



- **Panchayati Raj**
- **Rural Sports in India**



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PANCHAYATI RAJ

Chapter 1: Journey of Panchayats

Local Bodies – Importance

- **Historical Roots:** The Cholas were the pioneers in the formation of local bodies as part of a well-organised hierarchy to oversee the implementation of progressive plans.
- **Voices of People heard:** Panchayati raj ensures that the voices of the people are heard loud and clear. “The voice of the people is the voice of god; The voice of the Panchayat is the voice of the people,” is the quote attributed to Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.
- **Good Governance:** Seamless administration is impossible without power sharing.
- **Inclusive Governance:** To ensure that even the last man sitting in a remote corner of the last row should have access to benefits.
- **Participative Governance:** Every grama sabha meeting ensures the equal right to highlight the issues that disrupt life. Active participation of the people in governance.
- **Transparency & Accountability:** Elected members of the Panchayat are obliged to read out the financial statements and balance sheet to ensure transparency.



Constitutional status of Panchayati Raj institutions

Lord Mayo's Resolution of 1870 on financial decentralisation visualised the development of local self-government institutions. **Lord Ripon's Resolution of 1882** has been hailed as the 'Magna Carta' of local self-government. He is called as the **father of local-self government** in India.

A. Balwant Rai Mehta Committee – Establishment of Democratic Decentralisation

In January 1957, the Government of India appointed a committee to examine the working of the Community Development Programme (1952) and the National Extension Service (1953) and to suggest measures for their better working. The chairman of this committee was Balwant Rai G Mehta. The committee submitted its report in November 1957 and recommended the establishment of the scheme of 'democratic decentralisation', which ultimately came to be known as Panchayati Raj. The specific recommendations made by it are:

1. Establishment of a three-tier panchayati raj system—gram panchayat at the village level, panchayat samiti at the block level and zila parishad at the district level. These tiers should be organically linked through a device of indirect elections.
2. The village panchayat should be constituted with directly elected representatives, whereas the panchayat samiti and zila parishad should be constituted with indirectly elected members.
3. All planning and development activities should be entrusted to these bodies.
4. The panchayat samiti should be the executive body while the zila parishad should be the advisory, coordinating and supervisory body.
5. The district collector should be the chairman of the zila parishad.
6. There should be a genuine transfer of power and responsibility to these democratic bodies.
7. Adequate resources should be transferred to these bodies to enable them to discharge their

These recommendations of the committee were accepted by the National Development Council in January 1958. The council did not insist on a single rigid pattern and left it to the states to evolve their own patterns suitable to local conditions. But the basic principles and broad fundamentals should be identical throughout the country.

Rajasthan was the first state to establish Panchayati Raj. The scheme was inaugurated by the prime minister on October 2, 1959, in Nagaur district. Rajasthan was followed by Andhra Pradesh, which also adopted the system in 1959.

B. L M Singhvi Committee – Revitalisation of Panchayati Raj Institutions for Democracy and Development

In 1986, Rajiv Gandhi government appointed a committee on 'Revitalisation of Panchayati Raj Institutions for Democracy and Development' under the chairmanship of L M Singhvi. It made the following recommendations.

1. The Panchayati Raj institutions should be constitutionally recognised, protected and preserved. For this purpose, a new chapter should be added in the Constitution of India. This will make their identity and integrity reasonably and substantially inviolate. It also suggested constitutional provisions to ensure regular, free and fair elections to the Panchayati Raj bodies.
2. Nyaya Panchayats should be established for a cluster of villages.
3. The villages should be reorganised to make Gram Panchayats more viable. It also emphasised the importance of the Gram Sabha and called it as the embodiment of direct democracy.
4. The Village Panchayats should have more financial resources.
5. The judicial tribunals should be established in each state to adjudicate controversies about election to the Panchayati Raj institutions, their dissolution and other matters related to their functioning.

73rd Amendment Act Of 1992

This act has added a new **Part-IX** to the Constitution of India. It is entitled as '**The Panchayats**' and consists of provisions from **Articles 243 to 243 O**.

- In addition, the act has also added a **new Eleventh Schedule** to the Constitution. This schedule contains 29 functional items of the panchayats. It deals with Article 243-G.

- The act has given a practical shape to **Article 40** of the Constitution which says that, “*The State shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.*”
- This article forms a part of the **Directive Principles of State Policy (Gandhian Principles)** and gives a constitutional status to the Panchayati raj institutions. It has brought them under the purview of the justiciable part of the Constitution. In other words, the state governments are under constitutional obligation to adopt the new Panchayati raj system in accordance with the provisions of the act. Consequently, neither the formation of panchayats nor the holding of elections at regular intervals depends on the will of the state government any more.

Compulsory Provisions

1. Organisation of Gram Sabha in a village or group of villages.
2. Establishment of panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels.
3. Direct elections to all seats in panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels.
4. Indirect elections to the post of chairperson of panchayats at the intermediate and district levels.
5. 21 years to be the minimum age for contesting elections to panchayats.
6. Reservation of seats (both members and chairpersons) for SCs and STs in panchayats at all the three levels.
7. Reservation of one-third seats (both members and chairpersons) for women in panchayats at all the three levels.
8. Fixing tenure of five years for panchayats at all levels and holding fresh elections within six months in the event of supersession of any panchayat.
9. Establishment of a State Election Commission for conducting elections to the panchayats.
10. Constitution of a State Finance Commission after every five years to review the financial position of the panchayats.

Voluntary Provisions

1. Giving representation to members of the Parliament (both the Houses) and the state legislature (both the Houses) in the panchayats at different levels falling within their constituencies
2. Providing reservation of seats (both members and chairpersons) for backward classes in panchayats at any level.
3. Granting powers and authority to the panchayats to enable them to function as institutions of self-government (in brief, making them autonomous bodies).
4. Devolution of powers and responsibilities upon panchayats to prepare plans for economic development and social justice; and to perform some or all of the 29 functions listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.
5. Granting financial powers to the panchayats, that is, authorizing them to levy, collect and appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees.

NOTE:

A. Gram Sabha: The act provides for a Gram Sabha as the foundation of the Panchayati raj system. It is a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls of a village comprised within the area of Panchayat at the village level. Thus, it is a village assembly consisting of all the registered voters in the area of a panchayat. It may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the legislature of a state determines.

