

An Analytical Study of Democratic Framework in India

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ABSTRACT

Democracy is a form of government where the citizens choose its representatives through elections and make their participation. Introduction of democracy in India after independence was a revolutionary act that gave the people its identity and so in order to develop and governed, the society needs to be socially and economically developed. Democracy in India is based on the principles of equality, liberty, fraternity and justice which are the prerequisites required for smooth functioning.

Keywords: Democracy, Liberty, Participative democracy.

I. INTRODUCTION

The beginning of India's independence on 15th of August 1947 was a great day in the long and eventful history of this ancient country. The attainment of independence, however, was not an end in itself. It was not only political freedom that the leaders of the freedom struggle were fighting for, but also for the establishment of a new order of society. The leaders had a vision for minimization of economic and social inequalities, removal of mass poverty, unemployment and underemployment, restoration of human dignity, guarantee of civil rights, restoration of communal harmony and justice for all. These hopes and expressions were embodied in the Constitution of India which was adopted on 26th January, 1950. The visions were largely reflected through the Preamble to the Constitution and the parts dealing with Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy. To achieve the prescribed goals, the framers of the Indian Constitution relied completely on the norms of democracy.

Features of Indian Democratic Setup

Framers of the Indian Constitution provided for a representative democracy in a liberal frame work. The main characteristics of liberal democracy are:

- The government is formed by elected representatives of citizens and is accountable and responsible to them.

- More than one political parties compete for political power.
- The competition for power is open and not secretive. It is through open elections.
- There are periodic elections based on universal adult franchise.
- Pressure and other organised and unorganized groups are also allowed to operate in the system. They are also able to influence government decisions.
- Civil liberties, such as freedom of speech, religion and association, etc. are guaranteed.
- There is separation of powers and check by one over the other.

The above characteristics primarily refer to the aspects of a democratic form of government. Most political thinkers of the present age, however, agree that democracy does not mean merely a form of government. In a broader and moral sense, it means a way of life, an order of society, a way of social and economic relations, and above all a belief system. Such a political and socioeconomic system is based on the ideals of dignity and equality of citizens, principles of equality, liberty, fraternity, and justice and norms of government responsible and accountable to people. These ideals, principles and norms to be implemented require certain conditions, which we may call as prerequisites of democracy. These prerequisites are required in every sphere - social, economic and political. The social conditions require: social equality of status, equality before law and equality of opportunity; educationally and culturally developed citizenry; absence of all kinds of discrimination; and equal opportunities to participate in social, cultural, and educational processes. Economic conditions mean: absence of widespread inequalities; fulfillment of minimum material needs for a dignified human existence; justifiable distribution of resources; equal opportunities for gainful employment, equal pay for equal work and protection against exploitation: Political conditions include: rule of law; equality of citizens and equal opportunities for participation in political affairs; guaranteed and protected rights —

particularly freedom of thought, belief and expression. It also include freedom of participation in civil and political processes; government by the people or their representatives free and fair elections and respect for dissent and opposition.

Many political thinkers and observers believe that without social and economic prerequisites, political conditions of democracy cannot be achieved. They, therefore, suggest that before a society or state decides to be governed democratically, it is essential for it to have a minimum level of social and economic development. Many others, however, believe that democracy itself provides a better and successful means for attainment of social and economic development. The framers of Indian Constitution were fully committed to this view. In fact, their faith in democracy was so deep that soon after independence they made provisions for the universal adult suffrage, i.e. right to vote to every adult citizen without any discrimination.

Even in highly developed countries like UK and USA, this right was granted to all citizens gradually by stages. Therefore, it can be said that introduction of democracy in India, in then prevailing conditions, was a revolutionary act. Establishment of parliamentary democracy and universal adult franchise gave the Indian masses a sense of identity and also raised at new hopes.

Progression of India After Independence and Way Ahead

The very first General Election of 1952 under the new Constitution was hailed an epic achievement of a country of millions of illiterates. Thereafter, scholars and observers from all over the world have been attracted by the successful working of a system of popular democratic government based on adult franchise, guaranteed fundamental rights and an independent judicial system. Successive general elections at scheduled intervals and the peaceful and relatively efficient manner in which they have been conducted, have demonstrated that in spite of their poverty and widespread illiteracy, the people in general have proved the framers of the Constitution right. With every election, the base of democracy in India has got widened. This is particularly important in view of the fact that in most of the countries which attained independence after the Second World War, democracy has been replaced by military dictatorship or one party system. In India, it has not only worked but has also provided a considerable amount of political stability.

In social and economic fields also, the country has made great strides. Fifty years ago, the

life expectancy for the average Indian was 27 years. It is now 70 years. The literacy level at the dawn of independence was much less than what it is today. Agricultural breakthrough of the early seventies has not only made India self-sufficient in food but we now produce surplus. Milk production has gone up significantly. At the time of independence, country produced just 1362 MW of electricity; which is now over 1356 Billion Units.

There is also a considerable futuristic euphoria about the prospects of industrial, economic and technological progress. Today India is 5th largest economy. It is also predicted that India would be the largest software developer in the world and its advances in space technology would greatly enhance its potential for education, meteorology and disaster management, etc. India is also playing an important role in world affairs.

However, Indian democracy is flawed in many respects. India has not been able to acquire a stable national unity and the political system has not been able to fulfill the aspirations of all groups, sections, and classes. A vast majority of the Indian people are caught in the situation of abject poverty, illiteracy, and unemployment. There was almost a collapse of public health during Corona. The population has increased more than three times since independence. Of course, the Gross National Product (GDP) has increased fourfold and in the last decade alone per capita GDP has doubled. But in view of increase in population and concentration of benefits in few hands this increase remains insufficient.

The reality of Indian society is the fact that economic development has not been accompanied by institutional changes that could have moved it in an egalitarian direction. It could not abolish mass poverty and was not able to secure a minimum level of living and opportunities for all its citizens. The richest 20 per cent have taken away about 50 per cent of the gains and the poorest 20 per cent are left with only about 8 per cent. Almost 21.9 per cent of the population is below the official poverty line. In human development, India ranks 132th amongst 191 countries as per the UN Human Development Report 2022. Representation of women at all the levels of government is not even 10 per cent. Relentless pursuit of power and wealth has been the dominant preoccupation of many in public life. Consequently, the ideals and aspirations which had inspired the millions to participate in the struggle still have remained to a large extent unrealized.

There is thus a peculiar situation. The very fact of political independence, establishment of

Parliamentary government and grant of universal adult franchise, has given the common people of India a sense of identity as well as a conscious recognition of their position of exploitation and discrimination. Politicians wanting their votes have played up this feeling but have taken no concrete action to see that the weaker sections were given a participatory and effective role in the socio-economic development of the country. Consequently, people are getting alienated from the system and losing faith in the electoral system. To keep them in the game of elections, ambitious individuals have started counting on caste base, communal, linguistic and regional loyalties. Elections, as such, have become ends in themselves, instruments of the status quo and of self promotion rather than of change. With this another serious factor has emerged; it is politicization of crime, and criminalization of politics.

Altogether, Indian society today presents a picture which is far from being in line with the lofty doctrines of liberty, equality, fraternity, social justice, secularism, fair play and above all rule of law enshrined in our Constitution. Instead of national integration, we now have growth of divisive forces and separatist elements and groups. Communalism, regionalism and casteism are becoming conspicuously visible forces that are weakening, if not actually negating the attempts to build solidarity into Indian society.

During the last 75 years of India's independence, India has witnessed both successes and failures in running the democratic processes. Our country has achieved success in many fields. It has evolved a lasting Constitution, a viable political system, a functional federal polity and strong democratic traditions. It has achieved a relatively self-reliant economy. Quality of life has improved. India has achieved breakthrough in science and technological research. Diverse races and ethnolinguistic groups have been unified without destroying their identities. Above all, a vast multi religious, multi ethnic and multi cultural country has been kept united.

II. CONCLUSION

These achievements, however, are facing serious challenges from the negative trends that have crept in over the years. There has been of late stagnancy and decay in the political field. Economic development remains dissatisfactory. India is still far behind the developed countries. Caste, communal and linguistic tensions are

growing in such proportion that the unity of the country appears to be threatened. Society is looking towards younger generation with hope. They have to understand that democracy cannot be frozen into a static mould adopted at one time. It has to adapt, adjust and evolve itself to continuously changing situations and circumstances. For that, it is important to understand the existing nature of system - how it has been working, why and what aberrations and problems have crept in, what lessons can be learnt from the past experiences and what needs to be done? The purpose of this book on Indian democracy is to make you aware of all these and to prepare you participate in the system as a proud citizen of a great ancient country and contribute effectively in the task of making corrections, and improvement. There is no doubt that with the efforts of younger generation India can look forward to emerging as a great nation..

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