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## **UNIT 16 INTRA-LOCAL GOVERNMENT RELATIONSHIP-I- RURAL**

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### **16.0 LEARNING OUTCOME**

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After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- describe the intra-relationship between the various tiers of the local government bodies;
- define the intra tiers responsibilities as per the 11<sup>th</sup> schedule of the constitution; and
- analyse the intra tiers implementations hurdles.

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### **16.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The 73<sup>rd</sup> and the 74<sup>th</sup> amendments have introduced major structural changes in local governance. Local government institutions had hitherto remained restricted to performing ‘agency’ functions on behalf of the state governments and that too not on a consistent basis. Initiative at the local level in terms of policy planning had been conspicuously lacking. Frequent supercessions, irregular elections, inadequate devolution of powers and functions, and the most crippling factor of all, inadequate resources, had rendered local units, ineffective institutions of self-government. Besides confusion has prevailed regarding the number of tiers, with the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee proposing three and the Ashok Mehta Committee advocating two, viz. Mandal Panchayats and Zilla Parishad. The new amendment has gone with the former argument in this respect, that is, a three-tier arrangement has been settled for, and 29 items have been specified in the eleventh schedule in respect of which the state governments have the option/choice to delegate functions to local governments along with commensurate authority and resources as per stipulations in this regard by the state legislature and the state finance commission as provided by the 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment.

Committee system has been provided for at each level of the jurisdiction, which *act as a conduit* for sharing information and expertise between tiers, which in fact would be vital for effective grass roots planning, as envisaged in the 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment. Though the constitutional amendment is silent on the subject, committees have always been functional in all tiers. Though there is no definite provision in any of the state acts for committees at the village and samiti levels, all state acts provide for committees at the parishad level except Haryana. At the village Panchayat level, the number of committees, their structure, scope and functions vary from state to state. Committees are constituted for dealing with specific functional subjects but they may also cut across jurisdictions, as the *Beneficiary Committee* associated with the Gram Sabha in Andhra Pradesh. Except for Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, all states have provided for committees at the samiti level. In Andhra Pradesh, A mandal panchayat could constitute a joint committee with other local authorities for a joint purpose on its own initiative or if so required by the government of the state (Bajpai and Verma, 1995).

In what manner and to what extent the instrumentality of committees is utilised to collate expert information from relevant government and non-government sources will depend on the arrangements worked out in this regard in different states, as per particular/specific requirements and constraints, political constraints or pertaining to resources, more possibly. However, the committee system opens up tremendous opportunities for intra- tier as well as inter- jurisdiction coordination/cooperation, which would prove immensely beneficial for concerted rural-urban development.

Also, to what extent local governments are developed as institutions of self- governance would depend on the history in/of the state in this regard and the conventions and traditions in this respect, as for example, certain states have followed the democratic norm better than the others, such as Karnataka, Kerala and West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, and some have preferred rather, to observe provisions in breach, as Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and most other states. In this unit we will be discussing the intra tier local government relationships in the context of planning, responsibilities and implementation.

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## **16.2 GRAM SABHA AND GRAM PANCHAYAT**

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The 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment has prescribed a three-tier system of Panchayats, for all states which have a population of more than 20 lacs, which means, in each case, there shall be panchayats at the village (Gram panchayat), intermediate (panchayat samiti) and district levels (zilla parishad). The Gram Sabha is the most important institution where peoples' participation is set to invoked. Previously, where the gram sabha existed, it functioned as the prime association with the status of a body corporate with perpetual succession and a common seal, vested with the authority to sue or be sued in its corporate name, of acquiring, holding or transferring property and of entering into contracts. After the amendment, the Gram Panchayat has assumed that status. However, the gram sabha still retains considerable authority, as it is required to meet periodically and give its recommendations and suggestions to the gram panchayat which carry enough weight to ensure due consideration. The interconnection between the two bodies is also ensured by the fact that the chairperson of the gram panchayat presides over the meetings of the gram sabha. In most states, the gram sabha gives credible opinion on the annual administration reports, the annual statement of accounts and audit reports. Besides, the gram sabha is an indispensable instrument for bringing about/ ensuring social solidarity, organising and managing volunteer groups active within its jurisdiction for various purposes,

such as disaster management, family planning, gender justice and so on, and acting in tandem with the government in identification of beneficiaries for development programmes, overseeing distribution of funds for welfare programmes, where such distribution is to be monitored and there is no specification regarding the instrumentality. Even otherwise, the cooperation of the Gram Sabha is sought on almost all occasions (Bajpai & Verma, 1995). However differing views have been expressed in the tenth plan (2002-07). In the chapter on "Poverty Alleviation", the tenth plan 2002-07 articulates that only ceremonial functions have been given to the gram sabhas. The powers and functions of the gram sabhas need to be enlarged to give them effective powers of implementation, and monitoring of development plans. There is a declaration that social audit of all development programmes by the gram sabha, would henceforth be made mandatory. There is a proposition that the committee system which has been adopted in many states to facilitate a more participative decision making process in the panchayats should be incorporated in the state panchayat acts. The powers entrusted to a gram sabha in Scheduled V areas could be entrusted to gram sabhas in non-scheduled areas as well. Schedule V of the Indian Constitution provides for special provisions with regard to administration of regions having tribal populations. Uplift of tribal populations through policy aimed at their specific concerns is the main agenda of administration in these regions.

