UPSC with Saurabh Kaushik

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GS-II: POLITY

Previous Year Questions

UPSC Mains 2013 – 2024

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Polity

01. Indian Constitution – Historical Underpinnings & Evolution; Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions, Basic Structure

Sub-Theme	UPSC PYQs (GS-II Polity)	Year	Marks
Amendments & Basic Structure	"Parliament's power to amend the Constitution is a limited power and it cannot be enlarged into absolute power." In the light of this statement explain whether Parliament under Article 368 of the Constitution can destroy the Basic Structure of the Constitution by expanding its amending power?	2019	**15**
	Explain the salient features of the constitution(One Hundred and First Amendment) Act, 2016. Do you think it is efficacious enough 'to remove cascading effect of taxes and provide for common national market for goods and services'?	2017	**15**
Constitutional Morality, Case Laws & Judicial Review	'Constitutional Morality' is rooted in the Constitution itself and is founded on its essential facets. Explain the doctrine of 'Constitutional Morality' with the help of relevant judicial decisions.	2021	**10**
	Explain the constitutional perspectives of Gender Justice with the help of relevant Constitutional Provisions and case laws.	2023	**15**
	The most significant achievement of modern law in India in the constitutionalization of environmental problems by the Supreme Court. Discuss this statement with the help of relevant case laws.	2022	**10**
	What was held in the Coelho case? In this context, can you say that judicial review is of key importance amongst the basic features of the Constitution?	2016	**12.5**
Making of the Constitution, Preamble & DPSP	Did the Government of India Act, 1935 lay down a federal constitution? Discuss.	2016	**12.5**
	Discuss each adjective attached to the word 'Republic' in the preamble. Are they defendable in the present circumstances?	2016	**12.5**
	Discuss the possible factors that inhibit India from enacting for its citizens a uniform civil code as provided for in the Directive Principles of State Policy.	2015	**12.5**
Fundamental Rights & Personal Liberty	"The Constitution of India is a living instrument with capabilities of enormous dynamism. It is a constitution made for a progressive society". Illustrate with special reference to the expanding horizons of the right to life and personal liberty.	2023	**15**
	Discuss Section 66A of IT Act, with reference to its alleged violation of Article 19 of the Constitution.	2013	**10**
	Does the right to clean environment entail legal regulations on burning crackers during Diwali? Discuss in the light of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution and Judgement(s) of the Apex Court in this regard.	2015	**12.5**

	Examine the scope of Fundamental Rights in the light of the latest judgement of the Supreme Court on Right to Privacy.	2017	**15**
	Right of movement and residence throughout the territory of India are freely available to the Indian citizens, but these rights are not absolute. Comment	2022	**10**
	What do you understand by the concept "freedom of speech and expression"? Does it cover hate speech also? Why do the films in India stand on a slightly different plane from other forms of expression? Discuss.	2014	**12.5**
	Right to privacy is intrinsic to life and personal liberty and is inherently protected under Article 21 of the Constitution. Explain. In this reference discuss the law relating to D.N.A. testing of a child in the womb to establish its paternity.	2024	**15**

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02. Functions & Responsibilities of the Union and the States; Issues and Challenges of Federal Structure

Sub-Theme	UPSC PYQs (GS-II Polity)	Year	Marks
Centre-State Relations & Federal Tensions	Discuss the essentials of the 69th Constitutional Amendment Act and anomalies, if any that have led to recent reported conflicts between the elected representatives and the institution of the Lieutenant Governor in the administration of Delhi. Do you think that this will give rise to a new trend in the functioning of the Indian federal politics?	2016	12.5
	Explain the significance of the 101st Constitutional Amendment Act. To what extent does it reflect the accommodative spirit of federalism?	2023	15
	From the resolution of contentious issues regarding distribution of legislative powers by the courts, 'Principle of Federal Supremacy' and 'Harmonious Construction' have emerged. Explain.	2019	10
	Many State Governments further bifurcate geographical administrative areas like Districts and Talukas for better governance. In light of the above, can it also be justified that more number of smaller States would bring in effective governance at State level? Discuss.	2013	10
	What changes has the Union Government recently introduced in the domain of Centre-State relations? Suggest measures to be adopted to build the trust between the Centre and the States and for strengthening federalism.	2024	15
Emergency Provisions & President's Rule	Account for the legal and political factors responsible for the reduced frequency of using Article 356 by the Union Governments since mid 1990s.	2023	15
	Under what circumstances can the Financial Emergency be proclaimed by the President of India? What consequences follow when such a declaration remains in force?	2018	10
Nature of Indian Federalism: Cooperative & Competitive	Constitutional mechanisms to resolve the inter-state water disputes have failed to address and solve the problems. Is the failure due to structural or process inadequacy or both? Discuss.	2013	10
	How far do you think cooperation, competition and confrontation have shaped the nature of federation in India? Cite some recent examples to validate your answer.	2020	10
	Indian Constitution exhibits centralising tendencies to maintain unity and integrity of the nation. Elucidate in the perspective of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897; The Disaster Management Act, 2005 and recently passed Farm Acts.	2020	15
	The concept of cooperative federalism has been increasingly emphasized in recent years. Highlight the drawbacks in the existing structure and the extent to which cooperative federalism would answer the shortcomings.	2015	12.5

