

UNIT

5

Local Self Government



Learning Objectives

- To study and understand the development of local self government before and after Indian independence
- To learn about the rural and urban local governments
- To learn about the nature and working of Panchayat Raj system in India
- To understand the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, 1992
- To know about the historical origin and development in local self governments in Tamil Nadu



5.1 Meaning of Local Self Government

Local Self-Governments are institutions that look after the administration of an area or a small community such as a village, a town or a city. Local Self-Government operates at the lowest level of society. It works at the grassroot level, close to the people, touching their everyday life. Local Self-Government is the management

of local affairs by such local bodies which have been elected by the local people. These local bodies provide services to the local community as well as act as an instrument of democratic self-government.

5.2 Historical Background

The idea of local self government is a very old concept in India. It was at its peak under the later Cholas or the Imperial Cholas of Tanjore.

There are historical records of references to local self government under Mauryan administration. Local self government existed throughout the country with its own diverse characteristics of ancient India. During the medieval period, local self governments had somewhat declined due to the onslaught of feudalism. It was revived during the British period in the last quarter of the 19th century, with Western orientation of training in democracy with Lord Ripon's Resolution in 1882. Lord Ripon was known as the 'Father of Local Government' for laying the foundations of local self governments in modern times.

Under the Government of India Act, 1935 provincial autonomy was introduced. This Act came into force in 1937. In the provinces where the Congress formed its Government, rural development received special attention. It was an essential part of Gandhi's programme that Panchayat Raj institutions would be built from villages to the highest level.

After Independence, the Gandhian ideal of Grama Swaraj (Village Republic) greatly influenced the constitution makers. India being the land of villages, the creation of village panchayats became a social movement. Restoration of panchayats has become an article of faith during our freedom struggle.

Lord Ripon

Lord Ripon was the one who gave Indians the first taste of freedom by introducing the Local Self Government in 1882.

Ripon took some steps towards liberalizing the administration in India. He formulated the local self government and made it clear that he was advocating for the decentralization of administration.

He tried to remove obstacles in the sphere of Local Self government by his resolution of 1882. He led a series of enactments



Lord Ripon

in which larger powers of the local self-government were given to the rural and urban bodies and the elected people received wider rights.

5.3 Local Self Governments since Independence

The conceptualisation of the system of local self-government in India took place through the formation and effort of four important committees from the year 1957 to 1986. The Community Development Programme (1952) and National Extension Service (1953) became a basis for 'The Great Charter on Panchayat Raj' in 1957. The panchayatraj system was inaugurated on October 2, in Nagaur district of Rajasthan by the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Salient Features of the 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts (1992)

- Panchayats and Municipalities will be 'institutions of self-government'.
- Grama Sabhas (Villages) and Ward Committees (Municipalities) comprising .
- Three-tier system of panchayats at village, taluk and district levels.
- Seats at all levels filled by direct elections.
- Seats reserved for chairpersons of the Panchayats at all levels also shall

be reserved in proportion to their population.

- One-third of the total number of seats reserved for women.
- Uniform five year term.

Committees and Recommendations



Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957)

Three-tier Panchayati Raj system – gram panchayat at village level (direct election), panchayat Samiti at the block level and Zila Parishad at the district level (indirect election).

Ashok Mehta Committee (1977-1978)

Two-tier system and political parties should participate at all levels in the elections.



G V K Rao Committee (1985)

Appointed by the Planning Commission, the committee concluded that the developmental procedures were gradually being taken away from the local self-government institutions, resulting in a system comparable to 'grass without roots'.

L M Singhvi Committee (1986)

73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, 1992.



Salient Features of the Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Act, 1994

The New Panchayati Raj System came into being in Tamil Nadu after the enactment of a new law for local body institutions in the year 1994. The salient features of the new Act are as follows: (a) A three-tier system (b) Gram Sabha (c) Establishment of Election Commission (d) Constitution of Finance Commission (e) Reservation of seats for SC/ST's proportionate to their population. (f) One third reservation of seats for women and (g) Constitution of District Planning Committees.

