


# **Federalism**

Complete Chapter Study Notes

**Class 10 Political Science**

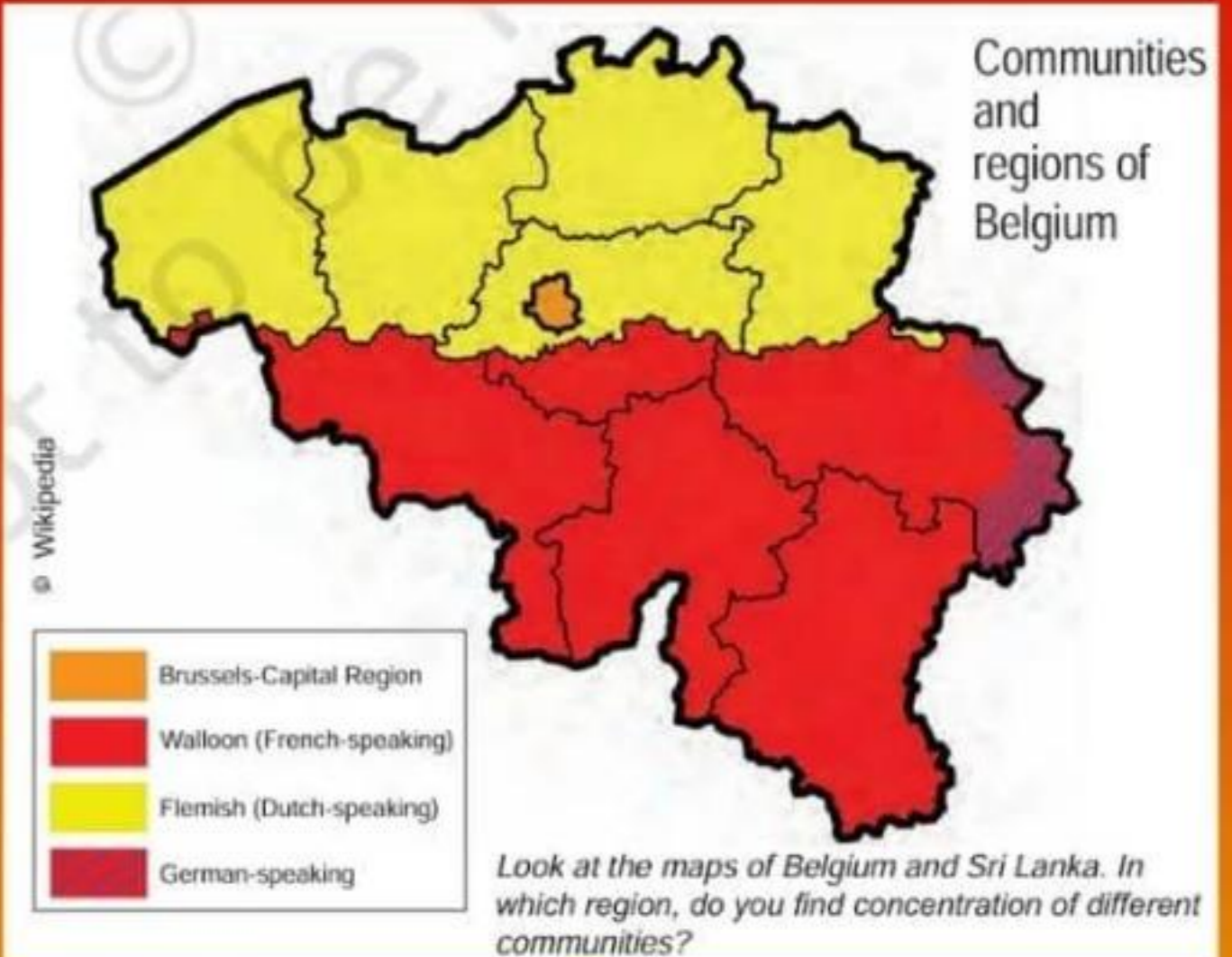
# Belgium vs. Sri Lanka

- **Sri Lanka (Unitary):** Continues to be a unitary system where the national government holds all practical powers, often leading to conflict (e.g., Tamil leaders demanding autonomy).
- **Belgium (Federal):** Shifted from a unitary to a federal form of government in 1993.
- Regional governments in Belgium were given constitutional powers that were no longer dependent on the central government.
- This sharing of power reduced conflict and accommodated regional diversity.



