

Long Answer Questions

Q.1. State the main features of democracy.

Ans. The main features of democracy are:

- (i)** In a democracy, the final decision-making power must rest with those elected by the people.
- (ii)** A democracy must be based on free and fair elections, where those currently in power have a fair chance of losing.
- (iii)** In a democracy, each adult citizen must have one vote and each vote must have one value.
- (iv)** A democratic government rules within limits set by the constitutional law and citizens' rights.
- (v)** Democracy provides a method to deal with differences and conflicts. It enhances the dignity of the citizens.

Q.2. How can you say that Pakistan was not exercising democracy when General Musharraf was ruling?

Ans. In Pakistan, General Musharraf led a military coup in October 1999.

- (i)** He overthrew a democratically elected government and declared himself the 'Chief Executive' of the country.
- (ii)** Later, he changed his designation to that of a President and in 2002, held a referendum in the country that granted him a five-year extension.

The government in Pakistan, under General Musharraf, cannot be called a democracy because:

- (i)** People may have elected their representatives to the national and provincial assemblies but those elected representatives are not really the rulers. They cannot take the final decisions.
- (ii)** The power to take the final decision rests with the army officials and with General Musharraf and none of them are elected by the people. This happens in many dictatorships or monarchies. They formally have an elected parliament and government but the real power is with those who are not elected.

(iii) Pakistani media, human right organisations and democracy activists said that referendum held by General Musharraf was based on malpractices and fraud.

Q.3. Giving an example of Zimbabwe, show how laws were made by one single ruler.

Ans. Since Zimbabwe got independence in 1980, it is being ruled by ZANU-PF which led the freedom struggle.

(i) Its leader, Robert Mugabe has been ruling the country since independence. But ZANU-PF won due to unfair practices in elections.

(ii) His government has made changes in the constitution several times to increase the power of the President and make him less accountable.

(iii) The opposition party workers were harassed and their meetings were disrupted.

(iv) Public protests demonstrations are declared illegal.

(v) Laws are made to limit the right to criticise the President.

(vi) The media has been forced to write and speak in favour of the ruling party.

(vii) There are independent newspapers but the government harasses those journalists who go against it. The government has ignored some court judgements that went against it and has pressurised judges.

This example of Zimbabwe shows that popular government can be undemocratic. Popular leaders can be autocratic. If we wish to assess a democracy, it is important to look at the elections and how they are fought.

Q.4. How did Musharraf establish his rule in Pakistan?

Ans. (i) Musharraf came to power after attempting a military coup. He overthrew a democratically elected government and declared himself the Chief Executive of the country.

(ii) Later, he changed his designation to President and in 2002 held a referendum in the country that granted him a five-year extension.

(iii) Pakistani media, human right organisations and democracy activists said that the referendum was based on malpractices and fraud.

(iv) In August 2002, he issued a 'Legal Framework Order' that amended the constitution of Pakistan. According to this order, the President can dismiss the national or provincial assemblies.

(v) The work of the civilian cabinet is supervised by a National Security Council which is dominated by military officers.

Q.5. “Democracy is better than other forms of governments because it allows us to correct its own mistakes. Do you agree with it or not?”

Ans. (i) There is no guarantee that mistakes cannot be made in democracy. No form of government can guarantee that.

(ii) The advantage in a democracy is that such mistakes cannot be hidden for long.

(iii) There is a space for public discussion on these mistakes. And there is a room for correction.

(iv) Either the rulers have to change their decision or the rulers can be changed.

(v) I believe, this cannot happen in a non-democratic government; so I fully agree that democracy does allow us to correct its own mistakes.

Q.6. Under what conditions is a government run after the elections?

Ans. A democratic government cannot do whatever it likes simply because it has won the elections. It has to respect some basic rules. In particular it has to provide some guarantees to the minorities. Every major decision has to go through a series of consultations. Every office bearer has certain rights and responsibilities assigned by the constitution and the law. Each of these is accountable not only to the people but also to other independent officials.

Q.7. Why do we need to define democracy accurately?

Ans. (i) The simple definition of democracy is not adequate. It reminds us that democracy is people’s rule.

(ii) But if we use this definition in an unthinking manner, we would end up calling almost every government that holds an election is a democratic. That would be misleading.

(iii) Every government in the contemporary world wants to be called a democratic country, even if it is not so.

(iv) That is why we need to carefully distinguish between a government that is actually a democratic and one that pretends to be one.

(v) We can do so by defining it carefully that democracy is a form of government in which the rulers are elected by the people and the final decision-making power must rest with those elected by the people.

Q.8. In which countries, even today, there is denial of equal right to vote?

Ans. The principle of universal adult franchise has been accepted almost all over the world, yet there are many instances of denial of equal right to vote.

(i) In Saudi Arabia, women do not get the right to vote, they remain in pardah and being told not to interfere in the political matters.

(ii) Estonia has made its citizenship rules in such a way that people belonging to Russian minority find it difficult to get the right to vote.

(iii) In Fiji, the electoral system is such that the vote of an indigenous Fijian has more value than that of an Indian Fijian.

Q.9. Once elected by the people, what kind of duties are needed to be performed by the office bearers?

Ans. A democratic government cannot do whatever it likes, simply because it has won an election.

- It has to respect some basic rules.
- In particular, it has to extend some guarantees to the minorities.
- Every major decision has to go through a series of consultations.
- Every office bearer has certain rights and responsibilities assigned by the constitution and the law.
- Each of these is accountable not only to the people but also to other independent officials.

Q.10. What have you understood by the term 'Democracy'?

Ans. Democracy is a form of government in which rulers are elected by the people. But, this definition is not adequate to define democracy. We need to add up following features:

(i) Democracy is a form of government in which rulers elected by the people take all the major decisions.

(ii) Elections offer a choice and fair opportunity to the people to change the current rulers.

(iii) This choice and opportunity is available to all the people on an equal basis.

(iv) The exercise of this choice leads to a government limited by basic rules of the constitution and citizens' rights.