

Democracy is a culture rather than a process.

Outline

(A) Introduction

Thesis Statement ✓

Just as culture is sustained by shared values and practices, democracy thrives on collective thinking, behaviour and participation of people. Without this <sup>democratic culture</sup> collective effort, democracy <sup>is resulting in forming demo- cratic culture</sup> loses its true essence and becomes a hollow process.

(B) Definition of culture.

(C) How democracy thrives on collective of thinking, behaviour and actions of people

1) Active participation of people bolsters democratic governance

→ Kerala State's democratic model.

2) Public accountability improves transparency.

→ Water Gate Scandal.

3) Tolerance encourages debates, peaceful co-existence and liberty of conscience.

→ Tunisia case study Arab Spring.

4) Openness to idea of political organisation leads to inclusivity.

→ Suffrage, Black rights in America.



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(D) Without this collective effort democracy becomes a hollow process.

1) Intolerance undermines liberty.

2) Excessive partisanship erodes justice  
→ Religious extremism / mob justice.

3) Acquiring political patronage weakens fairness and transparency.  
→ Bangladesh's quota system

4) Electoral autocracy rises without democratic culture  
→ Case Study of Belgium.

(E) How to foster democratic culture

1) Education

→ Germany's Federal Agency for Civic Education post WWII

2) Strengthening democratic institutions

2) Strong and inclusive democratic institutions

(F) Conclusion.



"Not gold but only men can make a people great and strong" - Ralph Emerson. Emerson emphasized that a nation's success lies in the collective efforts of its people. The same holds true for democracy. Its true strength lies in the collective thinking, behaviour, and actions of its people. It requires active participation, public accountability, tolerance, and openness to new political ideas. These collective efforts forge democratic culture. Like any other culture, democratic culture thrives on the collective efforts of its people. Without democratic culture, however, democracy is undermined. Intolerance and excessive partisanship erode liberty and justice in society. Moreover, political patronage weakens fairness and transparency. Additionally, without democratic culture electoral autocracy rises. Therefore, just as culture is sustained by shared values and practices, democracy thrives on the collective thinking, behaviour, and participation of its people. Without democratic culture, democracy loses its true essence and becomes a hollow process.

A culture is the way of life of a society, encompassing traditions, values and beliefs. These values and traditions are collectively followed by a society, due to which a culture thrives. Similarly, democracy also thrives on the collective actions, beliefs and behaviour of the people, resulting in forging democratic culture.



To begin with, active participation of people helps democracy to thrive. As democracy is a form of government that derives its power and legitimacy from the people, it requires people to actively participate in debates and decision making. As Lord Acton has argued that democracy should not be complacent, the more people involve themselves in democratic procedures, more efficient democracy will become. For instance, in Kerala, people actively participate in decision and policy making of the local government, such as in education, development and health sectors. Due to this, despite having medium per-capita income, Kerala scores high in human development index with respect to other Indian states. Hence, active participation of people is mandatory for democracy to work effectively.

By the same token, public accountability is pivotal in improving transparency in democratic government. It ensures that a government works for the people not for themselves. For instance, when President Nixon tried to misuse government's machinery and resources for his own vested interests, public held him accountable through independent media protests. Consequently, he had to resign from his post. Therefore, public accountability ensures that the real purpose of democratic government — to serve the people — is fulfilled.



Additionally, a tolerant society promotes debates and ensures peaceful co-existence. Tolerance is a fundamental principle for engaging in constructive debates, which lead to peaceful co-existence. For instance, following the Arab Spring, Tunisia was the only country that successfully enacted democratic reforms. Despite acute opposition between secular and Islamist groups, tolerance and healthy debates enabled them to draft a constitution acceptable to all. While other countries fell into chaos and autocracy, Tunisia's commitment to tolerance and debate empowered it to establish a democratic model. Therefore, tolerance not only encourages peaceful co-existence but also empowers democracy.

Furthermore, openness to ideas of new political organisations leads to inclusivity. In a democracy, citizens must be open to new political organisations to prevent tyranny of the majority. If any group feels that their rights are not safeguarded, they must be allowed to raise their voices politically. For instance, women gained right to vote after prolonged struggle and political movements. Their political movements succeeded because of prevalence of free speech in societies, which helped them mobilise women and men to demand justice. Consequently, democracy became more inclusive all over the world. Hence, when societies are more open to new political organisations, it renders democracy more inclusive.



All these collective efforts constitute democratic culture, which help democracy thrive. However without democratic culture, democracy becomes a hollow process.

