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Ch:What is Democracy? Why Democracy? (Notes)

In the previous 3 years of examinations, significant importance has been given to the following topics from this chapter. The students are therefore asked to have a deep understanding as detailed answers (Long Answer Type) could be asked on these concepts.

- Meaning and Features of Democracy
- Importance of Democracy
- Alternatives to Democracy

What is Democracy?

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

- Myanmar where the army rules, Dictator Pinochet's rule in Chile, or President Nkrumah's rule in Ghana was not democratic. They were not chosen by the people.
- Hereditary kings, like the king of Nepal or Saudi Arabia, are also not democratic rulers. They rule because they were born into noble families.

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

- In Pakistan, President Musharraf had the power to dismiss national and state assemblies; so the final powers rest with the army and the General himself. We cannot call it a democracy. Now Pakistan has an elected government.

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

For example, in Mexico elections have been held every six years since 1980. But the same party, PRI, has won the elections. Obviously, there has been rigging and malpractices, with freedom denied to the opposition. This is not what a democracy should be.

In a democracy, people's will is ascertained by each adult citizen having one vote and each vote has one value. Democracy is based on the fundamental principle of political equality.

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

- A democratic government cannot do what it likes after winning the elections. It has to respect certain basic rules and is accountable not only to the people but also to other independent officials.

The Pillars of Democracy are The Sovereignty of the people, Government based upon the consent of the government, Majority rule, Minority rights, Guarantee of basic human rights, Free and Fair elections, Equality before the law, Constitutional limits on government, Values of tolerance, Pragmatism, Cooperation and Compromise.

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