

Democracy, Development and Its Challenges in India: An Overview

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Abstract

Democracy is a form of government and a way of governance. During the last half of the 20th century, democracy became the only legitimate concept in the world. The world is facing an extraordinary and unprecedented expansion of challenges and also the upcoming challenges. It is moving towards a great change, may be in a way of development. As development means change and change coupled with growth. Development is an increasing capacity to make rational use of natural and human resources for social; ends. Looking through modern India, it is facing many challenges including social and economic inequalities, poverty and unemployment, Illiteracy and ignorance, casteism, communalism, population explosion, regionalism, corruption and terrorism, etc., that need to be tackled in order to ensure true and developmental democracy. What India needs is to develop new indicators to reform democracy towards development. However, this paper is an attempt to signify the problems of Indian democracy with developmental prospective.

KEYWORDS: Democracy, Development, social and economic inequalities, sustainable Development

Introduction to Democracy

Democracy is a form of government and a system of governance. As a form, it is a rule of the people, by them, and for their welfare in a representative forum. As a system of governance, it is a way of life. It is another name of self government or self rule. Some like Lecky considers it as the government of the poorest, the most ignorant, and the most incapable. In Greece, the meaning of democracy implies the rule of the commoners, the poor, and the least intelligent. Aristotle, the father of political science also stated that democracy is a perverted form of government. Subsequently, so far democracy is a better system of government in comparison to monarchy, dictatorship, aristocracy, oligarchy etc. Comprehensively democracy means a form of government, a type of state, a pattern of social system, a design of economic order, and a way of life and culture. Politically, democracy establishes a lawful state which exists not only for the life for the better life and socio- economically it fulfils all the socio economic conditions of the people.

Define democracy as a process of self government in which individuals operate upon their environment directly and indirectly – directly people make decisions for themselves, pursue careers, enter into relationships with others and otherwise live their lives and indirectly through political representatives accountable to them, is a narrow view of the concept but the successful administrative system is democracy with a developmental architect.

Democracy in India

Since her independence, India is signifying with the commitment to socio economic justice by ensuring it to achieve through proper democratic process and organized planning. Liberalization and competitiveness in Indian economy are the ultimate parameters to achieve democratic socialism in the country. The constitution of India is epitomized with the spirit of socialism by ending all forms of exploitation and by securing equitable distribution of income, resources, possessions and wealth. The basic aim of development, through which India is declared as Democratic Socialistic State (DSS), is to secure it through peaceful, constitutional and democratic means. To quote Barker "Social Justice aims to provide equal opportunities to every individual to develop his inherent qualities"ⁱ is a platform towards development in India and social justice is the cementing bridge between democracy and development. In this regard, modern liberal thinkers and social democrats highlight that social justice is the attempt to reconstruct social order in accordance with moral principles.

The constitution of India embraces parliamentary form of democracy by borrowing and executing certain democratic features in the predominantly made model by the British. After 1947, the country was able to succeed the first general election in 1952 with great rigour, enthusiasm and adopting universal adult franchise for the poor, vast and largely illiterate nation. Finally, the constituent assembly taking 299 members represented India as a republic and parliamentary democracy basing on the separation of powers, a universal Indian citizen with constitutional rights, equality before law, separation of the civil and military powers and the necessity for political competitionⁱⁱ.

Development and democracy in India

Development is a widely accepted and universal phenomenon. It is an enigma and has become a misty. While democracy emphasizes on shared experience i.e. people's experience, not impose one as in other forms; ethical conceptions of individuality, liberty, equality, fraternity; integration of individuals fulfillment and social harmony; thriving on the attitudes of democratic, scientific, flexibility and openness; unity in diversity with composite culture in common; working towards human development, social, moral, cultural and environmental growth;ⁱⁱⁱ ,Development as Esman says is a rational process of organizing and carrying out prudently conceived and staffed programs or projects as one would organize and carry out military or engineering operations. In the same way Colm and Greiger stated that development means change, changed coupled with growth. Development is a process towards Nation Building and Socio-economic progress. It is both a process and purpose. It is a process of acquiring a sustained growth of a systems capability to cope with new, continuous changes towards the achievement of progressive politics, economic and social objectives. In some way, development is described as increase in national economy, social development and the spirit of modernization. Subsequently, it has no universal satisfaction.

