

19. Democracy - An Evolving Idea

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1. Question

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

Answer

Democracy produces an accountable government: Democracy produces an accountable government because the people have the right to choose their own leaders through the elections. The elected leaders from the government and participate in the decision making progress on behalf of the people. If these representatives do not work in an effective manner the people might not elect them again in the next elections. In this way, they elected representatives are held accountable for the decisions. Democracy produces a responsive government: The leaders in a democratic government are elected by the people and have a responsibility towards them. These leaders promote the acceptance of public opinion and take care of their expectations. Democracy produces a legitimate government: A democratic government is a legitimate government because elections are held at regular intervals. The universal adult franchise allows the people to elect their leaders after every 5 years. The party which has the maximum votes forms the government. If they do not perform according to the expectations of the people, they might lose the next elections.

2. Question

What are the conditions under which democracies accommodate social diversities?

Answer

Every country in the world has certain social diversities, in terms of race, creed, gender, religions etc. Democracy is the most suited form of government to accommodate the social diversities. It ensures equal treatment of all. There are various situations when the democracies accommodate social diversities. a) Democracy is not just a majority rule. It accommodates social diversities when it understands that the rule of the majority is not the rule by a single community or a single religion. b) Democracy must also be able to sort out the differences between the different divisions and conflicts that arise over time. c) Democracy can function most effectively when the majority works with the complete correspondence of the minority. Only then it is a correct representation of the common people.

3. Question

Give arguments to support or oppose the following assertions:

A. Industrialised countries can afford democracy but the poor countries 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 the absence of any domination and conflict.

Answer

A. Industrialized countries can afford democracy but the poor countries need a dictatorship to become rich.

This is an incorrect statement. It is true that the economic growth rate in poor countries under a dictatorship is higher than when ruled under democracy. Yet, we cannot deny the fact that respect and dignity of every person are extremely important. So, poor countries must be allowed to function under a democratic system.

B. Democracy can't reduce inequality of incomes between different citizens.

This is an incorrect statement. Democracy States equality for all. Everyone has an equal set of rights. However the rich enjoy a disproportionate share of income. The rich are becoming richer and the poor are becoming poorer

C. The government in poor countries should spend less on poverty reduction, health, education and spend more on industries and infrastructure.

This statement is incorrect. Income, health, and education are the basic need of every citizen. It is the responsibility of the government to provide adequate and equal access to this everyone. They must prioritize these structures as compared to expenditure on industries and infrastructure.

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

This is an incorrect statement. Every person has only one vote and the people are divided on various grounds. Such kind of division leads to domination and conflict.

4. Question

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 the law

Answer

The correct answer is c) majority rule.

5. Question

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

The correct answer is b. inequalities exist in democracies. A democracy cannot ensure a reduction in inequality that exists between different citizens

6. Question

Here is some information about six countries. Based on this information, how would you classify each of these countries? Write 'democratic', 'undemocratic' or 'not sure' against each of these.

Country A: People who do not accept the country's official religion do not have a right to vote

Country B: The same party has been winning elections for the last twenty years

Country C: Ruling party has lost in the last elections

Country D: The parliament cannot pass a law about the army without the consent of the Chief of Army

Country E: The parliament cannot pass a law reducing the powers of the judiciary

Country F: All the major economic decisions about the country are taken by officials of the central bank which the ministers cannot change.

Answer

Country A: People who do not accept the country's official religion do not have a right to vote

Undemocratic

Country B: The same party has been winning elections for the last twenty years

Not sure

Country C: Ruling party has lost in the last elections

Democratic

Country D: The parliament cannot pass a law about the army without the consent of the Chief of Army

Undemocratic

Country E: The parliament cannot pass a law reducing the powers of the judiciary

Democratic

Country F: All the major economic decisions about the country are taken by officials of the central bank which the ministers cannot change.

Undemocratic

7. Question

Each of these statements contains a democratic and an undemocratic element.

Write out the two separately for each statement.

A. A minister said that some laws have to be passed by the parliament in order to conform to the regulations decided by the World Trade Organisation

B. The Election Commission ordered re-polling in a constituency where large scale rigging was reported

C. Women's representation in the parliament has never reached 10 percent. This led women' organizations to demand one-third seats for women.

Answer

A. A minister said that some laws have to be passed by the parliament in order to conform to the regulations decided by the World Trade Organisation

DEMOCRATIC: The Parliament passes the law.

UNDEMOCRATIC: The regulations are decided by the WTO.

B. The Election Commission ordered re-polling in a constituency where large scale rigging was reported.

DEMOCRATIC: The order of re-polling by the Election Commission

UNDEMOCRATIC: A large-scale rigging is reported.

