

Chapter 5: Panchayati Raj

Intext Questions:

Question 1. What happens after people elect their representatives? How are decisions made?

Answer: After people elect their representatives, the elected representatives of the party who have the majority of representatives elect their leader. The leader is invited to form the government.

The majority party puts the proposal about any public issue. The issue is discussed in the house. If the majority of representatives support the issue/bill it is adopted and the decision is deemed as made.

Question 2. What is a Gram Sabha?

Answer: The Gram Sabha is a meeting of all adults, above 18 years of age, who live in an area covered by the Panchayat. This could be a village or a few villages. Anyone who is 18 years old or more and has the right to vote can be a member of the Gram Sabha.

Question 3. In the meeting of the Gram Sabha so far what are the problems that are being discussed? What sort of solutions is being suggested?

Answer: The problems discussed in the meeting of the Gram Sabha are :

- Plan to repair the road that connects the village to the main highway.
- Water and water shortages.

Various solutions were offered in the meeting of the Gram Sabha. They were :

- Piping water from Suru and meeting an overhead tank in the village to increase the water supply.
- To deepen the handpumps and clean the wells for a season.
- Watershed development, which is a technique of recharging and refilling water.
- Construction of check dams and tanks.

Question 4. Was there a problem with the BPL list that the Gram Sabha was finalizing? What was this problem?

Answer: Yes, there was a problem with the BPL list that the Gram Sabha was finalizing. The problem was that :

1. Natwar who had just bought a colour T.V. and his son had sent him a new motorcycle, had been included in the BPL list.
2. Birju's name was also included in the BPL list although he had so much land. On the other hand, Om Prakash, who was a landless labourer and who could barely make both ends meet was not included in the BPL list. The other villagers wanted his name to be included in the list.

Question 5. Why do you think Soorajmal kept quiet even though Saroj asked him to speak?

Answer: Soorajmal kept quiet even though Saroj asked him to speak because they were afraid of Amirchand. He was a big landowner and still had control over a lot of lands.

Question 6. Have you seen any similar incidents when people are unable to speak for themselves? Why do you think that happened and what prevented the person from speaking?

Answer: In the earlier incident given in the book, Bhagwan Mahadev Lad wanted that the water from the water tanker should be emptied into the storage tank so that everyone could use it. But the people said that water was meant for upper castes only. When he protested, he was severely beaten and had to be hospitalized.

This was the main reason why people kept quiet. This type of thing happens because some people are in a better position. They have money power as well as muscle power and people do not want to enter into conflict with such kinds of people.

Question 7. How can the Gram Sabha prevent the Panchayat from doing what it likes?

Answer: The Gram Sabha is the main factor in making the Gram Panchayat play its role and be responsible. It is the place where all plans for the Gram Panchayat are placed before the people. The Gram Sabha prevents the Panchayat from doing wrong things like misusing money or favor certain people.

It plays an important role in keeping an eye on the elected representatives and making them responsible to the persons who elected them.

Question 8. What decisions were taken by the Gram Panchayat?

Answer: It was decided by the Hardas Gram Panchayat to deepen two hand pumps and clean one well so that the village would not go without water. The members then discussed the long term options. The members wanted to know if the watershed program would make a substantial difference to the water level.

It was finally decided that the Gram Panchayat would approach the Block Development Officer and get more information on the scheme.

Question 9. Do you think it was necessary for them to take these decisions? Why?

Answer: The Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat work for the welfare of the people of the village. They have to look after the needs of the villagers and hear their problems. They also have to offer solutions to their problems. The Hardas Gram Sabha offered both short-term and long-term decisions regarding water shortage in the village.

They had discussed the problem and offered how to solve the problem, to the villagers. Otherwise, the members of the Gram Sabha would have questioned the Gram Panchayat.

Question 10. From the above description, write down one question that people could ask of the Panchayat in the next Gram Sabha meeting.

Answer: In the next Gram Sabha meeting, the members would certainly question and asked explanations about the watershed program and to know the views of the Block Development Officer.

Question 11. Ask your teacher to invite any of the elected persons such as the Panch, Sarpanch (Panchayat President), or member of the Janpad or Zila Panchayat and interview them on their work and the projects undertaken by them.

Answer: The Sarpanch (Panchayat President) was invited by the school. We were eager to find out more about the villages and the functions of various organizations.

1st Person: Sir, you are the Panchayat President. Can you tell us about the work of the Gram Sabha and what projects have been undertaken by your Gram Panchayat?

Sarpanch: We call regular meetings of the Gram Sabha and discuss the problems faced by the villagers, then we implement the programs.

2nd Person: Can you enlist the programs undertaken by the Gram Panchayat?

Sarpanch: Gram Panchayat provides for the Construction of roads, footpaths, Water supply and electricity.

