

UPSC CSE MAINS · OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Public Administration

Optional · Paper II

Part B · Indian Administration, Units 8 to 14

Complete notes on the seven units of Part B, from the civil services to significant issues in Indian administration, with diagrams, Indian examples and topic-wise previous year questions.

Compiled by Arvind KrS

7

SYLLABUS UNITS

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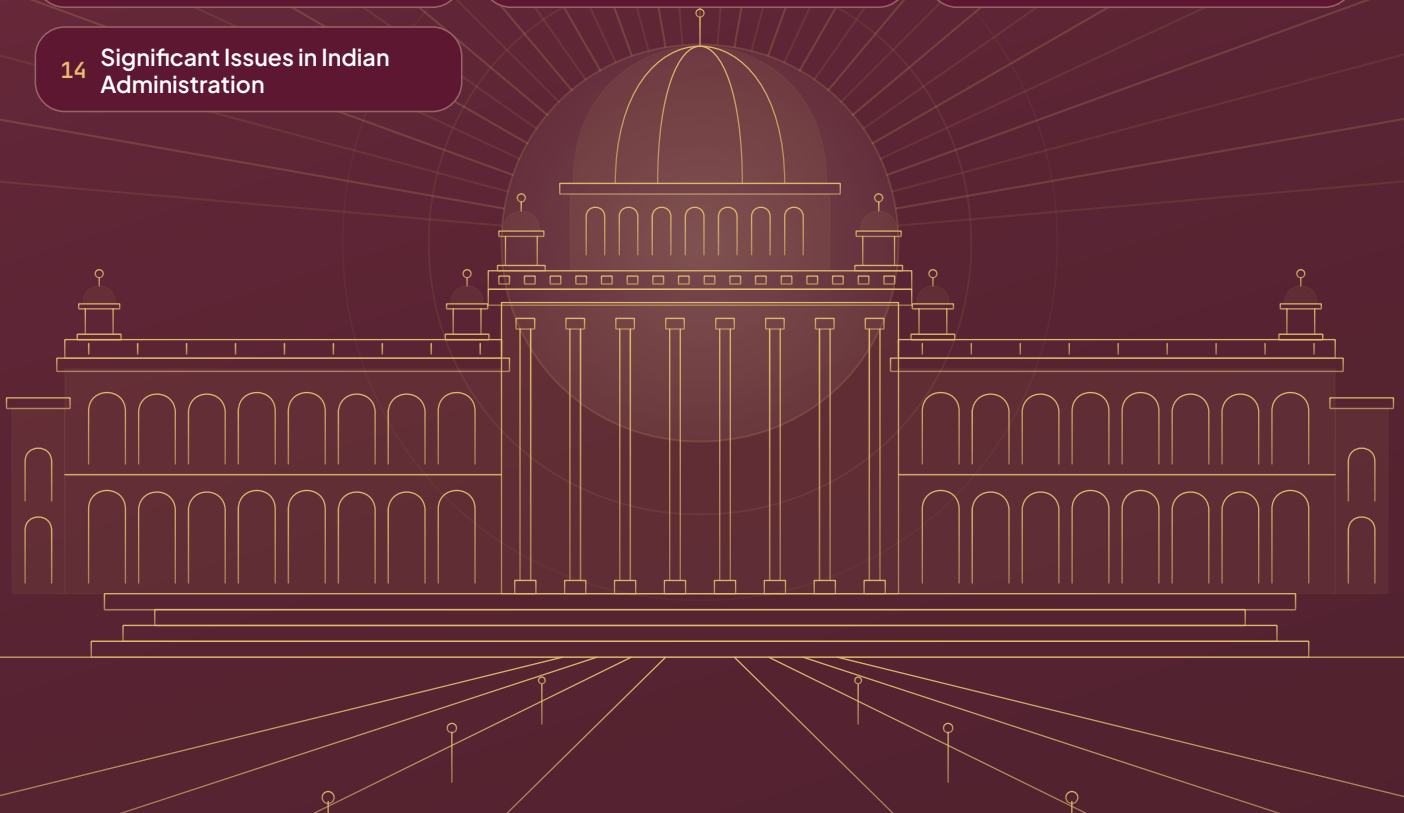
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PYQS 1987-2026

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DIAGRAMS

08 Civil Services**09** Financial Management**10** Administrative Reforms since Independence**11** Rural Development**12** Urban Local Government**13** Law and Order Administration**14** Significant Issues in Indian Administration



Public Administration Optional — Paper II

Part B: Indian Administration, Units 8 to 14

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08

UNIT 08

5 CHAPTERS

175 PYQS

Civil Services

Constitutional position; Structure, recruitment, training and capacity building; Good governance initiatives; Code of conduct and discipline; Staff associations; Political rights; Grievance redressal mechanism; Civil service neutrality; Civil service activism.

CHAPTERS

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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OPTIONAL

PAPER II · PART B

Civil Services in India: Constitutional Position, All India Services, UPSC and Recruitment

India's civil services are the **permanent executive**: the officials who run districts, draft laws, collect taxes, keep order and deliver schemes while ministers come and go. The Constitution gives them an unusual place. It does not merely allow Parliament to create a civil service; it writes into **Part XIV** who may dismiss a civil servant, what procedure must be followed, how **All India Services** common to the Union and the States are created, and how independent **Public Service Commissions** must recruit them. Few constitutions in the world go this far.

Three questions run through this topic. **How secure** should a civil servant be against the government that employs him? **How should the services be organised** in a federation with a strong Union and powerful States? And **how should India recruit** officers who are able, honest and socially representative, and when should it look outside the career services for expertise?

SYLLABUS Constitutional position; Structure, recruitment, training and capacity building; Good governance initiatives; Code of conduct and discipline; Staff associations; Political rights; Grievance redressal mechanism; Civil service neutrality; Civil service activism.

THIS CHAPTER Constitutional position of the civil services (Part XIV, Articles 308–323: Article 309 rules, the doctrine of pleasure under Article 310, safeguards under Article 311 and their exceptions, *Tulsiram Patel* and related judgments, the debate on Article 311); All India Services (Article 312, All India Services Act, 1951, dual control, cadre management, cadre allocation policies of 2017 and 2026, central deputation and the 2022 Rule 6 proposal, criticism and commission views); structure of the civil services (All India, Central Group A–C, State services; generalist vs specialist); Public Service Commissions (Articles 315–323, composition, independence, functions under Article 320, advisory nature, annual reports, State Commissions and the UPSC–SPSC relationship, Staff Selection Commission and National Recruitment Agency); methods of recruitment (direct, promotion, deputation, lateral entry); the Civil Services Examination (its evolution and the Kothari, Satish Chandra, Alagh, Hota, Nigavekar and Baswan committees, CSAT, age and attempts, service and cadre allocation, diversity and reservation including EWS, integrity reforms after 2024 and the Public Examinations Act, 2024); lateral entry from 2018 to its 2024 withdrawal; 2nd ARC recommendations on recruitment; theory lens. Training, good governance initiatives, conduct and discipline, and neutrality and activism are summarised briefly with links to their own articles.

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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · CIVIL SERVICES

Topic map

Civil Services: Constitution, Structure, Recruitment

*How India protects, organises and recruits its permanent executive***Constitutional position**

- **Art. 309:** service rules
- **Art. 310:** pleasure
- **Art. 311:** two safeguards, three exceptions

All India Services

- **Art. 312,** AIS Act 1951
- Dual control, cadres
- Deputation, cadre allocation

Structure

- All India, Central, State
- Groups A, B, C
- Generalist vs specialist

Permanent, merit-based civil service

neutral, protected and accountable to ministers

Commissions

- **Arts. 315–323**
- UPSC, SPSCs
- Advice under Art. 320

Recruitment

- Examination, promotion
- Deputation, lateral entry
- CSE and its committees

Recent issues

- Lateral entry halted, 2024
- Integrity reforms
- Cadre groups, 2026

Theory lens

Weber's merit bureaucracy · representative bureaucracy · Fulton · NPM and open systems · public service bargain

In simple words: who protects, organises and chooses India's officials.**Public Administration**

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Think of a large school run by a trust. The trustees (ministers) change every few years, but the teachers (civil servants) stay. The trust deed says teachers can be removed only after a fair hearing, and that a neutral selection board, not the trustees' friends, chooses new teachers through an open test. Part XIV is that trust deed for Indian government.

01

The Civil Services: Meaning, Legacy and Significance

IN SIMPLE WORDS

A civil servant is a government employee who is neither an elected politician, nor a judge, nor a soldier. India inherited a powerful civil service from British rule, kept it after independence, and placed it inside the Constitution so that it would serve every elected government fairly.

1.1 Meaning

- **Civil service** means the body of **permanent, professionally recruited officials** of the state who work in a civil (non-military, non-judicial, non-political) capacity.
 - **Herman Finer**, the British political scientist, in *The Theory and Practice of Modern Government* (1932), described it as a professional body of officials, permanent and paid, who carry out government policy and serve whichever ministry is in power.
 - The core features are **permanence, merit-based recruitment, professional skill, political neutrality and hierarchy under the political executive**.
- **"Civil post"** in the Constitution covers any post under the Union or a State in a civil capacity; **defence services** are under the doctrine of pleasure but outside the Article 311 safeguards.
- **Public servant** is wider: employees of public sector undertakings and statutory corporations are public servants for many laws, but they **do not hold civil posts** and so do not get the Part XIV safeguards.

1.2 The colonial legacy in brief

- **Covenanted service.** After the scandals of the East India Company's servants, Clive and Cornwallis made the Company's senior officers sign **covenants** against private trade and gifts and paid them high salaries; this **covenanted civil service** became the **Indian Civil Service (ICS)**.
- **Merit replaces patronage.** The **Charter Act of 1853** ended nomination; the **Macaulay Committee Report (1854)** laid down **open competition** and a **scholastic examination** for young graduates with a broad liberal education, and the first ICS examination was held in London in **1855**.
- **Indianisation.** **Satyendranath Tagore** became the first Indian in the ICS (selected 1863). The **Aitchison Commission (1886–87)** divided services into **Imperial, Provincial and Subordinate**; the **Islington Commission (1912–15)** and the **Lee Commission (1924)** pushed Indianisation, the Lee Commission fixing a **40:40:20** ratio (British : directly recruited Indians : Indians promoted from provincial services) and recommending a statutory Public Service Commission.

- **Public Service Commission.** Set up on **1 October 1926** under the Government of India Act, 1919, with **Sir Ross Barker** as Chairman; the **Government of India Act, 1935** provided for a **Federal Public Service Commission** (so named from 1937) and **Provincial Commissions**.
- **Independence.** The ICS gave way to the **IAS**, and the Indian Police to the **IPS**. On **21 April 1947**, at Metcalfe House, **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** addressed the first probationers and called the services the “**steel frame**” of the country; the date is now **Civil Services Day**.
- For the full history of the ICS and Indianisation, see the chapter on Legacy of British Rule.

1.3 Why the framers protected the services

- **National unity after Partition.** In the Constituent Assembly on **10 October 1949**, Patel defended the All India Services against members who saw them as a colonial relic: “You will not have a united India if you have not a good all-India Service which has the independence to speak out its mind”. He argued that an officer must have security to give frank advice.
- **Continuity in a parliamentary democracy.** Ministers change with elections; a permanent service carries **institutional memory** and implements the law impartially.
- **Development state.** Planning made the state the chief agent of development, so the civil service became the main instrument of change rather than just a regulator.
- **Rule of law.** Recruitment by an **independent commission** and tenure protection were meant to keep **patronage and spoils** out of the state.

INDIAN CONNECT — INDIAN CONNECT: WHAT THE SERVICES DO TODAY

- About **5,577 IAS**, **4,594 IPS** and **2,164 Indian Forest Service** officers were in position on **1 January 2025**, against authorised strengths of **6,877**, **5,099** and **3,193** (written replies in Parliament, February–March 2026).
- **180** candidates have been recruited to the IAS each year since **2012**.
- These few thousand officers head district administration, State secretariats and most senior posts in Union ministries; the much larger body of Group B and C staff does the day-to-day work.

02

Constitutional Position: Part XIV, Articles 308–323

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Part XIV is the Constitution’s chapter on government employees. One half (Articles 308–314) says who makes service rules, that employees serve at the government’s “pleasure”, and that they cannot be thrown out without a fair inquiry. The other half (Articles 315–323) sets up the independent commissions that recruit them.

2.1 The scheme of Part XIV

The Constitution divides Part XIV into two chapters. The table lists each provision and what it does.

ARTICLE	PROVISION	WHAT IT DOES
308	Interpretation	Defines the scope of Chapter I
309	Recruitment and conditions of service	Parliament / State legislature may regulate them by law; until then the President / Governor may make rules
310	Tenure of office	Doctrine of pleasure : civil servants hold office during the pleasure of the President or Governor
311	Dismissal, removal, reduction in rank	Two safeguards : no removal by a subordinate authority; no removal without an inquiry and reasonable opportunity of being heard
312	All India Services	Rajya Sabha resolution (two-thirds of members present and voting) → Parliament may create new AIS ; IAS and IPS deemed created
312A	Former Secretary of State's services	Lets Parliament vary the conditions of former ICS officers (added by the 28th Amendment, 1972)
313	Transitional provisions	Pre-1950 rules continue until replaced
314	Protection of old ICS officers	Repealed by the 28th Amendment, 1972
315	Public Service Commissions	One for the Union , one for each State ; a Joint Commission for two or more States by parliamentary law
316	Appointment and term	Chairman and members appointed by the President (Governor for a State Commission); six years or age 65 (UPSC) / 62 (SPSC)
317	Removal and suspension	Only by the President for misbehaviour after a Supreme Court inquiry , or for insolvency, outside paid employment or infirmity
318	Regulations	Conditions of service of members and staff; cannot be varied to a member's disadvantage after appointment
319	Bar on later office	Limits on further government employment of chairpersons and members
320	Functions	Conduct examinations; advise on recruitment, promotions, transfers, discipline and related claims
321	Extension of functions	Parliament or a State legislature may give additional functions
322	Expenses	Charged on the Consolidated Fund of India or of the State

ARTICLE	PROVISION	WHAT IT DOES
323	Reports	Annual report; reasons for non-acceptance of advice laid before the legislature

- **Chapter I (Articles 308–314)** deals with the **services**: rules, tenure and safeguards.
- **Chapter II (Articles 315–323)** deals with the **Public Service Commissions**.
- The detail is unusual. The **US Constitution** says nothing about a civil service; the British civil service rests on prerogative orders and, since 2010, a short statute. India constitutionalised both the **protection of the servant** and the **independence of the recruiter**.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · PART XIV OF THE CONSTITUTION

Arts. 308–323

The Constitutional Position of Civil Servants

Pleasure as the rule, safeguards as the exception, independent recruiters

Art. 309

Legislature regulates recruitment and service conditions; **President / Governor makes rules** meanwhile

Art. 310

Doctrine of pleasure: office held at the pleasure of President / Governor

Art. 312

Rajya Sabha resolution (two-thirds present and voting) → new All India Service

Art. 311: two safeguards

(1) no removal by an authority **subordinate** to the appointing one · (2) no dismissal, removal or reduction in rank **without inquiry and hearing**

Second proviso: inquiry may be dropped when

311(2)(a)

Conduct led to **criminal conviction**

311(2)(b)

Inquiry **not reasonably practicable**; reasons in writing

311(2)(c)

President / Governor: **security of the State**

Art. 311(3): the punishing authority's view on practicability is **final** · **Tulsiram Patel (1985)**: no partial inquiry, limited judicial review

Arts. 315–323: Public Service Commissions

appointment and term (316) · removal via Supreme Court (317) · functions (320) · charged expenses (322) · annual report (323)

In simple words: the state may dismiss its servants, but only fairly.

Public Administration

2.2 Article 309: who makes the service law

- **Article 309** lets the appropriate legislature **regulate recruitment and conditions of service** of persons appointed to public services and posts.

- **Proviso:** until a law is made, the **President** (for Union services) or the **Governor** (for State services) may make **rules**. These rules have the force of law and can even be made **retrospective**.
- **In practice India runs its services on rules, not statutes.** Parliament has never passed a general civil services law. Key rules made under the proviso include:
 - **Central Civil Services (Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules, 1965:** penalties and disciplinary procedure;
 - **Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964:** conduct of Union employees;
 - **Fundamental Rules**, including **FR 56(j)** on premature retirement in public interest.
- **The All India Services are the exception.** They are governed by a statute, the **All India Services Act, 1951**, made under Article 312, and rules under it such as the **IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954**, **IAS (Recruitment) Rules, 1954**, **AIS (Conduct) Rules, 1968** and **AIS (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1969**.
- **Why it matters.** Because rules are executive acts, the government can change service conditions without a debate in Parliament. The **Hota Committee (2004)** and the **2nd ARC** both called for a **Civil Services Law** setting out values, a code of ethics, tenure and performance management; draft **Public Services Bills** (from 2006 onwards) were prepared but never enacted.

2.3 Article 310: the doctrine of pleasure

- **Text in substance.** Except as expressly provided by the Constitution, every member of a defence service, a civil service of the Union, an All India Service, or holder of a civil post under the Union holds office **during the pleasure of the President**; State employees hold office during the **pleasure of the Governor**.
- **Origin.** The English common law rule that **Crown servants hold office at the pleasure of the Crown**: the Crown could dismiss them at will, without reasons, and a servant could not sue for wrongful dismissal. It rested on public policy: the state must be able to get rid of a servant whose continuance harms the public.
- **The Indian version is qualified.**
 - It operates "**except as expressly provided by this Constitution**", so it is subject to **Article 311** and to the fundamental rights (Articles 14 and 16).
 - It is exercised by the President or Governor **on ministerial advice**, through the rules made under Article 309, not as a personal prerogative.
 - **Article 310(2)** allows a **contract** with a specially qualified person (not a member of a regular service) to provide **compensation** if the post is abolished or he is asked to vacate it early. This is the constitutional basis for contract appointments such as lateral entry.
- **Who is outside the pleasure doctrine.** Offices whose holders the Constitution itself protects with a special removal procedure: **Supreme Court and High Court judges**, the **Comptroller and Auditor General**, the **Chief Election Commissioner**, and **members of Public Service Commissions**.
- **Effect.** The doctrine of pleasure is the **rule**; Article 311 creates **exceptions** that protect the servant's tenure. A temporary or probationary servant may be discharged under the terms of appointment, but if the termination is in substance a **punishment**, Article 311 applies.

2.4 Article 311: the two safeguards

- **Article 311(1):** no member of a civil service of the Union, an All India Service or a civil service of a State, or holder of a civil post, shall be **dismissed or removed by an authority subordinate to that by which he was appointed**.
 - The punishing authority may be the appointing authority or one **higher** than it, never lower.
 - It protects against action by a junior officer with a grudge.
- **Article 311(2):** no such person shall be **dismissed, removed or reduced in rank** except after an **inquiry** in which he has been **informed of the charges** and given a **reasonable opportunity of being heard** in respect of those charges.
 - It writes **natural justice** (*audi alteram partem*, hear the other side) into the Constitution.
 - The **42nd Amendment (1976)** removed the **second opportunity** to show cause against the **proposed penalty**; the penalty may now be imposed on the evidence of the inquiry.
- **Only three penalties attract Article 311: dismissal** (which normally disqualifies for future government employment), **removal** (which does not) and **reduction in rank**. Minor penalties such as censure or withholding increments are governed by the service rules, not by Article 311.
- **When is termination a “punishment”?** In **Parshotam Lal Dhingra v. Union of India (1958)**, the Supreme Court laid down two tests:
 - did the servant have a **right to the post** (substantive, permanent appointment)? If so, termination is removal;
 - does the termination carry **evil consequences** (forfeiture of pay or pension, a stigma)? If so, it is punishment even for a temporary servant.
- **The inquiry report.** In **Union of India v. Mohd. Ramzan Khan (1991)** and **Managing Director, ECIL v. B. Karunakar (1993)**, the Court held that the servant must get a **copy of the inquiry officer’s report** before the disciplinary authority decides, even after the 42nd Amendment.

2.5 The exceptions: second proviso to Article 311(2)

The inquiry may be dispensed with in three situations.

CLAUSE	SITUATION	WHO DECIDES
311(2) (a)	The servant is dismissed, removed or reduced in rank on the ground of conduct that has led to his conviction on a criminal charge	Disciplinary authority, considering the conduct
311(2) (b)	The authority is satisfied, for reasons recorded in writing , that it is not reasonably practicable to hold an inquiry	The authority empowered to dismiss
311(2) (c)	The President or Governor is satisfied that in the interest of the security of the State it is not expedient to hold an inquiry	President / Governor (on ministerial advice)

- **Article 311(3):** if a question arises whether it is reasonably practicable to hold an inquiry, the decision of the authority empowered to punish is **final**.

- **Clause (a)** rests on the logic that a criminal court has already given a full trial; the authority still considers whether the conduct deserves the penalty.
- **Clause (b)** covers situations where witnesses are terrorised, the servant and his associates threaten the inquiry, or there is a general atmosphere of violence or indiscipline.
- **Clause (c)** has been used against employees suspected of espionage or links with militant groups; in recent years **Jammu and Kashmir** has dismissed a number of employees under Article 311(2)(c) for alleged terror links, which critics see as punishment without any hearing.

2.6 Union of India v. Tulsiram Patel (1985)

- **Facts.** Several government servants (including CISF personnel after a violent agitation) had been dismissed **without any inquiry** under the second proviso. High Courts had set aside some dismissals relying on **Challappan (1976)**, which had required a hearing on penalty even under clause (a).
- **Bench.** A five-judge Constitution Bench decided on **11 July 1985** by **4:1**; **Justice D.P. Madon** wrote for the majority and **Justice M.P. Thakkar** dissented.
- **Holdings.**
 - The **doctrine of pleasure** in India is not a royal prerogative but a constitutional power exercised in **public interest**, subject only to what the Constitution expressly provides.
 - Article 311(2) embodies natural justice; when the **second proviso** applies, the Constitution itself **excludes** the inquiry, and **Article 14 cannot be used to bring it back**. No partial inquiry or show cause notice is required.
 - **Challappan** was **overruled** on this point.
 - The satisfaction under clauses (b) and (c) is **not immune from judicial review**: courts can strike it down if it is **mala fide** or based on wholly **irrelevant or extraneous grounds**; under clause (b) the reasons must be recorded, though they need not be communicated before the order.
 - The servant can still have the order reviewed in a **departmental appeal**, where he must be heard.
- **Significance.** The judgment strengthened the state's hand against indiscipline and threats to security while keeping a minimum of judicial control. It also explains why clause (c) orders are rarely overturned: courts defer to the executive on national security.

COMMON CONFUSION

Does Article 311 protect every government employee, including those in public sector companies?

No. Article 311 protects only persons who are members of a civil service or hold a **civil post** under the Union or a State. Employees of **public sector undertakings, statutory corporations and companies** are not holders of civil posts, so they rely on their service regulations, Articles 14 and 16 and labour law instead. **Members of the defence services** hold office at pleasure under Article 310 but are **outside Article 311**.

2.7 Constitutional position within the executive

- **Executive power** of the Union vests in the **President** (Article 53) and is exercised on the advice of the **Council of Ministers** (Article 74); the State equivalent is Articles 154 and 163.

- **Ministers are responsible**, collectively to the Lok Sabha (Article 75(3)) and individually for their departments; civil servants are **not responsible to Parliament** and act in the name of the President (Article 77(1)) under the **Rules of Business** (Article 77(3)).
- **Hence the old saying that ministers “rule” and civil servants “administer”**: the elected executive decides policy and answers for it; the civil service advises, implements and keeps the machine running. In practice, as **Paul Appleby** observed in his reports on Indian administration (1953, 1956), senior civil servants shape policy heavily through advice, drafting and implementation, so the line is blurred.
- **Anonymity follows from ministerial responsibility**. Because the minister answers in Parliament, the civil servant stays in the background. The neutrality, anonymity and commitment debate is treated in full in the chapter on Civil Service Neutrality and Activism.

2.8 Should Article 311 be retained? The central debate

- **The 2nd ARC’s case for change**. Its fourth report, *Ethics in Governance* (2007), observed that the safeguards meant to prevent **arbitrary and vindictive** action had, through a mass of case law, come to **shield the guilty** and delay punishment. It argued that a public servant, as an agent of the State, cannot rank above the State, and recommended that **Article 311 be deleted** and replaced by a comprehensive **law under Article 309** covering dismissal, removal and reduction in rank with fair procedure.
- **The 10th Report (2008)** proposed that the oral inquiry be replaced by a **summary disciplinary meeting**, that dismissal and removal be imposed only by an authority **three levels above** the servant, and that **UPSC consultation** be required only for proposed dismissal. The government accepted only part of this (it dropped the second-stage advice of the Central Vigilance Commission in cases where the UPSC is consulted, from **26 September 2011**).
- **Developmental pressure**. Supporters of change argue that a development state needs **performance-based** tenure, that **FR 56(j)** premature retirement and the proposal of **intensive reviews at 14 and 20 years** (2nd ARC) are hampered by litigation, and that India is almost alone in giving civil servants constitutional tenure protection.

