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a course in **social studies**

▪ GEOGRAPHY ▪ HISTORY ▪ SOCIAL & POLITICAL LIFE

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GRADE 7



Democracy and Equality

Key Aspects

- Different forms of government
- Democracy

Let us recapitulate why every country needs a government to understand this let us take the example of a family. A family needs a place to live which is secure. It should have a kitchen to cook food, the basic amenities like water, electricity, toilets, etc. It should have security from burglary and dacoity. It has a set of rules as to what time the food will be eaten, who will do what, and so on. And the parents usually ensure that the rules are followed by everyone. These rules are not written down as family is a small unit and everyone understands each other.

In the same manner the country also needs a safe environment, the infrastructure like roads, railways, electricity and water supply systems. They also have to have a set of rules which are to be enforced. All this is done by the Government of a country.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF GOVERNMENT

To understand what democracy is, we need to understand different forms of government.

Monarchy

Many countries have a monarchical form of government. In this type of government, the monarch (a king or queen) has absolute power. Monarchy is generally hereditary. On the death of monarch, the eldest child, usually a male child, inherits the position and becomes the next ruler.

Brunei kingdom is ruled by a king and all the political powers are in his hand. He makes law for the people but he himself is above them. His government is called absolute monarchy. Oman, Saudi Arabia, Vatican City and Qatar have absolute monarchy.



King of Brunei



Queen of United Kingdom

The Queen of United Kingdom is a monarch too. But her position is more ceremonial. She possesses no political power. The country is run by the Prime Minister, who is elected by the people. This kind of monarchy is known as constitutional monarchy.

Bhutan, Denmark, Kuwait, Malaysia, Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Japan have constitutional monarchy.

Authoritarian Government

This type of government is also known as Totalitarian regime or Dictatorship. In this type of government, individuals are not given importance in governance. The government enjoys unlimited power but the citizens do not have any freedom. The power to rule rests with one person known as the dictator such power is often obtained forcibly. The people who criticise the dictator are punished severely.



Adolf Hitler



Mussolini

Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany through democratic elections in 1933 but destroyed the democratic system of government and ruled like a tyrant.

Mussolini established a fascist government in Italy in 1932 which came to an end when he was overthrown in 1943.

Zimbabwe was freed from white rule in 1980. Since then, Robert Mugabe has ruled Zimbabwe enjoying dictatorial powers. He took away freedom of the people, preventing them from criticising the government. In 1987 the post of Prime Minister was abolished and Mugabe gained additional powers.



Robert Mugabe



Insight

During the medieval times, a political and economic system called 'feudalism' was practiced in Europe. It comprised three elements- the lord (noble who owned land), the vassal (the person who was granted land by the lord) and the fief (the land). In exchange for the fief, the vassal would provide military service to the lord. Feudalism came to an end in the 14th century.



Saddam Hussein

Military Dictatorship

It is a form of non-democratic government in which the political power lies with the military. The rulers give a lot of importance to nationalism. The people are, however, not given much freedom. Even the media is controlled by the government. The judiciary is under the government's control.



Idi Amin



Muammar al-Gaddafi



Gamal Abdel Nasser

In the Middle East and Africa too, powerful military dictators in the past like Idi Amin (Uganda), Muammar al-Gaddafi (Libya) and Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt) too enjoyed military leadership.

Some countries even experienced civil and military rules alternatively, like in Pakistan, Fiji and Libya. Myanmar and North Korea are presently under military rule.

CASE STUDY: AUNG SAN SUU KYI

Aung San Suu Kyi is the pro-democracy leader of Myanmar and the winner of 1991 Nobel Peace Prize. The 65 year old Suu had spent most of the last 21 years in some form of the detention because of her efforts to bring democracy to military-led Myanmar. Her father, Aung San, led his country's freedom struggle against Great Britain and got independence from Burma (Myanmar) in 1947. But he was killed by his own rivals in the same year. Suu Kyi's mother, Daw Khin Kyi, gained prominence as a political figure in the newly formed Burmese government. She was appointed Burmese ambassador to India and Nepal in 1960, and Suu Kyi followed her there.

