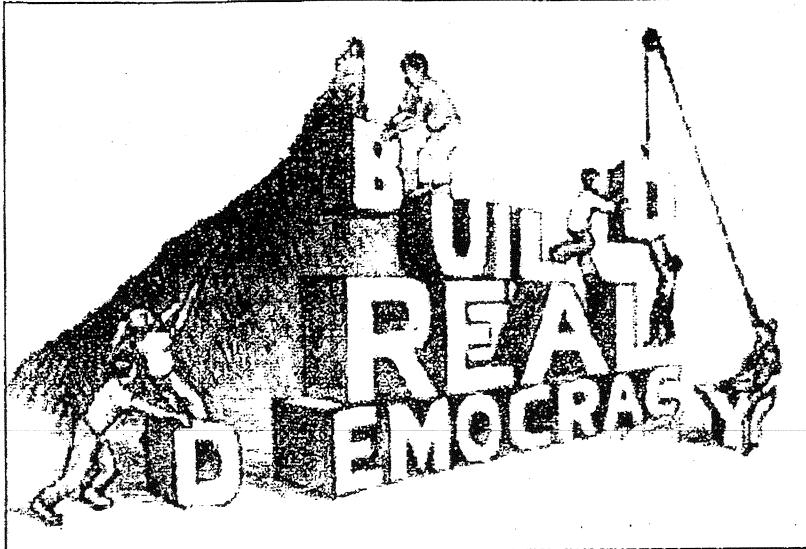


What is Democracy? Why Democracy?



"Words are used to express certain ideas. But the word "democracy" as it is used by political system, seems to express everything or nothing. The difficulty lies in the fact that the term has been understood not only as a form of government but also as an ideal way of life. Today it is seen as the best possible form of governance."

7.1 What is Democracy ?

The word 'Democracy' has been derived from a Greek word 'Demokratia', 'Demos' means people and 'Kratia' means rule. Democracy is a form of government in which the rule-s are elected by the people.

7.2 Common features of democratic government & non-democratic government

(a) Democratic government

- (i) Government formed by people's representatives.
- (ii) Representatives are elected in a free and fair election.
- (iii) Different decisions of the government are taken in an open manner; debate in media, invitation to experts opinion, representations by the common man form a part of decision making process.
- (iv) Citizens have a right to oppose and criticize any government action and policy.
- (v) Citizens have a right or protest, as long as the mode of protest is within the boundaries of law.

(b) Non-democratic government

- (i) Rule by force, by a person or by a group of persons.
- (ii) No opposition is permitted.
- (iii) No criticism of government or the rulers is tolerated.
- (iv) Citizens have no rights.
- (v) Citizens cannot resort to any method of protest.

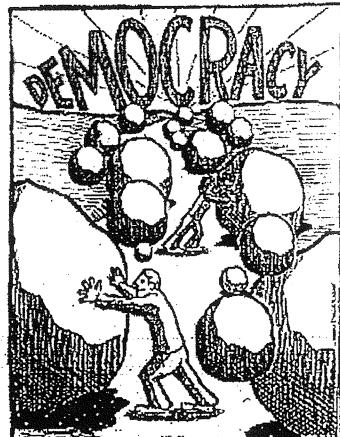


Fig.1 Democracy

7.3 Features of democracy

- (a) In a democracy the final decision making power must rest with those elected by the people

A democratic government is one in which the people's representatives participate in decision making process. They own a collective responsibility for all the decisions taken by the government. There are examples where representatives of people are chosen but they are not allowed to participate in decision making process. This happens in many dictatorships and monarchies, e.g. currently in Pakistan under General Musharraf. They formally have an elected parliament and government but the real power is with those who are not elected. Not notwithstanding the existence of elected national and provincial assemblies, these countries can not be classified as a democratic country.

- In Oct 1999, General Parvez Musharraf overthrew the democratically elected govt. and declared himself "CHIEF EXECUTIVE" of the country.
- In 2002 he held a referendum that granted him a 5 yrs extension. It was based on malpractices and fraud.
- In August 2002 he issued "LEGAL FRAMEWORK ORDER". According to this order, the President can dismiss the national or provincial assemblies.
- The work of civilian cabinet is supervised by a National Security Council which is dominated by military officers. Final Powers rest with General Musharraf.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING 7.1

1. This cartoon was drawn when elections were held in Iraq with the presence of US and other foreign powers. What do you think this cartoon is saying? Why is 'democracy' written the way it is?