Firstly, intolerance undermines liberty, which is detrimental to democracy. Intolerance leads to subjugation of weaker groups of society and deprives them of their liberty. For instance, the intolerant attitude of the Indian government and Hindus towards Indian Muslims has significantly undermined their liberty. One prime example of this is Wajif Act 2025, which mandates that a non-Muslim member be included in the managing body of Wajif board. This restriction undermines the liberty of India Muslims to manage their religious affairs independently. In a truly free country, not only majority but also minority should have equal rights. As Lord Acton aptly said, "The most certain test by which we judge whether a country is truly free is the amount of security enjoyed by its minorities". This underpins that authenticity of liberty covalates with protection of minority rights. Moreover, when liberty is diluted, democracy also loses its meaning, as it is built on core values, and liberty is one of the most important ones. Hence, intolerance leads to the failure of democracy in ensuring freedom for all.



Besides this, excessive partisanship erodes justice. Democracy's core value is to uphold justice in society. For that, the independent judiciary plays a pivotal role. However, excessive partisanship can compel people to dispense justice on their own. Demagogues may coax people to commit injustices against others for their own vested interests. For instance, extremist organisations use blasphemy as a tool to dispense injustices by bypassing the courts. The recent extrajudicial murder of Dr. Shah Nawaz in Sindh is one of the cogent examples in this case. Such an incident significantly undermines the rule of law in a country. Therefore, as democracy's prime function is to uphold the rule of law and justice, excessive partisanship cripples democracy by eroding justice.

Moreover, acquiring political patronage weakens transparency and fairness. Corrupt politicians use political patronage as a tool to steer the helm of country to serve their own vested interests. However, such practices erode transparency and fairness, and talented individuals are bypassed by the corrupt and those loyal to the politicians. For example, in Bangladesh, the government announced a quota system in government jobs for the martyrs of freedom fighters in the war with Pakistan. Yet, the Economist argues that within this quota system, bureaucrats and politicians hired individuals who were loyal to their interests, not the people. This highlights how they made an already controversial quota system more corrupt, further eroding transparency and fairness. The results were widespread protests and frustration directed towards the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina. Therefore, political patronage



poverty and fairness.

Lastly, without democratic culture, electoral autocracy rises within a democracy. Electoral autocracy is a political system in which values of democratic culture, such as free elections, independent media, and the right to free speech, are subjugated by the government, resulting in conduction of regular elections, but with questionable transparency. For instance, in Hungary, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has crushed his political opponents, and subjugated the media and independence of media and judiciary. Moreover, he has framed constitution, which favours his party, resulting in unfairly prolonging his rule. Consequently, the Economist Intelligence Unit, in its 2024 report, has reclassified Hungary's democracy as a hybrid regime. The erosion of democratic culture is the prime reason for downgrading Hungary's democracy from full democracy to a hybrid regime. Hence, without democratic culture, democracy is hollowed out, and its implementation remains on paper.

As democratic culture is pivotal in strengthening democracy, it is crucial to fortify it in the society.

To consolidate democratic culture, education holds prime importance. Education fosters critical thinking, which enables people to navigate through political issues, and allow them to actively particip-



ate in democracy. Moreover, Education is instrumental in fostering tolerance, openness to ideas of new political organisation. For instance, following World War II, Germany introduced extensive civic education platform to prevent the re-emergence of autocracy. Institutions like Federal Agency for Civic Education were formed, which guided educational institution to foster tolerance, democratic values, and enable to instill democratic awareness. Hence,

A Example of Germany clearly indicates that education is powerful tool to foster democratic culture.

Moreover, fostering strong and inclusive democratic institutions, holds equal importance. A strong and inclusive parliament enhance debate and participation of people. Moreover, independent judiciary consolidate trust in democracy, and leads to inclusivity. For instance, American judiciary played a pivotal role in the success of Black Rights movement. Its landmark verdicts like Brown v. Board of Education significantly empowered the movement. Consequently, people actively participated in it. Hence, strong and inclusive institutions are the bastion of democratic culture.

To conclude, just as culture is sustained by shared values and practices, democracy also thrives on collective thinking behaviour and participation of people. The active participation of people helps democracy



to work efficiently. Moreover, a vigilant citizenry is so essential for ensuring democratic accountability. Additionally, tolerance encourages peaceful co-existence and openness to ideas of political organisations enhance inclusivity. These collective efforts not only help democracy to thrive, but also forges democratic culture. Yet, without democratic culture, democracy becomes a hollow process. Intolerance undermines liberty in a democracy. Additionally, excessive partisanship and political patronage, erodes justice and transparency. Lastly, without democratic culture, democracy may remain as a power, but its true essence remains unattainable, forming electoral autocracy. Therefore, true essence of democracy can only be attained if it is followed as a culture.