

Federalism

1. What is Federalism?

Federalism is a system of government in which **power is divided between two levels of government**:

1. **Central / National government**
2. **State / Regional governments**

Both levels **work on the same citizens but have different powers** given by the Constitution.

Example (India)

- **Central/Union Government** → Defence, foreign affairs, currency
- **State Government** → Police, agriculture, health, local issues

So **both governments are independent in their own areas of work.**

2. Example to Understand Federalism

Think of a **school**:

- **Principal** → looks after the whole school
- **Class teachers** → manage their own classes

Both have power, but **in different areas.**

This is similar to **Central Government + State Governments** in federalism.

3. What Do We Call the Indian Government?

This is where many students get confused.

In **India**, the Constitution uses the term:

“Union of States.”

So the national government is called:

- **Union Government**
- **Central Government**

Both mean the **same thing.**

But the **system** of government in India is **Federalism.**

❖ Features of Federalism

① Two or more levels of government

There are **different tiers of government** in a country.

Example in India:

- **Union (Central) Government**
- **State Governments**
- **Local Governments** (Panchayats / Municipalities)

② Same citizens, different powers

Both governments **rule over the same people**, but each has **different responsibilities.**

Example in India:

| Level | Work |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|
| Central Government | Defence, foreign affairs, currency |
| State Government | Police, agriculture, health |

Each level has its **own jurisdiction (area of authority).**

③ Powers written in the Constitution

The **Constitution clearly divides the powers** of central and state governments.

Because of this:

- No government can remove the other.

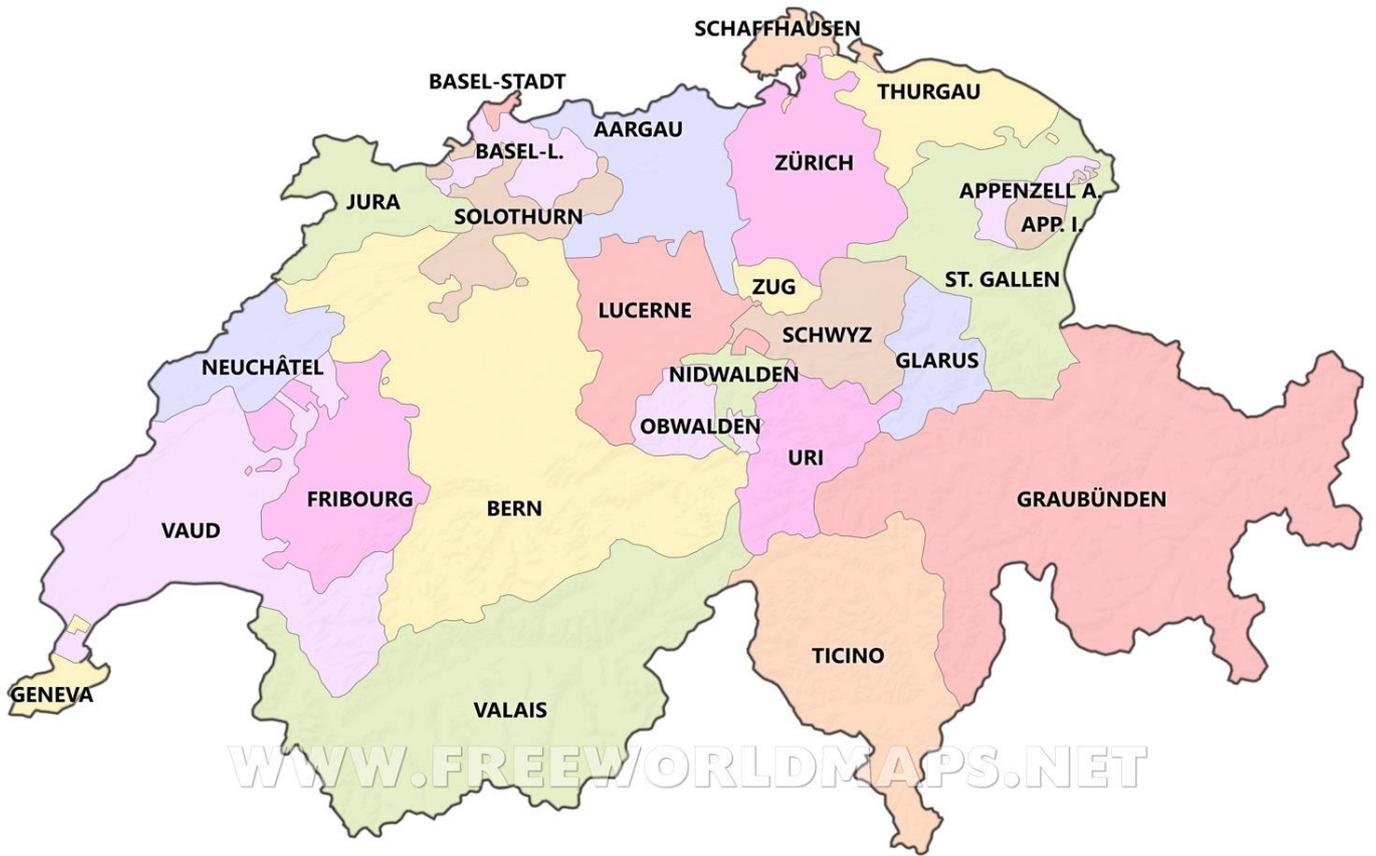
④ Constitution cannot be changed by one government alone

