

# Grassroots Democracy — Part 2

## Local Government in Rural Areas

Class 6 — Social Science (Exploring Society: India and Beyond) — Chapter 11

NCERT COMPREHENSIVE NOTES 2025-26

### 01 Overview

This chapter, titled "**Grassroots Democracy – Part 2: Local Government in Rural Areas**", focuses on how democratic governance operates at the village level in India. It introduces the **Panchayati Raj System** — a three-tier structure of local self-government that empowers rural citizens to participate directly in decision-making. Through the story of a fictional village called **Lakshmanpur**, the chapter explains the roles of the Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, and Zila Parishad, along with inspiring real-life examples of Sarpanchs who have transformed their villages. The chapter also highlights initiatives like the **Child-Friendly Panchayat** and draws connections to ancient Indian governance described in the **Arthashastra** by Kautilya.

#### ★ USP Key Points

- ★ India has approximately **600,000 villages**, **8,000 towns**, and over **4,000 cities**.
- ★ India's population has crossed **1.4 billion**, with nearly **two-thirds living in rural areas**.
- ★ The Panchayati Raj system operates at **3 tiers**: Village, Block, and District level.
- ★ Lakshmanpur village has **200 houses** and a population of about **700 people**.
- ★ **One-third of seats** at all three Panchayati Raj levels are reserved for women.
- ★ Popatrao Pawar (Sarpanch, Hiware Bazar) was awarded the **Padma Shri in 2020** for village transformation.
- ★ The Children's Parliament initiative received the **World's Children's Honorary Award in 2001**.

### 02 Panchayati Raj System

#### Introduction through Lakshmanpur

The chapter begins by taking us to **Lakshmanpur**, a small village in the foothills of the Himalayas. This village has 200 houses and a population of about 700, most of whom are farmers. People cultivate their lands and rear cows or goats. Some have relatives serving in the armed forces, while a few younger villagers have migrated to the city in search of jobs.

Villages like Lakshmanpur face many everyday needs — water for their fields, repairing roads damaged by heavy rains, maintaining the village's primary school, settling disputes about land, or dealing with crop theft. Since people cannot travel to the State capital or the national capital for every such issue, a system of **local self-government** becomes essential.

**Why Local Government?** India is a vast country with enormous diversity. People in rural areas need a governance system that is close to them, one where they can actively participate in decisions about their daily lives. This is exactly what the Panchayati Raj system provides.

## What is Panchayati Raj?

Like every village in India, the people of Lakshmanpur have a system of local government called '**Panchayat**', which refers to a village council. Panchayats bring governance closer to the people, making it possible for them to actively participate in decision-making processes. The Panchayat system, also known as **Panchayati Raj**, is a form of **self-government**. Panchayats play a vital role in addressing local issues, promoting development, and ensuring that the benefits of government schemes reach the grassroots level.

### Panchayati Raj

A system of local self-government in rural India that operates at three levels — village, block, and district — enabling people to participate directly in governance and decision-making for their community.

## The Three-Tier Structure

The Panchayati Raj system works at three levels — from bottom up — the village, the block, and the district. This is called a '**three-tier system**'. Together, these institutions' responsibilities cover almost all aspects of life in the district.

LEVEL	INSTITUTION NAME	ALTERNATIVE NAMES	SCOPE
<b>Village Level</b> (Bottom)	Gram Panchayat	Village Parishad	One village or group of villages
<b>Block Level</b> (Middle)	Panchayat Samiti	Block Panchayat / Mandal Parishad	Several Gram Panchayats in a block
<b>District Level</b> (Top)	Zila Parishad	District Panchayat	All blocks in the district

**Key Responsibilities:** Agriculture, housing, maintenance of roads, management of water resources, education, health care, social welfare, and cultural activities — these are all areas covered by the three-tier Panchayati Raj institutions.

## 03 Gram Panchayat — The Village Level

### Structure of the Gram Panchayat

The **Gram Panchayat** is the lowest and most important tier of the Panchayati Raj system, as it is closest to the people in rural areas. Its members are elected directly by the **Gram Sabha**, which is a group of adults from a village (or group of neighbouring villages) who are enrolled as voters. In the Gram Sabha, women and men discuss all matters related to their area and take decisions.

