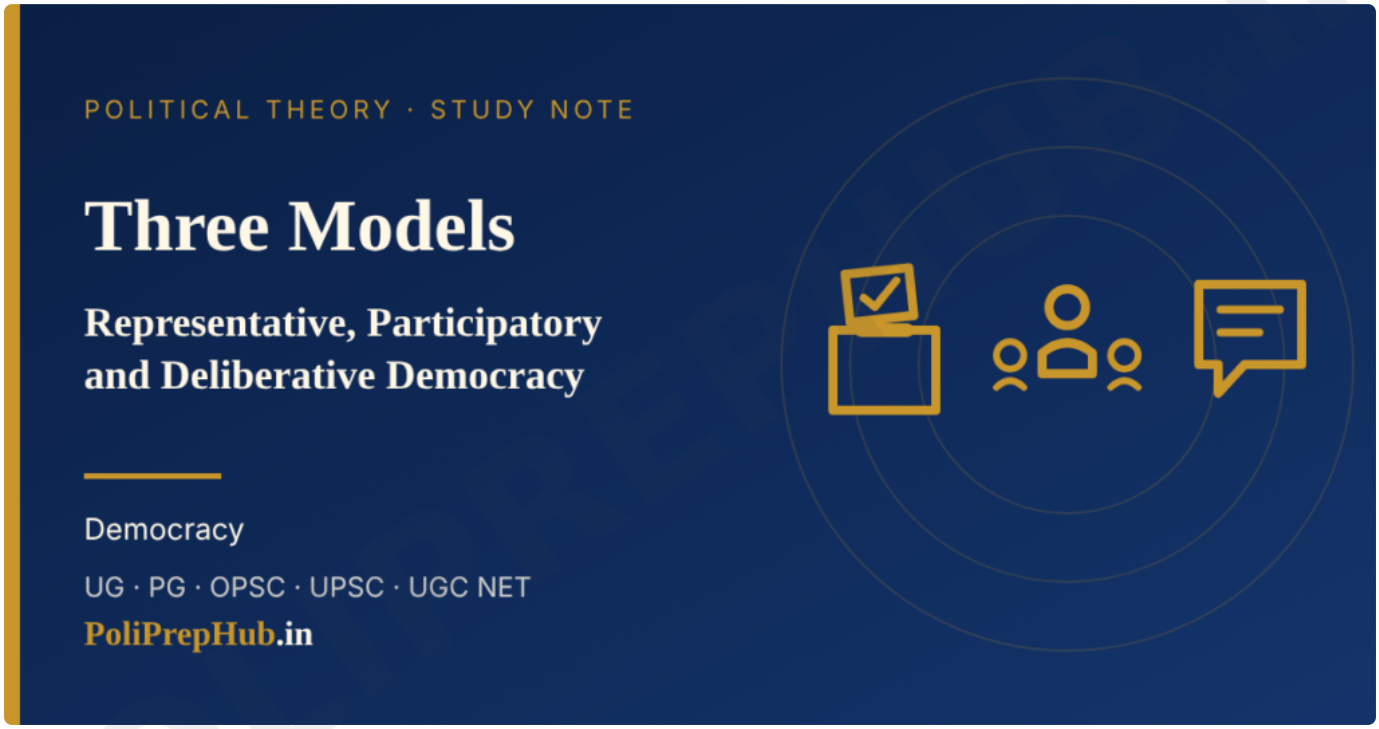
POLITICAL THEORY

Comparing the Three Models of Democracy

By **Brajabandhu Mahanta** • November 14, 2026 • 27 min read



Representative, participatory and deliberative democracy are three different answers to one question: how can the rule of the people be carried out in practice? The word democracy means rule by the people, but it does not say who exactly should decide, how they should decide and by what standard a decision should be called legitimate. The representative model answers that the people should choose rulers and control them through elections. The participatory model answers that the people should themselves share directly in decisions. The deliberative model answers that decisions should be the result of reasoned discussion among citizens. Each answer rests on a different picture of the citizen, a different

idea of the purpose of politics and a different source of legitimacy.

