

Local Self-Government in India

Rural & Urban

Democracy at the level where the citizen meets the state most directly — Panchayati Raj, Urban Local Bodies and the long road from formal decentralisation to real self-government.

Revise → write a little → don't break the chain.

13

PYQs cited in this unit

2015–2025

every year asked from this theme

10–20m

marks range · 73rd/74th & women dominate

P-I · Sec B

Grassroots Democracy

“The best school of democracy and the best guarantee for its success is the practice of local self-government” — James Bryce

1 What It Means · Conceptual Foundations

Local self-government = governance by people at the local level through elected bodies — local responsibility for local affairs, self-management, mutual cooperation, and direct participation through **Gram Sabha** and **Ward Committees**, with decentralised planning and service delivery.

Venkataramangaiya and **Pattabhiram** — five features of local government:

- a local body
- local inhabitants electing and controlling that body
- autonomy from higher authorities within a limited sphere
- distinction between local and non-local services
- local taxation

Core elements

Self-governance

Self-management

Mutual cooperation

Political equality

Freedom

Equity

Accountability

Local taxation

Local planning

Decentralisation = shifting political, administrative and fiscal powers from higher tiers to lower tiers. **Abay Asfaw** — a complex, multi-dimensional concept (fiscal, political, administrative).

Political-theory linkages — grassroots democracy is not only administrative reform

Thinker	Anchor for the village / Gram Sabha
Carole Pateman	Democracy needs participation beyond elections; PRIs are training grounds for active citizenship
Hannah Arendt · Rousseau	Public action as freedom fits Gram Sabha; General Will → collective deliberation in local assemblies
Jürgen Habermas	Grassroots forums can embody public reason — only if Sabhas are inclusive and empowered
Mahatma Gandhi	Gram Swaraj = ethical, self-reliant, participatory life; Panchayats are the moral base of democracy
B. R. Ambedkar	Village democracy can reproduce caste domination → rights-based, socially-equal foundation first
Partha Chatterjee	“Political society” — rights negotiated through informal networks, not only formal institutions
Menon, Young, Fraser, Mill	Feminist lens: women's entry challenges public-private divide; reservation necessary but not sufficient

Global context: **Prabhat Datta** — many countries use legal frameworks for participatory decentralised governance (Canada, China, Philippines, Uganda, Honduras, Namibia, Tanzania, Nepal, Bolivia, Colombia). **Artatrana Gochhayat** stresses participation across caste, class, gender and community.

2 Historical Evolution · Ancient → Colonial → Constitutional

Ancient & pre-colonial

- **Janapadas & Mahajanapadas** — forms of direct democracy
- **Kautilya's Arthashastra** — early local-governance insights
- **Aristotle** praised local administrative systems
- village assemblies managed local affairs
- Mughal period — villages enjoyed fair autonomy

Not modern democratic bodies, but evidence of an old social base for local governance.

Colonial

Milestone	Year / figure
First Municipal Corporation, Madras	1687
Lord Mayo — supported local bodies	for administrative convenience
Lord Ripon's Resolution — elected local bodies	1882 · the “Magna Carta” figure of local self-government

“to tap local resources and support the colonial administration” — the colonial purpose

Arora and **Goyal** — by the late 19th–early 20th century rural and urban bodies were recognised, but stayed subordinate.

Post-Independence — Article 40

"The state shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government." — **Article 40, Constitution of India**

A Directive Principle (Part IV), reflecting Gandhian Gram Swaraj. **Granville Austin** — Article 40 lacked mandatory force → half-hearted early implementation. The Community Development Programme & National Extension Service failed to generate local participation; **Balwantrai G. Mehta** found the absence of people's participation as the core weakness.



Major committees

Committee	Year	Key recommendation
Balwantrai G. Mehta	1957	Three-tier PR: Gram Panchayat · Panchayat Samiti · Zila Parishad; democratic decentralisation; social audit
Ashok Mehta	1977–78	Two-tier (Mandal Panchayat + Zila Parishad); party-based polls; constitutional status
G. V. K. Rao	1985	PRIs as principal channel of rural development; District Development Agencies
L. M. Singhvi	1986	Constitutional recognition; Nyaya Panchayats; decentralised planning
P. K. Thunon	1988	More powers, resource mobilisation, financial base
Narasimha Rao	1989	Direct elections to all seats; reservation for weaker sections
Sarkaria · Gadgil	—	Strengthen grassroots democracy; constitutional & institutional reform
Cmte. on Status of Women	1976	All-women Panchayats (appeared briefly in some areas)

Generations (Prabhat Datta): 1st — 1957 (elite capture, bureaucratic resistance); 2nd — 1977 (64th CAB failed Rajya Sabha; **Indira Hirway** on the failed corruption/empowerment attempt); 3rd — 1992 (constitutional status; **Gayadhar Malik** — inclusive democracy, gender justice, all stakeholders). **Jawaharlal Nehru** inaugurated Panchayati Raj on 2 October 1959 at Nagaur, Rajasthan.