Each Gram Panchayat elects a head or president called the '**Sarpanch**' or '**Pradhan**'. In recent years, more and more women have become Sarpanchs, reflecting the growing participation of women in grassroots democracy.

### Gram Sabha

A group of all adults from a village (or group of neighbouring villages) who are enrolled as voters. It is the foundation of the Panchayati Raj system, where people directly discuss matters and take decisions.

## Administrative Support

The Gram Panchayat is assisted by a **Panchayat Secretary** who performs administrative functions such as calling meetings and maintaining records. Most Gram Panchayats are also assisted by an officer called '**Patwari**' in many parts of India, who maintains the villagers' land records. In some cases, the Patwari keeps maps that are generations old!

ROLE	FUNCTION
<b>Sarpanch / Pradhan</b>	Elected head of the Gram Panchayat; leads meetings and decision-making
<b>Gram Panchayat Members</b>	Elected representatives who participate in governance and development
<b>Panchayat Secretary</b>	Administrative officer; calls meetings and maintains records
<b>Patwari</b>	Maintains villagers' land records and maps
<b>Gram Sabha</b>	Assembly of all enrolled adult voters; the foundation of the system

## Exemplary Sarpanchs

The NCERT textbook highlights three inspiring stories of Sarpanchs who have made a real difference in their communities:

**Dnyaneshwar Kamble** — A transgender person who was elected Sarpanch of Tarangfal village in the Solapur district of Maharashtra in 2017. Kamble's motto is *lok seva, gram seva* — "Service to the village is service to the public." Kamble defeated six other candidates to become the Sarpanch.

**Vandana Bahadur Maida** — A member of the Bhil community from the village of Khankhandvi in Madhya Pradesh. She defied patriarchal norms to become the first female Sarpanch of her village. She convinced women in the village to attend the Sabha meetings and addressed critical issues like education and sanitation, earning recognition far and wide.

**Popatrao Baguji Pawar** — Sarpanch of Hiware Bazar in Ahmednagar district, Maharashtra. The village used to be affected by frequent droughts and poor agricultural yield. After becoming Sarpanch, Pawar applied Anna Hazare's model of rainwater harvesting, watershed conservation, and massive tree planting of lakhs of trees. Hiware Bazar became a green and prosperous village. **Shri Popatrao Pawar was awarded the Padma Shri in 2020.**

## 04 Child-Friendly Panchayat Initiative

Panchayats are supposed to listen to everyone's voice — including the voice of children. The **Child-Friendly Panchayat Initiative** creates opportunities for children to express their ideas and opinions on matters that concern their wellbeing. Steps are being taken in several States to encourage the participation of children in **Bal Sabhas** and **Bal Panchayats** on a regular basis, while village elders try to find solutions to their concerns.

### Bal Panchayats in Maharashtra

In Maharashtra, a few Bal Panchayats have worked to eliminate child labour and child marriage. They have brought many children back to school. The Bal Panchayat members get together to convince parents and other adults to send their wards back to school, and not to arrange marriages for girls who should be studying.

**Sangkhu Radhu Khandu Gram Panchayat (West Sikkim):** This Panchayat has given a lot of importance to children's needs and rights. It built compound walls for schools to make them safer for children and constructed kitchens in schools to ensure students get hygienically cooked midday meals. For these efforts, it was declared a **child-friendly Gram Panchayat**.

### Children's Parliament — Rajasthan

The '**Children's Parliament**' was an offshoot of **Bunker Roy's Barefoot College** initiative, a few decades ago. It empowered underprivileged children in Rajasthan's rural areas through education and democratic participation. Children aged 8 to 14 were engaged in governance processes, learning about democracy and social responsibility through night schools and parliament-like elections.

The 'Parliament' followed formal procedures, including voter ID cards and campaigning. Elected representatives formed a 'Cabinet', overseeing school management and advocating for community needs. Children actively addressed issues such as access to education, sanitation, and social equality.

#### ★ Key Facts — Children's Parliament

- ★ Founded as part of **Bunker Roy's Barefoot College** initiative.
- ★ Children aged **8 to 14** participated in governance through night schools.
- ★ Used formal democratic procedures: **voter ID cards, campaigning, and elections**.
- ★ Elected representatives formed a '**Cabinet**' for school management.
- ★ Addressed issues: **education access, sanitation, and social equality**.
- ★ Received the **World's Children's Honorary Award in 2001**.