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### **16.3 CONNECTIVITY THROUGH MEMBERSHIP**

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Regarding intra- tier connectivity, through membership, the constitution amendment act has left the matter of representation of the chairperson the gram panchayats and intermediate panchayats at successive higher stages, that is, the intermediate and district panchayats; to the discretion of the state governments. In Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, there is no representation of the chairpersons of the village panchayats in the panchayat at the intermediate level. In case of Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan, there is provision for representation of one fifth of the chairpersons of the village panchayats in panchayats at the intermediate level by rotation for one year. In case of Tamil Nadu and Haryana, there is provision for election of chairpersons of village panchayats equal to one-fifth of the total elected members of the panchayats, by rotation, at the intermediate level. Punjab has adopted more or less the same pattern As far as representations of chairpersons of Panchayats at the intermediate level in the panchayats at the district level is concerned, except for Gujarat and Maharsahtra, all states have provided for representation. In Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan, they are treated as permanent invitees. In case of Tamil Nadu, the restriction is that only such number of chairpersons as shall be equal to one- fifth of the total number of elected numbers will be represented at the district level. Regarding representation MPs and MLAs at successive tiers in panchayats who operate within its jurisdiction, as well, the decision rests with the state legislature (Bajpai and Verma, 1995).

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### **16.4 INTRA-TIER DISTRIBUTION OF POWERS AND FUNCTIONS**

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Work distribution and the relative significance of the three tiers in respect of powers and functions, ever since the Balwantrai Mehta Committee reveals a distinct reluctance on the part of state governments for meaningful and effective devolution of powers and functions, which continues till the present day. Despite the Mehta committee's recommendation in favour of having the panchayat samiti as the fulcrum in the scheme of things in decentralised governance at the local level, most states favoured a strong zilla parishad.

It was even opined that the district development council in fact was the right institution to be developed as a democratic forum of local governance, which could be entrusted with the responsibility of implementing all developmental works up to the district level. It was even felt that it would be right to entrust it with the right to supervise the functions of the village panchayats and the samitis. Though Rajasthan struck a different note by strengthening the samitis, the experiment was subsequently reviewed after a few years when expected results were not forthcoming (Ibid).

As regards the powers and functions that ought to be entrusted to each tier, the Balwantrao Mehta Committee had recommended that the functions of the panchayat raj bodies should include all areas concerning the social and economic development of the area *in a general sense*. *In particular*, they should be entrusted with functions like, public health, clean water, lighting and cleansing, local roads and amenities. To these, development programmes should be added like, agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, social forestry, rural industries, family planning, education, social education, welfare programmes, irrigation channels, rural electrification and so on. Subjects whose effects transcend village boundaries should be entrusted to samitis, and those that concern the district as a whole, should be with the parishad. All else should be with the village panchayats.

According to the Ashok Mehta Committee, decentralisation should be attempted in the nature of real and effective devolution of powers and functions, and not as seemingly, 'political charity'. Delegation should start from the state governments. Developmental functions pertaining to the district, which are being retained/performed by the state governments, should be delegated to zilla parishads. These would be in the agriculture and allied sectors, marketing, health, education, communication, rural industries, welfare of backward classes etc. excepting certain functions like research in agriculture, College and University education, medium irrigation projects involving complications or items covering a larger area than one district, pilot projects etc. The committee also emphasised that commensurate resources should be provided to the institutions to efficiently discharge the responsibilities delegated. Those regulatory functions, which are tied with development work, should also be entrusted along with the devolution at respective tiers. It is felt that efficient resource management can come about only by vesting control regarding its management in the local groups and poverty and disability can best be tackled by empowering communities and urging them to self- help through catalytic intervention at the local level itself.

Overall perusal of the 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment suggests that it has assigned subjects like provision and maintenance of civic amenities, public hygiene, maintenance of public works, primary education, agricultural production, rural industries, and primary health care, women and child welfare etc. The functions of panchayat samitis are limited including various local schemes entrusted to them and some works taken up from their own resources. The District Panchayats have been kept as, generally, advisory and fund distributing bodies except in a few states where substantial functions have been entrusted to them. By the 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment, state governments have been enjoined the responsibility to develop local institutions as institutions of "self -governance" and bestowing such power and authority as might be appropriate to that end. Devolution has to be with respect to:

- The preparation of plans for economic development and social justice,
- The implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them, including those in relation to matters listed in the Eleventh schedule (Ibid).

