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محتوى المحاضرة

This lecture will cover:

1. The definition of democracy
2. Fundamental rights under a democratic system
3. Basic duties and responsibilities of citizens
4. The two core dimensions of democracy: procedural and normative
5. Challenges and threats to democracy globally

Please feel free to take notes and ask questions at the end.

1. What Is Democracy?

The term **democracy** originates from the Greek words *demos* (people) and *kratos* (power or rule).

In its essence, **democracy is a system of government in which power is vested in the people**, who rule either directly or through freely elected representatives.

There are many forms of democracy around the world, but all share two foundational dimensions:

- **Procedural dimension**
- **Normative dimension**

Let's examine each in detail.

2. Procedural Dimension of Democracy

This refers to **how democracy functions in practice**—the rules and mechanisms of governance. Its core features include:

- **Regular, free, and fair elections**
- **Universal suffrage** (every adult citizen has the right to vote)
- **Majority rule**—elected representatives make decisions based on the will of the majority
- **Peaceful transfer of power**

Procedural democracy ensures that governments are formed and held accountable through **transparent and competitive elections**.

3. Normative Dimension of Democracy

While procedures are important, democracy cannot survive without **respect for core values and rights**. This is the **normative** side, which includes:

- **Respect for universal human rights**
- **Protection of minorities**
- **Adherence to the rule of law**
- **Separation of powers**
- **Freedom of expression and religion**
- **Equal protection under the law**

When people say that democracy is “backsliding” or “eroding,” they often refer to **violations of these normative principles**—such as weakening civil liberties or undermining judicial independence.

4. Fundamental Rights in a Democratic System

A healthy democracy must protect the **basic rights and freedoms** of its citizens, including:

Freedom of Speech and Expression

- The lifeblood of any democracy.
- Citizens can criticize the government without fear.
- It includes media freedom and the right to debate political and social issues.

Freedom of Religion

- Citizens are free to practice any religion or none at all.
- The state must not impose a religion nor persecute religious beliefs.
- Religious tolerance is a cornerstone of democratic pluralism.

Freedom of Assembly

- People can protest and gather peacefully.

- Demonstrations are a legitimate form of political expression and a test of any democracy's maturity.

Freedom of Access to Information

- A literate and informed citizenry is vital.
- People must have access to **uncensored data, ideas, and opinions** to participate in public life and hold leaders accountable.

5. Basic Duties and Responsibilities in a Democracy

Rights come with **responsibilities**. In a democracy, **freedom does not mean freedom from responsibility**.

Citizens are expected to:

Participate Actively

- Vote in elections
- Engage in public debates
- Join civic organizations
- Contact representatives

Uphold Democratic Values

- Tolerance, cooperation, and compromise
- Respect for different opinions and minority voices

Hold Government Accountable

- Criticize unjust policies
- Demand transparency and justice

Stay Informed

- Read, learn, question, and seek knowledge
- An ignorant public cannot sustain democracy

As citizens, **we are not passive observers**—we are **co-authors** of the democratic experience.

6. Threats to Democracy

Around the world, we are seeing democracies facing serious challenges:

- **Suppression of media**
- **Manipulated elections**
- **Attacks on the judiciary**
- **Corruption and authoritarianism**
- **Erosion of civil liberties**

When governments fail to protect rights, silence opposition, or ignore rule of law, democracy is under threat.

This is why **every generation must protect it**—democracy is not a one-time achievement; it is an ongoing responsibility.

Conclusion

In summary, democracy is not just a political system—it is a **way of life** based on rights, responsibilities, participation, and justice.

To keep it alive, **we must all be active, informed, and engaged citizens.**

Remember: **Democracy is fragile, but with your participation, it is powerful.**

Key Takeaways

- Democracy has **procedural** and **normative** dimensions
- Rights include **free speech, religion, assembly, and equality before the law**
- Responsibilities include **participation, tolerance, accountability, and civic education**
- A healthy democracy requires **both strong institutions and active citizens**

Discussion Questions

1. Can a country hold elections and still not be a true democracy? Why or why not?
2. What is more important: majority rule or minority rights?
3. How can young people contribute to strengthening democracy today?