**NCERT CIVICS CLASS 10 CHAPTER 1 NOTES**

**BELGIUM AND SRI LANKA**



Communities and regions of Belgium

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Look at the maps of Belgium and Sri Lanka. In which region, do you find concentration of different communities?

# 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.

- Usually features at least two levels of government.
- One government for the entire country (handles national interests).
- Governments at the provincial/state level (handles day-to-day administration).
- Both levels enjoy their power independent of the other.



# Unitary vs. Federal

## Unitary System

Either there is only one level of government, or the sub-units are entirely subordinate to the central government.





The central government can pass orders to the provincial or local government. The local units lack independent constitutional power.

## Federal System





The central government cannot order the state government to do something. State governments have powers of their own.

State governments are not answerable to the centre. Both governments are separately answerable to the people.

# Key Features (Part 1)

-  **Multiple Tiers:** There are two or more levels (or tiers) of government governing the same citizens.
-  **Separate Jurisdiction:** Each tier has its own jurisdiction in specific matters of legislation, taxation, and administration.
-  **Constitutional Guarantee:** The jurisdictions of the respective levels or tiers of government are clearly specified in the constitution.
-  **Mutual Consent:** Fundamental provisions of the constitution cannot be unilaterally changed by one level. Changes require the consent of both levels.

# Key Features (Part 2)

-  **Independent Judiciary:** Courts have the power to interpret the constitution and powers of different levels. The highest court acts as an umpire in disputes.
-  **Financial Autonomy:** Sources of revenue for each level of government are clearly specified to ensure financial independence.
-  **Dual Objectives:** Federalism safeguards and promotes the unity of the country, while simultaneously accommodating regional diversity.
-  **Prerequisites:** An ideal federal system requires mutual trust and an agreement to live together.

# Routes of Federalism

## "Coming Together" Federation

Independent States coming together on their own to form a bigger unit to increase security by pooling sovereignty.

**Power Balance:** All constituent States usually have equal power and are strong vis-à-vis the federal government.

*Examples: USA, Switzerland, Australia.*

## "Holding Together" Federation

A large country decides to divide its power between the constituent States and the national government.

**Power Balance:** Central Government tends to be more powerful. Constituent units often have unequal powers (some get special status).

*Examples: India, Spain, Belgium.*

# India: A Federal Nation

The Constitution declared India as a **Union of States**. Although it didn't use the word federation, the Indian Union is based on federal principles.

- Originally provided a two-tier system: Union (Central) Government and State Governments.
- A third tier was later added in the form of Panchayats and Municipalities.
- These different tiers enjoy separate jurisdiction, guaranteed by the Constitution.



# Distribution of Powers

List Name	Types of Subjects	Who Makes Laws?
<b>Union List</b>	Subjects of national importance (Defence, foreign affairs, banking, currency, communications).	<b>Union Government</b> alone. Uniform policy is needed across the country.
<b>State List</b>	Subjects of State and local importance (Police, trade, commerce, agriculture, irrigation).	<b>State Governments</b> alone.
<b>Concurrent List</b>	Subjects of common interest (Education, forest, trade unions, marriage, succession).	<b>Both Union &amp; State.</b> If laws conflict, Union law prevails.

