

Chapter – 4: Panchayati Raj

- People – Hardas village – want to find out – new panchayat leaders – planned for village
- Everyone – rushing to Gram Sabha – holding 1st meeting after election of new gram panchayat
- Gram Sabha – meeting of adults – area covered by panchayat – one village or few villages
- Some states – every village – village meeting
- Anyone – 18 or above – has a right to vote – member of Gram Sabha
- Every village Panchayat – divided into wards – each ward selects one person – ward member (Panch)
- All the Panchs – select Sarpanch (Panchayat President)
- All of them make up the Gram Panchayat
- Gram Panchayat – Secretary – appointed by government – responsible for holding meetings of Grams Sabha and Gram Panchayat – records the proceedings
- Gram Sabha – very imp. – stops Gram Panchayat from doing wrong things – misusing money or favouring certain people – keeps an eye on elected persons

Gram Sabha

- Meeting starts – Panchayat President (Sarpanch) and members of Panchayat (the Panchs) – present plan – repairing the road connecting village to highway
- **Next topic** – matter of water and water shortages
- Tijia – villager – says – water problem in Hardas – very acute (severe) – hand pump water – gone below the drilling point – women – walk 3 k.m. to Suru river – get water
- One member suggested – lay out pipes from Suru to village overhead tank – others think – it's too expensive
- They think – deepening the handpumps and cleaning the wells for this season – better way
- Tijia suggested – that's not enough – they need some permanent solution – ground water level decreases every year – more water used – less water soaked into ground
- Anwar – another member – tells – he observed water conservation and recharging (refilling) techniques in Maharashtra – he visited his brother
- This method is called watershed development – government helps financially
- In that village – people planted trees, constructed check-dams, tanks
- Everyone thought – this is an interesting idea – asked Gram Panchayat – find out more
- **Next topic** – finalizing – list of people below poverty line (BPL) – approved by Gram Sabha
- As soon as list – read out – people start to whisper
- Natwar bought color T.V. and his son sent him motorcycle – Soorajmal whispers to his neighbor
- Saroj whispers to Sukhi Bai – Birju owns so much land – his name on list – Om Prakash is a landless labourer – his name not on list
- Sukhi Bai says – Natwar and Birju – both friends of Amirchand – earlier zamindar – still powerful
- Sarpanch – notice – people whispering – asks – someone has to say something
- Saroj provoke Soorajmal – ask about Natwar and Birju – he keeps quiet – afraid of Amirchand – present in meeting
- Saroj – speaks up – Om Prakash's name not on list – everyone agrees – he is very poor and should be on the list
- Sarpanch enquires (asks) – how was he missed out – person responsible says – his house was locked when they surveyed

- Sarpanch – orders – look at his family income – if its less than whatever is decided by government – add his name to BPL list

The Gram Panchayat

- Meets regularly – main task – implement development programmes – work approved by Gram Sabha
- Some states – Gram Sabha – form committees – include some members from Gram Sabha and some members from Gram Panchayat
- Working of Gram Panchayat –
 - construction and maintenance – water sources, roads, drainage, school buildings, other common properties
 - collect local taxes
 - executing government schemes
- Sources of funds for the Panchayat –
 - Collection of taxes
 - Government funds – through different schemes
 - donations
- Hardas Gram Panchayat – held a meeting – water shortage discussed again
- This meeting – attended by – Sarpanch, Panch, Secretary
- Members – first discussed – deepen 2 handpumps and clean 1 well – Sarpanch suggested – funds received for handpumps
- Members – started discussing long-term solutions – watershed programme
- After lot of discussion – Gram Panchayat will approach block development officer – get more information

Three Levels of Panchayats

- Panchayati Raj System – process – people – participate – own government
- Rural areas – Gram Panchayat – 1st tier / level
- Panchs and Gram Panchayat – responsible to Gram Sabha – they elected them
- One level up is Block level (Janpad Panchayat or Panchayat Samiti) – many Gram Panchayat under it
- Another level up is District level (District Panchayat or Zila Parishad)
- Zila Parishad – makes plans – district level – with help of Panchayat Samitis – regulate flow of money among Gram Panchayats
- Each state – own laws – regarding to Panchayats – provide more space for people to participate