



What Is Federalism?

Federalism is a system of government in which power is divided between a central authority and various constituent units of the country.

A federation has two levels of government. Both these levels of government enjoy their power independently of the other.

1. One is the government for the entire country, which is usually responsible for a few subjects of common national interest.
2. Governments at the level of provinces or states, which look after much of the day-to-day administering of their state.

Difference Between Unitary System and Federal System

Unitary System	Federal System
There is only one level of government, or the sub-units are subordinate to the Central Government.	There are two or more levels (or tiers) of government.
The Central Government can pass on orders to the provincial or local government.	The Central Government cannot order the state government to do something.
The central government is supreme, and the administrative divisions exercise only powers that the central government has delegated to them. Their powers may be broadened and narrowed by the central government.	State Government has powers of its own for which it is not answerable to the central government.

Key Features of Federalism

Some of the key features of the federalism system are:

1. There are two or more levels (or tiers) of government.

2. Different tiers of government govern the same citizens, but each tier has its own JURISDICTION in specific matters of legislation, taxation and administration.
3. The existence and authority of each tier of government is constitutionally guaranteed.
4. The fundamental provisions of the Constitution cannot be unilaterally changed by one level of government. Such changes require the consent of both levels of government.
5. Courts have the power to interpret the Constitution and the powers of different levels of government.
6. Sources of revenue for each level of government are clearly specified to ensure its financial autonomy.
7. The federal system has dual objectives: i) To safeguard and promote the unity of the country and ii) To accommodate regional diversity.

Different Routes Through Which Federations Can Be Formed

Two aspects are crucial for the institutions and practice of federalism: mutual trust between the government of different levels and agreement to live together. There are two kinds of routes through which federations have been formed.

1. The first route involves independent States coming together on their own to form a bigger unit. This kind of “coming together” federation is formed in the USA, Switzerland and Australia.
2. The second route is that a large country decides to divide its power between the constituent States and the national government. This kind of ‘holding together’ federation is followed in India, Spain and Belgium countries.

What Makes India a Federal Country?

All the features of the federal system apply to the provisions of the Indian Constitution. The Indian Constitution is a three-fold distribution of legislative powers between the Union Government and the State Governments. The 3 lists are mentioned below:

1) Union List: It includes subjects of national importance such as the defence of the country, foreign affairs, banking, communications and currency. The Union Government alone can make laws relating to the subjects mentioned in this list.

2) State List: It 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 this list.

3) Concurrent List: It includes subjects of common interest to both the Union Government as well as the State Governments. The list includes education, forest, trade unions, marriage, adoption and succession. Both the Union as well as the 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 will be considered.

How Is Federalism Practised?

The real success of federalism in India is attributed to its nature of democratic politics. Have a look at some of the major ways in which federalism is practised in India.

Linguistic States

The creation of linguistic States was the first and a major test for democratic politics in India. From 1947 to 2017, many old States vanished, and many new States were created. Areas, boundaries and names of the States have been changed. Some States have been formed of people who speak the same language. These states are known as Linguistic States.

Language Policy

A second test for the Indian federation is the language policy. Hindi was identified as the official language. Besides Hindi, there are 21 other languages recognised as Scheduled Languages by the Constitution. States, too, have their own official languages, and government work takes place in the official language of the concerned State.

Centre-State relations

Restructuring the Centre-State relations is one more way in which federalism has been strengthened in practice. Suppose no single party gets a clear majority in the Lok Sabha, the major national parties can 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.

Decentralisation in India

When power is taken away from Central and State governments and given to the local government, it is called decentralisation. The basic idea behind decentralisation is that there are a large number of problems and issues which are best settled at the local level. Local people can also directly participate in the decision-making.

A major step towards decentralisation was taken in 1992. The Constitution was amended to make the third tier of democracy more powerful and effective. Here are the key features of 3-tier democracy:

1. It is constitutionally mandatory to hold regular elections for local government bodies.
2. Seats are reserved in the elected bodies and the executive heads of these institutions for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes.
3. At least one-third of all positions are reserved for women.
4. State Election Commission has been created in each State to conduct panchayat and municipal elections.
5. The State governments are required to share some powers and revenue with local government bodies. The nature of sharing varies from State to State.

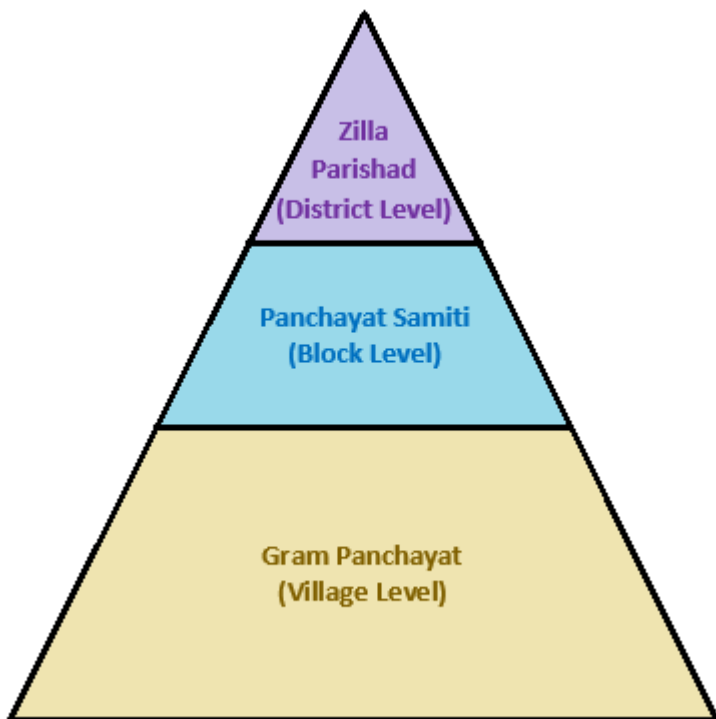
Panchayati Raj System

Rural local government is popularly known as **Panchayati Raj**. 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 a village or ward. Gram Panchayat is the decision-making body for the entire village.

The Panchayat works 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 a year to approve the annual budget of the gram panchayat and to review the performance of the Gram Panchayat.

When Gram Panchayat are grouped together, they form a **Panchayat Samiti** or **Block** or **Mandal**. The member of the Panchayat Samiti representatives are elected by all the Panchayat members in that area.

All the Panchayat Samitis or Mandals in a district together constitute the **Zilla (district) Parishad**. Members of the Lok Sabha, MLAs of the district, and some other officials of other district-level bodies are members of Zilla Parishad.



Municipalities

As Gram Panchayat is for Rural areas, similarly, we have Municipalities for urban areas. Big cities are constituted into Municipal Corporations. Both Municipalities and Municipal Corporations are controlled by elected bodies consisting of people's representatives. The Municipal Chairperson is the political head of the Municipality. In a Municipal Corporation, such an officer is called the Mayor.

This new system of local government is the largest experiment in democracy conducted anywhere in the world. Constitutional status for local government has helped to deepen democracy in our country. It has also increased women's representation and voice in our democracy.

Frequently Asked Questions on CBSE Class 10 Political Science Notes Chapter 2 Federalism

Q1

What is 'Federalism'?

Federalism is a system of government in which power is divided between a central authority and various constituent units of the country.

Q2

What are the sects under the Panchayati Raj?

The Panchayati Raj system consists of Gram Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Samiti at the block level and Zila Parishad at the district level.

Q3

What are the functions of a municipality?

1. Urban planning including town planning.2. Regulation of land use and construction of buildings.3. Planning for economic and social development.4. Roads and bridges.5. Water supply for domestic, industrial and commercial purposes.

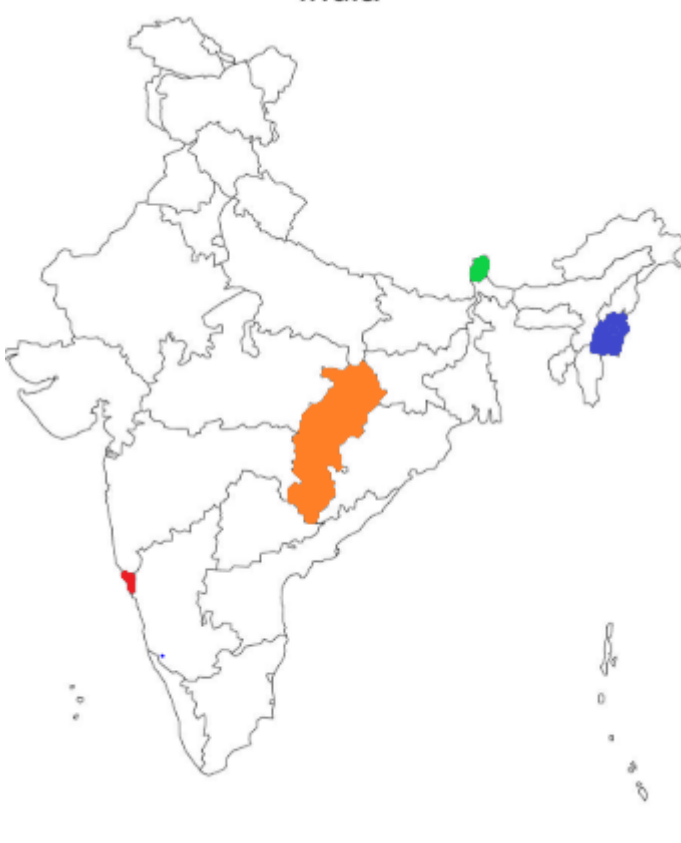
NCERT Solutions for Class 10 Civics Chapter 2 – Federalism

The solutions for Chapter 2 of Democratic Politics-I are given below. Students should also check for other subjects.