Later, Suu Kyi went to work for the United States in New York. In 1988, Suu Kyi returned to Burma at first to tend to her ailing mother but later to lead the pro- democracy movement. Influenced by both Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence and by Buddhist concepts, Suu Kyi entered politics to work for democracy in her country. She founded the National League for Democracy on 27 September 1988, and organized peacefully rallies calling for democratic reforms and free elections. But the army seized power in a coup and Suu Kyi was put under house arrest on 20 July 1989. In 1990 General elections, Suu Kyi's National League for democracy (NLD) won a landslide victory but the ruling military junta refused to accept the election results. She remained under house arrest for almost 15 years of the 21 years from 20 July 1989 until her release in 13 November 2010.



Aung San Suu Kyi



Insight

The People's Republic of China is run by a single political party. There is no place for other parties. The party chooses the head of the state.

Communist Government

The communist or socialist governments are also non-democratic governments. They advocate that ownership of the means of production should be collective and private ownership of property should be denounced.

The Russian Revolution in 1917 and the Chinese Revolution 1949 were landmarks in establishing the communist's governments in these countries. China, Cuba and Vietnam are the examples of communist states.

CASE STUDY: NEPAL

Nepal is the neighbouring country of India. Nepal has seen rapid political changes during the last two decades. Until, 1990 Nepal was a monarchy running under the executive control of the king. Faced with a Communist movement against the absolute monarchy, King Birendra, in 1990, agreed to political reforms by creating a parliamentary monarchy with the king as the head of state and a Prime Minister as the head of the government.

In 2002, the king sacked the elected Prime Minister and appointed his own men to important positions. Following this, in 2005, the king dismissed the entire government and assumed full executive powers.

The people reacted to this action with a movement against the monarchy and forced the king to give up power.

This movement in April 2006 brought about a change in the nation's governance. An interim constitution was prepared with the king giving up power, and an interim House of Representatives was formed with Maoist Members.

On December 28, 2007, the interim parliament passed a bill that would abolish monarchy and make Nepal a federal republic, with the Prime Minister becoming head of State. On April 10, 2008, the first election in Nepal for the constituent assembly took place.

On May 28, 2008, lawmakers in Nepal legally abolished the monarchy and declared the country a republic, ending 239 years of royal rule.

King Gyanendra was given 15 days to leave the Royal Palace in central Kathmandu by the Nepalese Constituent Assembly. He left the former Royal Palace on June 11. On July 19, 2008, the first round of voting for the election of country's President and Vice President took place in the Constituent Assembly. Parman and Jha became the first Vice President and Dr. Ram Baran Yadav was elected President of Nepal. On August 15, 2008, Maoist leader Prachandana (Pushpa Kamal Dahal) was elected the prime minister of Nepal.



King Gyanendra



Dr. Ram Baran Yadav

IQ 1

Nepal has experienced three types of government-absolute monarchy, parliamentary monarchy and democratic republic. Find out how the three types of governments affect the economic and social conditions in Nepal.

Democracy

Ours is a democratic country. The word 'Democracy' has been derived from the Greek words-*Demos* (people) and *Cratia* (administrations). Thus democracy is that form of government where people participate in the functioning of government. In the words of Abraham Lincoln, "Democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people".



Parliament of India

Supreme power lies with the people of the country. This power to administer is not vested with a particular caste or class of people but with the community as a whole. In a democracy, people are allowed to participate in its governance. But that does not mean that everyone participates in it directly. People have rights and duties to participate directly and indirectly.

