

Recent Developments of Local Self Government in India

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Abstract

Across India, local governance has become an area of focus for many states. Karnataka's leadership and UP's impressive jump in the rankings show that governance reforms, improved financial management, and the empowerment of local functionaries are crucial for better governance. As the index also evaluates aspects such as accountability and capacity building, it becomes clear that states are focusing on not just the framework but also on making their governance more inclusive and responsive to local needs.

Local self-governance ensures democracy at the grassroots level, promotes decentralization, and empowers citizens to participate in decision-making processes that directly affect their lives. Gram Panchayats focus on village-level administration, including water supply, sanitation, local infrastructure, welfare schemes, and agricultural development.

The Gram Panchayats at village level the PanchayatSamiti at block level and the Zila Parishad at district level. In states or Union Territories with less than two million inhabitants there are only two levels of PRIs. Local government in India refers to governmental jurisdictions below the level of the state. India is a federal republic with three spheres of government: central, state and local. The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments give recognition and protection to local governments and in addition each state has its own local government legislation. Since 1992, local government in India takes place in two very distinct forms. Urban localities, covered in the 74th amendment to the Constitution, have Nagar Palika but derive their powers from the individual state governments, while the powers of rural localities have been formalized under the Panchayati raj system, under the 73rd amendment to the Constitution

KEYWORDS: Framework Legal and Institutional Structure, Overall index score, Framework dimension, Functions, Capacity building, Functionaries, Finances, Accountability, Gramini, Lord Ripon's Resolution,

Constitution of India, The Panchayati Raj institutions have contributed substantially, Municipal Councils Nagar Palika, Karnataka State.

History of panchayath raj system and composition. The development of panchayath Raj system is analysed in India can be starting from Vedic period, in Vedas old Sanskrit scriptures, word 'Panchayati' has been mentioned which means a group of five persons, including a spiritual man. later the concept of the inclusion of a spiritual man in such groups vanished so this is real beginning of the solving problem at local level. In the Rigveda, there is a mention of Sabha, Samiti and Vedanta as local self-units. These were the democratic bodies at the local level. The king used to get the approval of these bodies regarding certain functions and decisions. Epic Era indicates the two great epic periods of India, that is, the

