

Lesson 3

Election in the Village

Like previous years Rupa and Deep are again in Bongaon to enjoy their summer vacation. Bongaon is their uncle's village. But this time the atmosphere in the village is different and unfamiliar. Everybody is very busy and their uncle, Mr Mohan Bora is meeting visitors till late at night. The two children could not understand anything and at last at night they got a chance to talk with their uncle.

Deep : Uncle, are you still busy? May we talk to you for sometime?

Uncle : Oh Deep, you can certainly talk with me now.

Rupa : Thank you, uncle. Is there anything wrong in the village? Everyone is talking and discussing in groups. So many people are coming to you, why?

Uncle : Oh no, nothing is wrong in the village. So, you noticed the difference. What else did you notice?

Deep : There are posters, banners and flags all around the village. Sometimes we see processions also.

Uncle : Well, all these are going on because we will have the village panchayat elections next month. The villagers are involved in the preparations for the elections.

Rupa : Uncle, what are panchayat elections?

Uncle : Children, do you know what form of government we have in our country? Who rules it?

Deep : Uncle, I've read in my book that India is a democracy and this country is ruled by a government that is elected by its citizens.

Uncle : Exactly. The people of India elect their own government. As you know, our country is very big and the government cannot

reach out to all the people directly. The people too cannot participate directly in every function of the government. If the people cannot participate in governance, the democracy cannot function efficiently.

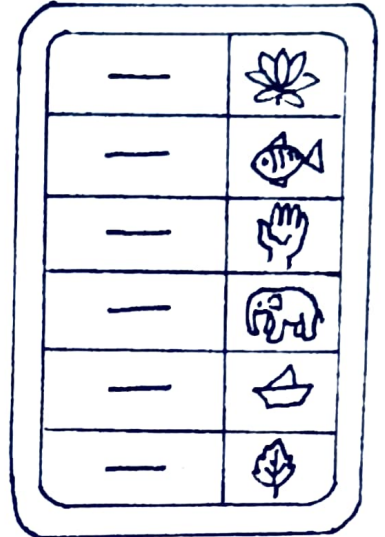


Rupa : What is the solution to this problem ?

Uncle : The solution is local self-governance. The villages, towns and districts should have their own governing bodies duly elected by the people where they can easily participate. This system of self governance in the villages is called panchayati raj in our country. It is the grassroot level of democracy in India.

Deep : Oh now I understand, all the cities, towns and villages in India have panchayats. Isn't it so uncle ?

Uncle : Well, not really. It's a little different because cities and towns do not have panchayats, only villages have. Panchayati raj is a self-governance system at three levels. The first level is panchayat in the villages, the second level is panchayat samiti in the blocks and the third level is the zila parishad in the districts. The people directly elect the members of the panchayats while panchayat samiti is formed by the members elected by the panchayat.



Rupa : Uncle, I want to know one thing. When was this system begun in our country ?

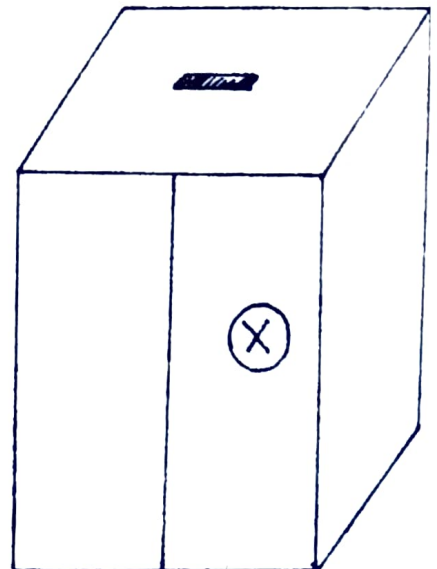
Uncle : Actually, this is an ancient system practised in Indian villages but in independent India the first panchayat under the nationwide system was established in Rajasthan in 1959. However, Assam has had its panchayats since 1948. At present there are more than 4.5 lakh panchayats in the country.

Deep : Are all the villagers members of a panchayat ?

Uncle : All villagers can actively participate in the activities of the panchayat but the number of its elected members may be within five and thirty one. The head of the panchayat is called the president or sarpanch. This year I am also contesting in the panchayat elections. I am a candidate for the post of president in our panchayat.

Deep : Oh now I understand why you have so many visitors. But is there any other aim of these institutions ?

Uncle : Panchayats have an important aim of making the villagers aware of their rights and responsibilities as citizens.



Rupa : Uncle, what are the functions of panchayats ?

Uncle : Panchayats are responsible for many functions such as agricultural production, rural industries, medical relief, women and child welfare, rural employment, maintenance of village roads, tanks etc. All the plans undertaken by the government are implemented by the panchayats. Moreover, nowadays, the popular self-help groups are also helped by the panchayats.

Rupa : Can women too participate in panchayats ?

Uncle : In fact, panchayats have a very important role in the empowerment of rural women because 33% of the panchayat membership are reserved for women. Similarly backward sections of a society are also given necessary representation in panchayats.