B. Three-Tier System: The act provides for a three-tier system of Panchayati raj in every state, that is, panchayats at the village, intermediate, and district levels. Thus, the act brings about uniformity in the structure of Panchayati raj throughout the country. However, a state having a population not exceeding 20 lakh may not constitute panchayats at the intermediate level.

C. Election of Members and Chairpersons - All the members of panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels shall be elected directly by the people. Further, the chairperson of

panchayats at the intermediate and district levels shall be elected indirectly—by and from amongst the elected members thereof. However, the chairperson of a panchayat at the village level shall be elected in such manner as the state legislature determines.

D. Duration of Panchayat: Every Panchayat shall continue for five years from the date of its first meeting. But it can be dissolved earlier in accordance with the procedure prescribed by State Law. Elections must take place before the expiry of the above period. In case it is dissolved earlier, then the elections must take place within six months of its dissolution. A Panchayat reconstituted after premature dissolution (i.e., before the expiry of the full period of five years) shall continue only for the remainder of the period. But if the remainder of the period is less than six months it shall not be necessary to hold elections.

E. Disqualifications - A person shall be disqualified for being chosen as or for being a member of panchayat if he is so disqualified, (a) under any law for the time being in force for the purpose of elections to the legislature of the state concerned, or (b) under any law made by the state legislature. However, no person shall be disqualified on the ground that he is less than 25 years of age if he has attained the age of 21 years. Further, all questions of disqualifications shall be referred to such authority as the state legislature determines.

F. Article 243 K- State Election Commission- The super-intendancy, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of all elections to the panchayats shall be vested in the state election commission. It consists of a state election commissioner to be appointed by the governor. His conditions of service and tenure of office shall also be determined by the governor. He shall not be removed from the office except in the manner and on the grounds prescribed for the removal of a judge of the state high court. His conditions of service shall not be varied to his disadvantage after his appointment.

PRELIMS ORIENTED MCQ

Q1: Which of the following committee was first to recommend constitutional status for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI)?

- a) G V K Rao Committee
- b) L M Singhvi Committee
- c) Ashok Mehta Committee
- d) Balwant Rai Mehta Committee

Solution: c

Q2: Consider the following recommendations about L M Singhvi Committee.

1. It recommended establishment of Nyaya Panchayats.
2. The judicial tribunals should be established in each state to adjudicate controversies about election to the Panchayati Raj institutions.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) None

Solution: c

Chapter 2: Making Gram Sabhas Vibrant

Reasons for failure due to half-hearted devolution of powers

- The grey area is the **lack of adequate funds**. There is a need to enlarge the domain of panchayats to be able to raise their own funds.
- The **interference of area MPs and MLAs in the functioning** of panchayats also adversely affected their performance.
- The 73rd amendment only mandated the creation of local self-governing bodies, and **left the decision to delegate powers, functions, and finances** to the state legislatures, therein lies the failure of PRIs.
 - **The transfer of various governance functions**—like the provision of education, health, sanitation, and water was not mandated. Instead the amendment listed the functions that could be transferred, and left it to the state legislature to actually devolve functions.
 - There has been very **little devolution of authority and functions** in the last 26 years.
 - Because these functions were never devolved, state executive authorities have proliferated to carry out these functions. The most common example is the terrible state water boards.
- The major failure of the Amendment is the **lack of finances for PRIs**. Local governments can either raise their own revenue through local taxes or receive intergovernmental transfers.
 - The power to tax, even for subjects falling within the purview of PRIs, has to be specifically authorised by the state legislature.
 - The 73rd Amendment let this be a choice open to the state legislatures—a choice that most states have not exercised.
 - A second avenue of revenue generation is intergovernmental transfers, where state governments devolve a certain percentage of their revenue to PRIs. The constitutional amendment created provisions for State Finance Commissions to recommend the revenue share between state and local governments. However, these are merely recommendations and the state governments are not bound by them.
 - Though finance commissions, at every level, have advocated for greater devolution of funds, there has been little action by states to devolve funds.
 - PRIs are reluctant to take on projects that require any meaningful financial outlay, and are often unable to solve even the most basic local governance needs.
- PRIs also suffer from **structural deficiencies** i.e. no secretarial support and lower levels of technical knowledge which restricted the aggregation of bottom up planning .
 - There is a **presence of adhocism** i.e. lack of clear setting of agenda in gram sabha, gram samiti meetings and no proper structure.
 - **Accountability arrangements** remain very weak even after 26 years of PRIs constitutional arrangement.
 - The issue of **ambiguity in the division of functions and funds** has allowed concentration of powers with the states and thereby restraining the elective representatives who are more aware and sensitive to the ground level issues to take control.
- **Tokenism**
 - Panchayats have not been granted enough powers for revenue generation. As a result, they only have limited functional autonomy. Even after 25 years of constitutional backing, the PRIs are able generated only 5 percent of their revenue.
 - Elections are not held regularly. For example, in Tamil Nadu elections were not held for 3 years after the term ended.

- Devolution of power which is imperative for socio-economic development has not been addressed properly.
- Separate cadre for local administration should have been setup for effective implementation of policies and decision making.
- Even after a decade and a half after the PESA Act, there is very little awareness about the Gram Sabha being designated as a self-governing body or having legal jurisdiction over the natural resources and forests. Neither is there any support mechanism for the Gram Sabhas to play any significant role.
- Recommendations of State Finance Commissions (SFCs) are generally not taken seriously
- **Surrogate representation**
 - Twenty-five years after women were given 33% reservation in local self-governance bodies, many women sarpanchs remain faceless wives and daughters-in-law. Even Prime Minister Narendra Modi acknowledgement the fact that 'Sarpanch Pati' tradition should be ended.
 - With the backing of national and state political parties, the object of direct and grassroot democracy gets defeated.
 - The state and central government have also started creating separate structures or units for implementing specific projects on education, health, and so on; this limits the role and powers of the PRIs

Strong political will of the state governments are vital for vibrant local self-government institutions.

