



Parliament of India

The first Prime Minister of Independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru observed that "*Democracy is tolerance, it is tolerance not only towards those who agree (with us) but also with those who disagree*". Those who do not believe in democracy or have no faith in democracy follow paths of violence and intolerance. But we on many occasions in social life show intolerance, It is essential that we know more about democracy and adopt democracy as a way of life.

### **Origin of Democracy**

Democracy that functions in most countries of the world, including India, is the Western model of democracy. The origin of Western democracy can be traced to ancient Greece.

Democracy as a system of governance existed in ancient Greece before wider interpretation and development of the concept of democracy.

The 'city state' system that existed in ancient Greece between 422 BC and 322 BC was considered as a great model by western thinkers, political scientists and scholars alike. The word 'democracy' is formed from the Greek words 'demos' which means 'people' and 'kratos' which means 'power'. Democracy, therefore, means the power of the people. Democracy and its facets underwent changes during the period of transformation from ancient Greece to the modern world. As a result the pattern of democracy that prevailed in ancient Greece assumed an entirely different and new shape.

### Forms of Democracy

Democracy has different forms. The practice of democracy that existed in ancient Greece, known as the 'City state' system, was not one in which the whole people exercised power of governance. Neither was it intended to be a system of government by the whole people. Democracy in the 'City State' can be described as rule and control by specially qualified persons, citizens. Democracy was held to be control of governance by the citizens. But women, slaves and aliens were not considered as citizens in ancient Greek democracy.

### Direct Democracy

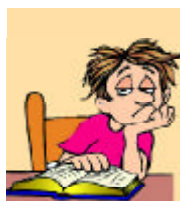
The system of governance that was practiced

in ancient Greece is described as direct democracy. In such a system all citizens assemble together to enact and approve the laws required for governance and they implement these rules too. Citizens directly engaged in the Judicial process. No separate officials or court systems existed as are followed now. For short periods citizens themselves performed these duties. Rulers were selected through lot system for limited duration. In short, in direct democracy citizens directly participate in the process of governance. Direct democracy is, thus, regarded as the most complete and pure model of democracy.

### Indirect Democracy

Direct democracy does not exist in any part of the world today. Indirect democracy is the order that prevails in the present world. What could be the reason for this change?

Nation state system is the accepted practice in the present world order. Slavery is no more followed and universal adult suffrage is accepted facilitating equal opportunity in political process. These caused the origin of indirect democracy. The rise in population also contributed towards this trend. This system is known as indirect democracy because people elect their representatives and the representatives rule for the people. Since rule is by the representatives of the people it is known also as representative democracy. Indirect democracy exists in countries like India. Representatives at centre, state and local levels are elected in the democratic practice in India.



*The Points given below are reasons contributing towards the change from direct to indirect democracy. Examine how each of them influenced this change.*

1. Small city states gave way to nation states.
2. Modern states allow suffrage to women.
3. Growth of the ideas of equality, and equal opportunity for all.
4. Wide recognition for adult suffrage.
5. Higher growth of population in nation states than in city states.



Indirect democracy has many unique features other than the presence of elected representatives. Find out the unique features of democracy from the table given below.

• Punctual and periodic elections	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Disapproval of the constitution	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Personalised exercise of power	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Denial of rights for people	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Adult suffrage	<input type="checkbox"/>	• People enjoying basic rights	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Independent election commission	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Political parties functioning independently	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Rule of law	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Biased election commission	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Irregular elections	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Government devoid of uncontrolled power	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Approving of the constitution	<input type="checkbox"/>	• Government endowed with uncontrolled power	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Suffrage based on economic status	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Direct democracy becomes impossible in the existing situations of the nation state system. But it is also pertinent that representative democracy is not adequate to solve all our problems. The merits and demerits of the existing pattern of democracy deserve to be examined here.

### Merits of Democracy

- Efficient government is created by people electing rulers through open elections. It increases the sense of responsibility in the minds of the people and they become more disciplined, loyal and patriotic.
- Democracy ensures personal freedom for the individual and recognizes the dignity and freedom of the individual.
- All are treated equally in (a) democracy and the idea of equality is accorded (more) importance.
- People are encouraged to display more interest in common issues. Democracy promotes their spirit of love for the nation and enriches their abilities.
- Democracy fulfils the expectations and requirements of people. Democracy is a

governing system that brings into practice the full responsibility of the rulers to the people.

- Rule of law prevails and no one is, including rulers, above the law.
- The government is more transparent. People can know about the affairs of the government as there is no secrecy.
- Democracy generates the awareness among the people that government is of the people themselves and that rulers are servants of the people.
- Democracy helps attain progress and social stability. It also provides opportunity for debates and consensus (of opinion).
- Democracy has a prominent role in politically educating the people. It also promotes awareness of associative claims, rights and a sense of security in the people.

### **Demerits of Democracy**

The following demerits generally are attributed to democracy.

- Quantity or number is given more importance than quality or ability in (a) democracy. Decisions are made most often on the basis of the number of voters. Democracy is based on the perception that every individual has the capability to rule. But good government requires able and talented persons.
- Democracy does not bring in the service of efficient persons. Those of special capabilities do not often show interest in contesting elections or involve in political activities. Thus, democracy is criticized as a system of governance by inefficient persons. This results in the nation losing the service of talented persons.
- Efficiency of government is reduced in a democratic system due to political insecurity caused by frequent elections and consequent change of governments.
- In democracy often the opinion of the majority is imposed on the minority.
- In democracy indifferent attitude on the part of the people in general, towards the governing process prompts them to keep away from voting.
- Sectarian party politics devoid of proper focus is another demerit of democracy.
- Democracy is an expensive system of government. Frequent elections and changes of government renders it very expensive.
- In democracy all needs of the people are not fulfilled up to their expectations
- Instability is caused in a democracy due to the unpredictable factor of mob psychology and frequently changing likes and dislikes of the people.



*Do you agree with the above mentioned defects of democracy?*

*Aren't these insufficiencies of democracy to be solved? What recommendations can be put forward towards the success of democracy?*

## Pre-conditions of Democracy

Certain preconditions are required for strengthening democracy. Let us examine them.

### Political freedom

Political freedom is that right of individuals to get themselves politically organized. It is that right of a person to fully and freely exercise political preferences. In democracy people have the right to vote (in elections), to contest public offices and to exercise political power. Political freedom in a democracy is further reinforced by the civil rights of citizens to form or organize and express opinion, to form associations and to criticize the government.

### Political consciousness

Political consciousness is regarded as the awareness of the people about state and politics. The traits of healthy competitions, co-operation, tolerance, clear political perceptions and consensus are implanted in

political consciousness. This is required for the success of democracy.

### Education

Education is the most prominent factor that influences the political consciousness of people. People should receive proper education about the ideas and values of democracy. Education will enhance the thought process of the people and their abilities of constructive criticism. Then only they will be able to arrive at right decision and act towards its realization.

### Independent media

Media is highly essential to convey the functioning of the government and democratic ideas to the people. They expose undemocratic activities like corruption, nepotism, terrorism etc. Free and impartial media help in forming and expressing (public) opinion.



*Do the media discharge their responsibility freely and independently in (a) democracy at present? Organize a debate in your class.*

### Economic freedom and social security programmes

The prevalence of economic freedom is a must for proper exercise of political rights, including the right to franchise. Economic freedom denotes the release from poverty and insecurity along with the availability of opportunities to participate in the production process, in a situation of fair distribution of goods (and services). The prevention of the tendency of concentration

of wealth in few and the eradication of inequality and poverty are required to ensure economic freedom for all. A section of people still live in poverty as a result of economic inequality that existed for centuries. Governments in democracy have planned various social security programmes such as pension schemes for the aged and widows and comprehensive health insurance for the uplift of these sections of people.



*Economic equality is a precondition for democracy. Are the various social security schemes implemented by the government capable of achieving this? Discuss.*



### Political parties and leaders

Political parties are inevitable in a democracy. They help organize public opinion and create situation conducive to policy decisions. Political parties also make

elections meaningful. It is inevitable in a democracy that parties shall be headed by leaders who possess a wider national vision and high democratic values.



*Are political parties inevitable to protect and sustain democracy? Discuss.*

#### Pointers for discussion

- Provide political education
- Organize people
- Ensures participation of people
- Helps the formation of opinion
- Practice democracy in their own functions

### Decentralization of power

Decentralization of power is a means for making possible preferences and control of people in formulating and implementing policies at the level of governance. Power and administration are handed over to lower levels. This ensures greater participation of the people in governance.

### Free and Independent Elections

Free and fearless exercise of right to vote is an important component of democracy. An independent election commission is designed with constitutional standing for this purpose.



*Collect information relating to elections in our country and discuss how are elections conducted in an independent and impartial manner in our country. Find out from the points given below those which hinder free and impartial elections?*

1. Franchise based on economic status
2. Inclusion of name in the voters list or electoral roll for voting
3. Presence of a biased election commission
4. Identification card for voters
5. Poverty
6. Influence of black money in election
7. Governments postponing elections to suit their interest
8. Irregularities and malpractices in elections





Are there other pre-requisite which you think are relevant for the making of democracy more effective? Discuss.

## Different Dimensions of Democracy

Democracy becomes complete and flawless only when the essence of democracy is spread to political, social and economic levels.

### Political level

This is the prevalence of democratic principles at the level of administration and government. At the political level, democracy is based on freedom, equality and fraternity. In addition, it is unique in ensuring participative share of people and in protecting the rights of the people by respecting their political will. At the political level democracy is subject to rule of law.

### Social level

Democracy at social level denotes a situation

of absence of discrimination based on religion, caste, gender, region, race and colour. Democratic social order envisages equal opportunity and absence of discrimination. It has the special features of social equality, equality of opportunity and equal protection.

### Economic level

Democracy at political and social level become meaningful only when principles of democracy operate at the economic level too. The generation, control and use of wealth should come under the guidance of society. The economic facet of democracy involves preventing the concentration of wealth in a few or a limited segment of society. It also stresses equality in the distribution of goods and services as well as consumption. This ensures the basic comforts of life to all.



Can these different levels of democracy be linked to Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution of India? Discuss.

## Direct Democratic Devices

Democracy became a universally accepted practice by the time direct democracy evolved into modern democracy (representative democracy). At the same time participation by people got confined to the exercise of franchise alone. Corruption and nepotism caused democracy to degenerate. This makes methods of direct democracy relevant.

Direct democratic methods are practiced well in Switzerland. Some of the states in the United States of America follow the methods of direct democracy in a limited form, though these are not widely practiced in the United States of America.

Take note of the newspaper report of the referendum conducted in Kenya on the newly formed constitution for the nation. This can be regarded as an example for the methods of direct democracy.



**Referendum**

The expression of public opinion through voting by the people on a law passed by the legislature is known as referendum. People get a chance to approve or reject a law. They develop interest and gain participation in law making. They also become conscious about law. This is widely practiced in Switzerland for amendments of the constitution and for making ordinary laws. Some of the states in the United States of America too follow this practice.

**Recall**

**This is the removing of elected representatives from office before the end of their tenure** when performance is unsatisfactory.

**Plebiscite**

Plebiscite is not conducted in matters relating to legislation. Plebiscite is a mechanism to ascertain the decisions of the people on issues of grave public importance. This will help prevent the imposing of the views of the minority on the majority.

**Initiative**

Initiative means the direct involvement of the people themselves in the law making process when legislature commits mistakes or defaults in law making. Such interventions are made when the law making body makes wrong commissions or omissions. This method is resorted to when a specified number of electors demand direct law making by themselves. A law desired by the people can be submitted either in brief or in full text before the legislature. The legislature is then bound to enact that law as submitted by the specified number of electors. In case such a law as desired by the people is not enacted by the legislature, it will be further submitted before the whole body of electors for their final decision. This method is followed in Switzerland and in some of the states in the United States of America.



*Are the methods of direct democracy effective in preventing degeneration in democracy? Discuss by gathering information from the experiences of democracy in India. Which of the above methods are suitable to our country?*

**Democracy as a way of life**

Some people regarded democracy as a process of voting and as a system of government and the failure of democracy is attributed to others rather than to

themselves. But of now we discern that real democracy is empowerment and liberation. Mark yes/no against the statements given below.



Statement	Answer	
	Yes	No
1. I get angry when, I hear views that are opposed to my beliefs.		
2. I will adopt any means to attain things that I long for.		
3. I never respect those who have political views opposite to mine.		
4. No one has any right to criticize me.		
5. I never give any consideration to the opinion of others.		
6. If I am bashed, I will retaliate.		
7. I don't like those who belong to other political parties seeking vote by visiting the house of my own party members.		

If your answer to all the statements is 'no' you are one who has accepted democracy as a way of life.

How can democracy be adopted as a way of life.

- Tolerate the beliefs and practices of others.
- Adopt only democratic means for the realization of (your) goals.



*Assess the changes that are to be brought about in you to make democracy a way of life.*

### Democracy in India

The Constitution of India that came into force from January 26, 1950 declares India as a democratic Republic. The Constitution lays down the requisites for sustaining a democratic governmental system.

Our Constitution contains the following democratic ideals:

- A system of government that holds people as the source of sovereign power, with the head of state elected by the people.

- Show (mutual) respect in politics and in (daily) life.
- Work with the realization that all including us are subject to criticism.
- Respect the view points of others.
- Accept rule of law. Do not try to take the law into your own hands under any circumstances or compulsions.
- Work by approving the opinion and political freedoms of all.
- Treat all equally.

In short, our thoughts and words should reflect the spirit of democracy and democratic decorum should be adhered to while talking to others, discharging (our) duties, taking food, using public pathway and while utilizing natural resources. We must ensure that the freedom and democratic rights of others are not hindered by our activities. Stable democratic order could be sustained only through such habits of the citizens.



- Fully protected fundamental rights
- Directive Principles of State Policy that ensure social and economic equality
- Special protection for those who are socially and educationally marginalized
- Transparent and independent elections
- Governing process established under rule of law. These are held as the life-blood of democracy in India

### Challenges before Indian democracy

Attempts are made to put into practice the ideas of democracy in our country. But the democratic order in our country is facing various challenges.

Many of the scholars from the western countries observed that elections in India would be the biggest ever farce in the history of the world and that democracy would not be successful in a country characterized by poverty and illiteracy. India is the largest democracy in the world on the basis of population. Varied ups and downs have occurred in our democratic process. India has since independence successfully maintained a democratic governmental system when in many neighboring countries democracy failed to take root. Still we are facing many challenges in this front. Let us examine them.

### Social and economic inequality

The success of democracy demands social and economic equality. Discrimination based on religion, caste, class, gender and race cause social inequality. Society in India even today is caste based. Total equality is not yet attained though various measures for sustaining social justice have been adopted by the government. Differences still exist in the name of religion and caste. Female foeticide and dowry related quarrels remain unsolved even now.

Inequality in the economic sphere has not been wiped out. Major share of national wealth is in the hands of a limited section of people. Majority of the population are poor and live in the rural areas. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening. Political rights cannot be independently exercised so long as poverty exists.

### Illiteracy

Basic education is the strength of democracy. A major part of Indian population is composed of illiterates. This prevents them from effectively participating in the governing process. In addition, this leads to social and political inequality. Law enacted by the legislature should receive the cooperation and assistance of the people for implementation. Hence, education shall be imparted to them.



*Government and voluntary organizations design and implement many programmes for the eradication of illiteracy. How do these strengthen democracy? Discuss.*

### Increasing population

Population profile in 1950 was 36 crores in India and it has grown into 120 crores now. Population explosion destabilizes the economic system in India. Population explosion is one of the reasons for poverty, unemployment and problems at health care

sector. The ever increasing population obstructs the attaining of the goal of welfare measures leading to economic inequality. Though government has implemented family welfare measures toward population

control, expected gains have not been attained at this front.

### Regional Imbalance

The economic progress of a nation requires evenly balanced development. Some of the states like Orissa, Bihar, Jharkand and Chattisgarh are in a very backward condition in terms of development. States like Maharashtra, Goa, Punjab, TamilNadu and Kerala are the ones that have attained progress. This regional imbalance causes many problems.

### Linguistic chauvinism

India is a multilingual country. Differences on the basis of languages exist in India. Many a number of regional political parties thrive on the basis of language. Often this leads to political conflicts. This also creates division and differences of opinion among the people. Due to this common steps cannot be adopted by the nation on many issues.

### Communalism

Communalism is another challenge faced by democracy in India. Communal conflicts have occurred many a time in different states. Communal rift spoils the harmony among people and hinders collective endeavors. Religious organizations have transformed into as political parties. Communal clashes threaten the integrity and survival of the nation.

### Casteism

Caste divisions are very evident in India. Differentiations and disharmony caused by caste divisions prevail in many parts of the country. Political parties make use of caste/s for temporary gains. Caste groups influence political parties. This might lead

to the loss of values and virtues in social life that are achieved by the nation. Casteism paves the way for clash between people ignoring common national interest.

### Terrorism

Terrorism is posing severe challenge to democracy in recent times. Terrorism has different facets and there are political, religious and inter national reasons for this. Terrorist organizations endanger the life and survival of innocent people.



### GUNS, BOMBS: TARGET GAMES

Youth are drawn into terrorism because of poverty, unemployment and blind religious faith. Social equilibrium and harmony are lost because these terrorist organizations are not ready for open discussions and compromises. More than creating terror, these organizations destroy peaceful life in society. In short, the functioning and survival of state systems is threatened. It creates a situation whereby the very foundation of democratic system remains challenged.

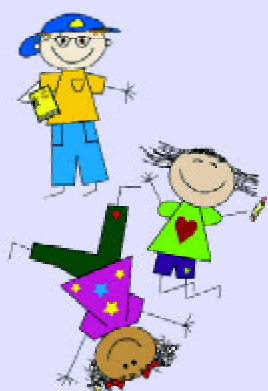
### Secessionism

Organizations that propagate secessionism operate in different parts of the country. These organizations have become more active in the recent periods. These are destructive of the integrity, stability and the very democratic system of the nation. Secessionist ideas are growing strong in Manipur, Jammu&Kashmir, Nagaland, Mizoram, Tripura etc. in India.



*Democracy in India faces challenges because it is not sufficiently strengthened. Do you agree? Discuss each of the challenges cited above in this context.*

## Activities



1. The view points of 'A' and 'B' are given below. Establish your arguments on these two view points.
  - A. India has a complete and mature democracy in terms of ideas and structure.
  - B. In India we have not been able to put into practice democracy in a matured manner.
2. The points mentioned below are both a strength and a challenge to Indian democracy-substantiate.

### Strength

- Rule of law
- Elections
- Franchise
- Fundamental rights
- Independent judiciary
- Human rights

### Challenges

- Criminal and terrorist organizations
- Undue influence of money and media
- Illiteracy, economic dependency
- Denial of right, economic inequalities
- Expensive and time consuming judicial system
- Violations of human rights

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Regionalism</li> <li>• Party politics and leadership</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population</li> <li>• Elections</li> </ul> |
|---|---|

3. Eminent personalities and experts in different walks of life, but not active political workers can be brought in as members of Parliament without contesting elections. How is this made possible?  
To which House of Parliament are these persons selected as members? Who nominates them? How many such nominated persons can be brought in as members of Parliament? Prepare a list of such nominated members of Parliament.
4. Democracy is simple but not trivial. It is a process that demands a lot of men and material resources. Examine this in the light of the pointers given below.
  - Election expenses-candidates, Government
  - Salary and allowances of representatives of people from Grama Panchayath to members of Parliament.
5. Decentralization ensures the participation of people in democracy at an increased level. Examine this opinion in the light of the experiences gathered from the functioning of local bodies of governance.
6. Government has designed different policies and programmes to bring down social and economic inequality. Find out them.