

Challenges to Democracy

LONG ANSWER TYPY QUESTIONS (4 MARKS)

Previous Years' Questions

Q.1. How does communalism take various forms in politics ? Explain four forms. [Foreign 2008]

Ans. Communalism is based on the idea that religion is the principal basis of social community. It can take various forms in a democracy.

- **Religious Form :** The most formidable form of communalism is in everyday religious ideas of people. The followers of one religion believe it to be superior to all religions. There is blind faith in one and contempt for all others.
- **Political Form :** Actually people of a particular religion often want maximum representation of their religion in politics and seek to achieve political and social dominance over the minority. This results into a majoritarian dominance. In this form they often demand a separate state for themselves.
- **Form of Political Mobilisation :** Communalism in politics sometime takes the shape of political mobilization on communal lines. It involves the use of sacred religious symbols and religious leaders to appeal to the people of a particular religion.
- **Form of Riots and Violence :** The most adverse form of communalism is that it leads to riots and violence. The people from various religions are in opposition to each other and use violence to show the domination of their religion. In this way it disturbs the social peace and cause social turmoil.
Thus we can safely say, that in its extreme form communalism leads to the belief that people belonging to different religions cannot live as equal citizens within one nation.

Additional Questions

Q.2. What must not take place in a democracy if it is a good democracy ?

Or

List out the demerits of democracy.

Ans. Democracy is the kind but not the ideal form of government. There are some drawbacks which should not take place in a democracy if it is a good democracy :

- Absence of Morality :** Democracy is all about political competition and power play. There is no scope for morality. Hence, "morality" should be made one of the basic principles of democracy.
- Chances of Defection :** Normally, leaders keep changing in a democracy. This leads to instability. But this, attitude of leaders should be checked under the "anti-defection law"
- Democracy Leads to Corruption :** Democracy leads to corruption for it is based on electoral competition. Democracy must follow the principle of electoral coordination. All elected leaders do not know the host interest of the people. It leads to bad decisions. Hence some qualifications of moral and intellectual nature should be introduced.

- (iv) Delayed in Decision Making : Commonly in a democracy so many people have to be consulted that it leads to delays. Therefore, only a group of selected leaders must be consulted for the quick and meaningful decision. On the basis of above arguments we can clearly say that democracy is not a magical solution to all the problems. It has not ended poverty in our country and in other parts of the world. Therefore, some drawbacks must be avoided to make democracy a better form of government.

Q.3. Examine the features of democracy.

Ans. The features of democracy can be categorised in the form of questions followed by sub-headings and classification of each feature like :

- (i) Who are the Rulers in the Democracy ?
- Major decisions are taken by elected leaders.
- (ii) What kind of Election constitutes a Democratic Election ?
- Free and fair electoral competition.
- (iii) Who are the people who can elect the rulers ?
- One person, one vote and one value.
- (iv) What kind of a form of government is democracy ?
- Rule of law and respect for rights.

Features in detail

- (i) Major Decisions by Elected Leaders :In a democracy the final decision making power must rest with those elected by the people. Some countries like Pakistan and Russia have formally an elected Parliament and government but the real power is with those who are not elected. But this cannot be called a good democracy or people's rule.
- (ii) Free and Fair electoral Competition :Democracy does not mean holding of any kind of election. But the elections must offer a real choice between political alternatives. And it should be possible for people to use this choice to remove the existing rulers if they wish so.
- (iii) One Person, One Vote, One Value :As democracy is based on the fundamental principles of political equality so, in a good democracy, each adult citizen must have one vote and each vote must have one value. In other words-democracy guarantees universal adult franchise.Unlike Saudi Arabia' women do not have right to vote, in Fiji right to vote is very much confined to indigenous Fijis. This is not the example of a good and sound democracy.
- (iv) Rule of Law and Respect for Rights : A democratic government cannot do whatever it likes, simply because it had won an election. It has to respect some basic rules. In particular it has to respect some guarantees. to the minorities. Every major decision has to go through a series of consultations and every office bearer has certain rights and responsibilities assigned by the Constitution and the law. Therefore, a good democratic government rules within limits set by constitutional law and citizens rights.

Q.4. Describe briefly the challenges faced by modern democracies of the world.