A comparison of the three is useful for several reasons. It shows that democracy is not one fixed institution but a family of ideas which can be combined in many ways. It helps in judging the strengths and failures of actual democracies, since the complaints made against a political system are often complaints that one model is being neglected: that voters have too little say, that citizens are not given real power, or that public debate is poor. It also helps in understanding why reformers propose such different remedies, such as better electoral rules, decentralisation to village and city bodies, or citizens' assemblies. For an examination, the topic calls for a clear and balanced treatment, in which the models are first understood on their own terms and then set side by side on common points.

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1. The three models in brief

Representative democracy. In this model, citizens elect a small number of persons to make laws and decisions for them, and these representatives are answerable to the voters through periodic elections, opposition, a free press and independent institutions. The citizen's main political act is voting. The model is suited to large states, is the basis of nearly all modern democracies, and is defended by Madison and Mill on grounds of size, expertise and orderly government. Its critics, such as Rousseau, Pateman and Young, argue that it makes the people passive and gives power to elites.

Participatory democracy. In this model, citizens take a direct and continuing part in decisions that affect their lives, in local government, workplaces and public services as well as in national politics. Its central ideas are that those affected by decisions should have a voice in them and that participation develops the character and capacities of the citizen. It is associated with Rousseau, Mill, Cole, Pateman, Macpherson and Barber, and with Gandhi's idea of *gram swaraj* in India. Its critics point to the problems of scale, unequal participation and local domination.

Deliberative democracy. In this model, legitimate decisions are those that result from public discussion in which free and equal citizens give reasons and listen to others, and are ready to change their views. Its central ideas are public reason, reciprocity and the transformation of preferences through discussion. It is associated with Habermas, Rawls, Cohen, Gutmann and Thompson, Dryzek, Young and Fishkin. Its critics point to the exclusion of those who do not speak in the dominant style, group polarisation, the problem of scale and the neglect of conflict.

The underlying contrast. Although the three models are often discussed as rival theories, the difference lies mostly in emphasis. The representative model is mainly about who decides, namely elected leaders. The participatory model is mainly about how many take part and how deeply, and the deliberative model is mainly about the quality of the reasoning behind decisions. A single political system may therefore be representative in its structure,

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participatory in its local bodies and deliberative in its committees and courts.

2. Basis of comparison

The three models can be compared on the following questions, which together make up a framework for analysis: the conception of the citizen, the source of legitimacy, the role of elections, the meaning of political equality, the idea of the common good, the treatment of preferences and interests, the size and scale in which each works, the role of leaders and experts, the place of conflict and consensus, the relation to the state and civil society, the main institutions, and the chief risks. The next part takes up these points one by one. Before doing so, it is useful to recall the thinkers who first set out the models in their modern form: Schumpeter and Dahl for the representative or competitive view, Pateman and Macpherson for the participatory view, and Habermas and Rawls for the deliberative view. Their disagreements with one another give the debate its structure.

3. Comparison on the main points

Point	Representative	Participatory	Deliberative
Central question	Who should decide? Elected leaders	How many and how deeply should citizens take part?	How should decisions be reasoned and justified?
Source of legitimacy	Consent through free elections	Involvement of those affected	Reasoned agreement reached through fair discussion
Role of the citizen	Voter and critic	Active decision-maker	Reason-giving discussant
Role of elections	Central	Useful but not enough	Not the chief source of legitimacy
Idea of equality	One person, one vote	Equal chance to take part and decide	Equal voice and equal standing in argument
View of preferences	Given and fixed; counted by votes	Developed through taking part	Formed and changed through discussion

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Natural scale	National and large	Local and small units	Small forums linked to wider public sphere
Place of experts and leaders	Large; leaders and civil servants decide	Small; ordinary citizens decide	Experts inform; citizens judge
Conflict and consensus	Managed by majority rule and compromise	Handled through bargaining and common action	Aimed at reasoned agreement, or reasoned disagreement
Main institutions	Legislature, executive, parties, courts	Gram Sabha, ward committees, participatory budgets, workers' councils	Deliberative polls, citizens' assemblies, committees, courts, public sphere
Main thinkers	Burke, Madison, Mill, Schumpeter, Pitkin	Rousseau, Cole, Pateman, Macpherson, Barber	Habermas, Rawls, Cohen, Gutmann and Thompson, Fishkin
Main risk	Elite domination and distance from people	Unequal participation and local capture	Exclusion by style of speech and weak link to power

Conception of the citizen. The representative model treats the citizen mainly as a chooser, who judges the performance of leaders and parties and decides whom to support. Schumpeter went so far as to say that the citizen's role is to produce a government. The participatory model sees the citizen as a decision-maker and as a person whose abilities grow through public work. The deliberative model sees the citizen as a reasoning person who can give and weigh arguments and who accepts that his own view may need revision. In the first the citizen is a voter, in the second a participant and in the third a discussant.