CRITICISM — CRITICISM: ARTICLE 311 PROTECTS THE INEFFICIENT AND THE CORRUPT

- Disciplinary cases take **years**; procedural lapses lead courts to quash penalties on **technicalities**.
- Security of tenure breeds **complacency and risk aversion**; the honest and the dishonest are protected alike.
- **Developmental aspirations** need a service that can be reshaped and held to results; constitutional rigidity blocks performance management.
- Most democracies, including the UK, protect civil servants by **law and convention**, not by the constitution.
- A carefully drafted **Civil Services Law under Article 309** could keep natural justice while removing excess procedure.

DEFENCE — DEFENCE: THE SAFEGUARDS PROTECT THE HONEST AND THE FRANK

- The **substance** of Article 311 is simply **natural justice** and a hearing; repealing it would not remove the need for a fair inquiry under Articles 14 and 21.
 - **Delays come from poor inquiries**, overloaded authorities and weak vigilance machinery, not from the Article; the 2nd ARC's own procedural reforms could cut delay without amending the Constitution.
 - The **second proviso** already allows dismissal without inquiry for convicted, threatening or security-risk employees (**Tulsiram Patel**).
 - In a political culture of **transfers as punishment** and pressure on officers, constitutional protection is what lets an officer **say no** to an illegal order; Patel's argument of 1949 still holds.
 - Weakening Article 311 could **politicise** the service, a risk greater than inefficiency.
- **Current position.** Article 311 stands unchanged. Governments have instead used **FR 56(j)** reviews, **compulsory retirement** of officers with doubtful integrity, faster departmental inquiries and online vigilance tracking. Conduct rules, penalties and the disciplinary process are covered in the chapter on Code of Conduct, Discipline, Staff Associations and Grievance Redressal.

03 The All India Services

IN SIMPLE WORDS

The All India Services are officers recruited and trained by the Union but posted to the States for most of their careers. An IAS officer selected in Delhi may spend thirty years in Odisha, with spells in the Union ministries. This makes them a bridge between the two levels of government, and also a source of friction between them.

3.1 Article 312 and the All India Services Act, 1951

- **Article 312(1):** if the **Rajya Sabha** declares by a resolution supported by **not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting** that it is necessary or expedient **in the national interest**, Parliament may by law create one or more **All India Services** (including an **All India Judicial Service**) common to the Union and the States, and regulate recruitment and conditions of service.
- **Article 312(2):** the **IAS** and **IPS** are **deemed** to be services created by Parliament under this Article.
- **Article 312(3)–(4):** an All India Judicial Service cannot include any post **inferior to a district judge**; the law creating it may amend Chapter VI of Part VI without counting as a constitutional amendment under Article 368. (The words on the judicial service were added by the **42nd Amendment, 1976**.)
- **Why the Rajya Sabha?** It represents the **States**. Creating a service that will work inside State governments requires the consent of the federal chamber, a **federal safeguard**.
- **All India Services Act, 1951** empowers the Union, **after consultation with State governments**, to make rules on recruitment and conditions of service; rules must be laid before Parliament.

- **Indian Forest Service.** After a Rajya Sabha resolution of 1961 proposing new services, the **Indian Forest Service** was constituted in **1966** (first selection 1967), the third AIS. The proposed **Indian Service of Engineers** and **Indian Medical and Health Service** were never created, and the **All India Judicial Service** remains on paper.

3.2 Features: dual control and the cadre system

- **Recruitment by the Union:** the IAS and IPS through the **Civil Services Examination**, the IFoS through the **Indian Forest Service Examination**, both conducted by the **UPSC**.
- **Cadre-controlling authorities:** **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)** for the IAS, **Ministry of Home Affairs** for the IPS, **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** for the IFoS.
- **State cadres and joint cadres:** each officer belongs to a State cadre or a joint cadre (such as **Assam–Meghalaya** or **AGMUT**, which covers Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Mizoram and the Union Territories; the **Jammu and Kashmir** cadre was merged into AGMUT in **2021**).
- **Dual control:**
 - the **State government** posts, transfers, assesses (writes performance appraisals) and can **suspend** an officer and start disciplinary action;
 - the **Union government** recruits, trains, fixes cadre strength, approves promotions to higher grades and alone can impose **major penalties** such as dismissal, removal or compulsory retirement.
- **Cadre management:**
 - **Cadre strength** of each State is reviewed by the Union in consultation with the State, normally every **five years**;
 - each cadre includes **senior duty posts** plus reserves: a **Central Deputation Reserve (CDR)** of up to **40%** of senior duty posts, and reserves for State deputation, training and leave;
 - **direct recruits** fill about **two-thirds** of the cadre and officers **promoted from the State Civil Service** about **one-third** (the promotion quota is up to **33⅓%** of senior duty posts under the IAS (Recruitment) Rules, 1954).
- **Insider and outsider.** To keep the national character, only a share of each State's vacancies goes to "insiders" (candidates from that State who opt for it); the rest are filled by "outsiders" from other States, through a roster.

3.3 Cadre allocation: from zones to groups

- **Why it matters.** The cadre decides where an officer will spend most of a working life, so its allocation is both a **personal stake** for candidates and a **federal balancing** device.
- **2008 policy:** a roster-based allocation with insider–outsider ratios; the **2nd ARC (2008)** asked that at least one vacancy a year in small north-eastern cadres go to a willing home-State candidate.
- **2017 policy (zones).** The 25 cadres were grouped into **five zones**; candidates gave cadre preferences zone by zone, so that officers from every region would be spread across the country.
 - Zone I: AGMUT, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana;
 - Zone II: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha;
 - Zone III: Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh;
 - Zone IV: West Bengal, Sikkim, Assam–Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland;

- Zone V: Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala.
- **2026 policy (groups).** On **23 January 2026** DoPT notified a new policy, effective from **CSE-2026**, that **abolished the zones**.
 - All cadres are arranged **alphabetically in four groups** (Group I: AGMUT, Andhra Pradesh, Assam–Meghalaya, Bihar, Chhattisgarh; Group II: Gujarat to Madhya Pradesh; Group III: Maharashtra to Tamil Nadu; Group IV: Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal).
 - Allocation runs through a **rotational cycle of 25 candidates** in merit order, matching the 25 cadres, so that top rankers are spread across cadres over time.
 - Vacancies are fixed on the **cadre gap as on 1 January** of the year after the examination; States must send requisitions by **31 January**; **EWS** vacancies are counted within the unreserved category.
 - A candidate must **expressly opt** for the home State to be considered against an insider vacancy; outsider allocation is by roster, first for **persons with benchmark disabilities**, then for others.

3.4 Central deputation and the 2022 Rule 6 proposal

- **Rule 6(1) of the IAS (Cadre) Rules, 1954:** an officer may be deputed to the Union **with the concurrence of the State**; in case of disagreement, the matter is decided by the **Union** and the State gives effect to its decision.
- **The problem.** States have been sending fewer officers than the CDR; the Union reported shortages at **Deputy Secretary, Director and Joint Secretary** levels, while States argued that their own cadres were short.
- **The trigger.** In **May 2021** the Union sought to call West Bengal's Chief Secretary, **Alapan Bandyopadhyay**, to Delhi at short notice after a dispute with the State; he retired instead. The episode exposed how deputation can become a weapon in **Union–State conflict**.
- **The proposal (December 2021–January 2022).** DoPT proposed four changes to Rule 6(1):
 - States would make available a list of officers for the CDR, and the Union would decide the **actual number** to be deputed in consultation with the State;
 - in case of disagreement, the State would give effect to the Union's decision **within a specified time**;
 - if the State delayed, the officer would **stand relieved from the cadre** from a date fixed by the Union;
 - in specific situations where the Union needed an officer **in public interest**, the State would comply within a specified time.
- **Reaction.** Several States, including **Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Telangana, Odisha, Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Meghalaya**, opposed it as an attack on **cooperative federalism** and on the officer's ability to serve the State government without fear. DoPT told an RTI applicant in 2022 that a **final view was yet to be taken**, and no amended rule has been notified.

3.5 Significance of the All India Services

- **National integration:** officers recruited on an all-India basis carry a **national outlook** into State administration and a State's ground reality into Union ministries.
- **Uniform standards** of administration, law and order and forest management across States.
- **Link between the two governments:** officers who have served in both understand each other's concerns; this aids **cooperative federalism** and the implementation of centrally sponsored schemes.

- **Neutrality buffer:** because the Union alone can impose major penalties, an officer has some protection against a vindictive State government (and vice versa).
- **High-quality leadership** for districts and secretariats, selected by an independent commission.
- **Continuity in crises:** elections, President's Rule, natural disasters and law-and-order emergencies.

3.6 Criticism of the All India Services

- **A hangover of colonial rule:** created for a unitary, authoritarian state; critics ask why a federal democracy should keep them.
- **Against federalism:** they restrict State autonomy, since key officers are recruited, trained and ultimately disciplined by the Union. The **Rajamannar Committee** (appointed by Tamil Nadu in 1969, report 1971) recommended **abolishing the IAS and IPS** and leaving States to recruit their own services.
- **Divided loyalty:** an officer serving the State but answerable to Union rules may be caught between two governments, especially when different parties rule them.
- **Demoralisation of State services:** AIS officers occupy the best posts, earn more and are promoted faster; State service officers reach the IAS late.
- **Lack of local familiarity** for outsiders (language, culture), though officers learn the State's language in training.
- **Generalism:** the IAS rotates across unrelated departments; the **1st ARC (1969)** recommended carving out functional fields and opening senior posts to specialists.
- **Uneven representation** of States among recruits, with some States sending far more candidates than others.
- **Financial burden** on States, which pay AIS officers at Union scales.

3.7 Commission views

- **1st ARC (1966–70):** retained the AIS but recommended **functional specialisation** and a **Senior Management Pool** open to all services.
- **Rajamannar Committee (1971):** abolition of IAS and IPS.
- **Sarkaria Commission (1983–88):** called the AIS **indispensable** for unity and said disbanding them or letting States opt out would be **retrograde**; recommended **new AIS** for **engineering, medicine and health, and education**, a minimum spell of **central deputation** for every officer, Union restraint in using transfers and suspensions against AIS officers, and consultation with States through a council.
- **Punchhi Commission (2007–10):** supported strengthening and extending the AIS.
- For the place of the AIS in Union–State administrative relations, see the chapter on Union–State Relations.

INDIAN CONNECT — INDIAN CONNECT: “CENTRAL SERVICES ARE MORE ALL-INDIA THAN THE ALL INDIA SERVICES”

- An **IAS or IPS officer** is tied to one State cadre for life, with only spells in Delhi; most of his career is spent inside one State's politics and language.

- An officer of the **Indian Revenue Service, Indian Railway services, Indian Audit and Accounts Service** or the **Indian Foreign Service** can be posted **anywhere in India** (or abroad) throughout his career, and owes loyalty to one Union department.
- The paradox: the **Central Services are national in practice**, while the AIS are **national in recruitment but State-bound in service**. The AIS's all-India character rests on outsider allocation, central deputation and Union disciplinary control, all of which States contest.

04 Structure of the Civil Services

IN SIMPLE WORDS

India has three layers of civil servants: All India Services shared by the Union and the States, Central Services that work only for the Union, and State Services that work only for one State. Within each layer, employees are graded into groups by the level of responsibility, from policy-making officers to clerks and support staff.

4.1 The three-tier structure

The structure below shows who recruits each kind of service and where it serves.

TIER	EXAMPLES	RECRUITED BY	SERVES
All India Services	IAS, IPS, IFoS	UPSC (direct) + promotion from State services	States and Union
Central Services Group A	Indian Foreign Service, Indian Revenue Service, Indian Audit and Accounts Service, Indian Railway Management Service, Central Engineering Service	UPSC (examinations, selection, promotion)	Union only, across India
Central Services Group B	Section Officers, Central Secretariat Service, Group B posts in departments	UPSC / Staff Selection Commission / promotion	Union
Central Services Group C	Assistants, clerks, Multi-Tasking Staff	Staff Selection Commission, Railway Recruitment Boards, departments	Union

TIER	EXAMPLES	RECRUITED BY	SERVES
State Services	State Civil Service (executive), State Police Service, State engineering, education and health services	State Public Service Commission / State boards	One State

- **Classification history.** Before 1947 the services were **Imperial (later All India), Provincial and Subordinate**. After independence, the **Central Services** were classified as **Class I, II, III and IV**, renamed **Group A, B, C and D** after the **Third Central Pay Commission (1973)**. The **Sixth Central Pay Commission (2008)** recommended upgrading Group D posts into Group C as **Multi-Tasking Staff**, so new Group D recruitment has ended.
- **Group A:** senior management and policy roles; the organised Group A Central Services number several dozen, each with its own cadre and cadre-controlling ministry.
- **Group B:** first-line supervisors (gazetted and non-gazetted).
- **Group C:** clerical and operational staff, by far the largest group.
- **A thin top.** Group A officers are a very small share of Union employees; the overwhelming majority are in Group C. Policy-making is concentrated in a few thousand officers.
- **Central Secretariat Service (CSS):** the permanent backbone of Union ministries at Section Officer to Under Secretary and above; senior posts (Deputy Secretary and above) are filled largely through the **Central Staffing Scheme**, which draws officers of the AIS and Group A services on **tenure deputation** after **empanelment**.
- **Rationalisation:** in **2019** the government decided to merge eight railway Group A services into a single **Indian Railway Management Service (IRMS)**, recruited through the CSE from 2022. NITI Aayog's *Strategy for New India @75 (December 2018)* proposed reducing the **60-plus** separate central and State services through rationalisation, a **central talent pool** allocating recruits by competence, and a lower upper age limit.

4.2 State services and their problems

- **Each State** has its own administrative, police, revenue, engineering, health and education services, recruited by its **State Public Service Commission** or subordinate service boards.
- **The State Civil Service (executive)** is the State's generalist service; its officers run sub-divisions and many district-level posts and are promoted into the IAS against the promotion quota.
- **Why State services suffer in comparison:**
 - **lower pay and slower promotion** than AIS and Central services;
 - the best posts (Collector, Secretary) go to AIS officers, so State officers feel **subordinate in their own State**;
 - induction into the IAS often comes **late**, sometimes near the end of a career;
 - **State Commissions** are often weaker, slower and more exposed to political pressure and **paper leaks**, which delay recruitment for years;
 - **frequent transfers** and political pressure are felt more by State officers, who lack Union disciplinary protection;

- weaker **training** and mid-career learning.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · CIVIL SERVICES

Structure

Three Tiers of India's Civil Services

Who recruits each service and whom it serves

All India Services: IAS · IPS · IFoS

recruited by UPSC, posted to State cadres · dual control: State posts and transfers, Union imposes major penalties

Central Services (Union only)

- **Group A:** IFS, IRS, audit, railways · UPSC
- **Group B:** supervisors · UPSC / SSC
- **Group C:** clerical, Multi-Tasking Staff · SSC, RRBs

State Services (one State)

- State Civil Service, State Police Service
- Engineering, health, education
- Recruited by **State PSC** and boards

Promotion link: State Civil Service officers fill up to **one-third** of IAS senior posts · Central Staffing Scheme brings AIS and Group A officers to Union ministries

Modes of entry

Direct recruitment

Promotion

Deputation

Lateral entry

In simple words: shared officers at the top, separate Union and State staff below.

Public Administration

• Measures suggested:

- induction into the IAS by a **UPSC-conducted examination** for State officers with **8–10 years** of Group A service (2nd ARC, 10th Report);
- stronger State Commissions with transparent appointments (see Section 5.6);
- **State Civil Services Authorities** or **Civil Services Boards** for postings and tenure;
- better **State training institutes** and inclusion in **Mission Karmayogi**-style capacity building;
- clear career progression and **domain assignment** for State officers too.

4.3 Generalist vs specialist

- **Who is a generalist?** An officer recruited young on a broad, non-technical test, given general training, and posted across unrelated departments, rising to top policy posts on the strength of administrative experience (the **IAS** in India, the administrative class in Britain).
- **Who is a specialist?** An officer recruited for professional knowledge (engineer, doctor, scientist, economist, accountant) who works within that field and gives technical advice.
- **Indian pattern.** Policy and coordination posts in secretariats and districts are held largely by **generalists**; specialists head technical departments and **directorates**, and complain that a generalist **secretariat**

stands between them and the minister. The **Secretariat–Directorate** friction is treated in the chapter on Chief Secretary, State Secretariat and Directorates.

	CASE FOR THE GENERALIST	CASE FOR THE SPECIALIST
Coordination	Area administration (the district) needs someone who can coordinate many departments	Modern policy is technical (finance, health, digital, climate); coordination without knowledge is shallow
Political sense	Ministers need advisers who understand public opinion and Parliament	Specialists can explain technical choices to ministers directly, without an intermediary
Breadth	Broad experience avoids departmental tunnel vision	Frequent rotation of generalists prevents depth and produces dependence on consultants
Decision-making	Technical inputs are only one part; legal, financial and political factors dominate	The generalist depends on specialist advice anyway, but takes the credit and the decision
Morale	A single administrative service provides a clear leadership cadre	Excluding specialists from top posts lowers their morale and drives brain drain

- **Origins of the generalist rationale.** The **Northcote–Trevelyan Report (1854)** in Britain and the **Macaulay Report (1854)** in India held that a broadly educated, intelligent young graduate, trained on the job, makes a better administrator than a narrow expert. The administrator, on this view, should have something of the **qualities of a layman**, able to weigh expert advice against public needs.
- **The Fulton critique.** The **Fulton Committee** in the UK (1966–68, chaired by **Lord Fulton**) attacked the service as still based on “**the philosophy of the amateur (or ‘generalist’ or ‘all-rounder’)**”, recommended a bigger role for specialists, abolition of the class system, a Civil Service Department and a Civil Service College. Its critique is the classic reference in the Indian debate.
- **Indian commissions.**
 - The **1st ARC (1969)** recommended that senior posts in **functional areas** go to those with functional expertise, and that non-functional senior posts be open to all services through a **Senior Management Pool**; it was not implemented.
 - The **2nd ARC (2008)** recommended **domain assignment** to every AIS and Group A officer after **13 years** of service, with the domains assigned by a **Central Civil Services Authority**; the government agreed in principle but preferred assignment after **18 years** in consultation with officers.
 - The **2nd ARC** also proposed opening **Senior Administrative Grade** posts to competition from **all services**, and earmarking some higher posts for **outside talent**.
- **The middle way (current trend):**
 - **domain specialisation** of generalists after their field years, through mid-career training and longer tenures;
 - **competency mapping** under Mission Karmayogi, matching officers to posts through role frameworks;
 - opening the **Central Staffing Scheme** to more Group A services, so that IRS, audit, railway and other officers become Joint Secretaries and Secretaries;

- **lateral entry** of a few specialists at senior levels (Section 7);
- **multidisciplinary teams** in which policymakers, programme managers and technical experts work together.

COMMON CONFUSION

Is the IAS purely a generalist service?

Not quite. IAS officers are generalists at **entry**, but many build deep expertise over long stints in finance, power, health or land administration, and the 2nd ARC and later reforms aim to formalise this through **domain assignment**. Conversely, many “specialist” Group A services (revenue, audit, railways) supply senior generalist managers through the Central Staffing Scheme. The real issue is **how postings and tenures are managed**, not the label at recruitment.

05 Public Service Commissions

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Public Service Commissions are independent recruiting bodies set up by the Constitution. Their job is to choose government employees on merit, so that a minister cannot simply hire relatives or party workers. They also advise the government on promotions and on punishing employees.

5.1 Evolution

- **1926:** first **Public Service Commission** (Chairman **Sir Ross Barker** and four members), advisory, under rules framed under the 1919 Act.
- **1935–37:** the **Government of India Act, 1935** created a **Federal PSC** and **Provincial PSCs**, made consultation on recruitment, promotions and discipline mandatory, and the Federal Commission took that name on **1 April 1937**.
- **1947:** **H.K. Kripalani** became the first Indian Chairman.
- **26 January 1950:** the Federal PSC became the **Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)** with constitutional status; **R.N. Banerjee** was its first Chairman under the Constitution.
- **1985:** sanctioned strength fixed at a **Chairman and ten members**.
- **1992:** **Rose Millian Bathew Kharbuli** became the first woman Chairperson.
- **1 October 2026:** the UPSC completed **100 years**, marked by a year-long centenary (from 1 October 2025) and a two-day conference, *Manthan*, in New Delhi on **30 September–1 October 2026**.

5.2 Composition, appointment and independence

- **Number of members** is not fixed by the Constitution; it is set by the President (or Governor) through regulations; the **UPSC (Members) Regulations, 1969** govern members' conditions of service. The UPSC's

sanctioned strength has been a Chairman and ten members since **1985**; in 2026 it had a Chairman and eight members.

- **Appointment (Article 316):** by the **President** for the UPSC and a Joint Commission, by the **Governor** for a State Commission.
 - **As nearly as may be one-half** of the members must have held office for at least **ten years** under the Government of India or a State government.
 - The Constitution prescribes **no other qualification** and no selection committee.
- **Term: six years** or until age **65** (UPSC) or **62** (SPSC; raised from 60 by the **41st Amendment, 1976**), whichever is earlier. A member is **not eligible for reappointment** to the same office.
- **Removal (Article 317):**
 - only by the **President** (even for a State Commission member), on the ground of **misbehaviour**, after an inquiry by the **Supreme Court** on a reference by the President, and the Court reporting that the member ought to be removed;
 - the President (or Governor, for a State Commission) may **suspend** a member while the reference is pending;
 - the President may remove a member who is adjudged **insolvent**, takes up **paid employment** outside the office, or is unfit due to **infirmary of mind or body**;
 - being interested in a **government contract** or sharing its profits counts as misbehaviour.
- **Conditions of service (Article 318)** cannot be varied to a member's **disadvantage** after appointment.
- **Expenses charged (Article 322)** on the Consolidated Fund, so they are **not voted** annually by the legislature.
- **Bar on later office (Article 319):**
 - the **UPSC Chairman** is **ineligible** for any further employment under the Government of India or a State;
 - a **UPSC member** can become UPSC Chairman or Chairman of a State Commission, but no other government post;
 - an **SPSC Chairman** can become Chairman or member of the UPSC or Chairman of another SPSC;
 - an **SPSC member** can become Chairman or member of the UPSC, or Chairman of that or another SPSC.

These provisions together make the Commissions among the most insulated bodies in the Constitution. The insulation is about **tenure and money**; it does not extend to **selection** of members, which is entirely in executive hands.

COMMON CONFUSION

Can a Governor remove a member of a State Public Service Commission?

No. A Governor **appoints** and may **suspend** a State Commission member pending a reference, but **removal** is only by the **President**, and for misbehaviour only after an inquiry by the **Supreme Court** (Article 317). This keeps State Commissions out of the reach of the State government that appointed them.

5.3 Functions under Article 320

- **Article 320(1):** the UPSC and State Commissions **conduct examinations** for appointments to the services of the Union and the States respectively.
- **Article 320(2):** if two or more States request, the UPSC **assists** them in framing and operating **joint recruitment** for services needing special qualifications.
- **Article 320(3):** the Commission **shall be consulted** on:
 - (a) **methods of recruitment** to civil services and posts;
 - (b) **principles** to be followed in making **appointments, promotions and transfers**, and the **suitability** of candidates;
 - (c) **disciplinary matters** affecting a civil servant, including memorials and petitions;
 - (d) claims for **legal costs** incurred by a civil servant in defending action taken in the course of duty;
 - (e) claims for **injury pensions** and related awards;
 - and any other matter referred to it by the President or Governor.
- **Exclusions:**
 - the **proviso to 320(3)** lets the President (or Governor) make **regulations** specifying matters on which consultation is **not necessary**, for example the **UPSC (Exemption from Consultation) Regulations, 1958**, which exclude many posts and matters;
 - **Article 320(4):** no consultation is needed on **reservation** of posts for backward classes under **Article 16(4)** or on giving effect to **Article 335** (claims of SCs and STs);
 - **Article 320(5):** exemption regulations must be laid before Parliament or the State legislature for at least **14 days** and may be modified by it.
- **Article 321:** Parliament or a State legislature may give **additional functions**, such as recruitment for local authorities or public institutions; in **1960–61** the UPSC agreed to recruit for bodies such as the Delhi Municipal Corporation and the Employees' State Insurance Corporation.
- **Article 323:** the UPSC presents an **annual report** to the **President**, who lays it before Parliament with a **memorandum** explaining cases where the Commission's advice was **not accepted** and the reasons. State Commissions report to the Governor, who lays the report before the State legislature.
- **Article 315(4):** the UPSC may, at a Governor's request and with the President's approval, serve the needs of a State.

5.4 What the UPSC actually does

- **Recruitment by examination:** Civil Services, Indian Forest Service, Engineering Services, Combined Medical Services, National Defence Academy and Naval Academy, Combined Defence Services, Central Armed Police Forces (Assistant Commandants) and others, about **15 examinations** a year.
- **Recruitment by selection:** interviews (with or without a recruitment test) for specialist posts requisitioned by ministries.
- **Advice on promotions:** a member presides over **Departmental Promotion Committees** for Group A promotions; it processed records of **24,581 officers** for promotion in 2023–24.
- **Induction into the AIS:** the **Selection Committee** chaired by the UPSC Chairman or a member prepares the list of State Civil Service and non-State Civil Service officers for promotion to the IAS, IPS and IFoS (**532 officers** inducted in 2023–24).