3 Gandhi · Ambedkar · Nehru on the Village

Gandhi — Gram Swaraj

"India lives in her village. Independence must begin at the bottom, thus making every village a republic or Panchayati, enjoying full powers" — **Mahatma Gandhi**

- every village a republic
- decentralised democracy
- self-sufficient local economy
- power beginning from below

Ambedkar — social-justice critique

"a sink of localism, a den of ignorance and communalism" — **B. R. Ambedkar (on the village)**

- village society caste-ridden
- Dalits could be oppressed by dominant castes
- political democracy without social equality is incomplete

"True democracy ... [has] to be worked from below by the people of every village ... centre of power now is in New Delhi, or in Calcutta, Bombay... I would have it distributed among the seven hundred thousand villages of India." — **Mahatma Gandhi**

Gayadhar Malik — Ambedkar's warning stays relevant: dominant groups can capture Panchayat power and silence Dalits.

Nehru — modernist development

- professional bureaucracy guides transformation
- industrialisation & planned development central
- rural masses need organised state support
- PR accepted, but the state retained a strong role

The Indian experiment fuses all three: **Gandhian localism** + **Ambedkarite social justice** + **Nehruvian development administration**.

4 Gram Swaraj & Local Economic Development

Gram Swaraj is Gandhi's model of self-reliant village reconstruction — two dimensions: **individual Swaraj** and **political Swaraj**.

"At the individual level, Swaraj is vitally connected with the capacity for dispassionate self-assessment, ceaseless self-purification and growing self-reliance" — **on individual Swaraj**

"self-governance in which every individual has self-rule and self-restraint through participation in decision-making... the role of the state machinery becomes less and power lies in the people's hand" — **on political Swaraj**

Core elements

- Supremacy of human being
- Equality
- Self-sufficiency
- Cooperation
- Decentralisation
- Nai Talim
- Full employment
- Swadeshi
- Trusteeship
- Ethical economics

Local resources, agriculture & village industries

Village industries

The idea

- meet basic needs locally

- hand grinding
- soap making
- cattle farming
- compost manure
- oil pressing
- paper making
- dairying
- farming crafts
- reduce rural–urban migration
- labour-intensive works raise farm productivity
- cities depend on village raw material

“Gandhi spoke incessantly of the need for village industries in India while maintaining that India’s survival and future were dependent on the state of the villages where most Indians reside” — **on village industries**

Cooperation: Gandhi founded the **All India Spinner Association** and **All India Village Industries Association**.

“the secret of successful cooperative effort is that the members must be honest and know the great merit of cooperation and it must have a definite progressive goal” — **on cooperation**

Indian agriculture can give a “foundation for the growth in the industry”. The **Kuthambakkam** model, nurtured by **R. Elango**:

“Network Economy among a few villages in the region, through which the local economy builds, sustains and nurtures itself, without dependence on the mainstream, global economy, although not completely divorcing itself from it either” — **Kuthambakkam model**

Assessment — Gandhi was not simply anti-machine

“He welcomed every improvement in small machines which could provide employment to millions of artisans in the villages” — **on machinery**

His criticism targeted big industry that could not absorb mass unemployment — whose aim is “primarily to make money for the few owners, never the direct one of finding employment for the unemployed millions”. Gram Swaraj seeks mass employment, not only mass production.

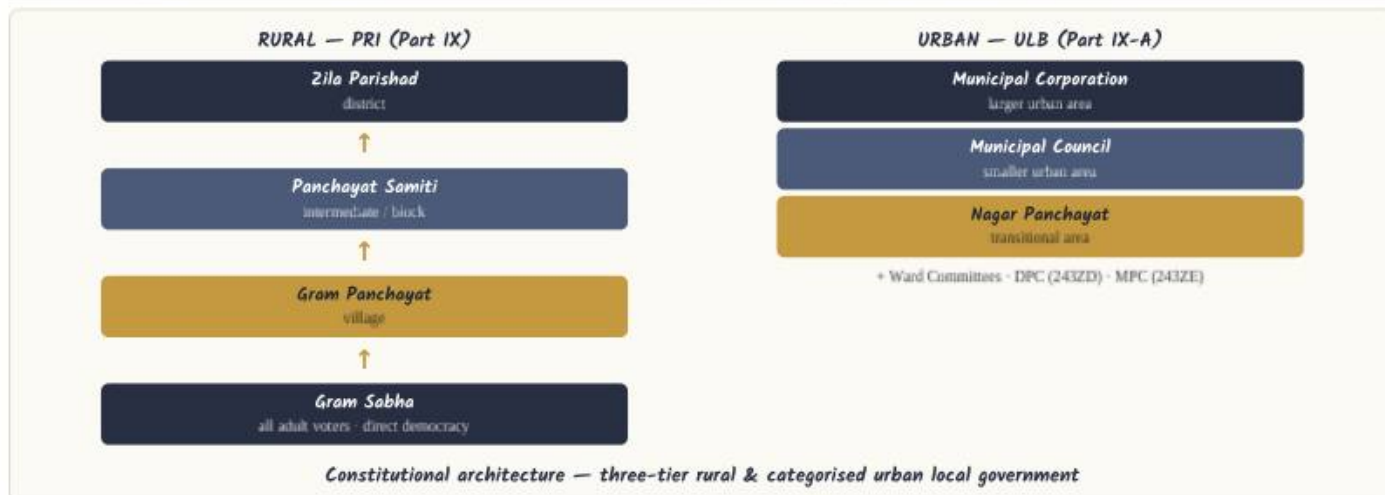
UPSC 2022 · ISm Panchayats with Gram Sabhas → identify locally available resources for agriculture & industry (Gram Swaraj).

