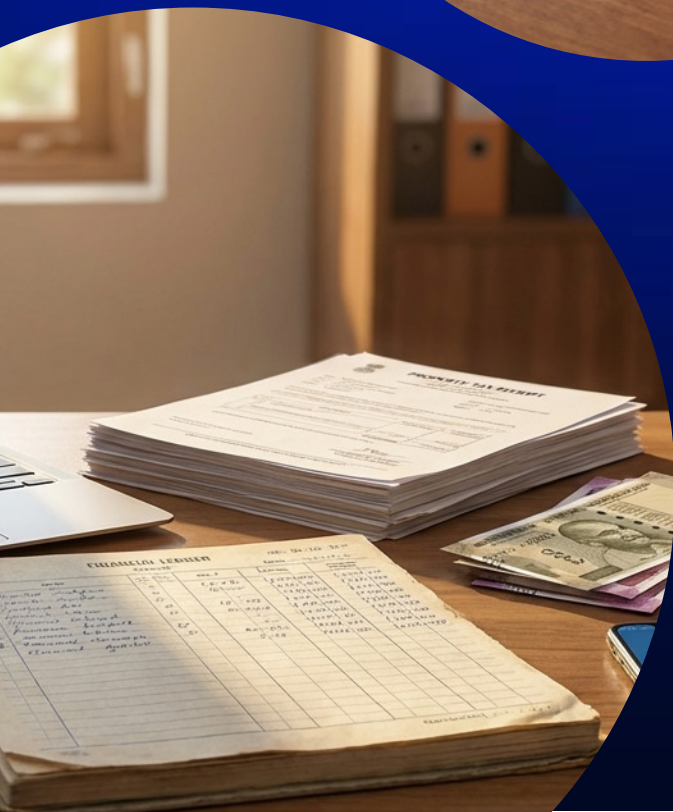




PadhAI

Kurukshetra

April Edition



Welcome to PadhAI

KURUKSHETRA MONTHLY COVERAGE

You are here because you understand a fundamental truth of UPSC preparation: ***it's not about reading everything – it's about reading what truly matters, in the right way, at the right time.***

Magazines like Kurukshetra offer deep insights into rural development, governance, social schemes, and grassroots policy implementation. Yet for many aspirants, the challenge lies in separating exam-relevant content from general narratives.

PadhAI's Kurukshetra coverage is designed to do exactly that - ***filter, structure, and align policy discussions with UPSC requirements.***

Why This Kurukshetra Coverage Matters

At PadhAI, we don't reproduce articles. We ***extract core themes***, map them with the syllabus, and connect them with ***Prelims and Mains PYQs***.

Every topic included here:

- carries relevance for ***GS Papers or Essay***,
- strengthens understanding of ***developmental and governance issues, and***
- builds ***analytical depth*** rather than surface-level knowledge.

Nothing is added for volume.

Everything is added for value.

Part of the PadhAI Preparation Ecosystem

This Kurukshetra coverage forms part of a larger, integrated learning system that includes:

- early and concise ***monthly magazines***,
- ***daily PIB summaries*** with exam-focused clarity,
- ***monthly compliance tracking***,
- complete ***Prelims & Mains PYQs with structured answers***,
- relevant ***news article summaries***, and
- ***personal tutor chat support*** for continuous guidance.

The aim is simple:

one trusted ecosystem instead of multiple scattered sources.

Our Guiding Philosophy

At PadhAI, everything is built around one belief:

- *Learn only what matters.*
- *Learn it the right way.*
- *Learn it at the right time.*

We don't believe in shortcuts.

We believe in clarity, consistency, and cumulative preparation.

A Final Note

UPSC preparation is demanding and often overwhelming.

