

Module 4

Political Science

WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

WHY DEMOCRACY?

Definition

- Democracy is government of the people, by the people and for the people – Abraham Lincoln
- Democracy comes from two words-

Greek word 'Demokratia'. In Greek 'demos' means people and 'kratia' means rule.

So, democracy is rule by the people.

Features of the Democracy

In Democracy:

- Who are the rulers?
- What kind of elections?
- Who are the people?
- What kind of a form of govt?

Final decision-making power must rest with those elected by the people.

Differentiate democracy vs government that pretends to be democracy.

Pakistan

- General Musharraf in 1999.
- Overthrew govt. and declared himself "Chief Executive".
- Changed designation to President and in 2002 held referendum for 5 yrs. extension.
- Media believed it was based on malpractices and fraud.

- In August 2002, **Legal Framework Order** amended constitution of Pakistan.

Under this amendment it was said that-

- Now, President can dismiss national and provincial assemblies.
- The work of the civilian cabinet is supervised by a National Security Council which is dominated by military officers.
- This type of Democracy was not the actual one but was being pretended as the officers were not having adequate power and political equality as they were under the orders of Musharraf.
- Elected representatives had some power but most power rests with military officers and Musharraf himself.

❖ Referendum- is a direct and universal vote in which an entire electorate is invited to vote on a particular proposal.

Free and Fair Electoral Competition

China-

- Elections held every 5 yrs. for country's parliament
- Quanguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui (National People's Congress) with 3000 members

(some elected by army) and power to appoint President.

Till 2002-03: Only those who are members of the Chinese Communist Party or 8 smaller parties allied to it were allowed to contest elections- govt. is formed by Communist Party.

Mexico-

- Hold election every 6 yrs. to elect President since 1930, never under military rule.

Till 2000, all elections won by PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party)- it was known to use many dirty tricks to win elections (teachers forced parents to vote for PRI), it spent huge sum of money in campaigning.

In China, the elections do not offer the people any serious choice.

(as only choice was Communist Party)

In Mexico, people seemed to really have a choice but in practice they had no choice (no fair elections as they were forced to cast vote)

Therefore, elections must be fair and offer real choice between political alternatives.

Also, those currently in power must have a fair chance of losing.

One Person, One Vote and One Value

- Democracy linked to demand for universal Adult Franchise.
- Principle of political equality- in a democracy, each adult citizen must have one vote and each vote must have one value.

✚ In Saudi Arabia woman do not have the right to vote.

✚ Estonia has made its citizenship rules in such a way that people belonging to Russian minority find it difficult to get the right to vote.

✚ In Fiji, the electoral system in such that the vote of an indigenous Fiji has more value than that of an Indian-Fijian.

Useful Links-

<https://byjus.com/cbse-notes/class-9-social-science-political-science-chapter-1-what-is-democracy-why-democracy/>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGsvR-j_bvU

<http://ncert.nic.in/textbook/textbook.htm?iess4=1-5>

Self -Assessment Questions

1. What is representative democracy?
2. Give reasons why Pakistan under General Musharraf should not be called a democracy.
3. Name the country where the people belonging to Russian minority find difficult to get the right to vote.
4. Democracy is based on the principle of political equality. Give two instances of denial of equal right to vote.

MODULE 5

Political Science

CH-1 What is Democracy? Why Democracy?

Rule of Law and Respect of Rights

- Democratic Party rules within the limits set by constitutional law and citizen's rights.
- Zimbabwe attained independence from white minority in 1980.
- Since then it was under rule of ZANU-PF (party that led freedom struggle) under leader Robert Mugabe.
- Known for use of unfair practices in election- he changed constitution many times to increase power of President and make him less accountable.
- Public protests against govt. are declared illegal- law that limits the right to criticize president.
- Newspaper and media can't go against the govt.
- Popular govt. can be autocratic and undemocratic- its important to look at elections (also before and after elections)
- What govt. should respect- basic rights to think, have opinions, express in public, form associations, to protest and take political actions- all should be equal before law and protected by independent judiciary.
- Democratic govt. has to respect some guarantees to minorities, all major decisions through consultations, each office bearer has rights and responsibilities.

Summary

- Rulers elected by the people take all the major decisions.
- Elections offer a choice and fair opportunity to the people to change the current rulers.
- This choice and opportunity are available to all the people on an equal basis.
- The exercise of this choice leads to a govt. limited by basic rules of the constitution and citizens' rights.

Why Democracy?

Arguments against Democracy

- Leaders keep changing and cause instability.
- Its political competition and power play with the morality.
- Many consultations lead to delays.
- Elected leaders lead to bad decisions as they don't know best interests.
- Leads to corruption and electoral competition.
- Ordinary people shouldn't decide anything as they don't know what is good for them.

Though Democracy is not the only solution as it has not ended poverty but ensures that people take their own decisions which could or could not be beneficial.

Arguments for Democracy

China famine- 1958-61-where 3 crore people died
(prevented if there was free press to criticize, multiparty election and good opposition)

India responded to food scarcity but China did not.

- Democracy is better than any other form of govt. in responding to the needs of the people.
- It is more accountable form of govt.
- Democracy is based on consultation and discussion – improves quality of decision making.
- It provides method to deal with conflicts and differences- peaceful solution with no permanent winner or loser.
- It enhances dignity of the citizens- political equality to rich and poor.
- It allows us to correct our own mistakes.
- Respect people's own wishes and allows different people to live together.

Broader Meaning

- Collective decisions are not possible as people can't sit together and take a common decision (huge population)
- Even if they could citizens don't have time, desire and skills to take part in decision.
- Those who are not powerful have the same say in taking the decision as those who are powerful.

This helps us to distinguish between minimal and good democracy.

Democracy requires active involvement of all citizens.

Useful Links:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmgAGK-VnRE&feature=youtu.be>

<http://ncert.nic.in/textbook/textbook.htm?iess4=1-5>

Self-Assessment Questions

1. Highlight any 5 unfair practices used by the President of Zimbabwe to win the elections.
2. What does Democracy offer?
3. What is the significance of the rule of law and respect for rights in democratic country?
4. Which body in the Indian political system is an example of direct democracy?