- (b) A democracy must be based on free and fair elections where those currently in power have a fair chance of losing.

The essence of democracy is that the rulers must be truly people's representatives. In order to choose these representatives, a system of elections is put in order. Now, an election could have some meaning and significance only if it has been held in a free and fair manner. A free election is one in which every person has an equal right to vote and

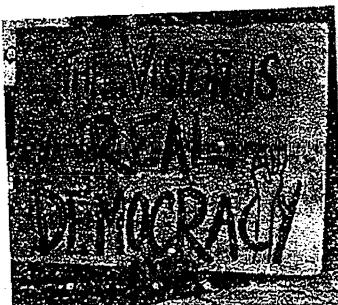
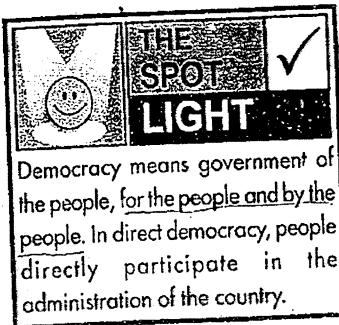
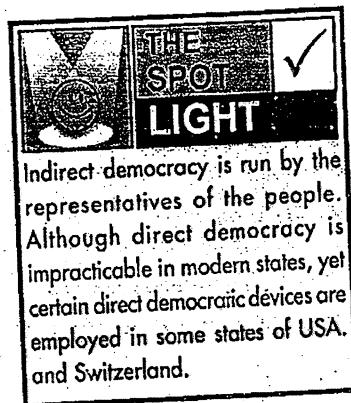


Fig. 2 Vision is a real democracy



to vote without fear and threat. He exercises his choice in a judicious manner. A fair election is one in which those persons who are currently in power have a fair chance of losing. If the election process is rigged and manipulated in such a manner that the result is a foregone conclusion, it does not constitute a fair election.

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS 7.1

1. Democracy – where fair and free elections must be held – is being forced on Iraq by the US and its allies. There are no 'free' and 'fair' elections. The capital M suggests mockery of democratic norms.
- "In China, elections are regularly held after 5 years for electing the country's parliament, but still it cannot be called a democratic country".
 - (i) In China, elections are regularly held after five years for electing the Country's parliament, called Quanguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui (National People's Congress)
 - (ii) The National People's Congress has the power to appoint the President of the country.
 - (iii) It has nearly 3000 members elected from all over China. Some members are elected by the army.
 - (iv) Before contesting elections, a candidate needs the approval of the Chinese Communist Party.
 - (v) 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.
 - (vi) The government is always formed by the Communist Party.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING 7.2

1. Syria is a small West Asian country. The ruling Ba'ath Party and some of its small allies are the only parties allowed in that country. Do you think this cartoon could apply to China or Mexico? What does the crown of leaves on democracy signify?

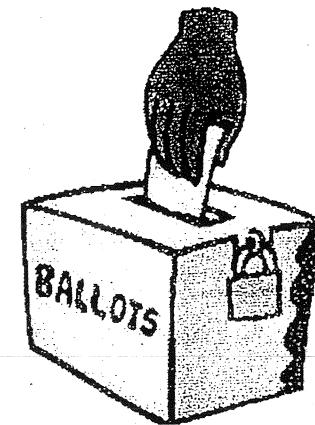
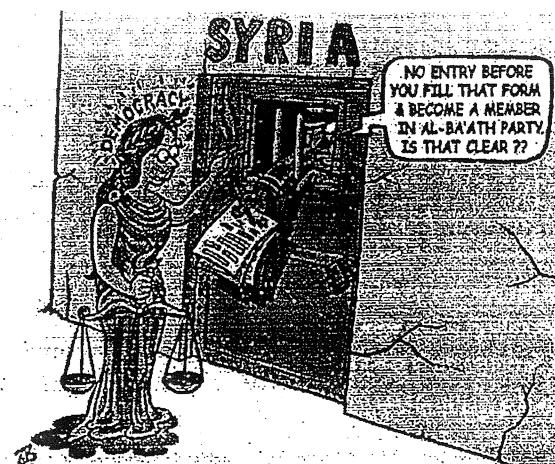


