

# Salient Features of the Indian Constitution

Did you know that the Indian Constitution has been amended about 106 times over the past years? Here are the salient features of the Indian constitution for students:

## 1. Longthiest Written Constitution

The Constitution of India is the lengthiest of all the written and unwritten constitutions in the world. Moreover, it is a very comprehensive, elaborate, and detailed document. Four factors have contributed to the huge size of our Constitution, they are as follows:

1. Geographical factors: Vastness of the country as well as diversity present in the Indian population.
2. Historical factors: The influence of the [Government of India Act of 1935](#) which was bulky.
3. Single constitution for both, the Centre and the State.
4. Dominance of legal luminaries in the [Constituent Assembly](#).

The Constitution contains not just the fundamental principles of governance but also detailed administrative provisions.

## 2. Drawn From Various Sources

The Constitution of India has borrowed most of its provisions from the constitutions of various other countries. [Dr B R Ambedkar](#) proudly claimed that the Constitution has been framed after 'ransacking all the known Constitutions of the world'.

Moreover, the Constitution has drawn from the Government of India Act of 1935. Furthermore, 75% of the provisions of our Constitution are identical or bear a close resemblance to the Act of 1935. Additionally, the Federal Scheme, the Judiciary, Governors, Emergency Powers, the Public Service Commissions, and most of the administrative details are drawn from this act.

## 3. Blend of Rigidity and Flexibility

A rigid constitution requires a special provision for its Amendment, for example, the American constitution. A flexible constitution, on the other hand, can be amended in the same manner as ordinary laws are made. However, the Constitution of India is neither rigid nor flexible but the synthesis of both. Moreover, Article 368 provides for two types of Amendments.

Some provisions can be amended by the special majority of the Parliament. Which is two-thirds majority of the members of each House and the majority of the total number of each house.

Some other provisions can be amended by a special majority of the parliament and with the ratification of half of the total states.

## 4. Federal System with Unitary Bias

The Constitution of India establishes a Federal system of government.

- It contains the usual features of Federalism, i.e., two government structures, division of powers, written constitution, independent judiciary and bicameralism.
- Although the term 'federation' has not been used in our Constitution, the country has been defined as a 'Union of States'.
- The Constitution has also been described as 'federal in form but unitary in spirit'.

## 5. Parliamentary Form of Government

The Indian Constitution suggests that the Government of India work on the Parliamentary Form of Government. Let us learn more about what it means:

- The Parliamentary system of government is the cooperation and coordination between the legislative and executive organs.
- The Presidential system of government is based on the doctrine of separation of powers between the organs.
- The Parliamentary system is also called the 'Westminster' system of government.

Furthermore, the Features of a Parliamentary system are as follows:

- Majority party rules.
- The system consists of nominal and real executives.
- Membership of the ministers in the legislature.
- The [Prime Minister](#) or [Chief Minister](#) has the role of leadership.
- There is a collective responsibility of the executive to the legislature.

## 6. Synthesis of Parliamentary Sovereignty and Judicial Supremacy

Our Constitution contains the essence of both, Parliamentary Sovereignty and Judicial Supremacy. Let us learn more about what this Salient Feature of the Indian Constitution means:

- Sovereignty in [Parliament](#) comes from the British Parliament.
- The principle of Judicial Supremacy comes from the American Supreme Court.
- The Indian Constitution provides the due procedure of law, made and amended by the legislature.
- Supreme Court on the other hand can declare the Parliamentary laws are unconstitutional through its power of [Judicial Review](#).

## 7. Integrated and Independent Judiciary

The Constitution of India establishes the Judicial system as integrated as well as independent.

- The [Supreme Court](#) is the highest court of appeal in the federal courts.
- It is the utmost protector of the [Fundamental Rights](#) of the citizens and the Guardian of the Constitution.

- There are certain provisions in the Constitution which provide for making the Judiciary independent. They are as follows:
  - Fixed service conditions of the judges.
  - There is a prohibition on the discussion on the conduct of judges in the legislature.
  - All the expenses incurred by the Supreme Court is carried out by the Consolidated Fund of India.

## 8. Fundamental Rights

The Fundamental rights are meant to promote political democracy. There are 6 Fundamental Rights given under the Constitution of India. They are as follows.

- [Right to Equality \(Articles 14-18\)](#)
- [Right to Freedom \(Article 19-22\)](#)
- [Right against Exploitation \(Article 23-24\)](#)
- [Right to Freedom of Religion \(Articles 25-28\)](#)
- [Cultural and Educational Rights \(Articles 25-28\)](#)
- [Right to Constitutional Remedies \(Articles 29-30\)](#)

## 9. Directive Principles of State Policy

The [Directive Principles of State Policy](#) can be classified into three broad categories.

- Socialistic
- Gandhian
- Liberal-intellectual
- The Directive Principles are upheld to protect and promote social and economic democracy.
- They are meant to establish a 'welfare state' in the country.
- However, they are not enforceable by the courts.

## 10. Fundamental Duties

The Constitution did not previously provide for Fundamental Duties. Furthermore, these were added during the [internal emergency](#) by the [42nd Constitutional Amendment Act 1976](#).

- The Constitution provided for the establishment of 11 Fundamental Duties. Some of them were as follows
  - Respect the Constitution, National Flag and National Anthem.
  - Protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of the country.
  - Promote the spirit of common brotherhood.
  - Preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture etc.

## 11. Secular State

The constitution of India stands for a secular state. It does not uphold the banner of any particular community or religion.

- The [Preamble](#) secures all the citizens of India's liberty of belief, faith and worship
- The State shall not discriminate against any citizen based on religion. (Article 15)
- No religious instruction will be provided in any educational institution maintained by the State (Article 28).

## 12. Universal Adult Franchise

The Constitution of India adopts [Universal Adult Franchise](#) as a means of election for the [Lok Sabha](#).

- This is the case in the [State Legislative Assembly](#) as well.
- The voting age was reduced from 21 years to 18 years in 1989 with the 61st Constitutional Amendment Act of 1988.

## 13. Single Citizenship

The Indian constitution is federal and works on a dual polity- Center and States.

- Moreover, it provides for only a single citizenship.
- Such is not the case in countries like the USA, where citizens are provided citizenship of the USA plus the citizenship of the particular State that they reside in.
- However, this is an exception for a few areas like tribal areas and previously Jammu and Kashmir.

## 14. Independent Bodies

India has several Independent Bodies for free and fair working. Some of these are as follows:

- Election Commission for ensuring free and fair elections.
- Comptroller and Auditor General of India to audit the accounts of the Central and State Governments.
- [Union Public Service Commission](#) to conduct examinations for recruitment of All Indian Services and to advise the [Governor](#) on disciplinary matters.
- State Public Service Commission to conduct examinations for recruitment of State services and advise the Governor on disciplinary matters.

## 15. Emergence Provisions

The Constitution envisages three types of emergencies, namely,

- National Emergency on the grounds of war or external aggression
- State Emergency on the grounds of failure of constitutional machinery
- Financial Emergency on the ground of threat to financial stability or credit of India.

During the Emergency, the Central Government becomes all-powerful and the states give into total control of the centre.

## 16. Three-tier Government

Previously the government worked on the dual polity. The Constitution contained information on the powers of the Central government and State governments.

- Later the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments introduced a three-tier government.
- This three-tier government is not found anywhere in the world
- This gave recognition to the panchayats ie rural local governments.
- This was done due to the vastness of the country and the large area to be administered.

## 17. Co-operative Societies

- The 97th Constitutional Amendment Act of 2011 gave constitutional status to co-operative societies.
- Furthermore, it gave these societies the right to form and included this in Fundamental Rights.
- Moreover, it included a new Directive Principle of State Policy on promoting co-operative societies.

## 18. Rule of Law

The Rule of Law is a cornerstone of the Indian Constitution and reflects the principle that no one is above the law.

- This feature ensures equality before the law, meaning every individual—regardless of status, position, or power—is subject to the same set of laws.
- It has been derived from the British legal system.
- The Rule of Law safeguards against arbitrary actions by the government and promotes justice and fairness in governance.
- It upholds the idea that law is supreme, forming the foundation of India's democratic and legal framework.