



INDIAN DEMOCRACY & Its CHALLENGES

Dr Sudeep Kumar, Assistant Professor (Political Science)

D A.V. College, Pehowa (Kuruksheetra)

Mail I'd gahlawat.sudeep8@gmail.com

We take pride in being the biggest democracy in the world. People have used their freedom to free speech, association, and religious practise for more than 65 years. At both the federal and state levels, we have witnessed peaceful changes in power. On the social and economic fronts, India has also been developing and evolving. At the same time, complaints about ongoing injustices, inequities, or failures to live up to the expectations of particular social groups are constantly heard. These folks don't see themselves as participating in democracy. You might want to know why. The definition of democracy is "government of the people, for the people, and by the people," as you may have read in a previous lesson.

Meaning of Democracy

Former American President Abraham Lincoln once declared that "democracy is a government of the people, for the people, and by the people." The word "democracy" comes from the Greek word *demokratia*, which means "rule of the people." *Demos*, which means "people," and *Kratos*, which means "power," are the two terms from which it was created. That is, the people hold the power in a democracy. The administrations that oversaw several of the Greek city-states, particularly Athens, are the foundation for this perspective. The general people possesses the ultimate authority under democracy and can exercise it directly or indirectly through a representative system, which frequently includes regular free elections.

Essential Conditions For Democracy

Only when a system meets the requirements for both the political and socioeconomic facets of people's participation and happiness can it be referred to as a true and comprehensive democracy. Let's point them out. Political factors and social and economic conditions could be the two basic types. If both are met, political democracy results from the first category, while social democracy results from the second.

The first and greatest are undoubtedly the political prerequisites of democracy. A Constitution and laws that allow the people total control must be passed in order for a society to be considered democratic.

The Constitution must guarantee the protection of fundamental and human rights like equality, freedom of expression, movement, association, and belief.

The democratic system must be based on the universal adult franchise in order to choose representatives at different levels of government. Additionally, all individuals must have access to



chances for political engagement in various facets of the political process in addition to regular elections. The executive branch must answer to the legislature, the legislature must respond to the people, and the judiciary must maintain its independence in order for there to be a responsible government. To convey the needs, demands, and complaints of the general populace, political institutions like political parties and interest and pressure groups (associations, other nongovernmental organisations) must be operational.

Challenges to indian Democracy

India has been acting as a responsible democracy ever since it gained independence. The same has received acclaim from people all across the world. It has successfully adapted to the difficult circumstances. Elections that were fair and free have occasionally taken place.

Every political office, from the President to the panchayats, is subject to elections. Political control has frequently been transferred without incident from one political party or set of parties to another, both at the federal and state levels. In our neighbouring countries, such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Myanmar, you may find a number of cases of military coups used to shift control.

India is a very large nation that is home to numerous distinct linguistic, cultural, and religious communities. At the moment of independence, its economy was fragile.

Significant geographic gaps, pervasive poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and a lack of nearly all public welfare resources were present. The expectations of the populace were very high for independence. India has undergone significant change, as was already indicated. However, the nation still faces a number of difficulties in meeting the demands of different societal groups. The difficulties stem from both the current internal and international circumstances as well as the absence of the necessary conditions for democracy to operate effectively.

Illiteracy

Widespread illiteracy was a fundamental barrier to India's democracy functioning well on the brink of independence, and it remains so now. The level of education among the public has a significant impact on both the success of democracy and the economical development of the country. Most importantly, it is a requirement for human dignity. However, formal literacy was in a nearly hopeless situation when India attained independence. In 1951, only 18.33% of people were literate, and only 8.9 percent of women were. Because voting is a personal manifestation of the power of the people, many individuals feared that citizens wouldn't be able to fulfil their duties efficiently or exercise their right to vote in a meaningful way.

Beyond allowing voters to take part in elections and exercise their right to vote in an educated manner, literacy is crucial. Citizens who are literate are better able to understand the country's challenges, demands, and interests. Additionally, it instills in them a sense of the importance of individual freedom and equality for everyone, and it guarantees that the representatives they elect actually reflect all of society's interests. For Indian democracy to function effectively, there must be universal literacy.