Source of legitimacy. In the representative model, authority rests on consent given by the voters in free and fair elections, and the winner receives a mandate to govern for a term. In the participatory model, legitimacy comes from the involvement of those who are affected, so that a decision is just when they have shared in making it. In the deliberative model, it comes from the quality of the reasoning, and a decision is legitimate if it can be justified in public by reasons that all could accept as free and equal. This difference is the most basic one among the models.

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Role of elections and voting. Elections are the central device of the representative model, and the competitive struggle for votes is its method of choosing rulers. For participatory thinkers, elections are necessary but thin, since they offer an occasional and limited chance of influence. Deliberative writers hold that voting, taken alone, only registers opinions and does not improve them, so they place discussion before the vote, and in some mini-public designs the vote is only a final step after discussion.

Political equality. Representative democracy secures formal equality, one person, one vote, one value, and equal civil and political rights. Participatory democracy asks for a more substantial equality of opportunity to take part, and so requires measures such as reservation, training and the reduction of economic inequality, as Macpherson insisted. Deliberative democracy asks for equality in the forum itself, so that each person has an equal chance to speak, to be heard and to be answered, whatever his wealth or rank.

Treatment of preferences. The representative model, in its elitist and pluralist forms, takes the preferences of citizens as they are, and treats politics as the competition and bargaining over them. The participatory model holds that preferences are shaped by experience, and that taking part makes people less narrow. The deliberative model goes furthest, and treats the transformation of preferences through exchange of reasons as the core of democratic politics.

The common good. For the representative model, the common good is either the outcome of the competition between interests, in the pluralist view, or the judgment of wise leaders, in Burke’s view. For the participatory model it is found in the common life and shared decisions of a community, as Rousseau and Barber suggest. For the deliberative model it is what survives public reason, that is, what can be justified to all. In each, a different method for finding the public interest is offered.

Scale and setting. The representative model was designed for large states and is the only one of the three that is clearly workable at the national level. The participatory model works best in small settings such as the village, the neighbourhood, the school and the workplace. The deliberative model, in its pure form, needs face-to-face discussion and is therefore

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practised in small groups, and yet it hopes to influence large publics through the media, the public sphere and the use of representative samples. Fishkin’s trilemma between equality, participation and deliberation expresses the difficulty.

Role of leaders and experts. The representative model gives wide discretion to leaders and to the civil service, and expects them to be accountable afterwards. The participatory model reduces their role, since citizens must decide matters themselves with the officials acting as helpers. The deliberative model gives experts the job of informing the discussion, but leaves the judgment to citizens, as in the consensus conference where lay people question experts.

Conflict and consensus. Representative democracy accepts conflict as normal and has rules, such as majority rule, a party system, and an opposition, to manage it. Participatory democracy hopes that shared involvement will bring people to common purposes, though it also expects conflict, which it handles through local bargaining and collective action. The deliberative model aims at rational agreement, or at least at a result that all can respect after a fair hearing, although critics such as Mouffe say that it underestimates lasting conflict.

Relation to the state and civil society. The representative model is centred on formal state institutions, with parties and civil society as channels of influence. The participatory model shifts power towards local bodies and associations and sometimes aims to democratise the economy and society as well as the state. The deliberative model places much weight on the public sphere of civil society, where opinion is formed, and on the way in which this opinion flows into the institutions of the state.

Main institutions and methods. The first relies on elections, legislatures, parties and constitutional courts. The second relies on village and ward assemblies, participatory budgeting, workers’ councils, social audits, referendums and initiatives. The third relies on deliberative polls, citizens’ assemblies and juries, parliamentary committees, reasoned judgments and the free media. Actual political systems often use all three groups of institutions side by side.

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Typical dangers. Each model has its typical failure. Representative democracy may degrade into rule by a professional political class, influenced by money and party discipline. Participatory democracy may be captured by activists and local elites, or may fade into tokenism, as Arnstein warned. Deliberative democracy may turn into talk by a privileged few, polarise like-minded groups, or have no effect on decisions. Knowing these dangers helps to see how the models may correct one another.

4. Strengths and weaknesses compared

Model	Main strengths	Main weaknesses
Representative	Workable in large states; stable and accountable government; division of labour; protection of rights through constitutions; peaceful change of rulers	Distance between voters and rulers; domination by elites, parties and money; weak engagement between elections; unfair translation of votes into seats
Participatory	Educates citizens; gives voice to affected people; improves local knowledge and accountability; builds community	Hard to apply at scale; unequal capacity to take part; local capture; tokenism; slow and hard to sustain
Deliberative	Improves the quality and legitimacy of decisions; deals with moral disagreement; reduces manipulation; respects reasons	Exclusionary standards of speech; polarisation; limited scale; weak link to power; neglect of conflict

What each does best. The representative model is best at ensuring order, continuity and control of rulers on a large scale. The participatory model is best at developing citizens and making local decisions fit local needs. The deliberative model is best at raising the quality of reasoning and at settling disagreements in a way that is respectful and justified. The strengths of one are the weaknesses of another, which is why comparison leads naturally to the idea of combination.

What each does worst. Representation does worst on engagement and equality of influence, because most citizens have little role beyond voting and because organised money and elites have more weight. Participation does worst on scale and on equal

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capacity, since it takes time and skill that not everyone has. Deliberation does worst on inclusion in the style of discussion and on actually changing decisions, since it may be confined to small forums.

Shared problem of inequality. All three models are weakened by social and economic inequality, though in different ways. In the representative model, inequality gives the rich more influence over parties, media and campaigns. In the participatory model, it limits who has the time and confidence to attend and speak. In the deliberative model, it shapes whose voice is heard as reasonable. This explains why writers such as Macpherson, Young and Fraser link the success of each model with the reduction of inequality and the inclusion of the marginalised.

5. Are the models rivals or partners?

The case for rivalry. In the 1960s and 1970s, the participatory theorists presented their model as an alternative to the minimal and elitist representative model, and Pateman said that the elitist theory had narrowed democracy to a method. In the 1990s, deliberative theorists criticised both the aggregative representative model and the participatory model, arguing that numbers and activity alone do not show how well people reason. Mouffe, on the other side, attacks the deliberative model for its faith in consensus. These arguments suggest that there are real differences in values.

The case for partnership. Most contemporary writers hold that the models answer different needs and so supplement each other. David Held, in *Models of Democracy*, has treated the various models as parts of a long search for the principle of autonomy in political life, and has argued for a combination in a cosmopolitan form. Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright have proposed empowered participatory governance, in which small groups of citizens deliberate and decide on local problems within a framework set by representative institutions. Jane Mansbridge and John Parkinson speak of a deliberative system in which legislatures, courts, media, civil society and mini-publics each do part of the work of deliberation. Benjamin Barber, though a participatory theorist, wanted strong democracy to include talk, and Habermas’s two-track model combines the formal institutions of

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representation with the informal public sphere.

Representation as the framework. In most proposals, representative institutions provide the frame for the others. National laws, budgets, defence and foreign policy cannot be decided in village meetings, so elections, parliaments and courts remain necessary. The other two models enter at the level of how those institutions are supplemented, controlled and improved. Even strong supporters of participation, such as Macpherson, proposed a pyramid in which direct democracy at the base is joined to delegated and party-based representation at the top.

Participation as the base. The participatory model provides the base of active citizenship from which the other models draw strength. Deliberation without participation may be confined to an educated minority, and representation without participation tends to lose touch with the people. Local participation also gives the practice in discussion and public judgment which deliberation needs.

Deliberation as the quality test. The deliberative model provides a test for the quality of what goes on in both the others. It asks whether elections are accompanied by honest and informed debate, and whether participatory meetings involve the giving of reasons or only the display of numbers and power. In this way, it improves the other models from within.

