

**Short-Answer Questions****1. What do you mean by the term Local Self-Government?**

**Ans.** Local Self Government is an institution which is constituted to look into local problems and to provide basic amenities to the citizens of a village or town or city. It serves as a training centre for the leadership of a country.

**2. Explain briefly the importance of Local Self-Government in a democratic country.**

**Ans.** The Local Self-Government plays a very important role in a democratic country. Its need is greatly felt because of the following reasons.

Firstly, it serves as a training centre for the leadership of the country. Most of the legislators begin their career as members of the local bodies and gain the required experience to rise to the national status.

**3. Mention two advantages of the Local Self-Government.**

- Ans.** (i) It relieves the State and the central Governments of the responsibility to look into petty local problems.  
(ii) It brings the people and the administration close to each other.

**4. Name the three-tier institutions of the Panchayati Raj.**

**Ans.** There tier institutions of the Panchayati Raj are:

- (i) Gram Panchayat - First Tier at Village Level
- (ii) Gram Panchayat Samiti—Second Tier at Block Level
- (iii) Zila Parishad—Third Tier at District Level.

**5. Name the local bodies in the rural areas which manage the affairs at (i) the village level and (ii) the district level.**

- Ans.** (a) Gram Sabha at the Village Level and  
(b) Zila Prishad at the District Level.

**6. What is a Gram Sabha?**

**Ans. The Gram Sabha:** A Gram Sabha is constituted in every village with a population of not less than 1500. It consists of all the adult citizens of the village. They choose a headman from among themselves called the Gram Pradhan. Whenever there is a need or a problem to be discussed, the entire adult population of the village is called at a convenient place. The decisions are taken by a majority vote and are binding on the entire population of the village. As a matter of fact, our Gram Panchayat is a beautiful example of direct democracy practised in our village life. Every Gram Panchayat has a whole-time Secretary who is paid from the funds of the Sabha.

**7. Mention three main functions of a Gram Sabha.**

**Ans.** The Gram Sabha has to perform the following functions :

- (i) Its main function is to keep a watch on the working of the Gram Panchayat which is the executive body of the Gram Sabha.
- (ii) It approves and passes the budget for the year, after scrutinising the new taxes.
- (iii) It elects the Gram Pradhan (Sarpanch) and other members of the Gram Panchayat.

**8. Mention two sources of income of the Gram Sabha.**

**Ans. Sources of Income:** The Gram Sabhas have very few sources of income. They get very little by way of taxes and most of the expenses incurred by the Gram Sabhas for the welfare of the village community are met by the State Government through the district authorities. The Gram Sabhas get their meagre income from : (1) house tax, (2) nominal tax on hawkers.

**9. Mention two qualifications for a candidate to be elected in the Gram Panchayat.**

**Ans. Qualifications needed to be elected in the Gram Panchayat:**

In order to be elected to a Village Panchayat, a candidate should possess the following qualifications :

- (i) He should be a resident of the village concerned and his name should be in the voters' list of the village.
- (ii) He should be not less than twenty-five years old.

**10. Mention the main judicial function of the Panchayats.**

**Ans.** In some states, the Gram Panchayat enjoys also certain judicial powers. It decides petty civil and criminal cases and imposes fines upto ₹ 100.

**11. What is a Nyaya Panchayat? Mention its functions.**

**Ans. The Nyaya Panchayats:** In certain states, Nyaya Panchayats have been specially established in rural areas to avoid litigation over minor disputes. The lawyers are not allowed to appear before the Nyaya Panchayats. Generally, there is one Nyaya Panchayat for three or four villages. Each Village Panchayat elects some members to the Nyaya Panchayat. No person can be a member of both the Gram Panchayat and the Nyaya Panchayat at the same time. The Nyaya Panchayats can hear only such petty cases as trespass, minor thefts and other cases of simple nature. These Panchayats can hear simple cases of both civil and criminal nature for which they can impose fines up to one hundred rupees. If a party is not satisfied with its judgement, it can go in appeal to the High Court. The Nyaya Panchayat cannot send a person to prison.

The establishment of the Nyaya Panchayats has a great significance for the poor people because they save them from undue expenditure and litigation on minor disputes. The cases tried by these Panchayats are decided quickly and there is little chance of misleading the Panchayat by telling lies.

**12. How is the Panchayat Samiti constituted?**

**Ans.** The Panchayat Samiti at the block level is in fact a Panchayat of the Panchayats. It covers fifty to one hundred Panchayats within a particular area, that is why it is sometimes termed as an Area Panchayat. In some states it is called Prakhanda Panchayat or Circle Panchayat or Taluka Panchayat.



