

The Foundation Indian Democracy: An Analysis of Changing State-Society Relations

Mr. Chidanand S Anur

Assistant Professor of Political Science, Government First Grade College for Women, Vijayapur, Karnataka

ABSTRACT

India's democratic foundation, deep-rooted in history and societal ideology, emphasizes continuing democratic values guided by Dharma. Indian democracy is based on political equality, which means every citizen of India is equal before the law. Democracy is a structure of government where the supreme power is vested in the people. The Indian democracy faces challenge which includes caste politics, communalism and religious disputes. India faced unparalleled challenges include a mainly illiterate, population, diverse cultures, and poor economic conditions. The paper focuses the massive corruption; criminalization of politics; voter's apathy; disintegration of the party system; refuse in the executive, legislative and judicial responsibility; anxious federal relations due to over-centralization of power; incapability of the democratic system,

Key words: Democracy, Constitution, opposition, system, government, administration, institution and elections

INTRODUCTION

Indian Democracy provides as a symbol of hope of diversity and unity, showcasing how a multi-cultural, multilingual society can flourish under democratic principles. Institution of marriage is perhaps the best institution ever evolved by man. The same can be said about democracy. Democracy is so far the best form of government. It is the only channel that imparts proper dignity to individuals. It is the only form of government that inculcates proper atmosphere and proper opportunities in which man can feel himself at his best. Many great minds have described democracy in their own ways. Seeley says, "Democracy is a government in which everyone has a share." Dicey puts it like this. "Democracy is a form of government in which the governing body is comparatively a large fraction of the entire nation". Another political thinker has described democracy like this, "Democracy is the highest form of civilized government". Lincoln's definition of democracy is the best definition. He says, "Democracy is a government of the people, by the people and for the people"

Modern age is an age of democracy. The countries which have not embraced and adopted the democratic system in reality also claim to have established democracy. Even dictatorial states prefer to call themselves true democracy. Even Aristotle has cast his vote in favour of democracy. What better proof can be demanded to establish the superiority of democratic set-up? Democracy saw its dawn in Greece during the 5th century B.C. It was the government by the demos or the people. The age of Pericles is regarded as the golden age in the history of Greece; it was the age of democracy. In Rome and in India of the Vedic times democracy existed. "Modern representative democracies attempt to bridge the gap between Rousseau's depiction of the state of nature and Hobbes's depiction of society as inevitably authoritarian through 'social contracts' that enshrine the rights of the citizens, curtail the power of the state, and grant agency through the right to vote" (Olson, Mancur 1993:576)

All the definitions handed over to us give the meaning of democracy from the point of view of administration but democracy is not only a form of administration. It has its importance in the economic, social and moral fields. Political democracy is and can't be real in the absence of social and economic democracy. Everybody should have economic minimum. Dr Crozier says, "The essence of democracy is the equality of man's material and social conditions." "Democracy in India is the largest by population in the world. Elections in India started with the 1951-52 Indian general election. India was one of the first few countries in the world which adopted universal adult franchise right from independence, giving women and men equal voting rights" (Guha, Ramachandra 2008: 44) Before passing our judgment on the future of democracy in India we must ponder over the essential conditions necessary for the success of democracy. Democracy is a difficult form of government. The people can reap the fruit of democratic administration only if a particular

type of atmosphere is created. Some of the essentials of democracy can be counted as under: (i) written constitution. (ii) Subordinate status of army, (iii) enlightened citizenship, (iv) high standard of people, (v) wise leaders. (vi) Economic and social equality, (vii) education, (viii) free and honest press, (ix) peace and order, (x) spirit of cooperation and toleration. (xi) Local self government, (xii) well organized political, parties (xiii) separation of powers. Let us see if all these essentials exist in India.

Constitution implies a rule of law rather than of men. Sir Henry Maine says, "With a wise constitution the turbulence of democracy may be restrained and made as calm as water in a reservoir." "Criticism has been a key part of democracy, its functions, and its development throughout history. Some critics call upon the constitutional regime to be true to its own highest principles; others reject the values promoted by constitutional democracy" (Ober, Josiah 2005)

Written constitution checks despotic tendencies and safeguards the rights of the people as everything is properly and systematically defined. It shuns arbitrariness. Government has three wings, legislature, executive and judiciary. Constitution defines their powers clearly and thus there are bleak chances of overlapping of powers. Separation of powers guarantees checks and balances. India has a written constitution and it has all respects for separation of power.

Absence of militarism further guarantees the success of democracy. Army can contribute to the successful functioning of democracy only if it has subordinate status. If it is not so the army can prove to be the worst foe of democracy. Any time there can be overthrow of democratic set-up as power intoxicates and absolute power intoxicates absolutely. Thank God in India army is subordinate to the civil power of the state. "Elected by the *gana*, the monarch apparently always belonged to a family of the noble class of *Kshatriya* Varna. The monarch coordinated his activities with the assembly; in some states, he did so with a council of other nobles" (Robinson, 1997: 22)

Enlightened citizenship is a must for the success of democracy. Only deep thinking people can be politically conscious. Every individual should perform his duty sincerely. The conferment of the right to vote on a citizen implies that he has the sacred duty to vote and must perform it intelligently. He should expect three wings of the government to be honest, impartial, just and efficient only then he realizes his full responsibility towards the state. He should remain alert and if his rights are trampled and violated he should raise his voice against it. In India we have enlightened citizens. From time to time they raise their voice against wrong deeds of the government and try to keep it on the right track.

