

Revision Notes

Class-6 Social Science - Civics

Chapter 4 – Key Elements of a Democratic Government

Democracy is regarded by almost everybody because the best sort of government. CBSE Class 6 Social Science (Political Science) Chapter 4 talks about the elements that build a democratic country. This chapter will teach you why democracy is the most viable alternative to other forms of government. You will also learn how democracy has still a long way to go.

The Story of South Africa

Your book starts with the story of South Africa to show you what it means to NOT live in a democracy. After the British colonies in other parts of the world crumbled, the British had no other option but to decolonize South Africa as well.

However, even after the British left, the life of the native Africans did not improve. The white people who immigrated to South Africa from other parts of Europe came together and started trying to grab political power there.

The major political party that was managed by the white supremacists (those who think that the whites are superior to others) was the National Party or NP. In 1950, they passed the Population Registration Act where it was mandated that the whites and the black would live separately.

Under the rule of the white supremacists, the whites got everything good - property in prime locations, jobs in major areas, facilities that made their lives comfortable. The blacks were marginalized and became second-class citizens in their own country. This racial segregation was known as apartheid.

During the apartheid, one of the ways in which the blacks were abused was to force them to learn Afrikaans instead of the native language Zulu. Many students protested against this. One such student was Hector Pieter son of the Soweto Township. While protesting against the imposition of the Afrikaans language alongside his classmates, Hector and therefore the protestors got

beaten up by the South African Police. When the police opened fire, one of the bullets killed Hector - all because he wanted his language to be treated with equal respect.

Ultimately under the awesome leadership of Nelson Mandela, the African National Congress tore down the system of apartheid in 1994. South Africa became a nation where all races were started to be treated equally.

Equality

So what have you learned from the above story? Many people believe that democracy only means the right to vote. But the most major element of democracy is equality. Even the right to vote is actually there to promote equality - equal voting rights. Equality is the aim of democracy. Let us now see how in a democracy this equality is achieved.

Participation in the Government and Governance

As you learned in the previous chapter that the people in a democratic nation elect the leaders who would represent them. It is assumed that these representatives would work for the people who elected them. Electing leaders is the basic way in which the people take part in the affairs of the government.

Specific Tenure

The government is a democratic country that is elected for a specific period only. In India, the government can stay in power till 5 years after the election. After the election, the leaders would again have to stand in power. In this way, the government is forced to act for the betterment of the people in mind so that they can get reelected again.

Other Features of Democracy

As mentioned, in India, elections happen at every five years. So should the people stay silent in the intervening years even if the government does bad

things during this period? No, there are many ways that the people can take part in the government besides taking part in the election.

- Criticism is a part of a healthy democracy. In a country where the government cannot digest criticism democracy cannot thrive there. It is the responsibility of the citizens to prevent the government from becoming too powerful by criticizing its harmful activities.
- Protests are also a great way to check the power of the government. It is the next step after criticism. Your book tells the story of a government that increased the electricity price back in 2005. The people criticized and protested and the government had to back down from its stance.
- It is said that the media is the fourth pillar of democracy. Whenever the government does something bad, the media is there to make the people aware of that activity.
- Judiciary is also an important part of democracy. In India even if a political party makes harmful laws to accommodate their agenda, the Supreme Court has the power to strike down such laws. Many people try to paint rallies, protests, and criticisms with bad paint. But without these things, democracy would become weaker.

Yet There Are People Who Are Not Fully Benefited by Democracy

Democracy gives people the power to make the government accountable. However, not all people can use the power that democracy provides. There are economically weaker sections that cannot take part in the protest because they are daily wage earners and cannot miss even a day's work. Sometimes, the minority and the Dalits are not properly represented in the parliament. There is still an imbalance in the ratio of female leaders to male leaders. So, the needs of the female citizens are not fully met by these male leaders.

Good Conflict Vs Bad Conflict

In a democracy people of various views, castes and religions have equal power. Sometimes this becomes a problem. When two differing communities put forth two differing views, there are chances of enmity being cropped up among them. This kind of conflict never results in anything good. This is a harmful form of conflict. However, sometimes the members of society come

into conflict with the government to snatch the rights of the common people. One example is the conflict between the government and Anna Hazare who wanted the government to pass the Lokpal bill. This form of conflict is necessary for democracy to remain strong. It is the duty of the citizens to examine which conflicts are good and which are bad.

Justice

In the case of the government systems other than democracy, not all people get the same treatment - not all people get justice. As was the case in apartheid-era South Africa, the blacks were not given justice - they were treated unfairly. Even today in India, the girl child is treated as inferior to the male child in many families. Back in the day, the Dalits were treated as untouchables. Today, they are still discriminated against. Democratic governments try to help these sections of society by making special provisions for them.

Important Questions and Answers:

1. How do people participate in the government?

Ans: In a democratic setup, there are many ways in which the people participate in the government. These ways are –

- Taking part in the election process and electing the leaders that they want to see in power.
- Criticizing the bad deeds of the government.
- Protesting against the bad deeds against the government.
- Using the media to check the powers of the government.
- Taking the help of the judiciary.

2. How can the government resolve the conflicts that can arise between various entities in a democracy?

Ans: The government acts as a mediator to help the conflicting entities resolve their issues. For example, the central government performed a significant role to resolve the issues between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu regarding the sharing of the water of Cauvery. Sometimes the government can make law and resolve issues. Then again, there are

police forces under the control of the government that resolve the issues between two entities.

3. What are the actions taken by the government to help every citizen enjoy equality?

Ans: The government can make laws to ensure equality and to outlaw things like having any non-academic title. Sometimes the government makes special provisions for the backward communities to pull them out of the economic and intellectual crisis. It also ensures that the countrymen are able to elect the government that they want.

4. How were the non-whites discriminated against in apartheid-era South Africa?

Ans: The non-whites were discriminated against in many ways.

- Not allowed to learn their own language - Zulu.
- They were deprived of properties in the prime location.
- They were deprived of government facilities.
- They were not allowed to mingle with the whites.

5. What are the key features of a democratic government?

Ans: The key features of democratic government are:

- Equality among all the people irrespective of caste, religion, gender, or economic status
- Universal adult franchise - the right to vote.
- The right to criticize and protest.
- Freedom of speech.
- The right to get justice