Hybrid designs in practice. A number of actual designs mix the three. Citizens' assemblies, such as those of Ireland and British Columbia, are deliberative in method, participatory in involving ordinary citizens, and linked to representation through legislatures and referendums. Participatory budgeting involves citizens in decisions, with deliberation in neighbourhood assemblies and representation through elected delegates. Parliamentary committees which hold public hearings combine representation with public input and reasoned discussion. Social audits join participation and public reason-giving to the control of officials. The Swiss system joins elected bodies with frequent referendums and local assemblies.

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Reform proposals combining the models. Proposals to improve democracy often draw on all three. Reform of party finance and electoral systems belongs to the representative tradition. Devolution to local bodies, the right to information and social audit belong to the participatory tradition. Deliberative days, citizens' juries, and the requirement of reasoned legislation and consultation before law-making belong to the deliberative tradition. Writers such as Dahl proposed the minipopulus, and Ackerman and Fishkin proposed a national deliberative day before elections, as ways of joining them.

6. The three models in the Indian setting

India offers a useful case in which to see how the three models operate together. The framers of the Constitution did not adopt one model alone. They built a representative parliamentary democracy on the basis of universal adult franchise, and, at the same time, wrote in provisions for local self-government, public participation and reasoned decision-making. Over seven decades, each of these elements has developed in its own way.

Model	Main Indian provisions and practices
Representative	Parliament and State Legislatures (Articles 79 to 122 and 168 to 212); adult suffrage (Article 326); Election Commission (Article 324); reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women; Tenth Schedule; collective responsibility (Article 75(3))
Participatory	Article 40; Seventy-third and Seventy-fourth Amendments; Gram Sabha; PESA, 1996; Forest Rights Act, 2006; Right to Information Act, 2005; social audit under MGNREGA; Kerala's People's Plan; public hearings
Deliberative	Debates of the Constituent Assembly; parliamentary committees; freedom of speech in Parliament (Articles 105 and 194); reasoned judgments of the courts and public interest litigation; pre-legislative consultation; regulatory consultations; public sphere of media and civil society

The representative core. India's democracy is first of all a representative one, with elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies every five years, the largest electorate in the world, and a record of peaceful change of governments. Its strengths are the regularity

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and wide acceptance of elections, the rise in turnout of women and poorer voters, and the presence of a vigorous opposition. Its weaknesses, which scholars and commissions have pointed out, include the cost of elections and the role of money, the criminal record of some legislators, strong party control through the anti-defection law, the first-past-the-post system's gap between votes and seats, and the fall in the time given to debate in legislatures.

The participatory layer. The participatory element is found chiefly in local government and in rights-based laws. The Seventy-third and Seventy-fourth Amendments created a third tier of democracy with lakhs of elected representatives, with reservations for women and weaker sections, and the *Gram Sabha* as the village's deliberative and decision-making body. Tribal areas are given further powers under PESA and the Forest Rights Act, as the Niyamgiri decision showed. The Right to Information Act, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, with its provision for social audit, and the school management committees under the Right to Education Act add voice and accountability. The weaknesses are the uneven devolution of powers, funds and functionaries, the irregular holding of *Gram Sabhas*, and the influence of caste, gender and class on who participates.

The deliberative layer. The deliberative element appears in the free debate of the Constituent Assembly, in the work of parliamentary committees, in the reasoned judgments of the Supreme Court and High Courts, in public interest litigation which has given voice to the poor and the excluded, and in the long tradition of public argument which Sen has described. It is weakened by disruptions in Parliament, hasty passage of laws, partisan and loud media discussion, misinformation on social platforms, and the lack of citizens' assemblies or similar forums at the national level. The Pre-Legislative Consultation Policy and public consultation by regulators are modest steps in this direction.

Interaction among the layers. The layers support or undercut each other in practice. The Right to Information Act, which is participatory in character, supplies the facts that make parliamentary and public debate more informed. The social movements that pressed for it, among them the MKSS, used public hearings, which are both participatory and deliberative, to build a case that led to legislation by the representative bodies. Court decisions on

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disclosure of candidates' criminal and financial records have strengthened electoral choice. On the other hand, when Parliament passes laws without discussion, citizens turn to the courts and the streets, and so the participatory and judicial channels carry loads that the representative channel should bear.

