

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2019 · 10 marks

Political decentralization has not been matched by administrative decentralization at the grass roots level. Explain

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1** political = elected bodies | administrative = functions / staff / planning → 73rd-74th gave elections, reservation, three tiers → administrative power stayed with states
- R2** India a leader in political decentralisation but a laggard in administrative → why do elected bodies still lack governing power

Body flow

Art. 243G leaves devolution to state law → states keep planning + budgeting → Panchayats lack control over health, education, public works, staff → parastatals / line departments run core services + MPLADS bypass → **Brass**: resistance as rival patronage → fiscal dependence on grants → incomplete 3Fs

Counter-view

mismatch not uniform → Kerala's participatory planning devolved further → cause is political will, not a constitutional bar

Conclusion routes

- R1** World Bank gap: high political, low administrative → elected but not self-governing
- R2** real self-government needs functions + finances + staff, not elections alone

Political decentralisation means elected local bodies ; administrative decentralisation means transferring functions , staff and planning power to them. The 73rd & 74th amendments delivered the first: regular elections , reservations and a three-tier structure.

But administrative authority stayed with the states, leaving local bodies elected without real power. Article 243 G leaves actual devolution to state legislation , so states keep planning and budgeting , while Panchayats lack control over health , education , public works & their own staff. Parastatals and line departments run water, sanitation and housing and schemes like MPLADS bypass Panchayats.

Paul Brass argues legislators resist devolution because empowered local bodies could become rival centres of patronage. Fiscal dependence on grants deepens this , leaving the 3Fs - Functions, Funds , Functionaries - incomplete.

The mismatch is not uniform : where states showed political will, as in Kerala, devolution went further. Still, world bank studies confirm the gap - India ranks high on political decentralisation but near the bottom on administrative. Without real functions, finances and staff, grassroots bodies remain elected, not self-governing.