Rupa : So it helps in maintaining equality in the society also. Now I understand the real importance of this system in our country.

Deep : Do the towns and cities also have any self-governance system? How are they governed ?

Uncle : Of course, they have the town committees and the municipal boards instead of the panchayats.

Deep : Uncle, can we also participate in this system ? Can we vote ?

Uncle : You'll have to wait till the age of eighteen years when you will be eligible to vote.

Deep : OK, but I think I'll definitely participate in this system as early as possible.

Rupa : I would also like to work in the grassroot level of democracy.

Uncle : I am very happy that you have understood the importance of this system. When all the citizens realize this and participate in the system, the panchayati raj will be a great success.

Wordnote

previous (adj)	: last; immediately before a time
atmosphere (n)	: the feeling or mood in a particular place
unfamiliar (adj)	: unknown
governance (n)	: the activity of governing or ruling a country
grassroot (n)	: the ordinary people in a society or organisation
aware (adj)	: knowing something
rights (n)	: legal claim; privilege
responsibilities (n)	: duties
vote (n)	: a formal choice made in an election
empowerment (n)	: the act of giving power to someone
implement (v)	: carry out
undertake (v)	: to take up a work to do
reserve (v)	: to keep something specially for someone

EXERCISE

Comprehension

1. Answer the following questions in a single sentence each.

1×10=10

- Where does Deep like to spend his vacations ?
- What is a village panchayat ?
- When was the first panchayat established in India ?
- How many members can be there in a panchayat ?
- What is a panchayat samiti ?
- What is the minimum age for voting in India ?
- At present how many village panchayats are there in India ?

- h) What percentage of seats are reserved for women in a panchayat ?
- i) Since when Assam has had its panchayats ?
- j) What is the head of the panchayat called ?
2. Give brief answers to the following questions. 2×5=10
- a) What is the necessity of local self-governance in India ?
- b) What kind of atmosphere do Deep and Rupa experience during their visit to the village ?
- c) Explain the three levels of the panchayati raj system in India.
- d) What are the functions of the panchayats ?
- e) How do panchayats help to maintain equality in the society ?
4. Write whether the following statements are 'true' or 'false'. $\frac{1}{2} \times 6 = 3$
- a) Deep doesn't like to visit the village.
- b) India is a democratic country.
- c) The villagers are very busy for the elections.
- d) The citizens have no role to play in the rule of the land in India.
- e) Panchayats always have five members.
- f) The rural development plans are implemented through the panchayats.

Grammar and usage

Look at the following sentences.

- i) The people elect the government.
- ii) The government is elected by the people.

In the first sentence, the subject itself performs the action. i.e. it is ACTIVE. In the second sentence the subject is not

performing the action. i.e. it is **PASSIVE**. Sentences in active voice can be turned into passive and from passive into active voice.

Active voice : Subject + Verb + Object

Passive voice : Sub (Obj) + 'Be' verb + Verb (past participle) + 'by' agent (sub).

5. Change the voice of the following sentences.
- We elected the leader.
 - Different plans are implemented by the panchayats.
 - We should maintain social balance in society.
 - Women are given proper representation in panchayats.
 - They speak English properly.
 - Who rules our country ?
 - Everyone likes his company.
 - What is wanted by him ?
6. Rewrite the following sentences correcting the tense of the verbs.
- They lived in the village since 1995.
 - Raju came before the guests left.
 - The baby sleeps now.
 - The children played after it stopped raining.
 - I came from school just now.
 - I am always going to school by bus.

Vocabulary

7. Select the correct meaning of the following words in italics from the alternatives given.
- The atmosphere in the village was *unfamiliar*.
i) Friendly, ii) Wonderful iii) Unknown iv) Quiet.
 - aim of making the citizens aware of their *rights*.
i) Correct ii) Privilege iii) Duties iv) Rituals.

- c) Panchayats are responsible for many *functions*.
i) Cultural programmes ii) Special activities
iii) A part of a programme iv) Operation
- d) Different plans are *implemented* through panchayats.
i) Emphasised ii) Carried out iii) Imported iv) Prepared
8. Make sentences using the following words.
Elect (v), Election, Govern (v), Government, Represent (v),
Representation.

Composition

9. Suppose you meet the president of a village panchayat. Prepare an interview including questions about the name of the village, members in the village panchayats, various works already done and future plans.

Spoken activity

10. If you are a candidate in the election of the captain of the class, how will you campaign for yourself? Give a speech in the class supporting your candidature.

Assignment

11. Collect the names of at least six important rural development plans being implemented now by the government with the help of the panchayats.

Note to the teacher

In this chapter the students should be taught exercises in voice change (different sentence types such as assertive, interrogative etc.) They should also be taught miscellaneous exercises in tense and use of noun forms and verb forms of words. They should be encouraged to know about the surroundings in society and social institutions like panchayats, elections etc.

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