STUDY NOTES · BASIC CONCEPT

Role of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in Strengthening Democratic Governance in India

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Role of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in Strengthening Democratic Governance in India

- The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, 1992 marked a major shift towards democratic decentralisation in India by granting constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). These reforms aimed to deepen democracy by bringing governance closer to the people.

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How the Amendments Strengthened Democratic Governance

1. Constitutional Recognition and Stability

- Local governments were incorporated into the Constitution under Part IX and Part IX-A.
- This ensured their legal continuity and protection from arbitrary dissolution.

2. Grassroots Participation

- The Gram Sabha was institutionalised as the foundation of rural democracy.
- Citizens gained direct participation in planning and decision-making, strengthening participatory democracy.

3. Social Inclusion

- Mandatory reservation for SCs, STs, and women (at least one-third) enhanced political inclusion.
- Marginalised groups gained representation in local governance.

4. Regular and Independent Elections

- Establishment of State Election Commissions ensured free, fair, and timely elections.
- This enhanced the democratic legitimacy of local bodies.

5. Fiscal Decentralisation

- Creation of State Finance Commissions enabled structured financial devolution.

- Local governments gained access to resources for development activities.

6. Improved Service Delivery

- Devolution of functions under the 11th and 12th Schedules allowed local solutions to local problems.
- Governance became more responsive and accountable.

Key Challenges Faced by Local Governments

1. Incomplete Devolution- The 3Fs — Functions, Functionaries, and Funds are not fully transferred in many states.

2. Financial Constraints- Limited taxation powers and heavy dependence on state grants weaken autonomy.

3. Excessive State Control- State governments often retain administrative dominance, undermining local self-governance.

4. Capacity Deficits- Lack of technical expertise, training, and planning capacity among elected representatives.

5. Urban Governance Issues- Weak mayoral authority and dominance of bureaucratic commissioners in municipalities.

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