	Though the federal principle is dominant in our Constitution and that principle is one of its basic features, but it is equally true that federalism under the Indian Constitution leans in favour of a strong Centre, a feature that militates against the concept of strong federalism. Discuss.	2014	**12.5**
Special Provisions for States (Arts. 370 & 371A)	Recent directives from Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas are perceived by the 'Nagas' as a threat to override the exceptional status enjoyed by the State. Discuss in light of Article 371A of the Indian Constitution.	2013	**10**
	To what extent is Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, bearing marginal note "Temporary provision with respect to the State of Jammu and Kashmir", temporary? Discuss the future prospects of this provision in the context of Indian polity.	2016	**12.5**

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03. Separation of Powers between Different Organs, Dispute Redressal Mechanisms and Institutions

Sub-Theme	UPSC PYQs (GS-II Polity)	Year	Marks
Executive-Legislature Relations & Ordinance Power	Discuss the essential conditions for exercise of the legislative powers by the Governor. Discuss the legality of re-promulgation of ordinances by the Governor without placing them before the Legislature.	2022	15
	Resorting to ordinances has always raised concern on violation of the spirit of separation of powers doctrine. While noting the rationales justifying the power to promulgate ordinances, analyze whether the decisions of the Supreme Court on the issue have further facilitated resorting to this power. Should the power to promulgate ordinances be repealed?	2015	12.5
	To what extent, in your view, the Parliament is able to ensure accountability of the executive in India?	2021	10
	Whether the Supreme Court Judgement (July 2018) can settle the political tussle between the Lt. Governor and elected government of Delhi? Examine.	2018	15
	"The growth of cabinet system has practically resulted in the marginalisation of the parliamentary supremacy." Elucidate.	2024	10
Judicial Activism, PIL & Legislative Oversight	Critically examine the Supreme Court's judgement on 'National Judicial Appointments Commission Act, 2014' with reference to appointment of judges of higher judiciary in India.	2017	10
	Judicial Legislation is antithetical to the doctrine of separation of powers as envisaged in the Indian Constitution. In this context justify the filing of large number of public interest petitions praying for issuing guidelines to executive authorities.	2020	15
	The Supreme Court of India keeps a check on arbitrary power of the Parliament in amending the Constitution. Discuss critically.	2013	10
Separation of Powers & Checks and Balances	"Constitutionally guaranteed judicial independence is a prerequisite of democracy". Comment.	2023	10
	Do you think that constitution of India does not accept principle of strict separation of powers rather it is based on the principle of 'checks and balance'? Explain.	2019	10

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04. Devolution of Powers and Finances up to Local Levels and Challenges Therein

