

DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALISATION

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Description of Module

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CONCEPT OF DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALISATION

Democracy is considered as one of the best forms of government because it ensures liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and opportunity, fraternity as well as the right to participate in political decision-making. Participation and control of governance by the people of the country is the essence of democracy. Such participation is possible only when the powers of the state are decentralized to the district, block and village levels where all the sections of the people can sit together, discuss their problems and suggest solutions and plan, execute as well as monitor the implementation of the programmes. It is called the crux of democratic decentralization.

The work “democratic” explains the nature and purpose of the concept as also its basic claims in an institutional set up. Decentralization means transfer of planning, decision-making or administrative authority from the central government to its field organizations, local administrative units, semi-autonomous organizations, local governments or non-governmental organizations. There exist a difference between democratic decentralization and delegation. Delegation means the grant of authority from a superior to a subordinate, to be enjoyed not as a right but as a derived concession. The term ‘democratic decentralization’ on the other hand means grant of authority by a superior to a subordinate as a right to be enjoyed by the subordinate and not as a concession.

DEMOCRATIC DECENTRALISATION IN INDIA

The spirit of democratic decentralization that evolved over the years is being practiced only in a limited way. It is realized that development efforts in India did not address the issues of equity and to the development of the poor. Therefore, there is a need to redirect development efforts towards the poor and those at the grass roots. The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts have been major steps in the direction of decentralized governance in India. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act relates to introduce reforms in rural local bodies whereas the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act relates to bring reform in urban local bodies. These amendments have accorded constitutional recognition to rural and urban local bodies.

Local self Government Bodies in Rural Areas:

The units of the local self-Government at three levels in the rural areas are drawn from the panchayat raj.

District Panchayat (Zila Parishad)

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Taluka (Block Development)

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Village Panchayat

The Village Panchayat :

Each village has a Gram Sabha. It elect by direct election, the village panchayat, Grama Sabha is the general body of a village. It consists of all men and women of the village, whose age is above 18 years and qualified voters. The sarpancha of a village panchayat is directly elected by the Gram Sabha. The panchayat areas are divided into wards and each ward sends its representatives to village panchayat. Certain number of seats will be reserved for the sc, st and 1/3rd seats for women on rotation basis. The state is also empowered to make provisions for the reservation of seats for chairperson in local self-government in favour of backward class of citizens.

Panchayat Samiti

The village Panchyat has limited sources, so it cannot fulfill all the needs on its own. There are certain problems which are common to the neighboring villages also. If they pull their resources and join hands together they can solve their common problems. The organisation which works for the development of a block is called panchayat Samiti or Block Samiti. (Samiti sabhya)

Zila Parishad or Zila Panchayat:

The Zila Parishad is the highest level in the three tier system of the panchayat Raj. Zila Parishad prepares plans for the development of its district. A district panchayat shall have chair—person and vice chairperson elected by its elected members.

Local Self-Government in the Urban areas

Nagar Panchayat : It is the smaller units of the urban population. A town is bigger than a village but smaller than a city. For every town a Nagar Panchayat is elected for five years by all the population.

Municipal Council: It is the cities which are bigger than towns but not big cities, the criteria are divided according to the population of the cities. A city is divided into wards and each ward elects one representative to the city.

Municipal Corporation: It is the mega cities Municipal Corporation is elected. The head or chairperson of a municipal corporation is known as Mayor.

Common provisions for Rural and Urban Panchayats :

- i. Reservation of seats and chairpersons
- ii. Duration of Panchayats/Municipalities : If the dissolution taken place before the 6 months of regular period it is not necessary to hold the election.

Disqualifications for membership:

Powers to impose taxes by Panchayat and Municipalities : Taxes, Tolls and fees etc.