Challenges to Indian Democracy

Uneducated or Illiterate people: Illiterate people are danger to democracy in matter of its functioning and representation. Education is a key to the successful functioning of democracy and socio-economic development of a country. Successful functioning of democracy depends on the free and fair representation which is a great matter of concern in India on the eve of independence and after. Literacy not only enables citizens to participate in elections and exercise their right to vote successfully but also conscious them about various needs, issues, problems, demands, and interests in the country. India

at the time of independence was mere 18.33 per cent of literacy rate in 1951 and female literacy was negligible with 8.9 percent. According to 2011 Census, the literacy rate has risen to 74.04 percent; the female literacy rate is still lagging at 65.46 per cent^{iv}.

Mass Poverty: Democracy, for a hungry person is meaningless. A person cannot think about the country without satisfying his or her basic needs or minimum requirement for living. Poverty is painstaking as the greatest nuisance of democracy which is the foremost cause of all kinds of deprivations and inequalities. It is the state of contradiction of opportunities to people to lead a healthy and fulfilling life. All these things in India may be because of the long exploitative British colonial rule, but it continues to be one of the greatest problems today. During the year 1960s, the governmental definition of poverty line were sought to measure the extent of poverty on the amount of income required to purchase a barest minimum desirable food having nutritional standards of caloric intake by a person. For this, in Indian conditions, a person in rural areas needs an average of 2400 calories per day and in urban areas and average of 2100 calories per day in order to keep himself above the poverty line. Mass poverty is such a devastating plague in India.

Gender unfairness and inequality: Unfairness and discrimination against girls and women is a major problem which is seen in every walk of life. In our society and polity every day we face gender inequality. The basic principles of democracy believe on equality of treatment to all irrespective of class, caste and gender. Equality of treatment to both men and women is in the basic structure of the constitution of India.

Defective common discernment and ineffectiveness of the Present transformation Efforts:

Self-centeredness, Moral-Decay, and encouraging India's spiritual communities are generally considered as the causes of our society's deterioration and disintegration. That is because we encounter them in our day-to-day life and also because we are continually habituated thus by our disheartened, depressed and organized exceptional and media who do not dare to or are not capable to look further than their nudge. Subsequently, a deeper analysis would prove that they are really just symptoms produced by the disintegration. The political parties and other institutions, such as the bureaucracy, security agencies, and mass media are also not only creating disturbances but also manifest them. The political system itself is also encroaching towards a misrepresented democratic system by producing and promoting a contaminated, opportunistic, hesitant and ingratiating political-mastership-hierarchy, breeds nepotism and penetrates their sovereignty. It also cause the a bad propagation of political parties; that cause deformation of the community's finding, unsteadiness and ineffectiveness, is the real reason.

Communalism

Communalism is an appearance of self-centeredness, egotism and altruism. Different ideological belief, color, culture, language, caste, religion, region and identity are the major factors of communalism. India is a land of immense communities. There are more than 177 million Muslims in India, and all view the present prime minister with notion given his past record of support for Hindu nationalism and charges that he failed to stop the 2002 sectarian riots in Gujarat, in which some 1,000 Muslims were killed. The issue of communal violence, though in decline over the long term, remained acutely relevant during the past year, as the country recovered from the 2012 ethnic and religious clashes, in which half a million people were displaced from northeastern states. In September 2013, confrontations between Hindus and Muslims killed 40 people and displaced

