

10th Standard

Social Science-Civics

Challenges to Democracy

Challenge:

A challenge is a difficulty that carries within it an opportunity for progress.

The challenges faced by democracy are:

- Foundation challenge;
- Challenge of expansion;
- Challenge of deepening of democracy.

Political reform:

All the suggestions or proposals about overcoming various challenges to democracy are called democratic reforms or political reforms

Challenges faced by countries which do not have a democratic form of government:

1. These countries face the foundation challenge of making the transition to democracy and then instituting democratic government.
2. They also face the challenge of bringing down the existing non-democratic regime, and keeping the military away from controlling the government.

3. Such countries have to make great efforts to establish a sovereign and functional State.

Three challenges faced by democracy:

- **Foundation challenge.** It relates to making the transition to democracy and then instituting democratic government. It involves bringing down the existing non-democratic regime, keeping military away from controlling government and establishing a sovereign and functional State.
- **Challenge of expansion.** It involves applying the basic principle of democratic government across all the regions, different social groups and various institutions. It pertains to ensuring greater power to local governments, extension of federal principle to all the units of the federation, inclusion of women and minority groups, etc. Most established democracies, e.g., India and US, face the challenge of expansion.
- **Challenge of deepening of democracy.** This challenge involves strengthening of the institutions and practices of democracy. It means strengthening those institutions that help people's participation and control in the government. It aims at bringing down the control and influence of rich and powerful people in making governmental decisions.

Broad guidelines for political reforms:

1. As legal-constitutional changes by themselves cannot overcome challenges to democracy, democratic reforms need to be carried out

mainly by political activists, parties, movements and politically conscious citizens.

2. Any legal change must carefully look at what results it will have on politics. Generally, laws, that seek a ban on something are rather counter-productive; for example, many states have debarred people who have more than two children from contesting Panchayat elections. This has resulted in denial of democratic opportunity to many poor women, which was not intended. The best laws are those which empower people to carry out democratic reforms; for example, the Right to Information Act which acts as a watchdog of democracy by controlling corruption.
3. Democratic reforms are to be brought about principally through political parties. The most important concern should be to increase and improve the quality of political participation by ordinary citizens.
4. Any proposal for political reforms should think not only about what is a good solution, but also about who will implement it and how. Measures that rely on democratic movements, citizens organizations and media are likely to succeed.