

Question:1

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

Solution:

The villagers in Hardas village faced the problem of acute water shortage. 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. Women had to travel 3 km to the Suru River to get water.

The Gram Sabha got together to discuss the problem. Many people came up with short-term and long-term suggestions for dealing with the problem at hand, e.g., piping water from the Suru and making an overhead tank, deepening the hand pumps and cleaning the wells, conserving and recharging water through watershed development.

After the discussion in the Gram Sabha, the Gram Panchayat discussed the suggestions and decided that the money it had received for the maintenance of handpumps could be utilised for deepening two hand pumps and cleaning one well, so that the village would not go without water. The Panchayat members also discussed options for a long-term solution. At the end, they decided to approach the Block Development Officer and get more information about the watershed programme.

Question:2

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

Solution:

The Gram Sabha is an important element in the proper functioning of the Panchayati Raj system. The members of the Gram Sabha, by raising and resolving issues placed before the Panchayat, can enable the Panchayat members to play their roles and be responsible to the people who elected them. The Gram Sabha is the place where all the plans for the work of the Gram Panchayat are placed before the people. The Gram Sabha prevents the Panchayat members from doing wrong things like misusing money or favouring certain people. It holds the members of the Panchayat accountable for everything they do or don't do.

Yes, all adults who live in the area covered by a Panchayat should attend the Gram Sabha meetings. Anyone who is 18 years old or more, and who has the right to vote is a member of the Gram Sabha. For the democratic functioning of a Gram Panchayat, all the members of the Gram Sabha should not only take part in electing the Panchs but also ensure that they work properly, by actively participating in the workings of the Panchayat and the Gram Sabha.

Question:3

What is the link between a Gram Sabha and a Gram Panchayat?

Solution:

The Gram Sabha is a meeting of all the adults who live in the area covered by a Panchayat. The members of the Gram Sabha elect the members of the Gram Panchayat. The Gram Sabha is the place where all the plans for the work of the Gram Panchayat are placed before the people. Once the issues are raised and discussed in the Gram Sabha, the Gram Panchayat holds its meeting wherein it discusses and decides upon the issues and proposals put forth in the Gram Sabha meeting. The Gram Panchayat meets regularly and one of its main tasks is to implement development programmes for all the villages that come under it. Its work has to be approved by the Gram Sabha. In some states, Gram Sabhas form committees that include some members of the Gram Sabha and some from the Gram Panchayat, who work together to carry out specific tasks like construction and development.

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.

Solution:

Visit the nearest *panchayat* and meet its head i.e., the *Sarpanch*. He/she is the person who would be able to answer most of your questions. Then, you could visit the houses of some of the villagers to check with them if the *panchayat* has been successful in completing the tasks.

Question:5

What is the difference between a Gram Sabha and a Gram Panchayat?

Solution:

The Gram Sabha is the collection of all adults who live in the area covered by a Panchayat. Anyone who is 18 years old or more, and who has the right to vote is a member of the Gram Sabha. The Gram Panchayat, on the other hand, is a collection of the elected representatives of a Gram Sabha. The members of the Gram Panchayat are called the Ward members or the Panchs. The Gram Panchayat is elected for a period of five years. The Gram Sabha is a permanent body. Issues are raised in the Gram Sabha, but it is the Gram Panchayat which implements the decisions.

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 was not meant for 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?

Solution:

(a) Bhagvan was beaten for insisting that the water in the tanker 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, the upper caste men were against this idea as they believed the tanker was not meant for the lower castes. As a result of this difference in opinion, a group of seven men beat Bhagvan with sticks, iron rods and axes.

(b) The above is a classic case of discrimination on the basis of caste.

Question:7

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

Solution:

A geographical area that drains to a common point is called a watershed or a catchment. A watershed is a perfect place for conservation of soil and water. A watershed provides a huge supply of water which has accumulated at a point. Also, fertile soil is deposited around this point. Watershed development is important for the overall growth and development of a village. It benefits the area by making the land fertile. It makes the growth of trees possible. It also helps in checking soil erosion and water logging.