- a) **Strong political commitment from higher level authorities** within the Government. Activity mapping which was supposed to be done by states as per resolution of the State Panchayat Ministers' round table has been done by quite a few states, but implementation has often remained incomplete. Transfer of functionaries has also remained mostly symbolic.
- b) **Autonomy of the local bodies in decision making and implementation of local schemes:** Since Panchayats implement state and union government schemes they are required to adhere to the guidelines without any authority to deviate even a little as per necessities emanating from local conditions. In the absence of Panchayats' own financial resources they can hardly undertake programs on their own in line with local requirements. It is here that decentralization of political decision making needs to be complimented by measures to ensure fiscal autonomy for PRIs so that such institutions can muster necessary financial resources on their own to be truly self-reliant in local decision making and its implementation.
- c) **Availability of the internally generated resources at the local level:** In the federal system of governance that is existent in India, almost all the sources of tax or non-tax revenue come under the jurisdictions of the State and Union Governments. This leaves little scope for local governments to generate resources on their own. Their own revenue generation capacity remains limited vis-a-vis their requirements and expenditure obligations. In view of this the constitution mandated for setting up of the State Finance Commissions that would help determine the devolution of state's revenue to the local governments.

Cooperation from the bureaucracy is vital for vibrant local self-government institutions.

- The development of bureaucracy should not be conservative but it should have scientific outlook, progressive, innovative, reformist and revolutionary in nature. The concrete tasks of development which the state had to undertake include modernization of agriculture, industrialization and economic diversification and building of infrastructure including irrigation, electrification, communication, transport, education, health and promotion of science and technology.

- The Twenty Point Program contained a number of points for the poorest sections of the society like the liquidation of the rural indebtedness, provision of house sites for landless, and enforcement of minimum wages. The formulation and implementation of these programs required bureaucracy to play a new role, the role of an agent of development or agent of change as compared with the traditional role of the past as agent of status quo. Furthermore, since most of these were people oriented programs bureaucracy had necessarily to work with people.
- Motivating and mobilizing the people, communicating programs to them, eliciting their cooperation, building up grass-root popular institutions-these were the new methods and techniques of administration which bureaucracy had to adopt.
- The bureaucracy had to go to people as development workers rather than just passing orders on cases of people approaching them with their grievances.

PRELIMS ORIENTED MCQ

Q1. Q3: Which of the following is/are the significance of 73rd Constitutional amendment act?

1. The act has given a practical shape to Article 40 of the Constitution.
2. The act gives a constitutional status to the Panchayati raj institutions.
3. The act has brought PRIs under the purview of the justiciable part of the Constitution.

Select the correct answer using the codes given below.

- a) 1, 2 and 3
- b) 1 and 2 only
- c) 2 only
- d) 2 and 3 only

Solution: a

Q2: Who was the Prime Minister of India when Local Self Governments were made constitutional?

- a) Rajiv Gandhi
- b) Indira Gandhi
- c) V P Singh
- d) P V Narasimha Rao

Solution: d

Q3: Which of the following statements are correct regarding reservation of seats in Panchayat?

1. 1/3rd seats are reserved for SCs and STs in every Panchayat.
2. The state legislature shall provide for the reservation of offices of chairperson in the panchayat at the village or any other level for the SCs and STs.
3. 1/3rd seats are reserved for women.

- a) 1 and 2
- b) 2 and 3
- c) 1 and 3
- d) All of the above

Solution: b

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Chapter 3: Financial Devolution

The 15th Finance Commission recommended giving greater financial freedom and powers to panchayats and urban local bodies for year 2020-21. Fiscal decentralization is nothing but the devolution of taxing and spending powers to lower levels of government.

Article 243 I - State Finance Commission- The state legislature may

- a) Authorise a panchayat to levy, collect and appropriate taxes, duties, tolls and fees
- b) Assign to a panchayat taxes, duties, tolls and fees levied and collected by the state government;
- c) Provide for making grants-in-aid to the panchayats from the consolidated fund of the state
- d) Provide for constitution of funds for crediting all moneys of the panchayats.

Finance Commission - The governor of a state shall, after every five years, constitute a finance commission to review the financial position of the panchayats. It shall make the following recommendations to the Governor:

1. The principles that should govern:
 - The distribution between the state and the panchayats of the net proceeds of the taxes, duties, tolls and fees levied by the state.
 - The determination of taxes, duties, tolls and fees that may be assigned to the panchayats.
 - The grants-in-aid to the panchayats from the consolidated fund of the state.
2. The measures needed to improve the financial position of the panchayats.
3. Any other matter referred to it by the governor in the interests of sound finance of the panchayats.

The state legislature may provide for the composition of the commission, the required qualifications of its members and the manner of their selection.

The governor shall place the recommendations of the commission along with the action taken report before the state legislature. The Central Finance Commission shall also suggest the measures needed to augment the consolidated fund of a state to supplement the resources of the panchayats in the states (on the basis of the recommendations made by the finance commission of the state).

Local bodies in our country receive funds in the following ways:

- Grants from the Union Government based on the recommendations of the Central Finance Commission as per Article 280 of the Constitution.
- Devolution from the State Government based on the recommendations of the State Finance Commission as per Article 243I.
- Loans/grants from the State Government.
- Programme-specific allocation under Centrally Sponsored Schemes and Additional Central Assistance.
- Internal Resource Generation (tax and non-tax).

Criticality of financial devolution:

Panchayats

- To strengthen democracy at grass root level.
- Panchayats have very few revenue resources with them to provide services. Center and state can nudge local bodies for desired development agenda through financial devolution with conditions.
- It helps to avoid duplication of efforts by government machinery. There can be creation of knowledge innovation activity center to render advice and expertise to local authorities for planning and prioritizing development goals.
- To use local resources in cost effective service delivery. Example of Patoda village of Maharashtra: It started its own local voluntary taxation of very minimal amount in return of

free services like clean RO drinking water, hot water, sanitary pads, CCTV cameras in public spaces, flour mill, spice grinder machine and tractor for agricultural needs on minimal rent indicates realization of development model at village level with understanding of local needs.

- Financial devolution increases accountability to people so performance can be realized as direct contact with people.
- Devolution based on capital asset creation, Human resource development, social indices and gender equality will bring desired results.

Though there are various issues associated with devolution of powers and finances at local level, reluctance of Politicians and bureaucrats to relinquish power to local bodies remain major hurdle.

