
CHALLENGES TO INDIAN STATE**Dr. Hariom Prakash Singh**

(Associate Professor, Department Of Political Science)

H.N.B. Government P.G. College Khatima, U.S.Nagar U.K.

From 1850 to 1950 the country was led in the direction of a liberal democracy, it was an integrative process. But as we entered the phase of a nation building, the process assumed a fragmentative character, a slide towards regression. It was a shift even if unintentional from the vision of integrative development to a fragmentative development. During the period 1850-1950 we were united to fight thereafter we have been fighting to divide¹. What has gone wrong? Where we as nation have been unable to fulfill the wishes of the people? Why are we alleged to have failed as a nation? To find the answers to these questions I will primarily limit myself to two fundamental concepts which as a nation we have inherited or applied. First Democracy and second economic model or concepts.

In the west, representative democracy was evolved over a period of time and they grew with the system and for which they struggled for centuries. After a long struggle only they got Parliamentary democracy and franchise for the citizens. But in India democracy and universal adult franchise was introduced all of a sudden and people did not have proper experience in it. Multiparty democracy came into existence and it was imposed on a primarily feudal society. What shape democracy has taken during these years of development? How has it evolved? How are we going to define it now?

Democracy in India is equated with elections. Democracy is never treated as culture. Even after five decades of experience of democratic governance our society could not be democratized, our institutions and organizations are not democratized. Even political parties are not democratized². Feudal elements have entrenched our political system. Our system has encouraged mafias, landlords and even criminals to fancy their chances in the corridors of power. Democracy is no longer a place for intellectuals, gentlemen and peace loving people. Ascriptive identities evoke more loyalty than issues of development. These feelings have even been more accentuated by lopsided development and sense of deprivation. Issues of reservation and allotment of government amenities have overshadowed the importance of equitable development. As there is no democracy in our institutions and organizations, many of our constitutional provisions are not operationalised but they are countered by the practices of the community. As our activities are in feudal mode community practices are taking upper hand to sabotage the provisions of the constitution. Best examples are our panchayats where at places caste

Hindus have not allowed Dalit to fight the elections. Thus the communities have pushed the constitutional provisions away from the Grassroots. It is a paradox that communities have a reservoir of energies, talents, skills, Knowledge, capacity and capability but they are not being harnessed and instead in the name of expansion of government they are annihilated and allowed to die. But there are certain practices which are antithetical to democracy which are being allowed to survive. As a result, the anti-democratic feudal elements have perfectly buckled with our electoral politics and bureaucratic development activities.

The existing democratic system has not been able to evoke the response of the people as development participants. It is evident that electoral politics and development paradigm of the state is sensitive to the need of small section of our population which has adapted itself to the changing demands of globalisation and liberalization. The peasantry which forms the two third of our population has lost its way in the present scenario. Peasants are divided along ascriptive identities which have resulted in their subsequent exploitation. There has been no significant peasant movement for decades to address the problems of farmers. This has resulted in agrarian distress and consequent suicide by our farmers. After the advent of green revolution use of machinery, high yielding variety seeds, fertilizers and pesticides made agriculture cash based individual enterprise requiring high investments in modern inputs and wage labour. Now, a farmer has to draw more and more credit to plough it into the land. As a result, the demand for credit had increased by several times when compared to the earlier period. Lack of remunerative prices in such a situation would cause immense trouble to farmers. If in addition a crop fails-due to either natural or manmade factors- the farmers economy is doomed. The uncertainty of crop yield and fluctuations in the prices of agricultural produce caused great deal of mental distress to the farmers. The agricultural output in the postmodern period decelerated to 2.4 percent per annum during the 1990s against 3.5 percent during the 1980s. It has slumped further during the last few years, reaching an abysmal low of 1.5 percent in 2004-05³. The share of agriculture in GDP has been declining. Public investment in agriculture has gone down. Imports have been increasing as the tariffs are lowered. Farmers in India are squeezed from both side – by the high cost of seeds and pesticides of the foreign companies and cheap imports from the heavily subsidized western nations on the one hand and the indifference of state and withdrawal of its support on the other.

Now the question arise are we any more a nation? What kind of citizens are these farmers? What has happened to the solemn resolve to constitute India into a socialist democratic republic and to secure for its citizens justice, liberty, equality and fraternity? If nothing positive happens in Indian agriculture in the coming years and if farmers continue to be squeezed by the global and domestic markets as well as the

rentier classes, they will have to either abandon agriculture or rebel against governments: or else the spate of suicides continues to haunt the country.

To overcome these problems political and economic reform is needed. We need to deepen our democracy, change the character of our democracy, bring the development initiative from below by changing the total paradigm of development and make it an inclusive and gender sensitive democracy. This would create a change in our society and show the way the other societies of the world by involving people as stake holder. The people who are marginalized now have to build their capacity and negotiate for power and resources to develop themselves on their own. Unless political leaders are faced with the threat of loss of power they will not act. To address the agrarian distress we need change in strategies of economic development which has hitherto downgraded agriculture and stunted non-farm employment, with a mechanism that would ensure remunerative prices to agricultural produce, willingness of the political executive to use tariffs to support Indian farmers in the global markets, the need to curb the growth of corruption, illegal amassment of wealth by the political class and end the disjuncture between the interests of the people and people's representative.

