



**Class 10th - History**

# **What is Democracy? Why Democracy?**

**Full Chapter Explanation**



## Class 9th - Civics - What is Democracy? Why Democracy? - Full Chapter Explanation



What is Democracy?



Why Democracy?



With the help of these questions we can understand  
*democratic government and non-democratic government.*



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### **What we are going to study in this chapter?**

- ❖ **What is democracy?**
- ❖ **Features of democracy**
  - **Major decisions by elected leaders**
  - **Free and Fair electoral competition**
  - **One person, one vote, one value**
  - **Rule of law and respect of rights**
  - **Summary definition**
- ❖ **Why democracy? - Arguments against democracy**
- ❖ **Why democracy? - Argument for democracy**
- ❖ **Broader meanings of democracy**



What is Democracy?



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



The definition is helpful for us to separate democracy from all forms of non-democratic governments but it is not adequate.



- It reminds us that democracy is *people's rule*.
- But if we use this definition in an unthinking manner, we would end up calling almost every government that holds an election a democracy.



Explain



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- We need to carefully distinguish between a government that is a democracy and one that pretends to be one.



- We can do so by understanding each word in this definition carefully and spelling out the features of a democratic government.

“Democracy is a *form of government* in which the *rulers* are *elected* by *the people*.”

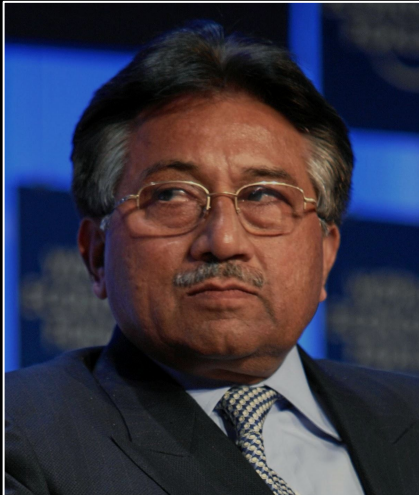
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### Major Decisions by Elected Leaders

“Democracy is a form of government in which *the rulers are elected by the people.*”

In October, 1999, Pakistan



→ General Pervez Musharraf



Led a military coup. 🤔



- He overthrew a democratically elected government and declared himself ‘the chief executive’ of the country.
- Later he changed his designation to President and in 2002 held a referendum in the country that granted him a five year extension.
- Protest against referendum. 🤔

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Legal framework order, 2002



- Amended the Constitution of Pakistan.
- According to this Order, the President can dismiss the national and provincial assemblies.
- The work of the civilian cabinet is supervised by a National Security Council which is dominated by military officers.
- Elections were held in Pakistan, but the final power rested with military officers and General Musharraf himself.

Analyse



Why Pakistan under General Musharraf should not be called a democracy?



In a democracy the final decision making power must rest with those elected by the people.



### Free and Fair Electoral Competition

#### In China

- Elections are regularly held after every five years for electing the country's parliament.



#### Quanguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui (National People's Congress)



- The National People's Congress has the power to appoint the President of the country.
- It has nearly 3,000 members elected from all over China.
- Before contesting elections, a candidate needs the approval of the Chinese Communist Party.
- Only those who are members of the Chinese Communist Party or eight smaller parties allied to it were allowed to contest elections held in 2002-03.
- The government is always formed by the Communist Party.



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### In Mexico

- Since its independence in 1930, Mexico holds elections after every six years to elect its President.
- The country has never been under a military or dictator's rule.
- But until 2000 every election was won by a party called **PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party)**.



*What's wrong in it?*



The PRI was known to use many dirty tricks to win elections.



Explain



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China's case

Mexico's case

Should we consider the elections described above as examples of people electing their rulers? 🤔



No



What can be conclude? 🤔



A democracy must be based on a free and fair election where those currently in power have a fair chance of losing.

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**One Person, One Vote, One Value**



→ This principle has now come to be accepted almost all over the world. Yet there are many instances of denial of equal right to vote.



- Until 2015, in Saudi Arabia women did not have the right to vote.
- Estonia has made its citizenship rules in such a way that people belonging to Russian minority find it difficult to get the right to vote.
- In Fiji, the electoral system is such that the vote of an indigenous Fiji has more value than that of an Indian-Fijian.



**Conclusion**



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- Democracy is based on a fundamental principle of political equality.



Explain 🤔



**In a democracy, each adult citizen must have one vote and each vote must have one value.**



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### Rule of Law and Respect for Rights

- Zimbabwe attained independence from White minority rule in 1980.  
↓
- **ZANU-PF**, the party that led the freedom struggle. Its leader, **Robert Mugabe**, ruled the country since independence.
- Elections were held regularly and always won by ZANU-PF.  
↓

Then what is the problem?



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*President Mugabe was popular but also used unfair practices in elections.*



- His government changed the constitution several times to increase the powers of the President and make him less accountable.
- Opposition party workers were harassed and their meeting disrupted.
- Public protests and demonstrations against the government were declared illegal.
- Television and radio were controlled by the government and gave only the ruling party's version.
- The government ignored some court judgments that went against it and pressurised judges.



Robert Mugabe was forced out of office in 2017.



Analyse



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### The example of Zimbabwe



- Popular governments can be undemocratic.
- Popular leaders can be autocratic.
- It is important to look at the elections. But it is equally important to look before and after the elections.



**Explain**



**A democratic government rules within limits set by constitutional law and citizens' rights.**



### Features of Democracy: Summary Definition

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



#### Features



- **Rulers elected by the people take all the major decisions.**
- **Elections offer a choice and fair opportunity to the people to change the current rulers.**
- **This choice and opportunity is available to all the people on an equal basis.**
- **The exercise of this choice leads to a government limited by basic rules of the constitution and citizens' rights.**





### Why Democracy? - Arguments against Democracy

What are the disadvantages/demerits of democracy? 🤔



- Leaders keep changing in a democracy. This leads to instability.
- Democracy is all about political competition and power play. There is no scope for morality.
- So many people have to be consulted in a democracy that it leads to delays.
- Elected leaders do not know the best interest of the people. It leads to bad decisions.
- Democracy leads to corruption for it is based on electoral competition.
- Ordinary people don't know what is good for them, they should not decide anything.



Democracy 🤔



It is not a magical solution for all the problems.



How? 🤔

- The democracy may not be the ideal form of government, but the question we face in the real life is different.



Is democracy better than other forms of government that are there for us to choose from?

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### **Why Democracy? - Arguments for Democracy**

#### **Advantages/merits of democracy**



- **A democratic government is a better government because it is a more accountable form of government.**
- **Democracy improves the quality of decision-making.**
- **Democracy provides a method to deal with differences and conflicts.**
- **Democracy enhances the dignity of citizens.**
- **Democracy is better than other forms of government because it allows us to correct its own mistakes.**

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### China's famine of 1958 - 1961



- The worst recorded famine in world history.
- Nearly three crore people died in this famine.

Situation in India

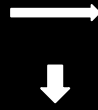


Questions



The existence of democracy in India made the Indian government respond to food scarcity in a way that the Chinese government did not.

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*Better than any other form of government in responding to the needs of the people.*

- A nondemocratic government may and can respond to the people's needs, but it all depends on the wishes of the people who rule.
- A democracy requires that the rulers have to attend to the needs of the people.

A democratic government is a better government because it is a more accountable form of government.