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## 16.5 INTRA- TIER RESPONSIBILITIES: THE ELEVENTH SCHEDULE

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A close study of the eleventh schedule suggests that local institutions have been assigned major responsibilities. These in fact could determine the future course the country adopts, implying/ regarding, the development stance it takes, mostly matters pertaining to sustainable development, education and welfare of the weaker sections et al. as India remains predominantly, an agrarian economy. Environmental and social concerns have been decentralised (by putting them in the eleventh schedule). Hence the intent is to improve the quality of service delivery by bringing the administration closer to the doorstep of the people, regarding matters that concern the day-to-day living of the rural poor. All items in the eleventh schedule, as read under, cater to/concern the livelihood of the local people and protection of their habitat through propagation of environmental control measures, their dissemination and internalisation in everyday farming and other living activities. Since these are matters relating to education and extension, education has rightly been decentralised.

The first is *Agriculture, including agriculture extension*. The approach paper to the tenth plan has recognised the centrality of the subject in national economic development. Public investment has continually shown a downward trend ever since the New Economic Policy got underway, especially since 1995-96. Public investment in agriculture declined from 1.6 percent of GDP in 1993-94 to 1.3 percent in 1998-99. Downfall in public investment is owing to system causes, which are explained by the shift towards the present, pro-business, neo- liberal paradigm of development from the traditional socialist mixed economy set up.

Revitalisation of farmer cooperative societies for the management of agricultural infrastructure, such as irrigation management, credit, storage, marketing through direct access to the markets and even exports is being discussed presently, to empower local communities. It has been emphasised time and gain that true democracy can only come about through real empowerment of people and that is possible only when they own and manage their own resources. Unless control over resources is secured, mismanagement or lack of availability would be the order the day/irredeemable woes. This would also improve extension services, since own stakes would be involved. The agriculture extension machinery and information support in most states seems to have become outmoded. The staff created under the World Bank assisted Training and visits programme do not have much mobility. Print and electronic media, and the private sector, particularly the input agencies and traders are now one of the main sources of information for the farmers (Tenth Plan).

Cooperatives would help check rampant abuse of natural resources like water, since co-sharing arrangements would be worked out between farmers on a voluntary basis which would aid further the task/end of sustainable development. Best practices could also be internalised through voluntary cooperative arrangements. The functioning of cooperative societies has suffered in the past owing to the following shortfalls:

- Cooperatives have suffered from stifling bureaucratic control and politicisation because of which they could not develop as the democratic self- help institutions that they purportedly are.
- They did not operate on sound management principles; hence, for revitalisation of cooperatives, best practices from management science like total quality management

TQM, strategic decision making, marketing etc. would have to be incorporated in their working. Women had negligible presence, which mitigated the impact of the cooperatives as a social movement.

- Absence of a national policy on cooperatives compromised their working
- They did not have adequate infrastructure support service like marketing, storage etc. that means they did not function as a network in interconnected spheres (Samantarai, 2004).

In China, ways are being explored to set up co-operative farming as a planned organisation, which would be a union of enterprises, scientific and technological workers and farmers. The enterprises will be responsible for market surveys, predictions on the produce categories and quantities demanded by the market, and deep processing and sales of the produce. The scientific and technological workers will be in charge of promoting advanced technologies, including popularisation of fine species and advantageous farming technologies and application of bioengineering and genetic engineering. Although individual farmers remain the basic production unit, membership of the union can help realise the industrialisation of agriculture and be of positive significance to increase farm incomes. The example of China is pertinent because the problems faced by the average farmer are largely similar and the issues confronting the industry, also the same (Yang, 2001).

Another positive outcome of voluntary effort would be ‘collectivisation’ of effort in the framing sector as a voluntary arrangement between farmers do garner economies of scale which are presently lacking in the agriculture sector because of sever individuation of effort. In all developed countries, there have been major shifts in the occupational pattern, from the primary sector, particularly agriculture, to secondary (industry) and tertiary sectors (services predominate in developed nations now). No such shift has been evident in India. In fact the average size of holdings has gone down from 2.28 ha in 70-71 to 1.57 ha in 1990-91 which means pressure on a unit of land has increased by about 2.25 times which suggests even more engagement in agriculture. Besides, the quality of farm implements has remained unsatisfactory. One of the reasons that are given to explain is, because manufacture of agricultural implements and equipments was reserved for the small-scale sector, quality could not be assured. Modern technology and precision farming techniques have remained a long distance away. The suggestion seems to come across clearly; there is need to foster large-scale capitalist farming. However that would not be possible given the present pattern of ownership. How does one attain the desired consolidation for the economies of scale intended? The share of agriculture in the GDP has declined from 61 percent in 1950-51 to 24.2 percent (2001-02), while the dependence of population on agriculture has declined only marginally, from 77 percent to 69 percent during the period.