New forces are emerging the new forces namely SHGs and organized youth groups have to actively involve themselves in the grassroots institution. The civil society organizations have to build the capacity of the local body leaders. One important tool of capacity building is our panchayats. We need to strengthen our constitutional panchayats, the customary and traditional panchayats have to be democratized and a synergy has to be established between traditional panchayats and constitutional panchayats. On the other hand communities have such reservoir of talent, energy, capacity, and capability that it could be harnessed to build a strong nation. As in Rajasthan and also in Tamilnadu communities built many big tanks to recharge their groundwater. Indigenous science, technologies, medicines and community practices could be improvised and used. Baba Ramdev has shown how yoga- a traditional ancient method of penance to keep oneself healthy can bring health and happiness to millions of people who otherwise felt distressed and isolated. He has ushered in a popular movement of health awareness which does not have any parallel in recent times. This is how Indigenous knowledge could be utilized for community development. By doing so the self-dignity of the poor, marginalized, women and Dalit could be restored. They will have a feeling that they can decide their own destiny. A new citizenship culture will evolve that will have a sense of development. Grassroot empowerment is more important than grassroot development.

After independence we were a nascent emerging nation where Nehruvian model of democratic socialism was applied and big public sector came up. Development with the help of big businessman and

state was initiated. We brought modern technologies and expertise from outside to build a strong nation. In the process we expanded our service sector and tried to reach the masses through development. We have reached significant growth, overcame several impediments, and met many a challenge.

The growth registered in terms of GDP has not contributed to human development, measured by HDI. That is why and how, while India is growing as a global economic power there is a parallel slide on the scale of human development. In regards to several parameters of human development, we have not even remained where we were in 1950, both in absolute as well as comparative terms.

Now the question arises why is it so? Some of the main causes and consequences are stagnant agricultural growth, growing regional imbalances, high levels of absolute poverty, energy and infrastructural constraints and conspicuous lack of efforts at administration, judicial and political reform. Development has not yet recognized the centrality of people as the measure of development. As the pattern and process of development have bypassed and in fact proved an affront to a large section of people, while others have accumulated unjust wealth. Many more individuals as well as segments have remained at the starting line; they have not even understood the relevance of liberal democracy to their lives. In some cases there is a slide even measured by the starting line, many people are deprived, marginalized and displaced leading to subsistence and sub human levels of existence. They have come to recognize that there is something amiss with our modes of development. We took the concept of development through modernization from the west. Thus activities have been designed for government agencies. Consequently institution for governance and administration had been expanded in an unprecedented way. Government departments have started consuming major portion of revenue of the state leaving meager amount for development works.

Participation of the community in the developmental activities is necessary. The place where I live there is a Gurudwara named Nanakmatta- a religious place of pious Sikhs. Here in the langar a person is provided free meals. It provides food security to the people living nearby, in this remote and desolate place. The whole process is managed by the help of the community. Not only Sikhs but people of the other communities also contribute generously to the Gurudwara. The place is an excellent example of how communities can manage and run the institutions of traditional symbol mixing entrepreneurship with indigenous culture. Our system centers on middle class involving poor as voters rather than participants of the political system. They are confined to elections to parliament and state legislatures. Down below the district level one will find oppressive bureaucracy and dominant caste structure.

Thus it is imperative for us to protect our marginalized section from clutches of bureaucracy and economic exploitation in this process of modernization and Globalisation. It apparent from the studies that even if we provide equal opportunity to the people around some will always remain at the bottom due to differential natural capacities to face the challenges of life. It is here that we need to address the problem. Labour laws need to be changed to help these people live a dignified life. A semblance of organization need to be established in this unorganized sector so that these people are somehow insulated from the market forces of supply and demand. It is not only these people, who auction themselves every day to meet their daily needs require protection but also our intellectual mass which is being poached by multinationals through number of BPO centers. It is an irony that we feel elated by getting those jobs in western countries with lower salaries and subhuman conditions in which their own countrymen have refused to do. This also partly explains the type of condition we live in and general frustration that masses today face. It is a fact that these people who live outside have through their remittances provided comfortable position to our foreign exchange reserve, BPO centers have provided employment opportunities to the unemployed youths, there is no doubt about the contribution of these people to our economy. But interestingly it is this paradox that explains why GDP led growth does not mean growth in terms of HDI. All these need to be rationalized. Competitive economic development should be made compatible with human development.

Unless we do this, "We the people" cannot remain and retain the ethos of "we" unless all of us together move in the same direction, as citizens of the nation. Education, health, housing and productive livelihood are the prime requisites in order to become citizens. That is why the Directive Principles have accorded priority to these basics as the triggers and together guiding as the polestar of development. All those living under conditions of deficit, in respect of these prime indicators remain "we the people" waiting to be recognized as citizens. Sixty years of development has accentuated the problem, a definitive time target should be recognized and adhered to, on a consensual basis, in order to bring all the people to the base line as citizens of India. Without such mainstreaming India has to face, predictably more of political turbulence and social conflict even in the face of an accelerated economic growth⁴.

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