**Composition:** A Panchayat Samiti or the Community Block has the following persons as its members :

- (i) Sarpanchas of all the Panchayats within the area.
- (ii) Elected members of the State Legislature, if any, belonging to that area.
- (iii) Members of the Union Parliament, if any, belonging to the area.
- (iv) The Block Development Officer of that Circle.

**Office Bearers:** A Panchayat Samiti or the Community Block elects its own Chairman and Deputy Chairman from amongst its own members. The Secretary of the Panchayat Samiti is a whole-time paid person.

**13. Mention any two functions of the Panchayat Samiti.**

**Ans. Functions:** The duties of the Panchayat Samiti are primarily those of coordination between the working of various Panchayats under it:

- (i) **Problems Regarding Roads and Transport:** Roads and other means of transport to the nearest town or market place have to pass through fields and areas of different villages. As the farmers are very particular about the safety of their agricultural land, problems generally crop up regarding the course of a road. The Area Panchayats solve such difficulties and make such arrangements that the roads, thus built, should be beneficial to the maximum number of villages within the Circle.
- (ii) **Means of Irrigation:** Means of irrigation are another subject which might estrange the relations between two or more villages. Passage of electric lines through the fields of one village or the other to energise tube-wells as well as small and big canals and building of water reservoirs, wherever necessary, often pose several problems. The Area Panchayat coordinates all such efforts.

**14. Name the highest organ of the Panchayati Raj system at the district level.**

**Ans.** The Zila Parishad also called the District Board is the highest local body in the Rural Local Government.

**15. Name two committees of the District Board.**

**Ans.** Two committees of the District Board are:

- (a) The Working Committee
- (b) The Development Committee

**16. Name two sources of income of the District Board.**

**Ans.** The District Boards have very few sources of their own income. They get a part of the tax collected from the fairs. They can levy some minor taxes for their health and other public utility services. But they mostly depend upon the state help. All the uncovered expenses of the District Board are borne by the State Government.

**17. Name any two functions of the Zila Parishad.**

**Ans.** (i) They co-ordinate the work of the Panchayat Samiti.  
(ii) They suggest ways and means to the Gram Panchayat etc. to work in a more purposeful manner.

**18. What is the term of the Gram Panchayat?**

**Ans.** Formerly the term of the Gram Panchayat differed from state to state. It ranged between three to five years. But the new Panchayati Raj Act 1993 has fixed a uniform five year term for every panchayat.

**Structural Essay-Type Questions**

**1. The Local Self-Government plays a vital role in a democratic country. In this connection explain the following :**

- (a) Meaning of the Local Self-Government
- (b) Importance of the Local Self-Government

**Ans. (a) Meaning of Local Self-Government:** Local Self-Government is an institution which is constituted to look into local problems and to provide basic amenities to the citizens of a village or a town or a city. In fact, it is the lowest unit of the governing machinery of a State charged with the responsibility of the welfare of the citizens of that unit which it serves.

**(b) The Need and Importance of the Local Self-Government:** The Local Self-Government plays a

very important role in a democratic country. Its need is greatly felt because of the following reasons.

*Firstly*, it serves as a training centre for the leadership of the country. Most of the legislators begin their career as members of the local bodies and gain the required experience to rise to the national status.

*Secondly*, it is the local people who can best know their own problems which are often peculiar to the areas concerned. These problems are easily and more efficiently solved by the Local Self-Government of the place concerned.

*Thirdly*, it brings the people and administration close to each other. Such a contact is very vital for the success of democracy.

*Fourthly*, it relieves the State and the Central Governments of the responsibility to look into petty local problems so that they can concern themselves with more important matters.

**2. With reference to the Gram Panchayats, answer the following :**

- (a) Give the composition of the Gram Panchayat.
- (b) What are its functions?

**Ans. (a) The Gram Panchayat:** The Gram Panchayat acts as the executive of the Gram Sabha.

**Composition:** The members of the Village or Gram Panchayat are elected by the members of the Gram Sabha. The members of the Gram Sabha generally elect a small committee of 7 to 15 members from among themselves who constitute the Village Panchayat. It is necessary that the Village Panchayat should have a member belonging to the Scheduled Caste and also a woman member. If they are not elected, then the Government itself appoints two such members. The Village Panchayat is the sole body which looks after the various problems of the village and takes steps to improve the condition of the villagers.