The *third* is, minor irrigation, water management, and watershed development. The aim of putting this in the eleventh schedule purportedly, is to encourage ‘communitarianism’ on the part of local communities for better and more sustained use of natural resources, and for that, decentralised management and operation of local public goods. Obviously, this could be encouraged at the local level under the aegis of a local institution, which is the panchayat. Local operation/provision of public goods is considered to be the more cost effective and sustainable option. Best practices could be internalised through research and development in indigenous practices of water management and encouragement of local

initiative towards the same. In watershed development, the aim is to move from conventional practices of soil conservation based on safe disposal of run-off to rainwater harvesting based on indigenous practices. The aim of watershed development would be to ensure that basic water needs of the rural poor are met. Rainwater management would encompass multiple uses of water namely, drinking water for people, livestock and wildlife, life saving and pre-sowing irrigation of crops, natural regeneration of flora and other uses, in that order of priority. The harvested water should be treated as a common people resource by evolving suitable community practices, which would ensure equitable distribution of the usufruct. Indigenous environmental friendly practices would be encouraged, as/in vegetative soil conservation measures, use of plant species in development and reclamation of problem soils instead of harmful pesticides, which are not environmentally sustainable. Panchayat institutions and the government sector would be actively engaged in securing wastelands and forests for provision of basic bio-mass needs of the rural poor, which is minor forest produce such as, *mahuva*, *chironji*, *honey*, *gum*, fuel and fodder for livestock, inputs for small scale and cottage industries such as basket and mat weaving. Certain non-government organisations have started the practice of leasing and contracting out land to village dwellers for provision of basic needs and protection of the wider natural environment. The lands are periodically retrieved for further leasing (The Tenth Plan).

Related, is the *sixth* subject, which is social forestry and farm forestry. Decentralisation of environment protection again, follows the same reasoning that forests can be better secured if local people are offered a stake in their preservation and development. As per the New Forest Policy, the idea of Joint Forest Management (JFM) has been mooted which turns to practice the aforesaid idea/argument. As part of the JFM, indigenous knowledge about plant species and ways to conserve them, especially among rural women would be utilised to achieve better forest conservation. Besides, exploitation of forest resource by private companies would be checked. Wood based industries would be made to undergo modernisation programmes, for reduction and recycling of waste regulations regarding use of seasoned and treated material, promotion of standards and codes for wood products etc. Community woodlots and public woodlots would be encouraged to check rampant exploitation from private timber merchants. Under the JFM, local communities have been granted stake in the earnings from forest resources, which has augmented their earnings and encouraged participation on their behalf in forest management. Since this could best be administered at the local level, it has been included in the eleventh schedule. Panchayat Raj institutions would have a major role to play in the greening venture, and better institutionalisation of JFMs with effective legal back up.

The *fourth* is, animal husbandry, dairying and poultry. It has been recognised globally, that conservation and improvement of native animal genetic resources is essential for sustainable development in agriculture and animal husbandry. Cross fertilisations have brought indigenous breeds of cattle to the point of extinction which are better adapted to local conditions with better feed conversion of crop residue. Hence conservation and improvement programmes should be decentralised and active involvement of non-government organisations should be sought. Hence, in line with the decentralisation, the tenth plan marks a shift from “subsistent livestock farming to sustainable and viable livestock and poultry farming”. Technology transfer in the field of processing and distribution of livestock products will be the thrust area in the tenth plan for which extension services for knowledge transfer and knowledge networking between veterinary schools, colleges, Krishi Vigyan Kendras and State Agricultural Universities and their field stations would be sought. Integration of

animal research institutes with the department of animal husbandry and dairying is essential to facilitate transfer of technology as well as to undertake sanitary and phyto- sanitary measures for better livestock production. For knowledge creation and dissemination through informed and educated extension workers, human resource development through collaboration between farmers, non- government organisations and expert agencies in related fields would be sought. Besides the overlap between the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Rural Development and the Ministry of Non -conventional Energy Sources etc. in matters related to animal husbandry and dairying would be tackled through efforts at consolidation and convergence of/in such schemes.

The *fifth* is, fisheries. Waterlogged lands could be reclaimed for aquaculture and crop production. Alkalinity and salinity of the land would be treated through effective drainage. The technology employed would be environment friendly/people friendly, based on active participation of the people. The seventh is minor forest produce, which refers again to the New Forest Policy and watershed development schemes, read above.

The *eighth* is small-scale industries including food-processing industries. The sector is rural in nature, hence rightly placed in the eleventh schedule. Growth in these sectors has been hampered by constraints, such as lack of timely credit, technological obsolescence, infrastructural bottlenecks, marketing constraints, and too many rules and regulations, stifling initiative. De-reservation of 85 items under liberalisation has also affected the industry. A New Policy Package has been announced (2004-05). Limits for investment in plant and machinery, loan limits from the RBI have been raised. Small and medium enterprises would, it is proposed, be integrated and the Small and Medium Industries Fund of Rs. 10,000 has been operationalised by the SIDBI since 2004. Attention is also being paid to remove the above-mentioned constraints (Economic Survey, 2004-05). The agency of the panchayat institutions could effectively *channelise* these benefits to the small-scale sector and be actively involved in planning efforts with regard to these sectors, in the sense of needs articulation. It is crucial since entrepreneurial activity should be promoted, pooling individual efforts for better productivity and employment in the countryside.

