

Course Code : POLS3029

Unit II

Politics and Governance

Regime types : Authoritarianism

Democracy

Monarchy

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# Introduction



South Asia does not have a single political system for the entire region. Instead this region has an amalgamation of different political systems. Political system in South Asian regions have witnessed various forms of government : democratic, military and monarchial.

# System of Government



Afghanistan

Presidential Islamic Republic



Bangladesh

Parliamentary Constitutional Republic



Bhutan

Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy



India

Parliamentary Constitutional Republic



Maldives

Presidential Constitutional Republic



Nepal

Parliamentary Constitutional Republic



Pakistan

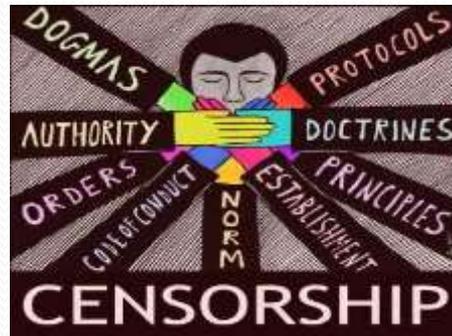
Parliamentary Islamic Republic



Sri Lanka

Semi-Presidential Constitutional Republic

# Authoritarianism



- ❖ Authoritarianism is a form of government where power is concentrated in the hands of an individual or to a small group of elite that is not constitutionally accountable to the people.
- ❖ It is a principle based on obedience to authority, and opposes autonomy of individuals in thought and action.
- ❖ As **Almond and Powell** (1996) specified, authoritarian governments are “those in which executive, legislative, and judicial powers are concentrated and in which the agents of government are not chosen in popular competitive elections”.

# Features of authoritarian regime..

- An authoritarian government is characterized by highly concentrated and centralized power maintained by political repression and the exclusion of political challenges.
- It is applied as a response to democratic failure, social polarization, economic stagnation, and international instability.
- It generally exercises power through single-party rule, and may depend upon military forces to maintain order.
- In its extreme control over society, it may become a totalitarian monopoly.
- Authoritarianism emphasizes arbitrary law rather than the rule of law, including election rigging and political decisions being made by a select group of officials behind the doors.
- Authoritarianism is marked by “indefinite political tenure” of an autocratic state or a ruling –party state.

# Democracy



- The term 'democracy' originates from the Greek word : 'demokratia' which means "rule of the people".
- This term was used around 400 BCE to denote the political systems then existing in Greek city-states, notably Athens.
- Literally, democracy means the system of government in which the power rests with the people.

# Views of thinkers...

- ❖ According to **Dicey**, it is a form of government in which the government body is a comparatively large fraction of the entire nation.
- ❖ **Gettell** elucidated that the democracy is a form of government in which the mass of the population possess the right to share in the exercise of sovereign power.
- ❖ **J S Mill** defines democracy as that form of government in which the whole people or some numerous portion of them exercise the governing power through deputies periodically elected by themselves.



**Direct Democracy**  
**vs**  
**Indirect Democracy**

# Direct Democracy

- It is also known as Pure Democracy.
- In a direct democracy, the citizens personally participate in the decision making process.
- They are not dependent on their representatives.
- In modern times, only Switzerland has direct democracy .
- The instruments of direct democracy are :  
Referendum, Initiative, Recall and Plebiscite

# Indirect Democracy

- It is also known as representative democracy.
- In this form of democracy, people choose their representatives who take decisions on their behalf.
- South Asian nations follow indirect form of democracy.
- Indirect democracy too has many forms :  
Parliamentary, Presidential, Federal, Unitary

# Democracy : Its Ideals

- Democracy is a shared experience – people's experience which is not an imposed one, as in other forms of government.
- Its ethical conceptions are individuality, liberty , equality and fraternity.
- It integrates individual fulfillment and social harmony.
- It thrives on attitudes : democratic, scientific, flexibility, openness.
- It is unity in diversity; composite culture is its merit.
- It works towards human development : social, moral, cultural & environmental growth.



# Voter Participation and Turnout



- ❖ Participation of citizens in the electoral process is an important indicator of healthy democracy as well as their trust in a democratic set-up.

# Democracy in contemporary South Asia

- ❖ As stated by Political scientist, **Paul Staniland**,  
“South Asia’s experience shows that democracy does not seamlessly advance or uniformly retreat..[its] trajectory shows just how important it is to seize opportunities to fortify liberal democracy when they present themselves and to confront potential dangers before they metastasize.”

- India and Sri Lanka have maintained democratic governments since independence, although Sri Lanka has suffered a long and costly civil war.
- Pakistan and Bangladesh have oscillated between regimes of military dictatorship and democracy. ( In Pakistan , a military government took over in October 1999, but much of the 1990s was spent under democratic rule.)
- Nepal has emerged from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy and parliamentary democracy, but has struggled to maintain political stability in recent years.

- ❖ The government of Pakistan has struggled to meet the challenges posed by the democratic structure of its constitution. The military establishment and the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency hold major political power in Pakistan. The political leadership has often vacillated between military and civilian rule. Transitions between the two types of leadership have been exercised through civil unrest or political demonstrations on the streets.
- ❖ In Afghanistan, the violence carried out during elections and problems of defunct election machinery affected the electoral process in the country. Despite the threat from Taliban , the citizens came out in large numbers to vote .

# The Crises of Democracy in South Asia

- The crisis of democracy in South Asia is manifested by pervasive nepotism and corruption, misappropriation of state funds , absence of transparency and accountability in public administration, lack of respect for the rule of law, unethical behaviour in public life and reluctance to delegate administrative or financial powers to grassroots organizations.
- A close look at the electoral processes and political systems prevalent in South Asia reveals some major problems that affect the character of political formations, the level of participation , and the inclusion of women and minorities as well as the rural and urban poor, the peripheral regions and sub-national groups in the mainstream.

# Monarchy



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- Monarchy is a form of government in which sovereignty is actually or nominally embodied in a single individual, the monarch.
  - In this form of government, a state or polity is ruled or controlled by an individual who typically inherits the throne by birth and rules for life or until abdication.

# Monarchy in contemporary South Asia

- In South Asia, Bhutan is the only nation which follows the monarchical form of government.
- Since 18 July 2008, the Government of Bhutan has been a constitutional monarchy with the King being the Head of the State and the Prime Minister heads the executive branch of the government.

# Types of Monarchy

- Absolute Monarchy

The king or queen has total authority of the country and the right to take all decisions.

- Constitutional Monarchy

Monarchs are the ceremonial heads who exercise little or no power, with the actual authority vested in a parliament or constitutional assembly.

# Conclusion

- Mired with geopolitical constraints , great power rivalries, regional tensions, national economic and political crises, and sub-national ethnic rivalries, the story of South Asia has seldom been nurtured by the rising democratic consciousness of its citizens and its varied expressions.
- Although the discourse of democratic development faces multiple obstacles , the roots of democracy have begun conditioning people's choices in the region.
- The survival of South Asian democracy has been and will be dependent on the continuity of these electoral processes.



Thank you...