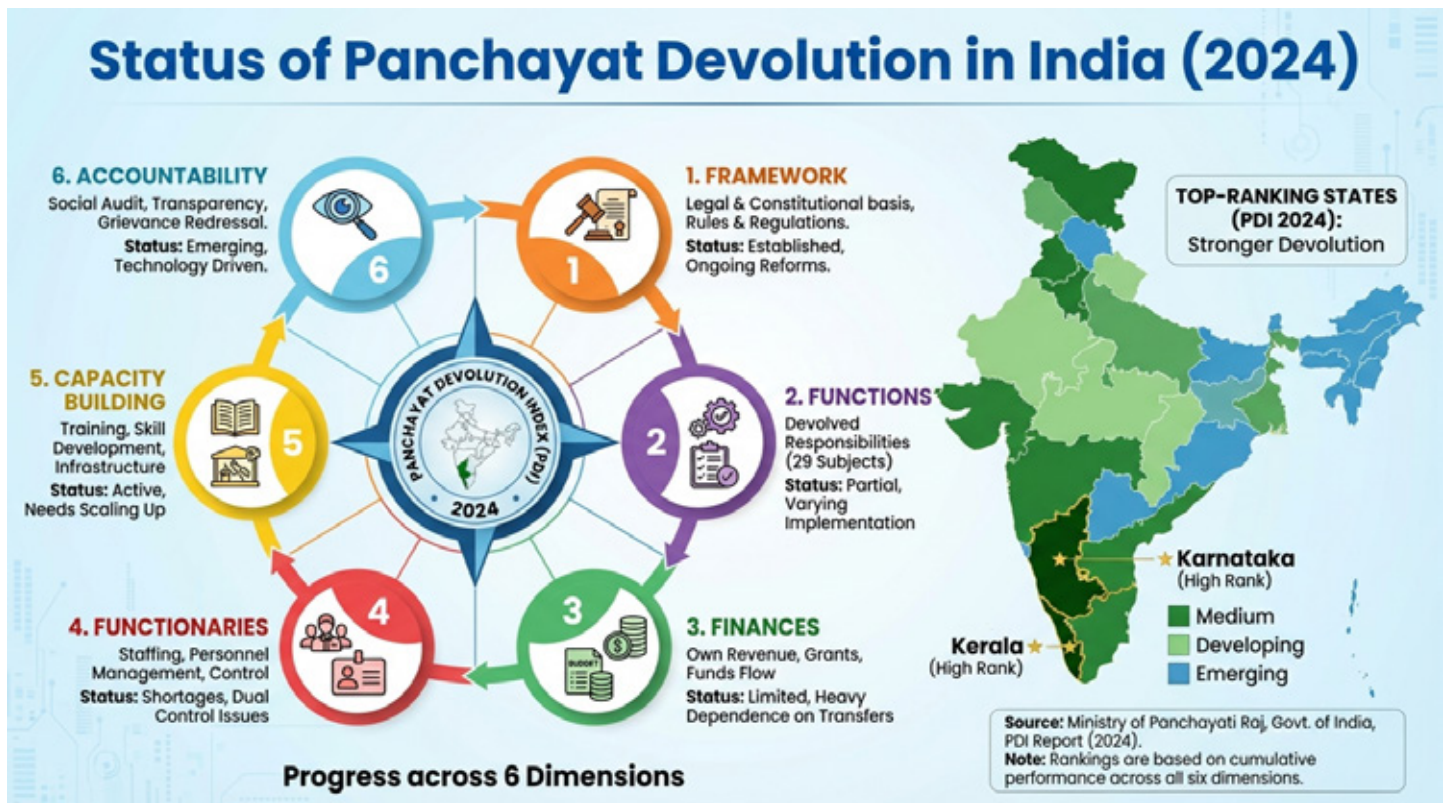
PadhAI exists to ensure you prepare with ***direction, relevance, and confidence*** — never blindly, never alone.

If this **Kurukshetra** coverage helps you save time, connect policy with practice, and strengthen your answers, then it has served its purpose.

Welcome to PadhAI.

A community built to prepare — not to overwhelm.

Topic I: Status of Panchayat Devolution in India (2024)



Summary: The **Ministry of Panchayati Raj** recently released the "**Status of Devolution to Panchayats in States 2024**" report, which uses an evidence-based ranking system to assess how well states have empowered their local governments. The report indicates a moderate increase in the overall **Devolution Index from 39.9% in 2013-14 to 43.9% in 2021-22**, showing incremental progress in grassroots governance.

Background: The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 institutionalised Panchayati Raj as the **third tier of governance** to ensure democratic decentralisation. This reform was necessary to move from top-down administration to **bottom-up planning**, empowering rural populations to manage their own socio-economic development.