Important changes in the Constitution need **approval from both levels of government.**

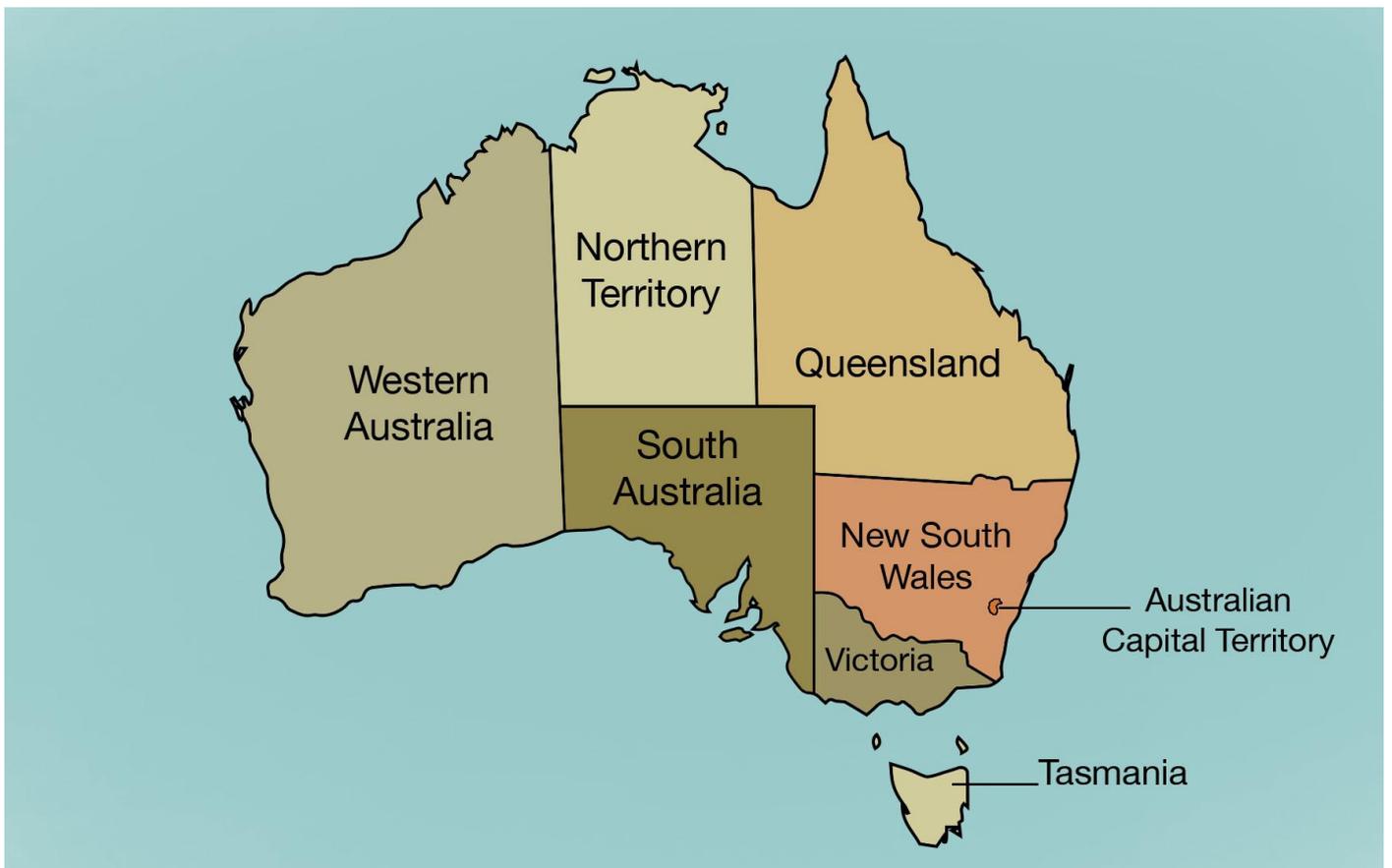
This protects **federal balance.**

⑤ Courts act as the umpire

If there is a **dispute between central and state