5 The 73rd Amendment, 1992 — Part IX

The 73rd CAA added **Part IX** (Panchayats), in force **24 April 1993**. It turned PRIs from statutory bodies into constitutionally-recognised institutions of self-government — **Articles 243–243-O + Eleventh Schedule** (29 subjects).

Key articles

Article	Provision	Article	Provision
243A	Gram Sabha	243D	Reservation (SC/ST, women, chairpersons)
243B	Three-tier Panchayat system	243E	Five-year term
243C	Composition & direct elections	243G	Powers, authority & responsibilities
243K	State Election Commission	11th Sch.	29 subjects (agriculture → PDS)



Compulsory vs voluntary — a national floor, real devolution left to states

Compulsory (the “skeleton”)	Voluntary (the “flesh & blood”)
three-tier structure; Gram Sabha	actual transfer of functions
regular 5-year elections; fixed tenure	taxation powers; control over staff
State Election Commission	Gram Sabha authority; activity mapping
reservation (SC/ST/women); State Finance Commission	accountability codes; depth of planning power

“introduces just a skeleton; flesh and blood have to be added to make it successful” — **on the Act**

“until and unless some issue becomes a matter of public discourse, governments will not respond” — **Amartya Sen**

Empowerment of marginalised sections

“a tremendous widening of the democratic base of the country” — George Mathew

Article 243D reserves seats for SC/ST in proportion to population, not less than one-third for women, and chairperson posts. **Raghabendra Chattopadhyay** and **Esther Dufflo** — villages headed by women “invest more in drinking-water infrastructure”; SC heads invest more in public goods in SC hamlets.

Criticism — a “half-baked cake”

- real devolution left to states
- Gram Sabha powers unclear in state laws
- centrally-sponsored schemes bypass Panchayats
- functions transferred without funds/staff
- dependence on grants
- bureaucratic dominance persists

Scholar	Assessment
George Mathew	a compromised document — states resisted strong Panchayats
M. Govinda Rao	presented as decentralisation, but actual devolution remained limited
James Manor	uneven implementation — Kerala/Maharashtra strong, Bihar/UP weak
B. S. Baviskar	incremental value — laid groundwork for local empowerment
E. Sridharan	compulsory elections & reservations created a basic democratic structure
Niraja Gopal Jayal	state flexibility can permit innovation (Kerala’s participatory planning)

“the objectives of democratic decentralisation are not only to bring governance closer to the people but also to make it more participatory, inclusive and accountable to the weaker sections of society...” — K. Krishna Murthy v Union of India

“this epoch-making Seventy-third Constitution Amendment — a turning point in the history of local self-governance with sweeping consequences in view of decentralisation, grass-root democracy, people’s participation, gender equality and social justice” — Bhanumati v State of Uttar Pradesh

UPSC 2022 · 20m Unique features of the 73rd CAA; will it achieve empowerment of marginalised sections?

6 Gram Sabha — Direct Democracy at the Base

Article 243A — the Gram Sabha consists of all persons on the electoral rolls of a village within a Gram Panchayat. It is the direct democratic base of PR — the “heart and soul” of decentralisation. Its actual powers vary by state law and local mobilisation.

Functions

- approve village development plans / GPDP
- conduct social audit of public works
- scrutinise muster rolls, bills, expenditure
- identify beneficiaries (poverty programmes)
- review Panchayat accounts
- discuss water, health, sanitation, roads, ration

Collective wisdom

Scholar	Claim
B. S. Baviskar	participatory democracy — voice for Dalits, women, Adivasis
M. P. Mathai	links Gram Sabha with Gandhian self-governance & bottom-up development
Paromita Sanyal & Vijayendra Rao	one of the largest deliberative institutions in human history
Ghazala Mansuri & Vijayendra Rao	villages that convene Gram Sabhas “do a better job of targeting the most disadvantaged”

Working & limitations — empirical record is uneven

- **PRIA**: meetings held, but quorum difficult
- **M. Pal & Sudha Pai** (Haryana): more attendance, limited Sarpanch awareness
- agenda reduced to beneficiary lists / utilisation certificates
- **Ramesh Kumar Singh** (Bihar): low attendance, lukewarm participation
- **Ghatak** (W. Bengal): landless attend; wealthy stay away (prestige)
- little discussion of common resources

Rajni Kothari — without awareness, mobilisation and social transformation, the Gram Sabha may remain symbolic. **Niraja Gopal Jayal** — limited devolution weakens both Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat.