Key Points:

- **State Rankings:** **Karnataka** ranked first overall, excelling in finances and accountability, followed by Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- **Dimensional Gains:** The most significant improvement was seen in the "**Functionaries**" index, which rose from 39.6% to 50.9%, reflecting better staffing and digital tool adoption.
- **11th Schedule Implementation:** While the Constitution lists **29 subjects** for devolution, many states are hesitant to transfer full control over these areas, leading to inconsistent functional empowerment.
- **Institutional Hurdles:** Problems such as the **frequent rotation of reserved seats** and non-functional District Planning Committees (DPCs) continue to disrupt leadership continuity and integrated planning.

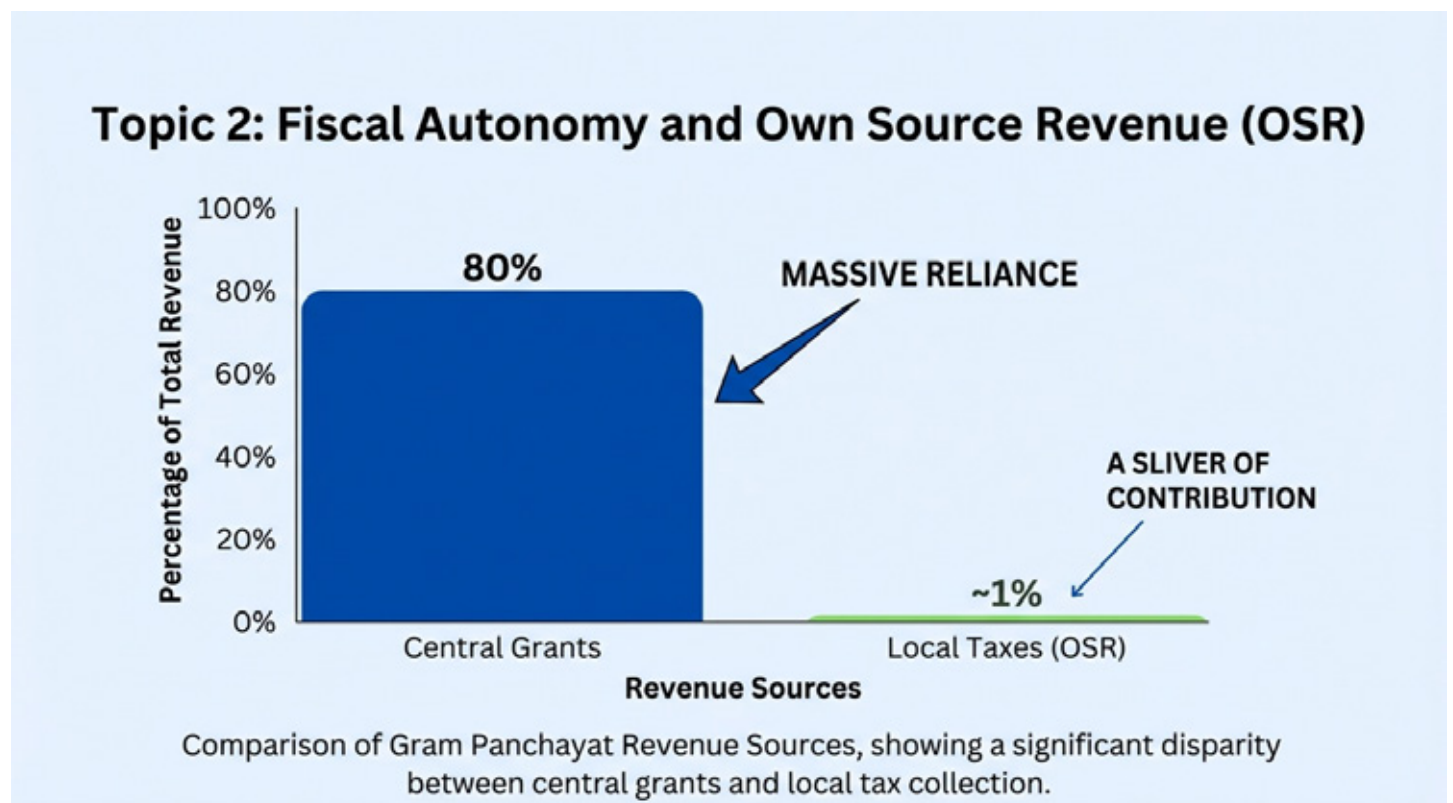
Prelims Facts (One Liners):

1. **Article 243G** empowers State Legislatures to devolve powers and responsibilities to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).
2. The **Panchayat Devolution Index 2024** ranks states across **six specific dimensions**.
3. **Article 243-I** mandates the constitution of a **State Finance Commission (SFC)** every five years.
4. **Karnataka** holds the top rank in the 2024 Devolution Index, while regions like **Ladakh and Puducherry** show the lowest progress.