- **Disciplinary advice** before major penalties on Group A officers.
- **Police leadership:** since 2012–13, under the Supreme Court's order in **Prakash Singh v. Union of India (2006)**, it **empanels** senior IPS officers from which States appoint their **Director General of Police**.
- **Advice on Recruitment Rules** framed by ministries for each post.

5.5 Advisory nature and independence

- **Consultation is not concurrence.** In **State of U.P. v. Manbodhan Lal Srivastava (1957)**, the Supreme Court held that **Article 320(3)(c) is directory, not mandatory**: failure to consult the Commission does not invalidate a disciplinary order, and Article 320 confers **no enforceable right** on the civil servant.
- **Advice can be rejected.** The government must only explain its reasons to Parliament under Article 323. In practice the advice is accepted in the vast majority of cases, and the report to Parliament creates **public accountability** for rejections.
- **Strengths of independence:**
 - security of tenure, removal only through the Supreme Court, protection of service conditions;
 - charged expenditure;
 - the bar on post-retirement government employment of the UPSC Chairman;
 - a long record of conducting examinations with integrity; the UPSC is among the most trusted institutions in India.
- **Limits of independence:**
 - **appointments** are made by the executive alone, with no qualifications beyond the ten-year rule and no selection committee;
 - **exemption regulations** can shrink the Commission's role;
 - **requisitions** for recruitment come from the government, which can delay or cancel them (as with the **lateral entry advertisement** of August 2024);
 - many posts are filled through **contract, deputation, outsourcing and ad hoc** appointments outside the Commission's purview;
 - several **promotion and disciplinary** matters have been shifted away from the Commission over time;
 - members who are **retired civil servants** may share the outlook of the bureaucracy they are meant to judge.

5.6 State Public Service Commissions and the “recruitment of recruiters”

- **The weak link.** Many State Commissions have faced **paper leaks**, cancelled examinations, delayed results, litigation over answer keys and allegations of **corruption and nepotism** in appointments. Since the Constitution sets no qualifications, State governments have at times appointed **politicians and loyalists** as Chairmen and members.
- **Punjab's warning.** The Punjab Commission Chairman **Ravi Pal Singh Sidhu** (1996–2002) was prosecuted in a cash-for-jobs scandal, and the Supreme Court later referred to it when examining appointments.
- **State of Punjab v. Salil Sabhlok (2013).** The Supreme Court upheld the quashing of the appointment of a sitting MLA and lawyer as Chairman of the Punjab Public Service Commission. It held that, although Article 316 lays down no qualifications, **integrity, competence and knowledge of administration and recruitment**

are **implied relevant factors**; a High Court may interfere under Article 226 in exceptional cases where these are ignored. The Court urged a **transparent selection procedure** and guidelines.

- **Reforms suggested for appointing the recruiters:**

- statutory **eligibility criteria** (integrity, experience in administration, academics or recruitment) and a **selection committee** including the Chief Minister, Leader of Opposition and a judge, on the model proposed for other constitutional bodies;
- **public disclosure** of the panel and reasons;
- fixed **calendars**, technology-based examinations and **question banks** to reduce discretion;
- application of the **Public Examinations Act, 2024** model in State laws against unfair means (several States have their own anti-leak laws).

5.7 Relationship between the UPSC and State Commissions

- **Constitutional position:** the UPSC and the State Commissions are **separate and coordinate** bodies. There is **no hierarchy**: the UPSC has no power to direct, supervise or hear appeals against a State Commission. The only links are Article 315(4) (UPSC serving a State on request), Article 319 (SPSC members may move to the UPSC) and Article 320(2) (assisting joint recruitment).
- **The 1989 proposal of a Supreme Court–High Court style relationship:**
 - **For a linkage:** common **standards of fairness**, a **national policy** on recruitment, shared technology, question banks and evaluation methods, training of State Commission staff, and a peer check on weak State Commissions; the UPSC already hosts conferences of State Commission chairpersons and shares practices.
 - **Against a hierarchy:** recruitment to State services is a **State subject** under Article 309; a supervisory UPSC would be a **centralising** step contrary to federalism; the Supreme Court's relationship with High Courts rests on appellate jurisdiction, which has no parallel in recruitment; and the UPSC's own capacity is limited.
- **Balanced position:** a **voluntary, cooperative linkage** (common guidelines, technology sharing, a standing conference, benchmarking) rather than a constitutional hierarchy, with stronger **appointment norms** for State Commissions themselves.

5.8 Other recruiting bodies

- **Staff Selection Commission (SSC):** set up in **1975** as the Subordinate Services Commission and renamed in **1977**; an attached office of DoPT that recruits for **Group B (non-gazetted)** and **Group C** posts in Union ministries through examinations such as the Combined Graduate Level and Combined Higher Secondary Level.
- **Railway Recruitment Boards** and the **Institute of Banking Personnel Selection** recruit for railways and public sector banks.
- **National Recruitment Agency (NRA):** approved by the Union Cabinet on **19 August 2020** to hold a computer-based **Common Eligibility Test (CET)** for non-gazetted posts, replacing the first-stage tests of the SSC, RRBs and IBPS. Despite repeated deadlines, it had **not held a single CET** by the latest official statements; the government cited the need for reliable IT and physical infrastructure. Rules under the **Public Examinations Act, 2024** gave the NRA the task of preparing **norms and standards for computer-based tests**.

- **State Commissions and subordinate service boards** recruit for State Group A, B and C posts.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · CIVIL SERVICES EXAMINATION

Process

From Vacancy to Cadre

The stages of recruitment through the UPSC

Requisition

DoPT and cadre authorities report vacancies, split by category



Preliminary

General Studies (ranks for screening) + **CSAT**, qualifying at 33%



Main

Two qualifying language papers · essay · four GS papers · one optional (**1,750** marks)



Interview

Personality test (**275** marks); final merit list with reservation



Allocation

Service by rank and preference · AIS cadre by groups and rotation



Training

Foundation Course at LBSNAA, then service academies

In simple words: one open test sorts lakhs of applicants into services.

Public Administration

06

Methods of Recruitment

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Governments fill posts in four main ways: by hiring fresh candidates through a test, by promoting their own staff, by borrowing officers from other departments, and by bringing in outside experts for a fixed term. A good system mixes these so that it gets both loyalty and new skills.

6.1 The four methods

METHOD	HOW IT WORKS	INDIAN EXAMPLES
Direct recruitment	Open competition through an examination, or selection by interview with or without a recruitment test	CSE for IAS/IPS and Group A; Engineering Services; specialist posts by UPSC selection
Promotion	Advancement of serving employees on seniority-cum-merit through a Departmental Promotion Committee	One-third of IAS/IPS posts from State services; Group B to Group A
Deputation / transfer	An officer of one service or government serves temporarily in another organisation, often on tenure	Central Staffing Scheme; officers of State governments, PSUs or universities appointed by transfer on deputation
Lateral entry / contract	Experienced persons from outside the career services recruited for a term to a specific senior post	Joint Secretary, Director and Deputy Secretary posts since 2018

- **Direct recruitment by examination** suits large, uniform intakes of young graduates; **selection by interview** suits small numbers of specialist posts (doctors, scientists, legal officers).
- **Promotion** rewards experience and keeps morale, but heavy reliance on seniority can protect mediocrity; DPCs assess **five years** of appraisal reports and grade officers (outstanding, very good, good), with **benchmarks** for higher posts.
- **Induction of State officers into the AIS** happens through a **Selection Committee** presided over by the UPSC Chairman or a member, including senior State and Union representatives. The **IAS (Appointment by Promotion) Regulations, 1955** govern this; a small part of the promotion quota may be filled from **non-State Civil Service** officers of outstanding merit.
- **Deputation** spreads experience and staffs Union ministries, but excessive dependence on it leaves some organisations without their own cadre and gives the Union leverage over officers.

6.2 Essentials of a good recruitment system

- **Merit principle:** open competition, equal opportunity (Article 16), an **independent recruiting agency** insulated from patronage.
- **Positive search:** wide **publicity** of vacancies and their requirements, so that able candidates apply, not only those already connected.
- **Clear job analysis:** defined qualifications and competencies for each post, so that the test measures what the job needs (validity).
- **Valid and reliable tests:** written examinations, aptitude tests, interviews and, where useful, psychological and situational tests; **A.D. Gorwala's Report on Public Administration (1951)** argued that psychological tests should gradually supplement the short interview.
- **Social representativeness:** reservation and outreach so that the service mirrors the society it serves.

- **Speed and predictability:** a fixed **calendar** and short cycle; long gaps between notification and joining waste talent.
- **Integrity of the process:** secure question papers, identity checks, transparent evaluation and grievance redressal.
- **Flexibility:** some **lateral entry** and controlled mobility, so the service can acquire skills it lacks.
- **Link to career and training:** recruitment should feed into planned careers, training and appraisal; the recruited person must find a satisfying career.
- For the general theory of recruitment (spoils vs merit, positive and negative recruitment, open and closed systems), see the chapter on Personnel Administration: HRD, Recruitment, Training, Career, Classification, Promotion and Pay.

07

The Civil Services Examination

IN SIMPLE WORDS

The Civil Services Examination is a single, very large open competition held every year by the UPSC. About five lakh people sit the first stage; around a thousand are finally selected for the IAS, IPS, Foreign Service and other Group A and B services. Its design has been changed again and again by expert committees.

7.1 The present scheme

- **One examination, many services.** A single combined examination (since **1979**) recruits for the **IAS, IFS (Foreign), IPS** and Central **Group A and Group B** services.
- **Stage 1, Preliminary (screening):**
 - **General Studies Paper I** (200 marks, objective);
 - **General Studies Paper II, the Civil Services Aptitude Test (CSAT)** (200 marks), **qualifying** at **33%** since **2015**;
 - marks do not count for the final ranking.
- **Stage 2, Main (written):**
 - two **qualifying** language papers (an Indian language and English, 300 marks each);
 - **Essay** (250), four **General Studies** papers (250 each, including **Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude**) and **one optional subject** in two papers (250 each): a total of **1,750** marks;
 - papers may be answered in English or any Eighth Schedule language.
- **Stage 3, Personality Test: 275** marks; total **2,025**.
- **Eligibility:**
 - a **degree** from a recognised university;
 - age **21–32** for general and EWS candidates, **35** for OBC, **37** for SC and ST, with up to **ten** more years for persons with benchmark disabilities (limits fixed in **2014**);

- **attempts: 6** for general and EWS, **9** for OBC and persons with benchmark disabilities, **unlimited** within the age limit for SC and ST.
- **Reservation: 15% SC, 7.5% ST, 27% OBC** (non-creamy layer), **10% EWS** (from CSE **2019**, after the **103rd Amendment, 2019**, upheld in **Janhit Abhiyan v. Union of India, 2022**) and **4%** for persons with benchmark disabilities (horizontal).
- **Service allocation** follows rank and the candidate's **service preferences**; **cadre allocation** for the AIS then follows the cadre allocation policy (Section 3.3).

7.2 Evolution: the committees

The design of the CSE has been reviewed repeatedly. Each committee balanced breadth against depth, youth against maturity, and fairness to rural and Indian-language candidates against tests of aptitude.

COMMITTEE	YEAR	CHAIR	KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	FATE
Macaulay Committee	1854	T.B. Macaulay	Open competition; scholastic test of liberal education; young entrants	Basis of ICS recruitment from 1855
Kothari Committee	Appointed 1974, report 1976	D.S. Kothari	Three-stage examination (preliminary, main, interview); one combined examination for all services; upper age 26 ; allocation after a post-training test	Three stages and combined examination adopted in 1979 ; post-training test rejected
Satish Chandra Committee	Appointed 1988, report 1989	Satish Chandra	Essay paper (200 marks); interview raised from 250 to 300 ; negative marking in the preliminary; more centres	Implemented in 1993
Alagh Committee	2000–2001	Yoginder K. Alagh	Test candidates on common subjects rather than optionals; test aptitude and values	Not implemented directly; fed into later CSAT and GS changes
Hota Committee	2004	P.C. Hota	Entry age 21–24 (5 years more for SC/ST, 3 for OBC); aptitude and leadership tests; a month after joining to choose service; a Civil Services Law, performance appraisal and tenure	Mostly not implemented
Nigavekar Committee	2012	Arun S. Nigavekar	Restructure the main examination around general studies; one optional linked to the graduation subject; age limit 25 with relaxations; three attempts	Main examination restructured in 2013 (four GS papers including Ethics, one optional); age and attempts not changed

COMMITTEE	YEAR	CHAIR	KEY RECOMMENDATIONS	FATE
Baswan Committee	Appointed August 2015, report 9 August 2016	B.S. Baswan	Plan of examination, papers and evaluation; phased reduction of the upper age limit	Under consideration; not implemented

- **CSAT (2011).** The aptitude paper replaced the optional in the preliminary in **2011**. After protests in **2014** that it favoured English-medium, science and engineering graduates, it was made **qualifying (33%)** from **2015**, and candidates of CSE-2011 got an extra attempt.
- **Main examination (2013).** On the Nigavekar recommendations, the main examination moved to **four GS papers** (including **Ethics, Integrity and Aptitude**) and **one optional**, cutting the weight of optionals.
- **Upper age.** Successive governments **raised** the age (26 in the 1960s, 28 in the 1980s, 30, and **32** since **2014**) despite committees recommending lower limits; legislators from rural and backward regions argue that late starters and first-generation graduates need time.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · RECRUITMENT REFORM

Timeline

Reviewing How India Recruits Its Officers

Committees, examination changes and recent reforms

- 1854** ● **Macaulay Committee:** open competition, liberal-arts test
- 1976** ● **Kothari Committee:** three-stage combined examination (from 1979)
- 1989** ● **Satish Chandra:** essay paper, interview 300 marks (1993)
- 2001** ● **Alagh Committee:** common subjects over optionals
- 2004** ● **Hota Committee:** younger entry, aptitude tests
- 2008** ● **2nd ARC:** age 21–25, domains, open senior posts
- 2011** ● **CSAT** added to the preliminary; qualifying from 2015
- 2012** ● **Nigavekar:** four GS papers, one optional (2013)
- 2016** ● **Baswan Committee:** phased cut in age limit
- 2018–24** ● **Lateral entry:** 63 appointed; 2024 round withdrawn
- 2024** ● **Public Examinations Act;** Aadhaar checks
- 2026** ● **Cadre groups** replace zones; facial authentication

In simple words: each review re-balanced depth, age and fairness.

Public Administration

7.3 The 2nd ARC on recruitment (10th Report, Refurbishing of Personnel Administration, 2008)

The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (constituted **2005**, chaired by **M. Veerappa Moily**) gave its fullest treatment of recruitment in its tenth report. Its main proposals and the government's response are summarised below.

RECOMMENDATION	GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE (ACTION TAKEN REPORT)
National Institutes of Public Administration and university degree courses in public administration and governance; graduates of other subjects to take a bridge course	Rejected: would deny equal opportunity; instead all Central Universities asked to offer Public Administration, and recruits to take a compact paper in it during induction
Age 21–25 (general), 21–28 (OBC), 21–29 (SC/ST and disabled); attempts 3, 5, 6, 6	Agreed to lower limits (26 for general) from CSE-2015; never applied, and the limit was instead raised to 32 in 2014
Compress the cycle: hold preliminary and main together, or a main within two months of the preliminary	Not taken up, as the examination had just been changed
Preliminary and main on compulsory subjects only, no optionals, plus an essay	Partly reflected in the 2011 CSAT and 2013 main examination changes
UPSC examination for State Civil Service officers with 8–10 years of Group A service for induction into the IAS, maximum two attempts, upper age 40	Scheme drafted; not implemented
Promotions up to selection grade delegated to departments, with UPSC audit of DPCs	Accepted
UPSC consultation in discipline only for proposed dismissal	Not accepted; second-stage CVC advice dropped instead
Domain assignment after 13 years by a Central Civil Services Authority; senior posts open to all services and some to outside talent	Domains after 18 years in principle; Authority and open competition deferred
25% of Section Officer posts by direct recruitment; a common examination for graduate-level Group B and C posts	Accepted in principle for further examination; the common-test idea resurfaced in the NRA's CET (2020)

- **Assessment.** The 2nd ARC's recruitment vision was to make entry **younger, more specialised and more professional**, and to make the top **competitive and open**. The government accepted its procedural proposals but not its structural ones, largely because of political sensitivity over **age limits, equal opportunity and reservation**.

7.4 Diversity and representation

- **Social profile has widened.** Early IAS batches came largely from urban, upper-caste, English-educated and civil-servant families and a few universities. Reservation, the spread of higher education, the option to write in Indian languages and the higher age limits have widened entry.
- **Evidence of change:**
 - **women** were **3.6%** of those recommended in **1952** and **31.2%** in **CSE 2025** (299 of 958), with **11 of the top 25** ranks;
 - **SC** recommended rose from **9 (1955)** to **158 (2025)**, and **ST** from **2 (1956-57)** to **73 (2025)**;
 - persons with benchmark disabilities: **3 (2002)** to **42 (2025)**;
 - a separate **transgender** category was added to the online application in **2020**.
- **Concerns that remain:**
 - a growing share of successful candidates are **engineering and technical graduates** writing in **English**, and the success of candidates writing in Hindi and other Indian languages fell after the 2013 changes;
 - the cost of **years of preparation** in metropolitan centres favours better-off families; the private tuition industry has grown around the examination;
 - critics argue that the **long age band** keeps lakhs of young people in prolonged preparation, a social cost noted by the Baswan Committee and NITI Aayog.
- **The theory question** of whether a socially representative service also behaves differently (passive vs active representation) is taken up in the theory lens (Section 9).

7.5 Integrity of recruitment: the 2024 crisis and the response

- **The Puja Khedkar case.** In **July 2024** a probationary IAS officer of the 2023 batch was found to have taken the CSE more times than permitted by **changing her own and her parents' names**, with questions also raised about her **OBC (non-creamy layer)** and **disability** certificates.
 - The UPSC issued a show cause notice on **18 July 2024**, **cancelled her candidature** for CSE-2022 and **debarred her permanently** on **31 July 2024**, and filed a criminal complaint; the Union then **discharged** her from the IAS (September 2024).
 - The UPSC reviewed data of over **15,000** candidates recommended from **2009 to 2023** and found no other case of excess attempts. It stated that it does only a **preliminary check** of caste and disability certificates; their genuineness is the responsibility of the issuing authorities.
- **Reforms that followed:**
 - On **28 August 2024** DoPT allowed the UPSC to use **Aadhaar authentication** (voluntary) at registration and at each stage of recruitment.
 - A new portal (**May 2025**) with a **Universal Registration Number** replaced one-time registration; over **92%** of early registrants opted for Aadhaar authentication.
 - **AI-based facial authentication** was piloted in September 2025 and used for all of about **5.5 lakh** candidates at the **CS (Preliminary) Examination on 24 May 2026**.
 - A scan of fifteen years of data before CS (Preliminary) 2026 **rejected 569 applicants** who had given false information to claim extra attempts.
 - **Provisional answer keys** for the preliminary examination are now published soon after the examination (2026), and **randomised interview boards** have been introduced (from 2025).

- **The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024** (Act 1 of 2024, assented **12 February 2024**, in force from **21 June 2024**) covers examinations of the **UPSC, SSC, Railway Recruitment Boards, IBPS, the National Testing Agency** and central ministries:
 - offences are **cognizable, non-bailable and non-compoundable**;
 - unfair means: imprisonment of **3 to 5 years** and fine up to **₹10 lakh**;
 - a **service provider** at fault: fine up to **₹1 crore**, recovery of examination costs and a **four-year bar**;
 - **organised crime** (paper-leak gangs, colluding institutions): **5 to 10 years** and a fine of at least **₹1 crore**, with attachment of property;
 - candidates themselves are dealt with under the examination authority's rules rather than as criminals.
- **Pratibha Setu (9 June 2025)** renamed and revamped the 2018 **Public Disclosure Scheme**, which shares details of willing candidates who cleared every stage but missed the final list with verified employers.

INDIAN CONNECT — INDIAN CONNECT: THE “THEN AND NOW” OF UPSC RECRUITMENT

- Applications to all UPSC examinations grew from **42,727** in 1950-51 to a peak of **45.1 lakh** in 2022-23.
- Examination centres grew from **8** in 1950 to **86** in 2026.
- The interview may be answered in an **Indian language** with an interpreter since 1980-81; the main examination may be written in any Eighth Schedule language.
- The basic principle has not changed since 1854: **open competition, anonymity of evaluation and an independent examining body**.

08 Lateral Entry

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Lateral entry means bringing an experienced expert from outside the regular services, such as an economist from a bank or a technology manager from a company, straight into a senior government post for a few years. It is meant to add skills that career officers may lack, but it raises questions about fairness, reservation and accountability.

8.1 From ad hoc to institutional

- **Old practice.** India has long appointed outside experts to senior posts: **Manmohan Singh** (Chief Economic Adviser, 1972), **Montek Singh Ahluwalia**, **Vijay Kelkar**, **Nandan Nilekani** (UIDAI) and many Chief Economic Advisers and scientists. These were individual, ad hoc appointments.
- **Recommendations.** The **2nd ARC (2008)** proposed earmarking higher posts for outside talent through a Central Civil Services Authority, and NITI Aayog's *Strategy for New India @75* (2018) recommended **lateral entry of specialists** at higher levels.

- **The scheme from 2018.** DoPT advertised **Joint Secretary** posts in **June 2018**; the selection was later entrusted to the **UPSC**, which recommended **nine** Joint Secretaries in **2019**. Later rounds (2021, 2023) added **Director** and **Deputy Secretary** posts.
 - Contracts of **three years, extendable to five**; candidates from the private sector, academia, PSUs, State governments and international bodies.
 - In all, **63 appointments** were made in three cycles (**2018, 2021, 2023**): **35 on contract** (mostly from the private sector) and **28 on deputation**. In **August 2025**, **43** were in position.
- **The 2024 withdrawal.** On **17 August 2024** the UPSC advertised **45 posts** (10 Joint Secretaries, 35 Directors and Deputy Secretaries) in 24 ministries, the largest round. Because each post was treated as a **single-post cadre, no reservation** applied. Opposition parties and NDA allies objected; on **20 August 2024** DoPT Minister **Jitendra Singh** wrote to the UPSC Chairperson **Preeti Sudan** asking that the advertisement be cancelled so that the process could be aligned with **social justice**, and the UPSC cancelled it the same day.
- **Status in 2026.** No new round has been held. In **June 2026** the Minister said there was **no order suspending** lateral entry, but **no feasible model** for reservation in standalone posts had emerged; DoPT said about **two-thirds** of the 63 entrants were still serving.

8.2 Lateral entry and Part XIV

- **Article 309:** recruitment methods are set by **rules**; lateral entry posts are filled under ministries' recruitment rules and executive orders, without a statute.
- **Article 310(2):** expressly contemplates **contract appointments** of persons with **special qualifications** who are not members of a regular service, with compensation clauses. Lateral entrants on contract hold office at pleasure and under their contract.
- **Article 311:** applies to them as holders of civil posts, but their **contractual tenure** means non-renewal is not a punishment.
- **Article 320:** selection through the **UPSC** (from 2019) satisfies the principle of consultation on **methods of recruitment** and suitability; early critics had objected to the 2018 plan of selection by a committee of officials.
- **Article 16 and reservation:** Article 16(4) permits reservation; under the **13-point roster** and the **PGIMER, Chandigarh v. Faculty Association (1998)** principle, **single-post cadres** cannot be reserved. Grouping lateral posts into a **pool** would allow reservation but conflicts with the idea of hiring for a specific specialised post.
- **Article 312 and the AIS:** lateral entry at Joint Secretary level takes posts that AIS officers fill under the **Central Staffing Scheme**, so it touches the balance between the AIS and outsiders that Part XIV was designed to protect.

8.3 Arguments

- **For lateral entry:**
 - **domain expertise** in areas such as fintech, semiconductors, climate, insolvency, cyber security and logistics, where rotating generalists struggle;
 - **competition and fresh ideas:** an antidote to **complacency** in a closed career service;
 - meets the **shortage** of officers at Deputy Secretary to Joint Secretary level in Union ministries;

- **global practice:** the US position system, the UK's open senior civil service competitions, Australia and New Zealand's contract chief executives;
- **New Public Management:** hire for the role, on contract, for results.
- **Against lateral entry:**
 - **politicisation:** without strict safeguards, it may become a back door for ideologically aligned appointees, creating a **committed bureaucracy**;
 - **accountability and conflict of interest:** contract officers may return to the industry they regulated (**revolving door**);
 - **reservation:** single-post appointments bypass Article 16(4);
 - **morale** of career officers who wait 17–20 years for Joint Secretary rank;
 - **lack of grounding** in government procedure, Parliament and federal coordination; many entrants find the bureaucracy unwelcoming.

