Democracy, often hailed as the most equitable form of governance, is a system where power ultimately rests in the hands of the people. The word itself derives from the Greek words 'demos' meaning 'people' and 'kratos' meaning 'power' or 'rule'. Democracy aims to provide equal political participation and protect the individual freedoms of all citizens. However, while the ideal of democracy is simple, its practice is frequently complex and fraught with challenges. At its core, democracy functions on the principle of majority rule, yet it simultaneously guarantees the protection of minority rights. This balance ensures that while the majority has the power to make decisions through voting, the fundamental rights of minorities are not trampled upon. Such a system requires consistent vigilance and respect for the rule of law. Without these, democracies can devolve into majoritarian tyranny or authoritarianism. The practice of democracy is not merely limited to voting in elections. It encompasses freedom of speech, an independent judiciary, free press, and protection of individual rights. These elements together create a political environment where citizens can express dissent, hold leaders accountable, and participate actively in decision-making. When any one component is weakened, the democratic process becomes vulnerable. In recent times, democracies worldwide have grappled with new challenges. The rise of misinformation and 'fake news' has eroded public trust in institutions and polarized societies. Social media platforms, meant to facilitate communication, have sometimes amplified divisive narratives and falsehoods. This has resulted in voter manipulation and a growing skepticism towards democratic processes. Literacy in media and critical thinking is increasingly vital to safeguard democracy from such threats. Economic inequality poses another significant challenge. While democracies promise equal rights politically, vast disparities in wealth and opportunity undermine this ideal. Economic power often translates into political influence, skewing representation and policy-making. This phenomenon raises questions about whether true democracy is achievable without addressing socioeconomic inequalities. Furthermore, the involvement of citizens is crucial. Democracy thrives when people are informed, engaged, and willing to participate beyond just casting votes. Civic education and awareness campaigns play an essential role in nurturing responsible citizenship. Apathetic or disengaged electorates weaken the democratic fabric, opening avenues for corruption and authoritarian tendencies. In conclusion, democracy is a dynamic and evolving system that requires constant effort to sustain. It is a system built on ideals of equality, freedom, and justice but challenged by human complexities and contemporary issues, The survival of democracy depends on the collective responsibility of governments and citizens to protect its pillars and ensure inclusive, fair governance.

1. In the context of the above passage consider the following statements, and select the appropriate option: Statement 1: Voting is the only element of democracy. Statement 2: Freedom of speech and an independent judiciary are essential for democracy.

(a) Both statements are true and 2 is the correct explanation of 1.

(b) Both statements are true and 2 is not the correct explanation of 1.

(c) Statement 1 is false, but statement 2 is true.

(d) Statement 1 is true, but statement 2 is false.

In recent years, urban gardening has emerged as a widespread movement in cities across the globe. Prompted by increasing concerns surrounding food security, sustainability, and mental well-being, urban dwellers are reimagining their limited spaces including balconies, rooftops, alleyways, and windowsills, as viable sites for food cultivation. At the heart of this shift lies the desire for fresh, organic produce, especially in cities where access to pesticide-free food remains both costly and inconsistent. By growing

their own fruits, vegetables, and herbs, individuals can reduce their dependence on commercial supply chains, which often entail extensive transportation, energy consumption, and synthetic chemical use. This not only empowers consumers to take control of their dietary choices but also enhances awareness about nutrition, food origins, and environmental impact. Urban gardening is also lauded for its ecological contributions. Plants in urban environments combat the urban heat island effect, a condition where metropolitan areas are significantly warmer than their rural counterparts due to concentrated human activity and infrastructure. Vegetation improves air quality by absorbing carbon dioxide and releasing oxygen, while also managing rainwater runoff and reducing pressure on often-overburdened drainage systems. Yet, the advantages of urban gardening extend beyond the tangible. On a psychological level, cultivating plants offers therapeutic benefits, including reduced stress, improved mood, and greater mindfulness. In the high-speed urban landscape, tending to a plant provides a rare opportunity to engage with nature, fostering patience and a sense of achievement. For many, these small pockets of greenery represent not just a practical solution but an emotional and symbolic reclamation of space and agency. However, urban gardening is not without its limitations. Scarcity of space, inadequate sunlight, and poor soil quality pose significant hurdles. In response, gardeners have turned to innovative methods such as vertical farming, hydroponics, and compost enrichment. Moreover, community gardens in shared spaces have flourished, enabling collective effort, resource sharing, and social cohesion. While urban gardening may not supplant industrial agriculture, it marks a meaningful shift toward more localized, responsible, and connected living, an act as much philosophical as it is practical.