- Takes steps for the distribution of seeds, which the government provides for the farmers.
- Promotes cottage industries.
- Keeps a register of births and deaths.
- It looks after maintenance and cleanliness of ponds and streets.

3rd Person: Can you tell us about some special projects undertaken by the Gram Panchayat?

Sarpanch: The main problem faced by the people of the village was water shortage during the summer months. This year with the help of the State Government, we have completed the rainwater harvesting program.

4th Person: What is this project?

Sarpanch: In this project, the rainwater is collected in such structures as dug wells, percolation pits, and check dams. The trenches are dug around the field. The roof water passes through the pipes and stored in tanks.

5th Person: How is this water used?

Sarpanch: It can be used for:

- Domestic work
- Provides water for agriculture
- Reduces groundwater pollution

6th Person: It is very costly? How did people get the money?

Sarpanch: Yes, the project was costly. Some people took loans at an easy rate of interest.

7th Person: How did people use underground water?

Sarpanch: They got water through handpumps and water was drawn from the wells.

All the Persons: Thank you, sir, for your information.

Questions:

Question 1. What problem did the villagers in Hardas village face? What did they do to solve this problem?

Answer: Problem faced by the villagers in Hardas village:

- Acute water shortage.
- Hand pump water has gone well below the point up to which the ground has been drilled.
- Women have to go to the Suru river which is 3 k.m. away to get water.

Solution done by them to solve this problem:

- Piping water from the river Suru and making an overhead tank in the village.
- Deepen the handpumps and clean the wells for this season.
- Finally, they came with the permanent solution of conserving water or the watershed development.

Question 2. What, in your opinion, is the importance of the Gram Sabha? Do you think all members should attend Gram Sabha meetings? Why?

Answer: Importance of Gram Sabha:

- Gram Sabha elect the members of the Gram Panchayat.
- It can question Gram Panchayat and keep watch on their work.
- Local problems of the villagers can be discussed in the meeting.
- They can recommend solutions to the problems.

Yes, I think all members should attend Gram Sabha meetings because they can raise the problems faced by them daily. They can also advise and make aware of the work done by the Gram Panchayat. It is the forum where they can discuss the welfare programmes of the village.

Question 3. What is the link between a Gram Sabha and a Gram Panchayat?

Answer: Link between a Gram Sabha and a Gram Panchayat:

- Gram Sabha elect the members of the Gram Panchayat.
- The Panch and the Gram Panchayat is answerable to the members of Gram Sabha.
- Gram Sabha keeps an eye on the elected representatives of the Gram Panchayat.

Question 4. Take an example of any one task done by a Panchayat in your area/nearby rural area and find out the following:

- a. Why it was taken up.
- b. Where the money came from.
- c. Whether or not the work has been completed.

Answer:

- a. Panchayat needs to construct building of middle school.
- b. Major part of the money came from the State Government and minor part of money came from the funds of Panchayat.
- c. The work has been completed on time.

Question 5. What is the difference between a Gram Sabha and a Gram Panchayat?

Answer: Gram Sabha in a village is like a tiny legislature. All adult inhabitants, above the age of 18 years are its members. It elects the Gram Panchayat, the executive, which actually looks after the administration of the village.

Question 6. Read the following news item.

Nimone is a village on the Chauphula-Shirur Road. Like many others, this village has also been facing a severe water shortage for the last few months and villagers depend on tankers for all their needs. Bhagvan Mahadeo Lad (35) of this village was beaten with sticks, iron rods and axes by a group of seven men. The incident came to light when some villagers brought a badly injured Lad to hospital for treatment. In the FIR recorded by the police Lad said that he was attacked when he insisted that the water in the tanker must be emptied into the storage tanks constructed as part of the water supply scheme by Nimone Gram Panchayat so that there would be equal distribution of water. However, he alleged that the upper caste men were against this and told him that the tanker water was not meant for the lower castes. Adapted from Indian Express, May 1, 2004

- a. Why was Bhagvan beaten?
- b. Do you think that the above is a case of discrimination? Why?

Answer:

- a. Bhagvan was beaten when he insisted that the water in the tanker must be emptied into the storage tanks constructed as part of the water supply scheme by Nimone Gram Panchayat so that there would be equal distribution of water.
- b. Yes, above is a case of discrimination because the distribution of water was not equal for all the people. The distribution of water from tanker was only served to the upper caste people not to the lower caste people. Moreover, it was not even emptied in tank constructed by the Panchayat.

Question 7. Find out more about watershed development and how it benefits an area?

Answer: Watershed development is the conservation, recharging and judicious use of the water resources like, underground water, rivers etc. and lands within the watershed area.

Benefits of watershed development in an area:

- i. It makes the land fertile and supports the growth of trees, plants and cultivation.
- ii. Help in the preservation of water and its resources.
- iii. Prevents soil erosion.