Exercises Page No. 27

1. Locate the following States on a blank outline political map of India: Manipur, Sikkim, Chhattisgarh and Goa.

Answer.



Green – Sikkim

Blue – Manipur

Orange – Chhattisgarh

Red – Goa

2. Identify and shade three federal countries (other than India) on a blank outline political map of the world.

Answer.



1. South Africa
2. Pakistan
3. Australia

3. Point out one feature in the practice of federalism in India that is similar to and one feature that is different from that of Belgium.

Answer.

A feature in the practice of federalism in India that is similar to that of Belgium – There is power-sharing between the union government and state government.

A feature in the practice of federalism in India that is different from that of Belgium – India has no community government in practice, while Belgium has one.

4. What is the main difference between a federal form of government and a unitary one? Explain with an example.

Answer.

Federal Form	Unitary Form
There is a sharing of power between union and state government.	The power is centralised with the union government, and there is no role of state governments.
Example – India (India is a federal country with union government at the centre and state governments at the state level and Panchayati Raj at the local level.)	Example – Sri Lanka (The national government has all the powers.)

5. State any two differences between the local government before and after the constitutional amendment in 1992.

Answer.

Local Government Pre-1992	Local Government Post Constitutional Amendment 1992
Elections to these local governments were not held regularly	Now, it is constitutionally mandated to hold regular elections to local government bodies
Local governments did not have any powers or resources of their own.	The State governments are required to share some powers and revenue with local government bodies. The nature of sharing varies from state to state.

6. Fill in the blanks:

Since the United States is a _____ type of federation, all the constituent States have equal powers and States are _____ vis-à-vis the federal government. But India is a _____ type of federation and some States have more power than others. In India, the _____ government has more powers.

Answer.

Since the United States is a **coming together** type of the federation, all the constituent States have equal powers and States are **strong** vis-à-vis the federal government. But India is a **holding together** type of federation and some States have more power than others. In India, the **central** government has more powers.

7. Here are three reactions to the language policy followed in India. Give an argument and an example to support any of these positions.

Sangeeta: The policy of accommodation has strengthened national unity.

Arman: the Language-based States have divided us by making everyone conscious of their language.

Harish: This policy has only helped to consolidate the dominance of English over all other languages.

Answer.

The policy of accommodation mentioned by Sangeeta is a correct reaction to the language policy followed in India. Due to this policy, India stands in unity with states having different languages. Had India not followed the policy of accommodation, several states could have proposed separation from the country.

8. The distinguishing feature of a federal government is:

- a. The national government gives some powers to the provincial governments.
- b. Power is distributed among the legislature, executive and judiciary.
- c. Elected officials exercise supreme power in the government.
- d. Governmental power is divided between different levels of government

Answer.

d. Governmental power is divided between different levels of government

9. A few subjects in various Lists of the Indian Constitution are given here. Group them under the Union, State and Concurrent Lists as provided in the table below.

- A. Defence
- B. Police

- C. **Agriculture**
- D. **Education**
- E. **Banking**
- F. **Forests**
- G. **Communications**
- H. **Trade**
- I. **Marriages**

Union List			
State List			
Concurrent List			

Answer.

Union List	Defence	Communications	Banking
State List	Police	Agriculture	Trade
Concurrent List	Education	Forests	Marriages

10. Examine the following pairs that give the level of government in India and the powers of the government at that level to make laws on the subjects mentioned against each. Which of the following pairs is not correctly matched?

State government	State List
Central government	Union List
Central and State governments	Concurrent List
Local governments	Residuary powers

Answer.

Local governments	Residuary powers
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11. Match List-I with List-II and select the correct answer using the codes given below the lists:

List-I	List-II
Union of India	Prime Minister
State	Sarpanch
Municipal Corporation	Governor
Gram Panchayat	Mayor

Answer.

List-I	List-II
Union of India	Prime Minister
State	Governor
Municipal Corporation	Mayor
Gram Panchayat	Sarpanch

12. Consider the following two statements.

- A. **In a federation, the powers of the federal and provincial governments are clearly demarcated.**
- B. **India is a federation because the powers of the Union and State Governments are specified in the Constitution and they have exclusive jurisdiction on their respective subjects.**
- C. **Sri Lanka is a federation because the country is divided into provinces.**
- D. **India is no longer a federation because some powers of the States have been devolved to the local government bodies.**

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a. **A, B and C**
- b. **A, C and D**

- c. **A and B only**
- d. **B and C only**

Answer.

(c) A and B only

Federalism Summary

Chapter 2 of **NCERT Social Science Civics** textbook – Democratic Politics–II will introduce students to federalism, which is a power-sharing system between two or more levels of the government. In India, federalism exists. The power is divided amongst three levels – union government, state government and local government. Students will learn the basics of federalism in India with special mention of decentralisation. The local government called the 'Panchayati Raj' will be discussed.