

Panchayati Raj System

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Class outline:

1. Democratic Decentralization
2. Implementation
3. Three tier structure
4. Election to Panchayati Raj Institutions
5. Reservation of seats
6. Organization of Panchayati Raj in India
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8. Panchayat Union
9. District Panchayat

Panchayati Raj

(Democratic Decentralization)

- The word democracy is derived from the Greek roots - **cracy** meaning 'rule of' and **demo** meaning 'the people'.
- Democracy is governance **of the people, by the people and for the people.**
- Decentralization means devolution (transfer) of central authority among local units close to the area served.
- The study team on Community Development headed by **Balwant Rai Mehta** recommended democratic decentralization.

Implementation:

- Madras State started as an experiment in a pilot block as early as 1957.
- It was inaugurated by Jawahar Lal Nehru on 2nd October, 1959 at a national rally at **Nagaur** (Rajasthan).
- **Rajasthan** and **Andhra Pradesh** were the first states to implement the Panchayati Raj in entire state on October 2, 1959 and November 1, 1959, respectively.

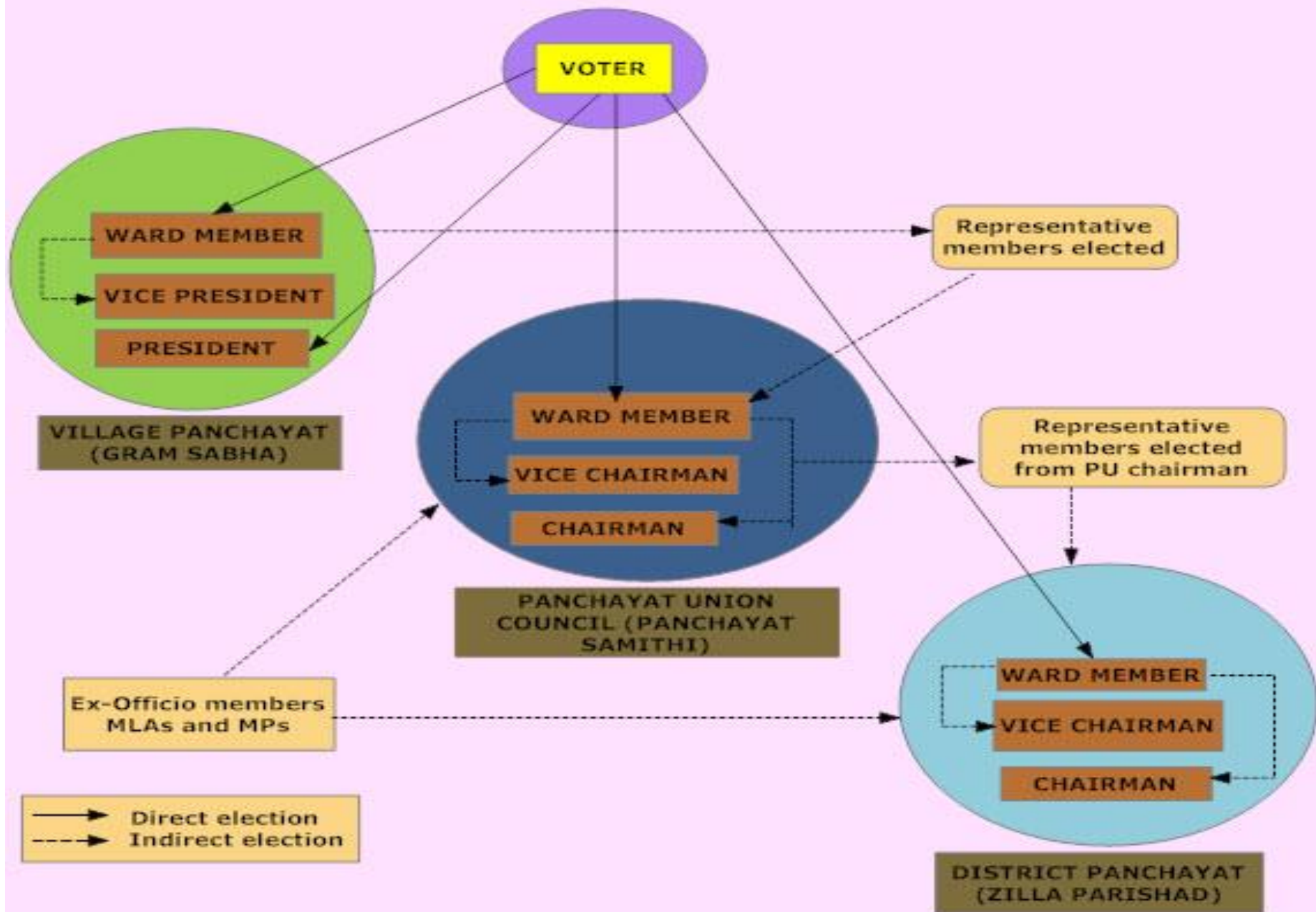
Salient features of Panchayati Raj

1. Three tier structure:

- Panchayati Raj Institutions are to be established at the village, intermediate and district levels.
 1. Village/ Gram Panchayat at the grass root level
 2. Panchayat Union/ Samiti at intermediate level and
