

CLASS 9 SOCIAL SCIENCE — PART 1

Chapter 6: Democracy

Exam-Preparation Notes

Prepared from the uploaded chapter in Understanding Society: India and Beyond, Grade 9 – Part 1. These notes summarise the chapter in student-friendly language. Practice questions are revision exercises, not official board questions.

1. Meaning of Democracy

Democracy is a system of self-government in which people are the ultimate source of political power. Citizens participate in decision-making directly or by electing representatives through free and fair elections.

Democracy is based on freedom, equality, justice, rights, duties, participation and respect for different opinions. It is not limited to voting; it also involves responsible behaviour and participation in everyday public life.

India is the world's largest democracy because of the scale of its electorate and citizen participation.

2. The Constitution and Democracy in India

The Constitution of India was adopted on 26 November 1949 and came into force on 26 January 1950.

It establishes democratic institutions, protects Fundamental Rights and provides a framework for government at Union, State and local levels.

The Constitution can be amended under Article 368, allowing it to respond to changing needs while preserving its fundamental values.

3. Democratic Traditions in India: Early Times to the Constitution

Early Indian traditions included collective decision-making through Vedic institutions such as the Sabhā, Samiti and Vidhata. These involved consultation and discussion.

The Aikyamatyā Sūktam of the Ṛigveda emphasises shared counsel, common intention and unity of purpose.

Early republican states, known as gaṇas or saṁghas, also involved collective political practices. Bauddha Saṁghas used discussion, debate and voting to make decisions and choose leaders.

During British colonial rule, people had limited control over governance. The freedom struggle strengthened democratic ideas.

The Constituent Assembly was formed in 1946 to draft the Constitution. It took 2 years, 11 months and 18 days to complete its work. Dr B. R. Ambedkar chaired the Drafting Committee.

4. Essential Principles of Democracy

Popular sovereignty: The ultimate authority of the State comes from the people. Citizens choose representatives through elections.

Universal Adult Franchise: Every Indian citizen aged 18 or above has the right to vote, subject to the law. Voting is conducted by secret ballot.

Rule of Law: Everyone is equal before the law. No person is above the law, and legal action must follow established procedures. People must have a fair opportunity to defend themselves.

Fundamental Rights: These protect the freedom, dignity and equality of individuals. Rights are enforceable in courts, subject to constitutional provisions and reasonable restrictions.

Separation of powers: The legislature makes laws, the executive implements laws and policies, and the judiciary interprets laws and protects the Constitution. This prevents excessive concentration of power.

Accountability and transparency: Public authorities must explain their decisions and act within the law. Access to reliable information helps citizens hold institutions accountable.

Participation and inclusion: Citizens should be able to take part in public decisions, and the voices of different groups should be respected.

5. Fundamental Rights

The six categories of Fundamental Rights described in the chapter are:

1. Right to Equality (Articles 14–18).
2. Right to Freedom (Articles 19–22).
3. Right Against Exploitation (Articles 23–24).
4. Right to Freedom of Religion (Articles 25–28).
5. Cultural and Educational Rights (Articles 29–30).
6. Right to Constitutional Remedies (Article 32).

Citizens may seek constitutional remedies through the courts. Article 21A provides for free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14.

6. Separation of Powers and the Judiciary

The legislature, executive and judiciary have different responsibilities. Their powers and functions are defined by the Constitution and laws.

The judiciary is expected to function independently and impartially. It can review government action and determine whether laws are consistent with the Constitution.

Public Interest Litigation (PIL) allows a legal action to be brought before a court to address an issue affecting the public interest.

7. Forms and Practices of Democracy

Representative democracy: Citizens elect representatives who make decisions and govern on their behalf.

Participatory democracy: Citizens take part more directly in public decision-making through public consultations, local councils, community initiatives and similar mechanisms.

Democracy works through institutions at Union, State and local levels. Local self-government brings decision-making closer to communities.

Panchayati Raj institutions and Municipalities support local participation. In certain north-eastern regions, Autonomous District Councils protect tribal customs and have specified legislative and judicial powers. The PESA Act, 1996, empowers Gram Sabhas in Scheduled Areas covered by the Act.

8. Democracy at the Grassroots

Gram Sabhas and Gram Panchayats can help communities identify local needs and take part in decisions about education, sanitation, welfare and development.

The chapter describes Jethipura Gram Panchayat in Gujarat, recognised for effective Gram Sabha functioning, record-keeping, special Gram Sabhas and participation by women and marginalised groups.

South Manubankul Gram Panchayat in Tripura is presented as a women-friendly Panchayat, promoting women's participation, health, sanitation, livelihoods and community programmes.

A quorum is the minimum number of members required for a meeting to conduct valid proceedings.

9. Women's Participation in Democracy

Women in India received voting rights with the introduction of Universal Adult Franchise under the Constitution when it came into force in 1950.

In Britain, women obtained full voting rights in 1928; in the United States, women obtained voting rights in 1920. These examples show that voting rights expanded through long struggles in many countries.

Article 243D provides for not less than one-third reservation for women in seats filled by direct election in Panchayats. Article 243T provides similar reservation in Municipalities. Some States and Union Territories have provided 50% reservation in local bodies.