8.4 Why it has not moved in the intended direction

- **Scale too small to matter:** 63 entrants over five years in a Union government with thousands of senior posts cannot change its culture.
- **Middle-level focus:** most posts were Director and Deputy Secretary, where specialised impact is limited; few top policy posts were opened.
- **Unattractive terms:** pay at government scales, short contracts and uncertain renewal deter senior private professionals; many entrants came from PSUs and other governments on deputation rather than from the market.
- **Weak induction and integration:** entrants received little orientation and faced **resistance** from career services, limiting their influence.
- **No institutional design:** the 2nd ARC's **Central Civil Services Authority** to identify posts, set criteria and manage tenures was never created; each round was ad hoc.
- **The reservation impasse** since August 2024 has frozen the scheme.
- **Unclear objectives and evaluation:** there has been no published assessment of what lateral entrants achieved.
- **The way forward suggested by reformers:** a statutory or regulatory framework; posts identified through competency mapping; a **pooled** design allowing reservation where possible; selection by the UPSC; longer tenures for top roles; cooling-off and conflict-of-interest rules; and openness of senior posts to **all career services** as well, so that lateral entry supplements rather than replaces internal competition.

Theory Lens and Links to Other Civil Service Themes

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Paper I theories help explain why India organises and recruits its civil servants as it does. They show what the merit system gains, what a closed career service misses, and why every reform of recruitment becomes a fight over fairness and representation.

9.1 Theory lens: merit, representation and open systems

- **Weber's legal-rational bureaucracy.** Max Weber, the German sociologist, in *Economy and Society* (published 1922), described the modern bureaucrat as appointed on **technical qualifications** tested by **examination**, holding office as a **career** with salary, pension and tenure, separated from ownership of the means of administration. Part XIV is a constitutional version of this ideal: open competition by an independent commission, tenure under Article 311 and a hierarchy under ministers. See the chapter on Weber's Bureaucratic Model.
- **Riggs and formalism.** Fred Riggs, the American comparativist, in *Administration in Developing Countries* (1964), described **formalism**, the gap between rules and practice in prismatic societies. India's merit-based entry coexists with **politically driven transfers, postings and deputation**: the formal rules of recruitment are Weberian, but the career that follows is often governed by personal and political ties. See the chapter on Riggsian Models.
- **Representative bureaucracy.** J. Donald Kingsley, in *Representative Bureaucracy* (1944), argued that the British civil service reflected its ruling middle class and that a democratic bureaucracy should mirror the society it serves. Samuel Krislov, in *Representative Bureaucracy* (1974), added that representation gives the bureaucracy **legitimacy** and brings diverse perspectives to policy. Frederick Mosher, in *Democracy and the Public Service* (1968), distinguished **passive** representation (the service resembles the population) from **active** representation (officers advance the interests of the groups they come from). Indian reservation, including EWS and the separate transgender category, pursues passive representation; the evidence that it changes behaviour (active representation) is weaker, since new entrants are socialised into the service's values.
- **Generalist vs specialist (Fulton).** The **Fulton Committee (1968)** made the classic attack on the **amateur generalist**; India's IAS remains the clearest surviving example of the generalist model, and the 2nd ARC's domain assignment is a Fulton-style correction.
- **Career and position systems; open and closed systems.** Paper I distinguishes the **career (closed) system**, where officers enter young at the bottom and rise within the service (India, UK, France), from the **position (open) system**, where a person is hired for a particular job at any level (United States). The AIS and Group A services are a closed career system; **lateral entry** and **deputation** open windows in it. See the chapter on Personnel Administration: HRD, Recruitment, Training, Career, Classification, Promotion and Pay.
- **New Public Management.** Christopher Hood, in "A Public Management for All Seasons?" (1991), identified NPM's doctrines: **hands-on professional management, explicit standards and measures of performance, output controls** and **private-sector styles of management**, including flexible hiring and rewards. Lateral entry, contract appointments, performance-linked careers and the NRA's single test

reflect NPM; critics answer that the public service is not a firm and that **equity and neutrality** are its core values. See the chapter on New Public Management and After.

- **The public service bargain.** Hood and Martin Lodge, in *The Politics of Public Service Bargains* (2006), describe the implicit deal between politicians and civil servants: civil servants give **loyalty, competence and political neutrality**; politicians give **tenure, anonymity and a share in policy-making**. Part XIV writes a **trustee-type bargain** into the Constitution. Lateral entry, weakening Article 311, and the deputation dispute are attempts to rewrite this bargain towards an **agency-type** bargain, in which officials serve at closer political direction and are judged on results.
- **Principal-agent and federalism.** The AIS has two principals, the **Union** and the **State**. Principal-agent theory predicts **conflicting instructions** and **strategic behaviour** by the agent when principals disagree, as the Rule 6 controversy and disciplinary disputes show. See the chapter on Union-State Relations.

9.2 Other themes of the civil services syllabus in brief

- **Training and capacity building.** Recruits attend a **common Foundation Course** at the **Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA)**, Mussoorie, then service-specific training (for the IAS, a **sandwich** pattern of institutional and district training since **1969**), followed by **mid-career training** phases linked to promotion. The **National Training Policy (1996, revised 2012)**, **Mission Karmayogi** (National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building, **2020**), the **iGOT Karmayogi** platform and the **Capacity Building Commission (2021)** aim to move from **rule-based to role-based** management. See the chapter on Civil Service Training and Capacity Building.
- **Good governance initiatives.** Citizen's charters and Sevottam, RTI, e-governance, performance appraisal (APAR, 360-degree feedback), fixed tenures and **Civil Services Boards** after **T.S.R. Subramanian v. Union of India (2013)**. See the chapter on Good Governance Initiatives in the Civil Services.
- **Code of conduct, discipline, staff associations, political rights and grievance redressal.** The CCS and AIS conduct rules, penalties and disciplinary procedure, recognition of associations, the ban on strikes, limits on political activity, and redressal through the **Central Administrative Tribunal (Article 323A)** and the Joint Consultative Machinery. See the chapter on Code of Conduct, Discipline, Staff Associations and Grievance Redressal.
- **Neutrality and activism.** The Weberian ideal of neutrality, the **committed bureaucracy** debate of the 1970s, anonymity, whistle-blowing and **civil service activism**. See the chapter on Civil Service Neutrality and Activism.

10 Key Terms

TERM	MEANING IN SIMPLE WORDS
Civil post	A post under the Union or a State in a civil (non-military) capacity; its holder gets Article 311 protection
Doctrine of pleasure	Article 310 rule that civil servants hold office at the pleasure of the President or Governor, subject to the Constitution

TERM	MEANING IN SIMPLE WORDS
Dismissal / removal	Ending service as a penalty; dismissal normally bars future government employment, removal does not
Reduction in rank	Demotion as a penalty; one of the three penalties protected by Article 311(2)
Reasonable opportunity	The right to know the charges and be heard in an inquiry before a major penalty
Second proviso to Article 311(2)	The three situations (conviction, impracticability, security of the State) in which the inquiry can be dropped
All India Service	A service common to the Union and the States, created under Article 312 (IAS, IPS, IFoS)
Dual control	Union recruits and imposes major penalties; State posts, transfers and supervises AIS officers
Cadre	The sanctioned body of posts of a service in a State or joint group of States
Insider / outsider	Candidate allotted to the home State / to another State
Central Deputation Reserve	Share (up to 40%) of a State cadre's senior posts earmarked for service with the Union
Central Staffing Scheme	System by which AIS and Group A officers serve in Union ministries at Deputy Secretary and above on tenure
Group A–D	Classification of Central employees by responsibility; Group D has been merged into Group C
Generalist	Administrator with broad education and rotating postings, not tied to one technical field
Specialist	Officer recruited and working for professional or technical knowledge
Domain assignment	Linking a generalist officer to a field of specialisation after mid-career (2nd ARC)
Public Service Commission	Independent constitutional body that recruits civil servants and advises on service matters
Exemption regulations	Rules made under the proviso to Article 320(3) listing matters on which the Commission need not be consulted
Charged expenditure	Spending fixed on the Consolidated Fund that the legislature does not vote annually
CSAT	Civil Services Aptitude Test, the second preliminary paper, qualifying since 2015

TERM	MEANING IN SIMPLE WORDS
Lateral entry	Direct recruitment of outside experts to senior posts, usually on contract
Single-post cadre	A post that is the only one of its kind; reservation cannot apply to it
Representative bureaucracy	The idea that a public service should reflect the social make-up of the people it serves
Career system	Entry young at the base and lifetime advancement within a service
Position system	Recruitment to a particular job at any level, open to outsiders
Public service bargain	Implicit exchange of loyalty and competence for tenure and voice between civil servants and politicians

11

Commissions, Committees and Judgments

BODY / CASE	YEAR	KEY POINT
Macaulay Committee (T.B. Macaulay)	1854	Open competition and a scholastic examination for the ICS
Aitchison Commission (Charles Aitchison)	1886–87	Imperial, Provincial and Subordinate services
Lee Commission (Arthur Hamilton Lee)	1924	Faster Indianisation; statutory Public Service Commission
Public Service Commission (Ross Barker)	1926	First recruiting commission in India, from 1 October 1926
A.D. Gorwala, Report on Public Administration	1951	Patronage-free recruitment; training; psychological tests
Parshotam Lal Dhingra v. Union of India	1958	Right-to-post and evil-consequences tests for when termination is punishment
State of U.P. v. Manbodhan Lal Srivastava	1957	Article 320(3)(c) consultation is directory; no right to the servant
1st ARC, Report on Personnel Administration (K. Hanumanthaiya)	1969	Functional specialisation; Senior Management Pool; sandwich training
Rajamannar Committee (P.V. Rajamannar)	1971	Abolition of IAS and IPS sought by Tamil Nadu

BODY / CASE	YEAR	KEY POINT
Kothari Committee (D.S. Kothari)	1976	Three-stage combined CSE, adopted 1979
Union of India v. Tulsiram Patel	1985	Second proviso excludes inquiry; Article 14 cannot revive it; limited judicial review; Challappan overruled
Sarkaria Commission (R.S. Sarkaria)	1983–88	AIS indispensable; new AIS for engineering, health, education
Satish Chandra Committee (Satish Chandra)	1989	Essay paper; interview to 300 marks; implemented 1993
Managing Director, ECIL v. B. Karunakar	1993	Inquiry report must be supplied to the charged officer
PGIMER, Chandigarh v. Faculty Association	1998	No reservation in a single-post cadre
Alagh Committee (Yoginder K. Alagh)	2001	Common subjects rather than optionals; aptitude
Hota Committee (P.C. Hota)	2004	Entry age 21–24; aptitude and leadership tests; Civil Services Law
2nd ARC, Ethics in Governance (M. Veerappa Moily)	2007	Delete Article 311; comprehensive law under Article 309
2nd ARC, Refurbishing of Personnel Administration (M. Veerappa Moily)	2008	Age 21–25; NIPAs; domain assignment; Central Civil Services Authority; lateral entry to senior posts
Nigavekar Committee (Arun S. Nigavekar)	2012	New main examination (four GS papers, one optional) from 2013
State of Punjab v. Salil Sabhlok	2013	PSC Chairman must be chosen considering integrity and competence; appointment quashed
T.S.R. Subramanian v. Union of India	2013	Civil Services Boards; fixed tenure; written orders
Baswan Committee (B.S. Baswan)	2016	Review of CSE; phased reduction of age limit
Janhit Abhiyan v. Union of India	2022	Upheld 10% EWS reservation (103rd Amendment)
Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act	2024	3–10 years' jail and heavy fines for unfair means and organised leaks in central recruitment examinations

12

Contemporary Developments

- **UPSC at 100 (1 October 2026).** The Commission completed a century; its centenary year (from 1 October 2025) ended with the *Manthan* conference (30 September–1 October 2026). Dr **Ajay Kumar**, former Defence Secretary, has been Chairman since **15 May 2025**.
- **New cadre allocation policy (23 January 2026).** The five-zone system of 2017 was replaced by **four alphabetical groups** and a **25-candidate rotational cycle**, effective from **CSE-2026**; willingness for the home cadre must be stated expressly.
- **Technology against impersonation (2024–26).** Aadhaar authentication allowed from **28 August 2024**; a new portal with a **Universal Registration Number** (May 2025); **AI facial authentication** for all candidates at the **CS (Preliminary) Examination of 24 May 2026**; **569 applicants** rejected for false claims of attempts; provisional answer keys published after the preliminary.
- **Puja Khedkar case (July–September 2024).** Candidature cancelled and permanent debarment for exceeding attempts by changing identity; discharged from the IAS; prompted the reforms above and a debate on verification of OBC and disability certificates.
- **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024** in force from **21 June 2024**, with rules assigning the NRA to set standards for computer-based tests.
- **Lateral entry in limbo (August 2024–2026).** The 45-post advertisement was cancelled on **20 August 2024**; the government told Parliament in **August 2025** that reservation does not apply to single-post appointments and that **43** of the 63 entrants were in position; in **June 2026** it said no feasible reservation model had emerged.
- **Vacancies in the AIS (2025 data).** Against sanctioned strengths, about **1,300 IAS**, **505 IPS** and **1,029 IFoS** posts were vacant on **1 January 2025**, sustaining the Union–State tussle over central deputation.
- **Women in the CSE.** Women were **31.2%** of candidates recommended in **CSE 2025** and held **11 of the top 25** ranks.

13

Revision Grid

THINKER / BODY	WORK OR REPORT (YEAR)	KEY IDEA
Herman Finer	<i>The Theory and Practice of Modern Government</i> (1932)	Civil service as permanent, paid, professional and neutral
Max Weber	<i>Economy and Society</i> (1922)	Appointment by examination; career tenure; hierarchy
Sardar Patel	Constituent Assembly speech (10 October 1949)	AIS needed for unity and frank advice
Paul Appleby	Reports on Indian administration (1953, 1956)	Civil servants shape policy despite ministerial responsibility

THINKER / BODY	WORK OR REPORT (YEAR)	KEY IDEA
J. Donald Kingsley	<i>Representative Bureaucracy</i> (1944)	Service should mirror society
Frederick Mosher	<i>Democracy and the Public Service</i> (1968)	Passive vs active representation
Samuel Krislov	<i>Representative Bureaucracy</i> (1974)	Representation gives legitimacy
Fulton Committee	Report (1968)	Attack on the cult of the amateur generalist
Fred Riggs	<i>Administration in Developing Countries</i> (1964)	Formalism: rules vs practice
Christopher Hood	"A Public Management for All Seasons?" (1991)	NPM doctrines, flexible hiring
Hood and Lodge	<i>The Politics of Public Service Bargains</i> (2006)	Loyalty and competence exchanged for tenure and voice
Kothari Committee	Report (1976)	Three-stage combined CSE
2nd ARC	<i>Refurbishing of Personnel Administration</i> (2008)	Younger entry, domains, open senior posts
Supreme Court	Tulsiram Patel (1985)	Limits of Article 311 safeguards
NITI Aayog	<i>Strategy for New India @75</i> (2018)	Fewer services, talent pool, lateral entry



Previous Year Questions 34 QUESTIONS



2026

Lateral Entry in Government of India has not moved in the intended direction. **Explain the reasons.** 10 MARKS

2024

The **constitutional stature** provided to the **Public Service Commissions** accord them the **autonomy** to work towards fair recruitments. **Comment.** 10 MARKS

- 2022 **Examine** the **lateral entry** recruitment in government in the context of **Part XIV** of the Indian Constitution. **10 MARKS**
- 2021 **Recruitment** is the cornerstone of the whole public personnel structure and it revolves around the problem of attracting the best. **Discuss** the **essential elements of a good recruitment system**. **20 MARKS**
- 2019 Emerging developmental aspirations of the society necessitate the **constitutional amendment** to change the present **safeguards available to the civil servants**. **Evaluate the pros and cons** of such amendment. **10 MARKS**
- 2018 It is apprehended that **lateral entry** will lead to **politicisation of bureaucracy**. **Do you agree? Justify** **10 MARKS**
- 2018 "**Competency mapping** is important for effective allocation of responsibilities to administrators." Do you think that a **generalist administrator** can handle all issues as effectively as a **specialist** **Discuss**. **20 MARKS**
- 2017 "The idea of **lateral entry** into the Civil Services would energise Indian administration." What are its possible **advantages and limitations?** **20 MARKS**
- 2009 Do **State Services** suffer in comparison with the **All-India and Central Services**? **Suggest measures** for enhancing the role, competence and impact of State Services.
- 2006 "The **generalist character of I.A.S.** is its chief characteristic as well as its chief criticism." **Comment**.
- 2002 "**All India Services** as an institution – is the **result of history**." **Comment**.
- 2001 "The **need and significance of all-India services** has been well recognized in political as well as administrative circles." **Comment**.
- 2000 "**All India Services** play a crucial **unifying role** in the whole administrative system of the country." **Explain**.
- 2000 "A **middle way** should be worked out to utilize the services of both **generalists and specialists** for the national development." **Comment**.
- 1999 **Article 320** states that the Government shall **consult the U.P.S.C.** on certain specific matters." **Comment**.

- 1999 "The **All-India Services** have, naturally to be **remunerated on a higher level** than services recruited purely on a local basis." **Comment.**
- 1998 It is argued that the **recruitment** and training of **All India and Central Services** have not kept pace with the changing needs and time. **Give suggestions** for improving these processes in order to make administrators more effective, committed and honest.
- 1998 "**Central Services** are more '**All-India**' in character than are the All-India Services." **Comment.**
- 1996 "**Independence of the Public Service Commissions** has been ensured under specific provisions of the Constitution." **Examine.**
- 1996 "The **public services** in India have been conferred a **Constitutional status.**" **Comment.**
- 1995 "The **Satish Chandra Committee** made a valiant attempt to correct the imbalances unnecessarily introduced in the **selection process** for civil servants during the late 1970s." **Comment.**
- 1993 "The **generalist-neutralist model** of Civil Service, more than any other model of Civil Service, fits in framework of parliamentary democracy in India, a legacy of the British pattern with which Indians have been familiar." **Comment.**
- 1992 'The **recruitment of recruiters** in the **Public Service Commissions** of India needs streamlining.' **Examine the statement.**
- 1989 'The **Union Public Service Commission** should have an integrative and coordinating role vis-à-vis **State Public Service Commissions** in more or less the same way as in the Case of Supreme Court of India vis-à-vis the High Courts in the States. A sound case exists for an **institutional linkage between UPSC and SPSCs** for evolving a National Policy, a uniform approach and common work procedures.' **Discuss.**
- 1988 **Discuss** the various facets of the **All India Services** and **examine** the emerging patterns of **Conflict and Co-operation between the Union and the State** in Indian Federalism.
- 1987 'Though the legislature and the executive rule as well as administer, the **Civil Servants only administer and do not rule.**' **Comment.**
- 1987 '**Generalism** in Civil Service is a powerful bulwark against **committed bureaucracy.**' **Comment.**

2018

"**Lateral entry** is an antidote to the **complacency in civil service.**" **Discuss.**

15 MARKS

PAPER I

2017

Lateral entry of competent experts into the government will promote freshness and innovation, but it can create **problems of accountability.**" 15 MARKS PAPER I

2000

What opportunities are available to **All India Services and state services** in **career development**? Do you agree that **days of generalists** in modern administrative state are numbered? PAPER I

1999

"The **Generalist** will always have an edge over the **specialist.**" **Substantiate the view.**

PAPER I

1996

"It is said that the **generalist rationale** was part of a revealed truth. All of us should have known better, for in a world of increasing scientific and technical complexity, it has compelling inadequacies." **Discuss.** PAPER I

1994

"The **administrator is a layman** rather than a **specialist**; or at least he has about him something of the qualities of a layman." **Comment.** PAPER I

1992

Differentiate between the **open and closed career systems.** Do you favour the coexistence of both the systems for a balanced career development? PAPER I

11

UNIT 11

2 CHAPTERS

89 PYQS

Rural Development

Institutions and agencies since Independence; Rural development programmes: foci and strategies; Decentralization and Panchayati Raj; 73rd Constitutional amendment.

CHAPTERS

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11	Panchayati Raj and the 73rd Amendment: PESA, 3Fs, Gram Sabha and PRI Reforms	438



PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OPTIONAL

PAPER II · PART B

Panchayati Raj and the 73rd Amendment: PESA, 3Fs, Gram Sabha and PRI Reforms

Panchayati Raj is India's system of **rural local self-government**: elected councils at the village, block and district levels, with the **Gram Sabha** of all village voters at the base. It is the oldest idea in Indian administration and one of its newest constitutional institutions. The **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992** turned Panchayats from bodies that existed at the pleasure of State governments into a **constitutionally mandated third tier**, with fixed terms, reserved seats, State Election Commissions and State Finance Commissions. Whether this third tier has become a real **government** or remains an **agency** of the State is the central question of this chapter.

SYLLABUS Institutions and agencies since Independence; Rural development programmes: foci and strategies; Decentralization and Panchayati Raj; 73rd Constitutional amendment.

THIS CHAPTER Decentralisation and Panchayati Raj (rationale, gram swaraj, Article 40, roots); committees from Balwantray Mehta to the 64th Amendment Bill; the 73rd Amendment (Part IX, Eleventh Schedule, mandatory and voluntary provisions, reservation and its litigation); PESA, 1996; working of PRIs (functions and activity mapping, finances, SFCs and Finance Commission grants, functionaries, RGSA, Devolution Index and PAI); problems (State control, parallel bodies, elite capture, proxy representation, SECs and delayed polls); Gram Sabha and social audit; e-governance; Kerala, Karnataka and Maharashtra; the 2nd ARC's Sixth Report; recent issues including Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans.

CONTENTS

01 Decentralisation and Panchayati Raj: Meaning, Rationale and Roots	02 Evolution of Panchayati Raj, 1952–1992
03 The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992	04 The Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996
05 Working of PRIs: Functions, Funds and Functionaries	06 Problems in the Working of PRIs
07 The Gram Sabha, Social Audit and Deliberative Democracy	08 E-Governance and Technology in Panchayats

09	Best Practices: Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Others	10	The 2nd ARC's Sixth Report and the Reform Agenda
11	Recent Issues in Panchayati Raj (2024–2026)	12	Key Terms
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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · RURAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Topic map

Panchayati Raj and the 73rd Amendment

From village republic ideal to constitutional third tier, and the gap between the two

About 2.6 lakh Gram Panchayats and 31 lakh elected members, nearly half of them women

1 · Ideas and roots

- Decentralisation and **subsidiarity**
- Gandhi's **gram swaraj**, Article 40
- Ripon to Balwantray Mehta

2 · Committees, 1957–1989

- Three tiers, then two tiers
- **"Grass without roots"**
- Singhvi, Thungon, 64th Bill

3 · The 73rd Amendment

- Part IX, Articles 243 to 243-O
- Reservation, **SEC, SFC**
- Eleventh Schedule: 29 subjects

4 · PESA, 1996

- Fifth Schedule areas in 10 States
- **Gram Sabha** over land and forests
- State rules and their gaps

5 · Working of PRIs

- **Functions, funds, functionaries**
- Finance Commission grants
- Capacity, e-governance, indices

6 · Problems and reform

- State control, parallel bodies
- Elite capture, **proxy** leaders
- Delayed polls, 2nd ARC agenda

A Panchayat is a government only when work, money and staff move with the vote.

In simple words: India gave villages elected governments in 1992; the struggle since is to give them real power.

Public Administration

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Think of a housing society. Once the residents elect a committee, the law says it must meet, hold elections every five years and include women members. But whether it can fix the lift, collect

maintenance and hire a watchman depends on what the builder hands over: keys, money and staff. The 73rd Amendment guaranteed the committee; the States still hold most of the keys.

01 Decentralisation and Panchayati Raj: Meaning, Rationale and Roots

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Decentralisation means letting decisions be taken closer to the people they affect. Panchayati Raj is the Indian form of this idea for villages: people elect their own councils, and those councils are meant to plan, spend and serve. The idea is old, but making it work has always been hard because the people who hold power above rarely want to give it away.

1.1 Meaning of the key terms

- **Decentralisation.** The **transfer of authority, responsibility and resources** from a central government to lower levels of government, field units, semi-autonomous bodies or the private sector. It is the opposite of **centralisation**, where decisions are concentrated at the top.
- **Democratic decentralisation.** Decentralisation in which power moves to **elected local bodies accountable to local voters**. The **Balwantray Mehta Study Team (1957)** gave the phrase its Indian meaning; the institutions it proposed were soon called **Panchayati Raj**.
- **Local self-government.** Government of a local area by **bodies elected by its residents**, with their own functions, revenue and staff, as distinct from **local administration** by officials posted from above (the Collector, the BDO).
- **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).** The **Gram Panchayat** (village or group of villages), the **intermediate Panchayat** (Panchayat Samiti, Mandal Parishad, Block Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat in different States) and the **District Panchayat** (Zilla Parishad), together with the **Gram Sabha**.
- **Three dimensions.** **Political decentralisation** (elected bodies), **administrative decentralisation** (staff and procedures under local control) and **fiscal decentralisation** (taxing powers and transfers). A Panchayat can be politically decentralised yet fiscally dependent, which is the typical Indian pattern.
- **Rondinelli's types.** **Dennis Rondinelli**, the American development administration scholar, with **John Nellis** and **G. Shabbir Cheema** (*Decentralization in Developing Countries*, World Bank, 1983), separated **deconcentration** (to field officers), **delegation** (to semi-autonomous bodies), **devolution** (to elected local governments) and **privatisation**. Panchayats under Part IX are meant to be **devolution**; Collectors, BDOs and DRDAs are **deconcentration and delegation**. The full typology and Fesler's approaches are in the chapter on District Administration, Democratic Decentralisation and Union–State–Local Relations.

