



## Teacher's Guide

What is Democracy? Why Democracy

Part 3

Based on the NCERT Curriculum for Standard IX



JANAAGRAHA CENTRE FOR CITIZENSHIP & DEMOCRACY

Janaagraha's initiative to improve citizen engagement in India's democracy through their civic learning program Developed in collaboration with Young Leaders for Active Citizenship (YLAC)



## What is democracy? Why Democracy?|Teacher's Guide (3/4)

Class IX

Board – CBSE

Subject – Social Science

Textbook – Democratic Politics- I for class IX (NCERT)

Chapter 2 – What is democracy? Why democracy?

Number of parts – 04

Length – 55 minutes (estimated, for a class of 30-40 students)

*Note: Teachers may divide the lesson plan into as many periods as they see fit*

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### Section I – What are we going to learn and why is it important?

#### Learning objectives

Students will

- Understand the advantages and disadvantages of a democratic form of government.
- Understand the risks related to undemocratic forms of government.

#### Learning outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Critically analyze democracy as a form of government.

#### Key Term

Famine

#### Materials needed

- Print-outs of the worksheet
- Projector to show the video

## Section II – How are we going to learn?

### 1. Identifying the arguments on democracy

Time: 7-8 minutes

#### Facilitation notes:

Is democracy better than other forms of government?

#### Instructions for the facilitator

1. Divide the class into 8 groups with 4-5 students each.
2. Give the following worksheet to each student.
3. The students have to first identify as to which statement is 'For' and which is 'Against' democracy.
4. Then they will match the statements that are against democracy with their counter-arguments.
5. Give the groups 5-8 mins to discuss the answers within their team.

*In the sheet given (Printable version in Annexure 1), there are 14 statements. Some statements are 'For' democracy and some statements are 'Against' democracy. Identify as to which statement is 'For' and which is 'Against'. Put 'F' in front of the statement if it is 'For' and 'A' in front of the statement if it is 'Against'. Discuss the statements with your team members and arrive at the answers. Let us do the first statement as an example – 'Ordinary people do not know what is good for them, so they should not be involved with how the government is run'*

*Here it is being said that everyone should not participate in the government, which means that this point is against the way democracy functions. So, we will write 'A' for Against next to it.*

**Worksheet: Arguments 'For' and 'Against' democracy**

1. Ordinary people do not know what is good for them, so they should not be involved with how the government is run.
2. In democracy, it takes a long time to implement any change and therefore it takes longer for democratic countries to develop.
3. Everyone does not vote, but everyone should have the right to vote despite their background.
4. In a democracy, if the leader has not performed well, the citizens can change him/her to ensure a leader, who is keen & focused to bring out development and change, comes to power.
5. It is hard to define who has the right capability to lead a country; a country needs a different type of leader at different points of time. Democracy gives an opportunity for everyone to lead, irrespective of their background and social status.
6. Most eligible voters do not exercise their right to vote. Many cities have less than 50% voter turnout.
7. India is a big country. One person cannot know what people living in different corners of the country need; therefore, everyone needs to participate.
8. Elected leaders will never take tough decisions because of the fear of losing their popularity.
9. It is important to take time and multiple opinions before taking big decisions that impact the lives of crores of people.
10. If leaders know that they are not going to be in power forever, then they will not be motivated to take up long-term projects.
11. Not everyone is capable of leading the country.
12. In a democracy, the people can participate and ensure that important decisions are taken where needed.
13. If leaders know that they are going to stay in power, no matter what; then what is their motivation to take up any project?
14. Democracy is always about winning a competition and power play, often leading to corruption. No one cares about developing the country.
15. Leaders keep changing in a democracy. This leads to instability.
16. Elected leaders do not know the best interest of the people. It leads to bad decisions.
17. If a leader is not able to best serve the country, changing him/her would be beneficial to bring a better leader to power. If leaders of a country cannot be changed, then it is likely that they could abuse their power.
18. Elected leaders have more incentive to understand the needs of the people before making the right decisions.

