

ROLE OF ELECTED  
REPRESENTATIVES OF CEO OF  
MUNICIPAL CORPORATION AND  
GRASS ROOT DEMOCRACY

# ROLE

- Chief Elected Official (CEO)
- The CEO can be a mayor, reeve or I.D. chairperson.
- The CEO, in addition to performing a councillor's duties, must preside when attending a council meeting, unless a bylaw provides otherwise.
- The CEO must also perform any other duty imposed under the MGA or any other enactment. In practice, the CEO is also generally the main spokesperson for the municipality, unless that duty is delegated to another councillor.
- The CEO of a city or town is elected by a vote of a municipality's electors, unless the council passes a bylaw requiring council to appoint the CEO from among the councillors.
- In a village, summer village, or municipal district, council appoints the CEO from among the councillors unless it passes a bylaw providing that the official is to be elected by a vote of the municipality's electors.

# ROLE

- The CEO role, unless a bylaw says otherwise, includes:
- chairperson of council
- consensus seeker amongst members of council
- liaison with senior elected officials
- ex officio member on various boards and committees
- key representative with regard to ceremonial responsibilities
- liaison with other levels of government
- advice with regard to policy development
- A deputy CEO will assume this role if the CEO is not available.

# INTEREST OF THE MUNICIPALITY

- Interests of the municipality
- A councilor is elected to look after the interests of the entire municipality.
- A councilor who is in a municipality that has wards must be careful not to place the interest of the ward or electoral district above the interest of the whole municipality.
- Council's effectiveness depends on councillors providing input on their areas while thinking and voting for the whole municipality.
- Councilors also have to make certain that they do not put themselves in a conflict of interest situation.

# IMPORTANCE OF GRASS-ROOT DEMOCRACY IN INDIAN CONSTITUTION

- **Grassroots Democracy: Panchayati Raj and Municipal Government, significance of 73rd and 74th Amendments; Grassroot movements**
- The form of grassroots democracy and domination in India and the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in the progression of rural areas is great. India has been a welfare state ever since after Independence and the chief objective of all governmental endeavors has been the wellbeing of its populace. Basic principles of government are elimination of poverty, ignorance, diseases and inequality of opportunities and providing a better and higher quality of life. India's democratic structure has three levels of governance which are national, state, and local.
- In simple term, Grassroot democracy is a people/community driven contribution in elections, governance and decision making. Grassroot democracy can be seen as a propensity towards designing political processes where as much decision making authority as practical is shifted to the lowest level of organization. Therefore, a local government is a government at the grassroots level of administration meant for meeting peculiar grassroots need of the people (Agagu, 1997). Appadorai (1975) also opined that the local government system as government is by the popularly elected bodies charged with administrative and executive duties in matters concerning the populations of a particular district or place.

# ABOUT LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

- Local government was further defined by Lawal (2000) as that tier of government closest to the people, "which is vested with certain powers to exercise control over the affairs of people in its domain". Local government is a system of public administration at a local level, charged with the responsibility of bringing the people at the grassroots closer to the government. Grassroots organizations can have numerous structures; depending on the type of organization and what the members want. These can be non-structured and non-hierarchical organizations that are run by all members, or by whichever member wishes to do something.

# INTRODUCTION

- The grassroots level is called the Panchayati Raj System. If democracy means people's participation in running their affairs, then it is nowhere more direct, clear and significant than at the local level, where the contact between the people and their representatives, between the rulers and the ruled is more constant, vigilant and manageable. Lord Bryce believed: "The best school of democracy and the best guarantee for its success is the practice of local self - government". Decentralization is a main mechanism through which democracy becomes truly representative and responsive (Dhaliwal, 2004).



# ABOUT 73<sup>rd</sup> AMENDMENT

- The 73rd amendment to the Indian Constitution (1992) clearly prescribes that the Panchayats should be institutions of self-overnment through which powers are devolved to the people as to the participation in the process of planning for economic development and social justice, and implementation of schemes and programmes for these purposes. To strengthen and enhance the efficiency of local governance, PRIs were structured and designed as three tier system. The base of this pyramidal structure is the gram sabha (or village assembly), composed of all citizens eligible to vote, and so the foundation of grassroots democracy. Whatever the case, the grass roots level institutions are vital instruments in the process of development to lower levels and these processes are quicker as and when common people identify themselves as active partners. There are so many facets to the issue of grassroots governance and development in India and it is very important because of more than 65 percent of India's population comes from rural areas and its fortune and future are determined by these PRIs.

# ABOUT PANCHAYATI RAJ SYSTEM

- Panchayats as institutional means for development have been part of the Indian system since olden time. Panchayati Raj Institutions, the grass root units of local self-government have been reflected as instruments of socio economic change in rural India. Involvement of people at the grass root level is the most important way to bring socio-economic development. Panchayati Raj is recognized as institutional expression of democratic decentralization in India. Decentralization of power to the panchayats is seen visualized as a means of empowering people and involving them in decision making process. Local governments being closer to the people can be more receptive to local needs and can make better use of resources. The democratic system in a country can be guaranteed only if there is huge participation in the governance. Therefore, the system of democratic decentralization commonly known as Panchayati Raj is considered as an effectual means to ensure democracy and socio-economic transformation. It is well documented in past history that India has a long tradition of local governments, going back to more than 4000 years. This institution has survived numerous political changes and disturbances in the ancient and medieval periods till the start of the British Raj. With the coming of the colonial administration, the patterns of the working of the local bodies underwent marked changes.

# CONCEPT

- **Panchayati Raj in India:**
- In India, the Panchayati Raj now functions as a system of governance in which gram panchayats are the basic unit of local administration. The system has three levels: gram panchayat (village level), mandal parishad or block samiti or panchayat samiti (block level) and zila parishad (district level). It was formalized in 1992 by the 73rd amendment to the Indian Constitution.
- Various Committees on Panchayati Raj :
- 1. Balwant Rai Mehta : Estd 1957: In 1957, a significant innovation in establishing Panchayati Raj was effected through the Report of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee which recommended: Public participation in community works should be organized through statutory representative bodies. It was of the view that without an agency at the village level that could represent the entire community, assume responsibility and provide the necessary leadership for implementing development programmes, real progress in rural development could not come about at all.

# COMMITTEE

- 2. V.T.Krishnammachari : 1960
- 3. Takhatmal Jain Study Group: 1966:4. Ashok Mehta Committee: 1977: The Asoka Mehta Committee (formed in 1978) made far reaching recommendations to amend the situation and recommended that Panchayati Raj be included in the Constitution. In keeping with the spirit of the Asoka Mehta Committee recommendations, some states, including West Bengal, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh revisited their respective Panchayati Raj systems and undertook several new initiatives to endow local bodies with more powers which served as a prime inspiration and example for subsequent reform.
- 5. G.V.K Rao committee :1985: