Chapter: Concept of Republic

A. UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF REPUBLIC

Introduction:

A Republic is a form of government in which the head of the State is elected and is not a hereditary ruler. The office of the head of State is therefore not acquired by birth or inherited through a royal family. India is a Republic, with an elected President as its head of State.

Why Are We Studying the Concept of Republic?

The concept helps us understand who occupies the highest constitutional office in a country and how that person acquires the position. It distinguishes a Republic from a Monarchy, where the head of State holds office by birth. It also helps us understand an important feature of the Indian political system: India has an elected head of State rather than a hereditary monarch.

Republic and Monarchy

BASIS	REPUBLIC	MONARCHY
Head of State	Chosen through an election; not hereditary.	Holds the position by birth or hereditary succession.
Basis of office	An electoral or constitutionally prescribed process.	Hereditary succession.
Examples	India and France.	United Kingdom and Japan.

CONCEPTUAL LINKAGES

REPUBLIC → NON-HEREDITARY HEAD OF STATE → ELECTION OF THE HEAD OF STATE → PRESIDENT OF INDIA

REPUBLIC ≠ DEMOCRACY

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A Republic or a Monarchy, by itself, does not determine whether a country is democratic. The form of headship of the State and the nature of the political system are distinct dimensions.

What Is a Republic?

DEFINITION

A Republic is a form of government where the head of State is elected, not hereditary.

Republic vs Democracy: An Important Distinction

FORM	WITH DEMOCRACY	WITHOUT DEMOCRACY
Republic	India — a democratic Republic.	North Korea — a Republic, but not democratic.
Monarchy	United Kingdom — a constitutional monarchy with democracy.	Saudi Arabia — an absolute monarchy.

Illustration:

Does Being a Republic Automatically Make a Country Democratic?

India is both a Republic and a democracy. Its head of State, the President, is elected, and the political system is democratic.

North Korea is a Republic but not a democracy. This shows that the label "Republic" alone does not establish that people enjoy democratic political rights or control government.

The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy and a democracy, while Saudi Arabia is an absolute monarchy. Thus, a country can be a democracy without being a Republic.

KEY IDEA: Republic or Monarchy per se does not determine democracy.

B. REPUBLIC IN THE INDIAN CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

1. India as a Republic

The Preamble declares India to be a "Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic". The word Republic signifies that the head of the Indian State is not a hereditary monarch. The President is the constitutional head of the State and is elected through the constitutionally prescribed process.

2. Constitutional Provisions

CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISION	SIGNIFICANCE
Preamble	Declares India to be a Republic, affirming that the head of State is not a hereditary ruler.
Article 52	Provides that there shall be a President of India.
Article 54	Provides for the election of the President by an electoral college consisting of elected members of both Houses of Parliament and elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of the States, including the NCT of Delhi and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

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3. Election of the President

The President is not directly elected by all citizens. The President is elected indirectly by an electoral college specified in the Constitution. This constitutionally prescribed election is the basis for India's republican character.

Illustration:

Who Is the Head of State in India?

The President of India is the head of the State. The office is not inherited and is not occupied by a member of a royal family by birth.

The President is elected through an electoral college under the Constitution. Dr. Rajendra Prasad became the first President of India when the Constitution came into force on 26 January 1950.

KEY IDEA: An elected, non-hereditary President is a key feature of India's republican form of government.

C. FROM MONARCHY TO REPUBLIC: INDIA

Before 26 January 1950, India continued to have the British monarch as its head of State under the transitional constitutional arrangement. On 26 January 1950, the Constitution came into force, Dr. Rajendra Prasad assumed office as the elected President, and India became a Republic.

Timeline:

PERIOD / DATE	DEVELOPMENT
Before 26 January 1950	The British monarch was the head of State.
26 November 1949	The Constitution was adopted. India did not become a Republic on this date.
26 January 1950	The Constitution came into force; Dr. Rajendra Prasad became President; India became a Republic.

MONARCHY (BRITISH MONARCH AS HEAD OF STATE) → CONSTITUTION COMES INTO FORCE → ELECTED PRESIDENT → INDIA BECOMES A REPUBLIC

Illustration:

Why Is 26 January 1950 Important?

Adoption of the Constitution took place on 26 November 1949. However, the Constitution came into force on 26 January 1950.

It was on 26 January 1950 that India's constitutional system began operating and the office of the President replaced the British monarch as the head of State.

KEY IDEA: India became a Republic on 26 January 1950, when the Constitution came into force — not on the date of its adoption.

D. KEY TAKEAWAYS

KEY DIMENSION	QUICK REVISION
MEANING	A Republic is a form of government in which the head of State is elected and not hereditary.
REPUBLIC vs MONARCHY	Republic: head of State chosen through an election. Monarchy: head of State holds office by birth/hereditary succession.
REPUBLIC vs DEMOCRACY	They are distinct concepts. A Republic can be non-democratic, and a Monarchy can be democratic.
INDIA	India is a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic, as declared in the Preamble.
HEAD OF STATE	The President is the head of State in India.
ELECTION	The President is indirectly elected by the electoral college prescribed under Article 54.
IMPORTANT DATE	India became a Republic on 26 January 1950, when the Constitution came into force.
FIRST PRESIDENT	Dr. Rajendra Prasad was the first President of India.

QUICK REVISION FLOW

REPUBLIC → ELECTED / NON-HEREDITARY HEAD OF STATE
INDIA → PRESIDENT → INDIRECT ELECTION UNDER ARTICLE 54
26 NOVEMBER 1949 (ADOPTION) ≠ 26 JANUARY 1950 (BECAME A REPUBLIC)

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E. UPSC PRELIMS PRACTICE

Question

With reference to the Constitution of India, consider the following statements:

1. India became a republic after the adoption of the Constitution on 26 November 1949.
2. The President is the head of the State in India.
3. The institution of an elected President is a key feature of a republican form of government.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

(a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 1 and 3 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

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