- Issues like **lack of expertise** to plan development priorities and use resources optimally, lack of resources to implement development agenda with minimal avenues for taxation and income.
- **Fewer sources of finances** at center and state level to devolve, lack of checks and balances on authorities at local level, myriad of social issues at rural level which can neglect minority social groups and position of women.
- **Non-uniformity of various programmes** at local level can make regulatory oversight difficult, organized cartel of few individuals can indulge in corrupt activities; state government interference can continue to influence the decision making at local level.
- Municipalities have not succeeded in realizing the **potential of the property tax**, though property values are on rise.

Following are few of the measures to help local bodies mobilise additional financial resources.

- Devolving more taxation powers.
- Encouraging municipal bonds. Credit rating of cities and towns is a step in the right direction for issuing Municipal Bonds for mobilization of resources.
- Review of property tax system which suffers from undervaluation; non-availability of database of properties; low rates; low collection efficiency and lack of indexation of property values. Use of Geographic Information System (GIS).
- Improve efficiency and transparency in collection and mobilization of resources. Use of ICT system.
- There is also a need to explore alternative sources of revenue generation by the municipalities such as entertainment tax, mobile towers, user charges for solid waste, water, parking, value capture financing and monetization of infrastructural facilities like parks, roads.
- Laying down rules for sharing GST revenue between states and local bodies.
- Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model in infrastructural projects.

Thungon Committee was first to recommend a State Finance Commission should be set-up in each state. It would lay down the criteria and guidelines for the devolution of finances to the Panchayati Raj institutions.

Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas (SVAMITVA)**The Need**

The need for this Yojana was felt since several villagers in the rural areas don't have papers proving ownership of their land. In most states, survey and measurement of the populated areas in the villages has not been done for the purpose of attestation/verification of properties. Lack of accurate land records are felt most acutely in times of crisis.

- Cyclone Amphan has devastated vast expanses of coastal Odisha and West Bengal, and left millions homeless. Any relief efforts aimed at helping people rebuild their homes would benefit hugely from land records that identify who lived where, and the boundaries and extent of their land. In the absence of these, there is the danger of the weakest sections losing out on the little they had, with no ability to claim compensation from the government.
- Land records also play an important role in the financial resilience of Gram Panchayats. Gram Panchayats that are able to generate their own revenues will be able to invest in the needs of their local communities. However, Gram Panchayats have a poor track record of generating revenues, especially through property tax. The 2018 Economic Survey estimated only 19% of the potential property tax was being collected by Gram Panchayats. One possible reason for low collection would be the lack of data about the properties – where are they located, are they residential or commercial, what should be the appropriate tax value, and who should be taxed.

Swamitva Yojana is aimed to fill the above gap to provide ownership rights to people in the villages. It is expected to go a long way in settling property rights in rural hinterlands and likely to become a tool for empowerment and entitlement, reducing social strife on account of discord over properties.

What is the SVAMITVA card?

- The acronym SVAMITVA stands for Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas.
- It is a Central Sector Scheme (100% by Union Government) implemented by Union Ministry of Panchayat Raj
- It is aimed at “providing ‘record of rights’ to village household owners possessing houses in inhabited rural areas in villages and issuance of property cards to the property owners.”
- The government aims to provide such property cards to each household in the next three to four years in every village across the country.
- The plan is to survey all rural properties using drones and prepare GIS based maps for each village.
- During the current financial year, the scheme is being implemented as a pilot project in about 1 lakh villages across 8 states – Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan.

How is a SVAMITVA property card generated?

1. **MoU with States:** The framework for implementation of SVAMITVA scheme provides a multi-stage process of generating a property card, which starts with signing of a memorandum of understanding between Survey of India (SoI) and respective state governments.
2. **Use of technology:** The SoI is responsible for preparing the National Topographic database on all scales, using technology (drones, Satellite images)
3. **Setting up of Network:** Once the MOU is done, a Continuously Operating Reference System (CORS) network is established that supports in establishing ground control points, which is an important activity for accurate Geo-referencing
4. **Public Awareness:** The next step is the identification of villages to be surveyed during the pilot phase, and make people aware of the process of mapping properties.
5. **Preparation of GIS Database:** The abadi area (residential area) of the village is demarcated and each rural property is marked with limestone (chunna). Then, drones are used for large

scale mapping of rural abadi areas. Based on these images, a GIS database on 1:500 scale, and village maps — Gram Manchitra — are drawn.

6. **Verification:** After creation of maps, a ground verification process by drone survey teams follows, on the basis of that corrections, if any, are made. At this stage, inquiry/objection process – conflict/ dispute resolution is completed
7. **Issuance of Property Cards:** After verification, final Property Cards/Title deeds or “Sampatti Patrak” are generated. These cards will be available on digital platforms or as hard copies to the village household owners.

How will the SVAMITVA property data and maps be updated in the future?

- The framework states, “Once the GIS database is prepared encompassing the 6.62 lakh villages, state governments will be responsible for conducting future surveys and updating the GIS database.” They will also decide the update frequency of the re-survey.

Who will own the SVAMITVA data?

- According to the framework, the orthorectified base maps shall be jointly owned by the Survey of India, Ministry of Panchayati Raj and the state government. The GIS data will also be jointly owned by Centre and State.
- However, the data related to property details will be owned by the State Revenue Department as it has the authority to mutate the Right of Records (RoRs) and update the maps.
- Hence, the State Revenue Department will be the owner/host of this data and others will have a right to view

What is the benefit of issuing a SVAMITVA property card?

- **Access Credit & Benefits:** It will enable rural households to use their property as a financial asset for taking loans and other financial benefits.
- **Tax Collection:** The database will help in determination of property tax, which would accrue to the Gram Panchayats directly in states where they are empowered to collect such taxes
- **Enhances Liquidity of assets:** The cards will help increase liquidity of land parcels in the market and increase the financial credit availability to the village.
- **Developmental Planning:** The scheme will also pave the way for creation of accurate land records for rural planning. All the property records and maps will be available at Gram Panchayat, which will help in taxation of villages, construction permits, elimination of encroachments, etc.

The Way Forward

1. **Engage the community from the start:** Land and boundaries can be a charged topic, which more often than not discourages any policy reform. However, by involving the community, it is possible to create greater acceptance of the process and reduce potential for disputes. When the land boundaries are drawn by the people themselves, there is a high level of transparency and neighbours act as a check and balance, while building consensus on boundaries.
2. **Protect the most vulnerable people:** Land often has deep roots in social power structures, including caste and gender biases. Dalits, women, tenant farmers and tribal communities are often excluded from accessing land, even though they may legitimately have a claim. It would be important to build safeguards in the implementation process to ensure legitimate claims of the most vulnerable people are not crowded out by louder, or powerful voices. Awareness drives to familiarize people with digital land records, how to interpret and access them, also need to be built into the program to avoid information asymmetry and ensure access across user groups.
3. **Establish a grievance redressal system:** Even with the best of intentions, it is possible that the process will create grievances for some people. Drawing learnings from Odisha's Kalia

and Mo Sarkaar programmes, a grievance redressal system that effectively addresses people's concerns in a transparent and fair manner, will go a long way in smooth implementation of the program.

4. **Enable markets to work:** It would be simplistic to expect that updated property records alone will make credit flow into rural areas. Credit needs marketable collateral, so it would be important to ensure there is a functional market for the underlying collateral – land. This would require states to simplify the legislative and regulatory procedures to build consumer confidence and encourage transactions in these areas.

Modernising land records is one of the foundational steps towards mending and reimagining broken institutional arrangements, which are pivotal in today's circumstances. The announcement of this scheme has signaled political will at the Centre to create reliable land records, which has been long overdue.

Chapter 4: Localising SDGs for Panchayats

Model Panchayat Citizens Charter

- It is a framework for delivery of the services across the 29 sectors, aligning actions with localised Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- *What is its aim?*
 - To Provide Services to the People in a Time Bound Manner
 - Redressing Their Grievances
 - Improving Their Lives.
- The Panchayats will utilise this framework to draw up a Citizens Charter and adopt it through a resolution of the Gram Sabha by 15th August, 2021.
- Panchayats are responsible for delivery of basic services as enshrined under article 243G of the Constitution of India, specifically in the areas of Health & Sanitation, Education, Nutrition, Drinking Water.

Role of Gram Panchayat in Localising SDGs

The role of panchayats in the attainment of SDGs is summed up as follows:

1. Convergent implementation of schemes- Ensure effective implementation of flagship programmes pertaining to livelihood like National Rural Livelihood Mission, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Swachh Bharat Mission etc. Eg: The Assam governments Samagra Gram Unnayan Yojana (CMSGUY) – a 5-year mission to initiate investment in rural areas towards doubling farmers' incomes.

2. Participatory outcome based planning for local development

- Effective functioning of the Gram Sabha as participatory discussion and decision making forum for local development.
- Ensure coordinated functioning in tandem with Self Help Groups and their collectives
- Institute outcome based planning that sets baselines and monitors advancement in development indices.

3. Specific governance interventions in panchayats

- Effective functioning of Standing Committees and Functional Committees of the panchayats
- Strengthening fora for community participation
- Institution of clear community based monitoring and tracking mechanisms and information feedback to the community.

4. Interventions across tiers of panchayats

- Effect convergent planning between the three tiers of Panchayati Raj
- Effective functioning of the District Planning Committees which link rural and urban planning
- Coordination for service delivery and implementation of flagship schemes.

- Eg. The Government of Bihar's umbrella programme titled 7 Nischay (or 7 resolves) addresses challenges in multiple sectors following an inter-sectoral approach.

The way ahead

It is very crucial that the Village/Gram Panchayats develop their own action plan to improve living conditions

- In rural Indian context, the living condition is linked with the practice of social justice principles. There is a need to be more inclusive in addressing the problems of people from different sections.
- Strengthening stakeholder participation in governance particularly in decision making. The various village level committees formed under different development programs – School Management Committee, Sanitation and Nutrition Committee, Matru Mangal Samiti for Anganwadi, PDS Committee, etc. shall be strengthened so that they plan and monitor the service delivery.
- Each village panchayat must assess the status of various public assets and services with regard to its functionality.
- The gram panchayat and various committees must periodically assess all the services. Primary focus must be given to five key services: (i) anganwadi (Child care) as it has direct link with child development and curbing malnutrition (ii) primary education – it has link with universal literacy particularly among girls (iii) drinking water and sanitation – it has direct link with the health status and wellbeing (iv) access to public health services – it will improve institutional delivery and healthy life (v) access to public distribution system and food availability in anganwadi and mid-day-meal – it will address malnutrition.

Geographical Information System (GIS) plans for Gram Panchayats

GIS-based planning under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS is an initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development which helps the Gram Panchayat to ensure a scientific & holistic approach for planning at the Gram Panchayat level. It is an important tool to ensure participatory planning at the implementation level.

- Contributions of Mahatma Gandhi NREGS have enhanced significantly by using the GIS-Based Planning approach and impacts of which are visible at ground level
- CRISP-M tool will further enable the local communities to understand the impact of changing climate and make smart decisions on them
- Yuktdhara Geospatial Planning portal helps the other Ministries to see the geographical location of planned assets on a map, which integrates planning for works, optimises convergence plans and facilitates effective monitoring.
- The planning of works under Mahatma Gandhi NREGS are now carried out using advanced technologies viz. Geographical Information System (GIS) and Remote Sensing (RS). Leveraged for this purpose is the much acclaimed 'Bhuvan' space technology solution from the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

Geographical Information System (GIS): The GIS is a computer-based tool for mapping and analyzing the geographic terrain and offers scientific choices of development works suitable to the area. This technology integrates common database operations such as query and statistical analysis with the unique visualization and geographic analysis benefits offered by the maps.