## 2. Identifying argument and counter-argument

Time: 10 mins

### Facilitation notes:

*As you saw, the statements were jumbled. Some of them were 'For' and some were 'Against'. Another interesting thing about these statements is that every 'For' statement has one or more counter argument and vice versa.*

### **Example of a Counter-argument**

*If someone is going against democracy, they can say, 'The media should not be allowed to write against the government of India, because it would reduce the respect that other countries have for India.' A counter argument to that would be 'If government's actions are against the interests of the citizens, then the citizens can take some action if they know about it through the media. Then there would be lesser chance of corruption and respect among international community would naturally increase.'*

Let us look at the first statement again. Ordinary people do not know what is good for them, so they should not be involved with how the government is run.

*Is there a statement that says people need to participate? It is statement 7 - India is a big country. One person cannot know what people living in different corners of the country need; therefore, everyone needs to participate.' So, this is the counter-argument to statement 1. I will write Statement 1 under 'Against' column in the table and statement 7 next to it in the 'For' column.*

Similarly, write down each 'Against' statement and the counter-argument next to it in the table (Annexure 2).

Discuss with your team and take 6-7 mins to do so.

**Answer Key**

<b>Against</b>	<b>For</b>
1. Ordinary people do not know what is good for them, so they should not be involved with how the government is run	1. India is a big country. One person cannot know what people living in different corners of the country need; therefore, everyone needs to participate.
2. In democracy, it takes a long time to implement any change and therefore it takes longer for democratic countries to develop, as many people have to be consulted.	2. It is important to take time and multiple opinions before taking big decisions that impact the lives of crores of people.
3. Not everyone is capable of leading the country.	3. It is hard to define who has the right capability to lead a country, a country needs a different type of leader at different points of time. Democracy gives an opportunity to everyone to lead, irrespective of their background and social status.
4. Most eligible voters do not exercise their right to vote. Many cities have less than 50% voter turnout.	4. Everyone does not vote, but everyone should have the right to vote despite their background.
5. Elected leaders will never take tough decisions with the fear of losing their popularity.	5. A democracy the people can participate and ensure that important decisions are taken where needed.
6. If leaders know that they are not going to be in power forever, then they will not be motivated to take up long-term projects.	6. If leaders know that they are going to stay in power no matter what, then what is their motivation to take up any project?
7. Democracy is always about winning a competition. No one cares about developing the country.	7. In a democracy if the leader has not performed well, the citizens can change them to ensure a leader who is invested in development comes to power.
8. Leaders keep changing in a democracy. This leads to instability.	8. If a leader is not able to best serve the country, changing them would be beneficial to bring a better leader to power. If leaders of a country cannot be changed, then it is likely that they could abuse their power.
9. Elected leaders do not know the best interest of the people. It leads to bad decisions.	9. Elected leaders have more incentive to understand the needs of the people before making the right decisions.

### 3. Comparison between democracy and other forms of government

Time: 20-25 mins

There is a fundamental problem with the arguments against democracy and the topic of today's debate. (Take a few answers from students on what they might be).

The topic of today's debate is 'Is democracy better than other forms of government?' but none of the arguments that are against democracy offered an alternative form of government that solves the problems of democracy. Democracy does have problems, there is no system that doesn't. To understand whether democracy is better than other forms of government, we should judge it by its outcomes. Till date we have seen countries like Saudi Arabia, North Korea, Zimbabwe and Pakistan that were not democratic. Today, we are going to look at pre-independence India, when the British ruled the country and India was not a democracy.



#### **Video: Bengal Famine**

This video discusses the famine that occurred in Bengal in the 1940's.

