

Chapter 7: Outcomes of Democracy

Intext Questions

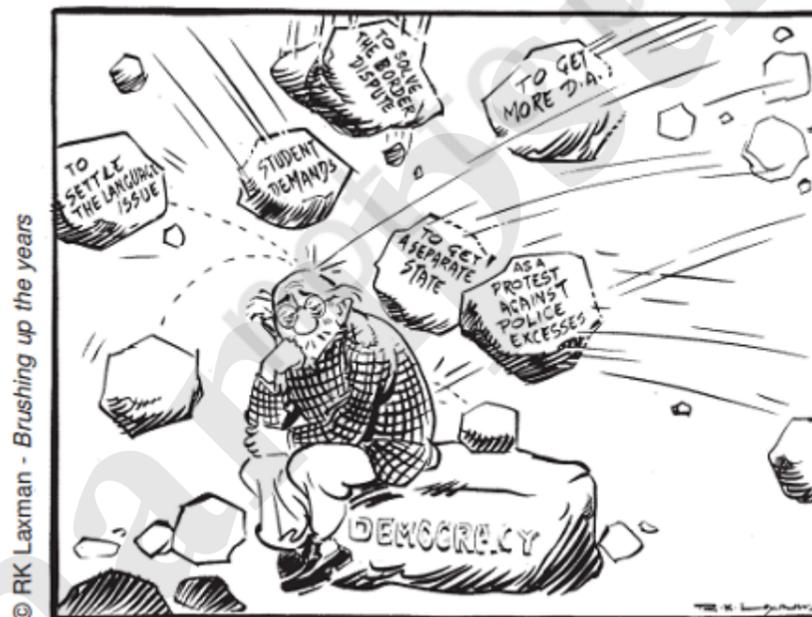
Question 1: Did we reach these conclusions in Madam Lyngdoh's class? I loved that class because students were not being dictated any conclusions.

Answer: We have reached these conclusions but after a heartfelt discussion from both students and teacher side. Students were raised many important questions and Madam makes the classroom itself as a democratic classroom. For every conclusion many arguments were taken and many more examples of different countries were given in madam's class.

Finally the following conclusions were drawn:

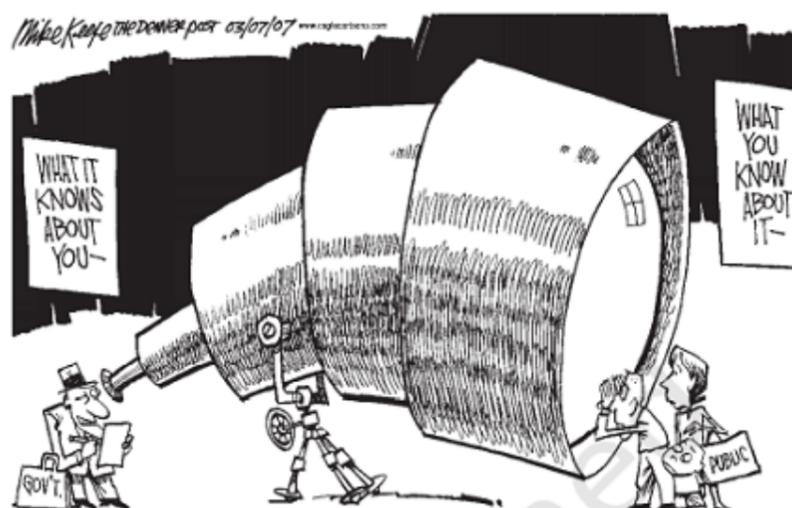
- Promotes equality among citizens;
- Enhances the dignity of the individual;
- Improves the quality of decision making;
- Provides a method to resolve conflicts; and
- Allows room to correct mistakes.

Question 2: Is democracy all about coping with multiple pressures and accommodating diverse demands?



Answer: Even though democracy is accompanied by many pressures and demands from everywhere the decisions are being taken by consensus and all people opinions are also respected. And different regions, religions, castes, beliefs and climates of varying capacity bring different kind of pressures in every current minute. Democracy should answer all these problems to satisfy all sections of people. Still, Democracy is the best form of government for ages. It gives importance to the voice of all sections of society. It pressurizes the sitting government for well being of all people.

Question 3:



A. Can you think of what and how the government knows about you and your family (for example ration cards and voter identity cards)?

Answer: The government knows about me and our family through the following ways:

- Every ten years, the government conducts census. In this census, there are records of each adult member of the family along with his /her sex, age and education.
- There is a provision of registering birth, marriage and death of the family members with the government institutions.

