

## Question #2

Discuss Aristotle's classification of constitutions. How relevant is his framework in contemporary political system

## {Solution}

Aristotle was born in Macedonnia. His father was a physician to the King of Macedonnia. At the age of 18 he came to Athens and joined Plato's Academy. He studied there for 20 years. He was a brilliant student of Plato. He opened his own school "The Lyceum".

## Aristotle's classification of Constitutions

Aristotle studied the constitutions of more than 150 states before giving his concept of classification of state. He used empirical method in his study. Unlike Plato who confined himself to the ideal state, Aristotle also provided for bad states

and the art of governing them. Aristotle classified the states on two basis.

- 1) Number of people who govern
- 2) The manner in which they govern.

### Types of government

Aristotle provided for following types of governments

#### a) Monarchy

If the government consist of a single person who works for the welfare of the people, then the form of government is Monarchy.

#### b) Tyranny

If the government consist of a single person who works for his selfish interest then the form of government is Tyranny.

#### c) Aristocracy

If the government consist of few people who work for the welfare of the masses

then the form of government is  
Aristocracy

### Oligarchy

If the government consist of few who work for their own selfish purpose, then the form of government is oligarchy.

### Polity

If the government consist of many who work for the welfare of the masses, then the form of government is polity.

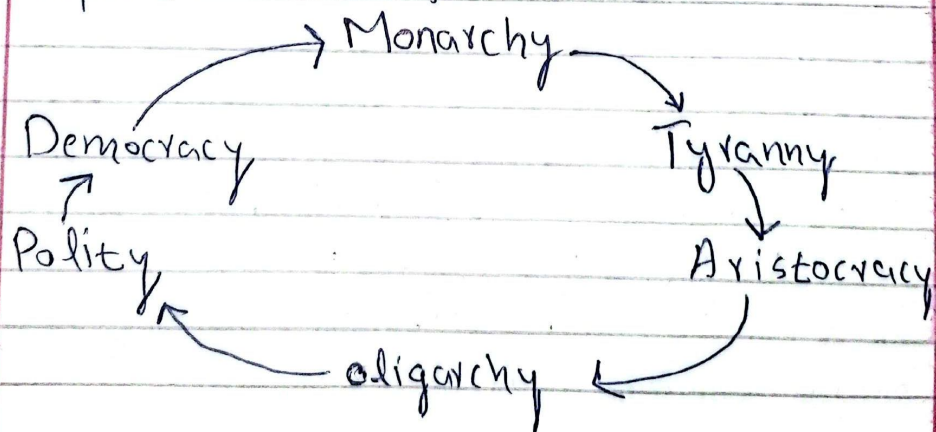
### Democracy

If the government consist of many who work for their own selfish interest, then the form of government is Democracy. It may be noted that Aristotle's concept of democracy is different from our modern concept of democracy.

Aristotle's classification of government can be summarized in the table as follows:-

| <u>Number of People who rule</u> | <u>Pure form</u> | <u>Corrupted form</u> |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| a) A single Person               | Monarchy         | Tyranny               |
| b) A few                         | Aristocracy      | Oligarchy             |
| c) Many                          | Polity           | Democracy             |

Aristotle believes that a single monarch rules. When that monarch becomes corrupt, he is overthrown by a few people and aristocracy is established. When these few people become corrupt, they are overthrown by many and the form of government becomes polity. These many people are overthrown and a single person comes to power, thus again establishing monarchy. This whole cycle repeats itself.



## Relevance in Contemporary Political System

In today's political system Monarchy is still present in countries like Saudi Arabia. Aristocracy is present in countries like China with one party rule. However, Aristotle's concept of democracy is inconsistent with modern democracy. His classification of states is relevant to some extent in our contemporary political system.