5.4 Village Panchayat

Local governments which are function in villages are called Village Panchayats. The President and ward members are

directly elected by the people. (Those who have attained the age above 18 to contest in the election one must have attained the age of 21 years) and their term of office is five years. District Collector act as the Inspector of Village Panchayat. Village Panchayats are constituted in each and every village wherever the population is above 500.

Functions of the Village Panchayat

- Supply of drinking water
- Maintenance of street lights
- Maintenance of roads
- Maintenance of village libraries
- Maintenance of small bridges
- Granting permission to the housing plots
- Maintenance of drainage
- Construction of group houses
- Cleaning of streets
- Maintenance of burial grounds
- Maintenance of common lavatory facilities

Voluntary Functions.

According to the Tamil Nadu Local Government Act passed in 1994, the following functions to be performed as voluntary functions by the local governments.

- Maintenance of street lights in the villages
- Maintenance of markets and fairs
- Implantation of trees
- Maintenance of play grounds
- Maintenance of parking vehicles, slaughter houses and cattle sheds
- Control over places of exhibition

Revenue

Village Panchayat was the only local government which was empowered to levy taxes in the three-tier system of Village Panchayat.



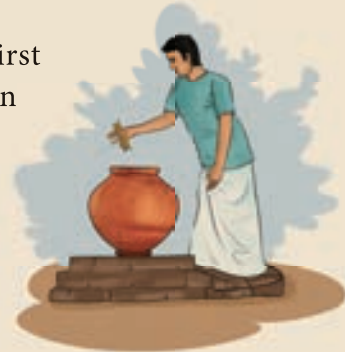
Historical Origin and Development of Local Self Government in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu has a long history of local self-governance as is evident from the Uthiramerur stone inscriptions of Paranthaka Chola I, in Kanchipuram District. Village republics, reached its peak during the reign of Cholas. These Village Councils had effective links with the Chola rulers. “Kuda Olai Murai” was the name of the secret ballot method exercised to elect members to the Village Councils. With the downfall of Cholas, the state experienced a decline of the village autonomy and rise of the centralized feudal administrative system. This continued till



British rules introduced local self-governance primarily as an administrative convenience for the colonial British Government.

In the post independence era, the first enactment in democratic decentralization in the state was the Madras Village Panchayats Act, 1950. Pursuant to the White Paper on the 'Reform of Local Administration' in 1957, the Madras Panchayats Act, 1958 and Madras District Development Council Act were enacted with the following salient features.



Taxes

- Property Tax
- Professional Tax
- House Tax
- Taxes for connection of drinking water
- Land Tax
- Taxes levied on shops

Go to the local government office in your village and know about the levying of taxes.

meeting of the Grama Sabha, the income and expenditure and the beneficiary of the schemes in the village are discussed.



Grama Sabha

Meeting of Gram Sabha

In each and every village, the people living within its jurisdiction will be the members of Panchayat. The President of the Panchayat will preside over its meetings. In the

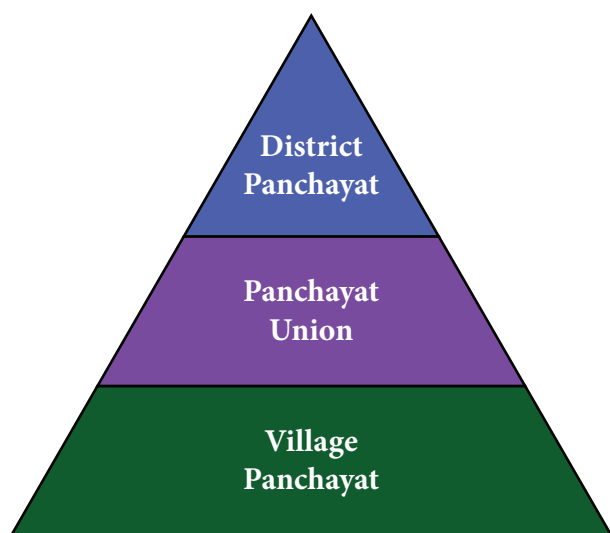
Meetings of the Grama Sabha are conducted four times a year

1. January 26 - Republic Day
2. May 1 - Labourer Day

3. August 15 - Independent Day
4. October 2 - Gandhi Jayanthi

Panchayat Union

Panchayat Union is formed by grouping of villages. Members of the Panchayat Union are directly elected by the people. The Chairman of the Panchayat Union is chosen from among the members.