# Asymmetric Federalism

- **Special Status (Article 371):** States like Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Mizoram enjoy special powers due to peculiar social/historical circumstances (protecting indigenous land rights and culture).
- **Union Territories:** Areas too small to be independent states (e.g., Chandigarh, Lakshadweep, Delhi). The Central Government has special powers in running these areas.
- **Residuary Powers:** Subjects that came up after the constitution was made (e.g., computer software) fall under Union control.



# Constitutional Rigidity

**It is not easy to make changes to this power sharing arrangement. The Parliament cannot on its own change this arrangement.**

*– Requirement: 2/3rd majority in both Houses + Ratification by half the States.*

The **judiciary** plays a crucial role in overseeing the implementation of these provisions, acting as an umpire in Centre-State disputes.

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# Practising Federalism

Constitutional provisions are necessary but not sufficient. The real success of federalism in India can be attributed to the nature of **democratic politics**, respect for diversity, and the shared desire to live together.

# Linguistic States

- The creation of linguistic States was the first and major test for democratic politics in India (1947 onwards).
- Boundaries were changed to ensure people speaking the same language lived in the same State.
- Some states were created to recognize differences based on culture, ethnicity, or geography (e.g., Nagaland, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand).
- **Result:** Instead of causing disintegration, it has actually made the country more united and administration easier.



# Language Policy



- Hindi as Mother Tongue (~44%)
- English (2nd/3rd Language) (~11%)
- Other 21 Scheduled Languages

Our Constitution did not give the status of **national language** to any one language. The flexibility shown by leaders—like continuing English for official use alongside Hindi—helped avoid major conflicts.

# Centre-State Relations



## Pre-1990 Era

For a long time, the same party ruled both at the Centre and in most States. Central Governments often misused the Constitution to arbitrarily dismiss rival State Governments, undermining federalism.



## Post-1990 Era

Saw the rise of regional political parties and the era of **Coalition Governments**. Major national parties had to enter alliances, leading to a new culture of power sharing and respect for state autonomy.



## Role of Supreme Court

This trend was supported by major Supreme Court judgments that made it extremely difficult for the Central Government to dismiss state governments in an arbitrary manner.






# Decentralisation

**Rationale:** Indian states are as large as independent countries. Decentralisation takes power from Central/State governments and gives it to local bodies.

- Local people have better knowledge of local problems.
- They have better ideas on where to spend money efficiently.
- Promotes direct participation in decision making (local self-government).



# The 1992 Amendment

-  **Mandatory Elections:** It is constitutionally mandatory to hold regular elections to local government bodies.
-  **Reservations:** Seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes (OBCs).
-  **Women Empowerment:** At least one-third of all positions are reserved for women.
-  **Independent Bodies:** An independent State Election Commission was created in each state to conduct panchayat and municipal elections.
-  **Revenue Sharing:** State governments are required to share some powers and revenue with local bodies.

# Panchayati Raj System

## Panchayat Samiti

Also known as Block or Mandal. Formed by grouping a few Gram Panchayats. Members are elected by panchayat members.