MCQ Practice: Q. According to the "Status of Devolution to Panchayats 2024" report, which state achieved the highest ranking due to its strengths in finance and accountability? A) Kerala B) Tamil Nadu C) Karnataka D) Maharashtra

Answer: C (Karnataka secured the top position by demonstrating robust performance in the key dimensions of local finances and institutional accountability.)

Topic 2: Fiscal Autonomy and Own Source Revenue (OSR)



Summary: Despite constitutional mandates for fiscal autonomy, Indian Panchayats remain heavily dependent on external funding, with **Own Source Revenue (OSR) contributing only 6.31%** of their total receipts. This financial over-reliance on Central and State grants transforms PRIs into mere "scheme implementers" rather than self-governing entities.

Background: The 73rd Amendment provided the legal framework for Panchayats to levy taxes under **Article 243H**, but institutional and political bottlenecks have prevented effective revenue mobilisation. True decentralisation is impossible without the financial capacity to address local priorities independently of higher-level government dictates.

Key Points:

- **Dependency Ratio:** On average, **80% of PRI revenue** comes from Central Government grants, while state grants provide another 15%.
- **Asymmetric Tax Powers:** There is high inter-state disparity; for instance, **Uttar Pradesh** GPs levy none of the six taxes they are legally permitted to collect, whereas states like **Kerala** have fully empowered their local bodies.
- **Administrative Bottlenecks:** Many Panchayats lack the **technical skills** for scientific property valuation or the political will to collect user charges for water and sanitation.
- **Parallel Structures:** State agencies often bypass PRIs in service delivery, such as rural water supply, which further undermines local resource control.

Prelims Facts (One Liners):

1. The average per capita **Own Source Revenue (OSR)** for Panchayats in India is only **₹59**.
2. **Article 243H** is the specific constitutional provision that authorises PRIs to levy and collect taxes.
3. PRIs spend less than **0.6% of GSDP** in all Indian states, highlighting low local expenditure capacity.
4. In **Maharashtra**, rural water supply schemes were handed over to GPs to enhance their autonomy and OSR potential.

MCQ Practice: Q. Which constitutional article directs the Central Finance Commission to recommend measures to supplement the resources of Panchayats in a state? A) Article 243G B) Article 243-I C) Article 280(3)(bb) D) Article 243H

Answer: C (Article 280(3)(bb) specifically mandates the Central Finance Commission to recommend augmentations to the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement Panchayat resources.)

Topic 3: Water Management through PRIs



Summary: PRIs serve as critical agents for **decentralised water governance**, managing **62.4% of publicly owned water bodies** in rural areas. Through initiatives like the **Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM)** and **Atal Bhujal Yojana**, Panchayats are transitioning from passive observers to active planners of sustainable water security.

Background: With the 2023 Water Body Census revealing that **97.1% of India's water bodies** are in rural areas, the role of local government is paramount. PRIs were granted authority over water resources, minor irrigation, and watershed development under **Schedule XI** of the Constitution.

Key Points:

- **Village Action Plans (VAPs):** Under JJM, Panchayats prepare VAPs and form **Village Water & Sanitation Committees (VWSCs)** to ensure 100% household tap connectivity.
- **Groundwater Management:** Through **Atal Bhujal Yojana**, PRIs in water-stressed regions prepare **Water Security Plans** to balance local demand with available supply.
- **Natural Resource Management:** Approximately **60% of MGNREGS funds** are earmarked for water conservation works like check dams and pond restoration, all implemented at the Panchayat level.
- **XV Finance Commission Grants:** Out of ₹2.36 lakh crore allocated to PRIs for 2021-26, **60% is "tied"** specifically to water supply and sanitation projects.

Prelims Facts (One Liners):

1. According to the 2023 Water Body Census, there are **24.24 lakh water bodies** in India, with 97.1% located in rural regions.

