

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q7(a)

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

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · PSIR GS 1 · 20 marks · Salient Features of the Indian Constitution

Salient Features of the Indian Constitution: The Preamble, Fundamental Rights and Duties, Directive Principles; Parliamentary System and Amendment Procedures; Judicial Review and Basic Structure doctrine.

Core demand of the question

- Examine the unique features of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. Do you think this Amendment would contribute in achieving the goal of empowerment of marginalised sections of the society? (20 marks)

Revision summary

The 73rd Amendment constitutionalised panchayats, gram sabhas, five-year elections, and State Election and **Finance Commissions**.

Reservations for SC, ST, and women are the distinctive social mechanism.

Eleventh Schedule lists developmental subjects including agriculture and poverty work.

Seats have opened; sarpanch-pati, thin devolution, and caste violence still hollow many offices.

The Amendment contributes to empowerment as a necessary institutional floor, not as a completed social revolution.

Introduction

The **73rd Constitutional Amendment** (1992) gave panchayats a constitutional third tier. Its unique features are a uniform basic design, a gram sabha, reserved seats, and State Election and **Finance Commissions**. Empowerment of the marginalised is the intent. Capture, patriarchy, and thin devolution still decide how far the intent travels.

Body

Unique features

- Part IX and the **Eleventh Schedule** constitutionalise village, intermediate, and district panchayats, ending the habit of suspending local bodies by ordinary whim.
- The **gram sabha** is named in **Article 243A** as the assembly of voters, a direct-democratic piece inside representative local government.
- Direct elections, five-year terms, and a **State Election Commission** (**Article 243K**) copy Union and State electoral regularity at the local scale.
- Reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to population, and not less than one-third of seats (now 50 per cent in many states) for women, including offices of

chairpersons, are the sharpest unique social device.

- A **State Finance Commission (Article 243I)** is to recommend devolution of taxes and grants, linking **Gandhi's** village claim to a fiscal procedure.
- **Article 243N** saves existing laws only for a time; states must fit the new scheme. **Eleventh Schedule** lists 29 subjects, including agriculture and poverty alleviation, which the question of Gram Swaraj also raises.

Contrast with earlier panchayats

- **Balwantrai Mehta** and **Ashok Mehta** recommended democratic decentralisation. Those remained state statutes, easy to supersede.
- The 73rd Amendment makes non-holding of elections a constitutional default that is harder to justify.
- It is unique in the world as a large-federation mandate of gender reservation in local office, not only in candidate lists.

Empowerment of the marginalised

- SC, ST, and women members entered offices that caste and gender had closed. That is a real shift in who sits on the dais.
- **Ambedkar** was sceptical of the village as a den of localism. The Amendment tries to use the village while binding it with reservations, which is an Ambedkarite correction inside a Gandhian unit.
- Self-help groups, women's quorums, and some documented rise in local public goods show partial social empowerment.
- Sarpanch-pati, proxy SC sarpanches, violence against Dalit women presidents, and un-transferred funds show the gap between seat and power.
- **Michels's oligarchy travels to the panchayat: dominant castes and parties still organise the Gram Sabha agenda, a Lukes third face of power.**

Would it contribute? A balanced answer

- **Yes, as a necessary condition:** without reserved office and regular elections, marginalised groups remain petitioners of the block office.
- **No, as a sufficient condition:** empowerment needs functions, funds, functionaries, land rights, and protection from violence.
- **Forest Rights Act** gram sabhas and PESA in **Fifth Schedule** areas deepen ST voice where implemented, which the 73rd design enables but does not guarantee.
- **Rawls's** fair value of political liberties is the right test: a reserved seat without campaign resources is not yet equal citizenship.
- So the Amendment contributes. It does not complete the goal.

Flow diagram

73rd Amendment -> Gram Sabha
 73rd Amendment -> SC ST women reservation
 73rd Amendment -> State Election Commission
 SC ST women reservation -> Possible empowerment
 Elite capture -> Limits Possible empowerment

Conclusion

The 73rd Amendment's unique features are constitutional status, gram sabha, independent local elections, fiscal commission, and reservations for SC, ST, and women. Those features contribute to empowerment by opening office. They do not by themselves end local oligarchy. **Gandhi's** unit plus **Ambedkar's** safeguards is the design; practice is still a contest.

Facts & figures

Part IX and Eleventh Schedule

Constitutional panchayats and twenty-nine devolved subject-heads, including agriculture and khadi.

Article 243D

Reservations for SC and ST, and not less than one-third for women, including chairperson offices.

PESA, 1996

Extends panchayat principles to Scheduled Areas with stronger gram sabha roles where states legislate.

Balwantrai Mehta, 1957

First national template of democratic decentralisation, later given constitutional teeth in 1992.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/psir-gs-1/2022/examine-the-unique-features-of-the-73rd-constitutional-amendment-do-you-think-this-amendment-would-contribute-in-achieving-the-goal-of-empowerment-of-marginalised-sections-of-the-society/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com