Poverty

It is a common belief that a hungry person's right to vote is meaningless. Food is his or her most basic need. Therefore, it is believed that poverty is the biggest threat to democracy. All forms of deprivations and inequalities stem from it, in actuality. People are deprived of the opportunity to have happy and healthy lives under this environment. Undoubtedly, India's long history of harsh British colonial rule left behind a legacy of poverty, which is still one of the most pressing problems in the country today. Today, a large percentage of Indians continue to live in poverty, or "BPL," as it is known. The "poverty line" is the economic threshold below which individuals are unable to meet their most basic needs for food, much less for clothing and shelter. In the 1960s, the government defined the poverty line as the amount of income needed to buy the bare minimum of palatable food that met minimal nutritional requirements for an individual's daily calorie intake. In order to sustain their quality of living, each individual in India needs, on average, 2400 calories per day in rural areas and 2100 calories per day in cities.

Gender Discrimination

There is discrimination against women and girls everywhere. You must have encountered the pervasive gender disparity in our society and political system. However, we are aware that one of democracy's guiding principles is gender equality. According to the Indian Constitution, the State is required to ensure that women are not subjected to discrimination and that men and women be treated equally.

The Directive Principles of outline Policy as well as the Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties both clearly outline these goals.

Communalism, casteism, and religious fundamentalism

Other significant obstacles to Indian democracy include communalism, casteism, and the radicalism of some faiths. They make the democratic system less functional and stable.

Casteism:

The caste system, which is said to have originated from the division of labour in ancient civilization, has grown into a more or less strict type of birth-based categorization. Has caste ever had an impact on your life or on society as a whole? You will concur that the practise of untouchability, which persists despite the constitutional ban put on it, is the most harmful and inhumane component of the caste system. As a result, 'Dalits' or 'so-called low castes' are now segregated, which denies them access to societal services like schooling. The Dalits have historically done some of the most physically demanding jobs in society, including menial labour.

Even in democratic political systems, casteism has had a harmful impact. In fact, casteism has earned a bad reputation for using caste consciousness for limited political purposes. The basis of democracy is threatened by the caste system. Caste identity is maintained by abusing democratic



institutions, such as equality-related fundamental rights, freedom of expression, assembly, and association, election participation, availability of a free press and media, and even legislative forums.

Communalism:

In India, communalism and religious extremism have taken on a very perilous shape and worrisome scope. Our multireligious society's pattern of coexistence is disrupted by them. India's nationalist identity is insulted by communalism, which also represents a devastating setback for the country's developing secular culture. It destroys our illustrious legacy of humanism and composite culture and jeopardises the stability of our democratic political system. Communalism is frequently mistakenly used to denote conservatism or religion. Communism is not the practise of joining a religious group or adhering to a particular faith.

Even if conservatism is associated with social sluggishness, it does not imply communism. In actuality, communalism is a political philosophy that supports a certain religious group. It utilises one religious community as a weapon against other communities and sees other faiths as adversaries. Humanism and even secularism are rejected. One indication of communalism is riots inside communities. Additionally, communalism has recently demonstrated that it poses a significant threat to our social and political life.

Fundamentalism in religion

Religious extremism encourages the manipulation of politics and religion. Fundamentalism is actually an ideology that promotes a return to orthodoxy and a strong adherence to religious principles. In order to completely seize control of their own countries, many religious fundamentalists deliberately fight progressive reforms. Religious extremism encourages the manipulation of politics and religion. Fundamentalism is actually an ideology that promotes a return to orthodoxy and a strong adherence to religious principles. In order to completely seize control of their own countries, many religious fundamentalists deliberately fight progressive reforms.

