

DEMOCRACY

The word “Democracy” has originated from the two Greek words “Demos” and “Croatia” means a form of government in which the people exercise the power. The people have some kind of control over decision-making. It is a govt. by consent and not by force. Democracy is based on the ideas of freedom and equality. Every citizen above the age of 18 has the right to vote. Democracy is based on the principal of politically equality. According to Abraham Lincoln, Democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

MERITS OF DEMOCRACY

- (i) It is based on equality. There is no discrimination among citizen on the basis of caste, colour, creed, religion, language, or sex.
- (ii) It aims at the welfare of all. The govt. works for the welfare of all people without any discrimination.
- (iii) It is based on public opinion. The representatives who are elected by the people run the administration.
- (iv) The govt. is responsible and accountable to the people.
- (v) It protects right and liberties of the people.
- (vi) Government can be changed through elections
- (vii) It serves as a school for good citizenship.
- (viii) A lot of importance is accorded to individual’s political, social, and intellectual matters.
- (ix) Democracy reduces separation between the electorate and the legislature.
- (x) Democracy enhances the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

DEMOCRACY IN ANCIENT SOCIETEIES

Democracy government of sorts existed in many ancient societies. One has to be cautious while taking about ancient democracies. In ancient Athens, there was a sort of democracy. it was not a true democracy. The population was divided into two great classes. There were the slaves, who had no political or other rights, were no part of Athenian government. They had no right to vote or take part in government affairs. The master had a monopoly of all political rights. Thus, democracy both did and did not exist. The form of government was democratic to the master class. To the slaves. It was not. But a modern democracy is based on poetical equalities.

TYPES OF DEMOCRACY

(a) **Direct Democracy:-** Direct democracy involves the entire population. It is the most extreme form of democracy in which there is simply no difference between people and the govt. and the people are the same. The entire citizen participates in the making of laws, taking of important decisions and executing them. But this system is possible only in those states whose population is very small. This type of democracy was prevalent in ancient societies where the population was less and also many people were not allowed to vote. This system prevails in Switzerland these days. There is less role of political parties under this system.

(b) **Indirect Democracy (Representative democracy):-** Modern states go in for representative form of government in this form of government. The electorate does not ex Modern states go in for representative form of government in this form of government. The electorate does not exercise control over the government directly but do not so indirectly. They choose their representatives who take decisions on their part. The people choose their representatives through elections. Once they are represented, they make laws on behalf of the people who have elected them. If the electorate is not happy with its representative, it may not re-elect them when the election comes round next time. In a representative form of govt, the executive is responsible to the legislature and legislature to the people. The power is exercised at three levels. The people exercise their power through election. Elections get a number of representatives chosen .out of parliament, a cabinet or a council of ministers is formed, which conducts the day – to- day business of the government. The govt. Give explanation to parliament and parliament in its turn is available to the people.

ORIGIN OF MODERN DEMOCRACY

Modern democracies started in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. England was one of the first of set up a democratic system. It began by making rulers accountable towards the ruled. Previously England

had a system of autocratic rule. All political power was with the king. Ruling was the king's privilege. But after the 1688 Glorious Revolution, the people of England decided once for all that the king would rule England but through the parliament. Thus, started the era of reforming the organs of Govt. before this the right to vote was limited only of the royal family and the higher ups. But gradually, the Franchise was granted to the people. The govt. was thus formed by the active participation of the people. The American and the French revolutions reinforced the idea of democracy.

IMPORTANT CONDITIONS FOR WORKING OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy can work smoothly by the active participation of people. The people should be well aware of their rights and duties to make it functional. The people should have faith in democratic principles. The conditions Necessary for the successful working of a democracy are :-

- a) **Educated Citizens:-** People participating in the demo-processes, should be educated. They can have knowledge of their rights and duties properly.
- b) **Economic Inequality:-** Democracy can run smoothly if there aren't extremes of wealth and property. Economic inequality leads to exploitation.
- c) **Equal Social and Political Rights:-** Democracy can be successful if all the citizens are given equal social and political rights. Equality before law right to vote and to fight elections should be given to all.
- d) **Right Leaders:-** The leaders should be honest, hard working and transparent other people to make a democracy successful. They must be men of sound judgment, balanced mind, and good in character.
- e) **Sound Party System:-** Democracy can be successful in a country where political parties are organized on definite political, social and economic principles.
- f) **Strong Opposition:-** Strong and organized opposition is necessary for the successful working of democracy. It checks the govt. from becoming dictatorial. It brings forth the bad policies of the government.
- g) **Peace:-** Democracy can run successful in a country where peace and security prevail. In countries which have perpetual danger of war or revolt, democracy cannot be run successful.