Fig.3 A Ballot



Fig.4 Parvez Musharraf

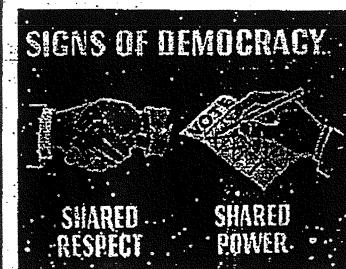


Fig.5 Signs of Democracy

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS 7.2

1. The cartoon suggests that there is no true democracy in Syria. Yes, it would suit China and Mexico also where no opposition parties are allowed to contest election.

Crown of leaves : It is a symbol of victory. In Greece the reward to the winner was this crown. Here the crown suggests that 'democracy' has won and demands justice, but the one party rule is denying this right to the people of Syria.

Democracy 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 still it cannot be called democratic country. Free and fair election is the basic feature of democracy but in Mexico this is not so. In Mexico until 2000, every election was won by party called PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party). Opposition parties did contest elections, but never managed to win. The PRI was known to use many dirty tricks to win elections. All those who were employed in government offices had to attend its party meetings. Teachers of government schools used to force parents to vote for the PRI. Media largely ignored the activities of opposition political parties except to criticize them. Sometimes the polling booths were shifted from one place to another in the last minute, which made it difficult for people to cast their votes. The PRI spent a large sum of money in the campaign for its candidates.

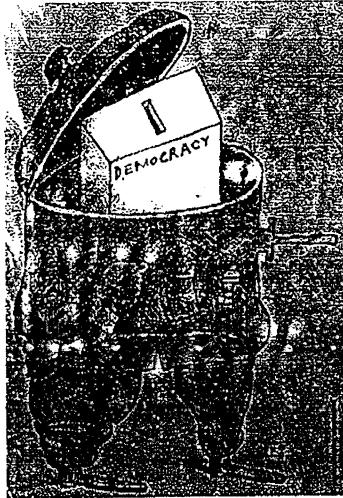
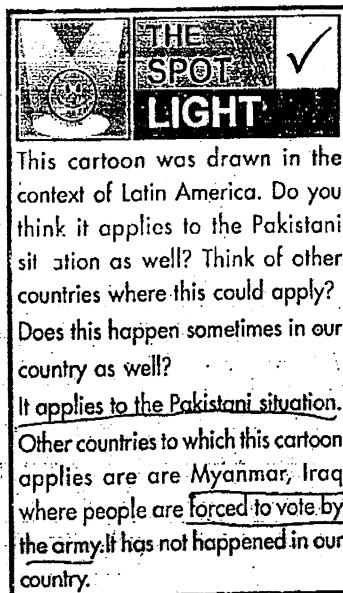


Fig.6 A cartoon drawn in context of Latin America

CHECK YOUR LEARNING 7.3

1. This cartoon is about the Iraqi election held after Saddam Hussain's regime was overthrown. He is shown behind the bars. What is the cartoonist saying here? Compare the message of this cartoon with the first cartoon in this chapter.



- (c) In a Democracy, each adult citizen must have one vote and each vote must have one value.

A true democracy grants its citizens what is called "universal adult franchise". It means all the adults have a right to vote without any discrimination based on sex, colour, race, caste or class. Each person can caste one vote; all votes are counted; the person who gets the maximum number of votes gets elected in many countries, this is not how the system works. There are



many instances of denial of equal right to vote:

- (i) In Saudi Arabia women do not have the right to vote.
- (ii) 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.
- (iii) In Fiji, the electoral system is such that the vote of an indigenous Fiji has more value than that of an India-Fijian.

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS 7.3

1. The cartoon shows the end of dictatorship in Iraq where Saddam ruled unchecked. People rejoice at elections being held. But the first cartoon shows that people do not have a real choice. They are forced to vote, by the powerful US and its allies.

(d) Rule of law and Respect for right

The state should respect some basic rights of the citizens. They should be free to think, to have opinions, to express their views in public, to form associations, to protest. Everyone should be equal in the eyes of law. There should be an independent judiciary whose orders are obeyed by everyone. A democratic government rules within limits set by constitutional law and citizens rights.

- Zimbabwe attained independence from minority rule 1980.
- ZANU-PF - the party led the freedom struggle movement under the leadership of Robert Mugabe.
- Mugabe is popular but also uses unfair practices in elections.
- Constitution amended so many times to increase the powers of President Mugabe and make him less accountable.
- Opposition party workers are harassed and their meeting disrupted and public protests against the government are declared illegal.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING 7.4

1. Chinese government blocked free flow of information on the internet by placing restrictions on popular websites like 'Google' and 'Yahoo'. The image of tanks and an unarmed student reminds the reader of another major event in recent Chinese history. Find out about that event.

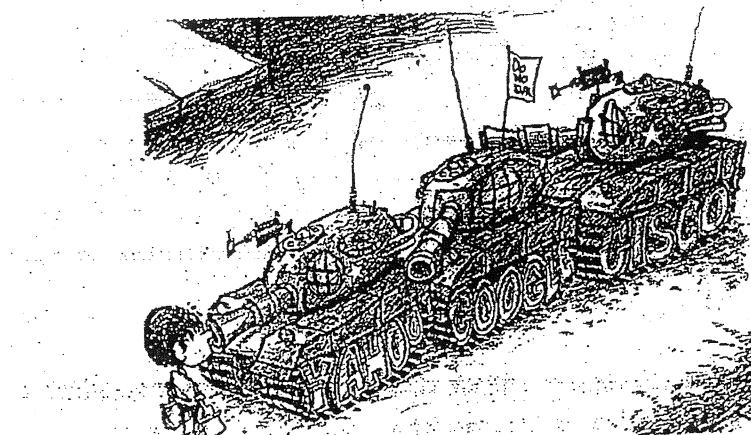


Fig.7 Building democracy with the help of money bags.



The above cartoon was titled 'Building Democracy' and was first published in a Latin American publication. What do moneybags signify here? Could this cartoon be applied to India? This cartoon suggests that 'democracy' is in the hand of the rich. They control the country. In India there are laws which see to it that the rich do not get the upper hand.



Fig.8 An image showing the dark side of Institutional Revolutionary Party



Fig.9 Mugabe

7.4 Why Democracy?

(a) Arguments in support of democracy

- (i) A democratic government is better government because it is a more accountable form of government.
- (ii) Democracy improves the quality of decision-making.
- (iii) Democracy provides a method to deal with differences and conflicts.
- (iv) Democracy enhances the dignity of citizens.
- (v) Democracy is better than other forms of government because it allows us to correct its own mistakes.
- (vi) Democracy is considered the best form of government.

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS 7.4

1. Refers to the massacre that took place at Tianmen Square where hundreds of students were ruthlessly killed.

(b) Arguments against the democracy

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

CHECK YOUR LEARNING 7.5

1. This cartoon was published in Canada just before its parliamentary elections of 2005. Everyone, including the cartoonist, expected the Liberal party to win once again. When the results came, the Liberal Party lost the elections. Is this cartoon an argument against democracy or for democracy?



7.5 Broader meaning of democracy

A representative democracy is one in which people elect their representatives to legislatures. These representatives in turn form the government and govern. In this type of democracy, a majority is allowed to take decisions on behalf of all the people.

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.

CHECK YOUR ANSWERS 7.5

- This cartoon is definitely in favour of democracy. In an indirect way it is telling the public not to be fooled and exercise their voting rights wisely, which they did by ousting the Liberals in the elections.

7.6 Nominal democracy and Ideal democracy

A nominal democracy, as we normally use the term, refers to a system of governance which is run by the people's elected representatives.

An ideal democracy is a broader concept. An ideal democracy is a system in which every citizen must be able to play equal role in decision making. For this, one does not need just equal right to vote. Every citizen needs to have equal information, basic education, equal resources and a lot of commitment. There may not be any country in the world which passes this test of democracy. Yet an understanding of democracy as an ideal reminds us of why we value democracy.

CHECK YOUR LEARNING 7.6

- This famous cartoon by R K Laxman comments on the celebrations of the fifty years of independence. How many images on the wall do you recognize? Do many common people feel the way the common man in this cartoon does?