B. What are the sources of information for you about the government?

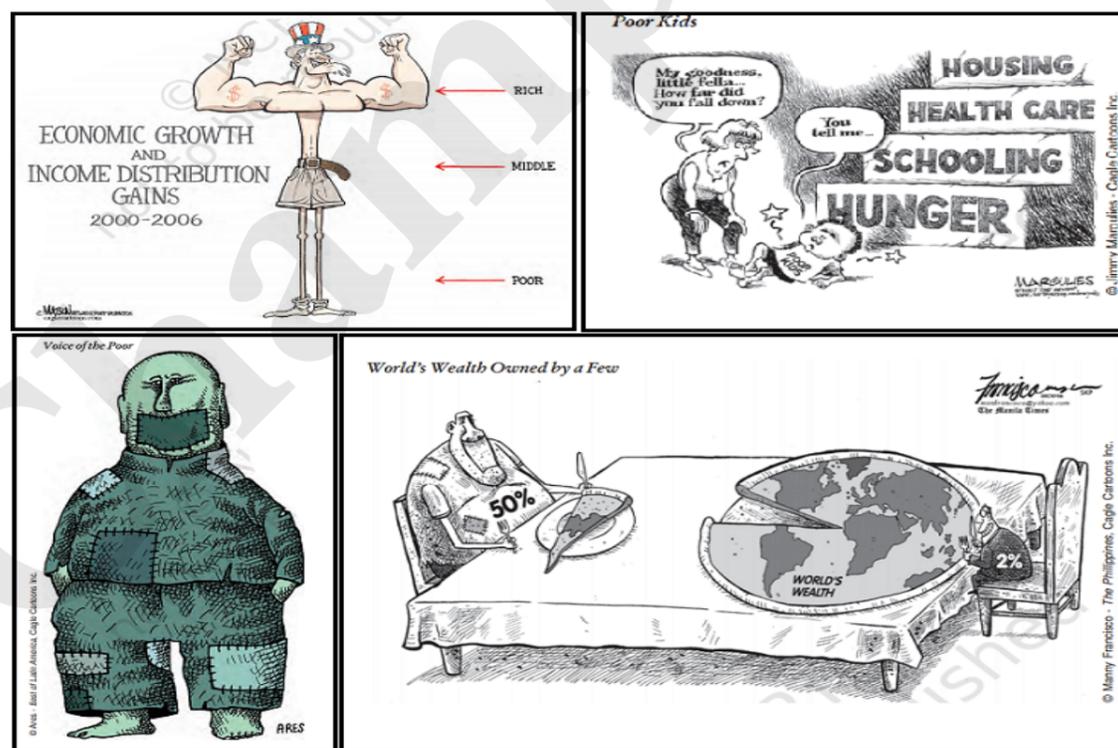
Answer: The sources of information for us about the government are as follows

- Right to information: Each and every citizen has the right to know about the policies and plan of the government and also its working, structure etc.
- Political leaders either local or national are the main sources information to the common people. They make them aware of the policies and decisions taken by the government.

Question 4: So, the best outcome of democracy is that it is a democracy! That is what we have discovered after all this mental gymnastics?

Answer: Democracy is a better form of government when compared to non-democratic form of government. A democratic regime is a legitimate government and is much better than dictatorship. A democratic government provides equal rights to all members of a nation. A democratic government is a transparent government. A democratic government is people's own government hence, improves the quality of decision making.

Question 5: Cartoon on this page and next three pages tell us about the disparities between the rich and poor. Should the gains of economic growth be evenly distributed? How can the poor get a voice for a better share in a nation? What can the poor countries do to receive a greater share in the world's wealth?



Answer:

(i) Of course, the gains of economic growth should be equally distributed among the citizens so as to make an economically even society. Also this would be as per one of the basis causes of democracy i.e., economic justice.

(ii) The poor can get a voice for a better share in a nation only when this group is given proper representation and chances to participate in the decision making.

(iii) The poorer countries should get united to fight for the cause. Only then, they will be able to get their share. At the same time, they will have to take initiatives to strengthen their internal democracy and exploit their own available natural resources.

Question 6: What would be your verdict on democracy if you had to base it purely on economic performance of democratic regimes in terms of growth and equal distribution?

Table 1

Rates of economic growth for different countries, 1950-2000

Type of regimes and countries	Growth Rate
All democratic regimes	3.95
All dictatorial regimes	4.42
Poor countries under dictatorship	4.34
Poor countries under democracy	4.28

Source: A Przeworski, M E Alvarez, J A Cheibub and F Limongi, *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Table 2

Inequality of income in selected countries

Name of the Countries	% share of national income	
	Top 20 %	Bottom 20 %
South Africa	64.8	2.9
Brazil	63.0	2.6
Russia	53.7	4.4
USA	50.0	4.0
United Kingdom	45.0	6.0
Denmark	34.5	9.6
Hungary	34.4	10.0

Answer:

(i) On the basis of economic performance, dictatorial regimes have performed much better in last 50 years. The democratic regimes witnessed 3.95 per cent growth rate on an average while the dictatorial regimes 4.42 per cent.