CHILD-FRIENDLY INITIATIVE	STATE	KEY ACHIEVEMENT
Bal Panchayats	Maharashtra	Eliminated child labour and child marriage; brought children back to school
Sangkhu Radhu Khandu GP	Sikkim	Built school compound walls and kitchens; declared child-friendly GP
Children's Parliament	Rajasthan	Empowered rural children (ages 8–14) through democratic participation

## 05 Panchayat Samiti & Zila Parishad

### Panchayat Samiti (Block Level)

The **Panchayat Samiti** at the block level is the link between the Gram Panchayat and the Zila Parishad at the district level. Its members are elected by the local people, but they may also include other members like Sarpanchs of the villages in the area and local members of the State Legislative Assembly.

The composition of the Panchayat Samitis differs from State to State, but their role in strengthening the participation of local people remains the same. They coordinate matters across Gram Panchayats — for instance, by collecting development plans from all Gram Panchayats and putting them together to present them at the District or State levels. This facilitates the allotment of funds for development projects and government schemes.

#### Panchayat Samiti

The middle tier of the Panchayati Raj system, operating at the block level. It coordinates the work of multiple Gram Panchayats and acts as the link between village-level and district-level governance.

### Zila Parishad (District Level)

The **Zila Parishad** (District Panchayat) operates at the top of the three-tier system. It oversees the functioning of the entire Panchayati Raj structure within the district, coordinates with the State government, and ensures that development plans and government schemes are implemented effectively across all blocks and villages.

#### Zila Parishad

The highest tier of the Panchayati Raj system, operating at the district level. It oversees all Panchayat Samitis in the district and coordinates district-level development.

### Government Schemes and Coordination

One important example is the **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)**, which promotes the construction of all-weather roads in rural areas. Panchayat Samitis collect development plans from Gram Panchayats and present them at higher levels, facilitating the allotment of funds for such schemes.

**Reservation for Disadvantaged Sections:** At all three levels of the Panchayati Raj system, special rules have been made so that disadvantaged sections of the population can make their needs and problems heard. These institutions also have a provision for **reserving one-third of the seats for women**.

FEATURE	GRAM PANCHAYAT	PANCHAYAT SAMITI	ZILA PARISHAD
<b>Level</b>	Village	Block	District
<b>Elected By</b>	Gram Sabha (adult voters)	Local people + Sarpanchs	Local people + MLAs
<b>Head</b>	Sarpanch / Pradhan	Block Pramukh / Chairman	Adhyaksha / Chairperson
<b>Key Role</b>	Local village governance	Coordinates Gram Panchayats	Oversees all blocks in district
<b>Women's Reservation</b>	One-third seats	One-third seats	One-third seats

It is important to remember that the structure and functions of the Panchayati Raj institutions differ a little across States. This is because the States have authority over those institutions. But their objectives are the same — to enable villagers to take an active part in the management and development of their villages and the local area.

## 06 Historical Roots — The Arthashastra Connection

The concept of local governance in India is not new. The **Arthashastra**, an ancient text of governance, was written by **Kautilya** (later also known as **Chanakya**) some **2,300 years ago**. Among other things, it describes how a state should be structured and run, how the economy can be made prosperous, what the duties of the ruler are, and how to conduct war.

Kautilya, an expert in statecraft, explains how a whole administrative structure should be put in place from the village to the regional capital. He envisioned a multi-tier system of governance remarkably similar to the modern Panchayati Raj.

**From the Arthashastra:** *"The king shall establish a sangrahaṇa (sub-district headquarters) for every 10 villages; a kārvaṭika (district headquarters) for every 100 villages; a droṇamukha for every 400 villages; and a sthānīya (provincial headquarters) for every 800 villages."*

ARTHASHASTRA TERM	MEANING	COVERAGE	MODERN EQUIVALENT
<b>Sangrahaṇa</b>	Sub-district headquarters	Every 10 villages	Panchayat/Block office
<b>Kārvaṭika</b>	District headquarters	Every 100 villages	Tehsil/Sub-divisional office
<b>Droṇamukha</b>	Regional headquarters	Every 400 villages	District headquarters
<b>Sthānīya</b>	Provincial headquarters	Every 800 villages	Divisional/State capital

It is truly remarkable that a similar structure of governance — from the grassroots to the regional level — was conceived in India over two millennia ago, long before the modern concept of Panchayati Raj was formally introduced.

