

Problems and prospects of Indian democracy

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Abstract

Participation of citizen in the decision making either directly or indirectly through elected representatives is democracy. Indian democracy is considered as the largest democracy in the world. However, it has faced a lots of social and economic inequalities challenges like poverty and unemployment, Illiteracy casteism, communalism, corruption etc. that are required to be addressed, for there is a need to device new proposals. No doubt, law plays an important role to out come the Indian democracy from these issues but mere legal proposals are not enough to the desired reforms in the society. In this paper, it has been attempted to study and analyse the existing democratic setup in India and suggest necessary reforms in order to ensure a sustainable democracy in India.

Keywords: Illiteracy casteism, communalism, corruption

Introduction

Most of the countries of the world including India have adopted the democratic setup of Governance. Amongst the democratic countries, India is the largest democracy in the world. The concept of origin of democracy can be traced to ancient Greece. Democracy existed in ancient Greece prior to wider interpretation and development of the concept of democracy. The 'city state' system that existed in ancient Greece between 422 BC and 322 BC was considered as a great model by western thinkers, political scientists and scholars alike. The word 'democracy' is derived from the Greek words 'demos' which means 'people' and 'kratos' which means 'power'. Hence, democracy means the power of the people. Democracy and its facets underwent changes during the period of transformation from ancient Greece to the modern world. As a result the pattern of democracy that prevailed in ancient Greece assumed an entirely different and new shape.

Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru observed that "Democracy is tolerance, it is tolerance not only towards those who agree (with us) but also with those who disagree". Those who do not believe in democracy or have no faith in democracy follow paths of violence and intolerance. But we on many occasions in social life show intolerance. It is essential that we know more about democracy and adopt democracy as a way of life.

After attaining independence, India became a Democratic Republic on 26th January, 1950 by introducing its own Constitution. It was a major achievement, more particularly when one looks at some of the countries in our neighbourhood and even around the world. Democracy is not a modern phenomenon; it was practiced with some measure of success in ancient India; some of the modern fundamental principles are practiced even in modern times.

Democracy in India

The Constitution of India came into force from January 26, 1950, declares India as a democratic Republic. The Constitution lays down the requisites for sustaining a democratic governmental system.

Our Constitution contains the following democratic ideals:

- Government system that holds people as the source of sovereign power, with the head of state elected by the people.
- Fully protected fundamental rights.
- Governing process established under rule of law. These are held as the lifeblood of democracy in India.
- Special protection for those who are socially and educationally marginalized.
- Directive Principles of State Policy that ensure social and economic equality.
- Transparent and independent elections.

Forms of Democracy

There are different forms of democracy. The practice of democracy in ancient Greece was known as the 'City state system'. People exercised their power of governance through this system. In fact, it was a system of government by the whole people. In the 'City State' system, democracy is rule and control by qualified persons and citizens. Democracy was under the control of governance by the citizens. However, under this system, women, slaves and aliens were not considered as citizens in ancient Greek democracy.

Direct Democracy

The Direct democracy system was practiced in the ancient Greece. In this system citizens assemble together for the enactment of laws required for governance and they implement these rules too. Citizens were also engaged directly in the judicial process. There was no separate court for the imparting justice. Citizens themselves used to perform these duties. Rulers were chosen through a lot system for limited period. In gist, citizens used to participate directly in the process of governance.

Indirect Democracy

Direct democracy no more exist in any part of the world. In the present society, indirect democracy prevails and nation state system is the accepted and practiced in the world now. Slavery

is obsolete and universal adult suffrage is practiced with equal opportunity in political process. The continuous rise in population contributed a lot towards this very trend. This very system is called as indirect democracy as citizens choose their representatives and then these chosen representatives further rule and makes laws. As this system is by the representatives, it is representative democracy. Indirect democracy exists in India. People elect their representatives at various levels like centre, state and local in India.

Pre-Conditions of Democracy

Herein below are some preconditions that are required to strengthen the democracy:

Political freedom

This is the right of people to organize them politically, though which they can exercise political preferences fully and freely. In democracy people have the right to vote, right to contest elections and further have the right to exercise political power. Political freedom in a democracy also empowers the citizens to form associations and to criticize the government.

Political consciousness

It regards to the people awareness towards state and politics. It includes healthy competitions, tolerance, clear perceptions and consensus. These are the necessary ingredients of for a successful democracy.

Education

It is also an important factor that influences the political consciousness. Citizens should have enough educated about the ideas and values of democracy. Education can enhance the thought process their abilities of constructive criticism so as to help them to arrive at right decision.

Independence of media

Media plays an important and pivotal role in conveying the functioning of the government and democratic ideas to the public and exposes the activities of corruption, nepotism, terrorism etc. Free and impartial media help in forming and expressing public opinion.

Economic and Social security

Economic Freedom is a must requirement for exercising the political rights properly. Economic freedom is the eradication of poverty and providing security towards the availability of opportunities to participate in the production process in a fair manner. Concentration of wealth amongst few and the eradication of inequality are very much required to ensure economic freedom for all. Governments in democracy needs to plan various social security programmes such as pension schemes for the aged and widows and comprehensive health insurance for the uplift of these sections of people.

Political parties and leaders

Political parties help to organize public opinion and create situation conducive to policy decisions. They make elections meaningful and headed by leaders who possess a wider vision and higher democratic values.

Decentralization of power

As per decentralization of power preferences and control of

people power and administration are handed over to lower a level, which ensures greater participation of the people in governance.

Free and Independent Elections

Free and independent elections and right to vote are important components of democracy. An independent election commission is designed with constitutional standing for this purpose.

Supreme Court on Democracy in India

In the case of *Kesavananda Bharati v State of Kerala*, court held the supremacy of the India Constitution and prevented the authoritarian rule by a single political party.

On April 24, 1973, the then Chief Justice Sikri and 12 judges of the Supreme Court delivered the most important judgment in the judicial history of India. It had been conducted for almost 68 days. There was only one issue to find the answer to a question as to whether Parliament can amend the Constitution in an unlimited manner even at the cost of taking away all the fundamental rights of the citizens of India. The problem was that under Article 368 of the Indian Constitution.

It is quite clear that there was no limitations on the power of Parliament to amend any part of the Constitution. Even there were no restrictions on the Parliament to prevent it from taking away a citizen's right to freedom of speech or his religious freedom. However, after several amendments made to the Constitution there was doubt was raised whether there is any inherent or implied limitation on the amending power of Parliament. In its 703 page verdict, with a 7:6 majority the Supreme Court has revealed that the Parliament could amend any part of the Constitution as long as it did not alter the basic structure or essential features of the Constitution. In this was there was an inherent and implied limitation on the amending power of Parliament was imposed by the Judiciary.

Suggestions

The suggestions on the basis of the study are here as under for the successful functioning of Indian democracy:

1. The electorate should be imparted with the awareness of political consciousness by making them aware of their rights and privileges by organising seminars, workshops, conferences, etc.
2. Proper education should be given to the illiterate people of India so as that they can vote sensibly. The countries like USA, Britain, Germany etc. are successful countries by giving progressed democracy in all spheres just because of high literacy.
3. Opinion Polls should be banned completely which creates adverse impression on the minds of voters.
4. Media should play work in a positive manner by bringing about true facts and maintaining the true spirit of democracy.
5. The politicians must have the spirit of democracy as they play a vital role for maintaining the democracy. They should act as a servant not as a master. They should do politics on the basis of issues not on the basis of caste, religion or communal politics.
6. The citizens should be aware while electing their leaders with good moral values and integrity. Common man should have the ability to recognise the character and conduct of the politicians. They should have an intelligent understanding

- of public affair, justice and unselfish devotion to public interest.
7. The Directive Principles enshrined in the State Policies should be made justiciable rights just like fundamental rights of part III of the Indian Constitution.
 8. Political education should be the part of education system, so that either they can become effective leaders of tomorrow or can chose their leader wisely without getting influenced from the unethical factors.
 9. Legislatures and Judiciary should work collectively by keeping an eye over the affairs going on around same sex marriages, abolition of death penalties, etc. and try to keep pace with the changing world around us.
 10. Elected representatives should be the role model for the youths should not act violently in the four corners of the Parliament and Legislatures towards each other's.
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Conclusion

In gist, it can be concluded that though India is considred as one of the largest democracy in the world, but in reality there are various challenges that are responsible for creating hindrance in the true functioning of democratic republic of India. It is a matter of concern that despite the elapse of many years of independence since 1947, there is lot of illiteracy and corruption in India. Indenpence of agencies remains in papers only. CBI, Election Commission, Income Tax Departments, etc. are like paper tigers and have miseraly failed to combat with the issues. Politicians indulge in corrupt practices, do scams, divide the nation on religious grounds for their petty motives of vote banks, which has advesely affected the respect of the Indian democracy in the world. However, on the other aspect, we are living in a democratic country which ensures equal rights and duties. Despite diversity in culture, race, religion and language, where people are united together. No government or country can be said as perfect. Nothing wrong with the Indian Constitutional but due to the selfishness of some politicians, faith of the people have diminished towards the democracy, to which everyone has to make the efforts to rejuvenate the faith of people in democracy by understanding his/her responsibility by making efforts to actively participate in the functioning of the government and make their country perfect.

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