

# **Concept of panchayati Raj**

- Panchayati Raj is a **system of rural local self-government in India.**
- It has been established in all the states of India by the acts of the state legislature to build democracy at the grass root level. It is entrusted with rural development and was constitutionalized through the **73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992.**

- **Evolution of Panchayati Raj in India**

- Panchayati Raj was not a new concept to India. Indian villages had Panchayats (council of five persons) from very ancient time, which were having both executive and judicial powers and used to handle various issues (land distribution, tax collection etc.) or disputes arising in the village area.
- Gandhi ji also held the opinion of empowerment of Panchayats for the development of rural areas. Thus, recognizing their importance our Constitution makers included a provision for Panchayats in part IV of our constitution (directive principles of state policy).
- **Art. 40** confers the responsibility upon State to take steps to organise Village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government. But it does not give guidelines for organising village panchayats.

- The Committee, in its report in November 1957, recommended the establishment of the scheme of ‘democratic decentralisation’, which ultimately came to be known as Panchayati Raj. It recommended for a three tier system at village, block and district level and it also recommended for direct election of village level panchayat. Rajasthan was the first state to establish Panchayati Raj at it started from Nagaur district on October 2, 1959.
- After this, **Ashok Mehta Committee** on Panchayati Raj was appointed in December 1977 and in August 1978 submitted its report with various recommendations to revive and strengthen the declining Panchayati Raj system in the country.

- Its major recommendations were two tier system of panchayat, regular social audit, representation of political parties at all level of panchayat elections, provisions for regular election, reservation to SCs/STs in panchayats and a minister for panchayati raj in state council of ministers.
- Further, **G V K Rao Committee** appointed in 1985 again recommended some measures to strengthen Panchayati Raj institutions.
- **LM Singhvi Committee** appointed in 1986 first time recommended for the constitutional status of Panchayati Raj institutions and it also suggested for constitutional provisions to ensure regular, free and fair elections to the Panchayati Raj Bodies.

# Evolution of the Panchayati Raj System in India

- The Panchayati Raj System in India was introduced right after India gained her independence. This system of transfer of power to the lowest strata of the political ladder is called Local self-government.
- In this democratic decentralization of power, the participation of people from the grassroots levels was encouraged in the process of administration. In India, this form of democratic decentralization was introduced with the formation of the Constitution. Article 40 states that:
- **The state shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.”**

# 73rd Amendment of Panchayati Raj in India

## **Gram Sabha**

Gram Sabha is a body consisting of all the persons registered in the electoral rolls relating to a village comprised within the area of Panchayat at the village level. Since all the persons registered in electoral rolls are members of Gram Sabha, there are no elected representatives. Further, Gram Sabha is the only permanent unit in Panchayati Raj system and not constituted for a particular period. Although it serves as foundation of the Panchayati Raj, yet it is not among the three tiers of the same. The powers and functions of Gram Sabha are fixed by state legislature by law.

## **Three Tiers of Panchayati Raj**

Part IX provides for a 3 tier Panchayat system, which would be constituted in every state at the village level, intermediate level and district level. This provision brought the uniformity in the Panchayati Raj structure in India.

However, the states which were having population below 20 Lakh were given an option to not to have the intermediate level.

All the members of these three level are elected. Further, the chairperson of panchayats at the intermediate and district levels are indirectly elected from amongst the elected members. But at the village level, the election of chairperson of Panchayat (Sarpanch) may be direct or indirect as provided by the state in its own Panchayati Raj Act

THANK YOU