The *ninth* is khadi, village and cottage industries. In the new environment of globalisation, the Khadi industry is facing the threat of premature and nebulous competition. Since it is a major source of employment for the illiterate rural poor, ways have to be evolved to protect the industry in the wake of constraints put up by the environment following the paradigm shift towards globalisation and free trade. Growth in khadi trade has dwindled over the years because of problems relating to marketing and uncertainty about the rebate policy to make the khadi cloth cheaper in the market. The Tenth Plan envisages promoting khadi through setting up rural industrial estates and artisan clusters to provide necessary infrastructure and support services to the village industries. Developed land, power, water, common facility centers, design and quality inputs and common packaging facilities would be provided at such clusters. The common facility centers would be managed by the implementing agency for the industrial state. Financial assistance would be provided by the KVIC or by agencies such as National Bank for Rural Development NABARD, Small Industries Development Bank of India SIDBI, Council for the Advancement of Peoples' Action and Rural Technology, CAPART etc. The managerial aspect of the endeavor would be entrusted to local self-governing institutions.

Items, *ten to fourteen* deal with basic services, like housing, fuel and fodder, drinking water etc. Regarding safe drinking water, it has been noted in the tenth plan that

panchayats are unwilling to shoulder the responsibility for operating and maintaining water supply projects which are presently designed and executed by implementing departments at the state level and passed on to end users. The State governments lack the machinery to implement these programmes at the village level. Hence a radical change is called for in the management system. Instead of being supply driven, water supply infrastructure should be as per assessed demands, and the capability to handle the infrastructure. User preferences should be taken into account between hand pumps, stand posts, household connections. People should be informed of the costs and benefits of each option and asked to make a choice for themselves. Hence, stakeholder participation is and necessary effort could be collated under the aegis of the panchayat institutions. Panchayats should also share the expenses of the projects and the responsibility of providing for the maintenance and good workmanship. Besides concerted efforts are required for watershed management measures, referred above, on the part of the community based organisations since they can be best coordinated at the local level. As local institutions are gradually institutionalised and gain in confidence, future scenario in this respect would be encouraging. Hence, one could confidently go with the listing of this subject in the eleventh schedule

*Twelfth* is, fuel and fodder. The JFM has been discussed above. Local people have the knowledge regarding what species need to be planted for fuel and fodder requirements. Hence, the joint arrangement for forest management between official agencies and the community would serve the twin purpose of addressing the requirements of local communities for fuel and fodder and conserving the other plant species, which could be hacked for firewood. Apart from community woodlots and public woodlots, farms and homesteads, for meeting the requirements of fuel and fodder, medicinal plants, poles, timber etc., degraded forests, wastelands private marginal lands and agricultural farms, are also being utilised for the purpose, raising the level of private tree planting to 6m.ha. The emphasis on social forestry by the National Commission on Agriculture since 1976 has given fillip to the initiatives. Private sources now account for more than 50 percent of the national requirements of wood in the country. Considering the contribution of the private sector, the tenth plan calls for further government incentive for such efforts.

*Thirteenth* is, roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways, and other means of communication. The *fourteenth* is, rural electrification, including distribution of electricity. The UDF is sated to play a major role in infrastructure development in the rural, areas. Low level of disbursements from the rural infrastructure development fund (RIDF) had been a cause for concern. The scope of the RIDF has consequently been widened to include activities such as rural drinking water schemes, soil conservation, drinking water, rural markets, health centers, schools, mini hydel plants, aganwadis, system improvement in the power sector etc. and projects undertaken by the panchayat institutions.

*Fifteenth* is non -conventional energy resources. Interestingly, development of non-conventional energy resources has been decentralised since subsistence of the poor farmer is indirectly associated with resource exploitation, like burning wood and charcoal for fire. Promotion of non-conventional energy sources is intended to meet the twin objectives of affecting the shift in the use pattern towards environmentally friendly means and its popularisation among the rural masses at the local level to check environmental degradation and global warming to make available better more consistent source of energy to the people in the rural areas.

The *sixteenth* is poverty alleviation programmes. Though poverty has come down in absolute terms from 37.27 percent in 1993-94 to 27.09 percent in 1999-2000 in rural

areas, achievements have fallen short of targets. This is attributed to imbalances in target achievement in states. Poverty is endemic in certain pockets in relatively poorer states like Orissa, Bihar, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh. These states alone accounted for 69 percent of the poor in the country in 1999(Tenth Plan). Hence, considerable stress is being laid on decentralised governance and needs articulation through micro planning to alleviate the distress in these regions owing to specific causes. There is need for area-based targeted approach instead of a top down approach with little semblance to the situation on the ground. This is the message put across by including the subject in the eleventh schedule assigned to the panchayats. There is also need to inter- connect the various self-employment and wage employment programmes to approach poverty reduction in a comprehensive manner. There is also need for integration with other sector progress such as health and nutrition, family welfare, as these all variables in creating the poverty situation. Poverty is not just an economic concept. It has significant sociological dimensions as also cultural; hence, cannot be tackled in an isolated manner. Such integration can be achieved only at the local level under the aegis of the politically legitimate panchayat institutions. Coordination left to the administration alone would be ineffective as has been the case up till now. It is hoped that delegating planning and implementation functions to the local level could check pathological processes like alienation of tribals from their land.

Civil society activism would also be secured in a better way at the local level, which is showing promise in the field of poverty alleviation. Cooperation, for instance, could be institutionalised through committees. Example of successful civil society activism could be their efforts in securing the livelihoods of the downtrodden segments of society. Agricultural workers did not benefit from zamindari abolition as they have no land and employment opportunities have not grown enough in the non-farm sector. Besides, there have been malpractices like concealment of land to hide the surplus available for distribution among non- farm communities etc. Conferment of ownership rights to the tenants has proved to be a retrograde measure, as it has deterred farmers from renting out land even if there were no able bodied members to cultivate for fear of acquisition by the owner. This has had adverse impact on productivity and employment opportunities for agricultural labourers. This warrants a fresh look at the tenancy laws. Certain innovative experiments in this regard pioneered by non -government organisations have worked, like the idea of 'pani panchayat' in Maharashtra, where each member of the village has equal right over water irrespective of ownership over some piece of land, and hence, big farmers are forced to lease out land to agricultural labourers who have no land but water rights, to access more water. A variant of this approach has been granting a larger share of the common property resources, which result from the rejuvenation of a watershed due to water supplied by the agricultural labourers. These families have been able to take up animal husbandry or fishery as a result of cooperative watershed development. Creating an enabling environment for development of a land market by removing restriction on sale, mortgage or leasing of land would be advisable, since there are many families who have moved out of the village but continue to hold land because of these restrictions. The State can also be a player as in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, where the National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance Development Corporation provides assistance to SC, ST families to purchase land. Alienation of tribals from their land by forced evictions can be checked through measures like computerisation of land records and the PESA, 1996, which has not been stringently implemented by state governments. The Panchayats (extension of scheduled areas act, 1996, extended the provisions of the 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment, 1992, to the scheduled areas in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh,

Maharashtra, Orissa and Rajasthan. PESA enables tribals to preserve and conserve their traditional rights over natural resources including land (Ibid).

Subjects, *seventeenth to eighteenth* relate to *education*, including primary and secondary schools; technical training and vocational education; adult and non-formal education; libraries, and cultural activities. This would be a natural corollary to decentralisation of other functions, relating to sustainable development practices in agro forestry, farm forestry, soil conservation et al and for poverty alleviation through employment generation. Human Resource Development for better extension services and empowerment of the general rural folk, particularly farmers for better use of natural resources and environment friendly practices.

*The Twenty- second* is markets and fairs. Marketing arrangements for rural industries and agricultural products are presently inadequate. Extension workers possess inadequate information about market conditions regarding prices; farmers are ill informed and resource constraints and lack of political will largely explain governmental apathy towards the farmers. If the shift towards the neo- liberal paradigm of governance has had some negative consequences, like, falling public investment in agriculture, there are positive potentials to be tapped. Increasing stake/ participation of the private sector is one such feature. It will lead to productive results in extension, storage and marketing, education, basic services like housing electricity etc. To arrange for the same, autonomy would be required for policy decisions at the local level or even a stake in policy. Past experience suggests that there has been reluctance on the part of M.L.As to delegate authority to local elected officials and have even resented their growing political clout. Such interpersonal conflicts could mar the spirit of the present amendment, which is primarily aimed at grass roots planning.

*Twenty- third* is Health and Sanitation, including hospitals, primary health care centers and dispensaries. Regarding Health, the key requirement/issue is horizontal linkages of related programmes, which are presently operating only vertically, that is through their specific departments, without necessary linkages with other departments,' in that health and sanitation are related problems; poverty is a debilitating factor, lack of primary health care centers and man power therein etc. Such horizontal linkage can be established only when local administration is activated. Regarding services generally at the local level, problems are more administrative in that teachers and other staff get away with no performance. Hence, monitoring, regarding, punishing, et al, which are essentially problems, related to motivation are the areas of concern at the local level. For example, village panchayats need to adopt building byelaws that restrict construction of dry latrines, which have to be manually scavenged. Information regarding all low cost options, providers of the same, whether private or non- government, should be available with samitis and disseminated through marts etc.

*Twenty- fourth* is Family Welfare. The NDC sub -committee on population recommended that there should be a paradigm shift in the Family Welfare Programme and the focus should be on:

- Decentralised area- specific planning based on needs assessment
- Emphasis on improved access and quality of services on women and children
- Providing special assistance to poorly performing states/districts to minimise the differences in performance.

- Creation of district level databases on quality, coverage and impact indicators for monitoring the programme.

Decentralisation of family planning thus is in line with the wider objective of need- based and culture specific application of programmes which is also in accord with the international strategy in this regard, articulated at the International Conference on Population and Development, held at Cairo in 1994.