**Did You Know?** As M.K. Gandhi famously said, *"The real India lives in its villages."* The Panchayati Raj system is the practical expression of this vision — bringing governance to the doorstep of every Indian villager.

## 07 Key Takeaways & Summary

### ★ Chapter Summary — Key Points to Remember

- ★ The local government in rural areas is organised into a **three-tier system** — Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, and Zila Parishad.
- ★ Democracy in the Panchayati Raj system works both through **direct participation** of people (Gram Sabha) and through their **elected representatives**.
- ★ The Panchayati Raj institutions give people in rural areas a measure of **self-governance**, so they may manage their issues and collaborate in development plans.
- ★ The **Gram Sabha** is the foundation — it consists of all adult voters in the village who discuss and decide on local matters.
- ★ The **Sarpanch/Pradhan** is the elected head of the Gram Panchayat; the system includes Panchayat Secretary and Patwari for administration.
- ★ **One-third of seats are reserved for women** at all three levels to ensure inclusive representation.
- ★ Child-friendly initiatives like **Bal Panchayats** and the **Children's Parliament** ensure children's voices are heard.

## How Panchayati Raj Ensures Democracy at the Grassroots

DEMOCRATIC FEATURE	HOW IT WORKS IN PANCHAYATI RAJ
<b>Direct Participation</b>	Every adult can participate in Gram Sabha meetings and voice their opinions
<b>Elected Representatives</b>	Sarpanchs and members are elected by the people through free and fair elections
<b>Inclusive Representation</b>	One-third seats reserved for women; provisions for disadvantaged sections
<b>Children's Voice</b>	Bal Sabhas, Bal Panchayats, and Children's Parliament give voice to children
<b>Self-Governance</b>	Villages manage their own development plans, fund allocation, and local issues
<b>Multi-level Coordination</b>	Three tiers ensure issues are addressed at the right level — village, block, or district

**Remember:** The Panchayati Raj system is not just an administrative structure — it is the embodiment of grassroots democracy, where governance begins at the village level and empowers every citizen to participate in the decisions that affect their lives.

## 08 Glossary

### Panchayat

A village council that serves as the basic unit of local self-government in rural India; the word literally means an assembly (ayat) of five (panch) wise persons.

### Panchayati Raj

The three-tier system of local self-government in rural areas operating at village, block, and district levels; a form of decentralised democratic governance.

### Gram Sabha

The assembly of all adults enrolled as voters in a village or group of neighbouring villages. It is the foundation of the Panchayati Raj system where people directly discuss matters and take decisions.

### Gram Panchayat

The lowest tier of the Panchayati Raj system at the village level, whose members are elected by the Gram Sabha. It is headed by a Sarpanch or Pradhan.

### Sarpanch / Pradhan

The elected head or president of a Gram Panchayat who leads meetings, oversees village governance, and represents the village at higher levels.

### Panchayat Samiti

The middle tier of the Panchayati Raj at the block level. It coordinates work across multiple Gram Panchayats and links them to the Zila Parishad.

### Zila Parishad

The highest tier of the Panchayati Raj at the district level. Also called District Panchayat, it oversees all Panchayat Samitis and coordinates district-level development.

### Patwari

A village-level official who maintains land records and maps of the villagers. In some areas, the Patwari keeps maps that are generations old.

### Three-Tier System

The three-level structure of Panchayati Raj: Gram Panchayat (village), Panchayat Samiti (block), and Zila Parishad (district), working together from bottom up.

### Self-Government

A system where local people govern themselves by electing their own representatives and making decisions about their community's needs and development.

### Bal Sabha / Bal Panchayat

Platforms for children to express their ideas and participate in local governance. Bal Panchayats work on issues like child labour, child marriage, and education.

### Arthashastra

An ancient Indian text on governance written by Kautilya (Chanakya) about 2,300 years ago, describing state structure, economy, and a multi-level administrative system from village to capital.

### PMGSY

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana — a government scheme that promotes the construction of all-weather roads in rural areas, implemented through the Panchayati Raj system.

