# Chapter 17: Outcomes of Democracy

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## Exercise 17.1 — Short Answer Questions

Q1 How does democracy produce an accountable, responsive and legitimate government?

SOLUTION

The most basic outcome of democracy is that it produces a government that is accountable to the citizens and responsive to their needs and expectations. Democracy is based on the idea of deliberation and negotiation, so decisions are taken by following norms and procedures.

Accountable and transparent: A citizen who wants to know if a decision was taken through the correct procedures has the right and the means to examine the process of decision making. This is known as transparency, a factor often missing in non-democratic governments. Democracies ensure regular, free and fair elections, open public debate on major policies and legislation, and the citizens' right to information about the government.

Responsive: Democracy develops mechanisms for citizens to hold the government accountable and to take part in decision making whenever they think fit. Though its record is mixed and some delay occurs because it follows procedures, its decisions are more acceptable and effective.

Legitimate: A democratic government is the people's own government. However slow or less efficient it may be, it is legitimate because people have chosen their rulers and have control over them.

Answer: Democracy is accountable and transparent through free elections, public debate and the right to information; responsive because citizens can hold it accountable and participate; and legitimate because it is the people's own chosen government.

Q2 What are the conditions under which democracies accommodate social diversities?

SOLUTION

Democracies are best suited to produce a harmonious social life by developing procedures to conduct competition and to negotiate differences among social groups. But the example of Sri Lanka reminds us that a democracy must fulfil two conditions to achieve this outcome:

1. Democracy is not simply rule by majority opinion. The majority always needs to work with the minority so that the government functions to represent the general view, since majority and minority opinions are not permanent.

2. Rule by majority must not become rule by a majority community in terms of religion, race or linguistic group. Every citizen must have a chance of being in the majority at some point. If someone is barred from being in the majority on the basis of birth, democratic rule ceases to be accommodative for that person or group.

Answer: The majority must work with the minority; and rule by majority must not become the permanent rule of one religious, racial or linguistic community — every citizen must have a chance of being in the majority.

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Q3 Give arguments to support or oppose the following assertions: (i) Industrialised countries can afford democracy but the poor need dictatorship to become rich. (ii) Democracy can't reduce inequality of incomes between different citizens. (iii) Government in poor countries should spend less on poverty reduction, health, education and spend more on industries and infrastructure. (iv) In democracy all citizens have one vote, which means that there is absence of any domination and conflict.

SOLUTION

(i) Oppose: Democracy is not a luxury of rich nations. Political equality and legitimacy matter for all countries, rich or poor. There is no evidence that dictatorships have a better economic record; a poor country can grow under democracy while retaining the dignity and freedom of its citizens.

(ii) Support (with a caveat): In actual life democracies have not been very successful in reducing economic inequalities — a small number of ultra-rich enjoy a disproportionate and rising share of wealth while the poorest have declining

incomes. But this is a failing in practice, not a necessary feature; democracy is based on political equality, which creates the possibility to demand and work towards reduction of inequality.

(iii) Oppose: Poverty reduction, health and education directly affect the well-being and dignity of the majority who are poor and are also voters. Neglecting them for industries and infrastructure alone ignores the basic needs of food, clothing, housing, education and health that many citizens struggle to meet.

(iv) Oppose: One-person-one-vote gives political equality, but it does not by itself remove domination and conflict. No society can fully and permanently resolve conflicts among different groups; democracy only provides a way to respect differences and evolve mechanisms to negotiate them, not to abolish them.

Answer: (i) Oppose — democracy suits poor countries too; (ii) Largely true in practice though democracy still enables reducing inequality; (iii) Oppose — the poor majority need spending on health and education; (iv) Oppose — one vote gives equality but does not end domination and conflict.

## Exercise 17.2 — Challenges to Democracy

Q1 Identify the challenges to democracy in the following descriptions. Also suggest policy/institutional mechanism to deepen democracy in the given situations: (i) Following a High Court directive, a temple in Orissa that had separate entry doors for dalits and non-dalits allowed entry for all from the same door. (ii) A large number of farmers are committing suicide in different states of India. (iii) Following an allegation of killing of three civilians in Gandwara in a fake encounter by Jammu and Kashmir police, an enquiry has been ordered.

SOLUTION

(i) Challenge: Caste-based discrimination and denial of equal dignity to dalits. Mechanism: Strict enforcement of anti-untouchability and equality laws, and social-reform / awareness measures so that equal treatment is practised, not merely ordered by courts.

(ii) Challenge: Economic distress and the failure to reduce inequality and poverty among farmers. Mechanism: Effective welfare and support policies — fair prices, credit and debt relief, crop insurance and rural development — so that economic well-being reaches the poor majority.

(iii) Challenge: Abuse of power by state agencies and violation of citizens' right to life and dignity. Mechanism: Accountability of the police and administration through independent, transparent enquiries, protection of human rights and the rule of law.

Answer: (i) Caste discrimination — enforce equality laws and reform attitudes; (ii) poverty/inequality — effective welfare and farmer-support policy; (iii) abuse of state power — accountable police and independent enquiries upholding rights.

## Exercise 17.3 — Multiple Choice Questions

Q1 In the context of democracies, which of the following ideas is correct — democracies have successfully eliminated: A. conflicts among people B. economic inequalities among people C. differences of opinion about how marginalised sections are to be treated D. the idea of political inequality

SOLUTION

Democracy is founded on political equality — all individuals have equal weight in electing representatives. It has not eliminated social conflicts, economic inequalities or differences of opinion; these persist within democracies.

What democracy has done is establish the idea of political equality and thereby remove the acceptance of political inequality. Hence option D is correct.

Answer: D. the idea of political inequality.

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Q2 In the context of assessing democracy, which among the following is the odd one out. Democracies need to ensure: A. free and fair elections B. dignity of the individual C. majority rule D. equal treatment before law

SOLUTION

Free and fair elections, dignity of the individual and equal treatment before law are values and outcomes democracies must ensure.

Majority rule alone is not a value democracies need to ensure — democracy is not simply rule by majority; the majority must work with the minority. Hence 'majority rule' is the odd one out.

Answer: C. majority rule.

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Q3 Studies on political and social inequalities in democracy show that: A. democracy and development go together. B. inequalities exist in democracies. C. inequalities do not exist under dictatorship. D. dictatorship is better than democracy.

SOLUTION

The chapter shows that within democracies there can be a very high degree of inequalities — a small number of ultra-rich hold a disproportionate share of income while the poorest have declining incomes.

Therefore the correct statement is that inequalities exist in democracies. Option B

is correct.

Answer: B. inequalities exist in democracies.