Sub-Theme	UPSC PYQs (GS-II Polity)	Year	Marks
Panchayati Raj & Rural Local Bodies	Assess the importance of Panchayat system in India as a part of local government. Apart from government grants, what sources the Panchayats can look out for financing developmental projects.	2018	15
	In absence of a well-educated and organized local level government system, 'Panchayats' and 'Samitis' have remained mainly political institutions and not effective instruments of governance. Critically discuss.	2015	12.5
	The strength and sustenance of local institutions in India has shifted from their formative phase of 'Functions, Functionaries and Funds' to the contemporary stage of 'Functionality'. Highlight the critical challenges faced by local institutions in terms of their functionality in recent times.	2020	15
	Analyse the role of local bodies in providing good governance at local level and bring out the pros and cons merging the rural local bodies with the urban local bodies.	2024	10
Urban Local Bodies, Decentralisation & Women in Local Governance	"The local self-government system in India has not proved to be effective instrument of governance". Critically examine the statement and give your views to improve the situation.	2017	10
	"The reservation of seats for women in the institutions of local self-government has had a limited impact on the patriarchal character of the Indian Political Process." Comment.	2019	15
	"The states in India seem reluctant to empower urban local bodies both functionally as well as financially." Comment.	2023	10
	To what extent, in your opinion, has the decentralisation of power in India changed the governance landscape at the grassroots?	2022	10

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05. Comparison of Indian Constitutional Scheme with Other Countries

Sub-Theme	UPSC PYQs (GS-II Polity)	Year	Marks
India-USA Comparative Constitutional Study	Analyze the distinguishing features of the notion of Right to Equality in the Constitutions of the USA and India.	2021	**15**
	India and USA are two large democracies. Examine the basic tenants on which the two political systems are based.	2018	**15**
	Discuss India as a secular state and compare with the secular principles of the US constitution	2024	**15**
India-UK Comparative Constitutional Study	Compare and contrast the British and Indian approaches to Parliamentary sovereignty.	2023	**10**
	The judicial systems in India and UK seem to be converging as well as diverging in recent times. Highlight the key points of convergence and divergence between the two nations in terms of their judicial practices.	2020	**10**
India-France Comparative Constitutional Study	Critically examine the procedures through which the Presidents of India and France are elected.	2022	**15**
	What can France learn from the Indian Constitution's approach to secularism?	2019	**10**

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06. Parliament and State Legislatures – Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges; Issues Therein

Sub-Theme	UPSC PYQs (GS-II Polity)	Year	Marks
Bicameral Legislature, Rajya Sabha & Joint Session	Discuss the role of the Vice-President of India as the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.	2022	**10**
	Explain the constitutional provisions under which Legislative Councils are established. Review the working and current status of Legislative Councils with suitable illustrations.	2021	**15**
	Rajya Sabha has been transformed from a 'useless stepney tyre' to the most useful supporting organ in past few decades. Highlight the factors as well as the areas in which this transformation could be visible.	2020	**15**
	The Indian Constitution has provisions for holding joint session of the two houses of the Parliament. Enumerate the occasions when this would normally happen and also the occasions when it cannot, with reasons thereof.	2017	**15**
Parliamentary Committees & Financial Control	Discuss the role of Public Accounts Committee in establishing accountability of the government to the people.	2017	**10**
	Do Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees keep the administration on its toes and inspire reverence for parliamentary control? Evaluate the working of such committees with suitable examples.	2021	**15**
	Explain the structure of the Parliamentary Committee system. How far have the financial committees helped in the institutionalization of Indian Parliament?	2023	**15**
	Why do you think the committees are considered to be useful for parliamentary work? Discuss, in this context, the role or the Estimates Committee.	2018	**10**
Parliamentary Conduct: Privileges, Presiding Officers & MPs	The 'Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Parliament and its Members' as envisaged in Article 105 of the Constitution leave room for a large number of un-codified and un-enumerated privileges to continue. Assess the reasons for the absence of legal codification of the 'parliamentary privileges'. How can this problem be addressed?	2014	**12.5**
	'Once a Speaker, Always a Speaker'! Do you think this practice should be adopted to impart objectivity to the office of the Speaker of Lok Sabha? What could be its implications for the robust functioning of parliamentary business in India?	2020	**10**
	Discuss the role of Presiding Officers of state legislatures in maintaining order and impartiality in conducting legislative work and in facilitating best democratic practices.	2023	**10**
	Individual Parliamentarian's role as the national lawmaker is on a decline, which in turn, has adversely impacted the quality of debates and their outcome. Discuss.	2019	**15**

	The role of individual MPs (Members of Parliament) has diminished over the years and as a result healthy constructive debates on policy issues are not usually witnessed. How far can this be attributed to the anti-defection law, which was legislated but with a different intention?	2013	**10**

