

Revision Notes
Chapter – 22
Democracy and Government

What is Government?

- Every country needs a government to run the country according to some laws.
- The government plays an important role in our lives and does a number of things for the people.

• **Need for a Government:**

- (i) The government is required to maintain law and order in a country.
- (ii) Government makes provision for services like roads, electricity, waterways, railways, health and sanitation, etc.
- (iii) Government even protects against external aggression and is responsible for maintaining unity and integrity of the country.

• **Level of Government:**

- (i) Government in any country functions at several levels-central, state and local.
- (ii) Central government looks after nation, state after the provinces and local looks after the villages and towns.

• **Laws and the Government:**

- (i) Laws are made by the government and as citizens of a country, people have to abide by it.
- (ii) Government even has the power to enforce these laws.
- (iii) Courts have the power to give justice to the aggrieved party.

• **Types of Government:**

- (i) The laws are made by the government in a manner depending on the type of government in the country.
- (ii) There are two types of governments: Democratic and Authoritarian.
- (iii) In a democratic government people have a right to choose their representatives. For example, India, UK and USA.
- (iv) Authoritarian governments are where there is absolute obedience to the authority. Examples of such type of governments are Saudi Arabia and Myanmar.

Key Elements of a Democratic Government

- For long people have struggled for their rights.
- It is generally perceived that democracy is the best system to give rights to people.

- **Ending of Racial Discrimination:**

- (i) The continent of South Africa is very close to the Asian subcontinent.
- (ii) For over nearly six decades in later part of the 20th century, the country was in the news for the practice of apartheid or racial discrimination.
- (iii) Majority of the South African population was of blacks. The white settlers who settled here pursued a policy of ruthless suppression towards the black majority.
- (iv) The discrimination was so apparent that everyone could see it.
- (v) After several decades of endless struggle, the policy of racial discrimination towards blacks came to an end in 1994 with Nelson Mandela being sworn in as a black President.

- **Participation:**

- (i) For a successful democracy, it is essential for people to participate in its governance.
- (ii) This participation takes place through voting in elections.
- (iii) In India, general elections are held after every five years to keep a check on the government.

- **Other ways of Participation:**

- (i) In addition to election, there are several other ways of participation.
- (ii) Some such methods are dharnas, rallies, strikes, signature campaigns and other form of

protests.

(iii) Mass media like TV, newspapers, magazines and other agencies also play a major role in highlighting public issues and moulding public opinion.

• **Need to Resolve Conflicts: Role of Government:**

(i) In any country problems may result in conflicts and lead to unpleasantness.

(ii) There may arise a situation when two people or two groups feel that they are not being treated fairly or are being discriminated on grounds of culture, region, religion, economic background, caste, race, etc.

(iii) It is the government's responsibility to resolve these conflicts.

• **Rivers as a Source of Conflict**

(i) The water flowing between two states or countries can lead to a conflict.

(ii) For example, Tamil Nadu in India would get water only if Karnataka releases it and this leads to conflict.

(iii) It has led to creation of a tribunal to see sharing of river water in these states.

• **Equality and Justice:**

(i) One of the main responsibilities of a democracy is giving impartial justice and equality to all.

(ii) Equality and Justice are two different sides of the same coin and are inseparable in democracy. They go hand in hand.

(iii) Dr. Ambedkar, had waged a long struggle for getting rights to Dalits or untouchables.

(iv) Laws were made to abolish untouchability.

(v) Likewise, the Hindu Marriage Act provides equal inheritance right to daughters in their father's property.

(vi) Without justice and equality democracy would remain meaningless and directionless.