

6th – Key Elements Of A Democratic Government



Struggles for democracy in South Africa: -

South Africa is a country that has people of several races. There are black people who belong to South Africa, whites who came there to settle, and Indians who came as laborers and traders. The African national congress, a group of people who led the struggle against apartheid, and their most well known leader, Nelson Mandela fought the apartheid system for several years. Finally, they succeeded and in 1994 South Africa became a democratic country in which people of all races were considered equal.

Participation: -

People make the decision in a democracy. Through voting in elections people elect leaders to represent them. These representatives take decisions on behalf of the people. All government is elected for fixed periods. In India this period is five years. Once elected, government can stay in power only for that period. If they want to continue to be in power then they have to be re-elected by the people. This is a moment when people can sense their power in a democracy. In this way the power of the government gets limited by regular elections.

Other ways of participating: -

Elections are usually held once in five years. Besides voting there are other ways of participation in the process of government. People participate by taking an interest in the working of the government and by criticizing it when required. When a particular government increased the money people had to pay for electricity, people had to pay for electricity; people expressed their disapproval very sharply. They took out rallies and also organized a signature campaign. The government tried to explain and defend its decision but finally listened to the people's opinion and withdrew the increase. The government had to change its decision because it is responsible to the people. Newspapers, magazines and TV also play a role in discussing government issues and responsibilities. While it is true that a democracy allows people to participate, it is also true that not all sections of people are actually able to do so. Another way for people to participate is by organizing themselves into social movements that seek to challenge the government and its functioning.

Need to resolve conflict: -

In Maya's story you read about how conflicts can often lead to violence and death because one group decides that it is all right to use force to prevent the other group from protesting. Conflicts occur when people of different cultures, religions, regions or economic with each other, or when some among them feel they are being discriminated against. People may use violent means to settle their differences. This leads to fear and tension among others living in an area. The government is responsible for helping to resolve conflicts. Religious processions and celebrations can sometimes lead to conflicts. The government particularly the police, play an important role in getting representatives of concerned communities to meet and try to arrive at a solution. At times there is fear that violence may erupt, with people throwing stones or trying to disrupt the procession. The police is responsible for ensuring that violence does not take place.

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Equality and Justice:-

One of the key ideas of a democratic government is its commitment to equality and justice. The government also recognizes this and makes special provisions for groups within society that are unequal. For instance, in our society there is a general tendency to value and care for the boy's child more than the girl child. This means that society does not value the girl and boy child equally and this is unjust. In this context the government steps in to promote justice by providing special provision that can enable girls to overcome the injustices that they are subjected to. Thus it is possible that fees for girls might be waived or lowered in government schools or colleges.

