



Research Paper

Indian Democracy and Challenges – A Critic

Dr .NAGESHA K L

Lecturer in Political Science

Government Pre-University College, Lakshmipura, Ramanagar-District, Karnataka.

ABSTRACT:

India is a proud country as it is recognized for having the largest democracy in the world. India achieved the status of being a democratic nation post its independence in 1947. Thereafter, the citizens of India were given the right to vote and to elect their leaders. Indian Constitution guarantees its citizens the right to vote irrespective of their caste, color, creed, religion, and gender. It has five democratic principles – sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic, and republic. Mere participation in elections by citizens of a country is not enough in a democracy. Citizens have to make efforts to make the system of democracy responsible and responsive. The citizens must make the Parliamentarians, Members of State Legislature, and their representatives in Panchayati Raj and Municipal Institutions accountable for their actions. This paper study on It means democracy is not limited to just a process of election, but also fulfilling social and economic aspirations of the people. In India we keep on debating these various aspects of democracy and its achievements and challenges. For a better understanding of the same, we discuss this in this lesson.

Received 22 May, 2024; Revised 02 June, 2024; Accepted 04 June, 2024 © The author(s) 2024.

Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

OBJECTIVES:

- understand the meaning of democracy in its different aspects;
- I appreciates the introduction and development of democracy in India;
- I identifies major problems and challenges being faced by Indian democracy;
- I explains the roles of citizens in making an efficient and successful democracy.

I. INTRODUCTION:

The word Democracy is derived from the Greek term 'Demokratia' which means Rule of the people. It can be further sub-divided into two words: Demosmos and Kratos, which means people and power respectively. It is especially a form of government either directly or through elected representatives of the people. It is a government under the direct or representative rule of the people of its jurisdiction. Democracy from its origin in Greece to present as adopted itself to many changes. In Modern days when it was adopted by the western countries, scholars discussed about social, economic, and political pre-requisites essential for the success of democracy. But, Indian experiment proved this notion wrong as it could successfully experiment with democracy without meeting any of these pre requisites essential for democracy. So, this paper tries to understand the basic questions about Indian democracy. The democratic system has to have universal adult franchise as the basis of electing representatives at various levels of the government. Moreover, opportunities for political participation of all the citizens not only in elections at regular interval, but also in other aspects of the political process have to be made available. There has to be a responsible government in which the executive is answerable to the legislature, the legislature to the people and the Judiciary to remain independent. Political institutions like political parties and interest and pressure groups (associations, various non-governmental organizations) must be functional for expressing popular needs, demands and grievances. A democratic system is strengthened if it maintains an enlightened public opinion in its various forms through free press and other communication processes. Political democracy is thus one which incorporates all the above political traits.

Administrative reforms have continuously been on the agenda of the government ever since independence. A number of Commissions and Committees have been set up in this regard. But bureaucratic reluctance to change has prevented the reforms to take place in full measure. The recommendations of various Commissions and Committees focus around the need (i) to make administration accountable and citizen

friendly, (ii) to build its capacity for quality governance, (iii) to orient administration for promoting peoples' participation, decentralization and devolution of powers, (iv) to make administrative decision-making process transparent, (v) to improve the performance and integrity of the public services, (vi) to reinforce ethics in administration, and (vii) to inculcate readiness for e-governance.

India could hold onto democratic form government with all the initial difficulties. In the meanwhile, Pakistan, being a neighbouring country which became independent along with India could not succeed with democracy. The primary reason for it is it did not make any necessary preparation required for adopting democracy. Integration of India: India became Independent in 1947 with 552 princely states having a choice of joining India or Pakistan and also having option of remaining Independent. So, India tried to integrate these states under the emotional aspect of Nationalism. But, in reality India could integrate 552 states as Princely State rulers were ensured of self-rule except foreign affairs, communication and defence matters. This democratic understanding between Princely Rulers and the Government of India helped in integration of India. Political Elite: Political elite who took over the reins of power after independence believed in the principle of 'Unity in diversity' and they thought a diversified country like India in terms of geography religion, caste, culture, language, food habits, etc. requires a democratic structure which helps people to protect their diversity. Adoption of Constitution: Constituent assembly was formed in December 1946 and submitted its report on November 1949. India adopted its constitution of on 26th January 1950. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar being the chairman of the drafting committee ensured via constitution the supremacy of Rule of Law. This ensured equality for people of all walks of life. In turn, this helped democracy to consolidate itself and deepen its presence in the Indian society. Moreover, Indian constitution adopted federalism but at the implementation level it was quasi federal in nature. Quasi- federalism provided more powers to the centre, this ensured integrity of the country. Adding to this, powers given to the states ensured democratic power sharing so, quasi federalism at one level ensured the integrity of the country at another level even ensured the voices of the state also being heard. In reality, it paved the way for democratic power sharing between the centre and the states. This in turn, ensured the survival of democracy in India. Adoption of Electoral System and Party Politics: Electoral system and party politics are the two basic foundations which ensured the success of electoral democracy in India. Regular state and central elections along with party politics provided platform for every section of people to actively participate in the affairs of government directly or indirectly.