Functions of the Panchayat Union

- Supply of drinking water
- Maintenance of Village Health Centres
- Maintenance of roads
- Establishment of Maternity Homes
- Establishment of Public fairs
- Establishment of Veterinary hospitals
- Maintenance of Social forests
- Repairing of Primary School buildings

Where will you report if street lights are not functioning and drinking water is not available in the tap in your village?

The district collector, Planning officer, concerned Block Development Officer are empowered to supervise the developmental functions of the Panchayat Union.

District Panchayat

A District Panchayat is constituted in each district. One district Panchayat is constituted for every 50,000 people and the ward members are directly elected by the people. The Chairman is elected from one among its members and their term is 5 years.

Functions of District Panchayat

- Advising the government about the developmental schemes of the Village Panchayat and Panchayat Union.
- Supervising the functions of District Planning Commission.

Urban Local Government

- Town Panchayat
- Municipality
- Corporation

Gandhi's Concept of Gram Swaraj

Gandhi really wanted 'Swaraj', the self rule by the people of India who represent the rural mass. He observed 'India's soul lives in the village'. He dreamt of village republics in terms of Panchayat in free India.



Mahatma Gandhi advocated Panchayat Raj, a decentralized form of government, where each village is responsible for its own affairs, as the foundation of India's political system.

In simpler words, Gandhi's ideal village should be basically self-reliant, making provision for all necessities of life—food, clothing, clean water, sanitation, housing, education, and other requirements, including government and self-defense.

Town Panchayat

The area where more than 10,000 people live is called a Town Panchayat. Members and President of the town Panchayat are directly elected by the people. There is an Executive Officer to look after the administration of the Town Panchayat and their term of office is 5 years and he is appointed by the government.

Municipality

The area where more than 1,00,000 people live is called a Municipality. The Members and the Chairman of the Municipalities are directly elected by the people and their term of office is five years. A Municipal Commissioner is appointed by the government to administer the Municipality.

Corporation

Municipal corporations are established in big cities where the city has many lakhs of population. The Municipal Commissioner is the Administrative Officer. The Mayor is the Chairman of the corporation. The term of office of the Mayor and other members is five years.

In Tamil Nadu, there are 21 Corporations. They are in Chennai, Kovai, Madurai, Trichy, Tirunelveli, Salem, Erode, Vellore, Tuticorin, Tirupur, Tanjore, Dindigul, Nagarkoil, Hosur, Avadi, Tambaram, Kanchipuram, Karur, Kumbakonam, Cuddalore and Sivakasi.

The Municipal Commissioner will be a person from the Indian Administrative Service (IAS). All the decisions of the Corporation Council will be implemented by him. He will be assisted by the office of the corporation.

Name the British Viceroy after whom the building of Chennai Corporation is name.



Corporation of Chennai

Important functions of the Mayor

- He acts as a bridge between the members of the corporation and the government
- He presides over the meetings of the Corporation Council
- He receives the dignitaries from foreign countries

Types of other Urban Panchayats

- Notified Area Committee
- Town Area Committee
- Cantonment Board
- Township
- Port Trust
- Special Purpose Agency

Elections to the local government in Tamil Nadu

The State Election Commission conducts the elections to the local government like general elections. The electoral roll is prepared ward wise. Seats are reserved for the SC & ST and also for the women in proportion to the population by rotation basis.

