

What is Democracy? Why Democracy

Q1. Here is some information about four countries. Based on this information, how would you classify each of these countries? Write ‘democratic’, or ‘undemocratic’ or ‘not sure’ against each of these.

- a. Country A: People who do not accept the country’s official religion do not have a right to vote.**
- b. Country B: The same party has been winning elections for the last twenty years.**
- c. Country C: Ruling party has lost in the last three elections.**
- d. Country D: There is no independent Election Commission.**

Ans. (a) Not Sure, (b) Undemocratic (c) Democratic (d) Undemocratic

Q2. Here is some information about four countries. Based on this information, how would you classify each of these countries? Write ‘democratic’, ‘undemocratic’ or ‘not sure’ against each of these.

- (a) Country P: The parliament cannot pass a law about the army without the consent of the Chief of Army.**
- (b) Country Q: The parliament cannot pass a law reducing the powers of the judiciary.**
- (c) Country R: The country’s leaders cannot sign any treaty with another country without taking permission from its neighbouring country.**
- (d) Country S: All the major economic decisions about the country are taken by officials of the central bank which the ministers cannot change.**

Ans. (a) Undemocratic (b) Democratic (c) Undemocratic (d) Undemocratic

Q3. Which of these is not a good argument in favour of democracy? Why?

- (a) People feel free and equal in a democracy.**
- (b) Democracies resolve conflict in a better way than others.**
- (c) Democratic government is more accountable to the people.**
- (d) Democracies are more prosperous than others.**

Ans. (d) “Democracies are more prosperous than others.” This argument is not in favour of democracy. Because in democratic countries, the poor and the rich all are living and all of them have a say, because their representatives make decisions according to their welfare and benefit. The representatives also feel that they will be chosen according to their work. So they also remain in the grip of fear. So they work hard.

Q4. Each of these statements contain 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 confirm to the regulations decided by the World Trade Organisation.
- (b) The Election Commission ordered repelling in a constituency where large scale rigging was reported.
- (c) Women's representation in the parliament has never reached 10 percent. This led women's organizations to demand one-third seats for women.

Ans. (a) Undemocratic (b) Democratic (c) Democratic

Q5. Which of these is not a valid reason for arguing that there is a lesser possibility of famine in a democratic country?

- (a) Opposition parties can draw attention to hunger and starvation.
- (b) Free press can report suffering from famine in different parts of the country.
- (c) Government fears its defeat in the next elections.
- (d) People are free to believe in and practice any religion.

Ans (d) People are free to believe in and practice any religion.

Q6. There are 40 villages in a district where the government has made no provision for drinking water. These villagers met and considered many methods of forcing the government to respond to their need. Which of these is not a democratic method?

- (a) Filing a case in the counts claiming that water is part of right to life.
- (b) Boycotting the next elections to give a message to all parties.
- (c) Organizing public meetings against government's policies.
- (d) Paying money to government official to get water.

Ans. (d) Paying money to government official to get water.

Q7. Write a response to the following arguments against democracy:

- (a) Army is the most disciplined and corruption-free organization in 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.

Ans

- (a) Army should not rule the country of being disciplined and corruption free because the army don't present the will of the people of the country.

- (b) We don't need the rule of wise in democracy if they are in small numbers because in democracy those should rule who represent the majority. Rule of majority does not mean the rule of ignorant people.
- (c) The country should not be ruled by religious leaders in democracy because religion is matter of personal belief and faith in a supernatural power. Whereas democracy is totally based on the need and problems of man.

Q8. Are the following statements in keeping with democracy as a value? Why?

- (a) **Father to daughter: I don't want to hear your opinion about your marriage. In our family children marry where the parents tell them to.**
- (b) **Teacher to student: Don't disturb my concentration by asking me questions in the classroom**
- (c) **Employee to the officer; Our working hours must be reduced according to the law.**

Ans.

- (a) The statement does not have democratic value, instead it has the elements of dictatorship of father. Because in democracy everyone has the right to freedom of thought, opinion and to marry anyone he/she like.
- (b) No, the statement does not keep the democratic value, because in a broader sense the students have the right to ask any question to the teacher related to the subject.
- (c) Yes, the statement keeps the democratic value, because in working hours are divided by the law of country made by the people's representatives in parliament.

Q9. Consider the following facts about a country and decide if you would call it a democracy. Give reasons to support your decision.

- (a) **All the citizens of the country have right to vote. Elections are held regularly.**
- (b) **The country took loan from international agencies. One of the conditions for giving loan was that the government would reduce its expenses on education and health.**
- (c) **People speak more than seven languages but education is available only in one language, the language spoken by 52 percent people of that country.**
- (d) **Several organizations have given a call for peaceful demonstrations and nation wide strikes in the country to oppose these policies. Government has arrested these leaders.**
- (e) **The government owns the radio and television in the country. All the newspapers have to get permission from the government's policies and protests.**

Ans.

- (a) In a democratic country every man has right to vote.

- (b) Education and health expenditure cannot be reduced in a democratic country.
- (c) In a democratic country it cannot be done, beyond its resources.
- (d) In a democratic country it happens occasionally.
- (e) This is not democratic because freedom of press is must.

Q10. In 2004 a report published in USA pointed to the increasing inequalities in that country. Inequalities in income reflected in the participation of people in democracy. It also shaped their abilities to influence the decisions taken by the government. The report highlighted that:

Ans.

- If an average Black family earns \$100 then the income of average White family is \$162. A white family has twelve times more wealth than the average Black family.
- In a President's election, nearly nine out of 10 individuals in families with income over \$75,000 have voted. These people are the top 20% of the population in terms of their income. On the other hand only 5 people out of 10 from families with income less than \$ 15,000 have voted. They are the bottom 20% of the population in terms of their income.
- About 95% contribution to the political parties comes from the rich. This gives them opportunity to express their opinion and concern, which is not available to most citizens.
- As poor sections participate less in politics, the government does not listen to their concerns – coming out of poverty, getting job, education, health care and housing from them. Politicians hear most regularly about the concerns of business and the richest.

Q11. Write an essay on 'Democracy and Poverty' using the information given in this report but using examples from Indian.

Ans. It is right that there is a fight between the have and have nots. The facts mentioned in the report of 2004 in USA clearly indicate that rich people are more influencing than the poor. They are the decision makers. All the policies are set by their representative. Poor people have no say. It may be considered undemocratic but we must see the facts mentioned in the report. In the Indian democracy we can see easily that common man cannot contest election at his own expenses. The grass root poor people are working day and night for their livelihood. They have to fight with hunger not the government or any of its policy.