Measures

- define Gram Sabha powers clearly
- binding social audit
- women-only preparatory meetings
- original jurisdiction (PESA-style)
- quorum with women/marginalised
- video-record meetings; e-governance without exclusion

UPSC 2024 · 15m Gram Sabha — a forum that expresses the collective wisdom, aspirations and will of the people. Comment.

7 PESA, 1996 — A “Constitution within the Constitution”

The 73rd CAA did not auto-apply to Fifth Schedule **Scheduled Areas**. PESA extends PR while respecting tribal customs and community control — based on the **Dilip Singh Bhuria Committee**.

“every habitation-community must have a Gram Sabha that exercises command over natural resources, settles disputes, and manages its own institutions.” — Dilip Singh Bhuria Committee

“PESA is a unique legislation, often described as a Constitution within the Constitution, which attempts to bring together in a single frame two totally different worlds — the simple system of tribal communities governed by their respective customs and traditions, and the formal system of the State governed exclusively by laws.” — **on PESA**

Major provisions — the village & Gram Sabha are central

Section	Provision
4(a)	State laws in consonance with customary law, social/religious practice, traditional resource management
4(b)	Village = habitation / hamlet / group of hamlets (natural community, not just population)
4(c)	Every village shall have a Gram Sabha (persons on electoral rolls)
4(d)	Gram Sabha safeguards traditions, customs, cultural identity, community resources, customary dispute resolution
4(e)	Gram Sabha approves development plans; selects beneficiaries

Other powers: ownership of minor forest produce; control over minor water bodies & village markets; consultation in land acquisition/resettlement; prevent & restore land alienation; regulate money-lending & intoxicants; approval in mining licences. PESA shifts authority from elected Gram Panchayat to the Gram Sabha in Scheduled Areas.

“Gram Sabhas shall be competent to safeguard and preserve community resources” — **Samatha v Andhra Pradesh**

Implementation gaps

“a decade and a half of PESA in the nine States has been dismal — hobbled by legal infirmity, bureaucratic apathy and political unwillingness.” — **UNDP review**

- states did not frame proper PESA rules
- line/forest departments override Sabha
- vague terms: minor water bodies / minor minerals
- power given to Gram Panchayat, not Gram Sabha
- governors not proactive
- low awareness; applies only to Scheduled Areas

Field concerns: Madhya Pradesh — agendas focus only on scheme beneficiaries; Odisha — forged Gram Sabha consent for land acquisition; Chhattisgarh — Premnagar (Surajpur) opposed an IFFCO-linked power plant, then GP converted to Nagar Panchayat (≈27 conversions reported). **Virginus Xaxa Committee:**

“the proliferation of Nagar Palikas in Scheduled Areas is being done without the consent of Gram Sabhas” — **Virginus Xaxa Committee**

Ajay Dandekar — PESA does not clearly make Gram Sabha authority superior to line departments. **C. R. Bijoy** — an unfinished agenda. **Reforms:** 2nd ARC (awareness, accountability, land records, harmonisation with Land Acquisition / Mines & Minerals / Forest Acts) and Xaxa (state-rule conformity, penalise forged consent, Parliament-made law before new Nagar Palikas in Fifth Schedule areas).

UPSC 2018 · 20m Examine the provisions of the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act (PESA), 1996.

8 The 74th Amendment, 1992 — Part IX-A (Urban)

The 74th CAA constitutionalised urban local government — **Part IX-A**, in force **1 June 1993**, **Articles 243P–243ZG** + **Twelfth Schedule** (18 functions). Spur: rapid urbanisation; the **Charles Correa**-chaired National Commission on Urbanisation (1988).

Three municipality types

- Municipal Corporation — larger urban area
- Municipal Council — smaller urban area
- Nagar Panchayat — transitional area

Twelfth Schedule (18 fns)

- urban planning
- water supply
- sanitation
- fire services
- land-use regulation
- public health
- solid waste
- slum improvement

Core provisions

- direct ward elections; nominated experts (by law)
- reservation: SC/ST & not less than 1/3 women + chairpersons
- 5-year tenure; SEC; State Finance Commission
- Article 243W** — economic development & social justice
- Ward Committees (larger cities)
- DPC (243ZD) · Metropolitan Planning Cmte (243ZE)

Why ULBs stay weak — the “unfulfilled dream”

Fault line	Detail
Incomplete functional devolution	12th-Schedule functions not fully devolved; state agencies implement key services
Financial weakness	octroi abolished; weak property tax; ignored SFCs — Isher Judge Ahluwalia
Weak mayoral system	ceremonial mayor; Municipal Commissioner holds real power; short tenures
Parastatal dominance	BDA overshadows BBMP; DDA + MCD fragment Delhi governance
Special Purpose Vehicles	Smart Cities SPVs bypass elected councils
Delayed elections	e.g. Maharashtra corporations left without elected bodies for a period

“Democratic decentralisation is barely alive... local governments remain hamstrung and ineffective; mere agents to do the bidding of higher-level governments.” — **T. R. Raghunandan**

“unwillingness of the system to devolve responsibility and funding to the city level” — **Isher Judge Ahluwalia**

Reforms: 3Fs + subsidiarity; property-tax reform, GIS assessment, municipal bonds (Pune’s INR 200 crore water-supply bond), user charges; JNNURM (65 cities); convert 3,784 Census Towns to statutory ULBs; municipal ombudsman, public hearings, social audit. **China paradox:** India is democratic yet municipalities lack power; the Mayor of Shanghai holds status comparable to the Mayor of London.