Source: [YouTube](#)

After watching the video, ask the students to answer the following question in their groups and discuss the answer before asking the next question

1. What were the reasons for the famine in Bengal in 1942-43?

Answer Key

1. The reasons for the famine were
  - a. Natural disasters leading to low crop yield.
  - b. Grains being exported to Great Britain and stored in excess due to fear of shortage during WW2.
  - c. The officials in most of the districts in Bengal exaggerated the amount of produce and thus it was concluded that a famine was not possible.
  - d. The threat of Japanese invasion led to many British troops being stationed in Bengal, to whom all the food was rationed.
  - e. All grains from foreign countries was diverted to Britain for the soldiers in WW2.

2. What was the reaction by the British towards the famine?

Answer Key

2. The British did not allow any media to publish any news about the famine. All photographs and articles about it were censored. The British population was unaware of the famine in India. The Prime Minister of the then Great Britain declined the requests made by the then Secretary of State of British India, to send some reserve grains to India. It was only in 1943 that photographs of the famine was published by *The Statesman*, breaking the censorship rules, after which Bengal received the aid that it needed from the international community and the British.

3. Do you think such a disaster could happen in India today? Why/Why not?

Answer Key

3. Lack of food is possible in India as well. But a man-made disaster of this magnitude would be unlikely. In India, opposition parties, media and the general public would hold the government accountable before such widespread consequences take place. In a time of free media, it would be difficult to hide such a large-scale man-made famine from the people of the country and the international community.



### Famine in China

China's famine of 1958-61 was the worst recorded famine in world history. Nearly 3 crore people died in this famine. During those days, India's economic condition was not much better than China. Yet, India did not have a famine. Economists believe that this is due to the different forms of governance that existed in the 2 countries. During that period -

- a. The farmers did not own farms anymore and the grains were sent to the central government for re-distribution to the rest of the country.
- b. The officials in most of the districts exaggerated about the amount of produce and all of the grains were sent to the central govt. and the farmers had no food.
- c. As the government controlled the media, the famine was never reported in the country. Even to this day, China maintains that the famine occurred due to natural reasons and understates the death toll.

The existence of democracy in India made the Indian government respond to food scarcity in a way that the Chinese government did not. If China too had multi-party elections, an opposition party and a press free to criticise the government, then so many people may not have died in the famine.

**Conclusion:** Shortage of food can happen anywhere around the world and it continues to happen to this day in many countries, including India. But the possibility of famines that are man-made and have such a large-scale impact of human loss is extremely low in a democracy. This is because in a truly democratic country, the media is allowed to show the truth (which may be against the government) with the people; the opposition parties will be able to counter the government policies; the general public will be able to protest against the government; the ruling party can be forced to resign and allow for other parties to come to power. A democratically elected government will do everything in its power to avoid a famine like situation, as it needs to get re-elected. The government's incentives are to help those in need, so that they vote for the same party again. Therefore, democracy is a better form of governance than others because:

- a. Democracy is a more accountable form of government, as the rulers in a democracy have to attend to the needs of the people if they wish to be in power.
- b. Democracy improves the quality of decision-making, as decisions involve consultation and discussion among many people.
- c. Democracy provides a method to deal with differences and conflicts through discussions and debates.
- d. Democracy enhances the dignity of its citizens by treating everyone equally.
- e. Democracy allows us to correct its own mistakes, either by changing the decisions made by the rulers or by changing the rulers, which might not be possible in a non-democratic country.

### 3. Activity: Discussion on the threats of non-democratic forms of government

Time: 8-10 minutes

- Continuing from our last discussion, what are some risks/dangers of having non-democratic form of government?
- After 2-3 minutes, ask them to discuss with their partners.
- Discuss a few answers in class.

#### Answer Key

Countries that are non-democracies have a high possibility of facing many risks/dangers. However, it is important to note that the risks/dangers listed are just some of the possibilities. There might be many more depending on the type of government that is ruling the country.

Some of the major threats that non-democracies (autocracies) face are:

1. There are no checks and balances, power is concentrated in the hands of one ruler, who can misuse his/her power.
2. If there are any major issues faced by the country, the ruler can control information to hide their inefficiency.
3. There is a great risk of human rights abuse, etc. in autocracies.
4. The ruler may favour one community over another and can also resort to unchecked violence in absence of a true democracy.
5. Eventually, lack of legitimate means for people to share their concerns can lead to civil unrest in the country.

