

### Lesson at a Glance

- The **Gram Sabha** is a meeting where people directly participate and seek answers from their elected representatives.
- Every village Panchayat is divided into **wards**, *i.e.* smaller areas.
- Each ward elects a representative who is known as the **ward Member or Panch**.
- The Gram Sabha members elect a **Sarpanch** who is the Panchayat President.
- The Ward Panchs and the Sarpanch together form the **Gram Panchayat**.
- The term of Gram Panchayat is five years.
- The Gram Panchayat and the Gram Sabha have one common secretary. The **secretary** is appointed by the government.
- It is the secretary who calls the meeting of the Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat.
- One of the main functions of the Gram Sabha is to prevent the Gram Panchayat from doing wrong things.
- The Gram Panchayat is responsible for the implementation of the developmental programmes for the villages that come under its jurisdiction.
- The Panchayati Raj System is a process through which people participate in their own government.
- The Panchayati Raj System is the **first tier** or level of democratic government. It extends to **two other levels**—  
Block level (Janpad Panchayat or the Panchayat Samiti), District Panchayat (Zila Parishad).

### ■ IN-TEXT QUESTIONS SOLVED ■

- Q. 1.** What is a Gram Sabha? (NCERT Textbook, page 44)
- Ans.** Gram Sabha is a meeting where people directly participate and seek answers from their elected representatives.

**Q. 2.** In the meeting of the Gram Sabha so far what are the problems that are being discussed? What sort of solutions are being suggested?

**Ans.** Several problems are being discussed in the meeting of the Gram Sabha:

- Problem of water shortages
- Finalisation of the list of people below the poverty line (BPL) which had to be approved by the Gram Sabha.

**Solutions that are being suggested for water crisis**

- One of the members of the Gram Sabha suggests piping water from the Suru and making an overhead tank in the village to increase the supply.
- Others feel that it is better to deepen the handpumps and clean the wells for that season.
- A villager, called Tijia, suggests for some permanent solution.
- Answer suggest for watershed development programme as permanent solution.

**Solutions suggested for finalisation of the list of people below the poverty line**

- The name of Om Prakash, a landless labourer, is not on the list. The villagers tells the Sarpanch. The Sarpanch gives instruction that Om Prakash's family income be looked at and if it is less than what has been decided by the government, his name should be included in the list.

**Q. 3.** Was there a problem with the BPL list that the Gram Sabha was finalising? What was this problem?

(NCERT Textbook, page 45)

**Ans.** Yes, there was a problem with the BPL list that the Gram Sabha was finalising. The name of one landless labourer called Om Prakash was not on the BPL list. The villagers are very keen to get his name included in the list.

**Q. 4.** Why do you think Soorajmal kept quiet even though Saroj asked him to speak? (NCERT Textbook, page 45)

**Ans.** Soorajmal kept quiet because Amirchand was setting in the Gram Sabha keeping an eye on everyone. He knew the power and influence of Amirchand.

**Q. 5.** 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? (NCERT Textbook, page 45)

**Ans.** Yes, there are several instances of similar incidents when people find it difficult to speak for themselves. Such situation occur because people find themselves under shadow of some unknown fear. Soorajmal could not speak a single word in favour of a genuine point because he was afraid of Amirchand, an influential landowner in the village. He dared not to say anything that might anger him (Amirchand).

**Q. 6.** How can the Gram Sabha prevent the Panchayat from doing what it likes? (NCERT Textbook, page 45)

**Ans.** The Gram Sabha is a key factor in making the Gram Panchayat play its role and be responsible. It is the place where all plans for the work of the Gram Panchayat are placed before the people. The works of Gram Panchayat must be approved by the Gram Sabha. It observes the meetings and gets the accounts of the Panchayat checked and scrutinised.

**Q. 7.** What decisions were taken by the Gram Panchayat?

(NCERT Textbook, page 47)

**Ans.** The Gram Panchayat decided to deepen two handpumps and clean one well so that the village would not go without water. The Gram Panchayat members were also keen for a long-term solution of water shortages. They suggested for the watershed development programme.

**Q. 8.** Do you think it was necessary for them to take these decisions? Why? (NCERT Textbook, page 47)

**Ans.** Yes, it was very necessary for them to take these decisions because the problem of water shortages was becoming acute.

■ **TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED** ■

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

**Ans.** The villagers in Hardas village faced water problem. The hand-pump water had gone well below the point up to which the ground had been drilled. They hardly got water in the taps.

The villagers gathered together in the Gram Sabha meeting to find a solution of the problem. After long discussions, they came to a conclusion that they should find ways to conserve water. Watershed development programme would be effective in this direction. They should plant trees, construct check-dams and tanks.

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

**Ans.** The Gram Sabha is the most important body of the Panchayati Raj System. It is responsible for the planning out the strategies for the development of village, implementation of the ruling provisions. It also looks after the basic amenities of village people. It is also the custodian of the public property of the village. Education, law and order, primary health services are some of the other responsibilities of the Gram Sabha. It also checks the wrong decisions taken by the Gram Panchayat. It keeps an eye on the elected representative and in making them responsible to the persons who elected them.

It is important for all members to attend Gram Sabha meetings because it is the only way to participate in the proceedings of various plans discussed in the meetings. The members of Gram Sabha represent different areas. So, it is important for them to put their local problems and development programmes in the meetings. If they remain absent from the meetings, their interests may be overlooked.

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

**Ans.** A Gram Sabha consists of all adults living in an area covered by a Panchayat. Sarpanch, the Panchayat president, is elected by all the members of a Gram Sabha. The Gram Panchayat has a secretary who is also the secretary of Gram Sabha. The Secretary is not an elected authority but is appointed by the government. The secretary is the link between the Gram Panchayat and Gram Sabha. He is responsible for calling the meetings of Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat. He is also the custodian of the records of the proceedings. Gram Sabha controls the functioning of the Gram Panchayat.

**Q. 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 come from.
- (c) Whether or not the work has been completed.

**Ans.** (a) Our Panchayat recently undertook the task of building a community hall. It was necessary because there was no such common place where people could gather at a time. It was difficult to hold a general meeting, organise a general function, etc.

(b) The money was collected as contribution from the villagers and some part of it was also diverted from the Panchayat welfare fund.

(c) Yes, the work has been completed within the projected time and it is now in use.

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

- Ans.**
- Gram Sabha consists of all the adults of a village while Gram Panchayat is elected by the members of the Gram Sabha for a period of five years.
  - The area of Gram Sabha is the entire village whereas Gram Panchayat is divided into wards represented by Ward Councillors.
  - Gram Sabha puts control over Gram Panchayat.

**Q. 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 villages 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 lower castes.

*Adapted from Indian Express,*

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(a) *Why was Bhagvan beaten?*

(b) *Do you think that the above is a case of discrimination? Why?*

**Ans.** (a) There was acute water crisis in Nimone village and the villagers had to depend on tankers for their needs. So, when the tanker came in the village, Bhagvan 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. But the upper caste men were against this and therefore they beat Bhagvan to suppress his demand.

(b) Yes, the above is a case of discrimination, because the upper caste men tries to suppress the genuine demand of the lower castes. They look them down upon and ignore their existence.

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

**Ans.** Wastershed Development Programme is an initiative of the goverment. It is done by the Non-govenment Organisation (NGOs). It helps in conservation of water by plantation, making bundns, canals etc.