1.2 Why decentralise: the arguments

Decentralisation is defended on far more than administrative efficiency, which is why it is never “just technical”; the theory is treated fully in the chapter on District Administration, Democratic Decentralisation and Union–State–Local Relations.

- **Democratic:** local bodies are **schools of democracy** (Tocqueville, J.S. Mill); Panchayat elections bring about **32 lakh** people into office every five years.
- **Efficiency and information:** **Wallace Oates’ decentralisation theorem** (*Fiscal Federalism*, 1972): provide each service at the **lowest level** that covers its beneficiaries, unless scale economies or spillovers justify a higher one.
- **Subsidiarity:** higher levels should do only what lower levels cannot, and **support rather than replace** them (*Quadragesimo Anno*, 1931; the **Maastricht Treaty**, 1992); the foundation of the **2nd ARC’s** local governance report.
- **Choice and competition:** **Charles Tiebout** (1956): citizens “**vote with their feet**” among local governments; centralisation inclines to **domination**, decentralisation to **competition and self-determination**.
- **Accountability and participation:** Gram Sabha decisions are **visible**; **downward accountability** to neighbours can be sharper than **upward accountability** to departments.
- **Equity:** reserved seats for **SCs, STs and women** make decentralisation an instrument of **social justice**.
- **Cautions:** **elite capture** in unequal villages (Section 6.3), weak **capacity**, **inequality between areas** without equalising transfers, **spillovers** across boundaries, and **decentralised corruption** without audit.

1.3 Gandhi’s gram swaraj and Article 40

- **Gandhi’s vision.** **Mahatma Gandhi** saw the self-reliant village as the unit of a free India. In *Harijan* (26 July 1942) he wrote:

“My idea of village swaraj is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity.” — M.K. Gandhi

- **The oceanic circle.** Gandhi rejected a pyramid with the apex sustained by the bottom; he imagined an “**oceanic circle**” whose centre is the individual, ready to sacrifice for the village, the village for the circle of villages, so that power flows **upward from the base**. **Gram swaraj** meant **political self-rule, economic self-sufficiency** (khadi, village industries) and **moral self-discipline** together.
- **Ambedkar’s counterview.** **B.R. Ambedkar**, presenting the draft Constitution (4 November 1948), called the Indian village “a sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism”, fearing that village power meant **domination of Dalits by upper castes**. The draft therefore took the **individual**, not the village, as its unit.
- **The compromise: Article 40.** After protests in the Constituent Assembly, **K. Santhanam’s** amendment added a **Directive Principle**: the State shall take steps to **organise village panchayats** and endow them

with such powers as may be necessary to enable them to function as **units of self-government**. Being **non-justiciable**, it left Panchayats as **creatures of State legislatures**.

- **Local government in the federal scheme.** "Local government" is **Entry 5 of the State List**; hence even after 1992 the **States**, not the Union, decide the detailed powers of Panchayats.

COMMON CONFUSION

Is today's Gram Sabha the Gandhian village republic? Only in name. Gandhi's village republic was **self-sufficient and sovereign** for its vital wants, with power flowing upward. The constitutional Gram Sabha (Article 243A) is a **body of all voters** whose powers are **whatever the State legislature gives it**; it sits at the base of a structure whose money, rules and schemes flow **downward** from the Union and the State. Outside PESA areas, most Gram Sabhas have advisory rather than binding powers. The Gram Sabha borrows Gandhi's language of **direct democracy** but works inside a **Weberian, centralised state**.

1.4 Historical roots in brief

- **Ancient and medieval India.** Village assemblies (**sabha** and **samiti** in Vedic texts), the **Chola** village councils (Uttaramerur inscriptions of the tenth century describing election by lot to village committees) and the **panchayat** of elders for disputes show a long tradition of local self-management, though dominated by upper castes and men.
- **Colonial period.** Urban bodies came first (**Madras Corporation, 1687–88**); **Lord Ripon's Resolution of 18 May 1882**, the **Magna Carta of local self-government**, favoured elected majorities; the **Bengal Local Self-Government Act, 1885** created district boards; after the **Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms (1919)** made local self-government a **transferred subject**, provinces passed Village Panchayat Acts. These bodies stayed **dominated by officials and notables**, with narrow functions and thin finances (see the chapter on Legacy of British Rule).
- **Three factors that shaped Indian local self-government.**
 - **Historical:** colonial bodies were built for **administrative convenience and control**, not democracy; district officers dominated them; the urban bodies came first, rural ones later, producing separate rural and urban laws.
 - **Ideological:** the **Gandhian** village republic, **Nehruvian** planned development (Panchayats as instruments of plan implementation) and **Ambedkarite** suspicion of village hierarchy pulled in different directions.
 - **Administrative:** a **centralised civil service** and **departmental** structure meant that development reached villages through officials; Panchayats were added **on top of**, not instead of, this machinery.

Evolution of Panchayati Raj, 1952–1992

IN SIMPLE WORDS

For forty years India experimented: first officials ran village development, then elected councils were added, then they were allowed to decay, then revived by committees, and finally written into the Constitution. Each committee was a reaction to the failure of the one before it.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · PANCHAYATI RAJ

Timeline

From Community Development to the 73rd Amendment

Each step answered the failure of the one before it

1952–53	CDP and NES: block, BDO, extension staff	No participation
1957	Balwantray Mehta: democratic decentralisation	Three tiers
1959	Nagaur, Rajasthan: first Panchayati Raj	2 October
1978	Asoka Mehta: district first; Mandal Panchayat	Two tiers
1985	G.V.K. Rao: development bureaucratised	Grass without roots
1986	L.M. Singhvi: protect local self-government	Constitutional status
1988	P.K. Thungon and V.N. Gadgil	SFC, SEC, reservation
1989	64th Amendment Bill: falls in Rajya Sabha	Lapsed
1992–93	73rd Amendment: Part IX; in force 24 April 1993	Third tier
1996	PESA Act: Fifth Schedule areas	Gram Sabha supreme

In simple words: India tried officials, then advisory bodies, then State laws, and finally wrote panchayats into the Constitution.

Public Administration

This section keeps the committees brief; their district-level design and the Collector's place in each are covered in the chapter on District Administration, Democratic Decentralisation and Union–State–Local Relations, and their planning proposals in the chapter on Decentralised Planning after the 73rd and 74th Amendments.

2.1 From Community Development to Panchayati Raj

- **Community Development Programme (2 October 1952)** and **National Extension Service (1953)** worked through blocks under a **BDO** with extension staff; people saw them as **government programmes**, and participation stayed weak.
- The **Balwantray Mehta Study Team** (appointed January 1957, report November 1957) diagnosed this failure and proposed **“democratic decentralisation”**: three tiers (**Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, Zila Parishad**) linked by **indirect elections**, the **Samiti** as the executive body and the **Zila Parishad** advisory under the **Collector**, with genuine transfer of powers and resources. The **National Development Council** accepted it (January 1958); **Rajasthan** began at **Nagaur on 2 October 1959**, Andhra Pradesh followed, and by the mid-1960s Gram Panchayats covered about **90 per cent** of the rural population. **Maharashtra (1961)** and Gujarat made the **Zilla Parishad** the strongest tier, with its own executive officer.
- **Decline (1965–1977)**: elections postponed and bodies **superseded**; block funds cut as Plans turned to **target-driven programmes** (IADP, SFDA, DPAP) run by departments and special agencies; **MLAs** saw local leaders as rivals; **parastatals** took over water and other services. James Fesler’s **“illusory decentralisation”** fits this phase.

2.2 The committees, 1978–1989

COMMITTEE	YEAR	CORE RECOMMENDATIONS
Asoka Mehta (Janata government)	1978	132 recommendations; two tiers (Zila Parishad and Mandal Panchayat for 15,000–20,000 people); district as the first point of decentralisation ; Zila Parishad as executive and planning body with a CEO; open party participation ; compulsory taxation powers ; SC/ST reservation by population; social audit; Nyaya Panchayats; no supersession, or elections within six months ; constitutional recognition
G.V.K. Rao (CAARD, Planning Commission)	1985	Rural development bureaucratised and divorced from PRIs, “grass without roots” ; Zila Parishad as principal development body; district as basic planning unit; District Development Commissioner as its chief executive
L.M. Singhvi (Revitalisation of PRIs for Democracy and Development)	1986	Local self-government to be constitutionally recognised, protected and preserved ; Nyaya Panchayats ; viable Gram Panchayats; more finances; Gram Sabha as embodiment of direct democracy
P.K. Thungon (Parliamentary Consultative Committee)	1988	Constitutional recognition; Zila Parishad as pivot ; five-year term; SC/ST and women’s reservation; State Finance Commission ; Collector as Zila Parishad CEO
V.N. Gadgil	1988	Three tiers, five-year term, direct elections , reservation, State Election and Finance Commissions

- **The Asoka Mehta Committee’s diagnosis.** Panchayati Raj was not a “god that failed” but a **schooling in democracy** that had been starved and superseded; and it had been **dominated by the privileged**, so the

weaker sections gained little. West Bengal (1978), Karnataka (Act of 1983, in force 1987) and Andhra Pradesh (Mandal Praja Parishads, 1987) built on its ideas.

- **64th Amendment Bill (1989).** Passed by the Lok Sabha but **defeated in the Rajya Sabha (October 1989)**, as opposition parties saw it as the **Union reaching past the States**. A combined bill of **1990** lapsed with the Lok Sabha's dissolution.

COMMON CONFUSION

Was the two-tier system the Asoka Mehta Committee's most important idea? It was its most visible, but not its most lasting. The **Mandal Panchayat** survived in only a few States, and the 73rd Amendment returned to **three tiers**. Its durable ideas were **the district as the first point of decentralisation, party participation, compulsory taxation powers, no indefinite supersession** with elections within six months, and **constitutional status**, several of which entered the 73rd Amendment.

2.3 Generations of Panchayats

Students of Panchayati Raj often divide its history into **generations**, which helps answer whether Panchayats became **political** rather than **developmental** institutions.

GENERATION	PERIOD	CHARACTER	EXAMPLES
First	1959 to mid-1970s	Agencies of development: delivering CDP and plan schemes; officials dominant; elections irregular; no party symbols	Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra under Mehta pattern
Second	Late 1970s to 1992	Political institutions: party-based elections, district-level executive bodies, land reform and patronage roles	West Bengal (1978), Karnataka (1987), Andhra Pradesh Mandal Praja Parishads (1987)
Third	After 1993	Constitutional third tier: mandatory elections, reservation, SEC and SFC; still dependent on States for powers	All Part IX States

- **The shift to politics.** Second-generation Panchayats (West Bengal's party-based councils after **Operation Barga**, Karnataka's directly elected Zilla Parishads) made local bodies **arenas of party competition and redistribution**, not only implementers of schemes. Critics feared **politicisation**; defenders argued that development itself is political, and that **party competition** gave the poor a lever against local landlords.
- **Political parties in Panchayat polls.** It is **unrealistic to keep parties out**; most States now allow party symbols at upper tiers (and some at all tiers). The real question is how to make parties deliver **good local government**: by fixed terms, independent SECs, transparent finances and **disqualification for defection** in some State laws.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992

IN SIMPLE WORDS

In 1992 Parliament added a new Part to the Constitution. Every State now has to have elected Panchayats at the village, block and district levels, hold elections every five years through an independent commission, reserve seats for SCs, STs and women, and set up a commission every five years to share money with Panchayats. What Panchayats actually do, and with how much money, is still left to each State.

3.1 Passage and purpose

- **Passage.** The P.V. Narasimha Rao government introduced the bill in **September 1991**. It was passed by the **Lok Sabha on 22 December 1992** and the **Rajya Sabha on 23 December 1992**, ratified by **17 State legislatures**, received **Presidential assent on 20 April 1993** and came into force on **24 April 1993**, now observed as **National Panchayati Raj Day**. All States had to bring their laws into conformity within **one year** (Article 243N), and most passed new Acts by April 1994.
- **Statement of Objects and Reasons.** Panchayats had failed to become viable and responsive people's bodies because of **absence of regular elections, prolonged supersessions, insufficient representation of SCs, STs and women, inadequate devolution of powers and lack of financial resources**. The Amendment would give them **certainty, continuity and strength**.
- **Two Amendments together.** The **74th Amendment** (Part IXA, Articles 243P to 243ZG, Twelfth Schedule) did the same for **Municipalities**; it also created the **District Planning Committee** (Article 243ZD), which consolidates rural and urban plans. Urban local government is covered in the chapter on urban local government; the DPC in the chapter on Decentralised Planning after the 73rd and 74th Amendments.
- **Ministry of Panchayati Raj.** A separate Union **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** was created in **May 2004** to monitor implementation, advise States and run capacity-building and e-governance schemes.

3.2 Part IX article by article

The table gives each Article of Part IX with what it requires and why it matters administratively.

ARTICLE	PROVISION	ADMINISTRATIVE SIGNIFICANCE
243	Definitions: Gram Sabha, Panchayat, village, intermediate level, district	"Panchayat" defined as an institution of self-government for rural areas
243A	Gram Sabha to exercise powers and functions as the State legislature provides	Direct democracy at the base, but its powers are State-defined

ARTICLE	PROVISION	ADMINISTRATIVE SIGNIFICANCE
243B	Panchayats at village, intermediate and district levels; intermediate tier optional in States with population not exceeding 20 lakh	Uniform three-tier structure; small States such as Goa and Sikkim have two tiers
243C	Composition: all seats filled by direct election from territorial constituencies; State may provide representation of chairpersons of lower tiers, MPs and MLAs ; chairperson of intermediate and district Panchayats elected by and from the elected members ; village chairperson chosen as State law provides	Upper-tier chairs are indirectly elected; village heads may be direct or indirect by State choice
243D	Reservation: SCs and STs in proportion to population; not less than one-third of seats (including SC/ST seats) for women , rotated; chairpersons' offices reserved for SCs, STs and women; States may reserve for backward classes (243D(6)); SC/ST reservation tied to Article 334	Social composition of local power changed; women's share rose to about 46 per cent
243E	Duration of five years; no dissolution without hearing; election before expiry , or within six months of dissolution	Ends indefinite supersession by officials
243F	Disqualifications: as for State legislature elections (minimum age 21 , not 25) or under State law	States add conditions (two-child norm, educational qualification, dues)
243G	State may endow Panchayats with powers to function as institutions of self-government , including plans and schemes for economic development and social justice , including Eleventh Schedule matters	The heart of devolution, but discretionary
243H	State may authorise Panchayats to levy taxes, duties, tolls, fees; assign State taxes; give grants-in-aid ; create funds	Fiscal powers depend on State law
243-I	State Finance Commission within one year and then every five years , on sharing of State taxes, assignment of taxes, grants and measures to improve finances; report and action taken memorandum laid before the legislature	State–local fiscal federalism
243J	State law on maintenance of accounts and audit	Audit usually by a State Director of Local Fund Audit, with CAG technical guidance
243K	State Election Commission: superintendence, direction and control of electoral rolls and elections ; appointed by the Governor ; removable only like a High Court judge ; service conditions not varied to his disadvantage	Independent local election machinery
243L	Application to Union Territories	President may modify

ARTICLE	PROVISION	ADMINISTRATIVE SIGNIFICANCE
243M	Exempted areas: Fifth Schedule Scheduled Areas and Sixth Schedule tribal areas; Nagaland, Meghalaya, Mizoram ; Manipur hill areas with District Councils; Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council at district level; SC reservation not in Arunachal Pradesh (243M(3A), added in 2000); Parliament may extend Part IX to Scheduled Areas by law (243M(4)(b))	Basis of PESA, 1996 ; respects traditional institutions
243N	Existing inconsistent laws continue for one year ; existing Panchayats may run their term	Transition
243-O	Bar on courts in electoral matters: delimitation and seat allotment laws not questioned; elections challenged only by election petition	Speedy elections
280(3) (bb)	Union Finance Commission to recommend measures to augment a State's Consolidated Fund to supplement Panchayat resources , on the basis of SFC recommendations	Basis of FC local body grants
Eleventh Schedule	29 matters that may be devolved	Indicative list of rural functions

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · CONSTITUTION, PART IX

73rd Amendment

What the 73rd Amendment Compels and What It Leaves to States

The structure is fixed by the Constitution; the substance is left to State law

The four bodies of Part IX

Gram Sabha

All voters of the village

Art. 243A

Gram Panchayat

Village or group of villages

Intermediate

Block; optional below 20 lakh

District Panchayat

Zilla Parishad
Art. 243B

Two kinds of provisions

Mandatory

- Gram Sabha; three tiers (**243A, 243B**)
- Direct election of members (**243C**)
- Indirect election of upper-tier chairs
- SC/ST seats by population; one-third for women (**243D**)
- Minimum age 21 (**243F**)
- Five-year term; polls within six months (**243E**)
- State Election Commission (**243K**)
- State Finance Commission every five years (**243-I**)

Voluntary (State's choice)

- Powers to act as institutions of self-government (**243G**)
- Which of the 29 subjects to devolve
- Taxes, tolls, fees and grants (**243H**)
- Seats for backward classes (**243D(6)**)
- MPs and MLAs as members (**243C(3)**)
- Powers of the Gram Sabha
- Audit arrangements (**243J**)

In simple words: every State must hold panchayat elections on time; how much power panchayats get is still the State's decision.

Public Administration

3.3 Mandatory and voluntary provisions

The Amendment is best understood as a **floor of compulsory structure** with a **ceiling of optional substance**, as the figure above shows: the **mandatory** provisions fix the bodies, elections, reservation, term, SEC and SFC; the **voluntary** ones (powers under 243G, which of the 29 subjects, taxes under 243H, backward-class seats, MP and MLA membership, Gram Sabha powers, audit) decide how much those bodies can actually do.

- **What this design achieved.** Within a decade every Part IX State had **elected Panchayats** at all levels, regular elections in most States, and **lakhs of women, Dalit and Adivasi** representatives. Supersession for years, the normal pattern before 1992, became rare. This is why the Amendment has been called a “**silent social revolution**” and a **landmark** in constitutional history.
- **What it left open.** The word “**may**” in **Article 243G** made devolution of functions, funds and staff a **State choice**. The Amendment also did not define the place of the **Collector**, the **MLA**, or the **line departments** in relation to Panchayats. The result is a **uniform structure with wide variation in substance**, from Kerala and Karnataka at one end to States where Panchayats remain **implementing agencies** at the other.

3.4 Reservation: Article 243D and the courts

- **SCs and STs:** seats in proportion to their population in the Panchayat area; **one-third** of these reserved for women of those groups. Chairpersons’ offices reserved in proportion to the State’s SC/ST population.
- **Women: not less than one-third** of seats and chairpersons’ offices, **by rotation**. **Bihar (2006)** was the first State to raise this to **50 per cent**; today **21 States and 2 UTs** provide **50 per cent**, among them Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. The **Constitution (110th Amendment) Bill, 2009**, which would have made 50 per cent mandatory everywhere, **lapsed**. About **14.5 lakh** of roughly **31.9 lakh** elected representatives (about **46 per cent**) are women.
- **Backward classes: optional** under 243D(6); most States provide some quota.
- **Rotation:** reserved seats rotate, so a reserved woman or SC sarpanch usually gets **one term**. The **2nd ARC** suggested rotating only after **two terms**, to allow leadership to mature.
- **Key judgments:**
 - **K. Krishna Murthy v. Union of India (2010):** a five-judge bench **upheld Articles 243D(6) and 243T(6)** and reservation of **chairpersons’ posts**. It held that **political reservation in local bodies is distinct** from reservation in education and jobs under Articles 15(4) and 16(4), but that backward-class reservation must rest on **empirical inquiry into political backwardness**, and that vertical reservation should **not ordinarily exceed 50 per cent**.
 - **Vikas Kishanrao Gawali v. State of Maharashtra (2021):** laid down the **triple test** for OBC reservation in local bodies: (i) a **dedicated commission** to study the nature of backwardness; (ii) **local-body-wise proportion** based on its findings; (iii) total SC, ST and OBC reservation **not exceeding 50 per cent**. Quotas without the test were struck down.
 - **Suresh Mahajan v. State of Madhya Pradesh (2022):** elections **cannot be postponed** to complete the triple test; the SEC must notify polls, with OBC seats only where the test is met.
 - **Union of India v. Rakesh Kumar (2010):** upheld PESA’s reservation of **all chairpersons’ posts** and of more than half the seats for **STs** in Scheduled Areas, given their special constitutional position.
 - **Maharashtra, 2025–26:** after OBC litigation stalled polls from 2022, the Supreme Court on **6 May 2025** ordered elections with the OBC quota as it stood before the **Banthia Commission** report (July 2022),

set **31 January 2026** as a final deadline (16 September 2025), and on **28 November 2025** allowed polls to proceed, with results where reservation crossed 50 per cent kept **subject to its final decision**. Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti polls in 12 districts were held on **7 February 2026**.

- **Other disqualifications under State law (Article 243F(1)(b)):**

- **Javed v. State of Haryana (2003):** upheld the **two-child norm** for Panchayat candidates as a reasonable classification serving population policy.
- **Rajbala v. State of Haryana (2015):** upheld **minimum educational qualifications**, a functional toilet at home and clearance of dues as conditions to contest. Critics argue such norms **exclude** poor, Dalit and women candidates, the very groups Article 243D meant to include.

COMMON CONFUSION

Does the Constitution require 50 per cent reservation for women in Panchayats? No. Article 243D requires **not less than one-third**. The **50 per cent** in 21 States and 2 UTs comes from **State laws**, using the words “not less than”. A bill to make 50 per cent constitutional (the 110th Amendment Bill, 2009) lapsed. Equally, OBC reservation is **enabling**, not compulsory, and is valid only if the **triple test** is met.

3.5 Powers, functions and the Eleventh Schedule

- **Article 243G** lets the State legislature endow Panchayats with powers and authority “**as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government**”, including the **preparation of plans** and **implementation of schemes** for **economic development and social justice**, including those on the 29 Eleventh Schedule matters.
- **The Eleventh Schedule** lists 29 matters, grouped below.

GROUP	ELEVENTH SCHEDULE MATTERS
Agriculture and natural resources	Agriculture and extension; land improvement, land reforms, consolidation, soil conservation; minor irrigation, water management, watershed development; animal husbandry, dairying, poultry; fisheries; social and farm forestry; minor forest produce; fuel and fodder
Economy and livelihoods	Small-scale industries including food processing; khadi, village and cottage industries; poverty alleviation programme; markets and fairs
Infrastructure	Rural housing; drinking water; roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways; rural electrification including distribution; non-conventional energy
Social services	Education including primary and secondary schools; technical training and vocational education; adult and non-formal education; libraries; cultural activities; health and sanitation including hospitals, PHCs and dispensaries; family welfare
Welfare and equity	Women and child development; social welfare including welfare of persons with disabilities; welfare of weaker sections, especially SCs and STs; public distribution system

GROUP

ELEVENTH SCHEDULE MATTERS

Community assets Maintenance of community assets

- **Nature of the list.** The Schedule is **illustrative, not a separate legislative list**: it does not give Panchayats exclusive jurisdiction or law-making power, and the State can keep any matter. The **2nd ARC** noted **incongruities**: some items naturally rural (rural electrification, minor forest produce) sit alongside others (education, health, PDS) that span rural and urban areas.
- **The 2nd ARC proposal.** Article 243G should say the State **"shall"** (not "may") vest Panchayats with powers over **all functions that can be performed at the local level**, including Eleventh Schedule matters, on the **principle of subsidiarity**.

3.6 Audit and the bar on courts

- **Audit (243J).** Left to State law; most States use a **Director of Local Fund Audit** under the Finance Department, with **technical guidance and supervision by the CAG**. Audit arrears have been chronic; the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Finance Commissions made **online audited accounts** an entry condition for grants.
- **Article 243-O.** Courts cannot question delimitation or seat allotment laws; election disputes go only by **election petition**. The Supreme Court in **State of Goa v. Fouziya Imtiaz Shaikh (2021)** read the parallel municipal bar (243ZG) as preventing courts from interfering **once the election process begins**, while allowing them to step in before notification or to help an SEC complete polls.

3.7 Assessing the Amendment

- **Achievements:**
 - **Permanent structure:** Panchayats can no longer be wound up at will; elections are regular in most States.
 - **Scale of representation:** about **31.9 lakh** elected representatives, the largest body of elected officials anywhere.
 - **Social change:** women, Dalits and Adivasis in office, including as sarpanch and Zilla Parishad president; the **"silent social revolution"**.
 - **Institutions of fiscal federalism** (SFCs) and of **electoral independence** (SECs) at the State level.
 - **Platform** for later reforms: Finance Commission grants direct to Panchayats, Gram Panchayat Development Plans, social audit, e-governance.
 - **Development with justice:** Articles 243G and 243ZD tie local planning to **"economic development and social justice"**, and reservation under 243D builds social justice into who plans; the two together are the distinctive hallmarks of the 1992 Amendments.
- **Limitations:**
 - **Discretionary devolution** (243G, 243H): structure without substance.
 - **No defined relationship** with the Collector, line departments, MLAs or parastatals.
 - **No exclusive functions** and no protection against **State control powers** (suspension, removal, approval of budgets).
 - **Weak Gram Sabha:** its powers are whatever the State gives.