Regionalism

As a result of regional imbalances and inequities in development, regionalism has been a problem for Indian democracy as well. India is a pluralistic nation with a wide range of religions, languages, groups, tribes, and civilizations, as we all know. In specific geographic regions, there exist concentrations of various cultural and linguistic groups. There are still regional disparities and imbalances when it comes to differences in per capita income, literacy rates, the standard of health and educational services, the condition of the population, and the levels of industrial and agricultural development, even though the country's development process seeks to promote growth and development throughout all of its regions. Regional imbalances that exist and are maintained both across and within States foster feelings of prejudice, deprivedness, and neglect. Due to this circumstance, calls have been made for the founding of new States, the expansion of state authority, a rise in state autonomy, and even the independence of an entire nation.



Corruption

India has always had a serious problem with public corruption. In the 183-nation Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) published by Transparency International in 2011, India came in 95th place. In actuality, there is pervasive corruption in every sphere of life, including alleged centres of spirituality and religious organisations, as well as in areas like real estate, health care, education, business and industry, agriculture, transportation, and the armed forces. Corruption in the corporate, administrative, and political spheres is still present. One can clearly see the connection between industrialists, bureaucrats, and politicians that has led to corruption and corrupt behaviour.

All branches of the government, including the judicial system, have been entangled in the corruption's web.

Criminalization of Politics

In India, the Criminalization of politics has drawn more attention. According to reports, a number of political figures are opposed to democratic values and procedures. They use violence and other damaging, anti-democratic tactics to win elections. Without a doubt, this is a risky political trend that needs to be strongly restrained.

The judiciary has recently shown signs of taking corrective action to put a real check on such organisations while seriously noting criminal tendencies in politics. Both the federal government and numerous state governments have started making attempts to deal with this issue effectively. This is a cause for great celebration and shows how strong our nation's democracy is. We can also make a difference in the biggest democracy in the world by preventing those with criminal histories from running for government. This is because we are informed voters and knowledgeable citizens.

Political Violence

Violence has long existed, but using it for political ends puts any society at risk of failing to function. There have been numerous acts of violence in India. The prevalence of communal, caste, and political violence has increased significantly. Political, religious, and economic vested interests incite riots inside communities. There has been an increase in many forms of caste violence. There are still significant feudal components in the nation despite improvements in agriculture, the abolishment of the zamindari system, and occasions like the green and white revolutions. Now that higher and middle castes have significant opposing interests, there is strong political conflict that frequently degenerates into bloodshed.

Universal Literacy 'Education for All'

The Indian Constitution's drafters understood the value and importance of education for a democracy to function effectively. As a result, India's constitution still requires that all kids up to age 14 receive a free, compulsory education. To do this, numerous national and state governments have been cooperating. A National Literacy Mission was established in 1988 as a follow-up to the National Policy on Education of 1986 to develop and carry out activities to eradicate illiteracy under



the auspices of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. The goal of broad literacy hasn't been attained yet, though. Saakshar Bharat, a national programme, is now being carried out. Its goal is to help nonliterate and non-numerate persons aged fifteen and older acquire functional reading and numeracy so they can further their education beyond basic literacy and become academically equivalent to formal educational systems.

Poverty Alleviation

Since the 1970s, numerous programmes have been implemented to lessen poverty in India. Two categories can be made from these programmes: (i) There are schemes that help recipients rise above the poverty line by giving them useful possessions, skills, or both, allowing them to use themselves more effectively and generate more revenue. (ii) Programmes are also being established to give the impoverished and landless temporary wage work.

Elimination of Gender Discrimination

It is now understood that if women are not completely represented in the socioeconomic and political development processes, the principles of democracy "of the people, for the people, and by the people" cannot be fully achieved. For this reason, in addition to constitutional requirements, numerous laws, policies, and institutional reforms have been passed in order to promote the advancement of women. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution, passed in 1993, marked turning points for women's political emancipation. In the municipalities, municipal corporations, and institutions under the Panchayati Raj, one-third of the seats have been reserved thanks to these amendments. The National Policy for Empowerment of Women, whose main objective is to "bring about the advancement, development, and empowerment of women," was adopted in 2001. This is another noteworthy milestone. But achieving this objective will need a lot of work.

