

# What is democracy? Why democracy?

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## Introduction

- Democracy is a form of government where the rulers are elected by the people.
- This chapter begins with examples of governments in different countries (like Pakistan, China, Mexico) to help understand:
  - What makes a government democratic or non-democratic.
- These examples help in identifying the core features of democracy.
- It raises two main questions:
  - What is Democracy?
  - Why should we have Democracy?


## What is Democracy?






- Democracy is a form of government in which the rulers are elected by the people.

Key Features of Democracy :-

- Rulers elected by the people:
  - In democracy, leaders are chosen through elections.
  - Example: India elects its MPs and MLAs.
- Elections must be free and fair:
  - People should have a real choice in choosing their leaders.
  - Elections should not be based on fear or force.
- Each adult citizen has one vote and one value:
  - There should be universal adult franchise.
  - No discrimination based on caste, gender, religion, or wealth.
- Rule of Law:
  - Everyone is equal before the law, even the Prime Minister or President.
  - Laws protect citizens' rights and freedoms.

## Features of Democracy

1. Major decisions by elected leaders
  - In a democracy, only elected leaders have the power to make major decisions.
  - Power should not be in the hands of army generals or unelected persons.
  -  Example: In India, elected Prime Minister takes key decisions.



-  Counter-example: In Pakistan, General Musharraf made key decisions without being elected.
2. Free and fair electoral competition
    - Elections must offer a real choice to people.
    - Multiple parties should contest, and people should have the right to choose freely.
    -  Example of failure: In China, only the Communist Party is allowed to contest.
    -  In Mexico (before 2000), elections were held but always won unfairly by PRI.
  3. One person, one vote, one value
    - Every adult citizen has the right to vote.
    - Each vote has equal value, regardless of caste, gender, income, or religion.
    -  Violation: In some countries, women or poor people are denied voting rights.
    -  In India: Universal adult franchise is followed.
  4. Rule of law and respect for rights
    - In democracy, laws apply equally to all citizens.
    - Fundamental rights like freedom of speech, religion, and equality must be protected.
    - Independent judiciary ensures justice.




## Why Democracy?

### A. Arguments Against Non-Democratic Governments:

1. No Guarantee of People's Rights:
  - Dictators or military rulers often suppress freedom.
  - Public opinion is ignored.
2. Power in the Hands of Few:
  - Decisions are taken by a small group, not by the people.
3. No Accountability:
  - Rulers can't be removed easily if people are unhappy.
4. Fear and Control:
  - People are often ruled by force and fear, not consent.

### B. Arguments in Favour of Democracy:

1.  More accountable form of government:
  - Elected leaders have to listen to the people.
  - They can be removed in the next elections if they fail.
2.  Improves quality of decision-making:
  - Democracy involves discussion and consultation, leading to better decisions.

3.  Enhances dignity of citizens:
  - Everyone is treated equally.
  - People get the freedom to express themselves.
4.  Allows correction of mistakes:
  - Democratic governments can be changed peacefully through elections.
5.  Gives people the right to choose leaders:
  - It ensures that people are the real source of power.

#### C. Limitations of Democracy:

- Not a magical solution to all problems.
- Decision-making can be slow.
- Sometimes leaders don't fulfill promises.
- But still, democracy is better than any other form.

## **Broader Meaning of Democracy**

- Democracy = Rule by the people, where leaders are elected by citizens.

#### A. Beyond Just Elections:

- I. People's participation in decision-making:
  - Real democracy tab hoti hai jab log sirf vote na karein, par policy aur governance mein bhi awaaz utha sakein.
- II. Freedom and equality for all:
  - Sabhi citizens ko equal rights, freedom of speech, aur equal law protection milna chahiye.
- III. Active and informed citizens:
  - Logon ko samajh hona chahiye apne adhikaron ka, aur sarkar se sawaal poochhna chahiye.

#### B. Democracy as an Ideal:

- Democracy is not just a system, it is an ideal to be achieved.
- Even democratic countries must keep improving to truly become democratic.
- It requires:
  - Social equality
  - Economic justice
  - Gender equality
  - Respect for diversity