

Hots (Higher Order Thinking Skills)

Q. 1. Distinguish between ‘coming together federation’ and ‘holding together federations’ with examples. India comes under which type of federation?

Ans. Coming Together Federation:

It involves independent states coming together on their own to form a bigger unit, so that by pooling sovereignty and retaining identity, they can increase their security.

E.g.: USA, Australia

In this category of federation, all the constituent states usually have equal powers and are strong as a federal government.

Holding Together Federations:

Here, a large country decides to divide its power between the constituent states and the national government. In this kind of federalism, Central government tends to be more powerful than the states. Very often different constituent units of federation have unequal powers. Some units are granted special powers.

For e.g. India, Spain, Belgium, etc.

Q. 2. Which five provisions of the Indian constitution make India a full-fledged federation? Explain.

Ans. There are two or more levels of government.

Different tiers of government govern the same citizens, but each tier has its own jurisdiction.

The jurisdiction of the respective levels or tiers of government are specified in the constitution.

The fundamental provisions of the constitution cannot be unilaterally changed by one level of the government.

Sources of revenue for each level of government are clearly specified to ensure its financial autonomy.

Courts have the power to interpret the constitution and the powers of different levels of government.

So, an ideal federal system has both aspects—mutual trust and agreement to live together.

Q. 3. Explain how the federal experiment has been successful in the matter of formation of states in India.

Or

What are the power sharing arrangements in our country? Explain with examples.

Ans. Our Constitution declared India as a Union of States. Indian Union is based on the principles of federalism. The Constitution originally provided a two-tier system (at the central and the state level) but later in 1992, a three-tier system (added up the third tier as local government) was adopted.

The powers are divided between three levels by Union List, State List and Concurrent List respectively.

The Union List includes 97 subjects like defence, foreign affairs, banking, etc. These subjects are of national importance, so they are looked after by the Union government and they only legislate on these subjects.

The State List includes 66 subjects like police, agriculture, trade and commerce, etc. These subjects are allotted to all the state governments and the state governments can legislate on them.

The Concurrent List includes subjects of common interests between the Centre and the State, e.g., education, forest, marriage, etc. Both the Union as well as the State governments can make laws on their respective subjects but central government exercises an upper hand.

Q. 4. Critically analyse the centre–state relations prior to 1990 and after.

Ans. For a long time, the same party ruled both at the centre and in most of the states. This meant that State governments did not exercise their rights as autonomous federal units.

In those days, the Central government would often misuse the Constitution to dismiss the State governments that were controlled by rival parties. This undermined the spirit of federalism.

After 1990, there was a rise of regional parties in many states. This was also the beginning of the era of Coalition Government at the centre. This led to a new culture of power sharing and respect for the autonomy of State Governments.

Q. 5. Explain the constitutional amendments of 1992 that compare local governments in India.

Ans. A major step towards decentralisation was taken in 1992. The constitution has amended to make the third tier more powerful and effective.

(i) Now it is mandatory to hold regular elections for local government bodies.

(ii) Seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes.

(iii) At least one-third of all positions are reserved for women.

(iv) The State Election Commission monitors the elections of municipalities and local governments of a state.

(v) The State governments are required to share some powers and revenue with local government's bodies.

Q. 6. What is the rational decentralisation of power? Describe the functions of rural local government.

Ans. The basic idea behind decentralisation is that, there are a large number of problems and issues which are best settled at the local level.

People have better knowledge of problems in their localities.

They also have better ideas on where to spend the money and how to manage things more efficiently.

At the local level, it is possible for the people to directly participate in decision-making. This helps to inculcate a habit of democratic participation.

Functions of Rural Government:

The local government is a three-tier structure. At the top is the District or Zila Parishad, few blocks form a Zila, so blocks have Block or Mandal and then few villages form a block and a village panchayat.

The smallest unit of our country is a village and at the village level, we have Gram Panchayat, which is run by a head called 'Sarpanch' with his team of representatives.

A few Gram Panchayats fall under a Block. At Block level, we have a Panchayat Samiti or Block Committee.

All Panchayat Samitis of a district are under a district having a local government called Zila Parishad. Members of Lok Sabha and MLAs of that district also become the members of Zila Parishad.

Q. 7. How challenge of language policy was adopted by the Indian federalism?

Ans. A second test for Indian federalism is the language policy.

Our Constitution did not give the status of national language to any one language.

Hindi was identified as the official language.

But Hindi is the mother tongue of only about 40 per cent of Indians. Therefore, there were many safeguards to protect other languages.

Besides Hindi, there are 21 other languages recognised as Scheduled Languages by the Constitution.

A candidate in an examination conducted for the Central Government positions may opt to take the examination in any one of these languages.

States too have their own official languages. Much of the government work takes place in the official language of the concerned state.