To our surprise the poor countries under democracy have obtained a better growth rate (4.28 per cent) than all democratic regimes (3.95 per cent). Overall, there is not much difference between the two forms of government so far as economic growth rate is concerned.

The same is true with regard to distribution of national income. For most countries top 20 per cent of their population fetch more than 50 per cent of national income while bottom 20 per cent people have less than 10 per cent share in national income. This shows deep unequal distribution of national income.

(ii) But, democracy has many other positive things that lack in dictatorship or other regimes, so I will go with democracy.

Question 7: Democracy is a rule of the majority. The poor are in majority. So democracy must be a rule of the poor. How can this not be the case?

Answer:

Democracy is a rule of the majority means that rule by majority views. It means that in case of every decision or in case of every election, different persons and groups may and can form majority. So, to say that democracy must be a rule of the poor will give rise to a further division of society on economic lines and lead to conflict. Democracy remains democracy only as long as every citizen has a chance of being in majority at some point of time.

Question 8: All you are saying is that democracy ensures that people do not break each other's head. This is not harmony. Should we be happy about it?

Answer:

When a democracy tries to accommodate social diversity, it does not mean it ensures that people do not break each other's head. In fact, democracy teaches us to respect these differences and evolve mechanisms to negotiate them. We should be happy that we can live together with dignity and freedom, with all our differences only when there is a democratic set up.

Question 9: The two image depict two different kinds of effects democratic politics can have on social divisions. Take one example for each image and write a paragraph each on the outcome of democratic politics in both situations.



(i)



(ii)

Answer:

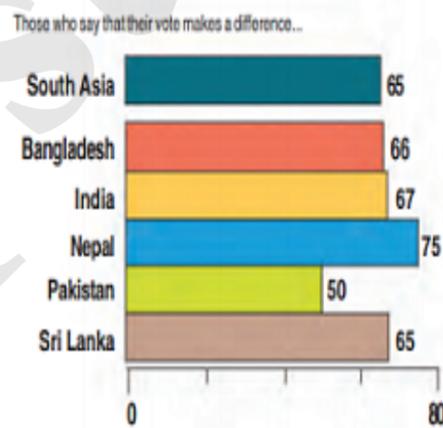
(i) Democratic politics when based on race, religion, caste or any other existing social division further divides the society and leads to bloodshed. This is not healthy for democracy itself.

(ii) On the contrary, when the existing divisions are minimized through democratic means on the basis of moral and prudential reasons, it contributes in the development of each and every class of the society. It makes an environment where people can grow and prosper together.

Question 10: The above cartoon and graph illustrates a point made in this section (Dignity and freedom of the citizens). Underline the sentences from this section which connect to the cartoon or graph.



Belief in the efficacy of vote is placed above the calculus of utility



Source: SDSA Team, *State of Democracy in South Asia*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007.

Answer:

(i) The cartoon relates to inequality that women face today all over the world. This reflects insecurity to women's dignity. The sentences from this section which connect to the cartoon:

- Most societies across the world were historically male dominated societies.
- But once the principle is recognised, it becomes easier for women to wage a struggle against what is now unacceptable legally and morally.

(ii) The graph shows that even after many complaints against it, democracy has been the most acclaimed form of government in the South Asian nations. The sentence from this section which connects to the graph:

- Most individuals today believe that their vote makes a difference to the way the government is run and to their own self-interest.

Exercises

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

Answer: Democracy produces an accountable, responsive and legitimate government in the ways as mentioned below:

(A) Accountability :

In a democracy, government is accountable to its people when decision-making process is based on norms and procedures. A citizen may know about the procedure process followed in the decision-making. It is known as transparency. In India Right to Information is an example of holding government accountable. In non-democratic government there is no such accountability. But whatever be the case it can be said that the democratic governments are better than non-democratic regimes.

(B) Responsive government:

Democratic governments are expected to be attentive to the needs and demands of the people and are largely free of corruption. But there are cases of corruption in democratic countries. At the same time, there is nothing to show that non- democratic government are less corrupt or more sensitive to the people.

(C) Legitimate government :

In this respect democracy is better than other non-democratic governments. It is people's own government. People wish to be ruled by representatives elected by them. They also believe that democracy is suitable for their country.

Thus there is an overwhelming support for the idea of democracy all over the world. In addition to this democracy's ability to generate its own support is itself an outcome that cannot be ignored.

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

Answer: Differences must be respected and there should be mechanism to negotiate differences.

Democracy is best suited to reduce this outcome. Ability to handle social differences, divisions and conflicts is possible only in democracies.

To accommodate social diversities in the ways as mentioned below :

Democracies usually develop a procedure to conduct their competition. The Belgian leaders recognised the existence of regional differences and cultural diversities. For example, the constitution prescribes the number of Dutch and French-speaking ministers shall be equal in the central government as well as Brussel's government.