## Gram Panchayat

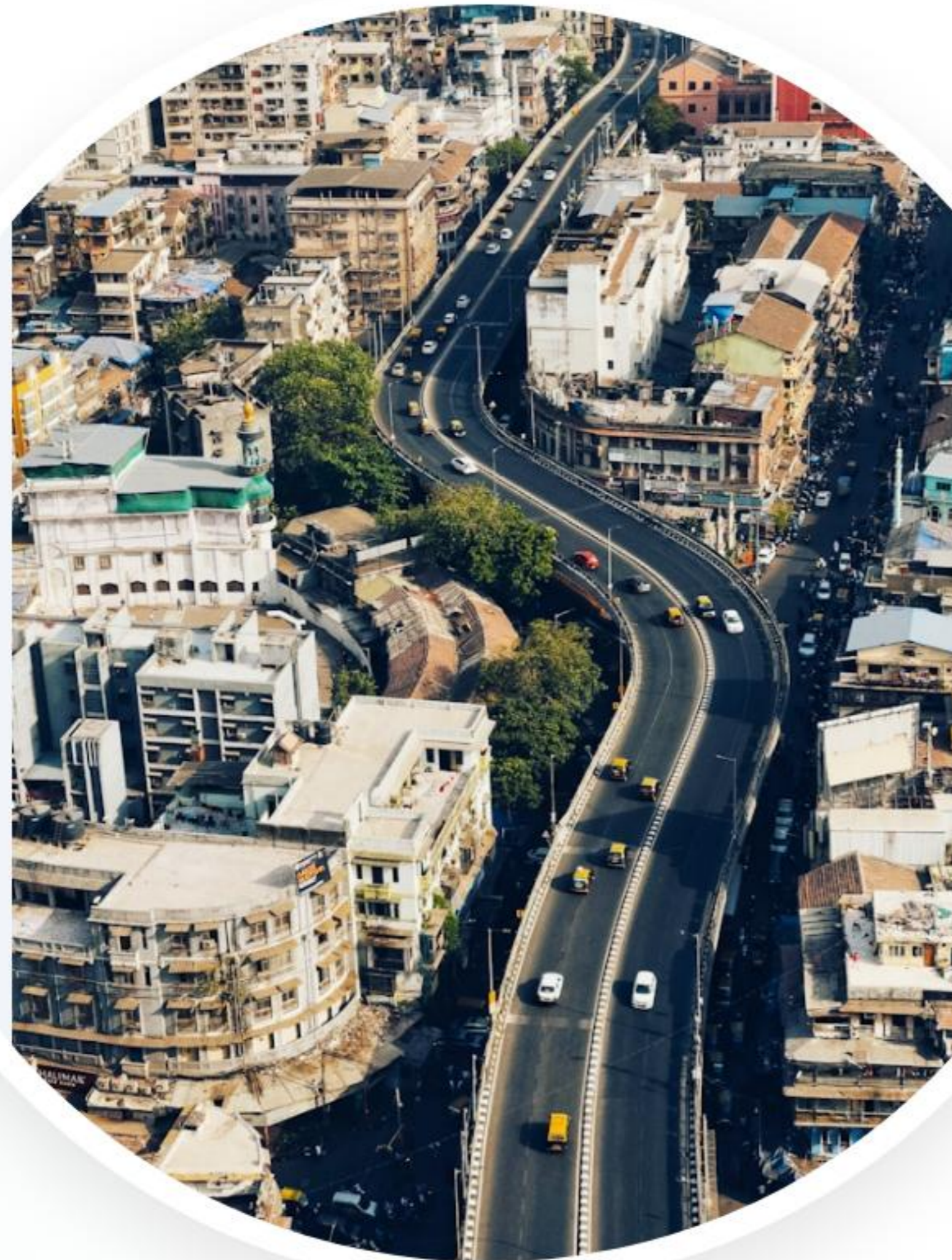
Council at the village level with ward members (Panch) and a Sarpanch. Works under the supervision of the Gram Sabha (all voters).



## Zilla Parishad

District-level body formed by all Samitis. Includes MPs, MLAs. The Zilla Parishad chairperson is the political head.

# Urban Local Government



## Municipalities & Corporations

Municipalities are set up in towns, while big cities are constituted into **Municipal Corporations**. Both are controlled by elected bodies.

The Municipal Chairperson is the political head of a municipality, while in a corporation, this officer is called the **Mayor**.

*Global Example: Porto Alegre (Brazil) runs an extraordinary experiment in participative democracy, allowing 13 lakh people to participate in the city budget.*

# Evaluating Indian Federalism

The new system of local government is the largest experiment in democracy conducted anywhere in the world, with over 36 lakh elected representatives.

While it has deepened democracy and increased women's representation, challenges remain.

Gram Sabhas are not held regularly, and states have not transferred significant powers or resources. We are still on the journey to the ideal of true self-government.

# Image Sources



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