governments**, the **Supreme Court** decides.



WWW.FREEWORLDMAPS.NET



In this system:

- **Independent states come together voluntarily**
- They form a **bigger country for security and strength**

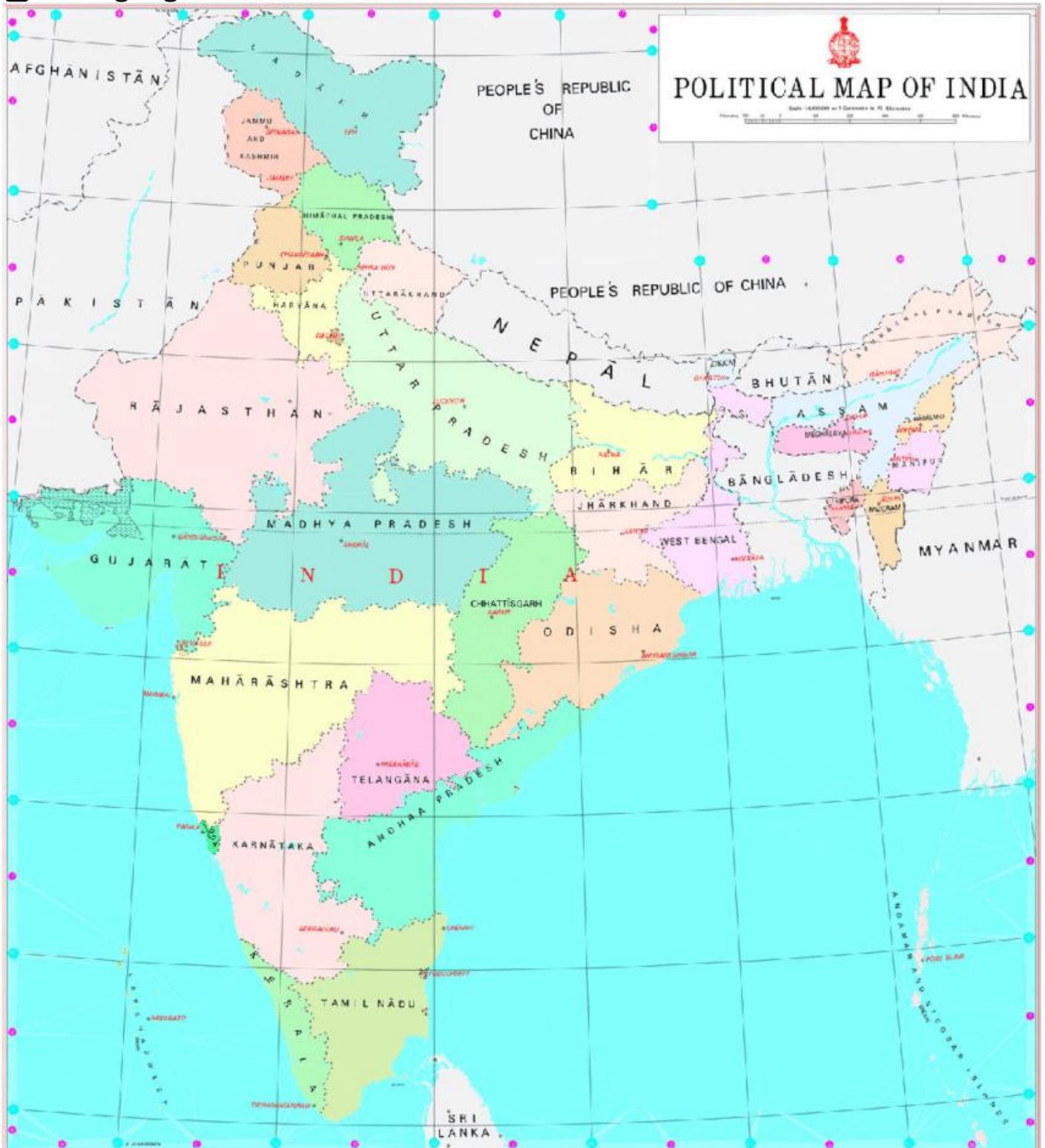
Examples:

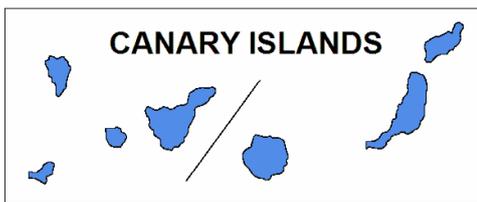
- United States
- Switzerland
- Australia

Characteristics:

- States have **equal power**
- States are **stronger compared to the central government**

2 Holding Together Federation





4

In this system:

- **One big country divides powers between centre and states**

Examples:

- India
- Spain
- Belgium

Characteristics:

- **Central government is usually stronger**
- Some states may get **special powers**

Example: In India some states earlier had **special status**.

3. Why Did Belgium Adopt Federalism?

Even though it is a **small country**, Belgium adopted federalism because:

- It has **different linguistic communities**

- To **reduce conflict between groups**
- To **share power peacefully**

❖ **What makes India a federal country?**

1. India – A Union of States

After independence and the Partition of India, many princely states joined the country. The Constitution of India declared India a **“Union of States.”**

Important point:

- The Constitution **does not use the word “federation”**
- But the **system follows federal principles**

So India is **a federal country with a strong centre.**

2. Levels (Tiers) of Government in India

Originally India had **two levels**:

1. **Union / Central Government**
2. **State Governments**

Later a **third level** was added.

| Level | Example |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| ① Union Government | Government of India |
| ② State Government | Delhi, Punjab, Maharashtra |
| ③ Local Government | Panchayats and Municipalities |

The third level was created through the **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments.**

3. Distribution of Powers (Three Lists)

The Constitution divides powers into **three lists.**

① **Union List**

Subjects of **national importance.**

Examples:

- Defence
- Foreign affairs
- Banking
- Currency
- Communications

Only the **Union Government** can make laws here.

② **State List**

Subjects related to **state and local matters.**

Examples:

- Police
- Agriculture
- Trade
- Irrigation

Only **State Governments** can make laws.

③ **Concurrent List**

Subjects of **common interest.**

Examples:

- Education
- Forests
- Marriage
- Adoption
- Trade unions

Both **Union and State Governments** can make laws.