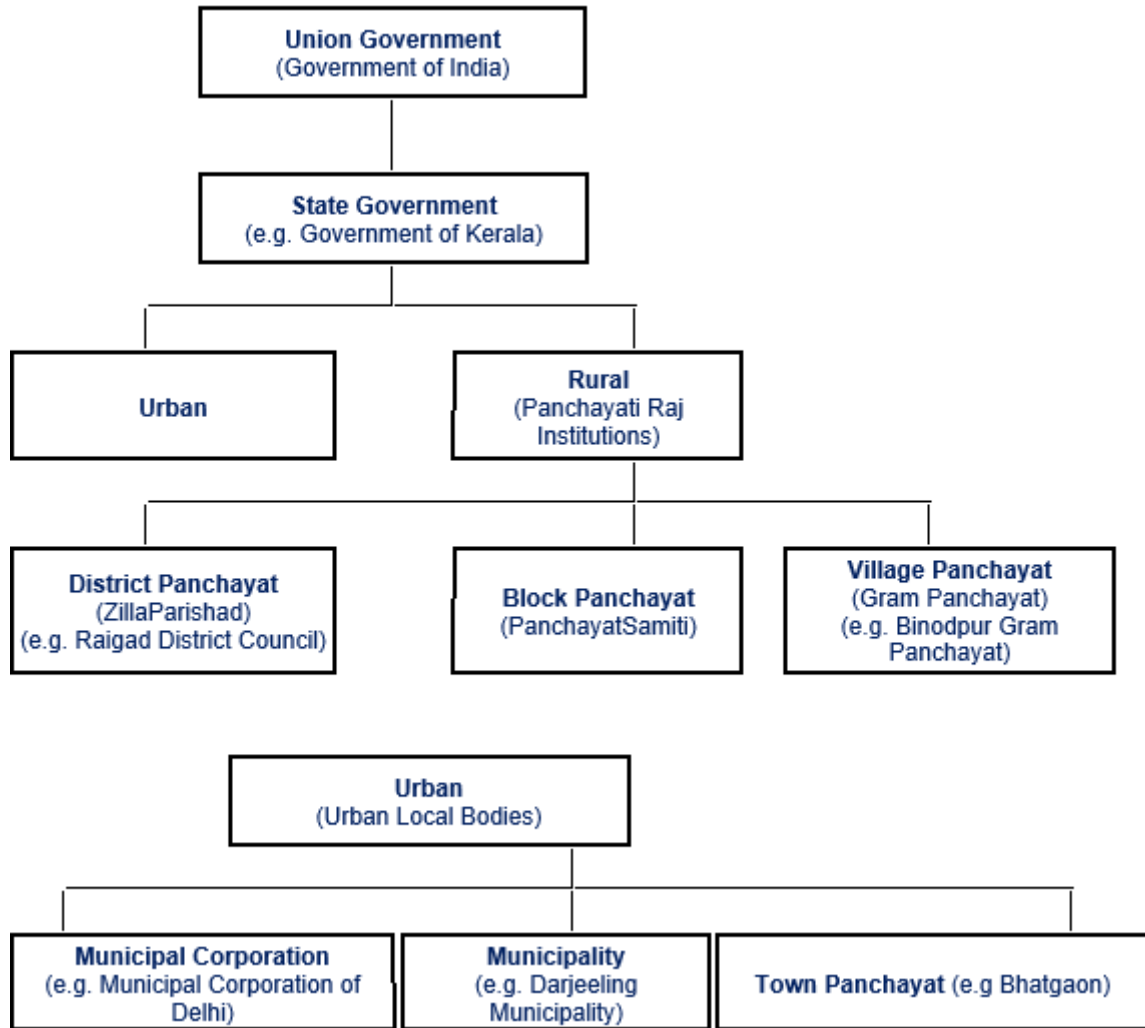
Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The study of Ramayana indicates that the administration was divided into two-part Pur and Janpad or city and village. In India Local self govt. which consist consists of the Panchayati Raj Institutions PRIs through which the self- government of villages is realized.

They are tasked with "economic development, strengthening social justice and implementation of Central and State Government Schemes including those 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule. Within the Administrative setup of India, the democratically elected Local self-governance bodies are called the "municipalities" abbreviated as the "MC" in urban areas and the "Panchayati Raj Institutes PRI" simply called the "panchayats" in rural areas. There are 3 types of municipalities based on the population, Municipal Corporation Nagar Nigam with more than 1 million population, Municipal Councils Nagar Palika with more than 25,000 and less than 1 million population, and Municipal Committee Nagar Panchayat with more than 10,000 and less than 25,000 population. PRIs in rural areas have 3 hierarchies of panchayats, Gram panchayats at village level, Mandal or block panchayats at block level, and Zillapanchayats at district level. The development of local self govt. for the first instance Panchayat Raj system was first adopted by the state of Rajasthan in Nagpur district on 2 Oct 1959 but first started by Andhra Pradesh. During the 1950s and 60s, other state governments adopted this system as laws were passed to establish panchayats in various states

It is very important in the local self-government it is needed good governance, to address the issues and challenges to the effectiveness of functions of panchayath Raj institutions, the first question raised in this study is for what purpose is the Panchayath Raj are functioning? In the process of effective functioning of Panchayath Raj Institutions the ideal administration, good governance is needed. When they function through the elected members of political parties can interact among all publics about their needs of the localities, this will enhance the quality of administration, governance, easy to reach and they can also communicate efficiently and effectively with different types of the people. Thus, the objective of this research is to explore the issues and challenges of Panchayath Raj by the use elected members in the good governance process. The main purpose of this research is to expand on existing local self govt research literature and create greater scope for further research, this study also explores the relationship between the effects of good governance of local selfgovernment and reach people at different level according to their local needs.