9 Democratic Decentralisation & Deepening Democracy

Democratic decentralisation = devolution of functions and resources to elected representatives at lower levels for direct citizen participation. The 73rd & 74th Amendments created India's third tier of federal democracy.

Nirmal Mukarji and **Balveer Arora** call PRIs a "third layer of federalism"; the system is described as "getting grass to the roots."

Evidence & studies

Source	Finding
Chattopadhyay & Duflo	women-led Panchayats invest more in drinking water; representative identity shapes public goods
Vijayendra Rao & Paromita Sanyal	poor people use Gram Sabha for routine problems; it can challenge local inequalities
World Bank	Panchayat turnout in Rajasthan & MP exceeded 90% across categories
CPR (14th FC study)	five core functions formally devolved: water, sanitation, roads, streetlights, community assets
IIPA Devolution Index 2012–13	above-average: MH, KA, KL, RJ, TN, WB ...; mid: UP, Assam, HP; low: Goa, Punjab, Bihar
World Bank (decentralisation)	India among best in political decentralisation, close to last in administrative decentralisation

Limitations

- incomplete 3Fs — funds, functions, functionaries
- parallel schemes: MPLADS, MLALADS, CSS
- social hierarchy: casteism, patriarchy, elite domination
- local bodies function at the mercy of states
- bureaucratic dominance; staff accountable upward
- proxy leadership, corruption

Paul Brass — PRIs are "made to fail": legislators hesitate to devolve to the district and below, fearing rival centres of patronage. **Rajni Kothari** — without deeper social transformation, local institutions reinforce hierarchy.

"Decentralisation can democratise, but it can also entrench dominance." — **Christophe Jaffrelot**

UPSC 2015 UPSC 2021 · 15m Role of PRIs & ULBs in deepening democracy; have PRIs strengthened democratic decentralisation despite limitations?

10 Good Governance & Grassroots Democracy

Good governance = participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective, equitable, inclusive and rule-bound. Local bodies are the first point of contact between government and people.

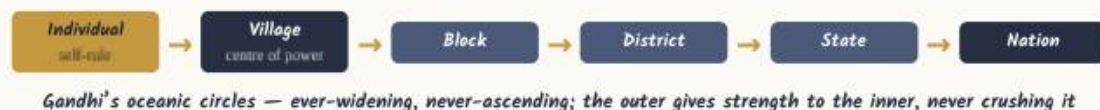
Grassroots democracy strengthens good governance — scholar map

Through	Scholar anchor
Inclusion	John Gaventa — inclusivity improves fairness of outcomes
Accountability	Ananya Roy — local transparency curbs corruption
Responsive development	Elinor Ostrom — local governance adapts to local conditions
Institutional strength	Daniel Kaufmann — strong grassroots institutions → democratic resilience, rule of law
Capability & empowerment	Amartya Sen — empowered local institutions improve implementation

Jessica Green supports local governance in sustainable resource management; the World Bank's **voice and accountability** and the 2nd ARC's citizen-centric governance both fit decentralisation. The Gadgil Committee's guiding line: "Develop sustainably, conserve thoughtfully".

PRIs & district administration — from controller to facilitator

S. N. Mishra — the elected-administrator relation is often strained. **Mani Shankar Aiyar** — advisories and "unambiguous orders" did not embed grassroots planning; Panchayats were not significantly vested under Article 243G.



"ever-widening, never-ascending circles ... the outermost will not wield power to crush the inner circle, but will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it." — **Mahatma Gandhi**

"Functions shall be carried out closest to citizens at the smallest unit of governance possible and delegated upwards only when the local unit cannot perform the task." — **Second ARC — the subsidiarity principle**

"the main gains arise not from competition, but from cooperation between levels in decentralized systems." — **James Manor**

Recent support: the Fourteenth Finance Commission recommended Rs. 2,00,292 crore (2015–2020) directly to Gram Panchayats; ≈10 lakh engineers/technicians to be trained for plan-making; ≈300 "rurban" clusters (up to 30 villages / 50,000 population).

UPSC 2016 · 20m Good governance will be achieved only by strengthening grass-root-level democracy.

11 Political · Administrative · Fiscal Decentralisation



Three dimensions — political decentralisation creates bodies; administrative + fiscal make them functional (India: high political, low admin)

Fiscal-federalism theory: **Wallace E. Oates** (foundational link to efficient service delivery); **Mancur Olson** (smaller groups — fewer free-rider problems); **M. Govinda Rao** (second-generation fiscal federalism — agency, corruption, elite capture); **Pranab Bardhan** (addresses heterogeneous local preferences); **Vito Tanzi & Rémy Prud'homme** (caution: macro-instability, local corruption); **Bardhan & Dilip Mookherjee** (fiscal gaps → elite capture).