Key elements of democracy :

- Equality for all citizens—In democracy, all citizens have equal rights. No discriminations is made on the basis of caste, colour, creed or birth. We shall read more about equality later in the chapter.
- People's Participation—In a democracy, people are given the rights and opportunities to actively participate in the government's activities at all levels without any discrimination. The representatives of the government are elected by, and from the people, and they direct the officials to run the government. To ensure people's participation in India the voting rights are given to all adult citizens irrespective of caste, religion, economic status, educational status and sex. This is called universal adult franchise. This assures that everyone has right to vote without discrimination after attaining the age of 18 years.
- Liberty—In a democracy, people get liberty (freedom) of thought, speech and expression.

Equality Before Law

The rule of law states the supremacy of law, which means that all persons (individuals and government) are subject to law. The Indian Constitution recognizes every person equal before law, which means that law is supreme.

Everybody has to abide by the law and anybody who violates the law is liable to punishment according to the law. Everyone is thus equal in the eye of law :

- No person can be discriminated against on the basis of religion, race, caste, place of birth or gender.
- Every person has access to all public places including playgrounds, hotels, shops, markets, wells, roads and bathing ghats.
- Untouchability, that existed in our age-old caste-ridden society, has now been abolished by our Constitution.

Do You Know?

The rule of Law was established by the French Revolution and in order to bring this law in force they first executed their King Luis XVI to establish the Rule of Law.

In our earlier caste ridden society untouchability was prevalent. Higher caste people indulged in insulting the weaker ones through harsh words and malicious behaviour recognizing them as polluted and untouchable's and violated human dignity. Human Dignity is the core value of democracy. A society can be called democratic only if all its members are respected as human beings and with dignity. Our Constitution says "Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of



Dr B. R. Ambedkar

any disability arising out of 'Untouchability' shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law" (Part III, Article 17).

Dr B R Ambedkar who was a Dalit, the downtrodden, contributed largely to uplifting the Dalits in Indian Society. Dr Ambedkar's efforts helped to eradicate social evils like untouchability and caste restrictions. Indian Constitution recognizes Dalits as Scheduled Castes (SC). Our Constitution and reservation in jobs provides them for their upliftment.

IQ 2

What would you have done to change the outlook of people towards your class, if you were born in a family of dalits?

Democracy in Action

Democracy forms a society and economy for proper governance. The facts of Democracy such as justice, equality, freedom and dignity are deeply interwoven with the social, political and economic life of the people. Only universal adult franchise does not suffice the need of the people living in democracy. But it requires a liberal outlook in every social, economic and political sphere for a democracy to flourish.

Social, Economic and Political Democracy

In our country every citizen who fulfils the criteria under the Constitution may be appointed the leader of a major political party or the head of the government.

All the men, women and every section of society are treated equally and given equal opportunity for growth by our government. No one can get privileges on the basis of religion, caste, race, sex, place of birth.

The democratic government is successful when the society is democratic. This means the society is free from discrimination of caste, gender and economic status.

Gender discrimination, caste discrimination and economic disparity tends to spoil the system of democratic set-up of our society, today.

There exists a rule in the constitution for equal distribution of wealth among the people. This is called economic justice. This means to be free from all economic exploitation. Say, for example, an employer should not be exploited by owners and peasants should not be exploited by the Zamindars (landlords) or oppressed by the bureaucracy.

Thus, the objective of a true democratic country can only be fulfilled if social, economic and political democracy prevails.

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Civil rights are the rights necessary to ensure one's ability to participate in the civil and political life of the state without discrimination. It includes equal treatment of all people with respect to protection by the law and enjoyment of life, liberty and property. Like India, many other countries are struggling and have struggled for equality. For example, in the United States of America people were divided on the basis of skin colour- the Whites (Americans) and the Blacks (African-Americans). The ancestors of African-Americans were once the slaves who were brought from Africa. African-Americans were treated unequally and denied equality before law. They had no civil and political rights. For example, while



While travelling in a bus, they (Blacks) had to sit at the back or leave their seat for a White person, there were separate lunch counters and separate schools for blacks and whites. They were not allowed to mix with the whites. In order to fight for equality the Civil Rights Movement began in the USA in 1950s. African-American people demanded equal rights and an end to racial discrimination.

