

CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRACY

Political Science Class-10

Thinking about Challenges

Challenge-

- It is any significant or important problem which can be overcome
- A challenge is also an opportunity to progress
- After overcoming challenges, we are one level higher than before
- Democratic countries as well as non-democratic regimes face different challenges.
- Example- Non-democratic countries face the foundational challenges as in China and Saudi Arabia

Board Questions:

1. 'A challenge is an opportunity for progress.' Support the statement with arguments. (2015)

Types of Challenges

At least one-fourth of the globe is still not under democratic governments. Even Democratic countries face different kinds of challenges.

1. Foundational Challenges

- This challenge is faced by non-democratic countries
- It means bringing down non-democratic rule through transition to democracy
- Instituting or establishing a Democratic government as in Myanmar
- Keeping military away from political affairs and controlling govt.
- Establishing a sovereign and functional state.
- Example- China, Saudi Arabia

Board Questions:

1. Explain the foundational challenges faced by democracies. (2011,12,13)

2. Challenge of expansion of Democracy

- This challenge is faced by established democracies
- It implies applying democratic principles across all regions, social groups, institutions
- Ensuring greater power to local governments like municipal bodies
- Extending federal principles to all the units of the federation
- Inclusion of women and minorities in decision making etc
- Most of the decisions should follow democratic procedures.
- Example- India and the USA. In Saudi Arabia there is no freedom of religion.

Board Questions:

1. Elaborate the challenge of expansion of Democracy. Give an example. (2012, 16)
2. Explain the 'challenge of Expansion' to democracy. (2012)
3. 'Most of the established democracies are facing the challenge of expansion.' Support the statement with examples. (2016)

3. Deepening of Democracy

- This challenge is faced by every democracy in form or another.
- It means making the popular practices of democracy and institutions of democracy stronger
- Different people have different expectations from democracy and therefore this challenge is dealt differently in different parts of the world.
- It seeks to involve people's participation and control of democratic institutions

Board Questions:

1. 'The challenge of Deepening of Democracy is being faced by every democracy in one form or another.' Support the statement with arguments (2016)

- Ordinary people's participation is possible when the influence of the rich and powerful people is brought down in making governmental decisions.
- Example- Setting up of Lokpal in India,

Thinking about Political Reforms

Political Reforms- All suggestions or proposals overcoming various challenges to Democracy are called 'democracy reforms' or 'Political reforms'.

Some broad guidelines for Political Reforms

Same set of reforms can not be applied in all situations or at all levels. Moreover, after some time the present list of reforms may become irrelevant after some time as situation may not be the same in future. Here some ways of reforming politics are given.

1. Legal ways to reform politics.

- Generally, we think that laws can be framed to ban undesirable things and discourage wrong practices.
- But only legal-constitutional changes cannot overcome challenges of democracy
- Democratic reforms can be effective if it is carried out mainly by Political Parties, movements and Politically conscious and aware citizens.

Example- as only change in rules in lbw in cricket can not guarantee the improvement in quality of cricket also, in the same way only laws can not improve politics unless all Political actors participate.

- Sometimes legal ways of reforming politics can be counter productive (have negative side effects)
- Example-** the two-child policy in some states for contesting candidate in Panchayat elections produced counter-productive results. This resulted in denial of democratic opportunity to the poor and women.

- The best laws are those which empower the common people
- Laws should give incentive to Political actors to try to bring reforms in Political system

- **RTI (Right to Information Act)** is a good example of laws that empower people.

1. RTI was implemented on 15th June,2005.

2. It acts as the watchdog of Democracy because it has greatly empowered people.

3. This Act has given people the right to know what is happening in the government.

4. It is a great tool in the hands of people to control corruption.

5. It also supplements the existing laws which ban corruption and impose penalties

6. The biggest achievement of the RTI is that it tells the most powerful people that they are not beyond the reach of the common man.

Example- Aadarsh House Scam in 2010, came to be known due to the RTI application filed by activists Simpreet Singh and Yogacharya Anandji.

2. Democratic Reforms

- Such Reforms can be brought about mainly through strengthening democratic political practice.
- The political participation by ordinary citizens will enhance the democracy.

Board Questions:

1. Mention any three ways through which democracy can be improved in practices. (2013)
2. How are the challenges to democracy linked to the possibility of political reforms? Explain. (2015)
3. Suggest some broad guidelines that can be kept in mind while devising ways and means for political reforms in India. (2012,16)

Board Questions:

1. 'Legal Constitutional reforms themselves can not overcome challenges to democracy.' Explain. (2013)

Board Questions:

1. 'Legal reforms may sometimes be counter-productive.' Support the statement with suitable arguments. (2012)

Board Questions:

1. When was the 'Right to Information Act' implemented? How does it act as the watchdog of democracy? Explain. (2015, 16)

- Example- the reforms in Political Parties is affected by –
 - i. Anti-defection Law which has reduced the split in Parties
 - ii. Candidates now have to file an Affidavit to declare their assets and any criminal proceedings
 - iii. Political Parties need to conduct organisational elections regularly
 - iv. Parties can give $\frac{1}{3}$ tickets to women to empower women presence in legislatures.

3. Implementation of Reforms

- Laws are made in parliament and the executive implements them.
- The Political leaders may not support the law that may go against them and their Political Parties.
- We can not rely only on Political leaders to bring out Reforms.
- Citizen organisations, democratic movement and the media can put pressure to bring out political reforms.
- Example-The case of Political Funding. (Financial reform proposals)
 - I. The financial accounts of Political Parties should be made public.
 - II. Financial accounts should be examined by government auditors.
 - III. There should be state funding of elections.
 - IV. Citizens should be discouraged from giving donations to parties.

Board Questions

1. What type of financial reforms should be brought to strengthen democracy and why? (2015)

Redefining democracy

If we expand the definition of democracy as a form government which is elected by people, we get the following qualifications of democracy.

Qualifications of a democracy

- All decisions should be taken by the chosen representatives
- Elections must offer a choice and fair opportunity to the people to change the rulers
- This choice and opportunity should be available to all the people on an equal basis.
- The exercise of this choice must lead a government limited by basic rules of the Constitution and rights of the citizens (can not ignore Constitution and rights of citizens)

Board Questions:

1. How would you like to expand the definition of democracy? Explain. (2012)
2. Mention some important qualifications of a democracy.

Redefining of democracy (Expansion of aspects of democracy)

1. Democratic rights are not limited to the right to vote, contest elections and form political organisations.
2. A democracy should offer some social and political rights also.
3. Power sharing is the spirit of democracy
4. Democracy is not the rule of the majority. Voice of minority should be respected.
5. Eliminating discrimination based on caste, religion, and gender is important in a democracy.
6. The outcomes of the democracy make it the most preferred govt but faces many changes of expansion and deepening of democracy.

Board Questions:

1. Explain the ways in which democracy can be redefined to make democracy more effective. (2012)

Challenges faced by contemporary India.

- Corruption is a major issue that reduces the faith of people in the system
- Caste based politics leads to social divisions which is harmful to the unity in diversity of India.
- Communal politics is also major issue that threatens the unity of India

- Regionalism also a threat to unity of country
- Challenge of women empowerment
- Challenge of economic inequalities is deepening the gap between the rich and the poor
- Challenge of Decentralisation
- Accommodation of diversity is also a challenge

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