Ambedkar's warning and the three models. Ambedkar's closing speech to the Constituent Assembly may be read as a statement on all three models. He accepted that political equality had to be built on a representative system, he warned that political democracy cannot last unless it rests on social democracy, and he cautioned against hero-worship in politics and in favour of constitutional methods and constitutional morality, which includes a habit of discussion and respect for opponents. In this way, he looked to both a base of social equality and active citizenship and to a culture of reasoned argument as necessary for the representative structure to work.

Gandhian and constitutional perspectives. Gandhi's picture of an oceanic circle of self-governing villages is a participatory ideal, and the constitutional provisions for panchayats are a partial acceptance of it. Nehru and Ambedkar placed more weight on the representative parliamentary system and on constitutional institutions. Jayaprakash Narayan's call for partyless democracy and for people's committees in 1959 is another attempt to bring participation into the structure. The Indian debate thus anticipated, in its own terms, much of the later Western discussion on the models.

Lessons from India. Three lessons arise from the Indian experience. A first lesson is that representative institutions can endure even in conditions of poverty and diversity, but they need to be supported by wider participation and by good debate to deal with inequality and exclusion. A second lesson is that participatory arrangements do not work by law alone, and need social change, information and organisation to overcome caste and gender hierarchies. A third lesson is that deliberation is a matter of culture and institutional design, not only of theory, and can be encouraged by committees, consultations, free media and open courts, and perhaps by new forums of citizens.

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7. Critical analysis

A comparison of the three models shows first that they are less sharply opposed than their founders sometimes claimed. The representative model has been presented as a minimal theory by Schumpeter, but Pitkin, Manin and Urbinati show that representation is a richer relation, which includes claim-making, debate and continuing involvement of citizens. The participatory model has been presented by Pateman as an alternative to elitist democracy, but Macpherson and Barber accept a role for representation and parties in large states. The deliberative model has been described as a theory of ideal discourse, but its later forms, such as Fung's design of mini-publics and Mansbridge's systemic approach, are closely tied to institutions. A fair comparison therefore looks at their central emphasis and their practical forms, and not only at the extreme versions.

The models also rest on different pictures of human beings and of politics, and these differences cannot be fully reconciled. The representative model, especially in the elitist version, is realistic or even sceptical about the ordinary citizen's interest and competence, and finds safety in competition among leaders. The participatory model is more optimistic, and holds that capacity grows when it is used. The deliberative model assumes that people can be moved by reasons, and regards disagreement as capable of being narrowed by fair discussion. Critics have therefore asked of each model whether its assumptions about human nature hold. Empirical studies of voting behaviour support some of the doubts of the elitist view, studies of local participation offer mixed evidence for the educative claim, and experiments with deliberation show both gains in knowledge and the danger of polarisation.

The dimension of power gives another angle. Critical, Marxist and feminist writers argue that all three models operate within unequal societies, and that none can deliver on its promise unless the underlying inequalities of wealth, status and gender are addressed. Representative systems are shaped by money and organised interests, participatory forums by the confidence and free time of the dominant groups, and deliberation by dominant styles of speech. The representative model has the advantage of a formal equality of votes which is protected by law, while the others rely on arrangements that may be changed or ignored. On the other hand, the participatory and deliberative models give a vocabulary for

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judging representative institutions and asking whether the voice of the weak is heard in them.

The question of scale and design is central. Representation answers the problem of scale at the cost of distance. Participation reduces distance but is hard to extend, while deliberation improves quality but is hard to extend to the many. Recent institutional experiments, such as citizens' assemblies linked to referendums, participatory budgeting within elected municipal councils and public hearings before legislation, are attempts to overcome these trade-offs. The systemic approach goes one step further, by suggesting that the aim should not be to make every institution fully deliberative or participatory, but to ensure that the system as a whole allows many voices, many forms of discussion and many ways of holding power to account.