2. **Schedule XI** of the Constitution delegates 29 subjects to PRIs, including drinking water and minor irrigation.
3. The **"Catch the Rain"** mantra is a key guiding principle for PRI-led water conservation initiatives.
4. **Jal Jeevan Mission** targets providing **Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs)** to every rural home.

MCQ Practice: Q. What percentage of the XV Finance Commission grants (2021-26) for Panchayats is "tied" to water supply, rainwater harvesting, and sanitation? A) 33% B) 46% C) 60% D) 80%

Answer: C (60% of the XV Finance Commission grants are tied to these essential water and sanitation services to strengthen local implementation capacity.)

Topic 4: Technological Empowerment and Land Rights (SVAMITVA)



Summary: The last decade has seen a **technological revolution** in rural governance, most notably through the **SVAMITVA Scheme**, which uses drones to survey village inhabited areas. This digital mapping provides villagers with **property cards**, enabling asset monetisation and enhancing the tax-collection capacity of Panchayats.

Background: Lack of clear property titles has historically limited rural residents' access to formal credit and hindered local government revenue. Technological integration aims to bridge the **urban-rural divide** by bringing modern land records and digital transparency to the grassroots.

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Key Points:

- **Scale of Survey:** Drones have surveyed over **3.2 lakh villages**, leading to the issuance of **2.41 crore property cards**.
- **e-Gram SWARAJ:** This portal simplifies Panchayat accounting and has processed over **₹2.4 lakh crore** in transactions, ensuring fiscal transparency.
- **Bhashini Integration:** The e-Gram SWARAJ portal now supports **20 regional languages**, making digital governance more accessible to diverse local populations.
- **Audit Online:** Over **2.1 lakh digital audits** were conducted between 2023 and 2024 to maintain high levels of fiscal accountability in rural spending.

Prelims Facts (One Liners):

1. The **SVAMITVA Scheme** uses drone technology to establish clear ownership of property in rural abadi (inhabited) areas.
2. **Audit Online** is the digital tool used to ensure the fiscal accountability of Panchayat expenditures.
3. The **Meri Panchayat app** provides farmers with localised, Panchayat-level weather forecasting in collaboration with the IMD.
4. Over **46% of India's 31.5 lakh elected representatives** in Panchayats are now women.

MCQ Practice: Q. Which initiative is specifically credited with issuing 2.41 crore property cards in rural India by using drone surveys? A) e-Gram SWARAJ B) SVAMITVA Scheme C) PESA Act D) RGSA

Answer: B (The SVAMITVA Scheme leverages drone technology to map rural land and provide official property cards to owners.)

Topic 5: Capacity Building and Localising SDGs



Summary: Real empowerment of PRIs requires more than just legal status; it necessitates **capacity building** to ensure elected representatives can manage complex governance tasks. Through the **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)**, millions of representatives are being trained to align their **Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP)** with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Background: Despite their constitutional status, many local leaders—especially women and first-time representatives—face a **capacity deficit** in areas like budgeting, digital tools, and public service delivery. The **National Capacity Building Framework (NCBF) 2022** was introduced to standardise this training across the country.

Key Points:

- **RGSA Achievements:** The program has trained **111 lakh representatives** between 2022 and 2025, with collaborations including premier institutes like IIMs and IRMA.
- **Thematic GPDP:** Approximately **2.54 lakh Gram Panchayats** have now aligned their development plans with **9 specific SDG themes**, such as "Poverty-Free Villages" and "Gender Equality".
- **Women's Leadership:** Targeted initiatives like the **Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan** focus specifically on providing decision-making training to women representatives.
- **Digital Divide:** A primary challenge remains the lack of digital infrastructure and skills in remote regions, which the **e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project** seeks to address.

Prelims Facts (One Liners):

1. The **Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA)** is the primary scheme for strengthening the governance capabilities of PRIs.
2. **Thematic GPDP** allows Panchayats to focus their local planning on **nine specific SDG themes**.
3. The **NCBF 2022** provides the guiding framework to standardise training for local governance in India.
4. **Antyodaya** (serving the last person) and **Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas** are the twin spirits guiding modern capacity-building efforts.

MCQ Practice: Q. Which program focuses on empowering women representatives in Panchayats through specialized decision-making training? A) SVAMITVA B) RGSA C) Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan D) e-Gram SWARAJ

Answer: C (The Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan is the initiative dedicated to training and empowering women leaders in local government.)