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Q5(e)

What do you understand by democratic federalism? How does it promote decentralization of power in India?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2020 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Politics and Society

Politics and Society: Nation, democracy and citizenship; Political parties, pressure groups, social and political elite; Regionalism and decentralization of politics; Secularization.

Core demand of the question

- What do you understand by democratic federalism? How does it promote decentralization of power in India?
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Democratic federalism is multi-level government filled by votes.

Indian states decentralize linguistic and policy power from the Union.

73rd and 74th Amendments push toward local bodies.

Scheduled councils are an ethnic federal path.

Central schemes and local caste capture can reverse the flow.

Introduction

Democratic federalism is a union of governments in which both the Centre and the units draw power from votes, not from a single appointed chain. In India it promotes decentralization when states and local bodies are real governments, not branch offices.

Body

Meaning

- Federalism divides competence. Democracy fills both tiers with elected authority and rights.
- India is a Union with a strong Centre, yet states have political life, which Kothari's democratic deepening used.

How it decentralizes

- States make education, health, and law-and-order bargains closer to linguistic peoples, a check on one-culture nationalism.
- **73rd and 74th Amendments** take power toward panchayats and municipalities, including women and weaker sections on paper.
- Finance commissions, **GST Council**, and scheme sharing are federal arenas, even when the Centre is loud.
- **Sixth Schedule** councils illustrate ethnic democratic federalism for some tribal areas.

Limits

- Concurrent muscle, CAG of all-India services, and centrally sponsored missions can recentralize.
- Village capture by dominant castes can make local democracy a faction office.

Promotion, not guarantee

- Democratic federalism is the constitutional path of decentralization. Practice decides the last mile.

Flow diagram

Democratic federalism -> Elected states
Democratic federalism -> Panchayat municipality
Elected states -> Decentralized power
Panchayat municipality -> Decentralized power

Conclusion

Democratic federalism is voted power at more than one level. It promotes Indian decentralization through states, local government, and scheduled councils, whenever the Union resists turning them into agencies.

Facts & figures

73rd and 74th Amendments

Constitutional local government as a third tier.

GST Council

A federal bargaining forum on tax, a test of cooperative federalism.

Sixth Schedule

Autonomous councils as decentralized tribal democracy.

Centrally sponsored schemes

Money that can recentralize priorities even under federal form.