



QUESTION

How far has the Indian federal framework been successful in accommodating regional and cultural diversities? Highlight the role of asymmetric federalism and suggest measures to make dispute resolution mechanisms more effective.

15 MARKS

250 WORDS

HOW FAR · HIGHLIGHT · SUGGEST

DECODING THE DIRECTIVE

- ♦ **How far** — assess the extent of success while acknowledging limitations.
- ♦ **Highlight** — explain the significance of asymmetric federal arrangements.
- ♦ **Suggest** — provide practical reforms for more effective dispute resolution.

Model Answer

. Introduction

India's federal framework combines constitutional federalism with a strong Union, while allowing differentiated arrangements to accommodate its extraordinary regional, linguistic, tribal and cultural diversity. Its relative success is reflected in India's ability to maintain national unity alongside substantial diversity.

. Accommodating Regional and Cultural Diversity

- 01 Linguistic accommodation:** the reorganisation of states largely on linguistic lines, beginning with the States Reorganisation Act, 1956, transformed linguistic aspirations into constitutional political units.
- 02 Constitutional recognition:** the Eighth Schedule, cultural and educational rights under Articles 29–30, and provisions for tribal autonomy have enabled diverse communities to preserve their identities.
- 03 Democratic accommodation:** regional parties and coalition politics have enabled state-specific interests to influence national policymaking, strengthening India's cooperative and competitive federalism.
- 04 Fiscal accommodation:** Finance Commission transfers, centrally sponsored schemes and GST mechanisms facilitate redistribution across economically unequal states.

However, concerns regarding centralisation, Governor-related controversies, fiscal dependence, inter-state disputes and regional development inequalities indicate that accommodation remains incomplete.

. Role of Asymmetric Federalism

India employs asymmetric federalism, under which different states or regions enjoy differentiated constitutional arrangements based on their historical, geographical or socio-cultural circumstances.

- ◆ **Sixth Schedule:** Autonomous District Councils in parts of the Northeast protect tribal customary practices and local self-governance.
- ◆ **Article 371 series:** provides special provisions for states such as Nagaland, Mizoram, Maharashtra and Gujarat, among others.
- ◆ **Fifth Schedule:** provides a special governance framework for Scheduled Areas and tribal populations.

Asymmetric federalism follows the principle of
“unity without uniformity” — diversity coexisting with national integration.

. Making Dispute Resolution More Effective

- 01 **Strengthen the Inter-State Council** as a regular forum for political negotiation and consensus-building.
- 02 **Revitalise Zonal Councils** for preventive resolution of regional and inter-state issues.
- 03 **Establish time-bound mechanisms** for water and boundary disputes, supported by reliable scientific data.
- 04 **Ensure institutional neutrality** and transparency in dispute-resolution bodies.
- 05 **Promote cooperative federalism** through prior consultation and structured Centre–State dialogue.

. Conclusion

Indian federalism has been substantially successful, though not flawless, in accommodating diversity. Its greatest strength lies in its flexibility — particularly the asymmetric arrangements that recognise India’s differentiated identities. Strengthening dialogue-based institutions and making dispute resolution timely, impartial and evidence-based can further deepen India’s constitutional vision of “unity in diversity”.



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