7.7 Difference between democratic form of government and dictatorship

	Democracy	Dictatorship
1	In this government the ultimate power lies in the hands of the peoples and they play a very important role in the governing process	It is a government of <u>one man or a group of people who have used power by force</u>
2	In this people have the <u>right to change the government through elections</u>	A dictator can only be removed by <u>violence or by military coup</u>
3	People enjoy freedom of speech and impression.	Do not enjoy freedom of speech and impression
4	Right to free and fair elections	No right to free and fair elections
5	Provides equal opportunities to all its citizens.	Do not provide equal opportunities

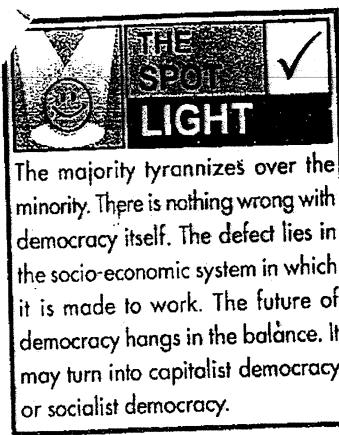


Fig.10 Hidden side of dictatorship



The above cartoon is from Brazil, a country that has long experience of dictatorship. It is entitled "The Hidden Side of Dictatorship". Which hidden sides does this cartoon depict? Is it necessary for every dictatorship to have a hidden side? Find this out about the dictators discussed in the first chapter and, if possible, about Abacha in Nigeria and Marcos in the Philippines.

The hidden side of dictatorship is massacre or killing of innocent people. Anybody who opposes the policies of a dictator is killed. Since the dictators control the media, the public never comes to know the number of people killed.



CHECK YOUR ANSWERS 7.6

1. The cartoon reflects the opinion of the general public. For fifty years leaders have made promises, made tall claims of achievements – but basic facilities are still denied to the common man – poverty is not eradicated, there is shortage of water, power, shelter, schools, hospitals – the basic necessities of life. The common man is bored by promises which are never fulfilled, actions do not match the promises.

IMPORTANT TERMS

CONSTITUTION MONARCHY

A government headed by a king or queen whose powers are limited by a constitution.

DEMOCRACY

A form of government which is chosen by the people to work for their welfare and can be voted out by them.

DICTATORSHIP

A form of government in which a person or a group of persons possess absolute power without effective constitutional limitations.

OPPOSITION PARTY

A political party (or parties) which fails to get majority in the legislature and is not able to form the government. They criticise the government and keep it in check.

REFERENDUM

An occasion when all the people of a country can vote on an important issue. It is a process of direct vote in which the electorate is asked to accept or reject a particular proposal.

WOMAN FRANCHISE

A system of election in which women are given the right to vote.

EXERCISE # 1

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Multiple choice questions

1. Democracy is based on a fundamental principle of
 - (1) communalism
 - (2) naturalised citizenship
 - (3) political equality
 - (4) male franchise
 2. The meaning of 'democracy' is that
 - (1) it is the rule of military
 - (2) it is the rule of a king
 - (3) it is the rule of the people's representatives
 - (4) it is the rule of a dictator
 3. In a democracy, rulers are elected by the
 - (1) people
 - (2) members of the Electoral College
 - (3) military officials
 - (4) bureaucrats
 4. Legal Framework Order in Pakistan was issued in -
 - (1) January 2000
 - (2) April 2001
 - (3) August 2002
 - (4) December 2003
 5. Pakistan under General Musharraf should not be called a democracy because -
 - (1) army officials are elected by the people
 - (2) elected representatives are not the real rulers
 - (3) Musharraf was retaining the post of General
 - (4) people have direct control over the government
 6. After how many years elections are held in China?
 - (1) 4 years
 - (2) 3 years
 - (3) 5 years
 - (4) 1 year
 7. To contest the general elections in China, a candidate needs to get the approval of the -
 - (1) National People's Congress
 - (2) Chinese Communist Party
 - (3) Socialist Communist Party
 - (4) United Workers Party
 8. Which one of the following is an appropriate reason that the government in China is not democratic?
 - (1) elections are not held
 - (2) elections are held under Communist Party's approval
 - (3) members are free to contest
 - (4) people choose government
 9. Identify the country, which has never been under military rule
 - (1) Pakistan
 - (2) Chile
 - (3) Poland
 - (4) Mexico
 10. Until 2000, every election in Mexico was won by
 - (1) Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)
 - (2) People's Revolutionary Party
 - (3) Revolutionary Political Party
 - (4) Institutional Political Party