In the Indian context, the debate has a practical bearing. The country has a strong representative frame and a long tradition of argument and local self-government, but it faces problems of caste and gender hierarchy, concentration of media and money, and decline in the quality of parliamentary debate. These problems suggest that a stronger democracy requires working on all three fronts together: improving elections and legislatures, giving real powers and resources to local bodies and communities, and strengthening the culture and institutions of public reasoning. The most defensible conclusion is that representation provides the structure, participation provides the energy and the education of citizens, and deliberation provides the standard of reasoned justification, and that democracy is healthiest when the three are kept in balance.

8. Authors and books for UGC NET

Author	Book or work	Main idea
David Held	*Models of Democracy* (3rd ed. 2006)	Comparison of classical and contemporary models of democracy
Joseph Schumpeter	*Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (1942)	Competitive elite model; democracy as method

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Robert Dahl	*A Preface to Democratic Theory* (1956); *Polyarchy* (1971)	Pluralist view of competition among groups; polyarchy
Hanna Pitkin	*The Concept of Representation* (1967)	Four views of representation
Bernard Manin	*The Principles of Representative Government* (1997)	History and principles of representation
Nadia Urbinati	*Representative Democracy* (2006)	Representation as continuing participation
Carole Pateman	*Participation and Democratic Theory* (1970)	Case for participation and industrial democracy
C. B. Macpherson	*The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* (1977)	Four models of liberal democracy; pyramid of councils
Benjamin Barber	*Strong Democracy* (1984)	Participatory and talk-based strong democracy
Jürgen Habermas	*Between Facts and Norms* (1992)	Deliberative politics; two-track model
John Rawls	*Political Liberalism* (1993)	Public reason
Joshua Cohen	“Deliberation and Democratic Legitimacy” (1989)	Ideal deliberative procedure
Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson	*Democracy and Disagreement* (1996)	Reciprocity and moral disagreement
James Fishkin	*When the People Speak* (2009)	Deliberative polling; trilemma
Iris Marion Young	*Inclusion and Democracy* (2000)	Inclusive communication and difference
Chantal Mouffe	*The Democratic Paradox* (2000)	Agonism; critique of consensus
Archon Fung and Erik Olin Wright	*Deepening Democracy* (2003)	Empowered participatory governance
Jane Mansbridge and John Parkinson	*Deliberative Systems* (2012)	Systemic approach
Graham Smith	*Democratic Innovations* (2009)	Designing participatory and deliberative institutions

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Amartya Sen	*The Argumentative Indian* (2005)	Tradition of public reasoning in India
Granville Austin	*The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation* (1966)	Constituent Assembly and the constitutional design

9. Practice questions

Long answer questions

1. Compare representative, participatory and deliberative democracy on their main points of difference.
2. Discuss the sources of legitimacy in the three models of democracy.
3. Examine the relation between the three models. Are they rivals or partners?
4. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of each model of democracy.
5. Discuss how the three models operate together in the Indian political system.
6. “Representation provides the structure, participation the energy and deliberation the standard of democracy.” Examine.

Medium answer questions

1. Distinguish between participatory and deliberative democracy.
2. How does the role of the citizen differ in the three models?
3. Explain the problem of scale in the three models.
4. What is meant by a deliberative system?
5. Explain how participatory budgeting combines the three models.
6. Discuss the problem of inequality in the three models.

Short answer questions

1. What is the main emphasis of the representative model?
2. What is the main emphasis of the participatory model?
3. What is the main emphasis of the deliberative model?

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4. What is empowered participatory governance?
5. What is a mini-public?
6. What is Fishkin’s trilemma?

Very short answer questions

1. Who developed the elitist theory of democracy in *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*?
2. Which model is associated with Pateman?
3. Which model is associated with Habermas?
4. Who wrote *Models of Democracy*?
5. Which Amendments gave constitutional status to local bodies in India?

