

Democracy

I. Meaning and definitions

- Democracy is a form of government in which all people have an equal say in the decisions that affect their lives
- The term comes from the Greek:(dēmokratía) "rule of the people", which was coined from (dēmos) "people" and (Kratos) "power", in the middle of the 5th-4th century BC to denote the political systems then existing in some Greek city-states, notably Athens following a popular uprising in 508 BC.
- Aristotle considered it as a perverted form of government
- Abraham Lincoln, “it is a government of the people, by the people and for the people”
- Bryce, “Democracy is that form of government in which the ruling power of the state is legally vested , not in any particular class or classes but in the members of the community as a whole”
- Prof. Seeley says, “Democracy is a form of government in which everybody has a share, it is a form of government in which the governing body is comparatively large fraction of the entire nation”
- It places people above the government and projects people as the real source of power, it implies that form of government in which the sovereign power of the state is vested in the people as a whole and the government derives its ultimate authority from them.
- social, economic and cultural conditions that enable the free and equal practice of political self determination

Democracy

- there should prevail social justice in a democracy ,the vast inequalities of wealth are eliminated
- It is a society based on equal opportunity and individual merit, rather than hierarchy and privilege.
- It is a system of welfare and redistribution aimed at narrowing social inequalities.

II. Kinds of Democracy : 1. Pure or Direct Democracy 2. Indirect or Representative Democracy

1. Pure or Direct Democracy

- Garner defines direct democracy as “a form of government in which the will of the state is directly or immediately expressed through the people.”
- the common citizens themselves directly exercise their control over the government and take decisions on public affairs is called pure or direct democracy
- Ancient period - prevailed in the Greek city-states, medieval times - in Italian city-states and in modern times -Switzerland
- Direct Democratic devices
 - **Initiative:** A specific number of voters may draft a bill and send it to the government for its adoption by parliament. Here the people initiate the legislation of a particular bill.
 - **Referendum:** It is a direct vote in which an entire electorate is asked to either accept or reject a particular proposal.
 - **Recall:** The voters may bring back or recall a representative chosen by them in case they are dissatisfied with him.
 - **Plebiscite:** It means a problem of great public importance may be referred to the people and the problem is solved as per the decision of the majority of the people revealed in the plebiscite.

Democracy

2. Indirect or Representative Democracy

- In large and complex societies, when the number of people is too large and the area of the state is too extensive
- people elect their representatives to rule who take decisions on their behalf.
- the responsibility of taking decisions on public affairs and issues of governance and administration as well as of formulating laws towards that end rests with not with the people themselves but with their representatives.
- The representatives are periodically elected by the people

III. Views on Democracy

- **Liberal view:** constitutional democracy
- It enshrines supremacy of the people;
- It takes individual as the basic unit of democratic model, assuming that he is rational, ethical, active and self-interested
- It hated the tyranny of monarchies and aristocracies
- It advocated representative government with elected leadership
- More than one political party freely competing for political power
- periodic election based on universal adult franchise
- Protection of civil liberties

Democracy

- **Gandhian View on Democracy**
- Gandhiji's ideal society was based on democracy without state
- It is an enlightened anarchy in which social life is based not on external but on internal, that is moral restraint
- no relationship of command and obedience, superior or inferior.
- Everybody rules over himself and regulates his own action in the interests of the society because he is a social animal.
- he was a philosophical anarchist and he rejects the state outright and in any of its form.
- state as an instrument on coercion and compulsion which goes against the free moral development of the individual.
- The state represents violence in a concentrated and organized form.
- Gandhiji's concept of state and democracy is based on truth, non- violence, Trusteeship and decentralization.
- in a stateless society there will be proper adjustment between law, freedom and social restraint on the basis of dharma.
- Trusteeship provide a means of transforming the present capitalist order of the society into a classless one

Democracy

- **Marxian view**
- It is fundamentally opposed to liberal democracy believing that the capitalist state cannot be democratic by its nature, as it represents the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie
- they believe that in a capitalist state all "independent" media and most political parties are controlled by capitalists.
- Lenin - "Democracy for an insignificant minority, democracy for the rich - that is the democracy of capitalist society"
- It associated democracy with establishment of a socialist society, and its destruction as a form of state in the higher stage of communism.
- Socialist democracy is the highest form of democracy because it is genuine democracy for the majority of the people.
- Liberal democracy exclusively serves the interests of the bourgeoisie.
- Liberal democracy tries to perpetuate the economic division of society

Democracy

- **IV. condition for the success of democracy**
- **Political Consciousness:**
 - Citizens must keep an eye on the government so that it does not grow authoritarian.
 - The presence of a strong public opinion
 - existence of a free, fearless and unfettered press, which vigilantly guards democracy
- **Rights and freedom:**
 - citizens must be able to enjoy basic civil rights and freedom so that can express and develop their personality.
 - people are given fundamental rights because in the absence of these rights the development of an individual is not possible.
- **Equality:**
 - all kinds of social, economic and political inequalities must be removed.
 - there can be no place for any discrimination based on caste, class, birth, religion or wealth.
 - there should be social justice in a democracy.
 - a democratic state must try to eliminate vast inequalities of wealth.
 - A democracy also depends on good leadership.

Democracy

- **Written Constitution and Independence of Judiciary**
 - Where there is no written constitution, the government can extend and exercise its powers in an autocratic manner
 - constitution guarantees basic rights and freedoms to the citizens.
 - it is the responsibility of the judiciary to protect the fundamental rights of the people and stand as the guardian of the constitution.
 - the judiciary must be independent of any political influence.
 - Independence of Judiciary is another pre-condition for the success of democracy.
- **Law and order:**
- Spirit of Co-operation.
- A democracy can flourish only if there is no big gap between the thinking of the people and of the government and when there is a spirit of co-operation between them
- **Sound Party System:**
- Constructive criticism has an important role in democracy, many parties crop up in democratic set up.
- In the countries where there is only one party, and where other parties are banned, only dictatorship will developed there

Democracy

- **Criticism of democracy**
- Milton Friedman have strongly criticized the idea of democracy on the basis of the irrational voter
- voters are highly uninformed about many political issues, especially relating to economics, and have a strong bias about the few issues on which they are fairly knowledgeable
- Vilfredo Pareto - democracy was illusory, and served only to mask the reality of elite rule
- elite oligarchy is the unbendable law of human nature, due largely to the apathy and division of the masses
- democratic institutions would do no more than shift the exercise of power from oppression to manipulation.
- Plato's *The Republic* presents a critical view of democracy through the narration of Socrates: "Democracy, which is a charming form of government, full of variety and disorder, and dispensing a sort of equality to equals and unequaled alike."

Democracy

V. Procedural and Substantive Conceptions of Democracy

- *Procedural democracy* is a term used to denote the particular procedures, such as regular elections based on universal suffrage that produce an electorally-legitimated government
- The term is often used to denote an artificial appearance of democracy through the existence of democratic procedures like elections when in reality power is held by a small group of elites who manipulate democratic processes to make themselves appear democratically legitimate
- the people or citizens of the state have less influence on the government
- Procedural democracy assumes that the electoral process is at the core of the authority placed in elected officials and ensures that all procedures of elections are duly complied with
- elected representatives use electoral procedures to maintain themselves in power against the common wish of the people (to some varying extent)

Democracy

- *Substantive Democracy*
- is a form of democracy in which the outcome of elections is representative of the people.
- substantive democracy is a form of democracy that functions in the interest of the governed
- socio-economic equality of citizens, tolerance for different opinions, ruler accountability, respect for the rules, and a strong political engagement
- the general population plays a real role in carrying out its political affairs, i.e., the state is not merely set up as a democracy but it functions as one as well.
- this type of democracy can also be referred to as a functional democracy.
- Greater participation by the marginal groups has guaranteed in substantive democracy
- Local governance through the Panchayati Raj institutions has ensured a space for the marginal through reservations in posts.
- Ambedkar - “life of contradictions”...He stated, “In politics we will be recognising the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic structure we continue to deny the principle of one man one value... If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril.