

ELEMENTS OF DEMOCRACY

Participation

You have read that in a democracy, the government is elected by people. A government is elected for a fixed period. In case of India, the government is elected for a period of five years. After that, people get a chance to elect a new government through popular vote.

Elections are the way to ensure people's participation in formation of government. If people are satisfied with the performance with the incumbent government, then the government gets re-elected to serve for another term. If people are not satisfied with the performance, then a new government replaces the old government. In real world it is not possible for each and every citizen to directly participate in governance. So, representational democracy has become the norm all over the world. It is assumed that the elected representatives work in the interest of people. Otherwise, they will lose the next elections.

- Other Ways of Participation
- Apart from participating in the government formation, people also have many other means of participating in the democratic process. This can happen through staging mass protests and also through participating in debates on the media.
- Whenever a particular social group develops a feeling that its interests are being ignored, it can raise its voice through mass protests. Various social groups also organize mass protests to raise some new demands to the government. Sometimes, the government may take a decision which does not appeal to a wide section of the population. In that case also people come out on street to register their protest.

- **Protests and Marches:** Protest marches and demonstrations (dharna) are the main tools of mass protest. You may have seen pictures of such protests on television and in newspaper. A particular social group may be staging a protest demand job reservation. Another group may be staging a protest to demand higher wages. The list of demands can be endless.
- Some people also raise their voice through debates on television. Many others raise their voice by writing on social media or by writing letters to the editors of newspaper.

- Need to Resolve Conflict
- Conflicts are part and parcel of life. When different social groups do not go along well with each other, it results in conflicts. Sometimes, people may turn violent to resolve the conflict. But it is the government's duty to ensure that no violence takes place and conflicts are resolved peacefully.
- Some Possible Causes of Conflict:
 - **Religion:** Route of religious procession often becomes a subject of conflict. People from one religion may insist on taking out procession through a locality which has majority population from another religion. This can happen at many places during some important religious festivals. In such a situation, it becomes the duty of police and administration to find out amicable settlement. The police also tries to ensure that the festival passes off peacefully.
 - **River Water:** Sharing of river water becomes a bone of contention between two or more states. River Cauvery is a good example. This river originates in Karnataka and ends in Tamil Nadu. Both the states seldom agree on settlements regarding sharing the river water. The Central Government often intervenes in the matter to keep the situation under control.
 - Delhi depends on Haryana and Uttar Pradesh for supply of drinking water. These states often come to conflict over ensuring smooth supply of drinking water for the people of Delhi.
 - In all the cases of conflict, governments at various levels try to control the situation. The government tries to find a solution which can be acceptable to all parties.

- Equality and Justice
- Because of the age-old caste system, there has been a long history of inequality in India. Many people could not get opportunities to study and to take up certain occupations because of the caste system. Many people from the downtrodden section did even get the basic human rights. They were not even allowed to offer prayers in a temple. They were not allowed to take water from public places.
- After independence, the government laid guidelines to remove inequality and injustice from the society. It is government's responsibility to treat every citizen equally. The government has to ensure that nobody suffers because of inequality.

Gender based inequality is another major social evil in our country. A male child is usually preferred over a girl child. In many families, girls are not given proper opportunities. To tackle this problem, girls are given free education in government schools. This is being done to encourage education of the girl child.

THANK YOU