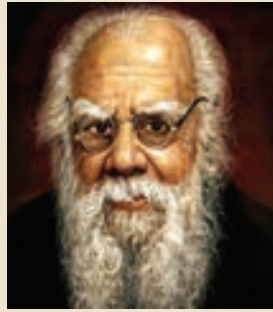
Problems and Challenges facing the Local Self Governments

Local self governments are the crucial basis for our democracy. The Constitutional status of local self governments adds more significance to their functioning. There are, however, a few critical concerns in the working of local self governments in India. Major problems and challenges may be mentioned as below:

- Lack of clear demarcation of powers and functions of local bodies
- Allocation of funds and needs assessment are not matched
- Role of caste, class and religion in decision-making at the local self governments
- Poor accountability of elected members and officials at the grassroots levels of democracy

Periyar as chairman of Municipality:-

Periyar E. V. Ramasamy became the Chairman of Erode Municipality in 1917. During his tenure in Erode Municipality, Periyar worked effectively for Providing piped drinking water supply and health facilities to the people. Piped water supply scheme was implemented in 1919 by Periyar. This scheme was said to be first of kind in the history of Indian Municipal administration.



Recap

- Local Self Government operates at the lowest level of society.
- Lord Ripon is known as the 'Father of Local Self Government'.
- 'Kuda Olai Murai' during the Chola rule was a ballot method to elect members to the village councils.
- The New Panchayat Raj system came into being in Tamil Nadu in the year 1994.
- Village Panchayats are local governments of villages.
- Meetings of the Grama Sabha are conducted four times a year.
- Panchayat Union is formed by grouping of villages.
- District Panchayat is constituted in each district.
- Corporations, Municipalities and Town Panchayats are urban local bodies.
- Mayor is the Chairman of the corporation.
- The state Election Commission conducts the elections to the local government.



Exercise



I Choose the correct answer

1. Which committee was appointed by the planning commission in 1985.
a) Balwant Rai Mehta b) Ashok Mehta
c) G V K Rao d) L M Singhvi
2. The Uthiramerur stone inscription show evidences of prevelant local self government during the _____ period in Tamil Nadu.
a) Chola b) Chera
c) Pandiya d) Pallava
3. The 73rd and 74th constitutional Amendment Acts, was enacted during the year in _____.
a) 1992 b) 1995
c) 1997 d) 1990
4. _____ act as the inspector of Village Panchayat.
a) Commissioner b) District Collector
c) Councillors d) Mayor

II Fill in the blanks

1. _____ is known as the 'Father of Local Governments'.
2. Restoration of _____ has become an article of faith during our freedom struggle.
3. _____ was the name of the secret ballot method exercised to elect members to the village councils during the Chola period
4. Local Government which function in villages are called _____.
5. _____ will look after the administration of the Town Panchayat.

III. Match the following

1. Zilla Parishad - Villages
2. Gram Sabhas - Mayor
3. Ward Committees - Chairman
4. Panchayat Union - District Collector
5. Corporation - Municipalities

IV. Correct the statement

- (i) Panchayat Union is formed by grouping of Districts.
- (ii) District Panchayat is constituted in each village.
- (iii) The Municipal Commissioner will be a person from the Indian Administration Service (IAS).
- (iv) In Village Panchayat, the President and ward members are elected by the people.

V. Give short note

1. Name the taxes levied by the Village Panchayat.

2. List out the salient features of Tamil Nadu Panchayat Raj Act 1994.
3. Mention the important functions of the Village Panchayat.
4. Which are the voluntary functions of the local governments?
5. Name the Urban local governments.

VI. Answer in detail

1. Write in details about the salient features of the 73rd & 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (1992).
2. Describe the major problems & challenges faced by the local self governments.

VII. Activity

1. Meet your Panchayat President / Municipal Chairman and discuss with him how the local self government is being administered.



ICT CORNER

LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

Official Website of the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department of Tamil Nadu help to learn about Government Act, Schemes, Database Map and Administration.



Procedure

- Step – 1 Open the Browser and type the URL given below (or) Scan the QR Code.
- Step – 2 Click on Map and Select "Blocks" in Dropdown menu
- Step – 3 Click your district name to know about the number of blocks in the database map (ex. Tiruchirappalli)

URL:

<https://www.tnrd.gov.in/index.html> (or) scan the QR Code

*Pictures are indicatives only.