LAISSEZ-FAIRE ECONOMY

The laissez-fair means to leave the individual alone. The term 'laissez fair economy' means an economy worked on the principal that everybody knew his interest and should work for himself. Man need not care about others. It was also called the doctrine of private enterprise. Such a kind of economy leaves industries to the private initiative. There is lot of emphasis on the individual. The potentialities of the state and culminates in economic competition. It creates economic inequality and strengthens capitalism.

HINDRANCE TO INDIA DEMOCRACY

India is considered the largest democracy in the world. But democracy in India is not running smoothly. Many features of India society make the working of democracy particularly difficult. The major hindrances, which come in, the ways of democracy in India, are:-

(a) **Social and Economic Inequality:-** Social and economic equality is the most essential condition for the successful working of a democracy. Indian democracy has not been able to bring about any significant change. Although the Indian Constitution has made every citizen equal in all respects and untouchability has been abolished, but we witness discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, religion, sex, etc. People cannot even exercise the rights freely which have been granted to them by the Constitution.

(b) **Poverty and Unemployment:-** India is very large country and most of its population still lives below the poverty line. Nearly 40 per cent of the people still do not get minimum basic necessities of life, like food, clothing, shelter, water and power, etc. This ever-increasing poverty adversely affects democratic institutions. A poor person can neither be a good citizen nor can he freely participate in political activities, let alone contesting elections. The moneyed and the rich dominate the political system and at times they are able to easily compel the poor voters to sell their votes. Thus, democracy becomes a mockery. The problem of unemployment is related to that of poverty in some ways. A large section of Indian youth, even the educated, is either unemployed or ill-employed.

(c) **Illiteracy and Ignorance:-** Illiteracy also poses a serious challenge to Indian democracy. An illiterate person is not aware of his rights and duties, to the extent that he cannot even cast his vote independently and judiciously. The problems of the country and their solution is completely out of his reach. He can be cheated and deprived and can easily fall a victim to the selfish designs and manipulations

of the unscrupulous politicians. Illiteracy leads to ignorance and ignorant persons become very superstitious. These people, instead of contributing to the success of democracy, hamper its progress.

(d) **Casteism:-** India is a caste-ridden society and casteism is one of the major problems of Indian democracy. Caste plays a predominant role in the elections, which is the bed-rock of a democratic system. The candidates are selected on the basis of caste and the voters also prefer a candidate of this caste.

(e) **Communalism:-** Communalism is another serious problem of Indian democracy. During communal riots, lot of government property, transport and installations are damaged, which put a heavy strain on country's resources also. Mixing of religion and politics has posed the greatest danger to our secular democracy.

(f) **Population Explosion:-** The ever-increasing population of India is a serious problem posing a challenger for the government. Population explosion has affected the Indian economy very badly. Poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and low standard of living of the people are directly linked to the increase in population.

(g) **Regionalism:-** India is a vast country spread over different regions. There is wide diversity in these regions as some are very poor and some very rich. India is full of diversities which give birth to regional imbalances. Regional disparities have become the cause of social conflicts leading to regional imbalances which hinder national growth and development.

(h) **Linguism:-** Linguism has also greatly influenced Indian politics. It is one of the most important aspects and ill-effect of regionalism. Linguism has become a threat to the country and leads to separatism. Language has greatly affected Indian politics. Violent movements over language issue have often proved an obstacle in the way of national unity.

(i) **Separatism:-** Separatism is another big challenge that threatens India's unity. Regional and other diversities lead to a tendency of separatism, which give rise to inter-state, inter-region and Centre-State disputes. When the issues methods, attempts are made to resolve them through violent means.

(j) **Corruption:-** Corruption is a global phenomenon, but it has assumed alarming proportions in India. India rates very high at the international level on the list of corruption. It leads to black money and criminalization, thus making a mockery of democracy as well as obstructing economic growth. As a result of widespread and rampant corruption, general public loses faith in law and order.

(k) **Terrorism:-** It is the biggest enemy of democracy as it destroys harmony, causes anarchy and results in large-scale destruction of property and loss of human lives. Today terrorism poses a grim threat to Indian democracy as well as sovereignty. Punjab, Kashmir, West Bengal, the north-eastern States have been the hot-bed of terrorist activities, threatening India's territorial integrity, legitimacy and governance of the nation.

PUBLIC OPINION

Public Opinion is the opinion, which the people in general hold on questions of common interest at a certain time. It is thus, the reaction of the people towards the activities of the government. The public opinion has to be alert and intelligent and informed. This helps avert a situation in which a government could disregard the rights of the people.