- (b) A Gram Panchayat is entrusted with various social, economic and judicial functions :
- (i) It provides civic amenities to the people of the village.
  - (ii) It gets a primary school opened in the village and supervises its work.
  - (iii) It looks after the cleanliness of the village. Drains for waste water are also provided by the Panchayat in the village.
  - (iv) It gets a Primary Health Centre opened in the village. The Panchayat has also to provide land and building for such a centre.
  - (v) It gets metalled roads built from the village to the nearest road leading to a market place with the help of the Public Works Department of the district.
  - (vi) It arranges for sufficient irrigational facilities, improved seeds, insecticides, chemical manures, improved implements and other such facilities with the help of the Block Development Officer of the area for the uplift of agriculture.
  - (vii) It manages and maintains the common property of the village.

**3. With reference to the Panchayat Samiti, explain the following:**

- (a) How is the Panchayat Samiti formed?
- (b) What are its chief functions?

**Ans.** (a) The Panchayat Samiti at the block level is in fact a Panchayat of the Panchayats. It covers fifty to one hundred Panchayats within a particular area, that is why it is sometimes termed as an Area Panchayat. In some states it is called Prakhanda Panchayat or Circle Panchayat or Taluka Panchayat.

**Composition:** A Panchayat Samiti or the Community Block has the following persons as its members :

- (i) Sarpanchas of all the Panchayats within the area.

- (ii) Elected members of the State Legislature, if any, belonging to that area.
- (iii) Members of the Union Parliament, if any, belonging to the area.
- (iv) The Block Development Officer of that Circle.

**Office Bearers:** A Panchayat Samiti or the Community Block elects its own Chairman and Deputy Chairman from amongst its own members. The Secretary of the Panchayat Samiti is a whole-time paid person.

- (b) **Functions:** The duties of the Panchayat Samiti are primarily those of coordination between the working of various Panchayats under it:
  - (i) The Area Panchayats solve difficulties and make such arrangements that the roads, thus built, should be beneficial to the maximum number of villages within the Circle.
  - (ii) Passage of electric lines through the fields of one village or the other to energise tube-wells as well as small and big canals and building of water reservoirs, wherever necessary, often pose several problems. The Area Panchayat coordinates all such efforts.
  - (iii) It has already been mentioned that primary education is arranged by the Village Panchayats, but it is not generally possible to have a Higher Secondary School or a College in every village. Hence, the Circle Panchayat makes arrangement for such institutions at a place where they could cater to the needs of maximum number of villages.
  - (iv) An Area Panchayat arranges hospitals for a group of villages so that all could be benefited by it.

**4. With reference to the Zila Parishad, answer the following :**

- (a) How is the Zila Parishad formed?
- (b) What are its chief functions?

**Ans.** (a) The Zila Parishad is the highest local body at the district level. It has a Chairman and a Deputy Chairman elected from amongst its own members. They have a full-time paid Secretary, and a few officials.



- (b) **Its main functions:** The following are the main duty of the Zila Parishads :
- (i) They coordinate the work of the Panchayati Samiti.
  - (ii) They suggest ways and means to the Gram Panchayat, etc.
  - (iii) They scrutinise the budgets of all the local bodies in the district and recommend grants for those bodies.
  - (iv) They help the local bodies to draw up various plans and execute them properly.

**5. With reference to the Panchayati Raj, explain the following:**

- (a) Discuss the achievements of the Panchayati Raj.
- (b) Does the system have any shortcomings? Explain them.

**Ans.** (a) The Panchayati Raj has many achievements to its credit:

- (i) The Panchayati Raj system has brought about political awakening in rural India.
  - (ii) The Panchayati Raj has brought the government close to the people. The village people not only elect the Panchayat members but also take part in making decisions concerning their villages.
  - (iii) The Panchayats have succeeded in improving the condition of their respective villages by taking up welfare activities.
  - (iv) Primary and adult schools run by the Panchayats have spread literacy and education among the rural people.
  - (v) The Panchayats have succeeded in drawing the attention of government officials to their problems.
- (b) Panchayat Raj has brought democracy at the grass root level. However, the system has many shortcomings. Most of the villagers are illiterate so they are unable to understand the main purpose of Panchayat Raj. The villagers do not have real environment for democracy. Although there is no place for political parties in local government, yet in most villages political parties interfere in the working of village panchayats. Lack of autonomy, inadequate funds and undue interference by the State Government have limited the effectiveness of the Panchayati Raj.