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## Key Elements of a Democratic Government

### Lesson at a Glance

- In South Africa we can find people of several races — black native people, whites and Indians.
- The country was governed by apartheid laws. **Apartheid** means separation on the basis of race.
- South African people were divided into white, black, Indian and coloured races and apartheid laws prevented them from getting mixed with each other.
- Non-white had to face several distinctions. They were not allowed to vote. Neither they availed other basic privileges.
- Hence, the **African National Congress** started a struggle against the apartheid system under the leadership of **Nelson Mandela**.
- Nelson Mandela fought for several years. Finally, South Africa became a democratic country in 1994. Now, there is no apartheid there and people of all races are considered equal.
- There are fixed periods for the governments that are elected. In India, once the government is elected, it can stay in power for five years. Thus, people participate in the process of government by using their voting rights.
- People also participate by taking an interest in working of the government and by criticising it when required.
- People express their views against government's wrong decisions by holding dharnas, rallies, strikes, signature campaigns, etc.
- People also participate by organising themselves into social movements and seek to challenge the government and its functioning.
- The government plays a major role in resolving the **conflicts** if they occur among people of different cultures, religions, regions, etc.
- Religious processions and celebrations can sometimes lead to conflicts. Rivers can also become a source of conflict between states.
- **Equality** and **justice** are key elements of **democracy**.
- The practice of untouchability is now banned by law in order to bring equality and justice in the society.
- The government also takes steps to bring girl child on equal level with boy child.

### IN-TEXT QUESTIONS SOLVED

- Q. 1.** *What were Hector and his classmates protesting about?*  
(NCERT Textbook, page 36)
- Ans.** They were protesting against learning the Afrikaans language in school. This language was spoken by the whites. Therefore, Hector and his classmates were being forced to learn this language. But they had their own language (zulu) which they wanted to learn.
- Q. 2.** *List five ways in which the non-whites were discriminated against.*  
(NCERT Textbook, page 36)
- Ans.**
- Non-whites were not allowed to vote.
  - There were separate trains and buses for them.
  - Hospitals were separate for them.
  - An ambulance meant for white people would always be well-equipped while one meant for black was not.
  - The best land in the country was reserved for the white people and non-whites had to live on the worst available land.
- Q. 3.** *Do you think it is important for all persons to be treated equally? Why?*  
(NCERT Textbook, page 36)
- Ans.** Yes, it is very important for all persons to be treated equally. Everyone has a right to lead a dignified life. Any difference causes discrimination or exploitation. It later creates an atmosphere of revolt.
- Q. 4.** *Why do you think elections are required after a fixed period?*  
(NCERT Textbook, page 37)
- Ans.** Elections are required after a fixed period because only in this way the power of the government gets limited.
- Q. 5.** *What approval or disapproval is being expressed here in the give cartoon?*  
(NCERT Textbook, page 37)
- Ans.** **Approval.** The two persons expresses approval for presence of water in a tap.
- Disapproval.** The distribution water is not praise worthy. It should be condemned as it may arise aversion to the system and governance.



**Q. 6.** Do you think the police shooting of Hector could have been avoided? How?

**Ans.** The police shooting of Hector was created intentionally to show arrogance towards the non-whites. It could have been avoided by talking with him in a peaceful manner or putting him in jail.

**Q. 7.** In Maya's story did the government support the idea that people are equal? (NCERT Textbook, page 40)

**Ans.** The government did not support the idea that people are equal. Sharp differences are seen between the whites and non-whites. The whites avail all privileges while the non-whites have to face hardships. They have no voting rights like the whites.

**Q. 8.** In Dr. Ambedkar's story did the practice of untouchability support the idea that people are equal? (NCERT Textbook, page 40)

**Ans.** Not at all. Dalits were considered untouchables. They belonged to the group of have-nots.

**Q. 9.** How do you think lowering the school fees would help girls attend school? (NCERT Textbook, page 40)

**Ans.** I don't think like this. But to some extent it may be encouraging. Most of the parents never think seriously about girl's career. They find it difficult to spend money on their education. For such parents lowering the school fees would perhaps help girls attend school.

**Q. 10.** Can you think of any experience from your life in which you have helped someone out of a situation which you thought was unfair. Did everyone else see it the same way? What did you have to say to convince others that what you did was fair?

**Ans.** Yes, I had an experience a few months back. In the market, I saw a young boy of around 19 years asking for some help from the visitors. Begging is a crime. Any monetary help to a beggar promotes beggary. So, I asked the boy to join a job with me. But he was not willing to it. When I asked him the reason, he told that his father was very critical and needed operation. The operation cost was two lakhs. So, the boy's first need was to collect money. I was very much shocked. I thought to cooperate him. I requested the people there to help him. I donated five thousand. People were also sympathised with him.

They donated generously. In all the boy could collect one lakh. I helped him deposit this amount in the hospital. Then I asked my father to help him through his contacts. It was fair to such a boy.

### ■ TEXTBOOK QUESTIONS SOLVED ■

**Q. 1.** How would Maya's life be different in South Africa today?

**Ans.** Maya's life would be different in South Africa today in terms of equal status in society. She would get a school where children from all classes, rich or poor, high or low, black or white study together. The same hospital would treat her which treats for all sorts of people. There would be no ambulance to be used separately for any white or ruling class. She would get the equal voting right. She would use language of her choice. She would lead a free life.

**Q. 2.** What are the various ways in which people participate in the process of government?

**Ans.** There are various ways in which people participate in the process of government:

- Through voting in elections people elect leaders of their choice to represent them. These representatives take decisions on behalf of the people.
- People participate in the process of government by taking an interest in the working of the government and by criticising it when required.
- People express their views through several ways and make governments understand what actions they should take. They stage dharnas, hold rallies, strikes, signature campaigns, etc.
- Another ways for people to participate is by organising themselves into social movements that seek to challenge the government and its functioning. Members of the minority community can participate in this manner.

**Q. 3.** Why do you think we need the government to find solutions to many disputes or conflicts?

**Ans.** Government is a constitutional body that maintains law and order. It consists of the representatives of all classes from all parts of the country. Problems or conflicts arise

in states, between two or more states and sometimes between two nations. The government represents the country and also the head of the constitutional system. So, it can resolve conflicts in the interest of the people at large. A system without a government may face crisis and lawlessness. Hence, government is necessary.

**Q. 4.** *What actions does the government take to ensure that all people are treated equally?*

**Ans.** The government ensures that the constitutional provisions are implied in the country. It makes laws and enforces them to abolish all sorts of discriminations. It makes provisions to provide equal facilities to all classes of people, promotion of education among girls and economically backwards. These are some of the actions that the government takes to ensure equality among people.

**Q. 5.** *Read through the chapter and discuss some of the key ideas of a democratic government. Make a list. For example, all people are equal.*

**Ans.**

- All people are equal.
- Justice to all.
- Opportunities for equal education to all.
- Abolition of discriminations.
- Equal status to all religions.
- Abolition of untouchability.