HOW IS PUBLIC OPINION FORMED AND EXPRESSED

Opinion is formed in many ways. For forming public opinion, citizens ought to know as to what is happening around the world and the country. The various agencies for the formation and expression of public opinion are the following:-

- (a) **Press:-** Development of a responsible public opinion will need an active, free and responsible offer criticism well as suggestion for the public affairs. They voice the feeling and views of the people.
- (b) **Radio and T.V:-** Radio and T.V reach a larger number of people and thus play an important in the formation of public opinion. Thy broad cast national and international news educate the people about the happening in the world.
- (c) **Cinema:-** The Cinema can also shape public opinion powerfully. Large number of go to the cinema .Films often speaks about common problems in a society. It can deal with problems like untouchability, casteism communal riots, or questions of poverty and illiteracy. Cinema can head public opinion in a healthy direction.

- (d) **Political parties:-** Political parties organize demonstrations, meetings and processions to attract the attention of the people towards the country's problems. They educate the people and help them to understand those problems.
- (e) **Legislature:-** The representatives of various political parties express their views on various national and international programmes in the legislature. The debates of the legislature are published in the newspapers and they are broadcast over radio and T.V. this it helps in the formation of public opinion.

ELECTIONS

The modern states are run through indirect democracies due to very large population. It is not possible for all the citizens to participate directly in the affairs of the state. Thus, we have period that run the administration according to the wishes of the people. The process by which people elect their representatives is known as Election. The people who have the right to participate in the election are known as Voters and persons who stand for election are known as candidates. Elections are very important in a democracy .Due to huge populations, the modern democracies are representative, and the representatives can be chosen only through an election. People can maintain their control over the govt. through election because their representative know that they can be voted out of power in the next elections if they do not respect the wishes of the people and work for their welfare.

ROLE OF ELECTORATE (Voters)

In a democratic government, the power of controlling the representatives lies with the electorate. The voters can control the govt. through various ways.

- (a) The electorate can criticize the wrong policies of the govt. and hold it responsible for the same.
- (b) Though elections the electors control the govt. they may vote for the party in power, or may opt for another party. The electorate can influence the govt. by holding public meeting, demonstrations and taking out processions etc.
- (c) The electorate can send memorandums and criticize the policies of govt.
- (d) The electorate can influence the govt. by forming strong public opinion against its wrong and unjust policies.

ADULT FRANCHISE

The right to vote is called Suffrage or Franchise. In the beginning, democracy was based on limited franchise only a few people were allowed to vote. Women were not allowed to vote at all. But in modern democracies, every person above the age of 18 is allowed to vote. The rule of one-man one vote is allowed. It gives equal weightage to every citizen whatever his or her sex, race caste, religion, or class. So, when the right to vote or franchise is given to every adult in a state, it is called Universal Adult Franchise. The system of universal adult franchise helps in the establishment of true democracy. It gives equal weight to the opinion of every citizen. Thus, this system is based on political equality.

ACCOUNTABILITY

By the term accountability is meant the responsibility of the rulers. It implies an accountable government. This government is accountable to the electors for all it does. Democratic government has to be essentially a responsible government, which is accountable to the legislature directly and to the people indirectly.

VARIOUS STEPS IN THE ELECTION PROCESS

Election process is completed through various processes,. The most basic parts of the election process are filling in the nomination papers, campaigning, casting of votes, and counting of votes and declaration of the results.

- a) **Filling in the nomination papers:-** Any person who wants to contest the elections can file his nomination papers to the election commission. He should be a citizen of the state and not holding any government office. His name must be here in the voters list and should be proposed and seconded by the voters. Every candidate has to deposit some security along with his nomination papers. A date is fixed for

scrutiny and if the nomination papers of any candidate are not in order, they are rejecting. The candidates can also withdraw their names from elections upto a certain date fixed by the election commission.

b) **Campaigning:-** campaigning is the process by which a candidate tries to persuade the voters to vote of campaigning is to seek people's support for the candidate during elections. Campaigning is important because it is a democratic method canvassing support. A candidate usually adapts the following techniques or methods in an election.

(i) **Posturing :-** Posturing is a common method of campaigning .the posters bearing the name and photographs of the candidates along with the photographs of the national leaders of the party concerned appear on the main road crossing and streets. Every candidate tries to put more and more posters for showing his popularity and for controlling the mind of the voters.

(ii) **Public meetings and speeches:-** The candidates hold public meeting and propagate their programmes and policies. They preach their high points and target the shortcomings and weaknesses of the other parties.

(iii) **Processions:-** Various parties and candidates hold processions using all sorts of transport. The supporters shout slogans in favour of their candidates.

(iv) **House to house canvassing:-** House to house canvassing is also undertaken by the candidates to ask the voters to vote for them. The candidates tell the people about their programmes and listen patiently to the grievances of the people.

(v) **Media :-** Various political parties and candidates use radio and T.V as a means to propagate the message. The leaders express their views in newspapers and appeal to the voters to vote in favour of their parties.

