Q) Discuss the merits and demerits of democracy.

Ans: As a form of government,democracy has been the subject of great controversy. Extreme views have been expressed both for and against this form of government. There are some with whom it is almost a religion. On the other hand, there are others who have severely criticized democracy.Democracy has both its merits and demerits.

***Merits of Democracy are as follows:***

1. ***Based on equality***: In a democracy,all are considered equal.There is no discrimination on the basis of colour,caste ,creed,religion,language,gender etc. No special right is granted to any class of society. In India,which is the largest democracy in the world any such discrimination has been completely abolished.All are equal before the law and the same punishment is meted out to all if law is violated.
2. ***Minimizes the chances of revolution***: There is no danger or chance of a revolution in a democracy. This is because it gives enough opportunity for a change in the government through peaceful means.Moreover,public opinion is respected,special attention is paid to the welfare of the people,no particular class is given any special right and everybody gets equal opportunity for self-development. There is enough of freedom of action and expression of opinion.
3. ***Upholds liberty of the people***: Every individual is free to think,speak ,act and develop his own personality in his own way. He cannot be coerced to do anything against his will. He enjoys fundamental rights which are guaranteed by an independent judiciary.
4. ***Gives political education to the people***: In democracy,every adult has the right to vote and contest election irrespective of caste,creed,religion,language,education etc. There are many political parties who contest elections. At the time of elections every party propagates its programme among the people and tries to draw the attention of the people on various issues. The people gets political education as they receive training to cast their votes . People also read the proceedings of legislatures and thus they receive political education.
5. ***Government is responsible to the people***: The government cannot act arbitrarily . It must respect the wishes of the people. The rulers if they want to continue in power, they must act as servants of the people and serve their interests.No minister can get away from punishment after having acted arbitrarily. Public opinion is very strong in this matter.
6. ***Based on public opinion***: Democracy is based on public opinion. It provides maximum opportunity to the people in self-government. The representatives of the people run the administration . The legislatures enact laws according to the wishes of the people. The Council of Ministers is responsible to the House of the People in a democracy. Democratic government pays special attention to the interests of the people.
7. ***Protection of interests of all***: It protects the interests of all the people. It is not expected to serve the interests of a particular individual or class but to serve the interests of all.That is not the case with monarchy or aristocracy or dictatorship.

***Demerits of Democracy are as follows***:

***1)Very expensive form of government***: In a democracy,everyone has to be cared for and so it requires a lot of money to satisfy the needs of all. Moreover, a lot of money has to be spent on the organization of public opinion,propaganda and frequent elections.The huge amount spent on elections could be put to better use in many other ways.

***2) Gives more importance to the quantity rather than to quality***: It is also criticized for giving importance to quantity rather than quality.This is because the decision of victory and defeat lies on the number of votes one secures. The value of the vote of a highly educated person is similar to that of an uneducated person. While enacting laws in the Parliament,all matters are decided by majority votes and no importance is given to the views of the educated persons.

***3)***  ***Democracy requires more time to implement changes.***
Centralized government structures can make declarations on rules, regulations, or responses that are not always possible in a democratic structure. Voting requires time to review the information provided by each election. That means processes slow down to the point where it can take several years to create significant changes.

It even takes more time at the local level to make decisions with democracy because each referendum must go to the voters. Every decision is up for review potentially. That means there is always a certain level of uncertainty.

***4) Lack of moral value***: In a democracy,there is always a temptation for falsification and lies. In order to appeal to the people,often issues are vulgarised and popularised. Discussion on questions take place in order to catch the attention of the people and not for the good of the society as a whole. There is no love for truth and justice.

***5) Wide gap between theory and practice***: There exist a wide gap between theory and practice in democracy. Most of the democratic governments do not act strictly according to democratic principles. There is talk of the sovereignty of the people,welfare of the people and the principle of consent and criticism. But ,in actual practice,many democratic governments violate the spirit of the true principles of democracy.

***6) Criticism by Fascists***: The Fascists condemn democracy as “decrepit,decaying,stale and out of date.” According to them, democracy is a false ideal.It is inefficient.Parties are corrupt and selfish. While they put emphasis on principles, in actual practice they do not act upon them.

**7) Not a stable form of government:** This form of government lacks stability. Government change rapidly.This defect is more visible in countries having multi-party system.In France,there is multi-party system and the average age of the ministry is eight months.Due to frequent changes in government there is no continuity in the policies and plans of the government.

 Thus democracy has its merits as well as demerits but its merits are much more than its demerits. It is considered to be much better compared to other forms of the governments.