C. Women's representation in the parliament has never reached 10 percent. This led women' organizations to demand one-third seats for women.

DEMOCRATIC: Women organizations have demanded one-third seats for women

UNDEMOCRATIC:C. Women's representation in parliament has never reached 10%.

8. Question

Write a response to the following arguments against democracy:

A. The army is the most disciplined and corruption-free organization in the country.

Therefore the army should rule the country.

B. Rule of the majority means the rule of ignorant people. What we need is the rule of the wise, even if they are in small numbers.

C. If we want religious leaders to guide us in spiritual matters, why not invite them to guide us in politics as well. The country should be ruled by religious leaders.

Answer

A. The army is the most disciplined and corruption-free organization in the country.

Therefore the army should rule the country.

Although the army is the most disciplined and corruption free organization in the country. It should not be allowed to rule over the country. Firstly it is not elected by the people. Secondly, the people will not have the right to voice their opinion over the fundamental rights. Finally, there is no guarantee that the army would not turn into a dictator.

B. Rule of the majority means the rule of ignorant people. What we need is the rule of the wise, even if they are in small numbers.

Democracy is based on the idea of a Universal adult franchise. According to this, every person above 18 years in our country has the right to vote irrespective of religion, caste, gender etc. Everyone has an equal right to decide the formation of the government. So we cannot ignore certain sections of society.C. If we want religious leaders to guide us in spiritual matters, why not invite them to guide us in politics as well. The country should be ruled by religious leaders.

Bringing religion into politics is not a wise choice. India is a multi-religious country. If the religious leaders are elected as political leaders as well, it might create a serious situation of conflict due to the difference in their ideology. Most of them do not have any experience in matters related to political administration.

9. Question

Locate the following countries in the world map.

Answer

1. Srilanka 2. Belgium 3. Russia 4. America (USA)

10. Question

Read the first two paragraphs under the subheading 'Dignity and freedom of the citizens' and answer the following question.

Write about the dignity and freedom of the citizens in a democratic country.

Answer

Democracy promotes dignity and freedom of citizens in the following manner:A) A democratic government is setup on the principle of Universal adult franchise. According to this principle, every individual who is has attained the age of 18 years has the right to vote irrespective of their caste, religion, gender etc.B) Democracy helps to transform the status of the people as proper citizens with certain fundamental rights and duties. Prior to democracy, the people were considered as subjects of a king or Dictator.C) Democracy has also brought to the notice the disadvantages that are faced by the minority groups. It is now being ensured that the minority section such as the scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, and other backward sections are given proper attention and their problems are resolved immediately.D) Democracy has ensured that equal treatment is being given to womenThus, we can say that democracy is an efficient form of government because it is based on the principle of equality. Every individual wants to receive a certain level of respect. When these individuals are not treated with the due respect it creates conflicts. Democracy ensures a reduction in discrimination and atrocities over the country and also strives to help the disadvantaged sections of society.

11. Question

What are the reasons for people to fight for democracy?

Answer

Democracy is derived from the Greek word 'demos' which means common people and 'Kratos' which means strength. A democratic government is a government in which the people choose their leaders by electing them directly. The party which receives the maximum votes wins the elections. They form the government and represent the people of the country. However, in recent years it is observed that people have to fight for democracy. This is due to various reasons:1. The role of anti-social elements has been on a continuous rise. The people are forced or bribed to vote for one particular candidate. Whether or not he is capable of being the leader of the people is not regarded. Rigging has also been a major concern.2. The economic and social inequalities among the people are also increasing. Although everyone has the right to vote it is only the rich section of the society who have a chance to win the elections.3. In many democracies, the political leaders are

dishonest, corrupted and inefficient. They are often involved in cases of bribery and rigging of elections. They do not have any trust on the part of the citizens and eventually, the country's democracy suffers.⁴ During elections, it is observed that the people give more importance to the caste and religion of the candidate. The political parties also consider this factor while distributing the ticket for election. If any representative is elected on this basis, there is a high possibility that he might work for the welfare of the people belonging to his own caste or religion.

Thus, the people have to fight for their democracy.

12. Question

Give some example which proves that democracy is practiced in our schools.

Answer

Democracy means a system where people have the authority of choosing the government.

The features of democracy are equality, active participation of citizens, providing civil liberties, free and fair election, equal say of even minority groups.

- a. At schools, students are taught to be in harmony and participate in organizations.
- b. Schools help in developing civic responsibilities in the students.
- c. Thoughts like equality, non-discrimination are fostered among students through schools only.