

What is Democracy? Why Democracy?

The word democracy is derived from the Greek word

Demos- People

Kratos- Power or rule

Meaning of Democracy

- Democracy is a form of government in which the rulers are elected by the people.
- Who are the rulers?
- What kind of election?
- Who are the people?
- What kind of form of government?
- Abraham Linkon- Democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

Features of Democracy

- In a democracy the final decision making power must rest with those who elected by the people.
- A democracy must be based on a free and fair election where those currently in power have a fair chance of losing.
- In a democracy, each adult citizen must have one vote and each vote must have one value.
- A democratic government rules within limits sets by constitutional law and citizen's right.
- The opposition parties are allowed to function freely before and after the elections.
- The democratic governments are based on fundamental principles of political equality.

Merits of Democracy

- A democratic government is a better government because it is a more accountable form of government.
- Democracy improves the quality of decision making.
- Democracy provides a method to deal with differences and conflicts. It is suitable the countries like India. India having diversity of language, religion and cultures. Democracy in India made it possible to keep unity in diversity.
- In a democracy no one is a permanent winner or loser.
- Democracy is better than other forms of government because it allows us to correct its own mistakes.
- Democracy enhances the dignity of citizens, because it is based on the principle of political equality, on recognizing that the poorest and least educated have the same status as the rich and the educated.

Demerits or Drawbacks of Democracy

- Leaders keep changing in a democracy. This leads to instability.
- Democracy is all about political competition and power play. There is no scope for morality.
- Elected leaders do not know the best interest of the people. It leads to bad decisions.
- Democracy leads to corruption for it is based on electoral competition.
- Ordinary people don't know what is good for them; they should not decide anything.

Two Types of Democracy- Direct & Indirect

Direct Democracy

It is a political setup, where the people themselves makes the laws and parliament directly in the functioning of the govt.

Decisions are taken on the base of the majority of opinion.

It is suitable for the geographically small countries with less population.

Eg : Ancient Greek/ Rome and India

Modern period- Switzerland

Indirect Democracy

- In the modern world most of the countries are following the in direct democracy.
- It is system, in which the representatives are elected by the people and they act on behalf of the people.
- They are so sensitive to cater the needs and opinion of the people.
Eg ; India/ France/ USA

Pakistan

- General Parvez Mushraff led a military coup in oct 1999.
- He overthrew the democratically elected govt.
- He declared the chief executive of the country.
- In 2002 he changed his position to president
- Then held a referendum- five years extension
- Media, Human right organisations and democratic activist said- referendum was based on malpractices and fraud.
- In Aug 2002- he issued Legal Frame Work order- amended the constitution of Pakistan.
- According to this order- president can dismiss the national or provisional assemblies.
- The work of civilian cabinet supervised by national Security Council dominated by military officers.
- After passing this law the election held to the national and state assemblies.
- The elected representatives have some powers.
- But final power rest with military officers and General Parvez Mushraff

China

- In China elections are regularly held after every five years for electing the Country's parliament- Quanguo Renmin Diabiao Dahui (National peoples congress)
- They have the power to appoint the president
- It have nearly 3000 peoples elected from all parts
- Some members are elected by the army
- Before contesting the elections the candidates needs the approval of Chinese Communist party.
- Only those who member in communist party or eight smaller parties allied to it were allowed to contest election held in 2002-2003.
- The government is always formed by the communist party

Mexico

- Since its independence in 1930, Mexico holds elections after every six years to elect its president.
- The country has never been under military rule or dictator rule.
- But until 2000 all election was won by a party called PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party)
- Opposition parties did contest the elections but never win the election
- The PRI use many dirty tricks to win the election
- All those who employed in govt offices had to attend its party meetings.
- Teachers of govt school forced parents to vote PRI
- Media ignored the activities of opposition parties except to criticise them.
- Some times the polling booths were shifted from one place to another place in the last minutes, which made difficult to the people cast their votes.
- The PRI spent a large sum of money in the campaign for its candidates
- Saudi Arabia/Estonia/Fiji
- Saudi Arabia women do not have the right to vote.

- Estonia 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 such that the vote of an indigenous Fiji has more value than that of an Indian Fijian

Zimbabwe

- Attained independence from white minority- 1980
- Since then the country has been ruled by ZANU-PF, the party led the freedom struggle.
- Leader- Robert Mugabe, has been ruling the country since independence.
- Elections have been held regularly- always won- ZANU
- President is popular- but uses unfair practices in election
- Changed the constitution and increased the power of president and makes him less accountable.
- Opposition party workers harassed and disrupted.
- There is a law that limits the right to criticise the president
- T V and radio were controlled by govt and give only ruling party version.
- There are independent news papers but the govt harasses those journalists who go against this.
- The govt has ignored some court judgments and went against it and has pressurised judges.

BROADER MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

- On this chapter we understood the meaning of Democracy in a limited and descriptive sense.
- We have understood Democracy is a form of govt.
- The most common form that democracy takes in our times is that of a representative democracy.
- In the countries we call democracy, all the people do not rule.
- A majority is allowed to take decisions on behalf of all the people.
- Even majority does not rule directly.

Aims Of Good Democracy

- True democracy will come to this country only when no one goes hungry to bed.
- In a democracy every citizen must be able to play equal role in decision making. For this you don't need just an equal right to vote. Every citizen needs to have equal information, basic education, equal resources and a lot of commitment.