Polity & Governance · GS - II

“The local self government system in India has not proved to be effective instrument of governance”. Critically examine the statement and give your views to improve the situation.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2017	GS - II	Polity & Governance

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
10	~150 words

Answer Hint

73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments; democratic decentralisation; devolution of powers; fiscal autonomy; capacity building; participatory governance

Model Answer

Introduction

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments strengthened rural and urban local bodies in India. However, their effectiveness remains constrained by inadequate devolution, financial dependence and limited administrative capacity.

Why Local Self-Government Has Underperformed

- **Incomplete devolution:** Many States have not transferred sufficient functions, funds and functionaries to local bodies.
- **Financial constraints:** Dependence on grants and weak revenue mobilisation limit independent decision-making.
- **Administrative control:** Bureaucratic interference and overlapping responsibilities weaken local autonomy.

- **Capacity gaps:** Shortages of trained personnel, technical expertise and planning capabilities affect service delivery.
- **Political interference:** Elite capture and irregular functioning of Gram Sabhas can weaken accountability.
- **Weak urban governance:** Fragmented responsibilities among municipal bodies and parastatal agencies hinder coordinated planning.

Measures for Improvement

- Implement the recommendations of State Finance Commissions and strengthen local revenue sources.
- Ensure meaningful transfer of the three Fs: functions, funds and functionaries.
- Build professional capacity through regular training and technical support.
- Strengthen Gram Sabhas, ward committees, social audits and citizen participation.
- Improve transparency through digital accounting, public disclosure and performance audits.

Conclusion

Local self-government has not fully realised its constitutional potential, but it remains essential for responsive democracy. Genuine fiscal and administrative autonomy, combined with citizen oversight, can improve local governance.

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