



INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES KOLKATA UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA



PhD in Development Studies (2021)

Entrance Test

1. Read the following excerpt, and based on your understanding answer the questions that follow: [30 marks]

Deliberation is the process by which a group of people can—through discussion and debate—reach an agreement. Ideally, agreement is achieved by both persuading people of a different way of thinking (usually by changing their preferences) and engaging in a process of reasoned compromise. Agreement is rooted in the perceived legitimacy of the process. When it is effective, deliberation can be transformative, empowering poor communities, enhancing the capacity for collective action, and harnessing the capacity of communities to manage their own affairs. There are two broad types of deliberation: formal deliberation, in which the process is deliberative but the final outcome may rest on a vote or negotiation, and substantive deliberation, in which the outcome directly reflects deliberation. In principle, deliberation can be part of any decision-making process, but in development policy circles it has generally been thought of in the context of local participatory development, where deliberative elements are in principle incorporated within a system of community management and control. The record of local participation in development projects has been mixed, largely because such projects, induced as they are from the outside through donor-funded projects, have generally failed to tackle the challenges of high inequality and low capabilities, which make deliberation difficult. The problem is one not simply of inequalities but also of outright exclusion. Exclusion can take the form of categorical exclusions enforced through coercive societal practices such as untouchability, racism, and much more insidious processes of rendering subalterns invisible, delegitimizing their claims, or creating a general environment in which their voices are not only not heard but systematically disparaged. Moreover, one needs to recognize the importance of discourse as power, particularly in thinking about theories of deliberation, where the idea of free and open communication is central. If discourses are constituted within a “regime of truth” that legitimizes, values, and rewards certain forms of speech while delegitimizing others, then discourse itself becomes an instrument of power. Through much of the postwar period, definitions of collective decision making were associated with the Schumpeterian notion of “representative democracy,” which focuses on the simple and elegant notion of representation through competitive elections and rests on the idea that democracy is fundamentally about

aggregating heterogeneous preferences. In contrast, the idea of deliberation, which harks back to classic normative conceptions of democracy, derives from the premise that democracy revolves around the transformation rather than simply the aggregation of preferences. The complex coordination problems of modern societies need not be resolved only through the instrumental-strategic forms of action that steer the market economy and the rational-legal-bureaucratic state. At the heart of deliberative theory is the claim that rational agreement based on the giving of public reasons can also be the basis of social action. In a democracy, the poor have three possible levers of empowerment: voting, bargaining, and arguing. Voting can and has been a source of empowerment for lower-class and marginalized groups, but this empowerment effect has been effective only after a long process of actively forming collective interests. More generally, voting tends to simply lock in existing preferences. By taking existing or minimally corrected preferences as given, as the base line for collective decisions, the aggregative conception fundamentally accepts and may even reinforce distributions of power in society.

- a) Can deliberation be always transformative? 5
- b) What are the shortcomings of thinking of deliberation in the context of local development? 5
- c) What is your understanding of the distinction between inequality and exclusion? 5
- d) How has the idea of collective decision making evolved in the postwar period, according to the author? 5
- e) What are the limitations of voting as a lever of empowerment of the poor? 5
- f) What do you understand by 'discourse as power'? 5

1. Write approximately 500 words on **any one** of the following:

- a) Who is your neighbour? Humanity and Proximity
- b) Should we all be feminists?
- c) Should scientific knowledge be a subject of public debate?
- d) COVID-19 vaccine policy and politics
- e) Those contesting elections in India must have a minimum level of formal education – Do you agree?

3. Based on the information in the following table, answer if the following statements are '**true**' or '**false**' or '**cannot be answered without additional information**'. Explain your answers in one or two sentences. 5x4 = 20 marks

Statistical Profile of Persons with Disability: West Bengal (all figures are given in %)

	Rural			Rural + Urban		
	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person
Person with any type of disability	2.6	1.8	2.2	2.5	1.8	2.1
Person with Locomotor Disability	1.4	0.9	1.2	1.4	0.9	1.2
Literacy rate of persons of age 7 years and above with disability	58.6	38.2	50.2	63.5	44.7	55.8
Persons of age 15 years and above with disability having highest level of completed education secondary and above	14.9	6.8	11.6	20.2	11.1	16.6

Source: NSS Report No. 583: Persons with Disabilities in India- A Statistical Profile: 2021

- a) The number of persons with locomotor disability is the same in rural and urban West Bengal.
- b) The proportion of persons with visual and hearing disabilities is greater than the proportion of persons with locomotor disability in West Bengal.
- c) The proportion of persons with disability who have completed at least primary education is higher in urban West Bengal than that in rural West Bengal.
- d) The literacy rate among disabled females is much lower than the overall literacy rate for females in rural West Bengal.

4. Based on the information in the following table, answer if the following statements are 'true' or 'false' or 'cannot be answered without additional information'. Explain your answers in one or two sentences. 5x4 = 20 marks

Selected Key Indicators (all figures are given in %)

	Kerala	West Bengal	Bihar
Women who have ever used the internet	61.1	25.5	20.6
Men who have ever used the internet	76.1	46.7	43.6
Households with any usual member covered under a health insurance/financing scheme	51.5	29.3	14.6
Children with diarrhoea in the 2 weeks preceding the survey who received oral rehydration salts (ORS)	61.1	75.2	58.2
Children with fever or symptoms of ARI in the 2 weeks preceding the survey taken to a health facility or health provider	86.2	71.3	69.4

Source: State Fact Sheets, National Family Health Survey, Round 5 (2019-20)

- a) Access to the internet improves healthcare seeking for childhood illnesses.
- b) More children suffer from acute respiratory infection than diarrhoea in Bihar.
- c) The percentage of women who have ever used the internet in Kerala and Bihar taken together (the combined average) is greater than the percentage of women who have ever used the internet in West Bengal.
- d) The percentage of women who have ever used the internet in West Bengal and Bihar taken together (the combined average) is greater than the percentage of women who have ever used the internet in Kerala.