

## PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2022 · 20 marks

Examine the unique features of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. Do you think this Amendment would contribute in achieving the goal of empowerment of marginalised sections of the society?

## FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

## Intro routes

**R1** 73rd CAA gave PRIs constitutional life + wrote marginalised entry into the design itself → so empowerment hinges on how far states let it work

**R2** unique = a mandatory democratic floor fused with guaranteed reservation → real question: does the floor convert into real power?

## Body flow

Part IX + Eleventh Schedule (1993) → statutory → constitutional self-government → three-tier + Gram Sabha + five-year SEC elections + State Finance Commission → Art 243G + 29 subjects → Art 243D reservation (SC/ST by population, ≥1/3 women, chairpersons) → compulsory “skeleton” vs voluntary devolution of functions/funds/staff (“flesh and blood”) → **Mathew**: widening of democratic base → **Chattopadhyay & Duflo**: women heads → drinking water, SC heads → SC hamlets → presence ≠ authority

## Counter-view

“half-baked cake” → elite control, weak education, poor support blunt marginal voices (**Patnaik**) → reservation gives seats, not authority; real devolution left to states

## Conclusion routes

**R1** necessary, not sufficient → opens the door; genuine devolution of funds, functions, functionaries + social change must walk through it

**R2** empowerment enabled by design, delivered only when the skeleton gains flesh — guaranteed presence must become real authority

The 73rd amendment did not simply create local bodies; it gave them constitutional life and wrote marginalised entry into their very design. Whether that design empowers depends on how far the states allow it to work.

By adding Part IX and the XIth schedule in 1993, the act turned Panchayati Raj institutions from statutory bodies into constitutional units of self-government. Its unique features form a mandatory democratic floor: a uniform 3-tier structure, the Gram Sabha as a direct village assembly, regular 5-year elections held by an independent state election commission and a state finance commission to review panchayat finances. Article 243G links Panchayats to 29 development subjects.

The most distinctive feature is reservation under Article 243D - seats for SCs and STs in proportion to population, and not less than one-third for women, reaching even chairperson posts.

Yet the act fixed only the compulsory "skeleton"; the transfer of functions, funds and staff was left voluntary to states, with the "flesh and blood" still to be added.

On guaranteed presence, the gains are real. George Mathew calls the Act "a tremendous widening of the democratic base of the country". Raghavendra Chattopadhyay and Esther Duflo show that women-headed villages invest more in drinking water and that Schedule Caste heads invest more in their own hamlets.

But presence is not authority. Often called a "half-baked cake", the act lets elite control, weak education and poor support blunt marginal voices, as Pratyusha Patnaik notes. The Amendment is therefore necessary for empowerment, not sufficient. It opens the door; genuine devolution of funds, functions & functionaries with social change, must walk through it.