



- It is the most celebrated political ideal in the history of the world
- In 1992, 2500 years of democracy were celebrated all over the world.
- It is a form of government & an ideal, an aspiration & a standard
- The modern world democracy is quite different from the practice of democracy in ancient Greece 2500 years ago.
- Greek word 'demokratia', it means rule by the people.
- Ancient Greek Democracy :- rejects the separation between the ruler & the ruled.
- Unlike communism & socialism, which have a point of reference in Marxism, democracy has not been associated with a specific doctrinal source or ideology
- It is a byproduct of the entire development of Western civilization.
- The history of democracy is complex & marked by conflicting & confusing conceptions
- The complexity is because of the dynamism associated with it

MEANINGS ASSOCIATED WITH DEMOCRACY

- A form of government in which people rule directly;
- A society based on equal opportunity & individual merit, rather than hierarchy & privilege;
- A system of decision-making based on the principle of majority rule.
- A system of rule that secures the rights & interests of minorities by placing checks upon the power of the majority.
- A means of filling public offices through a competitive struggle for the popular vote.
- A system of govt that serves the interests of the people regardless of their participation in political life (Heywood, 1997).
- A system of govt based on the consent of the governed
- Democracy links the govt to the people.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF DEMOCRACY

- In Britain the complex & intertwined processes of ideological, social & economic change signalled by the Industrial Revolution that began in the middle of the eighteenth century
- In France & America such changes was launched by the political revolutions in the last quarter of the 18th century.
- Democracy is the result of such complex & intertwined processes of ideological, social & economic changes.
- Britain became the first modern democracy because, after the Civil War in the seventeenth century royal

- absolutism was brought to an end & powers were transferred from the crown to the parliament
- The electoral franchise(voting rights) was restricted on the basis of ownership of property, but control of the executive had effectively delegated to a loose coalition of the aristocracy & the bourgeoisie, to establish peace between political competitors
- The Reform Act of 1832, expanded the suffrage of the upper middle classes
- The Chartist movement (1836) was the first mass movement driven by the working classes - started following the failure of the 1832 Reform Act to extend the vote beyond those owning property.
- Till the nineteenth century & three Reform Acts later – two-thirds of the male population stood enfranchised.
- Women secured the right to vote in 1929 & universal adult suffrage was achieved only in 1948 & plural voting was abolished
- In France a radical tradition of democracy was inaugurated by the Revolution of 1789, with its stirring call of Liberty-Equality-Fraternity & its emphasis on the principle of popular sovereignty.
- The Declaration of the Rights of Man & Citizen proclaimed the rights of personal liberty, freedom of thought & religion, security of property & political equality as the natural and imprescriptible entitlements not merely of French citizens, but of 'mankind' at large.
- Till 1791 four million male citizens won the right to vote, but in 1795 more restrictive property requirements were introduced, bringing down the number of voters to just 1,00,000 prosperous taxpayers
- Universal male suffrage was reintroduced only after the revolution of 1848 & universal adult franchise only a century later in 1946, when women won the right to vote.
- In the USA the democracy was confined to white men till the Civil War (1861-1865).
- The enfranchisement of women & black people has not achieved until the twentieth century.
- The Declaration of Independence (1774) is the document that influenced the legal creation of the USA & that of democracy
- Though slavery continued to be practiced till the mid 19th century.
- American Revolution gave the first democratic govt & the society.
- The institutionalised separation of powers between the three branches of government - the executive, the legislature and the judiciary - was also affected.

- The political ideas of the Levellers, John Locke & Thomas Paine & documents like the 'French Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789)' & the 'American Declaration of Independence (1776)', expressed the important ideas & principles that have underpinned democracy in the modern world.
- These documents are seen as charters of liberalism & liberalism was an important constituent of democracy
- Democratic theory has a strong emphasis on the concept of liberty, rather than the concept of equality
- The Levellers political movement during the English Civil War (1642–1651) committed to popular sovereignty & civil liberties
- Interrogating property ownership as the basis for political rights, they advocated a nearly universal male suffrage, though - echoing ancient Athens - servants & criminals, apart from women, were to be excluded.

JOHN LOCKE :- SECOND TREATISE ON GOVT

- His lifetime coincides with transformation of absolute monarchy in to parliamentary democracy.
- Also a period characterised by religious tensions between rival Christian denominations of Protestants, Catholics & Anglicans.
- Natural Law constitutes an integral part of Locke's moral & political theory.
- He was an avid supporter of the cause of Parliamentarians
- Locke was an empiricist & he explained his empirical understanding of knowledge in one of his famous works, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding which was published in 1689 CE
- According to John, “ human mind is a blank state, a tabula rasa, at birth without any innate knowledge. He argued that all knowledge that one gains is a result of sensory experience”
- Locke’s “A Letter Concerning Toleration” was also published in 1689 CE, Locke argued for toleration of different religious denominations and supported peaceful coexistence of people of different religions.
- Locke, being a supporter of Parliamentarians rejected the divine right theory of kings by claiming that monarchs were descendants of Adam.
- He dismissed the divine right theory of Robert Filmer (Patriarcha)
- Instead of an all-powerful monarch, Locke contended that human beings ought to govern themselves in accordance with natural law.