Objective questions

1. The central question of the representative model is: (a) Who should decide? (b) How can all take part? (c) How can reasons be improved? (d) How can conflict be ended?
2. Legitimacy through reasoned discussion is the central idea of: (a) Representative democracy (b) Participatory democracy (c) Deliberative democracy (d) Elitist democracy
3. The educative function of participation is stressed in: (a) Schumpeter’s theory (b) Pateman’s theory (c) Dahl’s theory (d) Sartori’s theory
4. Which of the following is a deliberative institution? (a) Citizens’ assembly (b) Election Commission (c) Cabinet (d) Political party
5. The idea of a deliberative system was developed by: (a) Mansbridge and Parkinson (b) Pateman and Macpherson (c) Dahl and Lindblom (d) Rawls and Nozick
6. Assertion (A): The three models of democracy are best treated as complementary. Reason (R): Each model meets needs that the others do not meet well. (a) Both A and R are true and R explains A (b) Both are true but R does not explain A (c) A is true but R is false (d) A is false but R is true
7. The Gram Sabha is an example of: (a) Participatory democracy (b) Elite democracy (c) Plebiscitary democracy (d) None of these

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8. Match: (i) Schumpeter (ii) Macpherson (iii) Habermas (iv) Held with (a) Models of Democracy (b) Communicative action (c) Competitive elitism (d) Pyramid of councils. (a) i-c, ii-d, iii-b, iv-a (b) i-a, ii-b, iii-c, iv-d (c) i-b, ii-c, iii-d, iv-a (d) i-d, ii-a, iii-b, iv-c

Analytical prompts

1. A state government introduces citizens' assemblies on a controversial law, while leaving the final decision to the legislature. Analyse which models of democracy are at work.
2. A village council approves a budget in an open meeting, but only a small group of landholders speak. Evaluate it in terms of the three models.
3. Which model, in your view, best deals with the problem of political inequality? Argue with reasons.
4. Is it possible to design a democracy that is fully representative, participatory and deliberative at the same time? Discuss.

Key takeaways

- The three models answer the question of how the rule of the people can be carried out in practice, each with a different emphasis: who decides, how many take part and how well decisions are reasoned.
- Representative democracy gives legitimacy through consent expressed in elections, treats the citizen as voter, and is the only model clearly workable at the national scale.
- Participatory democracy gives legitimacy through the involvement of those affected, treats the citizen as decision-maker and values the educative effect of taking part.
- Deliberative democracy gives legitimacy through reasoned public discussion, treats the citizen as a reason-giving discussant and aims at the transformation of preferences.
- Each model has its own typical failure: elite domination, unequal and tokenistic participation, and exclusion or lack of influence in deliberation.
- Most contemporary writers treat the models as complementary, with representation as the frame, participation as the base and deliberation as the test of quality.

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- Hybrid designs such as citizens' assemblies, participatory budgeting and social audits join the three models in practice.
- India combines a strong representative core with participatory local bodies and rights-based laws and with deliberative elements in committees, courts and public debate, though all three face problems of inequality and uneven working.

Further reading

1. David Held, *Models of Democracy*
2. Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*
3. Robert Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics*
4. Hanna Pitkin, *The Concept of Representation*
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20. O. P. Gauba, *An Introduction to Political Theory*

Frequently asked questions

1. What is the main difference between the three models of democracy? The representative model stresses who decides, namely elected representatives. The participatory model stresses the direct and deeper involvement of citizens in decisions. The deliberative model stresses the quality of reasoning and discussion behind decisions.

2. Which model is the most suitable for large countries? The representative model is the only one of the three that works clearly at the national scale, and so it forms the frame of most modern democracies. The other two are used mainly in local settings or in forums attached to the representative system.

3. How do participatory and deliberative democracy differ? Participatory democracy is concerned with how many people take part and how much power they have, while deliberative democracy is concerned with how well they reason together. A large public meeting may be participatory without being deliberative, and a small citizens' jury may be deliberative without being widely participatory.

4. Are the three models rivals? They differ in emphasis, but most scholars see them as complementary. Representation supplies the framework, participation the engagement of citizens and deliberation the standard of reasoned justification, and many actual institutions combine all three.

5. What is the main weakness of each model? Representative democracy tends to elite domination and distance from the people. Participatory democracy suffers from unequal capacity to take part and from local capture. Deliberative democracy may exclude those who do not speak in the dominant style and may have little effect on decisions.

6. How are the three models seen in India? India has a representative parliamentary system with universal adult franchise, participatory institutions such as panchayats, Gram Sabhas and rights to information and social audit, and deliberative elements in the debates of the Constituent Assembly, parliamentary committees, court judgments and public

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discussion. The balance among them is still developing.

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