

CHAPTER-1

DEMOCRACY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

QUESTION ANSWERS

1) What are the difficulties people face in a non-democratic country? Give answers drawing from the examples given in this chapter.

Ans: In non-democratic countries people cannot freely choose their leader, they cannot form political parties without the consent of those who are in power. In some extreme cases people who protest against the authorities are tortured and killed. The military coup of 1973 in Chile and the Communist government in Poland, which ruled till 1990, are examples of oppressive undemocratic rule. While the military rule in Chile tortured and killed people who opposed its rule, the Communist regime in Poland imprisoned those who spoke against the government. In both the cases, people were not free to choose their leaders.

2) Which freedoms are usually taken away when a democracy is overthrown by the military?

Ans: When a democracy is overthrown by the military, the freedom of the people to choose their own leader is taken away. In addition to this, they are not allowed the freedom of expressing displeasure at any of the government policies which they don't like.

3) What is a referendum?

Ans: A referendum is a direct vote in which an entire electorate is asked to either accept or reject a particular proposal.

4) Who was Salvador Allende? Why was his policy opposed by the aristocrats?

Ans: Salvador Allende (1908-1973) was the founder leader of the Socialist Party of Chile. Allende led the Popular Unity coalition to victory in the Presidential election in 1970. After being elected the President of Chile, he redistributed land to the landless farmers, gave free milk for poor children and opposed foreign companies which were taking away important natural resources like copper from Chile. His worker policies were not acceptable to the aristocrats. That is why the aristocrats opposed his policies.

5) Explain any three salient features of democracy.

Ans: Salient features of democracy are

(i) Democracy is a form of government which allows people to choose their rulers. This choice should be made through a free and fair election, where those people currently in power have a fair chance of losing.

(ii) In a democracy, people can express their opinions freely, form political associations and organize political action.

(iii) In a democracy, each adult citizen, including women, must have one vote and each vote must have one value.

6) Describe any three demands of the workers of 'Lenin Shipyard' during their strike which started in August 1980 in Poland?

Ans: On 14 August 1980, the workers of Lenin Shipyard in the city of Gdansk went on a strike. Their main demands were

(i) The strike began with a demand for taking back a woman crane operator, who was unjustly dismissed from service.

(ii) They wanted the right to form independent trade unions.

(iii) They also demanded the release of political prisoners and an end to censorship on press.

7) Explain the factors that make the United Nations a non-democratic organisation. Or 'International organisations are undemocratic'.

Justify the statement.

Ans: The UN Security Council is an organ of the United Nations responsible for maintaining peace and security in the world.

(i) The UN Security Council has 15 members including 5 permanent members. Its 5 permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States) enjoy the real power and take all crucial decisions.

(ii) Each permanent member has veto power. It means that the council cannot take a decision if any permanent member says no to that decision. This shows undemocratic nature of the Security Council.

(iii) Ten other members are elected by the General Assembly for two-year terms. In reality, they enjoy no powers and are not decision makers. This system has led more and more people and countries to protest and demand that the UN Security Council should be more democratic.

8) 'A democracy is incomplete without Universal Adult Franchise'. Explain the values which are associated with Universal Adult Franchise.

Ans: The United Nations was established on 24 October, 1945 to promote international cooperation. It has six principal organs, the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council, the Secretariat, the International Court of Justice and the United Nations Trusteeship Council (which has been inactive since 1994).

(i) All the 193 member countries have one vote each in the General Assembly. But assembly cannot take any decision about what action should be taken in case of conflict between different countries. It can recommend on any matter, except matters of peace and security.

(ii) The Security Council is the most important and powerful UN organ that takes crucial decisions. Its real power lies in the hands of five permanent

members which also enjoy 'veto' power.

(iii) The IMF (International Monetary Fund) is an international organisation which is the biggest moneylender for any country in the world. Its 188 member states do not have equal voting rights. The vote of each country is weighed by how much money it has contributed to the IMF. More than 54 per cent of the voting power in the IMF is in the hands of only ten countries.

(iv) The World Bank is an international financial institution that provides loans to developing countries. The Presidents of the World Bank (so far 12 presidents) has always been a citizen of the US, conventionally nominated by the Treasury Secretary (Finance Minister) of the US government. The international organisations are thus becoming less democratic. Their working is affected by the American dominance in the international politics.

9) What were the differences between Pinochet's rule in Chile and the communist rule in Poland? [V. Important]

Ans. Pinochet, an Army General supported by the government of USA, led a coup in Chile in 1973 against Allende's popularly elected government. With this, dictatorship was established in Chile. Pinochet's government tortured and killed several of those who supported Allende and wanted to restore democracy there.

In Poland, a Communist Party called Polish United Workers' Party ruled in 1980. No other political party was allowed to function. The government of Poland was supported by Soviet Union. But when the movement led by Lech Walesa spread, demanding the workers' rights, the government had to give in. Finally, an agreement was signed between Walesa and the Polish government in April 1989 for free elections. In 1990, elections were held in which more than one party could contest.

10) How was democracy re-established in Poland?

Ans. Lech Walesa – an electrician, joined the strikers (workers of Lenin Shipyard). He became popular. The government agreed to the workers' demand. An independent trade union was formed. Soon it had one crore members. The government tried to put it down. Another wave of strike followed. This time it resulted in an agreement in 1989 for free elections. Walesa was elected President of Poland.

11) Write five arguments why democracy is better than other alternative governments.

Ans: The circumstances and political conditions of the 20th century helped in spreading the idea of democracy all over the world.

(i) After the Second World War (1945), the world witnessed a wave of

democratisation. Democracy evolved through popular struggles. It has been established in countries where deep-rooted socio-economic inequalities have existed. Countries like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, etc did not only want to get rid of their colonial masters, they also wished to choose their future leaders.

(ii) In many democracies, people shared power in the decision making process through their representatives.

(iii) After the collapse of the Soviet Union (USSR) many East European countries like Hungary, Bulgaria, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Romania, etc abolished communism and adopted democracy.

(iv) In a democracy, government is formed through Universal Adult Franchise.

(v) Public opinion played a pivotal role in spreading nationalism and democracy throughout the world. Thus, we can say democracy is better than other alternative governments.

12) Who is Aung San Suu Kyi?

Ans: Aung San is a democratic leader of Myanmar who led The National League for Democracy. Military leaders put her under house arrest and did not accept the election procedure of the country.

13) How was democracy restored in Chile?

Ans: (i) Pinochet's military dictatorship came to an end after he decided to hold a referendum in 1988.

(ii) Political freedom was restored and General Bachelet's daughter, Michelle Bachelet was elected President of Chile in 2006.

(iii) The elected governments that came to power ordered inquiries into Pinochet's rule, which showed that his government was not only very brutal but also very corrupt.

14) What is democracy? Give its characteristics.

Ans: Democracy is a form of government that allows people to choose their rulers.

(i) In a democracy, only leaders elected by people rule the country.

(ii) In a democracy, people have the freedom to express views, freedom to organise and freedom to protest.

15) What were the common features between Poland and Chile?

Ans: Common features between Poland and Chile were:

(i) The people of both the countries could not choose or change their rulers.

(ii) There was no real freedom to express one's opinions in both the countries.

(iii) People could not form political associations and organise protests and political action.