Issues in fiscal decentralisation

Problem	Scholar
states assign responsibilities without funds/staff	Aureliano Fernandes
shrinking local share — “fiscal poverty”	M. A. Oommen
SFC recommendations ignored / delayed	Oommen · Palharya & Craig Johnson
no effective taxation powers; tax private taxpayers unheeded	Oommen · Sugata Marjit
unclear, delayed fund flow	M. Govinda Rao — clarity & timely transparent flow
centralised control prevents local resource management	Bishnu Prasad Mohapatra

The mismatch — political done, administrative weak

“Democracy is not just a form of government but a dream for the empowerment of millions.” — **Pratap Bhanu Mehta**

States retain planning/budgeting; DPCs often not constituted; many GPs lack full-time secretaries; parastatals control services; MPLADS/MLALADS bypass Panchayats. Scholar cluster: **Richard M. Bird** (financial autonomy), **Anirudh Krishna** (dominance of state officials), **Jean-Paul Faguet** (official resistance), **Arun Agrawal & Robert Chambers** (local capacity), **Merilee Grindle** (overlapping jurisdictions), **Larry Diamond** (lack of political will), **D. L. Sheth** (services held by higher departments).

UPSC 2019 · 10m Political decentralisation has not been matched by administrative decentralisation at the grass-roots level. Explain.

12 Women's Representation & Empowerment

The 73rd & 74th Amendments reserve **not less than one-third** seats for women (membership + chairperson, reserved & unreserved). Many states — Bihar, Haryana, MP, Odisha, Uttarakhand, HP, AP, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tripura — raised it to 50%.

“No less than 10 lakh women are in our Panchayati Raj institutions, comprising 37 per cent of all those elected and rising to as high as 54 per cent in Bihar, which has 50 per cent reservation for women” — **State of the Panchayats 2006–07, Ministry of Panchayati Raj**

“Woman is the architect of a nation's destiny.” — **Rabindranath Tagore**

“As long as women of India do not take part in public life there can be no salvation for the country; the dream of decentralization could never be fulfilled. I would have no use for the kind of Swaraj to which such women have not made their full contribution” — **Mahatma Gandhi**

Positive effects

Dimension	Evidence
Political entry	Sneha Palnitkar — 70–80% of elected women in several states were first-time representatives
Psychological	Lakshmi Iyer & Anandi Mani — women report crimes & injustices more openly
Policy priorities	Niraja Gopal Jayal, Chattopadhyay & Duflo — water, health, sanitation, education, food security
Attendance	Nirmala Buch / Bidyut Mohanty — women attend more regularly; 80–90% in Odisha
Economic	Fatima Bi (AP Sarpanch) — women's economic empowerment, UNDP recognition
Opening space	Aparajita Sarangi · S. Y. Quraishi — a profound but underreported democratic transformation

Social-reform examples: all-women Panchayats (Haryana) on sex ratio; anti-liquor drives (MH, MP); Arati Devi (Ganjam, Odisha) literacy; Mamta Devi — Swachh Bharat.

Barriers & impediments — formal entry ≠ substantive empowerment

Barrier	Detail / scholar
Proxy leadership	Sarpanch Pati · Pradhan-Pati — Sudha Pai ’s “Pati Panchayat”; Susheela Kaushik ; ActionAid India
Patriarchy / social norms	purdah, mobility limits, community resistance (2004 Haryana study)
Education & training gaps	Rohini Pande ; J. Devika & Binita Thampi — rubber-stamp authority
Administrative discrimination	James Manor — presence unacknowledged, not allowed to speak, no-confidence misused
Household burden	Bidyut Mohanty ; Gayadhar Malik & Smita Nayak (Odisha)
Rotation of reserved seats	Rohini Pande — limits re-election; many return to household roles
Legal / urban	Medha Nanivdekar — corporators lack a women’s agenda; two-child & education norms restrict entry

“the suppression of women from participation in social, political, and economic life hurts the people as a whole, not just women. The emancipation of women is an integral part of social progress, not just a women’s issue” — **Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen**

Theory: **Pateman** (democratic citizenship), **Iris Marion Young** (challenges male “neutrality”), **Nancy Fraser** (affirmative vs transformative remedies), **Mill** (participation → development), **Nivedita Menon** (household–politics boundary), **Raewyn Connell** (labour, power, cathexis).

UPSC 2017 · 15m **UPSC 2018 · 10m** **UPSC 2020 · 15m** **UPSC 2025 · 20m** Has the 73rd CAA empowered women? · New PR as instrument for empowerment · extent of women’s empowerment · impediments to participation.

