

Long Answer Questions

Q. 1. How did India emerge as a federal state?

Ans. India had emerged as an independent nation after a painful and bloody partition.

Soon after independence, several princely states became a part of the country.

The Constitution declared India as a Union of States.

Although it did not use the word federation, the Indian Union is based on the principles of federalism.

The Constitution originally provided for a two-tier system of government, the Union government or Central government, representing the Union of India and the State governments.

Later, a third tier of 'Panchayati Raj' or local government was added.

Q. 2. How are Gram Panchayats formed?

Ans. Rural local government is popularly known as Panchayati Raj. Gram Panchayat is the smallest unit at the village level.

Each village or a group of villages in some states has a gram panchayat.

This is a council consisting of several ward members often called Panch, and a President or Sarpanch.

They are directly elected by all the adult population living in that ward or village.

It is a decision-making body for the entire village.

The panchayats work under the overall supervision of the gram sabha; all the voters in the village are its members.

It has to meet at least twice or thrice in a year to approve the annual budget of the gram panchayat and to review the performance of the gram panchayat.

Q. 3. Describe the three-fold distribution of legislative powers between the Union government and State government.

Ans. It contains three lists:

(i) Union List: It includes subjects of national importance such as defence of the country, foreign affairs, banking, communications and currency. They are included in this list because we need a uniform policy on these matters throughout the country.

(ii) State List: The list contains subjects of state and local importance such as police, trade, commerce, agriculture and irrigation. The state governments alone can make laws relating to the subjects mentioned in the state list.

(iii) Concurrent List: Includes subjects of common interest to both, the Union government as well as the State government such as education, forests, trade unions, marriage, adoption and succession. Both the Union as well as State governments can make laws on the subjects mentioned in this list. If their laws conflict with each other, the law made by the Union government prevails.

Q. 4. How is a Zila Parishad formed?

Ans. (i) All the Panchayat Samitis or mandals in a district together constitute the Zila Parishad.

(ii) Most members of the Zila Parishad are elected.

(iii) Members of the Lok Sabha and MLAs of that district and some of the officials of other district level bodies are also its members.

(iv) Zila Parishad chairperson is the political head of the Zila Parishad.

Q. 5. How are constitutional changes made in a federal system?

Ans. It is not easy to make changes to power sharing of power between the Union Government and the State Government.

The Parliament cannot on its own change this arrangement.

Any change to it has to be first passed by both the houses of Parliament, with at least two thirds majority.

Then it has to be ratified by the legislatures of at least half of the total states.

Q. 6. What special provisions are provided to some of the states of India?

Ans. Most of the federations that are formed by 'holding together' do not give equal power to its constituent units. All states in Indian union do not have identical powers. Some states enjoy a special status, like Jammu & Kashmir which has its own constitution. Many provisions of the Indian Constitution are not applicable to this state without the approval of the State Assembly. Indians who are not the permanent residents of this state cannot buy land or house here.

Q. 7. Which territories in India do not enjoy the powers of a state?

Ans. There are some units of the Indian Union which enjoy very little power. These areas are too small to become an independent state but which could not be merged with any of the existing states as well. The areas like Chandigarh, Lakshadweep or the capital city of Delhi are called Union Territories. These territories do not have the powers of a State. The Central Government has special powers in running these areas.

Q. 8. How is power shared in a coalition government?

Ans. After 1990, there was the rise of regional political parties as well as the beginning of the era of 'Coalition Governments' at the Centre. Since no single party got a clear majority in the Lok Sabha, the major national parties had to enter into an alliance with many parties including several regional parties to form a government at the centre. This led to a new culture of power sharing and respect for the autonomy of State governments. This trend was supported by a major judgement of the Supreme Court that made it difficult for the Central Government to dismiss state governments in an arbitrary manner.

Thus federal power sharing is more effective today than it was in the early years after the Constitution came into force.

Q. 9. Which local government bodies exist for the urban areas?

Ans. Municipalities are set up in towns. Municipal Corporations are constituted in big cities. Both municipalities and municipal corporations are controlled by elected bodies consisting of people's representatives. Municipal Chairperson is the political head of the municipality. In a municipal corporation, such an officer is called the 'Mayor'.

Q. 10. State any two achievements and any two problems of the Panchayati Raj system

Ans. The Panchayati Raj system of India has been introduced by Balwant Rai Mehta Committee. Its achievements are:

- (i) The introduction of local governments has helped to deepen the roots of democracy in India.
- (ii) It has increased representation of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women as well.

At the same time, its problems are:

- (i) While elections are held regularly but gram Sabha's, block committees and zila parishads do not hold their meetings regularly.
- (ii) Most of the state governments are not ready to provide powers to the local governments. Neither they are ready to provide sufficient funds for their needs.

Q. 11. 'Promotion of Hindi continues to be the official policy of government of India.' Elucidate.

Ans. According to the Constitution, the use of English for official purposes was to stop in 1965.

However, many non-Hindi speaking states demanded that the use of English should continue. In Tamil Nadu, the movement took a violent turn.

The Central Government responded by agreeing to continue the use of English along with Hindi for official purposes. Many critics think that this solution favoured the English-speaking elite.

Promotion of Hindi continues to be the official policy of Government of India.

Promotion does not mean that the Central Government can impose Hindi on states where people speak a different language.

The flexibility shown by Indian political leaders helped our country avoid the kind of situation that Sri Lanka finds itself in.