#### Section III - Assessment:

1. Each of these statements contain a democratic and an undemocratic element. Write both the statements separately for each sentence.
  - a. A minister said that some laws have to be passed by the parliament in order to conform to the regulations decided by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).
  - b. The election commission ordered re-polling in a constituency where large-scale rigging was reported.
  - c. Women's representation in the parliament has never reached 10%. This led women's organisation to demand one-third seats for women.

2. Which of these is **not** a valid argument for the statement 'There is lesser possibility of a famine in a democratic country.'
  - a. Opposition parties can draw attention to hunger and starvation.
  - b. Free press can report hunger and famine in different parts of the country.
  - c. Government fears its defeat in the next elections.
  - d. People are free to believe in and practice any religion.
3. Which of these is not a good argument in favour of democracy? Why?
  - a. People feel free and equal in democracy.
  - b. Democracies resolve conflicts in a better way than others.
  - c. Democratic government is more accountable to the people
  - d. Democracies are more prosperous than others.

*(Reference: Page 38, Q 3, 4 & 5 in the NCERT textbook)*
4. State which of the following statements is True/false
  - a. In a democracy, it takes very less time to make decisions as no one needs to discuss them.
  - b. In a democracy, rulers need not worry about losing their position as they can chose when to leave their post.
  - c. In a democracy, elected leaders need to listen to the citizens to develop policies

### Answer Key

1.
  - a. Democratic element – 'some laws have to be passed by the parliament'; Undemocratic element – 'to conform to the regulations decided by the World Trade Organisation (WTO)'
  - b. Democratic element – 'The election commission ordered re-polling in a constituency'; Undemocratic element – 'large-scale rigging was reported'
  - c. Democratic element – 'This led women's organisation to demand one-third seats for women'; Undemocratic element – 'Women's representation in the parliament has never reached 10%.'
2. d. People are free to believe in and practice any religion.

3. d. Democracies are more prosperous than others. There has been no direct link between economic prosperity (assuming that prosperity refers to economic prosperity) and democracy. There are countries that are not democratic such as China and Saudi Arabia that are economically more prosperous than India or Sri Lanka.
4. a. False.  
b. False  
c. True.

#### **Section IV – Closure**

Democracy is not a perfect system in itself and no democratic government exists without problems. The arguments that we saw today against democracy, are demerits of democracy and they exist. However, compared to all other forms of government available today, democracy offers the maximum rights and freedom to the citizens. It holds governments accountable for their actions and allows a way of correcting its mistakes. Democracy, by its very nature incentivizes changes for the betterment of its citizens, so this gives hope that the problems that we notice with democracy today can be amended in the future.

#### **Section V – Homework**

1. Write the merits and demerits of democracy as a form of governance. Give example of each merit/demerit.

## **Section VI – Additional Resources**

### **For teachers**

1. Video: Democracy, Authoritarian Capitalism, and China: Crash Course World History 230  
Link: [Youtube](#)
2. Video: Democracy is India's Achilles heel  
This is a series of videos of a debate on democracy conducted by Intelligence Squared.  
Link: [YouTube](#)
3. Reading: Does Democracy Avert Famine?  
This is an article on the relationship between democracy and famines.  
Link: [NY Times](#)

### **For students**

1. Video: Why Socrates hated democracy  
Link: [Youtube](#)
2. Video: Why democracy is still the best form of government  
Link: [TED Talk](#)
3. Video: Democracy and Famine  
Link: [YouTube](#)
4. Reading: China's Great Famine: A mission to expose the truth  
An economist who survived one of the greatest man-made tragedies is determined to reveal how policies killed millions.  
Link: [Al Jazeera](#)

**Annexure 1:****Worksheet: Arguments 'For' and 'Against' democracy**

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18. Elected leaders have more incentive to understand the needs of the people before making the right decisions.

**Annexure 2:**

Against	For

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