Challenges of Indian Democracy:

Since independence India has been functioning as a responsible democracy. The same has been appreciated by international community. It has successfully adapted to the challenging situations. There have been free and fair periodic elections for all political offices from the panchayats to the President. There has been smooth transfer of political power from one political party or set of political parties to others, both at national and state levels on many occasions. You will find many examples in our neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Myanmar and even Bangladesh where transfer of power has been done through military coups.

✓ **Illiteracy:** Illiteracy has been a major challenge for India's democracy since the independence of the country. It has been a challenge because both the education level of its people and the socio-economic development of a nation play a vital role in achieving success in a democratic nation. At the time of independence, the literacy rate of India was almost dismal, and the female literacy rate was negligible. However, the Indian electorate proved this apprehension wrong over the years by participating in elections in record numbers and casting their votes. Literacy is a necessity in any nation not only to enable its people to participate in elections and exercise their right to vote meaningfully but also to enjoy dignity in society.

✓ **Poverty:** Poverty is regarded as one of the biggest challenges in the way of the successful functioning of democracy. A hungry person least cares about his right to vote and all he wants is food to fill his stomach. India inherited the state of poverty since the colonial rule of the Britishers. The population of our nation is increasing day by day and the scope of employment is decreasing. The process of economic development has not been able to ensure social justice and bridge the gap between rich and poor. These are the reasons why poverty continues to remain a great challenge to Indian democracy.

✓ **Gender discrimination:** Although gender equality is a basic principle of democracy in India, gender discrimination exists on every small step. Our Constitution guarantees equal treatment to all citizens, irrespective of their gender. Another instance is that the Women Reservation Bill is now approved in Parliament. This bill proposes to give women 33% of the seats in Parliament, allowing them to participate equally in politics. Although most of the members agree on the need for such a Bill, none of them has given it a priority.

✓ **Casteism:** Casteism is a differentiation made between individuals based on birth. In India, the caste system originated on the arrival of Aryans and continues in some parts of the country. This system further brought in practices like untouchability which continues despite being banned. It played a negative role in the development of democratic political development as lower caste people are in minority and are used as vote banks by politicians.

- ✓ **Communalism:** Communalism is an ideology which states that society is divided into religious communities whose interests differ and are, at times, even opposed to each other. Communalism is a setback to the Indian democracy as it acts as an offense to secularism. It is disruptive to our democratic system. It is a terminology that is used to make an attempt to divide people into different groups based on religion, communities, etc. to incite strife among them.
- ✓ **Religious fundamentalism:** Religious fundamentalism is a term that enforces communalists in the exploitation of religion, and politics. It is an ideology that helps in the growth of orthodox society and strict obedience, submission to principles of religions. Religious Fundamentalism opposes the progress of a nation and establishes control over various communities of the society.
- ✓ **Regionalism:** India is a nation with diversities of religions, languages, tribes, cultures, and communities. Due to such diversities, imbalances occur in the development process and lead to regional disparities, the democracy of the country is suffering. The problem relating to regionalism begins when the different political parties use it for their political gains. Such regional discrimination, deprivation, etc. attacks the democracy of a country.
- ✓ **Corruption:** Corruption is a major problem in India as it has its roots in every field be it land, health, education, property, industry, transport, agriculture, armed force, spiritual pursuits, and even religious institutions. It exists at all levels of politics, bureaucracy, government, and corporate. As citizens of the country, we should take measures to eradicate corruption in every possible manner.
- ✓ **Criminalization of politics:** The Criminalization of politics is when the politicians undertake criminal actions to win elections. The criminalization of politics has become a very sensitive and debatable topic in recent years. Many politicians are dissatisfied with the principles of democracy and undertake undemocratic methods to win elections. Such actions are a major threat to the successful functioning of democracy.
- ✓ **Political violence:** Violence is of various forms namely, communal, caste, political, etc. Whenever a political party loses elections, its party members begin engaging themselves in violence. It is a threat to our democracy because it leads to aggressive competition for political power and the victim is always the general public.