roughly 40,000 Muslims near the Uttar Pradesh town of Muzaffarnagar. It is a vicious cycle, internally producing ever-increasing acceleration for its degenerative trajectory: i.e. a flawed system producing a vicious leadership to operate it and this self-serving leadership manipulating the system and society to fulfill their own greed, to perpetuate their reign thus causing further degeneration. These traits are normally kept-in-check to a harmless limit, at times even sublimating them to supplement forces of progress, in healthy societies through dexterous management and inspiration by its competent leaders. In Modi's first speech as prime minister-elect, he vowed to work for all Indians. Yet there are still concerns that the Hindu nationalist could stir communal tensions with Muslims, who account for 15 percent of India's 1.2 billion people. Modi took a tough line in his campaign speeches on illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, a Muslim-majority nation, saying they should have their "bags packed" in case he came to power. He called Hindu refugees from the country "family". Modi denies the accusations and a Supreme Court inquiry did not find enough evidence to impeach him.

Pessimistic and unfriendliness role of Opposition:

Democracy needs a strong opposition but not in a pessimistic and unfriendly manner. In a parliamentary democracy like India, legislature makes the laws. There must be an opportunity for the opposition to take a key role in decision making for the transparency of the policies. The elected representatives of the people, who are in opposition, must be able to present and discuss alternative policy options even if they are not part of the government and do not have an immediate way of making their plans succeed. In present time opposition plays only negative role in India which causes a threat to Indian democracy.

Misuse of free press and Media: Press and media is the fourth pillar of democracy. They are the strength of democracy on their role, they play. India, as the world's biggest democracy, rests on the media. Keeping this in mind, it becomes important for the media to realize its powerful role and exertion towards its accurate operation.

Unawareness by People: unawareness among the people is the greatest challenge towards democracy. Indians, with the illiterate masses, aren't matured for democracy. The lack of literacy and awareness elects wrong persons as our representatives which causes bad effects on its development.

Corruption and vice: Corruption and vice reduces the label of transparency and accountability in India. The present government laid by Prime Minister Modi campaigned towards a corruption free India where every vision can be possible like Make –in –India, swatch Bharat mission, digital India etc to check against graft, nepotism, and cronyism^v.

Injustice, unfairness and inequality: Injustice, unfairness and inequality are the different setbacks of India's democracy. The fundamental duty of judiciary is to provide justice with equality and fairness to its citizen. But now days the judiciary is the most corrupted one. Under such circumstances true justice is a question for all.

Centre-state relations: Centre-state relations are the core of nation's development and prosperity. Article 50 of the constitution of India deals with the distribution of power among the three branches of the government and relationship between the centre and periphery is a good one, and then it is fruitful for the country. Subsequently, its opposite function will be a great threat to democracy.

Internal and external threat: Internal and external threat is the greatest challenge to the security of the country. India's main internal security threat is from Maoists. They have acquired guns, hand grenades and guerrilla war expertise over the years and routinely target security forces and other government officials in areas that contains the country's richest mineral deposits.

Unsocial activities: The Unsocial activities Rape and Sexual brutality, harassment, crimes against women are serious challenges to democracy. The fatal gang rape of a woman on a Delhi bus in December 2012 led to mass demonstrations and drew international attention. General's Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, voiced strong concern about the prevalence of rape by stating that while bullets, bombs and blades make the headlines, women's bodies remain invisible battlefields.

Criminalization of Politics: Recently, criminalization of politics in India has become a controversial issue. There have been allegations that there are some unfaith elements in politics with democratic values and practices. They indulge in violence and take refuge in other unhealthy, undemocratic methods to win elections. Undoubtedly, this is not a healthy trend in politics and there is an urgent need to apply serious check on such tendencies. Criminalization of politics is the very negation of democratic values and has no place in a democratic set up. Democracy can be strengthened by adopting and promoting democratic values and shunning criminal activities.