Formal voting rights do not automatically ensure equal representation. Social prejudice and other barriers can still limit women's participation.

10. Civil Society, RTI and Public Participation

Democratic practices can also be found in civil society organisations, community institutions, cooperatives and trade unions when they use fair and participatory decision-making.

The Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, enables citizens to seek information held by public authorities and strengthens transparency and accountability.

Citizens can also participate through campaigns, community organisations, Public Interest Litigation and local institutions.

11. Challenges to Democracy in India

Challenges include illiteracy, misinformation, fake news, poverty, regionalism, gender inequality and social discrimination.

Unequal access to information and weak implementation of laws or policies can reduce public trust in institutions.

Damaging public property, spreading false information, ignoring public rules and remaining indifferent to public issues weaken democratic life.

Democracy requires both strong institutions and responsible, informed citizens.

12. The Emergency of 1975–1977

A National Emergency was imposed in June 1975 on the grounds of internal disturbance. During this period, many Fundamental Rights were suspended, the press was censored and numerous political leaders and activists were arrested.

Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as Lok Nayak, helped mobilise students and citizens, especially in Bihar and Gujarat.

The Emergency was lifted in 1977 and general elections were held. The defeat of the ruling government demonstrated the importance of elections, civil liberties, constitutional safeguards and active citizen participation.

Articles 352, 356 and 360 of the Constitution concern National Emergency, President's Rule and Financial Emergency, respectively.

13. Democracy and Young Citizens

Young citizens can strengthen democracy by learning about the Constitution, respecting Fundamental Duties, checking the reliability of information and using social media responsibly.

Participation in community service and programmes such as the National Service Scheme (NSS), National Cadet Corps (NCC), and Bharat Scouts and Guides can develop teamwork and civic responsibility.

Students can practise democratic values by listening to others, resolving disagreements peacefully, taking leadership in school and community activities, and protecting public property.

14. Flowcharts for Quick Revision

Democratic principles: People's sovereignty → free and fair elections → accountable representatives → protection of rights → citizen participation.

Three organs of government: Legislature → makes laws | Executive → implements laws and policies | Judiciary → interprets laws and protects the Constitution.

Local democracy: Citizens → Gram Sabha / local community participation → Panchayat or Municipality → local decisions and development.

Responsible citizenship: Reliable information → informed opinion → respectful discussion → responsible participation → stronger democracy.

Challenges and response: Misinformation / inequality / apathy → public awareness + accountable institutions + inclusive participation → healthier democracy.

15. Important Terms

Democracy: A system in which people are the ultimate source of political authority.

Popular sovereignty: The principle that State authority comes from the people.

Universal Adult Franchise: The right of adult citizens to vote, subject to law.

Rule of Law: The principle that everyone is subject to the law and treated according to lawful procedures.

Separation of powers: Division of government responsibilities among the legislature, executive and judiciary.

Public Interest Litigation (PIL): A legal action initiated to address a matter of public interest.

RTI: The Right to Information Act, 2005, which allows citizens to request information from public authorities.

Quorum: The minimum number of members required for a meeting to conduct valid proceedings.

Civic responsibility: Responsible actions by citizens, including respecting others' rights, following laws and contributing to the community.

16. Exam Practice Questions

1. Define democracy and explain why it is not limited to elections.
2. What is popular sovereignty? How do elections express it?
3. Explain the importance of the Rule of Law in a democracy.
4. Name the six categories of Fundamental Rights in the Constitution of India.
5. Explain the functions of the legislature, executive and judiciary.
6. Describe two early Indian traditions that involved collective decision-making.
7. What is the role of the Constituent Assembly in the making of the Constitution?
8. Differentiate between representative democracy and participatory democracy.
9. How do Gram Sabhas and local bodies strengthen democracy?

10. Explain how RTI promotes transparency and accountability.
11. Mention three challenges faced by Indian democracy.
12. What happened during the Emergency of 1975–1977, and what lesson does it offer?
13. Why is women's representation important in democratic institutions?
14. Suggest four ways in which students can contribute to democracy.
15. 'Voting alone is not enough to sustain democracy.' Explain with examples.

17. Answer Hints for Selected Questions

- Q1. Democracy places ultimate authority with the people and includes rights, equality, accountability, public discussion and everyday civic participation—not just voting.
- Q2. Popular sovereignty means government derives its authority from the people. Free and fair elections allow citizens to choose or replace representatives.
- Q3. The Rule of Law prevents arbitrary use of power, protects rights, ensures equal treatment and requires legal procedures before punishment.
- Q5. The legislature makes laws; the executive implements laws and policies; the judiciary interprets laws and protects constitutional principles.
- Q8. Representative democracy works through elected representatives. Participatory democracy involves citizens more directly through consultations, local councils and community initiatives.
- Q10. RTI allows citizens to seek information from public authorities, helping them question decisions and improve accountability.
- Q12. During the Emergency, rights and freedoms were restricted, the press was censored and political leaders were arrested. The 1977 election showed the importance of constitutional safeguards and public participation.