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Democracy–Evolution and Focus

Lesson Plan

Contents

- ▶ An overview of democracy
- ▶ Understanding how democracy evolved and the areas it focuses on

Objectives

- ▶ To understand the evolution of democracy and its focal points
- ▶ To learn why democracy became a preferred form of government
- ▶ To know about the salient features that make democracy preferable
- ▶ To appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of the democratic system

Teacher's Aids

- ▶ Globe
- ▶ Pictures, charts, atlas and wall maps
- ▶ Blackboard
- ▶ Internet

Tips for Teacher

- ▶ Explain why or how democracy is the preferred mode of governance around the world.
- ▶ Students should be encouraged to know about people, places, locations and their placement on the maps.

Background and Reading

- ▶ Read the lesson aloud and explain, sharing the aids, etc., pausing to examine and explain the data in the boxes.
- ▶ Particularly focus on the evolution and salient features of democracy.
- ▶ Particularly clarify between the difference between freedom and licence: freedom carries responsibility and duties; licence is irresponsible.

What is Democracy

- ▶ Preferred form of government—it admits variety and also permits criticism.
- ▶ Democracy derived from Greek word 'demos' [people] and 'kratos' [role of government]—hence, rule of the people—Abraham Lincoln: Democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people.'

Evolution of Democracy

- ▶ Greece—2500 years ago—small states—people gathered to make laws—free to create rules and make laws—this was Direct Democracy.
- ▶ Rome—combined monarchical, democratic and aristocratic system—a political and economic system called feudalism was practised—three factors: Lord [noble], Vassal [person granted land by noble] and Fief [landless]—relation between these three formed the basis of feudalism—ended after 14th century.
- ▶ New type of law and order thereafter—representative democracy and nationalism developed.
- ▶ 16th century—England defeated by Spain—led to growth of Parliament which became supreme—king had power but under control of the Parliament.
- ▶ End of royal absolutism in the 17th century—power transferred to two houses of Parliament: House of Lords and House of Commons—the guiding principles laid down by the following laws: The Petition of Rights [1628]; The Bill of Rights [1689]; The Mutiny Act [1689]; The Habeas Corpus Act [1679]; The Act of Settlement [1701].

Universal Adult Franchise

- ▶ Initially, right to vote restricted to middle class—later extended to working class.
- ▶ 1928—women allowed to vote—through The Equal Franchise Act—equal in terms of suffrage.
- ▶ Universal suffrage achieved later.
- ▶ America—democratic changes after the War of Independence [1775-83]—first country to have written constitution—also a Federal Government with a division of power—constitution came into force in 1789—containing principles stated in the Declaration of Independence.

Equality

- ▶ France—democracy meant equality—with slogan liberty, equality and fraternity—French Revolution fought against privileges of nobles and clergy—started because people did not have the freedom to express themselves.
- ▶ French people divided into three estates: the first—clergy; the second—nobility; the third—the people.
- ▶ Third Estate declared themselves the National Assembly in 1789 and gave people the right to liberty, equality and fraternity—gave rise to process of making a constitution—came into force in 1791.

- ▶ All these movements established principle of self-government—people are supreme—idea of democracy.
- ▶ After Industrial Revolution—new middle class grew—capitalists became owners of factories—also right to vote—The Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884: Right to vote extended to more people—other changes: Emergence of political parties, rule that all members of the executive must belong to the same party established.
- ▶ Socialist ideas grew—gave importance to common man—led to need for government to create conditions of socio-economic equality.
- ▶ Presently—most independent countries—democratic form of government—earlier direct democracy—now difficult to follow—only followed now in Switzerland—now indirect democracy followed—by people electing their representatives.

Main Focus of Democracy

- ▶ Rules are laid down for rulers and people in democracy—document called a constitution—a source of power—lays down the powers of the organs of government: The Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary—also specifies what it cannot do—places limits on the powers of the government by giving rights to the citizens that cannot be violated.

Participating People

- ▶ Participation and consent of people important in democracy—right to express their opinion.
- ▶ Also implies equality—equal status and opportunities to all citizens—democracy states that all citizens will be treated as equals under the law—all subject to ‘the rule of law’—including the state, the union ministers—can be punished if they violate the law/rules laid down by the constitution.

Freedom of Expression

- ▶ Democracy one of the best forms of government because it gives freedom and equality to all—all rules and regulations passed through legislation and people’s interest given importance.
- ▶ India—diversity—regions, religions, languages, etc.—at times conflict—democracy finds an amicable solution.
- ▶ Equality for all diverse groups—rich/poor; educated/uneducated, etc.—all with equal opportunities—working towards eradicating poverty and achieving all-round growth for people.
- ▶ Existing problems—disparity between rich and poor—educational differences—caste—some treated as untouchable—Gandhiji fought against it—called them Harijans.
- ▶ B.R. Ambedkar—‘Father of the Indian Constitution’—made efforts to give basic rights to all people under provisions of the Constitution—made untouchability punishable by law.

Respect for Human Dignity

- ▶ Constitution lays down that—the State shall not discriminate against any citizens on grounds of caste, religion, place of birth or sex; no citizen on grounds of religion, caste

and creed is subject to any liability, disability or restrictions with regard to shops, hotels, public restaurants, use of wells, tanks, roads and public resorts.

- ▶ Government passes Acts to protect citizens.
 - 1955: The Disabilities Act—equal rights to persons with disabilities—also free education and ramps in public places.
 - Programmes and schemes—to bring equality and help to underprivileged persons.
- ▶ The Midday Meal Scheme—promoting equality—all elementary schoolchildren get assured meal—attendance in schools improved—incentive to students.
- ▶ Inequality in many countries—in America, Afro-Americans subjected to inequality—Martin Luther King Jr.—led the Civil Rights Movement against unequal practices—Civil Rights Act 1964 passed—discrimination on the basis of religion, race and nationality prohibited—received the Nobel Peace Prize.

Assessment Corner

Oral Assignment

- A. Ask for answers at random from the students. Confirm the right answers. Let them write down the correct answers if they like in their books.

Written Assignment

- B–F. The teacher has two options—(i) Either do these exercises orally first and then ask the students to write them down. OR (ii) Ask the students to write the answers on their own. Then the teacher can announce the correct answers to the students and they can ask their partners to cross-check them.

In either case, the answers can be written as homework and the teacher can check them in the class.

Think Tank

- G. **HOTS questions:** Discuss the questions in the class and let the students write the answers to G and H as homework. Teacher should assess individual work.