Union Government ,Government of India ,State Government , ex : Government of Karnataka State ,Urban Rural (Panchayati Raj Institutions) District Panchayat(ZillaParishad)(e.g. Raigad District Council)Block Panchayat(PanchayatSamiti)Village Panchayat(Gram Panchayat)(e.g. Binodpur Gram Panchayat) Urban(Urban Local Bodies)Municipal Corporation(e.g. Municipal Corporation of Delhi) Municipality(e.g. Darjeeling Municipality)Town Panchayat (e.g.Bhatgaon)

The diagram below outlines the three tiers of government :



State or Union Territory		Local Bodies		
Map key	Name	Rural LB	Urban LB	Traditional LB
1	Andhra Pradesh	1. ZillaPrajaParishad 2. MandalPrajaParishad 3. Gram Panchayat	4. Municipal Corporation 5. Municipality 6. Nagar Panchayat	
2	Arunachal Pradesh	1. ZillaParishad 2. Anchal Samiti 3. Gram Panchayat	4. Municipal Corporation 5. Municipality	
3	Assam	1. ZillaParishad 2. Anchalik Samiti 3. Gaon Panchayat	4. Municipal Corporation 5. Municipality 6. Town Panchayat	
4	Bihar	1. ZillaParishad 2. Panchayat Samiti	4. Municipal Corporation 5. Municipality	

State or Union Territory		Local Bodies		
Map key	Name	Rural LB	Urban LB	Traditional LB
		3.Gram Panchayat	6.Town Panchayat	
5	Chhattisgarh	1. ZillaParishad 2.Janpad Panchayat 3.Gram Panchayat	4.Municipal Corporation 5.Municipality 6.Notified Area Council	
6	Goa	1. ZillaParishad 2.Village Panchayat	4.Municipal Corporation 5.Municipality	
7	Gujarat	1. District Panchayat 2.Taluka Panchayat 3.Gram Panchayat	4.Municipal Corporation 5.Municipality	
8	Haryana	1. ZillaParishad 2.Panchayat Samiti 3.Gram Panchayat	4.Municipal Corporation 5.Municipal Committee 6.Municipal Council	
9	Himachal Pradesh	1. ZillaParishad 2.Panchayat Samiti 3.Gram Panchayat	1. Municipal Corporation 2. Municipal Council 3. Nagar Panchayat	
10	Jharkhand	1. ZillaParishad 2.Panchayat Samiti 3.Gram Panchayat	1. Municipal Corporation 2. Nagar Parishad 3. Nagar Panchayat 4. Notified Area Committee	
11	Karnataka	1. District Panchayat 2.Taluka Panchayat 3.Gram Panchayat	1.Municipal Corporation 2.City Municipal Council 3.Town Municipal Council 4.Town panchayat	
12	Kerala	1. District Panchayat 2. Block Panchayat 3. Gram Panchayat	1. Municipal Corporation 2. Municipality	
13	Madhya Pradesh	1. ZillaPanchayat 2.Janpad Panchayat 3.Gram Panchayat	1. Municipal Corporations 2. Municipality 3. Nagar Parishad	
14	Maharashtra	1. ZillaPanchayat 2.Block Panchayat 3.Village Panchayat	4. Municipal Corporation grade A 5. Municipal Corporation	

State or Union Territory		Local Bodies		
Map key	Name	Rural LB	Urban LB	Traditional LB
			grade B 6. Municipal Council 7. Nagar panchayat	
15	Manipur	1. ZillaParishad 2. Gram Panchayat	1. Municipal Council 2. Nagar Panchayat 3. Small Town Committee	
16	Meghalaya	1. District Council 2. Village Council		
17	Mizoram	1. District Council 2. Village Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal Corporation • Municipal Council 	
18	Nagaland	NA		
19	Odisha	1. ZillaParishad 2. Panchayat Samiti 3. Gram Panchayat	1. Municipal Corporation 2. Municipality 3. Notified Area Council	
20	Punjab	1. ZillaParishad 2. Panchayat Samiti 3. Gram Panchayat	1. Municipal Corporation 2. Municipal Council 3. Nagar Panchayat	
21	Rajasthan	1. ZillaParishad 2. panchayat samiti 3. Gram Panchayat	1. Nagar Nigam 2. Nagar parishad 3. Nagar Palika	
22	Sikkim	1. ZillaParishad 2. Gram Panchayat	1. Municipal Corporation 2. Municipal Council 3. Nagar Panchayat	
23	Tamil Nadu	1. District Panchayat 2. Panchayat Union 3. Village Panchayat	1. City Municipal Corporation 2. Municipality 3. Town Panchayat	
24	Telangana	1. ZillaPrajaParishad 2. Mandal PrajaParishad 3. Gram Panchayat	1. Municipal Corporation 2. Municipality 3. Nagar Panchayat	