JOHN LOCKE IN “SECOND TREATISE ON GOVERNMENT (1681)”

- It presents an account of a hypothetical state, governed by a Law of Nature, with a mandate that no individual ought to harm another in life, health, liberty or possessions.
- All human beings are equally creatures of God - gives them the equal right to freedom.
- Though this state of nature is governed by a Law of Nature - There is no agency to administer & enforce this law.

- The absence of such an agency contains endless possibilities for conflict, so to remove such stateless inconvenient society transcended through a social contract.
- This social contract, founded in the consent of every individual, is the basis of legitimate govt.
- The purpose of political society & of govt is the preservation of the life, liberty & property of individuals
- If the govt fails to discharge the purposes, the people have the right to resist & replace it.
- It is the core principles of classical liberalism - individualism, popular sovereignty & limited government - that provided the foundation for liberal democracy.

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU & FRENCH REVOLUTION

- He lived in the age of reason, French Enlightenment, and while he attacked the ancient regime, he was also critical of the Enlightenment.
- His concept of popular sovereignty, & the theory of General Will, which provides a philosophical justification for democratic governance.
- Rousseau lived at a time when the absolutist feudal order presided over by Louis XV reigned France.
- Rousseau believed that the part of what was wrong with modern man is that he had lost touch with his feelings.
- Rousseau argued that science was not saving but bringing moral ruin upon us – Virtue was possible in a simple society, where men lived austere & frugal lives.
- Intelligence was dangerous because it undermined reverence; science was destructive because it takes away faith; reason was bad because it sets prudence against moral intuition.
- Though Rousseau critiqued 'civil society', he did not suggest man to choose the savage existence.
- Rousseau says that 'General will tends always to the preservation and welfare of the whole & of every part, & is the source of the laws, constitutes for all the members of the state, in relation to one another and to it, the rule of what is just & unjust.
- French declaration of the rights of man (1789) is influenced by :- republican spirit of Jean Rousseau in idealising citizenship
- He presented individuals as public spirited members of a functional community
- Rousseau favoured direct democracy in which citizens participates directly
- Rousseau was aware about the gross inequalities of wealth
- According to him large political communities were obstacles to popular sovereignty
- Liberal-democracy may be seen as , based on a culturally specific theory of individuation.
- It’s a combination of liberalism as a theory of the state with democracy as a form of govt.

- Assigned greater significance to the community than to the individual.
- The liberal component in the liberal democracy was rejected
- So there are different paths to democracy & different ways of being democratic, or even being "differently democratic".
- Democracy have its instrumental value
- The guarantee of political equality is considered as moral superiority of democracy

PROCEDURAL & SUBSTANTIVE DEMOCRACY

- There exists two forms of democracy
 - 1) Procedural democracy :- It is the political topping in the form of institutions & procedures of democracy , which involves legislative assemblies, councils, local legislatures etc. The institutions & procedures are emphasised.
 - 2) Substantive Democracy :- It's a prevalence of social democracy, where society truly lives the life based on democratic principles like equality, fraternity, liberty etc .

DIRECT DEMOCRACY

- It is a form of self-rule in which decision making is collective & inclusive means, all adult citizens are involved equally in deliberations
- Deliberation based decision making are better informed, logical, rational
- Deliberations represents differential interests, spreads awareness among members & imparts expertise.
- Debates & deliberations enable people to influence others & to get influenced by the other members of group (Hague et al 1998).
- According to Aristotle, in direct democracy "all command each & each in his turn all".
- It was prevalent in ancient Athens as a form of govt established through long deliberations in the form of a mass meeting.
- Modern day 'referendum' flows from ancient Athens
- 'Gram Sabha', as envisioned in PESA Act , is an example of direct democracy in rural India.

PRINCIPLES OF DIRECT DEMOCRACY

- In a direct democracy decision making should be the result of deliberations based consensus & not by voting.

The following principles apply in direct democracy:

- Popular Sovereignty
- Sovereignty is inalienable & cannot be represented
- Expression of general will & make decisions through referendum
- Decisions are to be based on majority rule
- Direct, unmediated & continuous public participation in governance
- There should be no difference between govt & the governed i.e. between state & civil society.

MERITS OF DIRECT DEMOCRACY

- It is the only pure form of democracy.