*Twenty- fifth to twenty- seventh*, concern improving the *quality of life of people*; accordingly, *twenty -fifth* deals with women and child development; *Twenty –sixth* with social welfare, including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded; *twenty seventh* concerns welfare of the weaker sections, in particular, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Since, most of rural poor are engaged in non-farm activities, employment opportunities need to be furthered in this sector. Hence, employment avenues and education and training along with credit support is required for weaker sections, for which planning is necessary. Hence, the aforesaid subjects have been put in the eleventh schedule, as eventually, local institutions would be developed as institutions of development planning. Also, during implementation of schemes identification of beneficiaries is better affected through the panchayat institutions. It is notable, that social welfare concerns, as health above, need an integrated approach instead of isolated/ piecemeal approach, implying, welfare of weaker sections, is a broad concern with components that cut across jurisdictions/functional specialties within ministries/departments. Hence, there integration at the cutting edge level is vital for tangible results in this regard. Also, welfare is tied/ correlated with education. Since education is a purported to be decentralised, welfare is better dealt with at the level of closest interface between targeted beneficiaries that is citizen and the administration.

The *Twenty- eighth* deals with the particular subject of the public distribution system (PDS), which is related directly to poverty. The issue of food security can be addressed in two ways. First, by putting purchasing power in the hands of the rural poor in order to create demand for food items. This can be done providing employment to the rural poor. Second, food can be provided at subsidised rates to the poor. The PDS is based on the second line of thinking though it serves to complement the former in that employment generation is crucial for any demand to exist in the first place. The public distribution system operates through a network of fair price shops (FPSs) that sell essential commodities at subsidised rates. The operation of the PDS has been adversely affected because of corruption and problems in identification of beneficiaries. Unscrupulous elements with alleged connivance of officials buy off goods at very cheap rates and sell off in the open market. That creates shortages within the PDS or a residue of cheap quality grain. Decentralised procurement is being explored as an option to secure better service delivery. Maintenance of community grains would help during contingencies and even in normal times in areas where employment cannot be actively produced due to constraints. Identification of beneficiaries could be better secured through innovative measures like smart cards, food credit/debit cards and food stamps. All these arrangements would be better secured through decentralised operations. That explains the rationale of putting PDS in the Eleventh Schedule.

The *Twenty- ninth*, is Maintenance of Community Assets. In the process of developments in the aforesaid functional areas, assets would come up like water harvesting structures et al, the onus for the management of which would be with the local communities. This is designed to train local functionaries in the nuances of administration, which would them

develop in due course, as institutions of 'self-governance'. Local management would also be efficient and cost effective for obvious reasons of local stake, proximity, and the presence of a publicly accountable institution, that is the panchayat, which hopefully would function effectively.

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## 16.6 INTRA-TIER IMPLEMENTATION HURDLES

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There are 29 items in the eleventh schedule. However, precise definition of the functions/jurisdiction, implying, break up of the items into supervisory, executive, legislative *et al* has been left unspecified. According to Mukherjee and Datta (1996) there are three distinct groups of responsibilities assigned as panchayat functions. These are (1) civic services, (2) developmental activities and (3) agency tasks. In effect the civic services and development activities of the panchayats are joint responsibilities with the states' field administration, while agency functions are undertaken by the panchayats at the behest of the state government. Instead of carving out a panchayat functional list out of the 7<sup>th</sup> schedule, the eleventh schedule illustrates a combined list of civic services and development activities, which could be joint, rather than exclusive responsibilities of the panchayats and the state field administration. Two possible scenarios could emerge; situation retains status quo or could relegate into chaos; or, as per convention, traditions, history of the place, a natural arrangement could evolve in each state, where division of work responsibilities are affected in the best interest of governance; it is also possible that the state governments retain their overweening influence over local administrative affairs and perpetuate the latter's position as *agents*, carrying out specified tasks, delegated from time to time, to any tier, as per the convenience of the state government.

As pointed out by Bajpai and Verma (1995), some experts feel that mere listing of functions would not serve the desired purpose. A detailed exercise would be imperative to identify and specify functions for each tier under each sector as per the budget scheme. Expert groups should be constituted in each state to identify the schemes which could be delegated to the local level. It would not be right to leave the matter to the discretion of the state officials.

According to Mukherjee and Datta, (1996), "in assigning expenditure responsibilities to the three tiers of the panchayats, no discernible principle seems to have been followed, especially that of subsidiarity, which means whatever can be solved at the lower tier should be allocated to that level itself. As a result expenditure assignment to the different panchayat tiers shows overlapping responsibilities and role confusion." Organic linkages between the tiers notwithstanding, specific activity based expenditure allotment at each tier could be attempted. The upper tiers should be limited to a coordinating role or managing only spill over functions. This is partly due to the As articulated in the Tenth plan, apart from tied grants, which the panchayats receive for implementation of central/state schemes, united grants should also be extended to strengthen their resource base/capability. Local institutions also need to raise resources from local communities and end reliance on state funds. Presently, proper arrangements for audit of funds by Panchayats are not in place in most states, which makes it hard to check misappropriation of funds by elected officials. The constitutional provision on DPCs is quite weak and it provides for preparation of only draft plans by the DPCs. State governments have not given adequate attention to the DPCs and guidelines on district planning have not been properly internalised. The tenth plan has strongly asserted the need for the involvement of the gram sabha/panchayat in the preparation of village development plans, and their integration with