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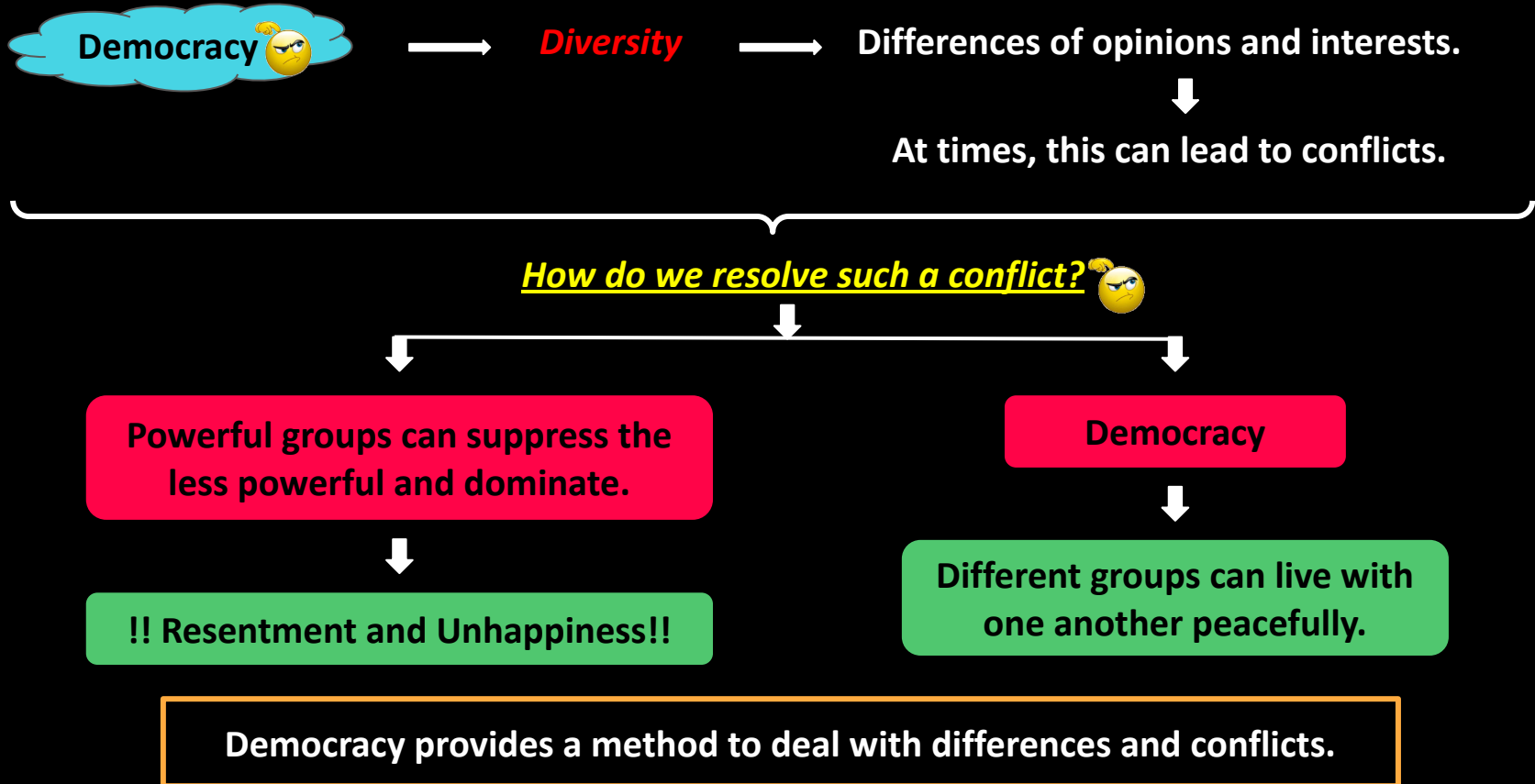
*Democracy is based on consultation and discussion.*



- When a number of people put their heads together, they are able to point out possible mistakes in any decision.
- This reduces the chances of rash or irresponsible decisions.

Thus democracy improves the quality of decision-making.

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Democracy 🤔



Even if democracy does not bring about better decisions and accountable government, it is still better than other forms of government.



Why? 🤔



***Because it does a lot to the citizens.*** 🤔



- Democracy is based on the principle of political equality, on recognising that the poorest and the least educated has the same status as the rich and the educated.
- People are not subjects of a ruler, they are the rulers themselves.

Democracy enhances the dignity of citizens.



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- There is no guarantee that mistakes cannot be made in democracy. 🤔



But in democracy there is a space for public discussion on these mistakes and there is a room for correction.



Either the rulers have to change their decisions, or the rulers can be changed.

**Democracy is better than other forms of government because it allows us to correct its own mistakes.**

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## Broader Meanings of Democracy

### The chapter and democracy



- In democracy as a form of government, we can identify a clear set of minimal features that a democracy must have.
- The most common form that democracy takes in our times is that of a Representative democracy.



A form of government in which the people rule through their elected representatives, not directly.

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**Why representative democracy is necessary?**



- Modern democracies involve such a large number of people that it is physically impossible for them to sit together and take a collective decision.
- Even if they could, the citizen does not have the time, the desire or the skills to take part in all the decisions.



**How to distinguish between a democracy and a good democracy?**



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Democracy

V/S

Good Democracy



Broader meaning of democracy? 🤔



1. Democracy as an organisation other than the government.



- A democratic decision involves consultation with and consent of all those who are affected by that decision.
- This can apply to a government or a family or any other organisation.
- Thus democracy is also a principle that can be applied to any sphere of life.

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2. Sometimes we use the word democracy not to describe any existing government but to set up an ideal standard that all democracies must aim to become.



*“True democracy will come to this country only when no one goes hungry to bed.”*



- It enables us to judge an existing democracy and identify its weaknesses.
- It helps us to distinguish between a minimal democracy and a good democracy.

Democracy and its scope



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**No country is a perfect democracy.**



- **Democracy provides only the minimum conditions.**
- **It requires a constant effort to save and strengthen democratic forms of decision-making.**
- **Citizens can make a difference to making our country more or less democratic.**
- **The fate of the country depends not just on what the rulers do, but mainly on what we, as citizens, do.**
- **This is what distinguishes democracy from other governments.**