



## Democracy in India: Issues and challenges

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### Introduction

India is the largest democracy in the World we know it very well and it is working successfully from its inception. Former President of the United States of America, Abraham Lincoln said, "Democracy is government of the people, for the people, and by the people." In other words Democracy means rule by the people to ensure that every citizen takes part in the decision making process either directly or indirectly through elected representatives. India is the largest democracy in the world. In the last more than 6 decades it has worked successfully well. In present time not from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century but the day when India becomes Republic many problems and issues comes in the way of successful working to the Democracy.

But in the recent times some of the instances happened in the country that has been published in various prominent news papers with the headings that shows to more or less there are some issues that should be settled as soon as possible reason being these issues shows that Democracy of the Country is under threat. This paper is a work that will try to find the truth behind the statement and try to identify the issues that are concerned with the Successful working of the Democracy of the Nation.

### Democracy

In 1947 India got Independence from the British reign and since India enjoying the Freedom and on and from 26<sup>th</sup> January by the commencement of the Constitution becomes a Republic Nation. Democracy is by far the most challenging form of government - both for politicians and for the people. The *term democracy* comes from the Greek language and means "rule by the (simple) people". Often *democracy* is defined opposite to other types of government for example Monarchy that is Government by a single ruler (king/queen, emperor), Aristocracy that is Government by noblemen (hereditary), Oligarchy that is Government by few persons, Theocracy that is Government by God (in reality this means government by religious leaders), Dictatorship that is Government by people, that have seized power by force (often: military dictatorship). India there is Democratic Government that is *government of the people, for the people, and by the people*.

Democracy' as a concept does not carries single precised and agreed meaning. Its meaning and connotation varies from time to time depending upon the social and economic system. Variation on the meaning and definition of democracy is largely drawn from the fact that democracy does not limit to

institutions and practices, rather the concept itself is an expression of our value judgment on them. In classical times, democracy is synonymous with active participation of citizens in the decision making process, whereas modern democracy is often identified with liberal representative democracy. Liberal democracy represents a combination of free economy with universal adult franchise. Liberal democracy is challenged by socialist democracy. Socialist democracy claims that liberalism, policy of free market economy, promotes economic inequality, which in turn creates conditions for exploitation for working class. Social democracy therefore argues that real democracy can be attainable only after abolition of 'private capital' and assurance of 'economic freedom' to all. Within the liberal democracy, there are also competing models democracy- such as 'representative democracy', 'republican democracy', 'deliberative democracy', among the others.

Numerous examples from early Vedic period point out at the old nature of the idea of democracy. The Indo-Aryans carried on their tribal administration through Sabha and Samity which were governed roughly on democratic principles. Other notable example is Santiparva of Mahabharata where democracies are referred to as 'Ganas'. Lord Buddha too preached the need of democracy for proper administration, and Kautilya's Arthashastra gives vivid references to democracy that prevailed in various parts of ancient India. <sup>[1]</sup>

### Issues and Challenges

Democracy as a form of government has now a day's got recognition as the best or ideal form of government on the ground that it is the only form of government that gives chance to every citizen to participate in the process of governance or in the process of decision making. It is true that great Greek philosophers Plato and Aristotle did not recognize democracy as the best form of government and condemned it as perverted but at the same time no one can deny that it has emerged as the only form of government that disrupts the monopoly of a few and establishes power of common man. "Democracy becomes meaningful when people can shape the state and the state in turn creates enabling social, political, economic and legal conditions wherein people can exercise their rights and achieve freedom from fear and want." <sup>[2]</sup>

But with the passage of time lots of debates have come up by analyzing the nature and working of existing democracies. Among the most prominent theorists, Giovanni Sartori and his views on democracy has been identified as an important theory for offering the criticism and synthesis of the debates

on democracy and of the problems surrounding the theories of democracy. Sartori made a distinction between real and ideal democracy by identifying the democratic regimes that exist, as real and democracies as some scholars would like them to be, that is, imagined democratic region as ideal. [3]

Over the years, it has been observed that on the one hand participation of the people in the processes has declined and on the other hand dissatisfaction of the people has increased day by day. Various governmental, non-governmental reports provide ample evidence of these negative trends of declining participation in elections. This is happening in both the developed and developing countries. Increasing dissatisfaction of the people over the present status of democracies has become a common feature of these countries. [4]

Among the academicians who have brought this issue to the forefront, first comes the name of R.D. Putnam who wrote the book 'Bowling Alone' where he highlighted on the declining trend of political participation of the citizens with reference to America. Robert Putnam along with Susan Pharr conducted a study in 13 advanced democracies of the world to examine support base of the political system or of the government. They found that those countries are experiencing steady decline in public trust and support for politicians. They labeled this trend as 'crisis of confidence'. [5] Similar trends were identified by some other writers also. Most important among those are R.C. Carty, F.D. Weil, Gallup and Environics etc. F.D. Weil tried to give evidence regarding this declining trend of political participation in countries like USA, France, Spain, England and Germany. [6] Another survey conducted by CBOs in Poland shows that between 1993 and 2005, dissatisfaction and lack of trust in government increased from 52% to 63%. [6] Increasing both in the developed and least developed countries. Poverty, famine, child death, poor maternal health and such other problems still dominate the social scenario of the developing countries. Hence it can be said that citizen's lack of trust in political institutions has strong objective foundations. [7] Democratic deficit as a term has emerged under such a trend to measure and identify the quality of governance of any institution or system. Andrew Moravcsik hence considers this problem of democracy as central question in contemporary world politics. [8] He discussed the problem of democratic deficit in four types of democracies i.e. libertarian democracy, pluralist democracy, social democracy and deliberative democracy.

#### **For successful democracy following conditions are required**

1. Empowerment of the illiterates and poor to enjoy and protect the democracy.
2. Readiness among the elected candidates to honestly perform their duties and they should not take any advantage over the poverty and ignorance of the voters.
3. The willingness among educated, intelligent, and efficient people to participate in the leadership role.
4. The presence of powerful public opinion.
5. Compliance among the elected candidates not to misuse their power and public wealth.
6. Eradication of all the social evils and dangers due to which the democracy suffers.

7. Feeling of compassion and communal peace among the people of India.
8. Awareness among the Individuals of their fundamental rights that they are entitled to utilise.
9. Conscious vigilance on the working of all the elected representatives.
10. Right, unbiased, and efficient press to get public opinion.
11. Strong and efficient opposition in the Center and State Legislature.

It is rightly said that Freedom to speech and expression is the mother of all the fundamental rights and very important in a democratic Country. However this fundamental right is subject to reasonable restriction as enumerated in the Article 19 of the Constitution of India. In a Democratic country right to express views in respect of the policy of the government and right to criticize the government working is very important. Constitution makers were very much aware of the conditions that may bring the democracy useless if the right to freedom of speech and expression is not there and very wisely they enshrined in the Constitution right to speech and expression in the fundamental rights.

A Democratic Government has to work for the welfare of the people's, reason being it is not a police State. People of a democratic Government required to actively involve in the matters relating to the public welfare. Without the active participation of the peoples of the Country Democracy cannot work successfully. With all the other things awareness among the individuals of their fundamental right, strong opposition, and Right, unbiased, and efficient press is very important for the successful Democracy of a Country.

#### **References**

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