Getting Rid of Regional Unbalance

In India, addressing regional disparities has been prioritised throughout the planning process. Regional inequities are being lessened through efforts. A variety of government supported programmes have been ongoing for the past two to three decades to target various aspects of the backwardness of such regions, in addition to State-specific measures to minimise regional disparities within States.

Do you know if a similar plan is in place in your neighbourhood? Programmes like the Desert Programme, Hill Area Programme, Border Area Programme, Western Ghat Programme, Drought Prone Area Programme, and Tribal Development Programme are noteworthy ones. Regulatory and Judicial Reforms.

The effectiveness of all the aforementioned corrective actions is largely dependent on how well the administration runs, as well as how impartial and righteous the judiciary is. But there is still work to



be done on both counts. Over the past few years, India's public administration has been closely scrutinised for its performance. Some of the widely acknowledged issues affecting the administration include widespread corruption, inefficiency, waste, and irresponsiveness to citizen concerns. There is little doubt that the Indian court has remained impartial and independent, but there are severe issues with (i) the delayed resolution of cases, which causes delays and the buildup of backlogs, and (ii) the incredibly low rate of prosecution in criminal cases. There is little doubt that the Indian court has remained impartial and independent, but there are severe issues with (i) the delayed resolution of cases, which causes delays and the buildup of backlogs, and (ii) the incredibly low rate of prosecution in criminal cases.

Sustainable Development (Economic, Social, Environmental)

When India's democracy advances along the road of sustainable development, it can effectively address all the difficulties. The existence of democracy cannot be supported by a development strategy that ignores the fundamental needs of millions of people today and in the future. The goal of development must be to improve the level of living for all people. It must concentrate on eradicating unemployment, disease, discrimination, and poverty. Sustainable growth in the economic, social, and environmental spheres must be the goal of the development process.

Role of citizens in a Democracy

Do we, as Indian citizens, truly understand the importance of being a citizen in a democracy? Why is this position so crucial? Most individuals hold the view that the political system is supreme and that its citizens must respect and submit to it. To govern them is their purpose. But don't you think that in a democracy, this isn't the case? In a democracy like India, the people who make up its citizenry cannot and should not behave passively or like subjects. In truth, a democracy can only succeed and continue to be dynamic if its citizens internalise and reflect important concepts like equality, freedom, secularism, social justice, accountability, and respect for everyone in their mindset, thinking, and action. They must take initiative and acknowledge the chance to play the roles they wish to play in order to accomplish the goals of democracy.



References

1. Ashraf, P. "The role of media in good governance: Paid news culture of media and the challenges to Indian democracy." *International Research Journal of Social Sciences* 3.3 (2014): 41-43.
2. Rana, S. S., and B. L. Meena. "The new challenges of Indian democracy: Role of political parties." *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews* 4.3 (2013): 12-21.
3. Kumar, Arun. "New Challenges of Indian Democracy." *Asian Man (The)-An International Journal* 11.2 (2017): 213-215.
4. Lomawaima, K. Tsianina, and Teresa L. McCarty. "When tribal sovereignty challenges democracy: American Indian education and the democratic ideal." *American Educational Research Journal* 39.2 (2002): 279-305.
5. Ganguly, Sumit, Larry Diamond, and Marc F. Plattner, eds. *The state of India's democracy*. JHU Press, 2007.
6. Ketkar, Prafulla. "Organized criminal networks: A challenge to Indian democracy." *Peace and Conflict* 6.3 (2003).
7. Dhar, Prithvi Nath. "Indira Gandhi the 'Emergency' and Indian Democracy." Oxford, 2018.
8. Reddy, G. Ramachandhra. *The Challenges of Governance in Indian Democracy*. APH Publishing, 2007.
9. Naidu, M. V. "Fifty years of Indian democracy: an assessment." *Peace Research* 30.3 (1998): 1-14.
10. Manisha, M., and Sharmila Mitra Deb, eds. *Indian Democracy: Problems and Prospects*. Anthem Press, 2009.