

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1. MEANING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government is a system of government that operates at the village, town and city levels. It looks after the local needs and problems of the people.

Examples: water supply, maintenance of roads, street lighting, sanitation, public health and local development.

Definition: Local government manages local affairs and provides basic services to people in a particular area.

2. NEED FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1. **Solves local problems:** It deals with roads, water, sanitation and drainage.
2. **People's participation:** It allows people to take part in decision-making.
3. **Democratic decentralisation:** It transfers power from higher levels to local bodies.
4. **Better administration:** Local problems can often be addressed more quickly by local representatives.
5. **Accountability:** Local representatives are directly answerable to the people.
6. **Development:** It promotes the development of villages, towns and cities.

3. EVOLUTION OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN INDIA

Important developments

- **Lord Ripon (1882):** Known as the father of local self-government in India. His resolution promoted local self-government.
- **Community Development Programme (1952):** Launched to promote rural development and improve rural living conditions.
- **Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957):** Recommended a three-tier Panchayati Raj system at village, block and district levels.
- **Ashok Mehta Committee (1977-78):** Recommended a two-tier Panchayati Raj system and stressed strengthening local institutions.
- **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992):** Gave constitutional status to rural and urban local bodies respectively. They came into effect in 1993.

4. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS OF 1992

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments were major steps towards strengthening local government in India.

73rd Constitutional Amendment — Rural Local Government

1. Gave constitutional status to Panchayati Raj institutions.
2. Provided for a three-tier system in states with populations above the constitutional threshold.
3. Provided for regular elections every five years.
4. Reserved seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in proportion to their population.
5. Provided for at least one-third reservation for women in seats and chairperson positions covered by the constitutional provisions.
6. Provided for a State Election Commission.
7. Provided for a State Finance Commission every five years.

74th Constitutional Amendment — Urban Local Government

1. Gave constitutional status to urban local bodies.
2. Provided for regular elections every five years.
3. Provided for reservation for SCs and STs.
4. Provided for at least one-third reservation for women in seats and chairperson positions covered by the constitutional provisions.
5. Provided for a State Election Commission and State Finance Commission arrangements for local bodies.

Remember: 73rd Amendment = rural local government, 74th Amendment = urban local government.

5. RURAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT: PANCHAYATI RAJ

Panchayati Raj is a system of local self-government in rural areas. It generally has three levels.

A. Gram Panchayat: Functions at the village level. Its members are elected by the people. Looks after village development, local roads, sanitation and water facilities. Head: Sarpanch or Pradhan, depending on the state.

B. Panchayat Samiti: Functions at the block or intermediate level. Coordinates the work of Gram Panchayats. Implements development programmes at the block level.

C. Zila Parishad: Functions at the district level. Coordinates the work of Panchayat Samitis. Supports district-level rural development programmes.

Level	Institution
Village level	Gram Panchayat
Block/intermediate level	Panchayat Samiti
District level	Zila Parishad

Note: States with a population not exceeding 20 lakh are not constitutionally required to have the intermediate tier.

6. GRAM SABHA

The Gram Sabha consists of all persons registered as voters in the electoral rolls of a village or group of villages within the area of a Gram Panchayat.

Functions of Gram Sabha:

1. Discusses village problems.
2. Reviews the work of the Gram Panchayat.
3. Helps identify local development needs.
4. Discusses development plans and expenditure.
5. Promotes people's participation in village administration.

Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat: Difference

Gram Sabha	Gram Panchayat
Includes all registered voters in its area.	Consists of elected representatives.
A general body of voters.	An elected local government institution.
Discusses village issues and helps hold the Panchayat accountable.	Carries out local development and administrative work.

7. URBAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Urban local government operates in towns and cities. The three main types of urban local bodies are:

A. Municipal Corporation: Generally established in large cities. Looks after essential civic services and urban development. Examples include Delhi, Mumbai and Jaipur.

B. Municipality: Generally established in smaller cities and towns. Provides civic amenities and maintains roads, sanitation and public facilities.

C. Nagar Panchayat: Established for an area transitioning from rural to urban. Manages basic civic services during urban development.

Institution	Area
Municipal Corporation	Large urban areas
Municipality	Smaller urban areas and towns
Nagar Panchayat	Transitional areas

8. FUNCTIONS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

1. Construction and maintenance of local roads.
2. Supply of drinking water.
3. Sanitation and waste management.
4. Maintenance of streetlights.
5. Public health and sanitation.
6. Maintenance of parks and public spaces.
7. Implementation of local development schemes.
8. Registration of births and deaths, as assigned by law.
9. Development of rural and urban infrastructure.

The exact responsibilities depend on state laws and the powers assigned to local bodies.

9. RESERVATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Reservation aims to ensure representation of disadvantaged sections of society.

- Seats are reserved for SCs and STs according to their population.
- At least one-third of the seats filled by direct election are reserved for women under the Constitution.
- At least one-third of chairperson positions are reserved for women, as provided by the Constitution.
- States may provide additional reservation, including for backward classes, subject to applicable constitutional and legal provisions.

Importance: Reservation promotes political equality, women's participation, representation of disadvantaged communities and grassroots democracy.

10. STATE ELECTION COMMISSION

The State Election Commission conducts elections to Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local bodies.

- Conducts local body elections.
- Supervises and controls the electoral process.
- Helps ensure free and fair elections to local institutions.

The State Election Commissioner is appointed by the Governor.

11. STATE FINANCE COMMISSION

The State Finance Commission reviews the financial position of Panchayats and Municipalities.

1. Recommends how state tax revenues may be shared with local bodies.
2. Recommends grants-in-aid to local bodies.
3. Suggests measures to improve their financial resources.
4. Reviews their financial position.

It is constituted by the Governor every five years.

12. IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN DEMOCRACY

1. **Decentralisation of power:** Power is shared with local institutions.
2. **Direct participation:** People can take part in local decision-making.
3. **Political awareness:** People learn about democratic processes.
4. **Leadership development:** It provides opportunities for new leaders.
5. **Social justice:** Reservation helps ensure representation of disadvantaged groups.
6. **Local development:** It focuses on the specific needs of local communities.

13. PROBLEMS FACED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

1. **Lack of funds:** Local bodies may not have sufficient financial resources.
2. **Lack of adequate powers:** State governments may retain control over important functions.
3. **Shortage of staff:** Many local bodies lack trained personnel.
4. **Political interference:** Decisions may be influenced by higher authorities.
5. **Lack of awareness:** People may not participate actively in local affairs.
6. **Irregular functioning:** Some institutions may not function effectively.

14. DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CENTRAL, STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Basis	Central Government	State Government	Local Government
Area	Entire country	A state	Village, town or city
Main work	National affairs	State affairs	Local affairs
Examples	Parliament and Union Government	State Legislature and State Government	Gram Panchayat and Municipal Corporation

15. WOMEN'S RESERVATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Introduction: Women's reservation in local government has helped promote women's political empowerment, social equality and participation in democracy. It provides women with opportunities to become leaders and participate in decision-making.

Heading	Explanation
1. Political Representation	Reservation ensures greater representation of women in Panchayats and Municipalities. It gives women an opportunity to participate in politics.
2. Leadership Opportunities	Women can become Sarpanches, Mayors and Chairpersons of local bodies. This helps them gain leadership and administrative experience.
3. Political Empowerment	Women gain experience in decision-making and learn how local government institutions function.
4. Social Equality	Reservation provides women with opportunities to participate in politics alongside men and helps challenge traditional gender inequalities.
5. Confidence and Awareness	Women develop confidence, leadership skills and awareness of their rights through participation in public life.
6. Local Development	Women representatives can raise issues related to drinking water, education, health, sanitation and other local needs.
7. Representation of Disadvantaged Women	Women belonging to Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) also benefit from reservation in the seats reserved for these categories.
8. Strengthening Democracy	Women's participation makes local government more inclusive and representative of society.
9. Constitutional Provision	The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, relates to Panchayats, while the 74th Amendment Act, 1992, relates to Municipalities.
10. Reservation Percentage	At least one-third (33⅓%) of directly elected seats in Panchayats and Municipalities are reserved for women. At least one-third of the offices of Chairpersons are also reserved for women, as provided by the Constitution.
11. Limitation	In some cases, male family members interfere in the work of elected women representatives. This highlights the need to strengthen women's independent decision-making.

Conclusion

Women's reservation has increased their political representation, leadership opportunities and participation in decision-making. It has helped promote women's empowerment and strengthen grassroots democracy in India.

Important facts to remember: 73rd Amendment — Panchayats; 74th Amendment — Municipalities; at least one-third reservation for women.

16. QUICK REVISION: IMPORTANT FACTS

Topic	Important Fact
Father of local self-government in India	Lord Ripon
Lord Ripon's Resolution	1882
Balwant Rai Mehta Committee	1957
73rd Constitutional Amendment	Rural local government
74th Constitutional Amendment	Urban local government
Amendment year	1992; came into effect in 1993
Panchayati Raj institutions	Rural areas
Municipal Corporation	Large urban areas
Gram Sabha	All registered voters in its area
State Election Commission	Conducts local body elections
State Finance Commission	Reviews local body finances