13 District Planning Committees & Integrated Planning

Composition (Art. 2432D)

- elected representatives from Panchayats & Municipalities
- share based on rural–urban population of the district
- chairperson elected/appointed per state law

Functions

- consolidate Panchayat + municipal plans
- prepare draft district development plan
- integrate rural & urban priorities; spatial + sectoral
- prioritise projects, allocate resources, review

Problems: states delay constitution; DPCs lack real planning power; district administration dominates; departmental schemes run separately; peri-urban growth complicates planning. **Metropolitan Planning Committees** (Art. 243ZE) face similar problems.

14 Grassroots Movements & Democratic Transformation

Grassroots / micro-movements = localised collective efforts by marginalised communities for social, economic and political change (rising from the 1970s), challenging development models that privilege industrial growth over local needs, ecology and community rights.

Contribution	Scholar
reclaiming development — local knowledge & culture	Arturo Escobar & Vandana Shiva
micro-movements reflect disillusionment & deeper democratic aspiration	Rajni Kothari
globalisation → non-people-centred models; aligned state with foreign capital	Smitu Kothari
grow from capitalist development + democratic space; empower poor/tribal/women	Amita Basu
changed development narrative; democratised the public sphere	Ranjita Mohanty
countervailing force against global political & economic powers	D. L. Sheth

Challenges: state repression, fragmentation, co-option, weak resources/organisation, caste & gender barriers. They deepen democracy when linked with empowered local self-government.

15 Scholarly Assessments — Quick Recall

Scholar / source	One-line
Rajni Kothari	grassroots democracy vital for democratic federalism; caste/class can capture it
Christophe Jaffrelot	reservation opened space, but “decentralisation of domination” & proxy representation
Niraja Gopal Jayal	decentralisation alone ≠ democracy; design, capacity, coordination are essential
Manoranjan Mohanty	PRIs are sites of struggle — gender, caste, class
Rajiv Bhargava	PRIs can deepen democracy if properly empowered
George Mathew	devolution of functions & funds is essential for PRI effectiveness
Sudipta Kaviraj	state reluctance & centralising tendencies weaken PRI autonomy
Pranab Bardhan	local corruption reflects broader institutional weakness; reforms must accompany
M. A. Oommen	fiscal poverty & weak SFCs undermine Panchayats
Mani Shankar Aiyar Committee	“a bad Panchayati Raj is worse than no Panchayati Raj”
Economic Survey 2017	local self-government suffers from a “low equilibrium trap”
Hanson & Douglas, Palmer, Thapar	India’s local self-government is a major democratic experiment

16 Reforms & Way Forward

For PRIs

- complete activity mapping; devolve 29 subjects
- ensure 3Fs; implement SFC reports
- dedicated local cadre; Panchayat Ombudsman
- reduce parallel schemes; bureaucracy accountable to local bodies

For Gram Sabha & PESA

- clear powers; binding social audit
- quorum with women/marginalised; video record
- penalties for forged consent; align PESA rules
- no village → municipality conversion without Parliament

For ULBs

- devolve 12th-Schedule functions; empower mayors
- reduce parastatal dominance; strengthen Ward Committees
- property-tax reform, bonds, user charges
- municipal ombudsman; stronger DPCs/MPCs

For women representatives

- training, digital literacy, election finance
- protection against violence; action on proxy rule
- SHG convergence; leadership mentoring
- longer reservation cycles; stronger Gram Sabha role

Punchhi Commission & 2nd ARC support activity mapping based on subsidiarity. **Paradigm shift:** local self-government is not the lowest tier but the key to good governance, inclusive growth, social justice, and a response to regional alienation and Left-wing extremism (Sarkaria & Punchhi). “Atmanirbhar Bharat” needs “Atmanirbhar Panchayats”.

★ Power Quotes — the lines that carry an answer

“The best school of democracy and the best guarantee for its success is the practice of local self-government” — **James Bryce**

“India lives in her village. Independence must begin at the bottom, thus making every village a republic or Panchayati, enjoying full powers” — **Mahatma Gandhi**

“a sink of localism, a den of ignorance and communalism” — **B. R. Ambedkar (on the village)**

“introduces just a skeleton; flesh and blood have to be added to make it successful” — **on the 73rd Amendment**

“a tremendous widening of the democratic base of the country” — **George Mathew**

“PESA is a unique legislation, often described as a Constitution within the Constitution...” — **on PESA**

“Democratic decentralisation is barely alive... local governments remain hamstrung and ineffective; mere agents to do the bidding of higher-level governments.” — **T. R. Raghunandan**

“Decentralisation can democratise, but it can also entrench dominance.” — **Christophe Jaffrelot**

“ever-widening, never-ascending circles ... will give strength to all within and derive its own strength from it.” — **Mahatma Gandhi**

“a bad Panchayati Raj is worse than no Panchayati Raj” — **Mani Shankar Aiyar Committee**

“the emancipation of women is an integral part of social progress, not just a women’s issue” — **Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen**