Ans. A challenge is a difficulty that carries within it an opportunity for progress". Once we overcome a challenge we go up to a higher level than before. And different countries face different kinds of challenges which can be categorised in these ways :

- (i) Foundational challenge for non-democratic countries,
 - (ii) Challenge of opening for established democracy
 - (iii) Challenge of deepening democracy for every democracy.
- For details Refer to Ans. 2,3 and 4 (3 Marks).

Q.5. How can democracy be reformed and deepened ? Suggest some guidelines.

Ans. Each challenge of democracy is linked to the possibility of reforms. Generally all the suggestions or proposals about overcoming various challenges to democracy are called democratic reform or political reform. So there are some that can be kept in mind while devising ways and means for political reforms in India.

- (i) Legal Way of Politics : It is very tempting to think of legal ways of reforming politics, to "think of new laws to ban undesirable things. But this temptation needs to be resisted. Actually democratic reforms are to be carried out mainly by political activists, parties, movements and politically conscious citizens.
- (ii) Reforms through Proper Legislation : Any legal change must carefully look at what results it will have on politics.
 - Generally, laws that seek to ban something are not very successful in politics. Laws that give political actors incentives to do good things have more chances of working.
 - The best laws are those which empower people to carry out democratic reforms. The right to information act is a good example to a law that empowers the people to find out what is happening in government and act as watchdogs of democracy. Such a law helps to control corruption.
- (iii) Reforms through Political Parties : Sometimes democratic reforms are to be brought about principally through political practices.
- (iv) Reforms through Citizens Organisation and Media : Measures that rely on democratic movements, citizens organisations and the media are likely to succeed.

Q.6. What role can an ordinary citizen play in deepening democracy ?

Ans. An ordinary citizen can play a very constructive role in the deepening of democracy.

- (i) No democracy can function in the absence of enlightened and informed citizens because they are the pillars of democracy. Citizens maintain a balance between government and public issues,
- (ii) Well informed and enlightened citizens form a healthy public opinion which puts a check on the unresponsive government and its policies.
- (iii) Socially responsible citizens also help in the regulations of social reforms and can put a check on rash and unsocial conduct.
- (iv) Hence, the strength of democracy lies in respecting though of its citizens and in creating an atmosphere of fair and frank interaction of thought, approaches and perspectives for solving collective problems and building a polity of free and equal beings.

Q.7. What are the major challenges to democracy in India ?

Ans. In spite of being the largest democracy in the world Indian democracy also suffers from some challenges of its own nature, e.g., challenge of expansion; challenge of deepening democracy; challenge of criminalisation and challenge of corruption,

(i) Challenge of Expansion : This challenge of Indian democracy involves the practical aspects of

- Ensuring greater power to local governments.
- Extension of federal principles to all the units of the federation.
- Inclusion of women and minority groups.

Although India has the federal nature of democracy based on decentralisation of power, the local self government is not implemented in a fair and just manner at every local or regional level because India has a quasi-federal nature of democratic set. up which is unitary basis. Women and minority groups still have not got a proper representation in the electoral politics of India, Hence, electoral reforms and political reforms have to be introduced in India.

(ii) Presently, India is suffering from the challenges like casteism. communalism, political violence, etc.

- Casteism plays a dominant role in the Indian polity. There are many caste pressure groups like Scheduled Caste Federation, etc., which influence those who are in power by different methods to get their demands met. For example political parties like the A1AUMK, DMK and BSP have come up to protect the interests of the backward classes.
- Communalism has also its negative implications in Indian politics like :

(a) It leads to the formation and growth of "pressure groups to protect and promote ^specific interest of the community e.g., V.H.P. etc."

(b) It also leads to intolerance, suspicion and fear towards members of the other communities.

- Besides, there are various types of violence like caste, communal, electoral in our country

(a) The most serious manifestation of political and social violence is the growth of "Terrorism"

(b) Rising state violence is assuming serious dimensions and harms the very foundation of a democratic polity.

(iii) Challenge of Criminalisation: This challenge of Indian democracy reflects :

- money and muscle power, violence,
- multiplicity of candidates,
- lack of electoral ethics, insufficient representation of various sections of society like minorities and women etc have polluted the electoral process.

Hence, meaningful and comprehensive electoral reforms are urgently needed.

(iv) Challenge of Corruption : This challenge of Indian democracy is related to the criminal record and personal possession of politicians. Now it is mandatory for every candidate who contests election to file on "Affidavit" giving details of his property and criminal cases pending against him. The new system has made a lot of information available to the public. But there is no system to check if the information given by candidate is false.