### Panchayat Secretary

An administrative officer who assists the Gram Panchayat by calling meetings, keeping records, and managing day-to-day administrative functions.

## 09 Q&A, MCQs & Case Studies

**Q1. 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?**

The three tiers of the Panchayati Raj system are:

**(i) Gram Panchayat (Village Level):** This is the lowest and most basic tier, closest to the people. Its key functions include — managing village-level affairs, maintaining roads, water supply, sanitation, primary education, and implementing government welfare schemes. It is headed by the Sarpanch or Pradhan, elected by the Gram Sabha.

**(ii) Panchayat Samiti (Block Level):** This is the middle tier and serves as the link between the Gram Panchayat and the Zila Parishad. Its key functions include — coordinating the development plans of multiple Gram Panchayats, collecting their proposals and presenting them at the district or state level, and facilitating fund allotment for development projects like the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).

**(iii) Zila Parishad (District Level):** This is the highest tier at the district level. Its key functions include — overseeing all Panchayat Samitis in the district, coordinating with the State government, and ensuring that development plans and government schemes are implemented effectively across the entire district.

**Q2. Write a letter to the Sarpanch regarding the issue of plastic bags lying on the roadside in the village.**

**To,**

The Sarpanch,  
Gram Panchayat,  
[Village Name], [District]

**Subject:** Request to address the problem of plastic bags on the roadside

**Respected Sarpanch Ji,**

I am writing this letter to bring to your kind attention a growing problem in our village. Large quantities of plastic bags are lying on the roadsides, near the pond, and around the village school. This is not only making our village look dirty but also causing harm to animals who eat the plastic, blocking water drains during rains, and creating an unhealthy environment for all of us.

I humbly request you to take the following steps through our Gram Panchayat:

- (a) Organise a village cleanliness drive with the help of villagers.
- (b) Place dustbins at key locations in the village.
- (c) Make an announcement in the Gram Sabha to discourage the use of plastic bags and promote cloth bags instead.
- (d) Impose a small fine for littering plastic in public areas.
- (e) Request the Block Development Officer for support under the Swachh Bharat Mission.

I believe that with your leadership and the cooperation of all villagers, we can make our village clean and plastic-free.

**Thanking you,**

Yours sincerely,  
[Student's Name]  
[Class & School]

### Q3. In your view, what type of person should be a Gram Panchayat member?

In my view, a Gram Panchayat member should have the following qualities:

**(i) Honest and Dedicated:** The person should be honest and truly dedicated to the service of the village. They should not misuse their position for personal gain.

**(ii) Well-Educated and Aware:** They should have a good understanding of government schemes, rules, and the development needs of the village.

**(iii) Impartial and Just:** They should treat all sections of the village equally — regardless of caste, gender, or economic status — and ensure that disadvantaged sections are given proper attention.

**(iv) Good Communicator:** They should be able to listen to the problems of villagers patiently and communicate effectively in Gram Sabha meetings.

**(v) Committed to Development:** They should be committed to improving roads, water supply, sanitation, education, and health facilities in the village.

**(vi) Inclusive:** They should encourage the participation of women, children, elderly people, and marginalised communities in decision-making.

Like the exemplary Sarpanchs mentioned in the chapter — Dnyaneshwar Kamble, Vandana Bahadur Maida, and Popatrao Pawar — a good Gram Panchayat member should have a spirit of service and a vision for the village's development.

**Q4. 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?**

**Options to solve this issue:**

- (a) A **speed breaker** can be built near the school gate to slow down vehicles.
- (b) A **pedestrian crossing (zebra crossing)** can be marked on the road near the school.
- (c) A **school crossing guard or traffic marshal** can be appointed during school timings.
- (d) The school can **change its timings** to avoid peak traffic hours.
- (e) A **foot overbridge or underpass** can be constructed if traffic is very heavy.
- (f) **Warning signboards** saying "School Zone – Slow Down" can be installed.

**Panchayati Raj institutions that can help:**

- (a) **Gram Panchayat:** Students and parents can raise this issue in the Gram Sabha meeting. The Sarpanch can write to higher authorities requesting road safety measures.
- (b) **Panchayat Samiti:** The block-level body can include the road safety request in its development plan and forward it to the district level.
- (c) **Zila Parishad:** The district-level body can coordinate with the PWD (Public Works Department) and traffic police for building speed breakers or a foot overbridge.

