

Q6) Illustrate with global and local examples the advantages and disadvantages of a federal system of governments?

Ans) ① INTRODUCTION :-

Federal system of Government or simply Federalism is a political concept used to describe a system of government in which sovereignty is constitutionally divided between a central governing authority and constituent political units. In Federalism, powers are constitutionally divided. There is a covenant between the central authority and the state in the division of powers in Federal system of government. It's a concept that opposes total resting of administrative and fiscal powers with the center and aims for making federation strong. It happens when the constituent parts of the government are empowered.

A federal system of government has both its negative as well as positive attributes which has a profound effect on the governance.

①.2 Definition :- A federal system of government can be defined as:-

"Federalism is the distribution of power between a central authority and the constituent units."

(Merion Webster)

" A system in which the power is constitutionally divided between the national (federal) government and the constituent units (territorial units). "

## ② ADVANTAGES OF FEDERAL SYSTEM.

The pros and cons of a federal system of government has been the subject of debate since the very creation of the concept of federalism. Some of its advantages are the following.

(i) Ensures the separation of Powers and prevents Tyranny. Federal system makes the national and sub-national institutions stronger as powers are dispersed between the centre and its units. It ends one man show and minimizes despotic centralized system.

Even if one person or group took control of all three branches of federal government, federalism ensures that state governments would still function independently.

Therefore, it fulfills the former's vision of a governmental structure that ensures liberty.

## (ii) Fosters State Loyalties.

It curtails the despotic tendencies of centralized systems and also the misrule of chaos and violence of decentralized power. Therefore, it fosters state loyalties.

### Example

Many Americans feel close ties to their home state, and Federalism maintains that connection by giving power to the states.

### (iii) Practices Pragmatism.

Federalism uses a pragmatic approach and deals with problems in a practical way. It involves Pragmatic Policy Making.

Example Best example in this regard is the United States. Running a country like the size of United States, with such a diverse population, is much easier to do if power is given to local officials. Likewise state and local officials are closer to the problems of their areas. So, it makes sense for them to choose policies to solve these problems.

### (iv) Creates laboratories of democracy.

State governments can experiment with policies, and other states along with the federal government can learn from their successes.

### Example

— Effective Californian Environmental Policies.  
California has frequently led the nation in environmental regulations. Many measures adopted by California are subsequently adopted by other states. And during the 1990s Wisconsin governor Tommy Thompson experimented with welfare policy, and those experiments influenced federal welfare reform.

(v) Leads to political stability.  
It leads to <sup>political</sup> stability

Example

By removing the national government from some contentious issue areas, federal system allowed US government to achieve and maintain stability.

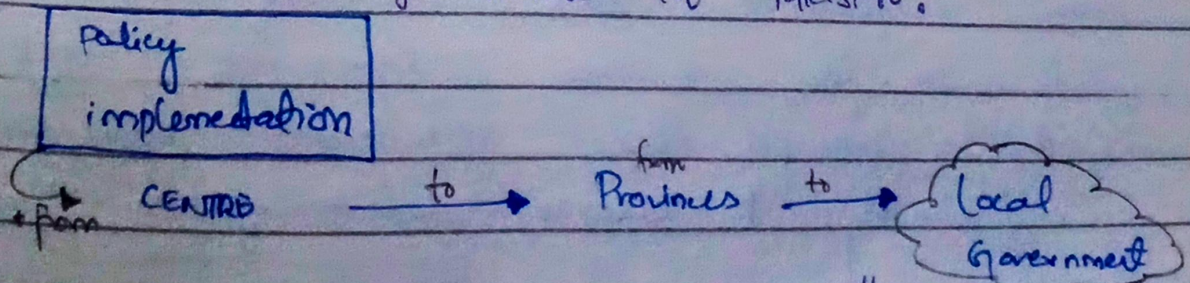
(vi) Encourages Pluralism.

Federal systems expand government on national, state and local levels, giving people more access to leaders and opportunities to get involved in their government. Pluralism refers to enjoying the diversity of thoughts etc.

(vii) Good Public Service Delivery.