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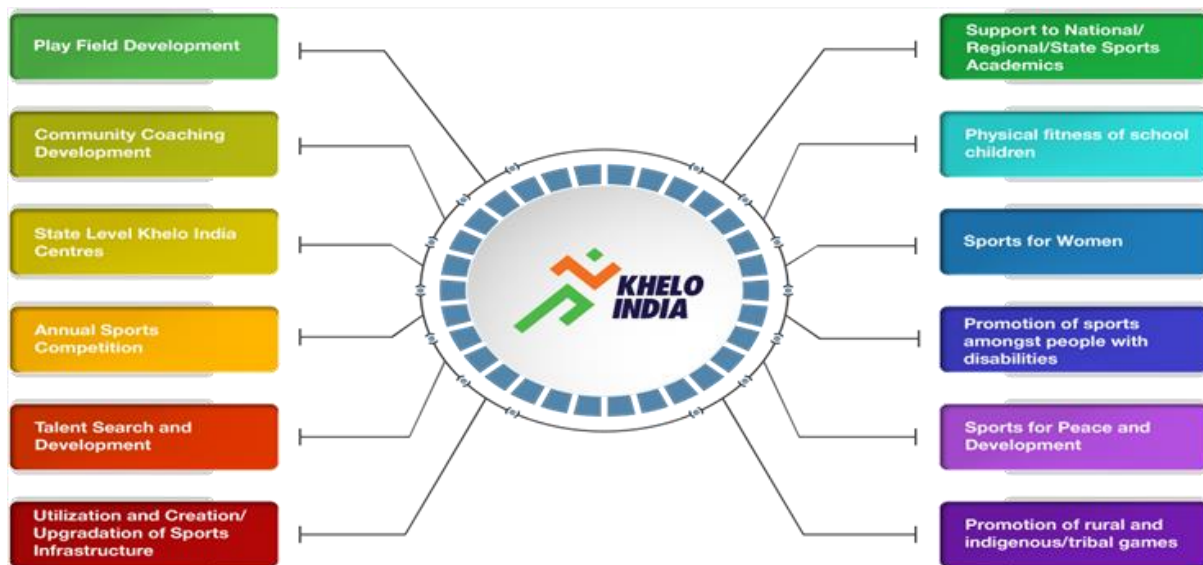
SPORTS IN RURAL INDIA

A. Reinvigorating Sports

Tokyo Olympics has been historic for India – an event that will be cherished forever. Many 'firsts' were achieved, and medal droughts ended – India bagged its highest ever medals (7), Neeraj Chopra brought India its first athletics gold in men's javelin; India ended a 41-year medal drought in hockey by winning a bronze. While Meera Bai Chanu lifted a billion Indian hopes with a silver medal at the Olympics, she also gave India's first-ever opening day medal at the Olympics. Ravi Dahiya, Bajrang Punia, and Lovlina Borgohain wrestled and boxed out to win a silver and two bronzes at India's most decorated Olympics.

A common thread that binds these athletes – apart from their spirit of excellence and service to the nation – is their **rural background**. It's a testimony to the fact that rural India has been a powerhouse of extraordinary talent. Rural India is abundant with sports and games which are local and unique in each state. These games and sports have served multiple purposes – keeping people fit, maintaining harmony, channelizing the youth's energy in constructive areas, keeping them away from substance abuse, and pulling the youth out of poverty among many other benefits.

The Government of India, in recent years, has taken several initiatives such as Khelo India, TOPS Scheme, etc. to build India as a sporting nation with a great amount of emphasis in the rural areas. While these initiatives are commendable, there is a long way to go in creating a bustling sports culture in India – rural and urban both.



Initiatives to Strengthen Sports in Rural Areas: A Pulse Check

The Government of India (GOI) took a historic step by starting a targeted scheme to achieve top results in the Olympics games.

A. The Target Olympic Podium Scheme or TOPS

Launched in 2014 under the aegis of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS), GOI to provide financial assistance and other help to athletes in their pursuit of medals in the Olympics and other international sporting events. Sports such as Archery, Badminton, Boxing, Hockey, Shooting, and Wrestling have been recognized as 'high priority' schemes under the scheme.

- The top-performing athletes are selected by a committee who are then provided customized training with top coaches at modern and well-equipped sports facilities and institutions.

- The Rio 2016 Olympics saw TOPs awardees P V Sindhu and Sakshi Malik clinching silver and bronze respectively for India. The paralympians covered under TOPS won four medals at Rio including two gold medals. The TOPS scheme's impact was best to be seen at the 2018 commonwealth games where 47 out of the 70 medals won by India were bagged by TOPS awardee athletes.
- In addition to best coaching and equipment, each athlete was provided with INR 50,000 monthly out-of-pocket expenditure which could be spent on their diet or training or any other way the athlete desires.

B. Khelo India Scheme

- The Government of India has designed a future-looking scheme to develop a pool of talent from the remotest part of the country through the **Khelo India Scheme**.
- Aimed at mainstreaming sports as a tool for national development, economic development, community development, and individual development, the Khelo India scheme was launched in 2018 with 12 verticals.
- Talent search has been started at the grassroots level in two categories: a) Sports potential talent identification and b) Proven talent identification.
- A zonal approach has been taken by the government in the identification of talent. Grassroot Zonal Talent Identification committees have been formed to scour the remotest part of the country for spotting talent across 20 disciplines in the age group 8 to 14 years, wherein the country has the potential /advantage to excel at the international level.

National Education Policy 2020: An Opportunity to Transform India as a Sporting Nation

- An extra-curricular activity, Sports, now will be an integral part of the school and college curriculum with grading in sports counted in the education of the children.
- The school education system in India caters to around 26 crore students through a network of 15 lac schools with ~18 crore enrolments in rural India, thus paving the way for scaling sports across the country.
- The existing schemes of the Government of India such as the Samagra Shiksha, Eklavya Model Residential Schools, Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya, etc have a special emphasis on promoting sports in the remotest part of the country.
- Samagra Shiksha, the flagship scheme of school education in India has components that exclusively focus on providing sports equipment to schools and supporting the Khelo India Scheme.
- The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme has set up at least one residential girl's school in every educationally backward block of India. A sport is a very important component of the scheme where facilities for sports such as hockey, kabaddi, kho-kho, badminton, volleyball, etc have been developed. Sports meets are conducted to provide a platform to girls to excel in sports.
- The Eklavya Model Residential Schools scheme of the government is targeted at providing holistic education to the students from ST category in tribal areas of the country. There is a lot of focus on sports in these schools. Centre of Excellence for Sports (CoE for Sports) has been planned and implemented across Eklavya Model Residential Schools. This Centre of Excellence will have specialized state-of-the-art facilities for one identified individual sport and one group sport in each State with scientific backup along with specialized training, boarding and lodging facilities, sports kit, sports equipment, competition exposure, insurance, medical expenses, etc. as per norms of Sports Authority of India.



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B. A Sporting Culture at the Grassroots Is the Need of Hour

A. Concept of One State One Sport

- It has to be emphasized that sports is a scientific discipline and requires a strategic roadmap to develop future talent and infuse a sporting culture in India.
- There are certain sports where Indians have a comparative advantage either because of their genetic build or the prolonged assimilation within certain sports.
- It might be useful to start a campaign namely **One State One Sport**, wherein each state government will identify a major sport in which it has a competitive advantage along with other sports which may be accorded a little lesser priority.