If laws conflict → **Union law is stronger.**

4. Residuary Power

Some subjects **are not mentioned in any list.**

Example:

- Computer software
- New technology

These are called **residuary subjects.**

Power to make laws on these belongs to the **Union Government.**

5. Unequal Powers in Some States

India is a **“holding together federation.”**

So all states **do not have exactly the same powers.**

Some states have **special provisions under Article 371.**

Examples include:

- Assam
- Nagaland
- Arunachal Pradesh
- Mizoram

These provisions protect:

- tribal culture
- land rights
- employment preferences.

6. Union Territories

Some areas are **too small to become states.**

They are called **Union Territories.**

Examples:

- Chandigarh
- Lakshadweep
- Delhi

These areas are **mainly controlled by the Central Government.**

7. Changing the Power-Sharing System

This system **cannot be changed easily.**

Steps required:

1. **Two-thirds majority in Parliament**
2. Approval by **at least half of the State legislatures**

This protects **federal balance.**

8. Role of Courts

The **judiciary acts as an umpire.**

If disputes arise between central and state governments:

- Supreme Court of India
- High Courts of India

decide the issue.

9. Financial Powers

Both governments need money to run the country.

So both can **collect taxes.**

Example:

| Government | Taxes |
|-------------------|------------------------|
| Union | Income tax, customs |
| State | Sales tax, excise duty |

❖ How is federalism practised?

How Federalism is Practised in India

The Constitution of India provides rules for federalism, but **rules alone are not enough.**

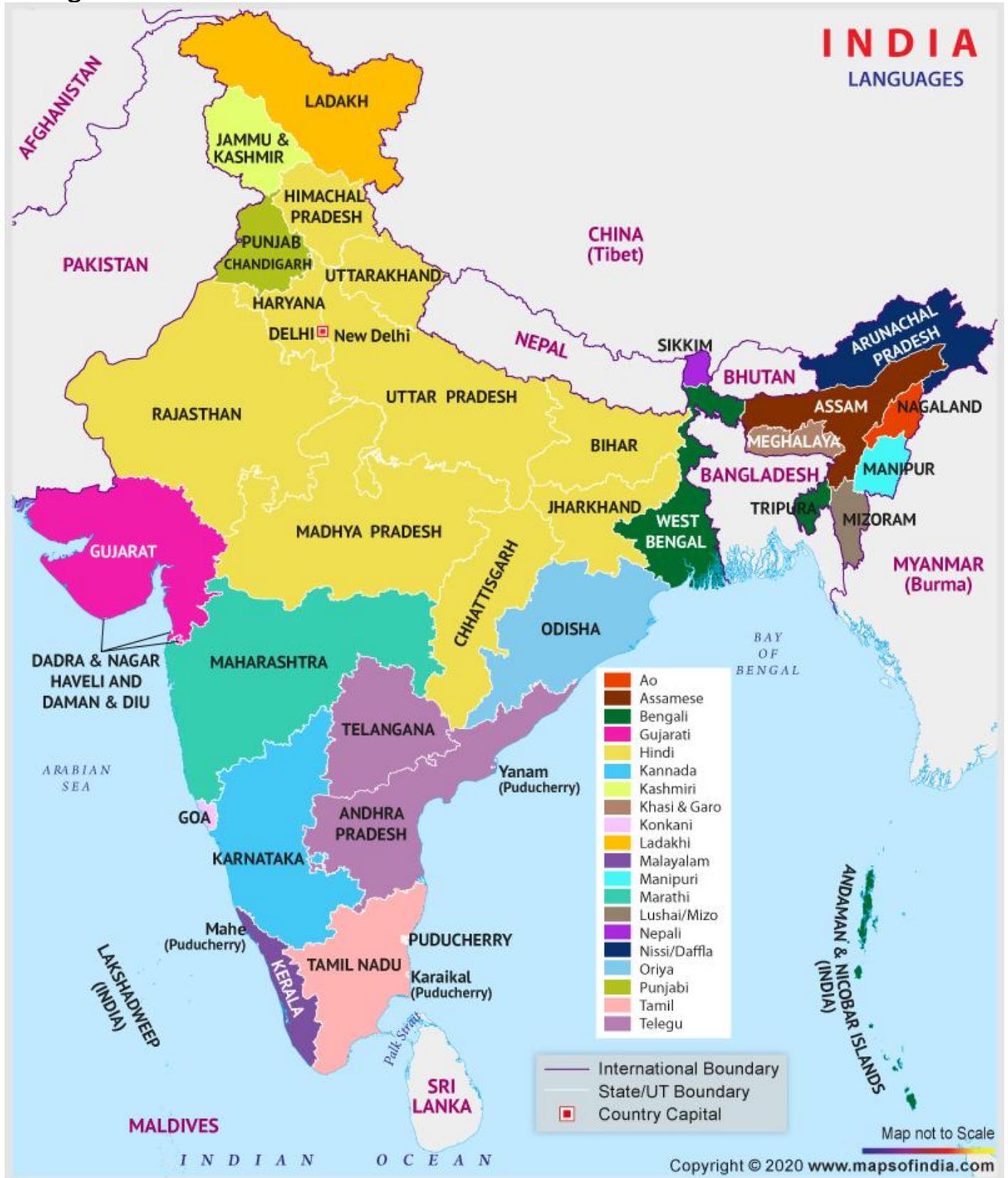
The **success of federalism in India** is mainly because of **democratic politics**, which encourages:

- respect for diversity

- cooperation between regions
- unity in the country

Three major developments strengthened federalism.

1. Linguistic States



This means:

→ People speaking the **same language were grouped into the same state.**

Example:

- Andhra Pradesh created for Telugu speakers
- Maharashtra for Marathi speakers
- Gujarat for Gujarati speakers

Some states were created for **cultural or geographical reasons**, such as:

- Nagaland
- Uttarakhand
- Jharkhand

Initially, leaders feared this would **break the country**, but the opposite happened.

Result:

- Stronger national unity
- Easier administration

2. Language Policy

India has **many languages**, so language policy was very sensitive.

Important decisions:

- **No language was declared the national language.**
- Hindi was made the **official language** of the Union.
- English continued for official work.

The Constitution also recognises **22 Scheduled Languages**.

Example languages:

- Bengali
- Tamil
- Telugu
- Marathi
- Punjabi

States can choose **their own official language** for government work.

Example:

- Tamil Nadu uses Tamil
- West Bengal uses Bengali

Because the government did not **force Hindi**, India avoided the language conflicts seen in Sri Lanka.

3. Centre–State Relations

The relationship between the **Central Government and State Governments** also evolved.

Earlier situation (before 1990)

Often the **same political party ruled both Centre and states.**

This caused problems:

- Central government sometimes **misused power**
- State governments controlled by other parties were **dismissed**

This weakened federalism.

Situation after 1990

Big political change happened.

- Rise of **regional political parties**
- Beginning of **coalition governments**

Example regional parties:

- Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam
- Telugu Desam Party
- Shiromani Akali Dal

❖ Scheduled Languages of India (with Percentage of Speakers)

| Language | % of Speakers |
|----------|---------------|
| Assamese | 1.26% |

| Language | % of Speakers |
|-----------|-------------------|
| Bengali | 8.03% |
| Bodo | 0.12% |
| Dogri | 0.21% |
| Gujarati | 4.58% |
| Hindi | 43.63% |
| Kannada | 3.61% |
| Kashmiri | 0.56% |
| Konkani | 0.19% |
| Maithili | 1.12% |
| Malayalam | 2.88% |
| Manipuri | 0.15% |
| Marathi | 6.86% |
| Nepali | 0.24% |
| Odia | 3.10% |
| Punjabi | 2.74% |
| Sanskrit | Very few speakers |
| Santali | 0.61% |
| Sindhi | 0.23% |
| Tamil | 5.70% |
| Telugu | 6.70% |
| Urdu | 4.19% |

❖ Decentralisation in India

1. Why a Third Level of Government Was Needed

India is a very large and diverse country.

Examples:

- Uttar Pradesh has a population larger than Russia.
- Maharashtra is comparable in size to Germany.