State or Union Territory		Local Bodies		
Map key	Name	Rural LB	Urban LB	Traditional LB
25	Tripura	1. ZillaParishad 2.Block Panchayat 3.Gram Panchayat	1. Municipal Corporation 2. Municipal Council 3. Nagar Panchayat	
26	Uttar Pradesh	1. ZillaParishad 2.Kshetra Panchayat 3.Gram Panchayat	4.Nagar Nigam 5.Nagar PalikaParishad 6.Nagar Panchayat	
27	Uttarakhand	1. ZillaPanchayat 2.Kshetra Panchayat 3.Gram Panchayat	1. Nagar Nigam 2. Nagar PalikaParishad 3. Nagar Panchayat	
28	West Bengal	1. ZillaParishad 2.Panchayat Samiti 3.Gram Panchayat	4.Municipal Corporation 5.Municipality 6.Notified Area Council	
A	Andaman and Nicobar	1. ZillaParishad 2.Panchayat Samiti 3.Gram Panchayat		
B	Chandigarh	1. ZillaParishad 2.Panchayat Samiti 3.Gram Panchayat	1. Municipal Corporation	
C	Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu	1. ZillaPanchayat 2.Gram Panchayat	1. Municipal Corporation 2. Municipal Council	
D	Jammu and Kashmir	1.District Planning and Development Board 2.Block Development Council 3.Halque Panchayat	1. Municipal Corporation 2. Municipal Council 3. Municipal Committee	
E	Ladakh	1.District Planning and Development Board 2.Block Development Council 3.Halque Panchayat	1. Municipality	
F	Lakshadweep	1. ZillaPanchayat 2.Gram Panchayat	NA	

State or Union Territory		Local Bodies		
Map key	Name	Rural LB	Urban LB	Traditional LB
G	NCT Delhi	NA	1. Municipal Corporation 2. Municipal Council	
H	Puducherry	1. Commune Panchayat 2. Village Panchayat	1. Municipality	

Framework Legal and Institutional Structure : Top State: Kerala 83.56 Other high scorers: Maharashtra 74.74 Karnataka 74.43, Haryana 73.3. This dimension assesses legal provisions for Panchayati Raj governance, including regular elections, reservation policies, and state commissions for Panchayat oversight. Functions Powers Delegated to Panchayats . Top State: Tamil Nadu 60.24. Karnataka 57.62. and Odisha 57.46. rank close behind. Karnataka allows maximum taxation power to Gram Panchayats, strengthening local governance. Finances Fiscal Decentralization and Funding Top State: Karnataka 70.65 . Kerala 62.89, Tamil Nadu 55.78, and Rajasthan 54.56 follow. The index evaluates how well states release funds under the 15th Finance Commission and implement recommendations from the State Finance Commission SFC. Accountability Transparency and Governance Monitoring. Top State: Karnataka 81.33 Kerala 81.18, Maharashtra 80.36, and Uttar Pradesh 76.07 rank next. Karnataka excels in social audits, Gram Sabha functioning, financial transparency, and anti-corruption measures. Functionaries Manpower and Resources at Panchayats. Top State: Gujarat 90.94 Tamil Nadu 84.25 and Kerala 82.99 follow. Karnataka has a high number of Panchayat officials, ensuring efficient local administration. Capacity Building Training and Skill Development for Officials. Top State: Telangana 86.19. Tamil Nadu 84.29 and Gujarat 83.96 rank next. Reasons for Karnataka Leading in Panchayat Governance Strong Fiscal Autonomy: Karnataka ensures timely release of funds, empowering Panchayats with financial independence. Effective Local Governance: The state has well-functioning Gram Sabhas and social audit mechanisms to promote transparency and accountability. Empowered Gram Panchayats: Panchayats in Karnataka enjoy significant authority in taxation and local decision-making. Capacity Building Programs: Training initiatives for Panchayat officials and elected representatives ensure efficient governance. Digitization and Transparency: e-Governance initiatives and digital monitoring systems improve service delivery and reduce corruption.... Karnataka tops the overall Devolution Index DI ranking of the Panchayat Raj system among States in India, while Kerala and Tamil Nadu are in the second and third spot, respectively. The report titled ‘Status of Devolution to Panchayats in States – An Indicative Evidence-Based Ranking’ 2024 released by the Centre on February 13 states that Karnataka tops the chart in the DI and in the key sub-indices of ‘finances’ and ‘accountability’. Overall, the State has commendable performance across nearly all identified metrics. States/UTs were ranked according to the overall panchayat DI and six key dimensions of framework, functions, finances, functionaries, capacity enhancement, and accountability. The Union Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, prepared the report.