2. Which of the following is NOT identified in the passage as a practical challenge faced by urban gardeners?

(a) The lack of organized communal support for local gardening efforts
(b) Inadequate access to direct sunlight in densely built environments
(c) Spatial constraints that limit the scale of cultivation in cities
(d) Soil conditions that are unsuitable for traditional planting methods

I have still to be brother to a Prince, though I once came near to kinship with what might have been a veritable King, and was promised the reversion of a Kingdom, army, law-courts, revenue and policy, all complete. But, today, I greatly fear that my King is dead, and if I want a crown I must go and hunt it for myself. The beginning of everything was in a railway train upon the road to Mhow from Ajmir. There had been a deficit in the Budget, which necessitated travelling, not Second class, which is only half as dear as First class, but by Intermediate, which is very awful indeed. There are no cushions in the Intermediate class, and the population is either Intermediate, which is Eurasian, or native, which for a long night journey is nasty; or Loafer, which is amusing though intoxicated. Intermediates do not patronize refreshment rooms. They carry their food in bundles and pots, and buy sweets from the native sweet meat sellers, and drink the roadside water. That is why in the hot weather Intermediates are taken out of the carriages dead, and in all weathers are most properly looked down upon. My particular Intermediate happened to be empty till I reached Nasirabad, when a huge gentleman in shirt sleeves entered, and, following the custom of Intermediates, passed the time of day. He was a wanderer and a vagabond like myself, but with an educated taste for alcohol. He told daring tales of things he had seen and done, of out of the way corners of the Empire into which he had penetrated, and of adventures in which he risked his life for a few days' food. "If India was filled with men like you and me, not knowing more than the crows where they'd get their next day's rations, it isn't seventy millions of revenue the land would be paying, it's seven hundred million," said he; and as I looked at his mouth and chin I was disposed to

agree with him. We talked politics, the politics of Loaferdom that sees things from the underside where the lath and plaster is not smoothed off, and we talked postal arrangements because my friend wanted to send a telegram back from the next station to Ajmir, which is the turning off place from the Bombay to the Mhow line as you travel westward. He had the air of one who had seen strange countries and stranger men, yet bore himself without vanity, There was a restless light in his eyes, the sort that belongs to men who have lived too long without a fixed purpose. When he spoke of the Empire, it was not with loyalty nor with bitterness, but with the detached amusement of one who has played his part and lost interest in the game. His laughter came easily, though it seemed to echo from some remembered hardship. It struck me then that his stories were less of adventure than of survival.

3. What does the phrase ‘looked at his mouth and chin’ suggest in context?

(a) He was assessing his character for trustworthiness.
(b) He was noticing his facial features.
(c) He was judging the man's cleanliness.
(d) He found him good looking and decent.

the following questions by choosing the most appropriate answer. The past century has drastically changed the concept of community, no matter if you live in a rural area, a suburban neighbourhood, or an urban metropolis. Families no longer co-habitat as intergenerationally as they once did, especially as the appeal of the nuclear family began to increase. The move from rural living to urban lifestyles to suburbia and then back to city-life has meant that extended families often fracture and live further and further apart. We are often caught up in the reality of constant "busy-ness" that we don't take the time to get to know our neighbours. And social media has redefined "connection" and "friendship," leaving us staring at screens more than engaging with the people around us. The impact of this is apparent on parents and children. The adage "it takes a village to raise a child" is absolutely still true. But somewhere along the way, we've lost the "village" we need to raise kids in nurturing, creative, and safe ways. And as a result, families are missing out on crucial learning experiences and much needed support systems. In the end, many parents feel isolated and alone in their struggles, and kids don't have the opportunity to engage with a diverse group of people and personalities.

4. Statement 1: People are available to raise other people's children. Statement 2: The nature of communities has undergone tremendous transformation regardless of their location. Choose the most appropriate answer.

(a) Both statements are true and 2 is the correct explanation of 1.
(b) Both statements are true but 2 is not the correct explanation of 1.
(c) Statement 1 is true but statement 2 is false.
(d) Statement 1 is false but statement 2 is true.

the following questions by choosing the most appropriate answer. In recent years, electric vehicles (EVs) have emerged as a catalyst for change, not only in terms of sustainable transportation but also in empowering individuals to become micro-entrepreneurs. Particularly in Tier 2 markets, where access to traditional job opportunities may be limited, EVs have opened up new avenues for women to assert their economic independence and contribute significantly to household income. According to our data, an inspiring 25% of women in these markets have embraced the EV platform as a means to earn their livelihoods. Electric vehicles, be it e-rickshaws, e-carts, or e-bikes, offer an affordable and eco-friendly

mode of transportation that can be easily adopted by individuals. This has allowed women to enter various service sectors like last-mile delivery, transportation, and local commuting, empowering them to generate income and uplift their communities.

5. Statement 1: EVs are extremely versatile and have a wider range to offer. Statement 2: More women than men have bought EVs. Choose the most appropriate answer.

(a) Both statements are true and 2 is the correct explanation of 1.

(b) Both statements are true but 2 is not the correct explanation of 1.

(c) Statement 1 is true but statement 2 is false.

(d) Statement 1 is false but statement 2 is true.

Answer Key

1. C	2. A	3. A	4. D	5. C