

Revision Notes
Chapter - 7
Outcomes of Democracy

Overview

1. We begin by thinking about how to access the outcomes of democracy.
2. After some clarity on how to think on this subject, we proceed to look at the expected and actual outcomes of democracy in various respects.
3. Our final verdict – positive but qualified.

How do we access democracy's outcomes?

1. Democracy is the better form of government when compared with dictatorship or any other alternative.
2. We felt that democracy was better because of it:
 - I) Promotes equality among citizens;
 - II) Enhances the dignity of the individual;
 - III) Improves the quality of decision – making;
 - IV) Provides a method to resolve conflicts; and
 - V) Allows room to correct mistakes.
3. We face a dilemma: democracy is seen to be good in principle but felt to be not so good in its practice.
4. This dilemma invites us to think hard about the outcomes of the democracy.
5. Our interest in and fascination for democracy often push us into taking a position that democracy can address all socio-economic and political problems.
6. The first step towards thinking carefully about the outcomes of democracy is to recognise that democracy is just a form of government.

Accountable, responsive and legitimate government:

1. The most basic outcome of democracy should be that it produces a government that is accountable to the citizens, and responsive to the needs and expectations of the citizens.
2. Democracy is based on the idea of deliberation and negotiation.

3. Democracy ensures that decision-making will be based on norms and procedures.
4. The right and the means to examine the process of decision-making known as transparency.
5. Democratic governments do not have a very good record when it comes to sharing information with citizens.
6. In substantive terms, it may be reasonable to expect from democracy a government that is attentive to the needs and demands of the people and is largely free to corruption.
7. The record of democracies is not impressive on these two counts.
8. There is one respect in which democratic government is certainly better than its alternatives: the democratic government is the legitimate government.
9. People wish to be ruled by representatives elected by them. They also believe that democracy is suitable for their country.

Economic growth and development:

1. The inability of democracy to achieve higher economic development worries us. But this alone cannot be the reason to reject democracy.
2. The difference in the rates of economic development between less developed countries with dictatorships and democracies is negligible.
3. We cannot say that democracy is a guarantee of economic development.
4. But we can expect democracy not to lag behind dictatorships in this respect.

Reduction of inequality and poverty:

1. Perhaps more than development, it is reasonable to expect democracies to reduce economic disparities.
2. A small number of ultra-rich enjoy a highly disproportionate share of wealth and incomes.
3. Not only that, their share in the total income of the country has been increasing.
4. In actual life, democracies do not appear to be very successful in reducing economic inequalities.

Accommodation of social diversity:

1. It will be fair expectation that democracy should produce a harmonious social life.
2. Ability to handle social differences, divisions, and conflicts is thus a definite plus point of

democratic regimes.

3. Two conditions in order to achieve the outcome:

I) It is necessary to understand that democracy is not simply rule by majority opinion.

II) It is also necessary that rule by the majority does not become rule by majority community in terms of religion or race or linguistic groups.

Dignity and freedom of the citizens:

1. Democracy stands much superior to any other form of government in promoting dignity and freedom of the individual.

2. The passion for respect and freedom are the basis of democracy.

3. This has been achieved in various degrees in various democracies.

4. Most societies across the world were historically male dominated societies.

5. Long struggles by women have created some sensitivity today that respect to and equal treatment of women are necessary ingredients of a democratic society.

6. Democracy in India has strengthened the claims of the disadvantaged and discriminated castes for equal status and equal opportunity.

7. Expectations from democracy also function as the criteria for judging and democratic country.

8. As people get some benefits of democracy, they ask for more and want to make democracy even better.

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