**What students can do:**

- (a) Write a petition to the Sarpanch signed by all students and teachers.
- (b) Participate in a **Bal Sabha or Bal Panchayat** meeting to raise the issue formally.
- (c) Create awareness posters and place them near the highway.
- (d) Request the school principal to raise the matter officially with the Gram Panchayat.

## Additional Short Answer Questions

**Q5. What is the Gram Sabha? Why is it considered the foundation of the Panchayati Raj system?**

The **Gram Sabha** is a group of all adults from a village (or a group of neighbouring villages) who are enrolled as voters. It is the general body of the village where every adult citizen has the right to participate, discuss matters related to their area, and take decisions.

It is considered the **foundation of the Panchayati Raj system** because it is through the Gram Sabha that the members and the Sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat are elected. It represents direct democracy at the grassroots level, where people themselves discuss and decide on village issues rather than just electing representatives.

### Q6. How did Popatrao Pawar transform Hiware Bazar village? What lessons can we learn from his work?

Hiware Bazar, a village in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, used to be affected by frequent droughts and poor agricultural yield. After **Popatrao Baguji Pawar** became its Sarpanch, he started applying Anna Hazare's model of **rainwater harvesting, watershed conservation, and massive tree planting** of lakhs of trees, all of which contributed to the recharge of groundwater. With the collaboration of the villagers, Hiware Bazar became a green and prosperous village in a few years. He was awarded the **Padma Shri in 2020**.

**Lessons:** (i) A committed and visionary leader can transform any village. (ii) Community collaboration is essential for development. (iii) Water conservation and environmental protection are key to rural prosperity. (iv) Government recognition (like the Padma Shri) shows that grassroots leaders are valued in our democracy.

### Q7. What role does the Panchayat Samiti play as a link between the Gram Panchayat and the Zila Parishad?

The **Panchayat Samiti** at the block level serves as the vital link between the Gram Panchayat (village level) and the Zila Parishad (district level). It performs the following connecting functions:

(i) It **collects development plans** from all Gram Panchayats in its block and compiles them into a unified proposal. (ii) It **presents these plans** at the District or State level, facilitating the allotment of funds for development projects. (iii) It **coordinates the implementation** of government schemes like the PMGSY across multiple villages. (iv) Its members include both locally elected representatives and Sarpanchs, ensuring that village-level voices reach the district level effectively.

### Q8. Explain how the Children's Parliament initiative empowered rural children in Rajasthan.

The **Children's Parliament**, an offshoot of **Bunker Roy's Barefoot College** initiative, empowered underprivileged children in Rajasthan's rural areas through education and democratic participation. Children aged **8 to 14** were engaged in governance processes, learning about democracy and social responsibility through night schools and parliament-like elections.

The Parliament followed **formal democratic procedures** including voter ID cards and campaigning. Elected representatives formed a **'Cabinet'** that oversaw school management and advocated for community needs. The initiative fostered **leadership skills and social awareness**, enabling children to challenge societal norms and advocate for change. Children actively addressed issues such as access to education, sanitation, and social equality. The initiative received the **World's Children's Honorary Award in 2001**.

### Q9. Why is the reservation of one-third seats for women important in the Panchayati Raj system?

The reservation of one-third seats for women in all three tiers of the Panchayati Raj system is important because:

- (i) It ensures that women have **equal representation** in local governance and their voices are heard in decision-making.
- (ii) It helps **break patriarchal barriers** that have traditionally kept women out of governance.
- (iii) Women leaders like **Vandana Bahadur Maida** from Madhya Pradesh have shown that they can address critical issues like education, sanitation, and women's empowerment effectively.
- (iv) It encourages **more women to participate** in democratic processes and strengthens grassroots democracy.
- (v) It ensures that the specific needs and problems of women and families — health, education, water, safety — receive proper attention in village development plans.

## Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

### 1. The Panchayati Raj system works at how many levels?

- (a) Two levels
- (b) Three levels
- (c) Four levels
- (d) Five levels

**Answer: (b) Three levels**

### 2. The lowest tier of the Panchayati Raj system is:

- (a) Zila Parishad
- (b) Panchayat Samiti
- (c) Gram Panchayat
- (d) State Legislature

**Answer: (c) Gram Panchayat**

### 3. The head of a Gram Panchayat is called:

- (a) Patwari
- (b) Panchayat Secretary
- (c) Block Pramukh
- (d) Sarpanch / Pradhan

**Answer: (d) Sarpanch / Pradhan**

### 4. The Gram Sabha consists of:

- (a) Only the Sarpanch and members
- (b) All adults enrolled as voters in the village
- (c) Only elected representatives

(d) Only male members of the village

**Answer: (b) All adults enrolled as voters in the village**

**5. Which of the following is NOT a tier of the Panchayati Raj system?**

- (a) Gram Panchayat
- (b) Municipal Corporation
- (c) Panchayat Samiti
- (d) Zila Parishad

**Answer: (b) Municipal Corporation (it is an urban local body, not part of Panchayati Raj)**

**6. Popatrao Baguji Pawar, Sarpanch of Hiware Bazar, was awarded the Padma Shri in which year?**

- (a) 2015
- (b) 2018
- (c) 2020
- (d) 2022

**Answer: (c) 2020**

**7. The officer who maintains villagers' land records is called:**

- (a) Sarpanch
- (b) Patwari
- (c) Panchayat Secretary
- (d) Block Development Officer

**Answer: (b) Patwari**

**8. The Arthashastra was written by:**

- (a) Mahatma Gandhi
- (b) Jawaharlal Nehru
- (c) Kautilya (Chanakya)
- (d) Dr. B.R. Ambedkar

**Answer: (c) Kautilya (Chanakya)**

**9. What proportion of seats in Panchayati Raj institutions are reserved for women?**

- (a) One-fourth
- (b) One-third
- (c) One-half
- (d) No reservation

**Answer: (b) One-third**

### 10. The Panchayat Samiti operates at which level?

- (a) Village level
- (b) Block level
- (c) District level
- (d) State level

✔ Answer: (b) Block level

### 11. The Children's Parliament initiative received the World's Children's Honorary Award in:

- (a) 1999
- (b) 2001
- (c) 2005
- (d) 2010

✔ Answer: (b) 2001

### 12. Vandana Bahadur Maida, the first female Sarpanch of her village, belonged to which community?

- (a) Gond
- (b) Bhil
- (c) Munda
- (d) Santhal

✔ Answer: (b) Bhil

## Case Studies

### Case Study 1: The Story of Greenfield Village

Greenfield is a small village with 300 families in a drought-prone area. The village had no proper roads, the school building was in poor condition, and drinking water was scarce. When Meera Devi was elected as the new Sarpanch, she called a Gram Sabha meeting where every adult was invited to share their problems. Based on the discussions, she prepared a list of development priorities — road repair, school renovation, and construction of a rainwater harvesting tank. She submitted the development plan to the Panchayat Samiti, which forwarded it to the Zila Parishad. Within a year, the village got an all-weather road under the PMGSY scheme, the school was renovated, and the rainwater tank helped recharge groundwater.

1. What is the role of Gram Sabha in this passage?
2. How did the three-tier system help Greenfield village get development funds?
3. Name the government scheme that provided the road. What does it promote?
4. What qualities of Meera Devi made her an effective Sarpanch?

**Ans 1:** The Gram Sabha served as the platform where all adult voters discussed their problems and helped identify development priorities for the village. It enabled direct participation of the people.

**Ans 2:** The Sarpanch (Gram Panchayat level) prepared the development plan based on Gram Sabha discussions. The Panchayat Samiti (block level) compiled and forwarded it to the Zila Parishad (district level), which facilitated fund allotment — showing how the three tiers coordinate from bottom up.

**Ans 3:** Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY). It promotes the construction of all-weather roads in rural areas.

**Ans 4:** Meera Devi showed qualities of being inclusive (inviting all adults), a good listener (hearing everyone's problems), organised (preparing a priority list), and proactive (submitting the plan to higher authorities).

### Case Study 2: Bal Panchayat Makes a Difference

In Sundarpur village of Maharashtra, many children aged 10 to 14 were working in brick kilns and farms instead of going to school. Some girls were being married off at young ages. When the State encouraged the formation of Bal Panchayats, a group of school-going children formed one in their village. They met regularly, discussed the problems of out-of-school children, and visited the families of children who had dropped out. They convinced parents that education was more important than short-term earnings. The Bal Panchayat members also presented their concerns in the Gram Sabha. Within six months, 15 children returned to school and two planned child marriages were stopped.