Upcoming Challenges

- Climate change
- Population explosion
- Unprecedented threats of Cyber crime
- Threat of third world war
- Threat of neo-cold war
- Threat of digitalization of world
- Cry for scienticism
- Over exploitation of natural resources.
- World without natural resources.
- Great energy crisis
- Unthinkable epidemics
- Energy security
- Nuclear threats

Indicators of development (steps to overcome)

Universal Literacy or Education for All

Development is a universal concept so we need development of universal education or education for all at the practical stage. For this, a nation-wide programme known as Saakshar Bharat is being implemented and continuing. Furthermore, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan is a great step for the universalization of elementary education for children between 6-14 years of age. Besides, the Parliament of India in 2009 passed Right to Education Act through which education has become a fundamental right and 11th fundamental duty. Thus the above mission must be revitalized in a great movement for the development of democracy.

Poverty alleviation

For poverty alleviation, two kinds of programmes are being implemented: (i) Programmes to lift beneficiaries above poverty line by providing them with productive assets or skills or both so that they can employ themselves usefully and earn greater income, and (ii) Programmes to provide temporary wage employment for the poor and the landless. Public Distribution System (PDS) contributes towards meeting people's basic food needs, the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) provides rural households below the poverty line with credit to purchase income-generating assets, the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY), provides more than 700 million person days of work a year. Moreover, TRYSEM (Training Rural Youth for Self Employment) was started to provide technical skills to the rural youth and to help them to get employment Poverty Alleviation in India. Besides this we must create awareness among the people in a political level^{vi}.

Abolition of Gender Discrimination

The forefathers of the constitution of India make no discrimination between genders. But the society itself makes this and now it is a great challenge to democracy. The goals of democracy "of the people, for the people and by the people" cannot be fully realized if the female population is not included in all ways in the processes of socio-economic and political development. Thus we must go for the elimination and abolition of gender decimation and respect to article 14 of the constitution.

Elimination of Regional inequality

For proper future development in India, regional inequality should be abolished not in pen and paper but in reality. After that a strong democracy is possible. Further, the State should have the specific efforts for reducing intra-State regional disparities from the central level to village levels.

Administrative and Judicial Reforms

The success of democracy primarily depends on the coordination, cooperation and efficient functioning of administration among the three branches of government with transparency and accountability. The three serious problems of judiciary such as (i) slow disposal of cases leading to delays as well as accumulation of backlog, and (ii) very low rate of prosecution in criminal cases, should be checked for better administration.

Sustainable Development

Indian democracy can adequately respond to all the challenges when it moves forward on the path of sustainable development. A model of development without taking into account the basic needs of millions, today as well as in the future, cannot be conducive for the survival of democracy. Development has to be human-centered and nature centric and directed towards improvement of quality of life of all the people. It has to be focused on removal of poverty, ignorance, discrimination, disease and unemployment in a practical sense. The development process has to aim at sustained economic, social and environmental development in India bearing the slogan of 'Development for ever' which will lead to sustainable democracy.

More Opportunities for Citizens' participation

The preamble of the constitution of India begins 'We the people of India', signifies people are the source of authority. So for the strength of democracy, people should more participate in the decision making process of Indian government.

Making the System Accountable

Participation in the political process is not enough. Citizens have to make the democratic system responsive and responsible. The Constitution makes the executive responsible to the legislature, but citizens are needed to ensure that the Parliamentarians, Members of State Legislatures and their representatives in Panchayati Raj and Municipal Institutions are accountable. The instruments created by the Right to Information Act, 2005 in our country enable citizens to play their role effectively. Citizens have an obligation to become informed about public issues, to watch carefully how their political leaders and representatives use their powers, and to express their own opinions and interests. Moreover the citizen should be more vigilant for the success of democracy.

Indicators of development (steps to overcome)



Conclusion:

From the above it is clear that the future of Indian democratic development hangs in the balance. It is standing on cross round, leading to people's democracy. The most important is that we should change our attitudes, mindset, way of thinking, our approach towards sustainability. We should try to overcome our self-centered nature. We should think of vibrant democracy with a multilayered pyramid with two themes i.e. Development and Democracy in a sustainable way.

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