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Community-led Water Management

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Community-led Water Management

 **Kurukshetra** Chapter 2 · 1 min read

Published: Kurukshetra, May 2026

The water chapter’s constitutional anchor: **minor irrigation and water management are Eleventh Schedule subjects**, devolved to panchayats by the **73rd Amendment**. Its argument is that India’s water security will be decided village by village, not dam by dam.

THE STOCK-TAKING

INDICATOR	FIGURE
Minor irrigation schemes (6th MI Census)	23.14 million
Share that is groundwater-based	94.7 percent
Large dams built before 1990	~73 percent (siltation and safety risk)
Ponds rejuvenated under Mission Amrit Sarovar	~70,000

The 94.7 percent groundwater dependence is the chapter’s red flag: it welds water security to the energy economy (pump subsidies) and drives the falling water table.

THE INSTITUTIONAL ANSWER

- **15th Finance Commission** earmarked **60 percent of Panchayati Raj grants** for drinking water and rainwater harvesting, the largest fiscal push ever made through local government for water
- **Water Users Associations** as the participatory irrigation vehicle
- **Mission Amrit Sarovar** as the visible community asset: ponds that recharge aquifers, support fisheries and anchor MGNREGA-successor works

MAINS ANGLE

Critical analysis: community management works where rights are clear and elites cannot capture the resource; without groundwater regulation (most states still run on the colonial “rule of capture”), panchayat-built recharge structures refill aquifers that unmetered borewells immediately drain. **Way forward:**

participatory groundwater budgeting (Atal Bhujal Yojana model), pairing Amrit Sarovar assets with recharge-zone protection bylaws, and metering agricultural power feeders.

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CONSTITUTIONAL AND FISCAL:

Minor irrigation, water management: Eleventh Schedule (73rd Amendment) subjects

15th FC: 60 percent of PRI grants tied to drinking water and rainwater harvesting

STOCK AND RISK:

23.14 million minor irrigation schemes (6th MI Census); 94.7 percent groundwater-based

~73 percent of large dams pre-date 1990

Mission Amrit Sarovar: ~70,000 ponds rejuvenated

Sources: Kurukshetra / Publications Division , Ministry of Jal Shakti



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