons) for women in Panchayats at all the three levels.
6. Fixing tenure of five years for Panchayats at all levels & holding fresh elections within six months in the event of supersession of any Panchayat.
7. Establishment of a State Election Commission for conducting elections to the Panchayats.
8. Constitution of a State Finance Commission after every five years to review the financial position of the panchayats.

## **Organisational Structure**

### **(i) Gram Panchayat at the Village level**

The members of the Gram Panchayat are elected by the Gram Sabha. The Pradhans (Presidents) of the Gram Sabha are the ex-officio members of the Gram Panchayat.

**Note:** Gram Sabha means a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral roles relating to a village comprised within the area of Panchayat at the village level.

### **(ii) Panchayat Samiti at the Block level**

The Panchayat Samiti has many Gram Panchayats under it. All the Presidents of the Panchayats within the Block are the ex officio members of the 'Panchayat Samitis'.

### **(iii) Zila Parishad at the District level**

- ❖ Zila Parishad is an apex body under the Panchayati Raj. It co-ordinates the activities of the various Panchayat Samitis.
- ❖ Zila Parishad actually makes developmental plans at the district level.
- ❖ With the help of Panchayat Samitis, it also regulates the money distribution among all the Gram Panchayats.