

Our country India became a democracy in 1947 and therefore, it is ruled by the people. People elect their representatives who together form a legislature. They take decisions for the common welfare to fulfill the aspiration of the people who have elected them. Every Indian citizen has the right to voice their opinions and views freely about the policies of the government. A government formed and working by the above democratic methods is known as a democratic government.

Note : At this level we have not divided the three organs of the State – legislature, executive and judiciary.

Democracy and Apartheid

Democracy is based on equality. Apartheid means separation and discrimination on the basis of race. For example, South Africa, before 1994, was governed by the apartheid laws. In the 17th century, English and Dutch colonists had settled in South Africa and their descendants introduced the system of apartheid to maintain white supremacy. Under this system all South Africans were separated into one of these categories —white (English and Dutch), black (African), Indian and coloured (including people from Asia or those born from parents of different races). The black people belonged to South Africa, whites came there to settle and Indians came as labourers and traders. These races were not allowed to mingle with each other, to live near each other or even to use common facilities. Hospitals were separate. An

ambulance for white people was well-equipped while one for black people was not. Even the bus stops were different for black and white people. The white people lived on the best land in the country while non-whites had to live on the worst available land.

Blacks and coloured people were not considered to be equal to whites. They were not allowed to vote. Their children in schools were forced to learn the Afrikaans



Two democracies related to each other

language (a language similar to Dutch language that the whites spoke). They wanted to learn their own language, Zulu. So they took out a rally in protest on 30 April 1976 in the South-western township (Soweto) of the blacks. The South African police beat up the protestors mercilessly and shot at them. Hector Ndlovu, a student was killed by the bullets.

The African National Congress and their famous leader Nelson Mandela struggled peacefully for the rights of the black and the coloured people. Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for more than 27 years. Finally, at midnight of 26 April, 1994, South Africa became a democratic country and the people of all races were considered equal.

Some of the **key elements that influence the working of a democratic government** are participation, resolution of conflict and equality and justice.

'During my lifetime, I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination.

I have cherished the ideals of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities.'

— Nelson Mandela, in his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom*



Nelson Mandela

Participation


People make the decisions for their welfare in a democracy. But how do they do it? Through voting in regular elections people elect leaders to represent them. These representatives take decisions on behalf of the people. In this process the people assume that the representatives would keep in mind the voice and interest of the people. Otherwise, the people will not vote for them in the next election to be held after a fixed period. In India this period is five years. In this way the power of the government gets limited and controlled by regular elections and the people can sense their power in a democracy.

Other Ways of Participating

Besides voting once in five years, there are other ways of participating regularly in the process of governance. If a country's people are alert and interested in how the country is run, the democratic character of the government will be stable and stronger. It has been seen that the representatives elected by the people overlook the public problems. Then people express their views and make governments understand what actions they should take for public welfare. These include dharnas, rallies, strikes, signature campaigns etc. Things that are unfair and unjust are also brought forward. Newspapers, magazines and television channels also play a role in discussing issues and responsibilities of the government and arousing public awareness about an issue. Then the government tries to explain and defend its decision but finally listens to the people's opinions and takes proper decision and action or change its decision because it is responsible for people.



A protest rally by women



Another way for people to participate in the governance is by organising themselves into social movements that seek to challenge the government and its functioning. Members of the minority community, dalits, adivasis, women and others are often able to participate in this manner. Not all of them are actually able to narrate and explain their difficulties and problems. So they, sometimes, have to depend on some one well-educated in the law of the land and social issues.

However, anyone can write a letter to a higher authority about their problems or a letter or views to the editor of a newspaper. A letter of a common person printed in a newspaper or magazine will be read by the authorities and social thinkers who will pursue it further.

A Letter to the Editor

Poor Children

It is seen that, at times, a large number of children are brought in a public function of inauguration by a political leader, minister etc. The poor children stand in the rally for hours, in heat or cold, usually without food and water and without relieving themselves of natural calls. Many children become unconscious and fall down and require medical attention which too is not available to them. Finally, the often late leader reaches the spot, inaugurates the function and gives a biased political lecture. The little children, usually of the age 6 to 14, do not understand this politics of cursing the politically opposite parties by these leaders. The valuable time of the learning by the students is thus wasted away .

I hereby request the President, Prime Minister, Governors and Chief Ministers to immediately ban on herding the children for selfish political causes.”

—Satya Pal, Delhi.

Resolution of Conflicts



Police using teargas to disperse a violent mob



Krishna Sagar dam

We have learnt that differences, prejudices and stereotypes lead to the discrimination. Under the law of a democratic government no discrimination is allowed. But not all sections of the society may be civilised enough. Conflicts occur when people of different cultures, religions, regions or economic backgrounds do not get along with each other, or when some among them feel they are being discriminated against. Sometimes various groups may adopt violent means to settle their differences. This leads to fear and tension among the rest population of a specific area. The government officials resolve these conflicts by getting representatives and influential people of concerned groups to meet and try and arrive at a solution. If a peaceful solution is not reached, police is called to use force and disperse the mob.

Conflicts may occur between two states. For example, there can be conflicts over the sharing of river water between different states

through which the river passes. For example, the river Kaveri (Cavery) flows through two states Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The water stored in Krishna Sagar Dam in Karnataka is used for irrigating a number of districts and for meeting the needs of the city of Bangaluru (Bangalore). The water stored in Mettur dam in Tamil Nadu is used for irrigating the crops grown in the delta region of that state.

The downstream dam in Tamil Nadu can only be filled up if water is released from the upstream one located in Karnataka. Therefore, both states cannot get as much water as they need for people in their states. This leads to conflict for the last 30 years. The central government tried for a fair distribution of water. Now this water dispute has been referred to the Supreme Court.



Mettur dam

Equality and Justice

Equality and justice are complement of each other. Justice can only be achieved when people are treated equally. All groups of people must have education, medical and other facilities. But many of them do not have money to pay for the facilities. The government makes special provisions for the groups within a society that are deprived to bring them as equals to others. The government made special provisions not only for certain backward classes but also for girls of the prosperous class. In our society there is a general tendency to value and care for the boy child more than the girl child. To bring these people of backward classes as well as the girl child as equals to others, the fees charged is waived or lowered for them in government aided schools or colleges. The government has also reserved certain percentage of posts under it for the backward classes.

Key Words

- » Afrikaans : the language derived from the Dutch language spoken by Europeans in South Africa.
- » Zulu : the language of black people in South Africa.
- » Apartheid : the official system of discrimination on racial grounds.
- » Dharnas : sit-in demonstrations.
- » Rallies : walking demonstrations.
- » Strikes : to stop working for a limited period.
- » Signature campaign : to get signatures of people on an appeal to the government.
- » Democracy : rule of people through electing representatives.

SUMMARY

- ▶ Our country India became a democracy in 1947 and, therefore, it is ruled by the people.
- ▶ Every Indian citizen has the right to voice their opinions and views freely about the policies of the government.
- ▶ Apartheid means separation and discrimination on the basis of race.
- ▶ Some of the key elements that influence the working of a democratic government are participation, resolution of conflicts and equality and justice

- ▶ People participate in the government by electing representatives to take decisions.
- ▶ Other ways of participating in the government are to organise social movements, dharnas, rallies, strikes, signature campaigns, letters to the editor, etc.
- ▶ The government officials resolve these conflicts by peaceful negotiations or police force.
- ▶ The government makes special provisions for the groups within a society that are deprived to bring them as equals to others.

Exercise Time

A. Tick (✓) the only correct choice amongst the following :

1. This leader struggled peacefully for the rights of the block :
 a. Nelson Mandela b. Hector Ndlovu c. Mahatma Gandhi d. Indira Gandhi
2. Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for more than _____ :
 a. 24 years b. 25 years c. 26 years d. 27 years
3. Blacks and coloured people were not considered to be equal to :
 a. Rich people b. whites c. british d. kings
4. The water stored in mettur dam in _____ is used for irrigating the crops grown in the delta region of that state :
 a. Kerala b. Karnataka c. Tamil Nadu d. Chennai
5. Justice can only be achieved when people are treated :
 a. equally b. democratic c. educated d. all of these

B. Fill in the blanks :

1. Apartheid means separation on the basis of _____.
2. The non-whites in South Africa were not given the right to _____.
3. _____ of people in the government is the key principle of democracy.
4. General elections are held in India in every _____ years.
5. The language of black people in South Africa is _____.

C. Match the following :

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. Conflict between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu | a. Afrikaans |
| 2. Language spoken by Europeans in South Africa | b. Dharna |
| 3. Own Language of black people in South Africa | c. Kaveri water |
| 4. A sit-in demonstration | d. Strike |
| 5. To stop working for a limited period | e. Zulu |

D. Write true (T) or False (F) against the following statements in given brackets :

1. The government of India is democratic.
2. Nelson Mandela led the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.
3. In a democracy, people make all the decisions through their representatives.
4. Girl child is more valued and cared in Indian society.
5. In a democracy the citizens cannot express their views freely.



E. Define the terms :

1. Apartheid
2. Democracy
3. Dharna
4. Rally
5. Strike

F. Answer in one word or one phrase :

1. Name the autobiography of Nelson Mandela.
2. Name one of the key principles of a democratic government.
3. When a peaceful solution of a conflict is not reached, who is called ?
4. On what problem the Tamil Nadu-Karnataka conflict is based ?
5. Which language is Afrikaans language similar to ?

G. Answer these questions briefly :

1. What are the various ways in which people participate in the process of governance ?
2. How does government find solutions to conflicts ?
3. What actions does the government take to ensure that all people are treated equally ?
4. What do you mean by apartheid ?
5. What role did Nelson Mandela play in ensuring equal treatment for all in South Africa ?

H. Answer these questions in detail :

1. Explain the various ways in which people participate in the process of governance ?
2. Discuss three key ideas of a democratic government.
3. Why should the children not be brought in Public functions where they have to wait for hours ?

PROJECT WORK

- Prepare a project report on elections in India :
 - a. Election symbols of various political parties
 - b. Election manifesto : aims and objectives of a political party
 - c. Polling booths for secret ballots
 - d. Counting process of the ballots after election