- **Fiscal dependence:** own revenue remains tiny.
- **A third tier of federalism?** Part IX gives Panchayats **constitutional existence, fixed terms and their own election and finance machinery**, which is why they are called the **third tier of government**. But they lack the defining features of a federal unit: **no legislative list**, no **exclusive** functions, no **independent taxing power** and no protection against State control. India has **constitutionally protected local government within States**, not three-tier federalism; making that model viable requires the 3Fs, not more structure.
- **The World Bank's fiscal warning.** A World Bank study argued that the Amendment might **accentuate fiscal indiscipline** by creating between States and local governments a **transfer system like the Union-State one**, where lower governments spend money they do not raise. The logic is the **soft budget constraint** (János Kornai): an entity that expects bailouts has little incentive to tax or save. Evidence partly supports the fear: a **2025 NIPFP study** for the Ministry of Panchayati Raj found that Panchayats' **own revenue is negatively correlated with grants**. But the counter-argument is stronger: Panchayats spend **tiny** sums relative to States, most grants are **conditional** (audited accounts, plans, online payments), and the problem is **too little**, not too much, fiscal autonomy. Linking grants to **own-revenue effort**, as the Fourteenth and Sixteenth Finance Commissions did, answers the incentive problem.

04

The Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Tribal areas under the Fifth Schedule were left out of the 73rd Amendment because their customs and land needed special protection. In 1996 Parliament extended Panchayati Raj to these areas with one big change: the village assembly of the tribal community, the Gram Sabha, was put at the centre, with a say over land, forests, minerals, markets and liquor.

4.1 Why PESA was needed

- **Article 243M(1)** kept **Fifth Schedule Scheduled Areas** out of Part IX, and **Article 243M(4)(b)** allowed **Parliament** to extend it by law with **exceptions and modifications**.
- Tribal communities had their own **customary institutions** (village councils, headmen, community control of forests and water), which a uniform Panchayat model could have displaced. They also faced **land alienation, displacement** by dams and mines, exploitation by **moneylenders and liquor traders**, and loss of forest rights.
- The **Bhuria Committee** (chaired by **Dilip Singh Bhuria**, 1994–95) recommended self-rule centred on the **Gram Sabha**, and Parliament enacted the **Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996** (PESA), in force from **24 December 1996**, now marked as **PESA Day**.
- **Coverage:** Fifth Schedule areas in **10 States** (Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana): about **77,564 villages, 22,040 Panchayats, 664 blocks, 45 fully covered and 63 partly covered districts**.
- **Sixth Schedule** areas (parts of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram) are different: they have **Autonomous District Councils** with legislative powers, not PESA.

PESA: The Gram Sabha at the Centre

Part IX extended to Fifth Schedule areas with exceptions and modifications

Gram Sabha: guardian of customs, community resources and dispute resolution

Approves

- Plans, programmes and projects
- Lists of beneficiaries
- Use of funds (certificate)

Owns or controls

- Minor forest produce
- Village markets
- Money lending to STs
- Sale of intoxicants
- Restoring alienated land

Prior say needed

- Land acquisition (consulted)
- Resettlement of displaced (consulted)
- Minor mineral leases (recommends)

Seats and offices

At least half the seats and all chairpersons' posts for Scheduled Tribes at every tier.

Implementation gap

State laws on land, forests, mines and excise not aligned; "consultation" read as formality; rules late.

In simple words: in tribal areas the village assembly, not the State office, is meant to decide about land, forests and liquor.

Public Administration

4.2 Key provisions (Section 4)

PROVISION	WHAT IT SAYS
Customary law (4(a), 4(d))	State laws must be consistent with customary law, social and religious practices and traditional management of community resources ; every Gram Sabha is competent to safeguard traditions, cultural identity, community resources and the customary mode of dispute resolution
Village and Gram Sabha (4(b), 4(c))	A village is a habitation or group of habitations managing its affairs by custom (not just a revenue village); every village has a Gram Sabha
Approval of plans (4(e), 4(f))	Gram Sabha approves plans, programmes and projects before implementation, identifies beneficiaries , and the Panchayat must obtain a utilisation certificate from it
Reservation (4(g), 4(h))	Seats for STs at least one-half ; all chairpersons' posts at every level reserved for STs ; nomination of unrepresented STs at upper tiers

PROVISION	WHAT IT SAYS
Land (4(i))	Gram Sabha or Panchayat to be consulted before land acquisition for development projects and before resettlement
Water bodies (4(j))	Minor water bodies planned and managed by Panchayats
Minerals (4(k), 4(l))	Prior recommendation for prospecting licences, mining leases and auction concessions for minor minerals
Specific powers (4(m))	Enforce prohibition or regulate intoxicants; ownership of minor forest produce ; prevent land alienation and restore unlawfully alienated land; manage village markets ; control money lending to STs; control institutions and functionaries in social sectors; control local plans and resources , including tribal sub-plans
Protection of lower levels (4(n))	Higher tiers must not assume the powers of the Gram Sabha or lower Panchayats
District level (4(o))	Administrative arrangements at district level on the pattern of the Sixth Schedule

4.3 Status of implementation

- **Incorporation into State laws:** nine States amended their Panchayati Raj Acts; **Rajasthan** passed a separate Act (1999).
- **State PESA rules:** after the Ministry circulated **draft model rules (2009)**, rules were framed by Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh (2011), Rajasthan (2011), Maharashtra (2014), Telangana (adopted 2014), Gujarat (2017), **Chhattisgarh (August 2022)** and **Madhya Pradesh (15 November 2022)**. **Jharkhand** notified its rules on **2 January 2026**, 25 years after statehood, making **nine of ten** PESA States with rules. **Odisha** published draft rules in **November 2023** but had not finalised them by March 2026.
- **Jharkhand's rules (2026)** require **prior Gram Sabha consent** for land acquisition and rehabilitation, recognise **traditional village heads**, give Gram Sabhas rights over **minor forest produce**, liquor licensing and monitoring of schools, anganwadis and ration shops, and create a **Gram Kosh** (village fund). Critics say rules giving **Deputy Commissioners** the power to recognise Gram Sabha boundaries may dilute customary autonomy.
- **Monitoring:** the Ministry has developed **10 PESA indicators** (alignment of State laws, rules notified, amendment of line-department laws, PESA staff, training, GPDP uploads by PESA Gram Sabhas, minutes on the Panchayat NIRNAY portal) and held a **PESA Mahotsav** at Visakhapatnam on **23–24 December 2025**.

4.4 Problems in implementing PESA

- **Conflicting subject laws.** State laws on **land revenue, excise, forests, minor minerals, money lending and land acquisition** were not amended to match PESA; the Act's promise is defeated by **departmental**

rules. The 2nd ARC asked for immediate amendment and, if States resist, Union **directions under the Fifth Schedule.**

- **“Consultation” read as formality.** Many States treat consultation on land acquisition as a **non-binding hearing**; Gram Sabha resolutions are ignored or obtained by pressure.
- **Revenue village versus habitation.** States notified Gram Sabhas at **revenue-village or Panchayat** level, not at the habitation where customary institutions actually work.
- **Bureaucratic gatekeeping.** Forest, mining and revenue departments retain control over MFP, leases and land records; **traditional institutions** sit uneasily with elected Panchayats.
- **Capacity and awareness.** Low awareness of rights, weak training in PESA areas, Gram Sabhas without staff or funds.
- **Courts as allies.** In **Samatha v. State of Andhra Pradesh (1997)** the Supreme Court held that transfer of Scheduled Area land to **private mining companies** was void; in **Orissa Mining Corporation v. Ministry of Environment and Forests (2013)**, the **Niyamgiri** case, it left the decision on Vedanta’s bauxite mine to the **Gram Sabhas** under the **Forest Rights Act, 2006** and PESA, and the twelve Gram Sabhas consulted **rejected** it. These judgments show what PESA could mean if implemented.
- **Assessment.** PESA is the most **radical** expression of decentralisation in Indian law, giving a **community assembly** powers that ordinary Panchayats lack. Thirty years on, it remains largely an **unfulfilled promise**: tribal society’s control over **livelihoods and traditional rights** depends on aligning **subject laws**, accepting Gram Sabha decisions as **binding** and building Gram Sabha capacity.

05

Working of PRIs: Functions, Funds and Functionaries

IN SIMPLE WORDS

To act as a government, a Panchayat needs three things: clear jobs to do, money it can spend as it chooses, and staff who answer to it. These are called the “3Fs”. In most States Panchayats have long lists of subjects on paper, but little money of their own and few staff, so they end up doing what State departments tell them.

5.1 Scale of the system

- **Bodies:** about **2.6 lakh Gram Panchayats and equivalent bodies** (2,66,999 counted for the Panchayat Advancement Index 2.0), about **6,700 intermediate Panchayats** and about **675 District Panchayats**.
- **Representatives:** about **31.9 lakh** elected representatives, of whom about **14.5 lakh (46 per cent)** are women.
- **Two roles at once.** Panchayats are **institutions of self-government** under Article 243G and also **implementing agencies** for Union and State schemes. The 2nd ARC distinguished three spheres: an **exclusive sphere** of the Panchayat, a **partnership sphere** with the State, and an **agency sphere** where Panchayats implement State or Union schemes. In most States the agency sphere dominates.

Functions, Funds and Functionaries

Devolution is real only when all three move together

Elected Panchayat: an institution of self-government (Article 243G)

Functions

- 29 subjects, Eleventh Schedule
- **Activity mapping** by tier
- Subsidiarity principle

Gap: subjects listed in law, but departments keep schemes and sanctions.

Fix: statutory activity mapping; exit of departments.

Funds

- Own taxes and fees
- SFC devolution
- Union Finance Commission grants

Gap: about 95% of revenue is grants; own tax near 1%.

Fix: wider tax domain, untied grants, timely SFCs.

Functionaries

- Secretary, engineers, accountants
- Staff under Panchayat control
- Trained elected members

Gap: deputed staff answer to departments; posts vacant.

Fix: own cadre, recruitment powers, steady training.

In simple words: a Panchayat with duties but no money or staff is an agent of the State, **Public Administration** not a government.

5.2 Functions and activity mapping

- **The problem.** States devolved functions mostly through **omnibus clauses** that repeat the 29 Eleventh Schedule items, without saying **which tier does what**, while **departmental executive orders** and **scheme guidelines** keep actual decisions (sanctions, staff, procurement) with line departments. This is “devolution on paper”.
- **Activity mapping** means **unbundling** each subject into **activities** and assigning each to the **level of government** best placed to perform it. The 2nd ARC’s illustration: **basic education** can be unbundled into monitoring teachers’ attendance, repairing schools, procuring equipment, recruiting teachers; **horticulture** into seed supply, nurseries, technical assistance, pest control, market information and post-harvest support.
- **Five categories of activity:** **setting standards, planning, asset creation, implementation and management**, and **monitoring and evaluation**.
- **Principles of assignment:**
 - **economies of scale** push an activity **upward** (a multi-village water scheme to the Zilla Parishad);
 - **externalities** push it to the level that covers all affected people (epidemic control beyond a village);
 - **equity** may need a higher level to ensure uniform standards;

- **heterogeneity** of local preferences pushes it **downward** (the menu of mid-day meals);
- **beneficiary selection** should always be at the **lowest level**, the Gram Sabha.
- **Why it matters.** Clear roles let Panchayats be held **accountable**, make **capacity building demand-driven**, and show which **functionaries and funds** must move with each function. The 2nd ARC asked every State to complete activity mapping within **one year** through a task force, and the Union to do the same for **Centrally Sponsored Schemes**.
- **Status.** Activity maps exist in many States, but are often **not notified** or **not followed by transfer of funds and staff**. The **Devolution Index 2024** ranked **Tamil Nadu**, Karnataka, Odisha and Rajasthan highest on the **functions** dimension.

5.3 Funds: own revenue, State transfers and Finance Commission grants

Panchayats draw on **own taxes** (mainly property or house tax), **own non-tax revenue** (fees, user charges, rents, auctions of fisheries and markets), **State devolution** on SFC recommendations, **Union Finance Commission grants** and **scheme funds**.

How dependent Panchayats are. The **RBI** report *Finances of Panchayati Raj Institutions* (January 2024), using data on 2.58 lakh Panchayats for 2020–21 to 2022–23, found:

- **own tax revenue** only about **1 per cent** of revenue receipts, own non-tax revenue about **3–4 per cent**;
- **grants** about **95 per cent**, of which Union grants about **80 per cent** and State grants about **15 per cent** in 2022–23;
- average revenue per Panchayat **₹21.23 lakh** in 2022–23, of which own tax only about **₹21,000**;
- wide variation, from about **₹2.7 lakh** per Panchayat in Andhra Pradesh to **₹64 lakh** in West Bengal; better outcomes in health, education and water in States with **higher devolution**.

Why own revenue is so low:

- **Thin tax domain:** buoyant taxes (excise, GST, motor vehicles, stamp duty) belong to the State; the only significant local tax is **property tax**.
- **Reluctance to tax** neighbours and voters; elected heads fear unpopularity.
- **Weak assessment** (no property registers, undervalued property) and collection machinery.
- **Grants crowd out effort** (the NIPFP study cited above).
- **Remedies:** SVAMITVA property cards as the base for **property tax**, **mineral royalty** shares (2nd ARC), user charges for services, **matching grants** for own revenue, a **band of rates** set by the State and obligatory levy by Panchayats (2nd ARC); the Ministry has trained about **2.55 lakh** participants on **own source revenue** under RGSA.

State Finance Commissions.

- **Mandate (243-I):** recommend **principles** for sharing State taxes, assigning taxes and giving grants, and **measures** to improve finances; the Governor lays the report with an **action taken memorandum** before the legislature.
- **Purpose:** to make State–local transfers **formula-based, predictable and equalising**, so that poorer and backward Panchayats get more, much as the Union Finance Commission does between the Union and States. SFCs thus serve **regional balance** within a State, though they distribute **State** funds, not Central ones; Central grants reach Panchayats through the **Union Finance Commission** route.

- **Problems in practice:**

- **Delay:** many States constituted SFCs late, irregularly or not at all; reports lie unacted for years, and action taken reports are tabled late or without decisions;
- **composition:** often retired officials without public finance expertise; no prescribed qualifications;
- **data:** no reliable accounts of local bodies, so recommendations rest on guesswork;
- **non-binding:** unlike Union FC awards, which the Union has always honoured, many States accept SFC recommendations **partially** and release funds **late**;
- **periods not synchronised** with the Union FC, so the Union FC cannot rely on SFC reports in assessing States' needs.

- **Effect on Central transfers.** Successive Union Finance Commissions, from the **Eleventh** onwards, complained that they could not base local body grants on SFC reports because these were **missing, dated or not comparable**. State apathy towards SFCs has thus **weakened the whole chain** of fiscal transfers to local bodies.
- **Reform proposals:** constitute SFCs on time and **synchronise** them with the Union FC (**Twelfth FC**); prescribe **qualifications** of members by law; a permanent **SFC cell** in the Finance Department; an **action taken report within six months**; **normative** rather than historical assessment; an annual statement of devolution in the State budget (**2nd ARC**). The **Sixteenth Finance Commission** has now made **regular constitution of SFCs** and tabling of the action taken report an **entry condition** for any local body grant.

Union Finance Commission grants. Since the 73rd Amendment, Union Finance Commissions have become the most dependable source of **untied money** for Panchayats.

FINANCE COMMISSION	PERIOD	LOCAL BODY GRANTS	DESIGN FOR RURAL BODIES
Tenth	1996–2000	₹5,381 crore (₹4,381 crore rural)	First local body grant; ₹100 per rural person
Eleventh	2000–05	₹10,000 crore (₹8,000 crore rural)	Priority to accounts and audit, databases
Twelfth	2005–10	₹25,000 crore (₹20,000 crore rural)	Water supply and sanitation; SFC reforms
Thirteenth	2010–15	₹87,519 crore	Share of divisible pool (1.5 per cent basic plus up to 1 per cent performance); conditions such as audit systems, local body ombudsman, electronic fund transfer, qualified SFC members
Fourteenth (Y.V. Reddy)	2015–20	₹2,87,436 crore (₹2,00,292 crore to Gram Panchayats)	Only Gram Panchayats; 90 per cent basic, 10 per cent performance for audited accounts and higher own revenue; spent through a plan (origin of GPDP)

FINANCE COMMISSION	PERIOD	LOCAL BODY GRANTS	DESIGN FOR RURAL BODIES
Fifteenth (N.K. Singh)	2021–26	₹4,36,361 crore (rural ₹2,36,805 crore)	All three tiers; 60 per cent tied (drinking water, rainwater harvesting, sanitation, ODF), 40 per cent untied ; online accounts as entry condition
Sixteenth (Arvind Panagariya)	2026–31	₹7,91,493 crore (rural ₹4,35,236 crore)	Basic 80 per cent (half tied, half untied), performance 20 per cent; entry conditions on duly constituted bodies, published audited accounts and regular SFCs; State performance grant for devolving own resources

- **The trend:** grants have grown more than **150-fold** since the Tenth FC, moved **directly to Panchayats** through electronic transfer, and become **conditional**.
- **Performance grants and accountability.** The Thirteenth FC's conditions and the Fourteenth FC's 10 per cent **performance grant** (for audited accounts and growth in own revenue) pushed States to **audit accounts, publish data and raise property tax**; the Fifteenth and Sixteenth FCs made **online accounts** an entry condition. These have improved **financial accountability**, though many Panchayats failed to qualify, showing weak capacity rather than unwillingness.
- **Tied versus untied.** Tied grants serve national priorities (water, sanitation) but narrow the Gram Sabha's choice; **untied** grants are what make local planning real. The Sixteenth FC's design (half the basic grant untied, the whole performance grant untied) tries to balance the two.
- **Release problems.** Releases are delayed when States miss conditions or when software and accounting checks hold funds; Karnataka's minister complained in **July 2026** that about **₹2,186 crore** of Fifteenth FC money due to its Gram Panchayats had been held back on technical grounds.

5.4 Functionaries

- **The staffing gap.** Most Gram Panchayats have only a **Panchayat secretary**, often shared between several Panchayats; few have **engineers, accountants or data operators**. Intermediate and district Panchayats work through the **BDO** and **CEO**, who are State officers.
- **Deputation and dual control.** Staff working for Panchayats are **deputed** from State departments and answer to them for **postings, promotion and discipline**. Frequent transfers prevent continuity; officials treat elected heads as **subordinates**, not employers.
- **No power to recruit.** In most States Panchayats cannot recruit staff or fix service conditions; where they can, they lack money.
- **2nd ARC recommendations:** Panchayats should have power to **recruit and regulate** their staff within State standards, within **three years**; until then, State staff on **defined deputation**; a **zero-based review** of PRI staffing within one year, with Zilla Parishads involved; a **pool of experts** (engineers, planners) shared by a federation of local bodies.
- **Better practice.** **Kerala** (1995 onwards) transferred **institutions and their staff** (schools, primary health centres, Krishi Bhavans, anganwadis) to local governments; Karnataka placed district and taluk staff under Zilla and Taluk Panchayats; the **Devolution Index 2024** ranked Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Kerala highest on **functionaries**.

5.5 Capacity building

- **Why it matters.** About 32 lakh representatives are elected every five years, many for the **first time**, many with little schooling, and because of **rotation of reserved seats** most serve **one term**. Without training they cannot read budgets, use portals or challenge officials, and proxies or officials fill the gap.
- **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA).** A Centrally Sponsored Scheme from **2018–19**; the **revamped RGSA** was approved on **13 April 2022** for **2022–23 to 2025–26** with an outlay of **₹5,911 crore** (60:40 Centre–State; 90:10 for the North–East, hill States and J&K). It funds training of elected representatives and functionaries, **Panchayat buildings and computers**, Gram Sabha strengthening, e-governance, localisation of **SDGs** and incentives. More than **24 lakh** elected representatives have been trained, nearly half of them women. The Ministry has proposed continuation from **2026–27** with about **₹7,860.83 crore**, and the parliamentary Standing Committee (2026) asked that training be linked to **measurable outcomes** (audit compliance, own revenue, Gram Sabha functioning) and **third-party evaluation**.
- **Institutions:** the **National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj** (Hyderabad), **State Institutes of Rural Development** and Panchayat training centres, using **cascade** training through master trainers; leadership programmes with **IIMs and IITs**; **Panchayat Learning Centres**.
- **Women representatives:** the **Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan** (launched **4 March 2025**) for leadership and negotiation skills; **744 Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats**, one per district, identified to demonstrate gender-responsive governance.
- **Limits:** training is **episodic, supply-driven and cascade-diluted**; it rarely includes mentoring or assessment; and trained representatives remain **frustrated** where the 3Fs are not devolved. **Capacity is also institutional:** staff, money, buildings, data and authority.

5.6 Measuring devolution and performance

- **Devolution Index.** The Ministry of Panchayati Raj has commissioned devolution rankings since 2006; the **Devolution Index 2024** (*Status of Devolution to Panchayats in States*, prepared with the **Indian Institute of Public Administration**, released in **February 2025**) ranks States on six dimensions: **framework, functions, finances, functionaries, capacity enhancement and accountability**.
 - **Top States:** **Karnataka (72.23)**, **Kerala (70.59)**, **Tamil Nadu (68.38)**, Maharashtra (61.44), Uttar Pradesh (60.07); **national average 43.89**.
 - **By dimension:** framework, Kerala first; functions, Tamil Nadu; finances and accountability, Karnataka; functionaries, Gujarat; capacity building, Telangana.
 - **Low scorers:** Goa, Haryana, Jharkhand, Punjab, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and most UTs.
 - **Findings:** most States are **not serious about SFCs**; finances depend on timely Fifteenth FC releases; devolution is **uneven** even in leading States.
- **Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI).** A Panchayat-level **report card** on the nine **Localised SDG themes** (poverty-free and enhanced livelihoods, healthy, child-friendly, water-sufficient, clean and green, self-sufficient infrastructure, socially just and secured, good governance, women-friendly).
 - **PAI 1.0 (2022–23)**, released **9 April 2025**: no Panchayat reached the top “Achiever” grade.
 - **PAI 2.0 (2023–24)**, released in **April–May 2026**: **2,59,867** Gram Panchayats (97.3 per cent) on **112 indicators**; **none** in the Achiever grade (90+), **3,635** Front Runners, **1,18,824** Performers, **1,23,719** Aspirants and **13,689** Beginners. **Tripura** (943 of 1,176 GPs as Front Runners), Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha did best; West Bengal did not take part.

- **Significance:** the two indices separate **how much power States give** (Devolution Index) from **what Panchayats achieve** (PAI). Together they create **yardstick competition** among States and Panchayats; critics warn that indicator-chasing can turn local governments into **data-reporting units** for Union priorities.

5.7 Panchayats and rural development programmes

Rural development in India has moved from the Community Development Programme through area and target-group programmes (IRDP, DPAP), wage employment and self-employment schemes, to rights-based laws and missions (MGNREGA, the National Rural Livelihoods Mission, PMAY-G, PMGSY), and from **1 July 2026** the **VB-G RAM G Act**; the institutions, agencies and strategies of these programmes are covered in the chapter on Rural Development: Institutions, Agencies, Programmes and Strategies since Independence. For this chapter the point is that **no rural development strategy has succeeded without appropriate Panchayati Raj institutions**:

- the **CDP failed** for want of popular institutions, which is why Panchayati Raj was created;
- the **IRDP** and other **DRDA**-run programmes of the 1980s were captured by officials and middlemen, producing “grass without roots”;
- the most successful schemes give PRIs a defined role: **Gram Sabha selection of beneficiaries** (housing), **Panchayat-planned works** with **social audit** (rural employment), **SHG federations linked to Panchayat plans** (Kudumbashree, NRLM's Village Poverty Reduction Plans);
- conversely, programmes run by **parallel bodies** (Section 6.2) duplicate effort and weaken accountability.

06 Problems in the Working of PRIs

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Even with the Constitution behind them, Panchayats are often held back by State governments that keep control, officials who treat elected heads as juniors, committees and agencies that work around them, powerful families who capture them, and elections that are delayed for years.

6.1 State control and bureaucratic dominance

- **Legal controls in State Acts.** Almost every State Panchayati Raj Act gives the State government or its officers powers to:
 - **suspend or rescind** Panchayat resolutions;
 - **inquire** into Panchayat affairs and **inspect** records;
 - **remove** sarpanches and members for misconduct, and **suspend** them pending inquiry;
 - **approve budgets** of lower tiers;
 - **withdraw** powers and **supersede or dissolve** Panchayats.

These place the State in a **position of command**, and are often used **politically** against opponents.

- **Bureaucratic dominance in practice.**
 - The **CEO of the Zilla Parishad** and the **BDO** are State officers who control files, payments and staff; the elected president often depends on them.
 - **Line departments** keep sanction powers for schemes in subjects formally devolved.
 - **Scheme guidelines** from Delhi and the State capital fix what can be built, by whom and how; Panchayats become **implementing agencies**.
 - **Digital dashboards** and target reviews make the Panchayat accountable **upward** to the block and district rather than **downward** to the Gram Sabha.
- **Political dominance. MLAs and MPs** see Panchayat leaders as rivals; State ministers prefer **MLA local area funds** and departmental schemes to untied Panchayat funds. The 2nd ARC observed that legislators sometimes act as **"executives"**, intervening in transfers, contracts and tenders.
- **Why control persists:** local government is a **State subject**; State bureaucracies and politicians lose **patronage** if they devolve; State finances are tight; and **distrust** of Panchayats' capacity and probity becomes self-fulfilling when capacity is never built.
- **2nd ARC remedy:** abolish **budget approval** by higher tiers; take away the State's power to **suspend resolutions, remove members or dissolve Panchayats**; route complaints of corruption or abuse to a **local body Ombudsman** (appointed by a committee of the Chief Minister, Speaker and Leader of Opposition) who reports through the **Lokayukta** to the **Governor**; and route election-related complaints to the **SEC**.

6.2 Parallel bodies and parastatals

- **What they are.** Bodies that perform local functions **outside** the Panchayat: registered societies, statutory boards and scheme committees with their own funds and staff.
- **Examples:**
 - **District Rural Development Agencies (DRDAs)**, societies that ran poverty programmes for decades; the Union **discontinued DRDA administration funding from 1 April 2022** and asked States to **merge** them with Zilla Parishads, as Kerala, Karnataka and West Bengal had done earlier;
 - **District Health Societies, District Water and Sanitation Missions, State water boards**;
 - village-level **user committees**: Village Water and Sanitation Committees, **School Management Committees, Joint Forest Management Committees**, watershed committees, mid-day meal and ICDS committees;
 - **MPLADS** and MLA local area schemes;
 - **DISHA** (district monitoring committees chaired by MPs).
- **Why they were created:** faster delivery, technical expertise, donor or scheme requirements, and **distrust** of Panchayats.
- **Effects: duplication**, confusion over who is responsible, funds bypassing elected bodies, user committees captured by the same local elites, and **erosion of Panchayat legitimacy**.
- **2nd ARC remedies:** parastatals must not undermine PRIs; DRDAs and district water and sanitation bodies to be **merged** with Zilla Parishads; health societies to have an **organic link** with Panchayats; community bodies to be created **from below** and be **accountable to PRIs**; **local area development schemes** (MPLADS, MLALADS) to be **abolished** and all rural development funds routed through Panchayats.

6.3 Elite capture, caste and the voice of weaker sections

- **Elite capture** is the domination of local institutions by locally powerful groups (dominant castes, landlords, contractors, party bosses), who direct benefits to themselves. **Pranab Bardhan** and **Dilip Mookherjee** ("Capture and Governance at Local and National Levels", 2000) showed that whether local or central government is more prone to capture depends on **local inequality, literacy and electoral competition**.
- **Indian evidence.**
 - The **Asoka Mehta Committee (1978)** found PRIs dominated by the **privileged**, with benefits not reaching the poor.
 - Reserved **SC and ST** sarpanches face **non-cooperation, social boycott and violence**; in some villages they are made to sit on the floor or denied flag-hoisting; dominant castes run Panchayats through **proxies**.
 - **Rotation** means a reserved Dalit sarpanch often serves once and loses office before gaining influence.
 - Beneficiary lists are manipulated; the **landless and migrants** rarely attend Gram Sabhas.
- **Evidence of real change.** Reservation has brought **lakhs of SC, ST and women** representatives into office; studies of reserved Panchayats show more spending on **public goods used by the reserved group** (Chattopadhyay and Duflo's finding that women-led Panchayats invested more in **drinking water**, 2004); and the presence of Dalit leaders has **changed social expectations** over time.
- **Assessment.** Constitutional representation is necessary but **not sufficient**: the **voice** of weaker sections depends on **land and economic power, education, literacy, mobilisation (SHGs, social movements) and protection from violence**. Measures that help: **ward and mahila sabhas**, SHG federations linked to Panchayats, **social audit**, **rotation after two terms** (2nd ARC), protection under the **SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act**, and independent grievance redress.

6.4 Women in Panchayats and proxy representation

- **Scale:** about **14.5 lakh** women representatives, about **46 per cent**, the largest number of elected women anywhere.
- **Change they bring:**
 - **Agenda shift:** drinking water, sanitation, schools, anganwadis, liquor and domestic violence get attention;
 - **Contesting patriarchy:** women heads presiding over men, signing cheques, dealing with officials, and inspiring other women to contest; in Karnataka women have won seats **beyond** those reserved;
 - **Social legitimacy:** mothers, Dalit and Adivasi women gain public voice; women's sabhas and SHG networks give them a base.
- **Why many struggle:**
 - **Proxy representation:** the "**sarpanch pati**", "**pradhan pati**" or "**mukhiya pati**" phenomenon, where husbands or male relatives exercise the office;
 - **Rotation:** one term, then the seat moves; no time to learn;
 - **Low literacy** and little prior experience; **care burdens** and restricted mobility;
 - **Hostility** of officials and male members; violence and character attacks;
 - **Intersection of caste and gender:** Dalit and Adivasi women face double exclusion.

- **Sushil Kumar Committee.** On the Supreme Court's direction, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj set up an **Advisory Committee** under former Mines Secretary **Sushil Kumar** in **September 2023**; it reported in **February 2025** (*Transforming Women's Representation and Roles in Panchayati Raj Systems and Institutions: Eliminating Efforts for Proxy Participation*). Its recommendations, accepted by the Ministry:
 - **exemplary penalties** for proven proxy leadership;
 - **public swearing-in** of women heads in the Gram Sabha;
 - **women's ombudspersons**, helplines and **whistleblower rewards**;
 - **gender-exclusive quotas** in Panchayat subject committees and **ward committees** (on the Kerala pattern);
 - **gender resource centres**, mentorship by former women leaders, federations of women representatives;
 - technology: tracking heads' participation in meetings on the **Panchayat NIRNAY** portal, AI-based legal guidance in local languages, messaging groups linking them with officials;
 - officials to deal only with the **elected woman**, not her relatives.

A **Task Force** was set up on **17 April 2025** to carry these forward.

6.5 State Election Commissions and delayed elections

- **Constitutional design.** Article 243K vests **superintendence, direction and control** of Panchayat elections in the **SEC**, appointed by the **Governor**, removable only **like a High Court judge**. But the SEC depends on the **State government** for staff, funds, **delimitation and reservation** of seats (done by the State in most States), and the **timing** of polls.
- **Judicial reinforcement:**
 - **Kishansing Tomar v. Municipal Corporation of Ahmedabad (2006):** elections must be held **before the term expires**; the SEC must approach courts if the State does not cooperate; only exceptional situations (natural calamity) can delay polls.
 - **State of Goa v. Fouziya Imtiaz Shaikh (12 March 2021):** a State government officer (the **Law Secretary**) cannot hold the post of SEC as an additional charge; the SEC must be **independent of the State government**, which the Court called a constitutional mandate.
 - **Suresh Mahajan (2022)** and the **Maharashtra orders of 2025:** polls cannot be stalled for OBC data; SECs were **censured** for failing to act.
- **Delays in practice:**
 - **Maharashtra:** local body polls stalled from **2022 to 2025–26** over OBC reservation; elected bodies were run by **administrators** for years, until the Supreme Court's deadlines forced polls (Zilla Parishads, February 2026).
 - **Karnataka:** **Zilla and Taluk Panchayat** elections **not held since 2021** because of repeated delimitation and reservation exercises; by mid-2026 the terms of more than 90 per cent of Gram Panchayats had also ended, with **administrators** in charge, and the High Court recorded completion of ward formation only in **September 2026**.
 - **Puducherry:** Panchayat elections not held after **2011** (as of 2024).

- **Why delays happen:** States control **delimitation and reservation**, which can be redone endlessly; ruling parties delay polls when unpopular; OBC litigation; and SECs headed by **retired State officers** hesitate to confront governments.
- **Reforms:** the **2nd ARC** proposed that delimitation and reservation be done by the **SEC**, that the SEC be appointed on the recommendation of a **collegium** of the Chief Minister, Speaker and Leader of Opposition, and that an institutional mechanism link the **Election Commission of India** with SECs. The **Sixteenth Finance Commission** made **duly constituted local bodies** an entry condition for grants, giving States a **fiscal** reason to hold polls on time.

6.6 Competitive politics versus planning and service delivery

- **Panchayats as political arenas.** After 1993 Panchayats became sites of **intense electoral competition**: high turnout, party involvement, expensive campaigns and contests for control of contracts and beneficiary lists. This is real democratisation, but often of **power over distribution**, not of **planning**.
- **Why they did not become agencies of planning and service delivery:**
 - the **3Fs** were not transferred (Section 5);
 - **District Planning Committees** are weak or inactive, so village plans are not consolidated;
 - **scheme silos** and tied funds leave little room for local choice;
 - weak **technical capacity** to estimate, design and supervise works;
 - **short time horizons** of elected heads (one-term rotation);
 - **upward accountability** to departments rather than to citizens.
- **Signs of change:** since **2015**, Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP) prepared annually through the **People's Plan Campaign**, direct Finance Commission grants, e-GramSwaraj accounting and the **Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans** under the VB-G RAM G Act have pushed Panchayats towards planning. Whether these plans are **chosen locally** or **filled in to central templates** is the open question (see the chapter on Decentralised Planning after the 73rd and 74th Amendments).
- **Should Panchayats go beyond development administration?** The 73rd Amendment calls them **institutions of self-government**, not development agencies. Beyond implementing schemes, they can perform **civic and regulatory** functions (birth and death registration, certificates, building permissions, rural policing, weights and measures, as the 2nd ARC suggested), **dispute resolution** (the old Nyaya Panchayat idea, now partly met by **Gram Nyayalayas** under the **Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008**), **social justice** (protecting the weak, fighting untouchability and gender violence), **natural resource governance** (PESA, forest rights) and **democratic education**. Limiting them to development administration repeats the error of the first generation.

6.7 Size and viability of Gram Panchayats

- Gram Panchayats range from a few hundred people (hill States, Uttar Pradesh) to 20,000 or more (**Kerala, West Bengal**): too small and they cannot sustain staff or revenue; too large and the Gram Sabha becomes distant.
- The **2nd ARC** asked States to make Gram Panchayats **viable** (resource potential, staff, planning suitability, terrain, communication), respecting PESA, and to create **Ward Sabhas** in large Panchayats (as in Kerala, Odisha's **Palli Sabhas** and Karnataka).

CRITICISM — PANCHAYATI RAJ HAS FAILED TO DELIVER SELF-GOVERNMENT

- **Structure without substance:** three decades after 1993, own revenue is about **1 per cent** of Panchayat receipts and **95 per cent** is grants.
- **Agents, not governments:** Panchayats implement schemes designed elsewhere; activity mapping is unenforced; departments keep sanctions and staff.
- **Captured democracy:** dominant castes, contractors and proxies run many Panchayats; reserved representatives are often figureheads.
- **Weak Gram Sabhas:** low attendance, scripted meetings, no binding power.
- **Lawless delays:** States postpone elections for years and rule through administrators.
- **Corruption decentralised:** leakage in works and beneficiary lists; weak audit.

DEFENCE — PANCHAYATI RAJ HAS DEEPEENED DEMOCRACY AND IS IMPROVING

- **Unbroken elections** in most States since 1994–95, with about 32 lakh representatives, **46 per cent women**.
- **Social revolution:** Dalit, Adivasi and women leaders in office in the most hierarchical society in the world.
- **Money is moving:** Finance Commission grants have grown from ₹4,381 crore (rural, Tenth FC) to ₹4,35,236 crore (Sixteenth FC), most of it **direct to Panchayats**.
- **Planning and transparency:** annual GDPs in over **96 per cent** of Gram Panchayats, online payments, PAI report cards, social audit.
- **Leaders show it can work:** Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Tripura.
- **Democracy needs time:** institutions take generations to mature; three decades is short against two centuries of centralisation.

07 The Gram Sabha, Social Audit and Deliberative Democracy

IN SIMPLE WORDS

The Gram Sabha is the meeting of every adult voter in the village. It is meant to be the place where people decide what the village needs, check what the Panchayat spent, and question officials face to face. In practice, many Gram Sabhas are poorly attended and run by a few powerful people, but where they work, they are the most direct form of democracy India has.

7.1 The Gram Sabha in law and practice

- **Constitutional position.** Article 243A: the Gram Sabha “**may exercise such powers and perform such functions**” as the State legislature provides. It is the only **direct-democracy** body in the Constitution.

The Gram Sabha: Promise and Practice

Direct democracy written into Article 243A, shaped by village society

What it is meant to do

- Approve plans and select beneficiaries
- Debate priorities in public
- Review accounts; run social audits
- Hold the Panchayat to account
- Give women and Dalits a voice

What gets in the way

- Low attendance; quorum on paper
- Dominance of caste and party elites
- Agenda set by schemes from above
- No power over officials or funds
- Large villages, distant meetings

Remedies: ward and women's sabhas, fixed calendars, information before meetings, binding resolutions

In simple words: the village assembly works when people come, know the facts and see their decisions carried out.

Public Administration

• Typical State provisions:

- **two to six meetings a year**, with special Gram Sabhas on **26 January, 1 May, 15 August and 2 October** in many States;
- a **quorum** (often one-tenth of voters), frequently adjourned and then met without quorum;
- powers to **approve plans, select beneficiaries, review accounts and works**, issue **utilisation certificates** (PESA areas), and conduct **social audits**;
- **ward sabhas** and **mahila sabhas** before the Gram Sabha in several States (the Ministry has advised all States to hold them).

- **Purpose:** to enlist **community participation** in planning, beneficiary selection and monitoring, to make Panchayats **accountable to voters between elections**, and to give **marginal groups** a forum.

7.2 Gandhian direct democracy or a shadow of it?

- **The gap with Gandhi.** Gandhi's village republic was **sovereign** for its vital needs; the Gram Sabha is an **adjunct** of a Panchayat that is itself an agent of the State. Its decisions are often **recommendatory**; officials can ignore them; its agenda is set by **schemes** (beneficiary lists for housing, toilets, pensions).
- **But not unconnected.** In **PESA areas**, Gram Sabhas have **approval powers** over plans, beneficiaries and certificates and a say on land and minerals; in Kerala, Gram Sabhas and development seminars shaped plans in the **People's Plan Campaign**; Gram Sabhas under **Forest Rights Act** and **Niyamgiri** took real decisions. Where powers are given, the Gandhian spirit revives.

7.3 The deliberative ideal and its impediments

- **Deliberative democracy** holds that decisions gain legitimacy when **free and equal citizens reason together in public** before deciding (**Jürgen Habermas**; **Joshua Cohen**; in development, **Archon Fung** and

Erik Olin Wright's *empowered participatory governance*, 2003, which used Kerala as a case). The Gram Sabha is India's most ambitious deliberative institution.

- **What studies find.** Paromita Sanyal and Vijayendra Rao, in *Oral Democracy*, a study of Tamil Nadu's Gram Sabhas, found that poor and low-caste villagers **do speak, argue and make claims** in Gram Sabhas, and that deliberation varies with **literacy, state support and political competition**; but other studies show many meetings are **brief, scripted and dominated** by activists and political groups.
- **Impediments:**
 - **Low and skewed attendance:** the poor lose a day's wage; women, Dalits and migrants stay away; quorum is met on paper;
 - **Elite and party domination;** fear of reprisal;
 - **Information deficit:** budgets and plans not shared in advance, accounts not read out;
 - **Agenda from above:** meetings become beneficiary-selection sessions for schemes;
 - **No binding power** over officials or funds; decisions not followed up;
 - **Size:** large Panchayats with many habitations;
 - **Weak facilitation:** secretaries treat meetings as formalities.
- **Remedies:** ward and mahila sabhas; a **fixed calendar** with notice and **information before meetings**; video recording and online minutes (**Panchayat NIRNAY**, **SabhaSaar** AI minutes in 13 languages, launched **14 August 2025**); facilitators from the People's Plan Campaign; **binding** Gram Sabha decisions on beneficiary selection and plans; follow-up action taken reports in the next meeting; the **2nd ARC's** proposal that **one-third** of those present in PESA Gram Sabhas be **women** for quorum.

7.4 Social audit

- **Meaning.** **Social audit** is the examination of a programme's records and works **by the community** that is meant to benefit, usually in a public hearing (jan sunwai), comparing **official records with ground reality**. Unlike a statutory audit by an auditor, it judges not only **legality and accounts** but also **outcomes and fairness**. Its origins lie in the **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan's** public hearings in Rajasthan in the 1990s.
- **In Panchayat governance:**
 - **MGNREGA (2005), Section 17** required the Gram Sabha to conduct regular social audits of all works; the **Audit of Schemes Rules, 2011** created **independent State social audit units**. **Andhra Pradesh's Society for Social Audit, Accountability and Transparency** became the model, recovering misused funds and disciplining staff.
 - Social audit has also been applied to housing, mid-day meals and the Fifteenth FC grants; the **2nd ARC** asked every State to adopt robust social audit norms.
- **Effect:** social audit lent a **critical edge** to rural employment by exposing fake muster rolls, ghost works and delayed wages, and it **complements** CAG audit by catching what files hide. Its weaknesses are **no penal power**, dependence on State-funded units, intimidation of auditors, and slow action on findings.

E-Governance and Technology in Panchayats

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Panchayats now keep their plans, accounts and payments online, survey village houses with drones, and let citizens see on a mobile app what their Panchayat received and spent. This makes money easier to track, but it can also make Panchayats answer more to dashboards in Delhi than to their own Gram Sabha.

- **Evolution.** The **e-Panchayat** Mission Mode Project (National e-Governance Plan, 2006) and its suite of applications were unified in **2020**.
- **Key platforms:**
 - **e-GramSwaraj** (launched **24 April 2020**): one portal for **planning, accounting, progress reporting and asset records**, integrated with the **Public Financial Management System** so that Finance Commission funds are paid online to vendors; over **2.5 lakh** Gram Panchayats upload plans and make payments through it.
 - **AuditOnline:** online audit of Panchayat accounts.
 - **SVAMITVA** (launched **24 April 2020**): **drone survey** of inhabited village land and **property cards** to owners. By **August 2026**, drone surveys were complete in about **3.30 lakh villages**, **3.24 crore property cards** prepared and about **2.72 crore** distributed; property cards supported **11,147 loans worth about ₹1,713 crore**. It also gives Panchayats a **property tax base**.
 - **Meri Panchayat** app (launched **21 August 2023**): citizens see elected members, budgets, funds received and spent, works with geo-tagged photos, beneficiary lists and audit status; they can **suggest works, rate projects** and give feedback, a mobile tool for **social audit**.
 - **Gram Manchitra** (GIS planning), **Panchayat NIRNAY** (Gram Sabha meeting records), **SabhaSaar** (AI-generated minutes), **Local Government Directory**, the **PAI portal**.
- **Benefits:** **efficiency** (fewer cash transactions, faster payments), **transparency** (anyone can see funds and works), **accountability** (audit trails), standard **data** for SFCs and Finance Commissions, and spread of a **digital culture** among representatives and staff.
- **Limits:**
 - **Digital divide:** connectivity, devices and skills are weak in remote and tribal areas; secretaries and data operators, not elected heads, control the systems;
 - **upward accountability:** portals report to the Ministry and States, and planning risks becoming **data entry for compliance**;
 - **centralisation by software:** what can be planned or paid is limited by what the system allows;
 - **data quality:** uploads made to meet deadlines, not to reflect reality.
- **Assessment.** ICT has improved **financial discipline and visibility**; it enhances **democratic accountability** only when its information reaches the **Gram Sabha** in usable form and citizens can act on it.

09 Best Practices: Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Others

IN SIMPLE WORDS

A few States show that Panchayats can govern when they are given money, staff and freedom. Kerala gave them a large share of its plan budget, Karnataka gave them the most powers on paper and in practice, and Maharashtra built strong district councils decades ago. Each also has weaknesses.

9.1 Kerala

- **Law and transfer:** the **Kerala Panchayat Raj Act, 1994**; in 1995 institutions such as **schools, primary health centres, Krishi Bhavans and anganwadis**, with their staff, were transferred to local governments.
- **People's Plan Campaign (1996):** about **35–40 per cent** of the State's Ninth Plan outlay given to local governments as **untied funds**, spent through plans made in **Grama Sabhas**, development seminars and task forces; a large volunteer and resource-person mobilisation; the **Sen Committee** recommended the institutional changes. The **Kerala Institute of Local Administration** became the training hub.
- **Kudumbashree (1998):** the State poverty eradication mission linking **women's neighbourhood groups** to local governments.
- **Results:** Kerala ranks second on the **Devolution Index 2024** and first on its **framework** dimension; its Gram Panchayats did very well in PAI 2.0.
- **Limits:** party domination of local bodies, plan quality and **capital works** bias, and fiscal stress of the State limiting devolution in recent years.

9.2 Karnataka

- **Pioneer:** the **1983 Act** (in force 1987) under minister **Abdul Nazir Sab** created directly elected Zilla Parishads and Mandal Panchayats on the Asoka Mehta pattern.
- **Today:** the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993 was amended in **2015** on the report of a committee under former Speaker **K.R. Ramesh Kumar** and renamed the **Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj Act**. The amendments added **habitation sabhas** and **ward sabhas** below the Gram Sabha, a preamble and "directive principles of Panchayat policy", **activity mapping**, at least **20 per cent of SFC devolution as untied funds**, five-year terms for Panchayat heads, rotation of reservation over **ten years**, **compulsory voting**, declaration of assets by members, a **Panchayat administrative service** and a grievance redressal authority; the **Panchatantra** software tracks Panchayat finances.
- **Results:** **first** on the **Devolution Index 2024** (72.23), and first on **finances** and **accountability** (social audit and Gram Sabhas).
- **Paradox:** the same State has **not held Zilla and Taluk Panchayat elections since 2021**, showing that even leading States can let the framework lapse.

9.3 Maharashtra

- **Strong districts since 1961:** the **Maharashtra Zilla Parishads and Panchayat Samitis Act, 1961** (based on the **V.P. Naik Committee**) made the **Zilla Parishad** the key tier, with an **IAS Chief Executive Officer**,

subject committees, and the **Collector kept outside**. It anticipated the Asoka Mehta idea of the district as the first point of decentralisation.

- **Village models:** **Hiware Bazar** (Ahmednagar), where the Gram Sabha under sarpanch **Popatrao Pawar** decided on water budgeting, a ban on borewells for irrigation, grazing rules and afforestation, turning a drought-prone village prosperous; **Ralegan Siddhi**, the watershed village associated with **Anna Hazare**; the State's **Adarsh Gaon** scheme spread such models.
- **Results:** fourth on the **Devolution Index 2024**; but local polls were stalled for over three years (2022–2026) by OBC litigation.

9.4 Others and the lessons

- **West Bengal** (party-based Panchayats since **1978**, tied to land reform), **Tamil Nadu** (first on **functions** in the Devolution Index) and **Tripura** (best in **PAI 2.0**) are other leaders.
- **Lessons:** devolution works where there is **political commitment**, **untied money by formula**, **transferred staff**, **active Gram Sabhas** and **civil society** support; without these the same constitutional framework yields **form without function**.

INDIAN CONNECT — KERALA'S MODEL IN ONE LINE

Kerala's success came less from its Act than from three decisions: a **fixed share of the State plan** given to local governments as **untied funds**, **institutions and staff transferred** with the functions, and a **mass campaign** to make Grama Sabhas plan. The same three levers (formula money, staff, participation) are what the 2nd ARC and later Finance Commissions have tried to make national.

10

The 2nd ARC's Sixth Report and the Reform Agenda

IN SIMPLE WORDS

In 2007 a national reform commission studied local government and said the Constitution had created the bodies but not the power. Its answer was to give each level only the jobs it can do best, give Panchayats their own staff and taxes, stop States from dismissing them at will, and set up independent watchdogs for corruption and elections.

10.1 The report

- The **Second Administrative Reforms Commission** (chair **M. Veerappa Moily**) submitted its **Sixth Report**, *Local Governance: An Inspiring Journey into the Future*, in **October 2007**. Its core principles were **democratic decentralisation** as the centre-piece of governance reform, **subsidiarity**, **clear delineation of functions**, **devolution in real terms**, **convergence** and **citizen centricity**.
- **Diagnosis:** compliance with even the **mandatory** provisions took years in some States; elections were postponed on pretexts; only the **bare minimum** of the Constitution was implemented; Panchayats were left

“at the mercy of State legislatures and State executives”; strong **vested interests** after decades of centralisation resisted devolution.

10.2 Main recommendations for rural local government

AREA	RECOMMENDATION
Subsidiarity	Amend Article 243G so that the State “ shall ” vest Panchayats with powers over all functions that can be performed at the local level , including Eleventh Schedule matters
Structure	Leave the number of tiers to States (amend Article 243B); a District Council with rural and urban representation; MPs and MLAs not to be members of local bodies; retain reservation under 243D
Elections	SEC to do delimitation and reservation; SEC appointed by the Governor on a collegium’s recommendation (Chief Minister, Speaker, Leader of Opposition); rotation of reserved seats after two terms
Activity mapping	Comprehensive mapping of all Eleventh Schedule matters by a task force within one year ; Union to do the same for CSS; a “ local government memorandum ” with every new law
Regulatory functions	Devolve rural policing, building byelaws, certificates, weights and measures to Panchayats
Personnel	Panchayats to recruit and control their staff within three years; zero-based staffing review
State control	Abolish budget approval by higher tiers; no State power to suspend resolutions, remove members or dissolve Panchayats; such complaints to a local body Ombudsman reporting through the Lokayukta to the Governor
Parastatals	DRDAs and water and sanitation bodies to merge with Zilla Parishads; no new committees outside PRIs; community bodies accountable to PRIs
Finance	Widen the tax domain and make levy obligatory; share of mineral royalty ; untied allocations except major CSS; a separate Panchayat sector in the State budget; timely releases in instalments; borrowing for infrastructure; abolish MPLADS and MLALADS
SFCs	Constitute on time (“at such earlier time” in 243-I); prescribe members’ qualifications; normative devolution with backwardness indices; action taken report within six months
Audit and accountability	District audit committees ; a legislature committee on local bodies; independent Local Fund Audit head from a CAG-vetted panel; social audit norms
Gram Sabha	Ward Sabhas in large Gram Panchayats; viable Panchayat size; Gram/Ward Sabha as the key body for planning, monitoring and audit of CSS

AREA	RECOMMENDATION
PESA	Bring Union and State laws into conformity; Union directions under the Fifth Schedule if States resist; Governors' annual reports in the public domain; one-third women in PESA Gram Sabha quorum

- **Response.** The Union accepted most recommendations in principle and **forwarded them to States**; the **constitutional amendments** (243G, 243B) and abolition of MPLADS were **not accepted**. Implementation has been **piecemeal**: DRDA merger (2022), Finance Commission conditions on accounts and SFCs, activity mapping in some States, social audit units, an Ombudsman for local bodies in Kerala and a few other States.

10.3 The way forward

- **Constitutional:** make devolution **obligatory** ("shall") in Article 243G; SEC control of **delimitation and reservation**; protection from **State control powers**.
- **3Fs:** notified **statutory activity mapping**; a Panchayat **tax domain** (property tax on SVAMITVA data, user charges, royalty shares) with formula-based **untied** SFC transfers; a **Panchayat cadre** answerable to Panchayats.
- **Accountability and inclusion:** a **local body Ombudsman**; empowered Gram, ward and mahila sabhas; social audit with follow-up; an end to proxy leadership and longer rotation cycles.
- **Integration:** fold **parallel bodies** into Panchayats; one **village plan** integrating GPDP and VGPP; working DPCs; aligned **PESA** subject laws.

Theory lens: Panchayati Raj through Paper I ideas

- **Decentralisation theory (Rondinelli).** Dennis Rondinelli (1983) distinguished deconcentration, delegation, devolution and privatisation. Part IX is constitutionally **devolution**, but with staff, money and sanctions left with departments, practice is often **deconcentration in democratic dress**, Fesler's **illusory decentralisation**. See the chapter on Structure and Forms of Public Organisations.
- **Subsidiarity.** The principle that higher authorities should do only what lower ones cannot (**Quadragesimo Anno**, 1931; the **Maastricht Treaty**, 1992) is the organising idea of the **2nd ARC's Sixth Report** and of **activity mapping**. Indian practice often **inverts** it: national schemes decide even village-level choices. See the chapter on Administrative Reforms since Independence.
- **Participatory and deliberative democracy.** Carole Pateman (*Participation and Democratic Theory*, 1970) argued that participation in local institutions educates citizens for democracy; **Sherry Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation** (1969) separates real citizen power from **tokenism** and **manipulation**; **Jürgen Habermas** grounds legitimacy in public reasoning. The Gram Sabha sits on the lower rungs when it only ratifies scheme lists, and climbs towards **delegated power** in PESA areas and Kerala. See the chapter on Citizen and Administration: Media, Interest Groups, Voluntary Organisations and Civil Society.
- **New Public Service.** Robert and Janet Denhardt (*The New Public Service*, 2000; book 2003) argued that government should **serve citizens, not steer them**, and value **citizenship and public interest** over customer satisfaction. Gram Sabhas, social audit and participatory plans embody this; dashboard-driven, target-ranked Panchayat management reflects the earlier **NPM** logic. See the chapter on New Public Management and After: New Public Service, New Public Governance and Digital-Era Governance.

- **Fiscal federalism (Oates).** **Wallace Oates** (*Fiscal Federalism*, 1972) assigns each service to the lowest level that covers its beneficiaries and justifies **intergovernmental grants** for spillovers and equalisation. Panchayats' **vertical fiscal imbalance**, the **soft budget constraint** and Finance Commission **conditional grants** are questions of fiscal federalism at the third tier. See the chapter on Monetary and Fiscal Policies, Public Borrowing and Public Debt.
- **Riggs' formalism.** **Fred Riggs** (*Administration in Developing Countries*, 1964) described **formalism**: the gap between formal rules and actual behaviour in prismatic societies. "Institutions of self-government" that cannot hire a clerk, Gram Sabhas with quorum met on paper, and women sarpanches whose husbands sign files are classic **prismatic formalism**, as are **overlapping** formal and traditional (caste, kin) authority in villages. See the chapter on Riggsian Models and their Critique.
- **Social capital (Putnam).** **Robert Putnam** (*Making Democracy Work*, 1993) found that Italian regional governments performed better where **civic traditions and associational networks** were dense. Kerala's literacy movements, SHGs and libraries help explain its Panchayats' success; **bonding** (caste) rather than **bridging** social capital can fuel capture instead.
- **Elite capture.** **Pranab Bardhan** and **Dilip Mookherjee** (2000) showed that local governments are more prone to capture where **inequality is high, literacy low and political competition weak**. This explains the Asoka Mehta Committee's findings, Ambedkar's fears, and why reservation, social audit and Gram Sabha empowerment are **preconditions**, not afterthoughts, of devolution. See the chapter on Development Administration: Concept, Changing Profile and the Anti-Development Thesis.

11

Recent Issues in Panchayati Raj (2024–2026)

IN SIMPLE WORDS

In the last two years, a new rural jobs law made village plans the basis of rural works, courts forced long-delayed Panchayat elections, Jharkhand finally made PESA rules, a committee proposed penalties for husbands who run Panchayats in their wives' names, and the Sixteenth Finance Commission gave Panchayats more money with stricter conditions.

- **VB-G RAM G Act and Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans.** The **Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025**, enacted in **December 2025**, replaced MGNREGA and has been implemented from **1 July 2026**, guaranteeing **125 days** of wage employment per rural household, with **60:40** Centre–State sharing (90:10 for the North-East, Himalayan States and J&K). Under **Section 16**, every Gram Panchayat prepares a **Viksit Gram Panchayat Plan (VGPP)** through a participatory process in which the **Gram Sabha identifies and prioritises works**; plans are consolidated at block and district levels and spatially linked to **PM Gati Shakti**. For Panchayats this means:
 - **Gain:** a statutory, Gram Sabha-based plan for the largest rural works programme; works chosen locally;
 - **Concern:** a fixed menu of permissible works, national themes and **normative allocations** from above may make the VGPP a **template filled locally**; the shift from a demand-driven guarantee to a budget-bound scheme, a higher State share, and **technology-led planning** (Yuktdhara GIS) may move influence from the Gram Sabha to technical staff. Whether India ends up with **one village plan or two**

(GPDP and VGPP) will decide the effect on Panchayat autonomy. The programme itself is covered in the chapter on Rural Development: Institutions, Agencies, Programmes and Strategies since Independence.

- **Other recent issues** (detailed in the sections above): court-forced Panchayat polls in **Maharashtra** (February 2026) and pending ones in **Karnataka** (Section 6.5); **OBC reservation** and the 50 per cent ceiling, which the Supreme Court indicated in November 2025 may go to a larger bench (Section 3.4); **Jharkhand's PESA rules** (Section 4.3); the **Sushil Kumar Committee** on proxy representation (Section 6.4); the **Sixteenth Finance Commission's** conditional grants (Section 5.3); and the **Devolution Index 2024** and **PAI 2.0** (Section 5.6).

12 Key Terms

The terms below recur across Panchayati Raj debates.

TERM	MEANING IN SIMPLE WORDS
Democratic decentralisation	Transfer of power and resources to elected local bodies accountable to local voters
Devolution	Transfer of authority to legally separate, elected local governments
Subsidiarity	A task should be done at the lowest level that can do it well
Gram swaraj	Gandhi's idea of the self-reliant, self-governing village republic
Gram Sabha	Body of all registered voters of a village (Article 243A)
Eleventh Schedule	List of 29 matters that may be devolved to Panchayats
3Fs	Functions, funds and functionaries that make devolution real
Activity mapping	Breaking each subject into activities and assigning each to a tier
State Finance Commission	Body set up every five years to recommend State–Panchayat fiscal transfers (243-I)
State Election Commission	Independent body that conducts Panchayat elections (243K)
Own source revenue	Taxes, fees and charges a Panchayat raises itself
Tied and untied grants	Grants that must be spent on fixed purposes / that the Panchayat may spend as it chooses
Soft budget constraint	Weak fiscal discipline when a body expects to be bailed out by higher governments

TERM	MEANING IN SIMPLE WORDS
Parallel bodies	Societies, boards or committees that do local functions outside Panchayats
Elite capture	Domination of local institutions by locally powerful groups
Proxy representation	Male relatives exercising the office of women representatives ("sarpanch pati")
Triple test	Commission, local-body-wise proportion and 50 per cent ceiling for OBC quotas
Social audit	Public examination of a programme's records and works by the community
PESA	1996 law extending Panchayats to Fifth Schedule areas with Gram Sabha powers
GPDP / VGPP	Gram Panchayat Development Plan / Viksit Gram Panchayat Plan under VB-G RAM G
Devolution Index	Ranking of States on how much power they give Panchayats
Panchayat Advancement Index	Report card of each Gram Panchayat on nine Localised SDG themes

13

Commissions, Committees and Judgments

The table lists, in order, the bodies, laws and judgments that shaped Panchayati Raj.

BODY / CASE	YEAR	KEY POINT
Balwantray Mehta Study Team (Balwantray G. Mehta)	1957	Democratic decentralisation; three tiers; Samiti executive, Zila Parishad advisory under Collector
Maharashtra ZP and PS Act (V.P. Naik Committee)	1961	Strong Zilla Parishad with own CEO; Collector outside
Asoka Mehta Committee (Asoka Mehta)	1978	Two tiers; district first point of decentralisation; party participation; constitutional status
CAARD (G.V.K. Rao)	1985	"Grass without roots"; Zila Parishad principal; District Development Commissioner
L.M. Singhvi Committee	1986	Constitutional recognition; Gram Sabha; Nyaya Panchayats; viable GPs

BODY / CASE	YEAR	KEY POINT
P.K. Thungon Committee	1988	Constitutional status; Zila Parishad pivot; Collector as CEO; SFC
V.N. Gadgil Committee	1988	Three tiers, direct elections, reservation, SEC and SFC
64th Amendment Bill	1989	Passed by Lok Sabha; defeated in Rajya Sabha
73rd Constitutional Amendment Act	1992 (in force 24 April 1993)	Part IX, Arts. 243–243-O, Eleventh Schedule, Art. 280(3) (bb)
Bhuria Committee (Dilip Singh Bhuria)	1994–95	Gram Sabha-centred self-rule for Scheduled Areas
PESA Act	1996	Gram Sabha powers over land, MFP, minerals, intoxicants, markets in Fifth Schedule areas
Samatha v. State of Andhra Pradesh	1997	Transfer of Scheduled Area land to private miners void
Javed v. State of Haryana	2003	Two-child norm for Panchayat candidates upheld
Kishansing Tomar v. Municipal Corporation of Ahmedabad	2006	Local elections before expiry of term; SEC's duty
2nd ARC, 6th Report, Local Governance (M. Veerappa Moily)	2007	Subsidiarity; activity mapping; local body Ombudsman; SEC collegium; parastatals under PRIs
K. Krishna Murthy v. Union of India	2010	Arts. 243D(6), 243T(6) and chairperson reservation upheld; political backwardness needs inquiry; 50% ceiling
Union of India v. Rakesh Kumar	2010	PESA's ST reservation of chairpersons and over half the seats upheld
Orissa Mining Corporation v. MoEF (Niyamgiri)	2013	Gram Sabhas to decide on mining affecting their rights
Fourteenth Finance Commission (Y.V. Reddy)	2015	₹2,00,292 crore direct to Gram Panchayats; basis of GPDP
Rajbala v. State of Haryana	2015	Educational and other qualifications for Panchayat candidates upheld
Vikas Kishanrao Gawali v. State of Maharashtra	2021	Triple test for OBC reservation in local bodies

BODY / CASE	YEAR	KEY POINT
State of Goa v. Fouziya Imtiaz Shaikh	2021	SEC must be independent of the State government
Fifteenth Finance Commission (N.K. Singh)	2021–26	₹2,36,805 crore to rural local bodies; 60:40 tied–untied
Suresh Mahajan v. State of Madhya Pradesh	2022	Local polls cannot be postponed for OBC data
Devolution Index 2024 (MoPR–IIPA)	2025	Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu top; national average 43.89
Advisory Committee on proxy participation (Sushil Kumar)	2025	Exemplary penalties; women ombudspersons; public oath
VB–G RAM G Act	2025 (in force 1 July 2026)	Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans through the Gram Sabha (s.16)
Sixteenth Finance Commission (Arvind Panagariya)	2026	₹7,91,493 crore to local bodies; entry conditions on elections, accounts, SFCs

14

Contemporary Developments

- **11 September 2026:** the **Karnataka High Court** recorded that ward formation and seat reservation had been completed for all **5,864 Gram Panchayats**, leaving it to the SEC to hold polls; Zilla and Taluk Panchayat elections had been pending since 2021, with administrators running most Panchayats.
- **April–May 2026:** **Panchayat Advancement Index 2.0** (2023–24) covered **2,59,867** Gram Panchayats on 112 indicators; none reached the Achiever grade, **3,635** were Front Runners, and Tripura led.
- **March 2026:** the Union informed Parliament that **nine of ten** PESA States had framed rules, with **Odisha** still at the draft stage, and that the Ministry had developed **10 PESA indicators**; the parliamentary Standing Committee recommended continuing RGSA with an outcome-based framework (proposed outlay **₹7,860.83 crore**).
- **7–9 February 2026:** **Zilla Parishad and Panchayat Samiti** polls were held in 12 districts of **Maharashtra** (731 ZP and 1,462 PS seats), after four years of delay over OBC reservation.
- **2 January 2026:** **Jharkhand** notified its **PESA rules**, requiring prior Gram Sabha consent for land acquisition and recognising traditional village heads, 29 years after the Act.
- **1 February 2026:** the **Sixteenth Finance Commission** report recommended **₹4,35,236 crore** for rural local bodies in 2026–31, conditional on elected bodies, audited accounts online and regular SFCs.
- **December 2025:** Parliament enacted the **VB–G RAM G Act, 2025** (in force from 1 July 2026), making **Gram Sabha-approved Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans** the basis for rural works.

- **February 2025:** the **Devolution Index 2024** ranked Karnataka (72.23), Kerala (70.59) and Tamil Nadu (68.38) highest; the **Sushil Kumar Committee** report on ending proxy representation of women heads was submitted and accepted.

15 Revision Grid

THINKER / BODY	WORK OR REPORT (YEAR)	KEY IDEA
M.K. Gandhi	<i>Harijan</i> (1942) and other writings	Village swaraj; oceanic circle; power from below
B.R. Ambedkar	Constituent Assembly speech (1948)	Village as "sink of localism"; individual as unit
Balwantray Mehta	Study Team (1957)	Democratic decentralisation; three tiers
Asoka Mehta	Committee on PRIs (1978)	Two tiers; district first; parties; constitutional status
G.V.K. Rao	CAARD (1985)	Grass without roots; Zila Parishad principal
L.M. Singhvi	Committee (1986)	Constitutional recognition; Gram Sabha as direct democracy
2nd ARC (M. Veerappa Moily)	Local Governance (2007)	Subsidiarity; activity mapping; Ombudsman; SEC collegium
Dennis Rondinelli	<i>Decentralization in Developing Countries</i> (1983)	Deconcentration, delegation, devolution, privatisation
James Fesler	"Approaches to the Understanding of Decentralization" (1965)	Illusory decentralisation
Wallace Oates	<i>Fiscal Federalism</i> (1972)	Decentralisation theorem; intergovernmental grants
János Kornai	Soft budget constraint (1979–86)	Expected bailouts weaken fiscal discipline
Carole Pateman	<i>Participation and Democratic Theory</i> (1970)	Participation educates citizens
Sherry Arnstein	"A Ladder of Citizen Participation" (1969)	Tokenism versus citizen power

THINKER / BODY	WORK OR REPORT (YEAR)	KEY IDEA
Robert Putnam	<i>Making Democracy Work</i> (1993)	Social capital explains institutional performance
Bardhan and Mookherjee	"Capture and Governance" (2000)	Elite capture depends on inequality and competition
Chattopadhyay and Duflo	"Women as Policy Makers" (2004)	Women leaders shift public investment
Denhardt and Denhardt	<i>The New Public Service</i> (2000)	Serve citizens, not steer
Fred Riggs	<i>Administration in Developing Countries</i> (1964)	Formalism and overlapping



Previous Year Questions 48 QUESTIONS



2026

Women in panchayats challenge the established **patriarchal norms** and contest **structural inequalities** in society. **Explain.** 10 MARKS

2025

Gram Sabha aims to enlist **community participation**. **Explain.** 10 MARKS

2025

Many **elected women representatives** in local governments in India, especially from **marginalized backgrounds**, often struggle to **govern effectively**. **Examine.** 20 MARKS

2024

The journey of **transformation of local governance** has been long. **Examine** the challenges to realise the **spirit of gram swaraj**. 20 MARKS

2024

"The role of **State Finance Commission** in **distribution of finances** between state and local governments is vital." **Discuss.** 20 MARKS

2023

Post-amendment period Panchayats have become a platform of **competitive politics**, but could not emerge as an **agency of planning and service delivery**. **Examine.** 20 MARKS

2023

Is it true that the **Finance Commission** has been lending **Financial strength to the local bodies** in India? **Argue in favour** of your response. 10 MARKS

- 2022 The main objective of **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996** is to enable tribal society to assume control over their **livelihoods and traditional rights**. **Critically examine the implementation** of the Act. 20 MARKS
- 2021 No **rural development strategy** can succeed unless it is complemented by appropriate **Panchayati Raj Institutions**. **Examine** the statement. 10 MARKS
- 2021 **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts** aimed at making the third tier of government more powerful and effective for **democratic decentralization**. **Critically examine** the extent to which this goal has been transformed into reality. 20 MARKS
- 2020 Panchayati Raj Institutions are still plagued by **State control** and **domination of bureaucracy**. **Argue your case**. 10 MARKS
- 2020 Despite the constitutional provisions for representation, the **voice of weaker sections** is not having the desired impact in the realms of **Panchayati Raj Institutions**. **Critically examine**. 20 MARKS
- 2019 The evidences suggest that the dream of **deliberative democracy** could not be realized in practice at the grassroot level. **Evaluate** the **impediments in the functioning of Gram Sabha**. 10 MARKS
- 2019 Efforts to strengthen **State Finance Commissions** have faced **apathy of State Governments** over the years, which has also affected the successive Central Finance Commissions in recommending appropriate **fiscal transfers to local bodies**. **Substantiate** the answer with examples. 20 MARKS
- 2019 **Performance grants** devolved by Finance Commission of India have increased the **financial accountability** of the local bodies. **Elaborate**. 10 MARKS
- 2017 "The institution of **Gram Sabha** has very little connection with the **Gandhian spirit of direct democracy**." **Critically examine**. 10 MARKS
- 2017 "Effectiveness of **local self-government institutions** is hampered due to the lack of **capacity building of the elected representatives**." **Elaborate** 10 MARKS
- 2017 "The **Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)** makes a strong case for the **principle of subsidiarity**." **Elaborate**. 10 MARKS
- 2016 "The objectives of **fiscal devolution** to local bodies as mandated by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts has been derailed by the actual working of the **State Finance Commissions**." **Comment**. 20 MARKS

2016

"The goals of **good governance** will remain utopian if **local governments**, responsible for providing all basic services directly to the citizens, are not empowered as mandated by the **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts**." **Critically evaluate** the status of **empowerment of the local bodies**. **20 MARKS**

2015

Do you think that the functioning of **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)**, in practice, reflects **genuine devolution of powers and resources**? **Give reasons** for your answer.

2015

"**Decentralised governance** must serve as an instrument of realising **social change and social justice**." **Comment** on the statement.

2014

Do you think that the role of **Panchayati Raj** should go **beyond development Administration**? **Give reasons** for your answer.

2014

The **13 th Finance Commission** highlighted an indispensable need to improve the **finances of rural and urban level bodies**. Does this make local bodies **more accountable** in the discharge of their functions?

2013

"The **second generation reforms** in the Panchayati Raj institutions have changed Panchayats from an **agency of development** at local level into a **political institution**." **Discuss**.

2013

"Use of **Information and Communication Technology (ICT)** in Panchayat's functions enhances **efficiency, transparency and accountability** and also induces mass ICT culture." **Examine**.

2013

"The **73 rd Amendment**, it is felt, may accentuate **fiscal indiscipline** by establishing between States and Local Governments a **system of transfers** similar to the one in place between the Central and State Government." (World Bank) **Comment**.

2012

'Panchayati Raj Institutions are still affected by **State control** and **domination by bureaucracy**.' **Do you agree?**

2012

Local self-government in India is the interplay of several factors-**historical, ideological, and administrative**. **Critically examine** these factors.

2008

'**Economic Development and Social Justice** are the hallmarks of the **1992 Constitutional Amendment Acts**.' **Elucidate**.

2007

"**73 rd Constitutional Amendment** has provided **permanent structural framework** to PRI's resulting into **silent social revolution**." **Comment**.

2006

"The **73 rd and 74 th Constitutional Amendments** are **major landmarks** in India's Constitutional History and Local Governance." **Comment.**

2005

"Even after a decade of having adopted the **73 rd Amendment** to the Constitution, the Panchayat Raj institution still faces a number of problems towards making it a **strong and vibrant unit of Government.**" **Comment.**

2002

The role of **local self-government** in the state administration is of considerable importance. **Evaluate** the statement in the context of the **73 rd and 74 th amendments** made.

1998

"The **State Finance Commission** under Panchayat Raj Law is designed to ensure **regional balance** in the distribution of State and Central Funds." **Comment.**

1997

"The most momentous recommendation of the **Ashoka Mehta Committee** was the creation of a **two-tier system** of panchayati Raj." **Examine** the statement.

1996

"The **Panchayati Raj institutions** at grass-roots level are ensuring **greater peoples participation** and involvement in development work." **Comment.**

1996

Examine the provisions of the **73 rd and 74 th Constitutional Amendments** from the point of view of the **autonomy of the local bodies.**

1995

"The most important feature of the **second generation panchayats** is their change from **local developmental organization** to **local political institutions.**" **Comment.**

1994

"**Autonomy of local bodies** is conditioned by **state-local relations** and the **managerial capability** of the local bodies themselves." **Comment.**

1993

Discuss some of the **State models of Panchayati Raj** in the Uniform Constitutional frame of **73 rd Amendment** with special reference to Panchayati Polls, grassroot justice, local finances and centrally sponsored development programmes.

1992

Examine some of the **Challenges to Development Administration** in the **Panchayati democracy** of rural India. Do you think that the Constitutionalisation of **three-tier Federalism** will be a viable model for future?

1991

'The **political will** at higher levels seems hesitating to go wholehog for **democratising the entire field administration.** So long as this trend would persist, we would be having successive Committee Reports pinpointing same ailments of Panchayati Raj and prescriptions to restore its health,' **Elucidate** the **achievements and failures** of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in the context of this statement.

1990

The real problem with Panchayati Raj institutions is to promote **efficiency in the implementation** of the rural development programmes and to ensure **social and economic justice** to the poor in the country side.' **Examine** the past experience of working of Panchayati Raj and Suggest specific constitutional measures to enforce **genuine decentralisation** in the light of the above statement.

1988

"It is unrealistic to attempt to eliminate **political parties** from **Panchayati Polls**.... The issue is how to get these parties to provide **good government at the local level**?" **Comment.**

1987

'The **Panchayati Raj bodies** do provide an appropriate forum for effecting **welfare of Weaker Sections**, including the members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes through decision-making and programme implementation processes at local level.' **Comment.**

1993

"**Decentralization** is never just a **technical exercise**, with intentions and effects neatly confined to questions of **economy and efficiency**." **Comment.** PAPER I

1992

'**Decentralization** has a **more important justification** than more **administrative efficiency**.' **Comment.** PAPER I

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