

Outcomes of Democracy

How do We Assess Democracy's Outcomes?

Democracy is a better form of government than dictatorship in the following respects:

- Promotes equality among citizens.
- Enhances the dignity of the individual.
- Improves the quality of decision making.
- Provides a method to resolve conflicts.
- Allows room to correct mistakes.

Democracy Produces Accountable, Responsive and Legitimate Government

People have the right to choose their rulers and they have control over their rulers. Citizens can participate in decision making. Thus, democracy produces a government that is accountable to the citizens, and responsive to the needs and expectations of the citizens.

Democracy ensures that decision making is based on norms and procedures. So, a citizen who wants to know if a decision was taken through the correct procedures can *find out* this information. Citizens can take part in decision making whenever they want.

A democratic government is the people's own government. People wish to be ruled by representatives elected by them.

Economic Growth and Development

Economic development depends on several factors: the country's population size, global situation, cooperation from other countries, economic priorities adopted by the country, etc. There is a significant difference in the rates of economic growth between countries under dictatorship and democracy. So, democracy is preferred as it has several positive outcomes.

Economic Outcomes of Democracy

The following points show the relationship of democracy with economic growth and economic inequalities.

1. Dictatorial regime has had a slightly better record of economic growth. But when we compare their record only in poor countries, there is virtually no difference.
2. There can be a very high degree of inequalities within democracies.
3. There is often inequality of opportunities available to the poorer sections of the society.

Reduction of Inequality and Poverty

All individuals have equal weight in electing representatives. In the process of bringing individuals into the political arena on an equal footing, we find growing economic inequalities.

- A small number of ultra-rich enjoy a highly disproportionate share of wealth and incomes. Their share in the total income of the country has been increasing.
- Those at the bottom strata of the society have very little to depend upon. Their incomes have been declining.

In actual life, democracies do not appear to be very successful in reducing economic inequalities.

Accommodation of Social Diversity

No society can fully and permanently resolve conflicts among different groups. However, we can learn to respect these differences and we can evolve mechanisms to negotiate the differences. Democracy is best suited to produce this outcome. Ability to handle social differences, divisions and conflicts is a plus point of democratic regimes. But democracy must fulfil 2 conditions in order to achieve this outcome:

1. The majority always needs to work with the minority so that governments function to represent the general view.
2. Rule by majority means that in case of every decision or in case of every election, different persons and groups may and can form a majority.

Dignity and Freedom of the Citizens

Democracy stands much superior to any other form of government in promoting the dignity and freedom of the individual. The passion for respect and freedom are the basis of democracy. Let's take the case of the dignity of women. The long struggles by women have created some sensitivity that respect and equal treatment of women are necessary ingredients of a democratic society. The same is true of caste inequalities. Democracy in India has strengthened the claims of the disadvantaged and discriminated castes for equal status and equal opportunity.

Most individuals today believe that their vote makes a difference to the way the government is run and to their own self-interest. Democratic examination never gets over. As it passes one test, it produces another test. As people get some benefits of democracy, they ask for more and want to make democracy even better. The fact that people are complaining is itself a testimony to the success of democracy.

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

Answer.

The government can be accountable by framing and developing various laws and policies in which citizens can hold the government responsible if any of those policies and laws are not implemented or are held against the welfare of the citizens.

The government can be responsible when people start taking action when the government becomes insensitive about their aspirations. People can hold protests, carry out campaigns and organise rallies and force the government to respond to them. A democratic government is a legitimate government, as it is elected by citizens and enjoys the confidence and trust of the citizens.

2. What are the conditions under which democracies accommodate social diversities?

Answer.

Social diversities can be accommodated by focusing on all the communities of the society. The majority and minority communities should be given equal attention. Democracy is not the rule of the majority. In democratic countries, both the majority and minority work together to achieve progress and development of the nation. It is equally important to understand that the rule of the majority is not expressed in terms of religion or languages. Any person or group may become a majority in a democracy.

3. Give arguments to support or oppose the following assertions:

- a. Industrialised countries can afford democracy but the poor need dictatorship to become rich.
- b. Democracy can't reduce inequality of incomes between different citizens.
- c. The government in poor countries should spend less on poverty reduction, health, education and spend more on industries and infrastructure.

d. In a democracy, all citizens have one vote, which means that there is an absence of any domination and conflict.

Answer.

- a. Industrialised countries can afford democracy, but the poor need dictatorship to become rich – There is no relationship between democracy and the wealth of the nation. The economic development of the nation is dependent upon the resources, the policies and the openness of the government to attract investment. If the dictatorship could have brought wealth in the nation, countries like Nigeria would be having all rich people, which is not the case in reality.
- b. Yes, democracy cannot reduce income inequality as there are sectional communities which have different professions. Income equality is not a value of democracy as democracy brings social and political equality. People have the right to vote and can access fundamental rights, but income is self-generated, and that depends on their ability to work.
- c. The statement is untrue. For any country to be developed, the focus should be on human resources. The country is made up of its people, and if the citizens are uneducated, ill and under-sufficient, the country cannot grow. The human development report in itself judges the development of the country by the education and health of the citizen along with the income. Hence, it is important for a country to invest in health and education infrastructure.
- d. The statement is partly true. Yes, democracy offers one vote to each of its citizens. However, it is not a fool-proof system that does not invite any conflicts. Take the example of India, which has a diverse diaspora. The social divisions in the society are reflected in the form of riots, protests and strikes. Hence, no democracy can eliminate social divisions.

4. Identify the challenges to democracy in the following descriptions. Also, suggest policy/institutional mechanism to deepen democracy in the given situations:

a) 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.

Answer:

The biggest challenge to democracy, in this case, is if such practices continue in the country, there is a threat that discrimination based on caste, colour and creed cannot be eliminated. If people indulge in such practices, legal actions can be taken against them. The Constitution clearly states that discrimination of any kind will be considered a crime and a big threat to the peace of the country. In such cases, serious actions must be taken against the people so that the communal harmony of the country does not get disturbed.

b) A large number of farmers are committing suicide in different states of India.

Answer: A large number of farmers are committing suicides in different states of India because of the economic inequality in the country. Farmers in villages grow crops on a small piece of land, and if the weather conditions do not stay stable, the farmer has to suffer serious loss. He is further unable to repay the loan taken from the moneylender or the bank and gets overburdened by the loan. These cases have increased in the country over the past few years, and the poor farmers take such severe steps like committing suicide. The government should provide these farmers with cheap fertilizers and seeds and provide them with better irrigation methods.

c) Following allegation of killing of three civilians in Gandwara in a fake encounter by Jammu and Kashmir police, an enquiry has been ordered.

Answer: Allegations of killing three civilians in Gandwara by the Jammu and Kashmir police in a fake encounter raises questions on the police force of the state. The challenge here is to control the power of the police and other authoritative officials.

5. 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

Answer.

- D. the idea of political inequality

6. In the context of assessing democracy which among the following is odd one out? Democracies need to ensure:

- A. free and fair elections
- B. the dignity of the individual
- C. majority rule
- D. equal treatment before the law

Answer.

C. Majority rule

7. 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 a dictatorship.
- D. dictatorship is better than democracy.

Answer.

B. inequalities exist in democracies.