- It creates a well informed & politically sophisticated citizenry
- It promotes democratic education in public & social sectors
- It enables the public expressions & different public interests
- No evolution of powerful politicians
- Legitimacy of the rule is in public agreement of the decisions

A CASE OF GREEK DEMOCRACY

- The Athenian democracy (4th B.C.) is the classic example of a direct democracy
- Decisions were taken through mass meetings /Assembly or Ecclesia
- Assembly met at least 40 times a year to settle issues put before it.
- Public officials were chosen among the assembly members on the basis of lots.
- The posts of officials were, not fixed & were rotated frequently in order to give exposure & experience in governance.
- A council consisting of 500 citizens
- Council acted as the executive or steering committee of the assembly
- A strong committee in turn made proposals to the council.

REASONS FOR ITS POPULARITY

- Athenian democracy cultivated a new political culture
- It enfranchised citizenry in governance
- Public took responsibilities of their own governance.
- Citizens were differentiated on the basis of rank & wealth in their involvement in public affairs.
- Public participation in the affairs of the state.
- It was based on the principle of civic virtue – means
 - 1) Commitment & dedication to the republican city-state,
 - 2) The subordination of private life to public affairs
 - 3) The achievement of common good.
 - 4) No separation of public & private life
 - 5) Individuals could attain self-fulfillment i.e. Socialist Democracy the city-state.
 - 6) The rights & obligations, granted as members of the political community, but not as private individuals
- In the Greek democracy, politics is a natural social activity not separated from the rest of life. Rather political life is only an extension of oneself" (Robert Dahl)
- Free & open" political life :- Scope of individual development
- Justice meant :- Securing & realization of the citizen's role & place in the city-states (Held, 1987)
- The difference between ancient & modern democracies :- The way in which 'the people' were defined.

THE OTHER SIDE OF ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY

- In the ancient Greek polity, the 'demos' was restrictively defined, excluding three main categories

of persons: the slaves, women & metics (foreigners who lived in the city-state).

- Barely a quarter of the total population were members of the citizen body.
- Aristocrats, generals & demagogues made periodic attempts to control power.
- The modern world democracy was achieved through struggle

ARISTOTLE'S PERCEPTION

- Aristotle's famous work "The Politics"-- written between 335 & 323 BC.
- According to him, liberty & equality are inseparable principles - Numerical equality means – equal share for all in the ruling - It is essential for the majority to be sovereign.
- According to classical democrats, numerical equality was possible to achieve because
 - a) Citizens are paid for their participation in govt
 - b) Citizens have equal voting power &
 - c) Everyone has an equal opportunity to hold office.

LIMITATIONS OF DIRECT DEMOCRACY

- The City-State was marked by unity, solidarity, participation but a highly restricted citizenship.
- An adult male culture, i.e. only men over the age of 20 years were qualified to become citizens.
- 'Immigrants', settled in Athens several generations earlier, remained excluded from citizenry.
- Plato was critic of direct democracy
- Plato attacked the principle of political equality on the grounds that the masses are not made equal by nature
- They lack the wisdom & experience.
- According to his famous work "The Republic" – the govt be placed in the hands of a class of philosopher-kings,
- Their rule can be called enlightened dictatorship.

DIRECT DEMOCRACY IN MODERN TIMES

- In township meetings of New England in the USA & in communal assemblies which operate in smaller Swiss cantons.
- The most common method used in recent times is referendum as compared to the mass meetings of ancient Athens.

- Referendum is a vote in which the electorate can express a view on a particular issue of public policy

WESTERN LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

- Western liberal democracy is a political theory that emerged in Europe during the seventeenth century and continued in modern times.
- This excludes the socialist countries with dictatorships of different kinds.
- Contributed by John Locke, Jeremy Bentham & J.S Mill.
- Locke contributed the ideas of limited government, constitutionalism, individual rights & the rule of law.
- Jeremy Bentham believed in utilitarianism—that actions that lead to people's happiness are right & that those that lead to suffering are wrong.
- John Stuart Mill contributed the idea of individual liberty, plurality of opinions, principle of development of individual personality
- The property rights granted in liberal democratic states prevented govt intervention in economic matters.
- Liberal democracy was criticised for not laying emphasis on economic equality.
- Liberal democracy is called as, people's democracy, it means the sources of production are socially owned.

REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY & ITS CRITICS

- Direct democracy is not possible in large & complex societies. So people chooses their representatives to get govern themselves through representatives
- Early social contract theorists like Thomas Hobbes & Locke, representative govt was a form of govt authorised by the people to act on its behalf.
- Two types of critics : –1)Who consider it unrealistic (Schumpeter & the elite theorists) & 2) Who consider it inadequate
- To Joseph Schumpeter, the classical theory of democracy assumes - mistakenly - that sovereignty lies in the hands of the people who elect individuals to an assembly where their will can be carried out.
- Schumpeter argues, democracy is not about popular sovereignty. It is not really the case that the primary task of democracy is to vest political power in the hands of a sovereign electorate & its secondary task to elect leaders.