B. Boosting Rural Sports Infrastructure

- A Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model is best for building sports infrastructure.
- India, being the second most populated country has the capability to develop athletes who can be very successful in terms of sports, other than cricket.

C. A path to empower vulnerable youth

- The need to bring in sports is an integral part of growing up. It is as important as learning addition, subtraction and reading.
- For children in an impressionable age group, sports teach children certain things which school curriculum does not, which include working in a team, taking leadership, making quick decisions and learning to lose.
- There exists massive gender imbalance in sports administration, coaching and general participation in India, which some NGOs are trying to tackle.

D. Identifying talent in far-flung areas

- There is a need to recognise talent that exists in rural areas and bridging the gap in accessibility of sports between rural and urban areas.
- The bigger challenge is not the lack of talent or capacity for India to produce great sportspersons, it is the difficulties associated with bringing in coaches and training persons in rural and tribal areas and providing young athletes with the resources and support they need.

Role of NGOs

India's aspirations of becoming a sporting nation and achieving accolades in global sporting events will be incomplete without a sporting culture at the grassroots. While massive reforms are required at the governance level, the creation of local sporting cultures and making opportunities accessible to rural youth can go a long way in uncovering talent and bridging the equity gap in sports. This seems to be an area where NGOs can and have played a significant role.

- However, there is a need to go beyond creating a culture around sports. Even with elite sports that attract significant resources, India does not have a particularly good track record **supporting sportspersons through thick and thin**. Many who get injured while playing are forgotten and are forced to take up different professions. The government needs to provide assistance – both financial and emotional – for athletes who are struggling or have had to take a temporary break from sports. Without this unconditional support, sports is unlikely to be viewed as a sustainable career. From the lens of equity, it is even more important that this safety net exists for persons who do not have alternate employment options to fall back on.
- Another area where NGOs can step in is **capacity-building of local youths to support sporting activities**. Often, conversations around sports get limited to the perspective of participants. However, sportspersons themselves value the immense contribution of coaches, nutrition specialists, therapists and others. Recognising this, some of the NGOs have invested heavily in training local youths to become better coaches. Not only does this

provide meaningful employment, but if scaled up, it can potentially address India's massive coach shortage.

- Since NGOs have a better understanding of grassroot areas, they can connect private organisations interested in scouting talent, promoting a sporting culture and building academies to navigate those areas. Civil society and private partnership have met with success in similar contexts across the world. If scaled up in India, it has the transformative power to discover and nurture untapped sporting talent.

If we want our sportspersons to perform, the spotlight cannot appear a few months before the Olympics. Working towards structural change, a strong sporting culture and grassroot mobilisation is the need of the hour for sustainable, long-term improvement and cementing India's place in the world of sports.

C. Women Participation in Sports

19 September, 2000: Karnam Malleswari won India's first Olympic medal in female competition: a weightlifting bronze at the Sydney Olympics. It was a watershed moment for women's sport in India.

Legendary sprinter Usha became the first Indian female athlete to reach an Olympic final, in the 400m hurdles in Los Angeles in 1984. She came tantalisingly close to winning bronze - finishing fourth, 0.01 seconds behind third place.

Sport has the power to change lives. Sport is one of the most powerful platforms for promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls. The ability to drive gender equality by teaching women and girls teamwork, self-reliance, resilience and confidence. Women in sport defy gender stereotypes and social norms, make inspiring role models, and show men and women as equals.

Gold is just a metaphor here to reflect on how the Indian women have comfortably outperformed their male compatriots in the last Olympics and in the ongoing Summer Games so far.

A long wait finally had ended after PT Usha - the original poster girl of Indian sport - had come closest to achieving a similar feat at the 1984 Los Angeles, missing a podium finish by 0.01 seconds. A jinx had been broken and so were many barriers for Indian women in sports. Since then, India has seen an upward trend in the number of female athletes across varied disciplines. They are not only winning laurels at the international stage but are doing so by shattering societal prejudices along a path that's mostly uncharted.

In the five summer Olympics in the 21st century, including the ongoing Tokyo Games, six out of the 14 individual medals so far have been won by female athletes who are always smaller in numbers compared to male athletes.

Apart from Malleswari in Sydney 2000, Sindhu, Sakshi in Rio 2016 and Chanu and Lovlina in Tokyo, Mary Kom and Saina Nehwal from the London Games in 2012 have won medals.

There has also been a gradual increase in the total number of women heading to the quadrennial event each time. While there were 21 women in 2000, 25 in 2004, 25 in 2008, 23 in 2012 it more than doubled to 54 in 2016 while the current contingent competing in the Tokyo Games has 57 women out of the 128 athletes.

Challenges for Women

Gender equality is one of the major concerns of Indian society and it is now being looked after by several authorities and women as well. Women are made to face the consequences of buoyant sexism and they are judged in all aspects of life. Women have now excelled and endorsed in their lives. The sports industry has seen an upsurge in the number of women athletes.

- The first and foremost challenge faced by women in sports is the dip in their pay scale as women athletes are paid either less or half what is paid to the male counterparts. There is a huge discrepancy between the male and female incomes and so is the case with prize money. Even when both the competitors are equally talented yet they are differentiated.
- Female athletes are less representative as compared to men. And the former is usually neglected and deprived of the golden opportunities that are secured for men.
- Women are also commodified on and off the field. They are not seen as entities of potential and talent. Even the successful and accomplished athletes are scrutinized by the crowds.
- The stable income of female athletes seems bleak and there is an uncertainty of job security. It leaves no choice for women to take another job for additional income.

Breaking Barriers in their own style

Going back to where it all began, the first decade of the 21st century will remain as the most important period which saw multiple women athletes - equipped with a fearless brand of play - cement this determined attitude towards breaking barriers. To reverse narratives irrespective of the challenges that had denied so many before them of the bigger opportunities.