plans prepared at the samiti and district levels for realising the goal of grassroots planning in India. Functionaries in DPCs and other personnel involved in local administration in general need to be trained in specialist areas such as planning, budgeting and accounting. Besides, PRIs need to be adequately staffed, both quantitatively and qualitatively, with personnel trained in relevant specialties. The Tenth plan stresses on the role of the voluntary sector, whether by social action groups or expert individuals/bodies as an effective contributor to rural development. Empirical evidence suggests that people have benefited most from development programmes where there has been informed collaboration between panchayats, user groups and community organisations. However, since the panchayats and the voluntary sector function in the same subject areas, there have been reports of conflicts between the two.

That would have jeopardising effect; hence institutionalisation of civil society participation through effective voice through committees or any other institutional arrangement would grant a definite political space for the voluntary sector, which could nip trouble to a large extent. Voluntary sector is set to play a significant role in rural development specifically service delivery as the modality of implementing the swarnjayanti gram swaraj yojana, (SGSY) and the swarnjayanti gram rojgar yojana, (SGRY) would be through a network of self- help groups based on partnerships between community based organisations, financial institutions and government agencies. A system of identifying and training facilitators would be followed. For example, the shift in SGSY would shift to a process- oriented approach in four stages:

- Social mobilisation for formation of self- helps groups
- Savings among the groups and internal lending among its members and provision of a revolving fund
- Micro finance; and
- Micro enterprise development

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## 16.7 CONCLUSION

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The committees at each level would be the crucial instrumentality for securing intra- tier collaboration, as is envisaged for fruitful development of local institutions as institutions of development/micro planning for meaningful realisation of grass roots democracy in the country. Involvement of the civil society as also institutionalisation of social capital, that are much talked about today in public administration theory and desired in public administration practice can be realised through the instrumentality of the committees that would provide a forum for joint deliberation on issues and the mechanism for peoples' participation in administration. Though broad functions specified in the eleventh schedule have not been divided precisely between tiers, the arrangement would be worked out in practice as per requirements. If the United Kingdom could work on an unwritten constitution, it should be possible for the largest democracy on earth to evolve best practices in this regard at least at the level of local governance, 93 amendments to the constitution notwithstanding.

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## 16.8 KEY CONCEPTS

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**Watershed** : Watershed is a hydro-geographic area that drains at a common point. The watershed approach is a project based development plan that follows a ridge to valley

approach for water harvesting; water conservation and other related economic and social activities that seek to enhance the production potential of an area on a sustainable basis. The watershed development programmes taken up by ministries usually take up a micro watershed of about 500 hectares each. However the actual project area could vary depending on the local conditions (Tenth Plan).

- Cooperative Society** : A cooperative society is a self- help organisation, which operates like businesses but is internally democratic and addresses vital social issues like agricultural credit, marketing etc. A cooperative society is registered under the societies registration act of ——. The Registrar of Cooperative Societies does the audit of cooperative societies.
- Public Goods** : Public goods are those goods whose enjoyment cannot be restricted to those who pay for it, for example security.
- Comunitarianism** : Communities in the West have suffered ‘atomisation’ as a consequence of weakening social and filial ties, which had made traditional virtues like community cooperation to solve mutual problems through voluntary cooperation. On this count traditional communities like India benefit where comunitarianism is potent especially in rural areas. It is being looked upon as a vital economic resource to tap for cost effective policy implementation and targeted/relevant policy.
- Scheduled V Areas** : The Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution that provides protection to the adivasi people living in the Scheduled Areas. These areas are administered by a tribal advisory council, which functions under the direct control of the Governor. Laws are applied to the region with such modifications ad the governor deems fit and declares so by public notification. Scheduled five is under imminent threat of being amended to allow the transfer of tribal lands to non-tribals and corporates. This move has serious economic and cultural implications to the 80 million tribals of the country. This report attempts to capture the sequence of recent events and concludes with an appeal for support (Rebbapragada, from India Together).
- RIDF** : In 1995-96, the government set up the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund for financing ongoing infrastructure projects. The fund is maintained by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD). Shortfalls in funds are met by investments

from the commercial banks. The objective of the fund is to provide loans to state governments and state owned corporations to undertake rural infrastructure projects (Economic Survey, 2004-05).

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## 16.9 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

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## 16.10 ACIVITIES

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- 1) Do a case study of a cooperative society in your vicinity. Study it closely by an appropriate research tool (interview schedule or questionnaire) with a view to finding out the constraints in the working and suggesting ways to ameliorate the same.
- 2) Write an essay on the historical evolution of local self-governance in India. Bring in the current perspective in the latter half of your essay, quoting recent development with examples from newspaper records and periodicals.