Weakness and shortcomings of Indian democracy:

- ❖ In India, women constitute 50% of the total population. But in State assemblies and Parliament, they do not even enjoy complete 10% representation. It is no surprise that topics like rape, domestic violence, etc. are not dealt with as an urgent matter of discussion.
- ❖ Tax is paid by only 1% of the total population in a nation of 1.24 billion people. However, 15% of the population is liable for paying taxes.
- ❖ India is a country of 28 states and 8 union territories with a population of 124 crore people with numerous languages. Whereas, the United States has 50 states for a population of 34 crore people.
- ❖ Approximately 60,000 cases are pending in the Supreme Court, 42 lakh cases are pending in different High Courts, and 2.7 crore cases pending in District and Subordinate Courts. There are not enough judges and it has a faulty, and slow justice system.
- ❖ GDP of our country has increased about 50% but children below the age of 5 years are still malnourished.
- ❖ Currently, more than 260 million farmers are protesting against the farm bills enacted but the farmer's protest is continuously failing Indian democracy as no decision has been undertaken on the government's part.
- ❖ People of our country are still living in poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment.
- ❖ Approximately 60% of the total population has no access to sanitization.
- ❖ Institutional changes do not accompany economic development.
- ❖ Approximately 35% of the total population lives in poverty.
- ❖ There is not even 6% women representation in governance.
- ❖ Our society clutched into socio-economic inequalities.

II. CONCLUSION:

Democracy is a mirror where one can clearly see the truth but the mirror also serves as a door to that darkroom just behind it where our chosen representatives are free to take decisions to serve their personal interests to acquire power and property of the people in the name of the people. The representatives are doing so by continuously hammering the minds of its people with their own dreams and desires through promises, planning, theories, concerns, inquiries, and commissions that ultimately take the images on the mirror of democracy as our own, painted by our rulers in the disguise of servants. However, this scenario can be changed if the citizens take effective participation, fulfill obligations, and hold public authorities accountable for their actions. With all the initial lacunas Indian democracy could survive and operationalize itself in a successful way. The reasons for its success are its internal mechanisms rather than outside or international pressure. So, a

country with all its diversities and lack of pre- requisite conditions can sustain and succeed in its democracy, if people of the country wilfully accept democratic state.

REFERENCES:

- [1]. Appadorai A, (1944), Democracy in India, New York, Oxford University Press, pp.3-5
- [2]. ChakrabortiAtulananda, 'The Welfare State', in ChakrabortiAtulananda ed. (1961), NehruHis Democracy and India, Calcutta, Thachers Press Publication Limited pp.79-88
- [3]. Hidayatullah M, (1965), Democracy in India and the Judicial Process, New Delhi Asia Publishing House, pp.42-53
- [4]. Jalal Ayesha, (1995), Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia, A comparative and Historical Perspective, New Delhi, Cambridge University Press, pp.20-26
- [5]. KavirajSudipta, 'Democracy and Social Equality', in Hasan Zoyaed, (1999), Transforming India Social and Political Dynamics of Democracy, Delhi, Oxford University Press, p.86
- [6]. KohliAtul, (2001), The Success of India's Democracy, Cambridge University Press pp.5-19
- [7]. Mehta BhanuPratap, 'The State of Indian Democracy', in Basrur Rajesh. M ed. (2009), Challenges to Democracy in India, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp.49-51.
- [8]. Roy Ramashray, (2005), Democracy in India: Form and Substance, Delhi, Shipra Publication, pp.57-58
- [9]. Roy Ramashray, (2005), Democracy in India: Form and Substance, Delhi, Shipra Publication, pp.66-67
- [10]. Sharma Sanjeev Kumar, (2005), Ancient Indian Democracy- Studies, Research and Some Modern Myths, Indian Journal of Political Science, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh, Vol.XXXIX, No.3, July-September, pp.155-166
- [11]. VarshneyAshutosh, (1995), India and the Politics of a Developing Countries, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, pp.90-95
- [12]. World Brotherhood All India Committee, (1960), Indian Democracy in the Asian Background, New Delhi, Allied Publishers Private Ltd, pp.62-63