- 'Magnificent Mary' has punched her way through all sorts of stereotypes: from boxing-is-a-man's-sport rhetoric to mothers-cannot-be-elite-athletes jibe to constant questions about form and fitness for being on the 'wrong side of 30'.
- Even after winning the silver, Chanu was trolled by the faceless for the sport she has chosen as it robbed her of her "fertile" years when she should be producing babies instead of making the country proud.
- Elsewhere, an Indian winning the 2003 Wimbledon Championship Girls' doubles title made headlines. Sania Mirza had arrived with her blistering forehands and an on-court personality that garnered the kind of attention usually enjoyed by men cricketers.
- While Anju Bobby George's efforts once again resurrected athletics, somewhere else the Phogat sisters were wrestling their way through patriarchy.
- Two superstars were born - Saina and Sindhu - who gave the Chinese a taste of their own medicine. The duo - performers on the big stage - showcased their hunger for winning with a brand of play hitherto unknown to Indian women shuttlers.

Three main types of interventions required:

1. Enforce the right of girls and women to participate in physical education, physical activity and sport at all levels;
2. Protect participating girls and women from harassment, misconduct and abuse;
3. Use sport to promote gender equality and empower girls and women;

The crucial point in ensuring India becomes a sporting superpower is to increase participation at the grassroots. A wide participation base will ensure there are a good number of children who continue to play sports professionally. It is important to note that young girls **form 50% of this participation base**, and at no cost can they be left behind.

- **The Khelo India Scheme** with the objective of infusing sporting culture and achieving sporting excellence in the country has played a vital role in the past three years. An exclusive component of the Khelo India Scheme focuses on barriers faced by girls & women to take part in sporting activities, and creating mechanisms to overcome these and increase participation. We have had a 161% increase in women participation at the Khelo India Games from 2018 to 2020. From 657 identified female athletes being supported under the Khelo India scheme in 2018, the number has now gone up to 1471 (223% increase!).
- **The Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS)** focuses on high performance sports where we provide international training exposure, world class physical & mental conditioning, scientific research, day to day monitoring & counseling and ample financial assistance to our elite athletes who could potentially win Olympic gold medals. 86 women athletes were a part of

the TOPS program in September 2018, it is heartening to note that today we have 190 of them (220% jump!).

Promotion of women in sports needs to deal heavily with changing social mindsets. Bringing young girls outside, in a safe environment, and allowing them to experience physical activity with good quality coaching and infrastructure has to be a combined effort from both the Govt. and society on the whole. Many women champion athletes have taken proactive steps to establish academies with a focus on sporting excellence, a number of such initiatives have been supported and fostered by the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports under the National Sports Development Fund. Usha School of Athletics, Mary Kom Boxing Foundation, Ashwini Sports Foundation, Sarita Boxing Academy, Karnam Malleshwari Foundation, Anju Bobby George Sports Foundation, etc are all examples of such initiatives.

Young girls & women being exposed to sports will go a long way in improvement of their physical health and building character, this would go on to contribute significantly to societal reform and our human capital.

Making India Sporting Superpower

- **Investment in infrastructure at grassroots level:** The budding sportspersons in our country do not have access to the best infrastructure. To be able to compete at the top level, we need to have more stadiums and basic infrastructure. For instance, the introduction of astroturf, a more advanced, expensive outfield, inflicted a death blow on Indian hockey players who dominated every Olympics in hockey till then. This is because due to the lack of basic infrastructure, Indian hockey fields could not replicate it.
- **Budding sportswomen and men should have access to equipment.** For example, professional robots can help master the skills in table tennis. At the same time, the available infrastructure is mismanaged and not marketed properly. Look at the Commonwealth games stadium near Akshardham which is lying vacant for most part of the year.
- **Commercialisation:** There is a serious setback in the country when it comes to commercialising sports. We can take inspiration from how Reliance is commercialising football, by launching Indian Sports League and bringing top companies and great players together to create interest in the sport, like, Roberto Carlos, Nicolas Anelka, Elano Blumer and Marco Materazzi. Mahesh Bhupati's ITPL immensely boosted tennis with players like Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, and Maria Sharapova playing for Indian Tennis League, and in 2017, U-17 FIFA Football World Cup is expected to boost the market significantly with its extensive international media coverage.
- **Inducting players in governing bodies:** We need to ensure that only former players enter sports governing bodies, as they have a clear idea of the problems faced by players and know the best ways to solve them. Additionally, we need good administrators to market and manage sports. Let us take cognisance of how Anil Kumble changed the scene of Karnataka cricket by introducing young faces into the team and providing budding fast bowlers Like Vinay Kumar, S. Arvind to the Indian cricket team.
- **Taking care of players after retirement:** Sportsmen have a very short shelf life. Once they retire, many of them struggle even for basic survival. We must think of a pension system to support the players who have played at a certain level. We also need to create enough avenues where they can share their skills and earn a livelihood. In their retired life, players can become great coaches for future legends and help bring out their talent. An academy must be created to train former players into coaches. We already see the former players like badminton maverick Prakash Padukone doing an excellent job of training potential sportstars.
- **Curriculum:** Additionally, sports must be included in mainstream curriculum and given its due importance. Teach sports at schools and universities level to make study understand

importance of sports.

- **Develop a sports culture:** India seriously lacks a sports culture. We, as a country, have never valued sports in the same light as academics. In the face of exams, we stop practice sessions. While parents are not to be blamed for this, there is a vicious circle around us, which we must shatter for good. We need to develop a sports culture in our ecosystem that will produce more internationally respected stars like Usain Bolt, Michael Phelps, and Rafael Nadal.
- **Decentralise the Sports Authority of India:** The over centralisation in competition and recruitment have led to corruption and favouritism. This structure needs to be remodeled for effective outcome.
- **Make authorities accountable:** There should not be permanent heads and non-players who head the sports bodies. It's time to recruit professionals at each level and create a structure of accountability to ensure success is being measured and rewarded

Some ancient sports of India

- **Kuttiyunkolum-** Kerala (Similar as Gilly Danda of north)
- **Kalaripayattu-** Kerala
- **Sagol Kangjei (Polo)-** Manipur
- **Asol Aap (Canoe Race)-** Nicobar
- **Asol – Tale Aap (Canoe Race on sand)-** Nicobar
- **Dhopkhel-** Assam
- **Gella – Chutt-** Tripura
- **Mallakhamba -** Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra
- **Gatka-** Punjab (traditional fighting style of the Nihang Sikh Warriors is used both as self-defense and a sport)
- **Thang-Ta-** Manipur marital art

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