True or false

1. In 2002, General Parvez Musharraf changed his designation from President to Chief Executive and held a referendum in the country that granted him a five-year extension.
2. In China, Chinese Communist Party or eight smaller parties allied to it were allowed to contest elections held in 2002-03.
3. In Fiji, the electoral system is such that the Indian-Fijian is not allowed to vote.
4. Zimbabwe attained independence from White minority rule in 1980. Since then the country has been ruled by ZANU-PF.
5. The example of Zimbabwe shows that popular approval of the rulers is necessary in a democracy, and is sufficient.
6. Leaders keep changing in a democracy. This leads to instability.
7. Democracy is better than any other form of government in responding to the needs of the people.
8. Though modern democracies involve a large number of people, it is possible for them to sit together and take a collective decision.

Fill in the blanks

1. Democracy is a form of in which the rulers are elected by the people.
2. Pakistani media, human rights organisations and democracy activists said that the was based on malpractices and fraud.
3. has made its citizenship rules in such a way that people belonging to Russian minority find it difficult to get the right to vote.
4. In Zimbabwe President is popular but also uses unfair practices in elections.

5. A democratic government rules within set by constitutional law and citizens rights.
6. Democracy leads to for it is based on electoral competition.
7. Democracy enhances the of citizens.
8. There can be various ways of taking decisions in a democratic manner, as long as the basic principle of on an equal basis is accepted.

Match the column

1.	Column-I	Column-II
(1)	General Parvez Musharraf	(a) has changed the constitution several times to increase the powers of the President and make him less accountable
(2)	National People's Congress	(b) is a better government because it is a more accountable form of government
(3)	Institutional Revolutionary Party	(c) would like citizens not to take part in politics
(4)	President Mugabe	(d) he overthrew a democratically elected government and declared himself the 'Chief Executive' of the country.
(5)	Democratic government	(e) has the power to appoint the President of the country.
(6)	Non-democratic government	(f) shifted the polling booths from one place to another in the last minute which made it difficult for people to caste their votes

ANSWER KEY**Multiple choice questions**

Ques	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Ans.	3	3	1	3	2	3	2	2	4	1	1	2	3	4	1	2	4	1	1	1

True or false

1. False 2. True 3. False 4. True 5. False 6. True 7. True 8. False

Fill in the blanks

1. government 2. referendum 3. Estonia 4. Mugabe
 5. limits 6. corruption 7. dignity 8. constitution.

Match the column

1. (1) → d ; (2) → e ; (3) → f ; (4) → a ; (5) → b ; (6) → c

EXERCISE # 2

SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT

Short answer type questions	10. Why is democracy considered the best form of government? Write in detail.
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What amendment did Parvez Musharraf bring in the constitution of Pakistan by issuing a Legal Framework Order ?2. Pakistan under General Parvez Musharraf should not be called a democracy". Explain.3. Although the principle of Universal Adult Franchise has now come to be accepted almost all over the world there are many instances of denial of equal right to vote. Explain with examples.4. What dirty practices were used by Institutional Revolutionary Party to win the elections in Mexico?5. Give any three arguments in favour of democracy.6. Give any three arguments against democracy.7. How does democracy improve the quality of decision making?8. How is the dignity of Citizens enhanced in democracy?9. How would you define democracy?	Long answer type questions <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Give some reasons for non-participation in the voting process.2. Explain the importance of liberal democracy.3. What is the difference between democracy and dictatorship?4. What is ideal democracy ?5. With reference to Zimbabwe, describe how the popular approval of rulers is necessary in a democracy, but not sufficient.6. Explain any three features of democracy.7. Why China still can not be called democratic ?8. Write a short note on democracy in Mexico.9. Give the difference between a democratic and non democratic form of government.