Federalism ensures effective and efficient Public Service Delivery, as it involves a proper <sup>institutional</sup> framework till grass root level.

Example For instance policy implementation till grass root level by local governments in Pakistan.



This is how centre engages <sup>with</sup> the citizens and Public Service Delivery is done through a proper governance institutional framework.

(viii) Reduces Burden on centre :-

It reduces the burden on centre as powers are divided. It stops the over-concentration of power at the centre.

Example

With globalization and <sup>emergence of</sup> uncertain trends, the challenges are lot more complex now. For instance, Climate change effects, pandemic etc. Covid caused a lot of problems for Pakistan and the world globally. Similarly, Pakistan faced worst floods as being major <sup>effctee</sup> of Climate change. This increases the burden on centre to handle all problems effectively. But with proper distribution of powers, the work load gets a bit reduced on the centre, with additional help being provided by the units.

(ix) Good Governance :-

With separation of powers, units become more autonomous, thus ensuring good governance. Because it ensures democratic participation and manages the democratic responsibility effectively. It involves decentralization of powers.

Example

Earlier

Devolution of Powers

- Dispersion of powers vertically along hierarchy  $\updownarrow$

Present

Decentralization of powers

- Dispersion of powers vertically and horizontally along hierarchy  $\updownarrow \rightleftarrows$

### (i) Essential system to minimize Xenophobia.

Xenophobia carries the notion of fear and hatred towards foreign races and other ethnicities. In context of federal system, it refers to hatred towards other provincial community or federal government itself. Federalism is necessary in multi-ethnic countries to minimize Xenophobia and maintain social stability.

#### Example

Punjabi-Pakhtun clashes and xenocentrism in Pakistan.

### (ii) Resource sharing. — innovation on indigenous levels.

Federalism involves resource sharing, information sharing and devolution of resources, therefore, ensuring empowerment and innovation on gran level. It ensures empowerment of Street Bureaucracy as well.

#### Example

Sdca tube wells and sdca panels for farmers in Bahawalpur was an indigenous level innovation.

### 3. DISADVANTAGES OF FEDERAL SYSTEM.

Apart from its advantages, federal system harbors its cons as well which makes this system fall short in many ways and increases the challenges.

## "Disadvantages of federalism"

(i) Reverts creation of a national policy

→ It is difficult to achieve national goals as there is lack of <sup>uniform</sup> cohesion of goals.

(eg) → The United States does not have a single policy on issues; instead it has 51 policies, which often leads to confusion.

→ (ii) Lack of Accountability

→ It leads to lack of accountability. The overlap of the boundaries among national and state governments makes it tricky to assign blame for failed policies.

→ (iii) Budget issues

→ Federal system also faces the issue of budget management. It creates budget issues between the centre and its units.

(eg) In Pakistan, for instance, the NFC Award, giving more share to the provinces, affects the centre and its national goals.

→ (iv) Affects National integration

→ It impacts national integration by increasing provincialism.

→ (v) **Regional Deprivation Issues** → It creates a sense of regional deprivation among the units by creating a sense of competition among them.

→ (vi) **Citizen Ignorance Issues** → Critics argue that federalism cannot function well due to ignorance. Citizens often ignore state and local governments, even though these governments have a lot of power to affect people's lives.

|| (eg) || → Most Americans know little about their state and local governments, and turnout in state and local elections is often less than 25%.

→ (vii) **Uneven Priorities**

- Law enforcement and justice are uneven.
- Smaller units may lack money and expertise
- may promote local dominance by special interests.

→ (viii) **Lack of Coordination**

A lot of compromise and effective coordination is required to make a federation work. Lack of coordination among different tiers of government can lead to serious problems for the state.

|| (eg) || Conflicting views on slavery among the north and south resulted in Civil War in the US.



#### ④ Conclusion -

Thus, Federalism encapsulates separation of power among the centre and its units. It has both its pros and cons. However, effective management and a balance can be achieved by proper institutional framework. Good cooperation and necessary compromises among the different tiers of government can make Federal system work much successfully.