Overall index score: The report notes that Karnataka ranks first with an overall index score of 72.23 followed by Kerala 70.59, Tamil Nadu 68.38, and Maharashtra 61.44. While BJP-ruled Uttar Pradesh ranks fifth 60.07, Gujarat is ranked sixth 58.26. Bihar along with the north-eastern and hilly States of

Assam, Sikkim, and Uttarakhand emerged as moderate scorers but with values above the national average of 43.89.

Framework dimension: In the ‘Framework’ dimension, Kerala ranks first with a score of 83.56 followed by Maharashtra 74.74, Karnataka 74.43, and Haryana 73.3. This dimension includes legal requirements such as holding regular panchayat elections, reserving seats for women, SCs, and STs, and establishing State Election Commission and State Finance Commission.

Functions: In the ‘functions’ dimension, Tamil Nadu tops with an index value of 60.24. Karnataka 57.62, Odisha 57.46, and Rajasthan 56.13 are marginally separated from each other. This criterion stipulates States to assign local functions to panchayats, enabling them to act as institutions of self-government. Karnataka delegates a significant number of functions to panchayats and GPs enjoy maximum power to levy taxes and non-taxes, it said.

Capacity building: In the ‘Capacity building’ dimension, Karnataka is among the top 10 States. Key indicators included in this category are training institutions, and training activities of elected representatives and officials. Telangana has secured the first rank 86.19 followed by Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat, with the score of 84.29 and 83.96, respectively.

Functionaries: In the ‘Functionaries’ dimension, Karnataka has one of the maximum number of panchayat officials working as per the sanctioned positions prescribed by the State. Gujarat tops the list with a value of 90.94, followed by Tamil Nadu 84.25, and Kerala 82.99. Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, and Maharashtra have secured scores above 70 along with Himachal Pradesh 70.06. Key indicators included in this dimension are the physical infrastructure of panchayats, e-connectivity of panchayats, panchayat officials, and sanctioned and actual staff positions.

Finances: Under the criterion of ‘Finances’, Karnataka has secured the top place with a score of 70.65 followed by Kerala 62.89, Tamil Nadu 55.78, and Rajasthan 54.56. In this indicator, States have been evaluated based on the release of funds in time under the 15th Finance Commission. It is found that most States are not serious about the constitution of the SFCs and implement their recommendations.

Accountability: Karnataka has topped in the ‘Accountability’ dimension with the highest score 81.33 in the indicators of ‘social audit’ and ‘gram sabha’. Karnataka is followed by Kerala, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh with the score of 81.18, 80.36, and 76.07, respectively. Criteria adopted in this category are accounting and audit of panchayats, social audit of panchayats, functioning of gram sabha, transparency and anti-corruption, panchayat assessment, and incentivisation. Overall, the GP system in Karnataka has served as a vital institution for promoting local self-governance, participatory democracy, and sustainable development in rural areas, the report noted.