NCERT QUESTIONS WITH ANSWERS

1. Here is some information about four countries. Based on this information, how would you classify each of these countries. Write 'democratic', 'undemocratic' or 'not sure' against each of these.
- (1) Country A : People who do not accept the country's official religion do not have a right to vote.
 - (2) Country B : The same party has been winning elections for the last twenty years.
 - (3) Country C : Ruling party has lost in the last three elections.
 - (4) Country D : There is no independent election commission.

Ans. (1) Undemocratic

- (2) Undemocratic
- (3) Democratic
- (4) Not sure

2. Here is some information about four countries. Based on this information, how would you classify each of these countries? Write 'democratic', 'undemocratic' or 'not sure' against each of these.
- (1) Country P : The parliament cannot pass a law about the army without the consent of the Chief of Army.
 - (2) Country Q : The parliament cannot pass a law reducing the powers of the judiciary.
 - (3) Country R : The country's leaders cannot sign any treaty with another country without taking permission from its neighbouring country.
 - (4) Country S : All the major economic decisions about the country are taken by officials of the central bank which the ministers cannot change.

Ans. (a) Democratic
(b) Democratic
(c) Not Sure
(d) Undemocratic

3. Which of these is not a good argument in favour of democracy? Why?
- (1) People feel free and equal in a democracy.
 - (2) Democracies resolve conflict in a better way than others.
 - (3) Democratic government is more accountable to the people.
 - (4) Democracies are more prosperous than others.

Ans. (4) Prosperity is not a sign of democracy. Democracy does not affect the financial status of a country. India is a democracy, yet it is fighting a long battle against poverty. India is poor for various other reasons.

4. Each of these statements contains a democratic and an undemocratic element. Write out the two separately for each statement.
- (1) A minister said that some laws have to be passed by the parliament in order to conform to the regulations decided by the World Trade Organisation.
 - (2) The Election Commission ordered re-polling in a constituency where large scale rigging was reported.
 - (3) Women's representation in the parliament has never reached 10 per cent. This led women' organisations to demand one-third seats for women.

Ans. (1) The reference of the laws to the parliament show that democracy is practiced. The minister has not taken the decision himself. But the decision to conform to the regulations decided by World Trade Organisation is undemocratic. Why should a free country make laws to suit a foreign organisation?
(2) Democratic : Repolling is necessary whenever rigging takes place in a constituency during elections.
Undemocratic : Rigging itself is an undemocratic element. It should not happen in a democracy.
(3) One should have more women representatives in parliament - democratic. To demand reservation is undemocratic. Women should come forward themselves and fight elections.

5. Which of these is not a valid reason for arguing that there is a lesser possibility of famine in a democratic country?

- (1) Opposition parties can draw attention to hunger and starvation.
- (2) Free press can report suffering from famine in different parts of the country.
- (3) Government fears its defeat in the next elections.
- (4) People are free to believe in and practice any religion.

Ans. (4) It has nothing to do with famines.

6. There are 40 villages in a district where the government has made no provision for drinking water. These villagers met and considered many methods of forcing the government to respond to their need. Which of these is not a democratic method?

- (1) Filing a case in the courts claiming that water is part of right to life.
- (2) Boycotting the next elections to give a message to all parties.
- (3) Organising public meetings against the government's policies.
- (4) Paying money to government officials to get water.

Ans. (4) Paying money to government officials to get water.

7. Write a response to the following arguments against democracy :

- (1) Army is the most disciplined and corruption-free organisation in the country. Therefore, army should rule the country.
- (2) Rule of the majority means the rule of ignorant people. What we need is the rule of the wise, even if they are in small numbers.
- (3) If we want religious leaders to guide us in spiritual matters, why not invite them to guide us in politics as well. The country should be ruled by religious leaders.

Ans. (1) Army rule is not a rule of the people through their representatives. They may be disciplined but they become dictatorial and cut down the freedom of the people. We have seen this in the case of Pinochet's rule in Chile, President's Musharraf's rule in Pakistan and the military rule in Myanmar.

- (2) Wise men are not necessarily good administrators. It will become the rule of the minority, not of the majority of the people. People's liberties are bound to be cut down.
- (3) Religious leaders follow the letter of the religion they preach. They deny freedom of thought, expression and speech. We have seen this in the case of Afghanistan. Religious leaders deny freedom of religion

Important Notes