Prof. Hearnshaw opines that in democracy the people should be honest. "The democratic principle is essentially religious in character." Corruption has no place and if it is in vogue democratic values will be undermined. Parties should not make false propaganda and false promises to seize the reins of power. High moral character is very essential for the success of democracy. Citizens should not do anything that is detrimental to the interests of the state. No doubt India lacks people of high standard but their tribe is increasing day by day. "Some emphasize the central role of the assemblies and thus tout them as democracies; other scholars focus on the upper-class domination of the leadership and possible control of the assembly and see an oligarchy or an aristocracy" (Sharma 1968: 109)

People always look towards their leaders for guidance. So it is imperative that these leaders should be wise enough to be good guides. They should devote themselves to the cause of the masses. They should not misguide and instigate the public. Fortunately in India the number of wise leaders is on the increase. Economic and social inequality causes revolutions. It divides society into warring groups. A perpetual strife is raged between the haves and have-nots. Laski has rightly said, "Political liberty without economic liberty is a mere myth". Administration passes into the hands of the rich if there is no economic equality. The poor can sell their votes. A hungry stomach can't take interest in the problems facing the state. So there should be no poverty and people should have reasonable means of livelihood. Communalism, regionalism, class and caste distinctions wreck in democracy. If equal opportunities are not provided to people government can't last. In India our Constitution provides economic and social equality. There is rule of law.

The citizens should not remain mute spectators. They must participate in government work intelligently. This is possible only when they are educated. Only bookish knowledge will not do. Education makes people responsible and responsive and they learn the art of sifting chaff from the grain. Illiterate and ignorant people can't debate and discuss. Education makes them discerning. Only educated electorate can elect right type of persons. Education prevents people from signing on the dotted lines. Educated people can ask questions to be satisfied. Wrong policies they can object to. Government of India is making all efforts to educate people and make them know their worth.

Press acts as a kind of liaison between the government and the people. It is the watchdog of the democracy. It acquaints the people with the policies and works of the government. It also reflects the public reactions to these policies and works. It appreciates the good actions and condemns the bad and wrong actions at the government. It gives opportunity to common

people to air their views and grievances. It keeps the officials and representatives on their toes and reminds them frequently that they are accountable and answerable to the general public. Thus it checks arbitrary and tyrannical moves of the government. A free, honest and independent press is mirror to the government. In India, by and large press is free. Independent and honest, Recent exposures of the corrupt officials and representatives prove this beyond any iota of doubt If press is free, independent and honest no government has the guts to act undemocratically. Political education in only possible when press is free and impartial, Side by side peace and order, which are absolutely imperative to let democracy flower out fully, by and large prevail in India. Minor disorder and confusion do surface but they are not allowed to take bigger shape. People are vigilant and they give full support to the government to establish peace and order.

Democracy implies dissent and debate. No coercion can work. If the party in power can't stand dissent and criticism it tends to become authoritarian and arbitrary. Intolerance of criticism and dissent makes deep dents on democracy. Effective opposition saves a country from unnecessary upheavals. It is always better to wage a war of tongues than war of weapons. Honest, constructive and vigilant opposition will not allow any government to go astray. Responsible opposition will never allow any government to become despotic, complacent, and tardy negligent and slack in the performance of its duties. Government remains alert and active. Political parties should be well organized and based on political or economic grounds and not on religion, caste, language etc. Legislative excellence depends on responsible opposition. Only a strong opposition can guarantee good laws. Effective opposition can impart better political education to the people. If opposition indulges in criticism for the sake of criticism and condemns even the good measures of the party in power it automatically harms the institution of democracy. Personal rivalry and animosity should be avoided. Public interests should not be sacrificed at the altar of party interests. Indian political parties are products of circumstances. But slowly and steadily they are maturing into responsible and effective lots.

Success of democracy depends largely on decentralization of administration. Panchayats. Municipal committees, Zila parishads etc., impart political training to the masses. People get a taste of governing themselves and it develops political consciousness and makes people responsible and serious. In India we do have local bodies. Decentralization of power is prevalent.

In nutshell we can say democracy seeks welfare at the people, works on the will of the people, is based on the principal of equality, ensures liberties, imparts political education, develops spirit of patriotism and national unity, builds national character, provides progressive government etc. etc. So it is liked by one and all. Still many criticize democracy and call it democracy. In the past also it had been condemned. Lenin said, "Democracy is a bourgeois conception which the revolutionary proletariat must overthrow." Trotsky, said, "Democracy is a wretched and worthless masquerade." There is no doubt that democracy also suffers from some defects.

Democracy gives more importance to quantity rather than to quality. It is based on the assumption that one man is as good as another. So there is no need of experts and qualified people. The equality of man is a myth. But in democracy wise man and a fool are on the same level. In reality all men are not equal. So it is impossible to establish economic, social and political equality. Many a time duffers are elected to rule. How can they rule? They become tools in the hands of officials and bureaucracy prevails. People suffer.

Democracy is an expensive government. Huge money is spent on elections. So in reality democracy is a government by the rich. It turns into dictatorship of majority. Generally political parties are formed on the basis of religion, caste, language, region etc. Each party demands loyalty from its members. This curtails individual liberty. Regional political parties harm national unity.

When we make an appraisal of our democracy we find it falling short of many important requisites. It is no respecter of great men. It lacks secrecy and speed. In wartime it proves to be a failure. In India a large majority of people are still illiterate. Disparity between the haves and the have-nots has widened. 30% of the people live below poverty line. We may boast of stupendous progress in agriculture and industrial spheres but fruits of progress have not percolated to the have-nots. They have been monopolized by influential and rich people. The rich are becoming richer, the poor poorer. Do we have economic and social equality? Perhaps not. No economic security we could give to people. Poverty and unemployment prevail. Where lies the value of vote for a poor man? He can sell it any time. We still come across farmers committing suicide. We still fight over caste, colour and creed. In a secular state communalism surfaces time and again.

Unfortunately there had been growing nexus between the legislature and the executive. Both hoodwink people. They ignore national interests and nurture their own selfish ends. They try to undermine judiciary, the backbone of democracy. Frequent constitutional amendments sought after are nothing but gimmicks to befool judiciary. Criminalizations of politics and

money and muscle power have made democracy a mockery. Helpless voters have no liberty to vote freely. Superfluity of political parties hinders consistency in the implementation of government programmes.

Still democracy in India has not failed though it looks so. Ballot is a better method of ruling than the bullet. Healthy and effective opposition is developing. Honest press is exposing the corrupt. Constitution is followed in letter and spirit. The judiciary is still above board. Peaceful changes of governments and successful conducting of general elections have cemented the roots of democracy. The merits of democracy outweigh its demerits. Dunning says. "Democracy has closed some of the old channels of evil, it has opened some new ones, but it has not increased the stream." C.D. Burns observes, "No one denies that existing representative assemblies are defective, but even if an automobile does not work well, it is foolish to go back into farm cart, however, romantic." Democracy is a human institution and its failings are the failings of human beings. Democracy has never claimed on its own behalf that it is a panacea for all ills. We are faced with formidable problems yet we are on the march. Government is doing its utmost to build a socialist society. One may denounce democracy but one single attribute confirms its superiority and that is its inevitable election schedule. Government has to be responsible and responsive as masses remain masters. India is a vast country having untold disparities. Outside world wonders as to how we conduct elections smoothly. Here lies the success of democracy. Future of democracy in India is bright and secure.

Delivering the first V.M. Tarkunde Memorial lecture on "Indian Democracy-Reality or Myth" , the noted jurist and former Attorney General of India. Soli Sorabjee opined that democracy was not heading in the right direction in India and if it were not for an independent judiciary and a free press, it would have disappeared a long time ago. Criminalization of politics and corruption had bedeviled the process of free and fair elections and recouping poll expenses was the prime motivation for unscrupulous elected representatives. "The notion of service to nation is unknown to them. Electoral compulsions for funds have become a foundation for the superstructure corruption. It's hard to tell if democracy or mobocracy is in action. Cleansing political institutions is vital for democracy."

CONCLUSION

India is a very large country occupied of diversities – linguistically, culturally and religiously. At the time of independence, it was economically underdeveloped. Democratic practices need harmony building and compromise which is a slow process. Defection is the worst form of political immorality. Still there is hope that Indian democracy will not go astray so long as judiciary is at its back. Politically enlightened masses will not let democracy see its nadir. One of the primary challenges is the presence of money power and the influence of criminal elements in elections. The democratic form of government make sure the liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and opportunity, fraternity.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Basu D.D(2001) *Introduction to the Constitution of India*, Prentice –Hall of India Private limited
- [2]. Guha, Ramachandra (2008) *India after Gandhi : The History of the World's largest Democracy* (Indian ed.). India: Picador.
- [3]. Olson, Mancur (1993) "*Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development*". The American Political Science Review. 87 (3): Panday, J.N (2014) *Constitutional Law of India*, Central Law Agency, Alahabad,
- [4]. Robinson, E. W. (1997) *The First Democracies: Early Popular Government Outside Athens*. Franz Steiner Verlag.
- [5]. Ober, Josiah (2005) "*Democratic Athens as an Experimental System: History and the Project of Political Theory*". Princeton/Stanford Working Papers in Classics Paper No. 110512. Rochester,
- [6]. Sharma, J. P. (1968) *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*. Motilal Banarsidass.