Gramini: An important village functionary in the Vedic period. Sabha - Assembly for discussing agricultural matters. Samiti - Assembly with judicial powers. Marked with centralization of leadership and decline in local governance. However, the hands of the administration reached only to the district level. The village communities continued to exist. Regulation of 1816 conferred judicial authority to the village panchayats in a few provinces. The Mayo’s resolution, 1870 gave impetus to the development of local institutions by enlarging their powers and responsibilities. Bengal Village Chowkidari Act, 1870 empowered the District Magistrate to constitute a panchayat in any village. The Resolution on Local Self Government **Lord Ripon’s Resolution** 1882 intended to build local self-government institutions on the foundations of the local self-government system of ancient India. Morley Minto Reforms, 1909 incorporated the recommendations of Royal Commission on Decentralization 1907 which led to the enlargement of the election process in the Local Self Government structure in India. Montagu

Chelmsford reforms of 1919 introduced a dyarchy system where responsibility of the local government was given to ministers. PanchayatiRaj : A Timeline 1882 Local Self Government Resolution of 1882. 1919 Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms. 1938 The Aundh Experiment. 1940 Article 40 **Conctitution of India**. 1957 BalwantRai Mehta Committee Rajsathan Become First State to Adopt Panchayati Raj. 1985 G.V.K. Rao Committee. 1986 L.M. Singhvi Committee. 1992 73rd & 74th Constitutional Amendment. Major sources/ Committees Article 40. Local government is a state subject. Given constitutional status through 73rd and 74th amendment act. To examine the workings of the National Extension Service and Community Development Program. The Committee recommended a scheme for “democratic decentralisation”, as well as a threetier system with directly elected members at the village level. Rajasthan became the first state to adopt the system. 3 tier PRI should be replaced with a **Two tier** PRI with ZilaParishad at the district level and Mandalpanchayat below it. Committee also recommended for Nyayapanchayat. The committee recommended reducing the developmental role of the district collector and giving a major role to PRI. A post of district development commissioner should be created. Appointed to recommend on the revitalization of PRI for democracy and development. It suggested that constitutional status must be given to PRI. Thus 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendment act was passed by Parliament in 1992 and got assent on 20th April 1993. Constitution of India BalwantRai Mehta Committee Ashok Mehta Committee G V K Rao Committee L.M Singhvi Committee Provisions It enabled a large number of people to acquire leadership at local levels. Political consciousness Not less than one-third of seats are reserved for the women candidates. Women empowerment The experience gained by the new generation of leadership in democratic management has raised the quality of legislative debates and working of other higher level institutions. Strengthening democratic Institution and process The PRIs have been designed to play a crucial role in planning and development. A number of studies indicate that as units of planning and development, be it at the district or lower level,

Substantially contribution of Panchayat Raj institutions: Planning and development PRIs have become the connecting link between the Parliament and State Legislature on the one hand and local bodies on the other so that the respective members can exchange views on the objectives of a plan and its priorities. All States now have a uniform three tier Panchayati Raj structure. At the base is the ‘Gram Panchayat’. A Gram Panchayat covers a village or group of villages. The intermediary level is the Mandal (also referred to as Block or Taluka). These bodies are called Mandal or Taluka Panchayats. The intermediary level body need not be constituted in smaller States. At the apex is the Zilla Panchayat covering the entire rural area of the District. The amendment also made a provision for the mandatory creation of the Gram Sabha. The Gram Sabha would comprise all the adult members registered as voters in the Panchayat area. Its role and functions are decided by State legislation.

Conclusion: Local self-governance plays a vital role in promoting democracy, decentralization and citizen participation in governance processes. In India, rural and urban local bodies serve as important pillars of local governance, addressing the diverse needs and aspirations of citizens at the grassroots level. By empowering local communities and enhancing their capacity to manage their own affairs, Local Self-Government in India has helped strengthen the grassroots-level democracy. However, several challenges coming in the way have hampered the realization of its true potential. Necessary steps should be taken to strengthen them so as to ensure that governance is truly of the people, by the people, and for the people.

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