(c) **CASTING OF VOTES (Secret Ballot) :-** The voting takes place on the actual Election Day decided by the election commission. Voters go into the polling booths and use their right to vote through secret ballot. The voter votes for the candidate of his choice in such a manner that the others cannot know about his choice. It enables the voters to cast their precious votes fearlessly and according to their own free will.

(d) **COUNTING OF VOTES:-** After the polling is over, the ballot boxes are sealed and taken to the counting centers. The boxes are opened before the candidates and independent observers and the votes are counted.

(e) **DECLARATION OF RESULT:-** The candidate who secures the highest number of votes is declared elected.

SYMBOLS

Symbol is given to every party contesting the election. The election commission allots it. The symbol is something with which a political party or an independent candidate is generally understood. In allotting symbols, the election commission makes sure that the symbols allotted are not too similar because it can create confusion in the minds of ordinary voters. The symbols are allotted so that even the illiterate voters are able to recognize the party and the candidate of their choice on the ballot paper. It also becomes easier in making of the votes if there is a large number of candidates contesting in a particular area. In our state, the major parties have the following symbols. National conference (plough) P.D.P (pen and inkpot). In India the symbol of congress is hand symbol of BJP is lotus the symbol of CPI is sickle and sheaf of paddy.

SIMPLE MAJORITY

The term simple majority refers to just more than half. In democracy, the representatives are elected on the basis of simple majority. It means that a candidate, who is able to get more votes than other, is declared elected. Simple majority often leads to paradoxes. The elected candidate represents the majority when there are basically two candidates in the field and the election is a straight fight between them. Suppose constituency "A" has 100 voters. There are only two candidates X and Y. in this case, X can win only if he gets more than half of the voters, at least 50 + 1 = 51. The verdict of the people is clear 51, voters wanted them to represent them, 49 did not.

But, if there are three candidates A, B and C and 100 voters in a constituency. Suppose that at the end of the counting the result is A 40, B-30, and C – 30. A gets elected it is because he has simple majority. But negatively, only 40 people wanted him, 60 did not. So, A gets elected on the basis of the vote of minority. Now, if the country had 10 constituencies, and in all of them the same party won and with exactly the same type of simple majority. The govt. has majority seat in the legislature. But actually, only 400

people voted for it conversely, though 600 people did not want that party to form a govt. they cannot prevent it. The process of simple majority is followed in India.

ELECTION MANIFESTO

Election manifesto is the programme of the candidates or political parties. It is usually in the form of a small booklet or a pamphlet that is issued by a political party at the time of elections. This is done to tell the people about the future policies and programmes of their party. Usually, the election manifesto tells the voters about party's views on major issues of internal and foreign policy. It also contains the promises of the party to do certain things if it is voted into power.

Election manifestos are considered as important documents in an election process. Political parties are judged by their manifestos. They give the party's commitment and these commitments may influence the voters. The voters also judge if the party has lived up to its commitment after the election is over. After the elections are over, the voters can exert their pressure on the party which has come to power, to implement the programmes and promises made in their election manifesto. It also gives the opposition opportunity to criticize the bad policies of the government and mobilize public opinion against them.

ELECTION COMMISSION

To make sure that elections are free and an independent body called the election commission manages fair elections. It consists of a chairman and some other members. The president of India fixes their number. The election commission is appointed by the president. The election commission supervises the most basic parts of the election process, like allotment of symbols, fixing of election dates and procedures. It is the commission's task to see to it that elections are fair, and the govt. side does not get undue advantage over the other parties. The election commission also does the delimitation of the constituencies. It supervises the whole procedure of electioneering. The counting of votes is done under the supervision of the commission. Any losing candidate can send a petition to the commission if he feels that there has been any discrepancy in the election process. The election commission also keeps a close watch on the candidate's expenditure on the elections. Election commission also prepares and revises electoral rolls. Recently, the election commission has issued identity cards to the residents of India.

BY ELECTION

If any seat in the state legislature or the parliament falls vacant due to the death, resignation or removal of a member, the election held to fill in that vacancy is known as by-election.

MID TERM ELECTION

If the state Assembly or the Parliament is dissolved before the expiry of its full term and elections are held to constitute a new house, it is called a Mid – Term Election.

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The system by which the president of India is elected is called Proportional representation by single transferable vote. Under this, voters cast their vote for candidates in order of preference. It ensures, that no vote goes waste. The person to be elected must get what is known as the quota. The quota is fixed by the formula

$$q = \frac{V + 1}{S + 1} \quad [V = \text{total number of votes } S = \text{number of seats}]$$

The president is elected by an electoral college, consisting of the elected members of both houses of parliament and elected members of Legislative Assemblies of states.

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