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**Ch:What is DEMOCRACY?AND WHY DEMOCRACY?**

## **Features of Democracy( Notes)**

The simple definition of democracy gives rise to various questions, which are given below:

- Who are the rulers in this definition?
- What kind of election constitutes a democratic election?
- Who are the people who can elect the rulers or get elected as rulers?
- Finally, what form of government is a democracy?

## **Major decisions by elected leaders**

Some countries like Pakistan do not follow this rule. In Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf led a military coup in October 1999. He overthrew the democratically elected government and went on to become the President of the country. In 2002, he also held a referendum in the country that granted him a five-year extension. Meanwhile, after passing of this 'Legal Framework Order' elections were held to the national and provincial assemblies and elected representatives were granted some powers. But the final power rested with military officers and General Musharraf himself. Hence, we can conclude it was not a democratic country. The same thing happens in many dictatorships and monarchies. Thus, we can conclude that 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 held after every five years for electing the country's parliament, called Quanguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui (National People's Congress). Before contesting elections, a candidate needs the approval of the Chinese Communist Party. The government is always formed by the Communist Party. Alternatively, since its independence in 1930, Mexico holds elections after every six years to elect its President. But until 2000 every election was won by a party called PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party). Should we consider the elections described above as examples of people electing their rulers? Reading these examples we get a sense that we cannot. Democracy must be based on a free and fair election where those currently in power have a fair chance of losing.

## **One person, one vote, one value one value**

Democracy is based on a fundamental principle of political equality. However, there are many instances of denial of the 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 the Russian minority found 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. Definitely not a democratic government. The feature of democracy this highlights is that in a democracy, each adult citizen must have one vote and in turn, each vote must have one value.

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