Rosa Parks was an African-American woman. She being tired after a long day at work refused to give up her seat on a bus to a white man on 1st December 1955. Her refusal that day led to a huge agitation against the unequal ways in which African-Americans were treated and this came to be known as the *Civil Rights Movement*.

Martin Luther King was an inspiration to the people during the American Civil Rights Movement. He showed his followers the path of non-violence and peaceful resistance. Through the struggle of the black people, Civil Rights Act came into force in 1964.

- It banned discrimination on the basis of race, religion or national origin.
- All schools were opened to African-American children and they no longer had to attend separate schools specially set up for them.
- All citizens (whites and non-whites) were equal before law and enjoyed equal protection of law.

But still the poorest African-American sections of the country are unable to avail better educational facilities due to lack of money and resources.



Martin Luther King
addressing people.



Martin Luther King

Key Terms

<i>Ceremonial</i>	: Formal
<i>Regime</i>	: Rule
<i>Nationalism</i>	: Love of country and willingness to sacrifice for it.
<i>Election commission</i>	: A sudden and violent change of government.
<i>Denounced</i>	: Strongly criticised

Chapter in a Nutshell

- In monarchical form of government, the monarch has absolute power.
- In authoritarian government, individuals are not given importance in governance.
- Military dictatorship is a form of non-democratic government in which the political power lies with the military.
- The communist government is also non-democratic government.
- Democracy is that form of government where people participate in the functioning of government.
- Civil rights are the rights necessary to ensure our's ability to participate in the civil and political life of the state without discrimination.

EXERCISE

I. Objective type questions.

A. Tick (✓) the correct option.

- In which form of government king or queen has absolute power?
a. Dictatorship b. Monarchy
c. Communist d. Democratic
- Which of these have constitutional monarchy?
a. Malaysia b. Netherlands
c. Norway d. All of these
- _____ Kyi is the pro-democracy leader of Myanmar.
a. Adolf Hitler b. Saddam Hussein's
c. Aung San Suu Kyi d. King Gyanendra
- Nepal was _____ country.
a. communist b. monarchy
c. democratic d. dictatorship
- India is a _____ country.
a. dictatorship b. monarchy
c. communist d. democratic

B. Fill in the blanks.

- Monarchy is generally _____.
- _____ came to power in Germany through democratic elections in 1933.
- _____ established a fascist government in Italy in 1932.
- China, Cuba and Vietnam are the examples of _____ states.
- _____ is that form of government where people participate in the functioning of government.

C. State true or false.

- Brunei is a kingdom ruled by a dictatorship.
- In Monarch government, individuals are not given importance in governance.
- Zimbabwe was freed from white rule in 1980.
- Military dictatorship is a form of non-democratic government in which the political power lies with the military.
- Nepal has seen rapid political changes during the last two decades.

II. Very short answer questions.

- Define democracy.
- What do you mean by monarchy?

3. What is dictatorship?
4. Who was Martin Luther king?

III. Short answer questions.

1. What is communist government?
2. What are the different types of democracy.
3. What are civil rights?
4. What do you understand by 'All persons are equal before the law'.

IV. Long answer questions.

1. Describe the key elements of democracy.
2. What methods of resistance was adopted in the American civil right movement by Martin Luther king and his followers?
3. Difference between political and economic democracy.
4. Describe the role of BR Ambedkar?

V. HOTS questions

1. 'Democracy means the rule by the common people.' Justify this statement.
2. Why did India not adopt direct democracy?

GROUP DISCUSSION

Arrange a group discussion in your class on topic 'Should illiterate people be given the right to vote'.

VALUE ADDED QUESTION

The Indian constitution provide equality to all citizens. But still them prevails discrimination and inequality in the Indian society. What would you do to establish equality in the real in society.