Differences must be respected and there should be mechanism to negotiate differences. Democracy is best suited to reduce this outcome. Ability to handle social differences, divisions and conflicts is possible only in democracies.

But for this democracy must fulfill two conditions as mentioned below :

- The majority always needs to work with the minority so that governments function to represent the general view.
- Rule by majority should not become rule by majority community in terms of religion, or race or linguistic group. Democracy remains democracy only as long as every citizen has a chance of being in majority at some point of time.

Question 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) Government in poor countries should spend less on poverty reduction, health, education and spend more on industries and infrastructure.

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

Answer:

(a) It is not correct.

A lot of expenditure is incurred on elections in a democracy but regular, fair and free elections make democracy a popular form of government.

Poor need dictatorship to become rich is not correct. For example, in African countries, where military dictatorships have been established, the poor have not become rich.

In Pakistan and Bangladesh too, the condition of the poor is far from satisfactory.

A poor country can be a democratic country such as India where democracy has been successful since its independence.

(b)) It is correct to state that democracy cannot reduce inequality of incomes between different citizens. Democracy provides political equality i.e. right to vote.

Thus in actual life the democracies have not been successful in reducing economic in-equalities. For example in India, the poor constitute a large population of our voters and no party will like to lose their votes. The situation in Bangladesh is more than half of its population lives in poverty. People in several poor countries are now dependent on the rich countries even for food supplies.

(c) I do not agree with the view that the government in poor countries should spend less on poverty reduction, health, education and spend more on industries and infrastructure. The governments should spend more on poverty reduction, health and education due to the reasons as mentioned below :

The poverty eradication programmes help the poor directly. For example poverty alleviation programmes such as NREGA help them directly.

The opening of health centers will enable the poor to get health facilities in their localities. A healthy person can earn more and thus, in turn, will improve their standard of living.

Education too will improve the condition of the poor. An educated person i.e., engineer, doctor, lawyer, IT professional not only can earn more but also help in improving the economy of the country.

On the other hand if more money is spent on industries and infrastructure, it may help the industrialists more than the poor.

(d) It is correct to say that in democracy, all citizens have one vote, which means that there is absence of any domination and conflict. In democracy under universal adult franchise all citizens have right to vote without any discrimination on account of caste, creed and religion. There is no domination of upper class voters over the lower class voters.

Question 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.

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

(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:

(a) The Challenge relates to social diversity because of social divisions in the country. To deepen democracy there should be law banning discrimination on account of caste, religion or other factors.

(b) There is a challenge of poverty. In this situation, the government should set up an organisation to look after the interests of the farmers. They should be given financial help or loans at nominal rate of interest. Irrigation and other facilities should be provided to them.

(c) Dignity and freedom of the citizens has been challenged in the present case.

To avoid such fake encounters there should be transparency in the working of the government departments including police department. The culprits should be punished even if they occupy a higher post in any government department.

Question 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.

Question 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. dignity of the individual,
- C. majority rule.
- D. equal treatment before law.

Answer: (D) equal treatment before law.

Question 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 dictatorship.
- D. dictatorship is better than democracy.

Answer: (B) inequalities exist in democracies.

Question 8: Read the passage below :

Nannu is a daily wage earner. He lives in Welcome Mazdoor Colony, a slum habitation in East Delhi. He lost his ration card and applied for a duplicate one in January 2004. He made several rounds to the local Food and Civil Supplies office for the next three months. But the clerks and officials would not even look at him, leave alone do his job or bother to tell him the status of his application. Ultimately, he filed an application under the Right to Information Act asking for the daily progress made on his application, names of the officials, who were supposed to act on his application and what action would be taken against these officials for their inaction. Within a week of filing application under the Right to Information Act, he was visited by an inspector from the Food Department, who informed him that the card had been made and he could collect it from the office. When Nannu went to collect his card next day, he was given a very warm treatment by the Food and Supply Officer (FSO), who is the head of a Circle. The FSO offered him tea and requested him to withdraw his application under the Right to Information, since his work had already been done.

What does Nannu's example show ? What impact did Nannu's action have on officials ? Ask your parents their experiences when they approach government officials to attend to their problems.

Answer:

(a) Nannu's example shows that ordinary people should be aware of their rights. They should exercise those rights without any fear as has been done by Nannu.

(b) Nannu's action has a significant effect on the officials who not only made his ration card but also offered him a cup of tea at the office of the Food and Supply Officer. He was given proper respect. However, the Food and Supply Officer requested him to withdraw his application because his ration card had been prepared.

(c) My parents also had the same bitter experience when they went to electricity department. The government officials do not bother about the requests of the people. In case of poor and disadvantaged it is much more worse. But now with the introduction of Right to Information, things would change. There will be more efficiency and transparency in the functioning of the government departments.

Champstreet