 3. District Panchayat / Zila Parishad at district level
- Smaller states with a population of 20 lakhs or less are given option of not forming the middle tier.
- Panchayats vary in their population ranging from 500 to 10,000.

2. Election to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs):

- Elections to the Panchayats are to be conducted regularly under the supervision of the Panchayati Raj Election Commission of the State.
- The elections of the members of the Panchayats at village, intermediate and district levels have to be compulsorily elected **directly**.
- The chairpersons at the intermediate and district levels have to be compulsorily elected **indirectly** and from amongst the elected members.
 - However, the chairman of Village Panchayat is elected **directly**.



3. Reservation of seats:

- Reservation for the candidates belonging to the weaker sections, namely the **Scheduled Castes** and **Scheduled Tribes** at all levels in proportion to their population and in proportion to the area has been provided in order to ensure participation of these groups in the decision making process.
- **One third** of the total number of seats has been reserved for women (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to SCs and STs).

- Not less than **one-third** of the total number of Chairpersons in Panchayats at each level has been reserved for women.
- Likewise reservation for the offices of Chairpersons belonging to the SC and ST categories has also been made.

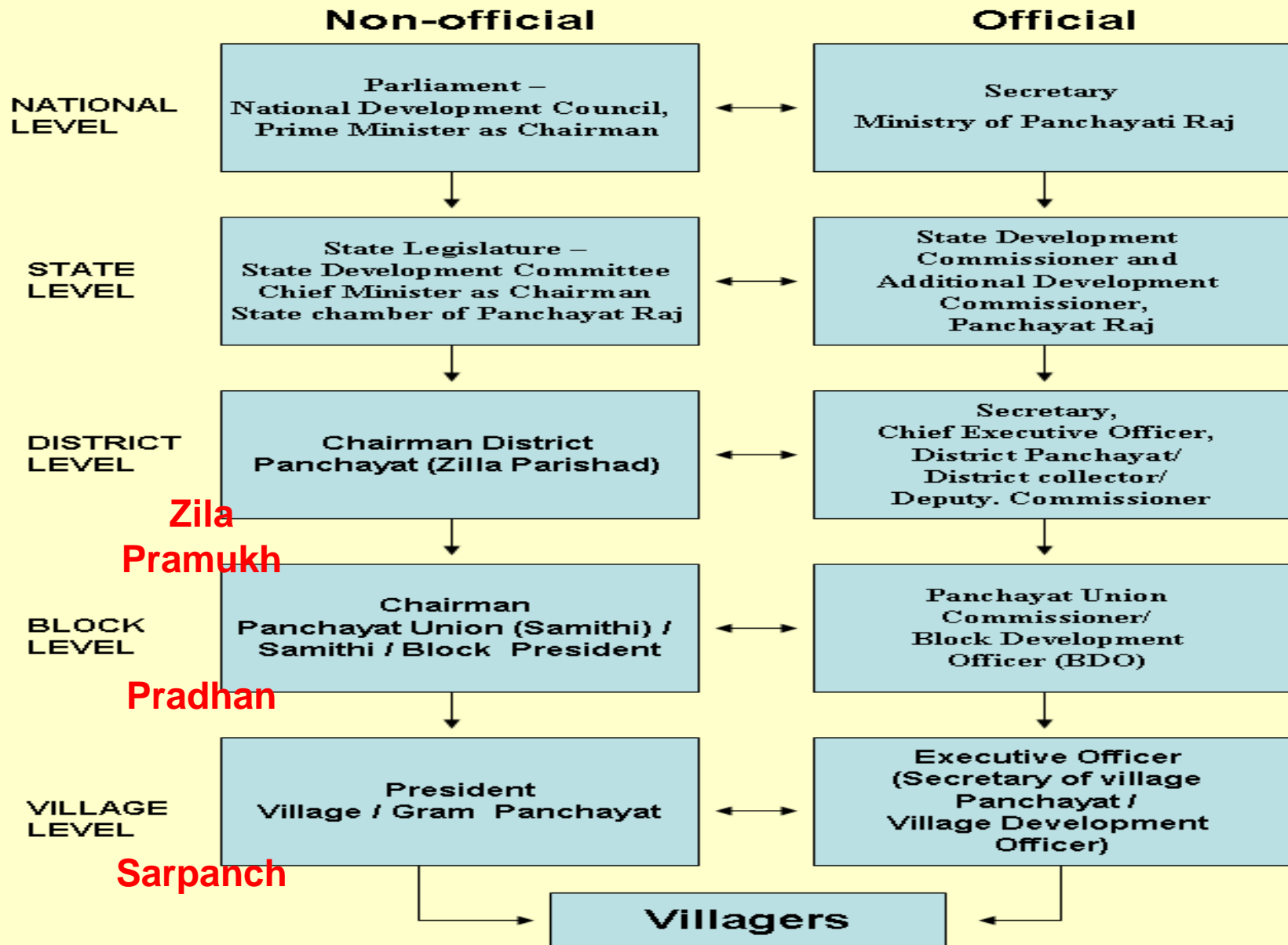
4. Tenure:

- A term of **five years** has been provided for every Panchayat unless it is dissolved earlier on specific grounds.

5. Resources:

- The Panchayats have been authorized to levy and collect appropriate suitable local taxes.
- A state can also provide grant-in-aid to Panchayats from its consolidated fund.
- A State Finance Commission is appointed to review and assess financial position of the Panchayats and recommend to the states the pattern of distribution of funds between the state and PRIs.

Organisation of Panchayati Raj in India



Gram/ Village Panchayat

- It is the base or bottom tier of the PR system.
- The members of the Gram Panchayat (i.e. **Panchas**) and Chairman (i.e. **Sarpanch**) are directly elected.
- A Gram Sabha (village assembly) consisting of all adult members registered as voters in the area of Panchayat is to be constituted.
- The number of members in each Panchayat varies from 5-31 according to population of the Panchayat.
- In addition to the elected members and Sarpanch, there is a provision for co-option of two ladies and one SC and ST member each if they have not been elected as members.

Functions:

- Maintenance of peace and harmony in the Panchayat.
- Maintenance of roads, wells, schools, burning and burial grounds, sanitation, public health, libraries, reading rooms, community centres etc.
- Also keeps records of births and deaths.
- Construction of drains and disposal of village water including sewage.

Revenue:

- House tax, vehicle tax, taxes on animals and vacant lands, taxes on transfer of property, fines on account of violation of Panchayat laws etc.

Panchayat Samiti

- It is the middle tier of the PR system between Gram Panchayat and Zila Parishad.
- It consists of 20-60 villages depending on area and population. Population ranges from 35,000 to 1,00,000.
- It consists of:
 - i. About 20 members elected by and from the Panchas of all Panchayats falling in the block area.
 - ii. One fifth of the presidents of the Village Panchayats.
 - iii. Two women and one member from the SC and ST if they have not been elected as members.
 - iv. Members of Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and MLAs without the power to vote.

Functions:

- Construction, repair and maintenance of public roads, elementary schools etc.
- Maintenance of dispensaries, maternity and child welfare centres.
- Construction and maintenance of house for the poor, orphanages, shops and stalls.
- Preventive and remedial measures of epidemics.
- Control of notified fairs and festivals.
- Veterinary relief.
- Opening and maintenance of public markets.

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- Maintenance of statistics of birth and deaths.
- Promotion of agriculture, cottage industries etc.
- Other duties as mentioned by the government.

Revenue:

- Share of local cess, local cess surcharge, house tax, rental of common property resources, local educational grant, local road grant, fee on licenses, fees levied by public market, parking fee for vehicles etc.
- Proportionate share from tax, income from ferries, fines and penalties.

Zila Parishad

- It stands at the apex of the three tier structure of the PR system.
- It consists of:
 - i. Elected members of the Zila Parishad.
 - ii. One fifth of the Panchayat Samiti chairman.
 - iii. Women and SC and ST members if they have not been elected as members.
 - iv. Members of Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and MLAs without the power to vote.

Functions:

- Preparation of district plan.
- Advise on all matters of development undertaken by panchayats and panchayat unions to the government.
- Watching and reviewing the progress of the programme.

Revenue:

- Grants received from the state government.
- Share in the land cess and other local cess and taxes.
- Rents from lands or other properties, penalties etc.