Because states are so big, only Central and State governments cannot manage all local problems.

So another level of government was needed.

2. What is Decentralisation?

Decentralisation means:

→ Taking power away from the Central and State governments and giving it to local governments.

Reasons for decentralisation:

- Local people understand local problems better
- Decisions can be made faster
- People can directly participate in democracy

This is called local self-government.

3. Early Local Governments (Before 1992)

Local bodies like:

- Panchayats in villages
- Municipalities in cities

already existed, but they had problems:

- Elections were not regular
- They had very little power
- They depended on State governments

So decentralisation was not very effective.

4. Major Reform in 1992

A very important step was taken in 1992 through constitutional amendments.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act strengthened local governments.

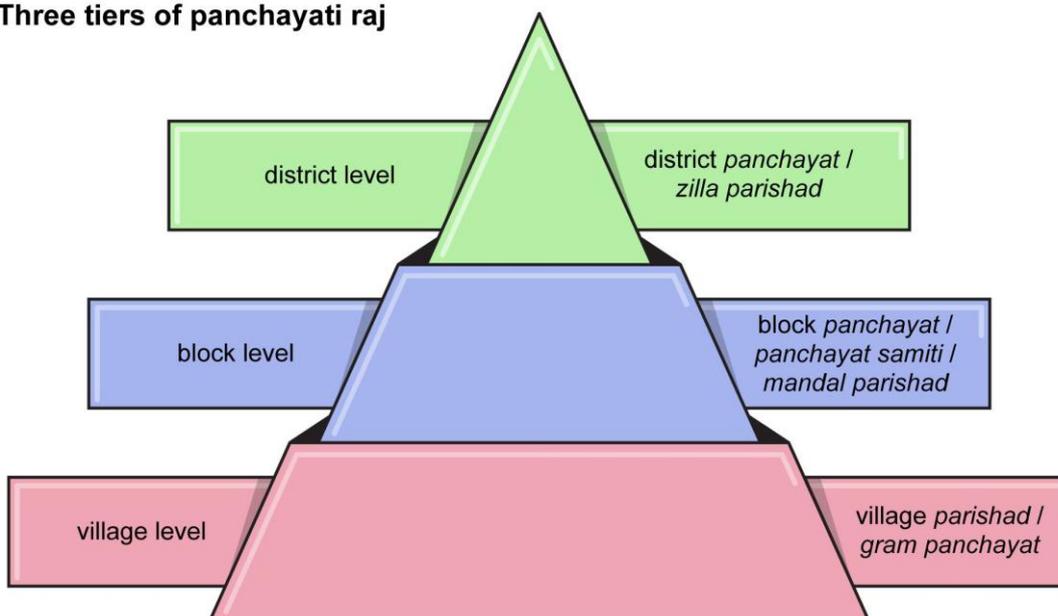
Important changes:

- 1 Regular elections to local bodies became compulsory.
- 2 Seats reserved for SC, ST and OBC communities.
- 3 At least one-third seats reserved for women.
- 4 Each state created a State Election Commission to conduct local elections.
- 5 State governments must share powers and funds with local bodies.

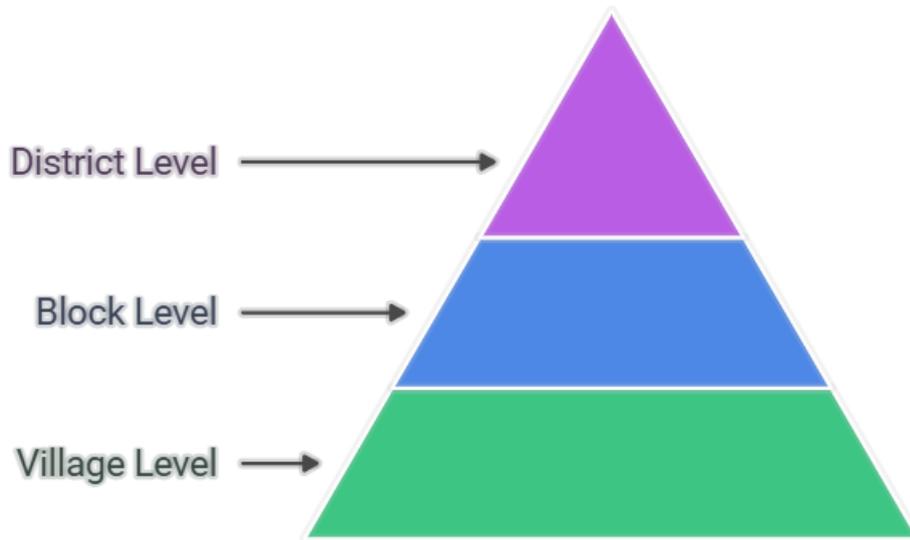
These changes made the third tier of democracy stronger.

❖ . Rural Local Government (Panchayati Raj)

Three tiers of panchayati raj



Panchayati Raj Governance Structure



Local government in villages is called Panchayati Raj.

Structure:

| Level | Institution |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Village level | Gram Panchayat |
| Block level | Panchayat Samiti |
| District level | Zila Parishad |

At the village level:

- The **Gram Panchayat** consists of **ward members (panch)**.
- The head is called the **Sarpanch**.
- They are **directly elected by the people**.

6. Urban Local Government

Cities and towns have **Municipalities**.

Examples:

| Type | Area |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| Municipal Corporation | Big cities |
| Municipality | Smaller cities |
| Nagar Panchayat | Small towns |

These bodies manage:

- water supply
- sanitation
- roads

- street lights

7. Three-Tier Federal Structure of India

Level Government

- ① Union (Central) Government
- ② State Governments
- ③ Local Governments (Panchayats & Municipalities)

1. Gram Panchayat (Village Level)

The **Gram Panchayat** is the **local government at the village level**.

Key points:

- Members are called **Panch**.
- The head is called the **Sarpanch**.
- They are **directly elected by all adult voters in the village**.

Functions:

- Manage village development
- Maintain roads, water supply, sanitation
- Implement government schemes



2. Gram Sabha

The **Gram Sabha** is the **most important body in village democracy**.

Members:

- **All voters of the village**

Role:

- Supervises the Gram Panchayat
- Approves the **annual budget**
- Reviews the **work of the panchayat**

Meetings:

- Held **2–3 times a year**

So, **Gram Sabha = people of the village directly participating in decisions**.

3. Panchayat Samiti (Block Level)

A group of **several Gram Panchayats** forms a **Panchayat Samiti**.

Other names:

- Block
- Mandal

Functions:

- Coordinates development between villages
- Implements larger projects like irrigation, schools etc.

Members are **elected by Panchayat representatives.**

4. Zilla Parishad (District Level)



At the **district level**, the local government body is the **Zilla Parishad**.

Members include:

- Elected representatives
- Members of Lok Sabha from that district
- MLAs
- Local officials

The **Chairperson** is the political head of the Zilla Parishad.

5. Urban Local Government

Cities and towns also have local governments.

| Area | Local Body | Head |
|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| Small towns | Municipality | Chairperson |
| Big cities | Municipal Corporation | Mayor |

Example cities with municipal corporations:

- Delhi
- Mumbai
- Kolkata

These bodies manage:

- roads
- sanitation
- water supply
- street lights

- public health

6. Why District Magistrate (DM) Still Has Power

The question in the book asks:

Why does the **District Magistrate / Collector** run the district instead of the Zilla Parishad chairperson?

Reason:

- The **District Magistrate** is a **senior government officer appointed by the state government**.
- He/she coordinates **administration, law and order, and government departments**.
- The **Zilla Parishad handles local development**, but the DM handles **overall administration**.

7. Full Structure of Local Government in India

| Level | Rural Area | Urban Area |
|----------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Village | Gram Panchayat | — |
| Block | Panchayat Samiti | — |
| District | Zilla Parishad | — |
| Town | — | Municipality |
| City | — | Municipal Corporation |