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Q1(c)

How does democratic politics construct citizenship?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · PSIR GS 2 · 10 marks · Comparative Politics

Comparative Politics: Nature and major approaches; political economy and political sociology perspectives; limitations of the comparative method.

Core demand of the question

- Explain how democratic politics constructs citizenship
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Citizenship in a democracy is made by law, votes, and **social rights**, not only by birth records.

Marshall's civil, political, and **social rights** describe how that status has thickened.

Parties, movements, and civic education teach people to act as citizens.

Democracies still contest migrants, minorities, and documents of belonging.

Construction is therefore both inclusion and a fight over who is inside.

Introduction

Citizenship is not only a passport. Democratic politics constructs it by granting rights, demanding duties, and teaching who belongs to the political community. The construction is legal, social, and everyday.

Body**Legal construction**

- Constitutions and statutes name who is a citizen, who can vote, and who can hold office.
- **T. H. Marshall's** sequence of civil, political, and **social rights** shows how democracies have thickened citizenship from legal equality toward welfare claims.
- Universal adult franchise, independent courts, and equal protection make the citizen a rights-bearing person rather than a subject.

Political practice

- Parties, elections, and campaigns teach citizens to see themselves as choosers of governments.
- **Civil society**, unions, and social movements expand who is heard, including workers, women, and minorities.
- Public education, conscription in some states, and civic ritual create a shared political identity.

Contests inside democracy

- **Democracies also exclude:** property tests in the past, and today disputes over migrants, refugees, and dual nationality show that citizenship is fought over.

- In India, adult franchise from 1950, later panchayati raj, and debates on identification documents show construction as an ongoing process, not a finished list.
- Democratic politics therefore constructs citizenship by inclusion through rights and by conflict over the boundary of the people.

Flow diagram

Democratic politics -> Civil political social rights
Democratic politics -> Elections and parties
Democratic politics -> Boundary of membership
Civil political social rights -> Citizenship
Elections and parties -> Citizenship
Boundary of membership -> Citizenship

Conclusion

Democratic politics constructs citizenship through law, elections, welfare, and civic practice. It makes members into rights-holders and voters, while the boundary of membership remains a live political question.

Facts & figures

T. H. Marshall

Mapped citizenship as civil, political, and social rights that expanded over modern European history.

Universal adult franchise in India

The 1950 Constitution made voting a general political right rather than a colonial property privilege.

Civil society

Associations between family and the State through which people practise citizenship between elections.

Social rights

Claims to education, health, and a minimum of welfare that make formal legal equality usable.

Boundary politics

Laws on nationality, refugees, and identification that decide who counts as a member.