Scholar Index — self-check your recall

Abay Asfaw ♦ Ajay Dandekar ♦ Amartya Sen ♦ Amita Basu ♦ Ananya Roy ♦ Anandi Mani ♦ Anirudh Krishna ♦ Aparajita Sarangi ♦ Aristotle ♦ Arora & Goyal ♦ Artatrana Gochhayat ♦ Arturo Escobar ♦ Arun Agrawal ♦ Ashok Mehta ♦ Aureliano Fernandes ♦ B. R. Ambedkar ♦ B. S. Baviskar ♦ Balveer Arora ♦ Balwantrao G. Mehta ♦ Bidyut Mohanty ♦ Binita Thampi ♦ Bishnu Prasad Mohapatra ♦ C. R. Bijoy ♦ Carole Pateman ♦ Charles Correa ♦ Christophe Jaffrelot ♦ Craig Johnson ♦ D. L. Sheth ♦ Daniel Kaufmann ♦ Dilip Mookherjee ♦ Dilip Singh Bhuria ♦ E. Sridharan ♦ Elinor Ostrom ♦ Esther Duflo ♦ Fatima Bi ♦ Gadgil ♦ Gayadhar Malik ♦ George Mathew ♦ Ghazala Mansuri ♦ Granville Austin ♦ G. V. K. Rao ♦ Habermas ♦ Hannah Arendt ♦ Indira Hirway ♦ Iris Marion Young ♦ Isher Judge Ahluwalia ♦ J. Devika ♦ James Bryce ♦ James Manor ♦ Jawaharlal Nehru ♦ Jean Drèze ♦ Jean-Paul Faguet ♦ Jessica Green ♦ John Gaventa ♦ John Stuart Mill ♦ Kautilya ♦ Kuldeep Mathur ♦ L. M. Singhvi ♦ Lakshmi Iyer ♦ Larry Diamond ♦ Lord Mayo ♦ Lord Ripon ♦ M. A. Oommen ♦ M. Govinda Rao ♦ M. P. Mathai ♦ M. Pal ♦ Mahatma Gandhi ♦ Mancur Olson ♦ Mani Shankar Aiyar ♦ Manoranjan Mohanty ♦ Medha Nanivdekar ♦ Merilee Grindle ♦ Nancy Fraser ♦ Narasimha Rao ♦ Niraja Gopal Jayal ♦ Nirmal Mukarji ♦ Nirmala Buch ♦ Nivedita Menon ♦ Partha Chatterjee ♦ Pattabhiram ♦ Paromita Sanyal ♦ Paul Brass ♦ P. K. Thungon ♦ Prabhat Datta ♦ Pranab Bardhan ♦ Pratap Bhanu Mehta ♦ Pratyusna Patnaik ♦ R. Elango ♦ Raewyn Connell ♦ Raghavendra Chattopadhyay ♦ Rajiv Bhargava ♦ Rajni Kothari ♦ Ramesh Kumar Singh ♦ Ranjita Mohanty ♦ Rémy Prud’homme ♦ Richard Crook ♦ Richard M. Bird ♦ Robert Chambers ♦ Rohini Pande ♦ Rabindranath Tagore ♦ Rousseau ♦ S. N. Mishra ♦ S. Y. Quraishi ♦ Sarkaria ♦ Shakun Palharya ♦ Smita Nayak ♦ Smitu Kothari ♦ Sneha Palnitkar ♦ Sudha Pai ♦ Sudipta Kaviraj ♦ Sugata Marjit ♦ Susheela Kaushik ♦ T. R. Raghunandan ♦ Vandana Shiva ♦ Venkatarangaiya ♦ Vijayendra Rao ♦ Virginius Xaxa ♦ Vito Tanzi ♦ Wallace E. Oates

How UPSC Asks It — this theme, year by year

Year	Marks	Theme tested
2015	—	Role of PRIs & ULBs in deepening democracy
2016	20m	Good governance & grass-root-level democracy
2017	15m	73rd CAA & women in panchayats
2018	10m	New Panchayat Raj as instrument for women empowerment
2018	20m	Provisions of PESA, 1996
2019	10m	Political vs administrative decentralisation mismatch
2020	15m	73rd & 74th amendments & women's empowerment
2021	15m	PRIs & democratic decentralisation despite limitations
2022	15m	Gram Sabhas, local resources & Gram Swaraj
2022	20m	Unique features of 73rd CAA & marginalised empowerment
2023	20m	74th CAA provisions & the "unfulfilled dream"
2024	15m	Gram Sabha as collective wisdom & will of the people
2025	20m	Impediments to women's participation in local governance

Today's Practice — pick up the pen

#	Question (write a 10-minute skeleton for each)	Year · Marks
1	Discuss the major provisions of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. Do you think that the Act remains an 'unfulfilled dream'? Argue your case.	2023 · 20m
2	Gram Sabha in the Panchayati Raj system is a forum which gives expression to the collective wisdom, aspirations and the will of the people. Comment.	2024 · 15m
3	Enunciate the impediments to women's participation in local governance in the process of political decentralisation.	2025 · 20m

Model answers drop tonight on [@psirbyamitpratap](#). Blank on a point above — a scholar, a case, a section of PESA? It is covered in full in your Foundation / OGP class notes & handouts. Revise it, then write. The capsule jogs memory; the class builds it.

See you tomorrow with Day 21 — revise → write a little → don't break the chain.