1. What problems did the Bal Panchayat in Sundarpur address?
2. How did the Bal Panchayat members convince families?
3. What was the result of the Bal Panchayat's efforts?
4. Why is the Child-Friendly Panchayat Initiative important for democracy?

**Ans 1:** The Bal Panchayat addressed child labour (children working in brick kilns and farms) and child marriage (girls being married off at young ages).

**Ans 2:** The Bal Panchayat members visited families of out-of-school children, explained the importance of education over short-term earnings, and also raised their concerns formally in the Gram Sabha meeting.

**Ans 3:** Within six months, 15 children returned to school and two planned child marriages were stopped.

**Ans 4:** The Child-Friendly Panchayat Initiative is important because it ensures that even children — the future citizens — have a platform to express their ideas and participate in democratic governance, making the system truly inclusive.

### Case Study 3: Ancient Wisdom, Modern Governance

Ravi was reading about Kautilya's Arthashastra, written about 2,300 years ago. He found a passage that said: "The king shall establish a sangrahaṇa (sub-district headquarters) for every 10 villages; a kārvaṭīka (district headquarters) for every 100 villages; a droṇamukha for every 400 villages; and a sthānīya (provincial headquarters) for every 800 villages." Ravi was amazed to find that this ancient system was very

similar to the modern Panchayati Raj structure. His teacher explained that India's tradition of local governance goes back thousands of years and that the modern system draws inspiration from these ancient ideas.

1. Who wrote the Arthashastra and approximately when?
2. What four levels of administration did Kautilya describe?
3. How is Kautilya's system similar to the modern Panchayati Raj?
4. What does this tell us about India's tradition of governance?










**Ans 1:** The Arthashastra was written by Kautilya (also known as Chanakya), approximately 2,300 years ago.

**Ans 2:** Kautilya described four levels: sangrahaṇa (sub-district HQ for every 10 villages), kārvāṭika (district HQ for every 100 villages), droṇamukha (for every 400 villages), and sthānīya (provincial HQ for every 800 villages).

**Ans 3:** Both systems have a multi-level structure of governance working from the village to the district/provincial level. Kautilya's sangrahaṇa is similar to the Panchayat/Block level, kārvāṭika to the tehsil, droṇamukha to the district, and sthānīya to the state capital.


**Ans 4:** This tells us that India has an ancient and rich tradition of organised local governance. The idea of administering people through a structured, multi-level system existed in India over 2,000 years ago, long before the modern Panchayati Raj was formally established.

## Exam Tips — Chapter 11

-  Memorise the three tiers: Gram Panchayat → Panchayat Samiti → Zila Parishad (Village → Block → District).
-  Know the difference between Gram Sabha (all adult voters) and Gram Panchayat (elected body). This is a frequently confused concept.
-  Remember key data: 600,000 villages, 1.4 billion population, two-thirds in rural areas, one-third seats reserved for women.
-  Learn the names and contributions of all three exemplary Sarpanchs — Dnyaneshwar Kamble (2017, Tarangfal), Vandana Bahadur Maida (Khankhandvi, Bhil community), and Popatrao Pawar (Hiware Bazar, Padma Shri 2020).
-  The Children's Parliament (Barefoot College, Bunker Roy, ages 8–14, World's Children's Honorary Award 2001) is a likely case study question topic.
-  For letter-writing questions (Q2), always include: To, Subject, Salutation, Body with specific suggestions, and Closing.
-  The Arthashastra connection (Kautilya, 2,300 years ago) is ideal for "historical roots" type questions — remember the four terms: sangrahaṇa, kārvāṭika, droṇamukha, sthānīya.
-  For 5-mark questions, always give examples from the chapter — exemplary Sarpanchs, child-friendly initiatives, or specific schemes like PMGSY.
-  Compare the Panchayati Raj with Central government structure (Chapter 10) — the Gram Sabha is like Parliament, the Sarpanch is like the PM, and the three tiers parallel Central/State/Local government.

 Practice writing answers that show how the Panchayati Raj system enables both direct democracy (Gram Sabha) and representative democracy (elected Panchayat members).

## UNIQUE STUDY POINT

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