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07. Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary; Pressure Groups and Formal/Informal Associations and their Role in the Polity

Sub-Theme	UPSC PYQs (GS-II Polity)	Year	Marks
Pressure Groups & Informal Political Actors	Khap Panchayats have been in the news for functioning as extra-constitutional authorities, often delivering pronouncements amounting to human rights violations. Discuss critically the actions taken by the legislative, executive and the judiciary to set the things right in this regard.	2015	12.5
	"Pressure groups play a vital role in influencing public policy making in India." Explain how the business associations contribute to public policies.	2021	10
	How do pressure groups influence Indian political process? Do you agree with this view that informal pressure groups have emerged as powerful than formal pressure groups in recent years?	2017	10
	Pressure group politics is sometimes seen as the informal face of politics. With regards to the above, assess the structure and functioning of pressure groups in India.	2013	10
	What are the methods used by the Farmers organizations to influence the policy-makers in India and how effective are these methods?	2019	10
Alternate Dispute Resolution & Legal Aid	What are the major changes brought in the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996 through the recent Ordinance promulgated by the President? How far will it improve India's dispute resolution mechanism? Discuss.	2015	12.5
	Who are entitled to receive free legal aid? Assess the role of the National Legal Services Authority(NALSA) in rendering free legal aid in India.	2023	10
	Explain and distinguish between Lok Adalats and Arbitration Tribunals. Whether they entertain civil as well as criminal cases?	2024	10
Judiciary: Activism, PIL & Judicial Democracy	Discuss the desirability of greater representation to women in the higher judiciary to ensure diversity, equity and inclusiveness.	2021	10
	Starting from inventing the 'basic structure' doctrine, the judiciary has played a highly proactive role in ensuring that India develops into a thriving democracy. In light of the statement, evaluate the role played by judicial activism in achieving the ideals of democracy.	2014	12.5
	Explain the reasons for the growth of public interest litigation in India. As a result of it, has the Indian Supreme Court emerged as the world's most powerful judiciary?	2024	15
Union Executive: President, PM & Cabinet	"The Attorney-General is the chief legal adviser and lawyer of the Government of India." Discuss.	2019	15
	Instances of President's delay in commuting death sentences has come under public debate as denial of	2014	12.5

	justice. Should there be a time limit specified for the President to accept/reject such petitions? Analyse.		
	The size of the cabinet should be as big as governmental work justifies and as big as the Prime Minister can manage as a team. How far the efficacy of a government then is inversely related to the size of the cabinet? Discuss.	2014	**12.5**

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08. Salient Features of the Representation of People's Act

Sub-Theme	UPSC PYQs (GS-II Polity)	Year	Marks
Election Commission & Model Code of Conduct	Discuss the role of the Election Commission of India in the light of the evolution of the Model Code of Conduct.	2022	15
	To enhance the quality of democracy in India the Election Commission of India has proposed electoral reforms in 2016. What are the suggested reforms and how far are they significant to make democracy successful?	2017	15
Electoral Reforms & Electoral Process	'Simultaneous election to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies will limit the amount of time and money spent in electioneering but it will reduce the government's accountability to the people' Discuss.	2017	10
	In the light of recent controversy regarding the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM), what are the challenges before the Election Commission of India to ensure the trustworthiness of elections in India?	2018	10
	Examine the need for electoral reforms as suggested by various committees with particular reference to "one nation-one election" principle.	2024	10
Political Parties & Party System	The Indian party system is passing through a phase of transition which looks to be full of contradictions and paradoxes." Discuss.	2016	12.5
	While the national political parties in India favour centralisation, the regional parties are in favour of State autonomy. Comment.	2022	15
Representation of People Act: Disqualification & Election Disputes	"There is a need for simplification of procedure for disqualification of persons found guilty of corrupt practices under the Representation of Peoples Act". Comment.	2020	10
	Discuss the procedures to decide the disputes arising out of the election of a Member of the Parliament or State Legislature under The Representation of the People Act, 1951. What are the grounds on which the election of any returned candidate may be declared void? What remedy is available to the aggrieved party against the decision? Refer to the case laws.	2022	15
	On what grounds a people's representative can be disqualified under the Representation of People Act, 1951? Also mention the remedies available to such person against his disqualification.	2019	15