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Seven decades of Indian republic

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Abstract

India has adopted the parliamentary system of democracy as found in Britain. The constitution which came into force on January 26th, 1950 upholds the principles of Liberty, Equality, and fundamental Rights. It also introduces the other features of democracy like Adult Franchise, Periodical elections, Freedom of press, local self-Government institutions, secret ballot system, Decentralization of power, Independent Judiciary, political parties etc., unlike, the colonial master, the UK, India preferred a Republican government. Here public offices are open to all eligible citizens and there is no place for hereditary principle.

Keywords: parliamentary system, democracy, constitution, fundamental rights, adult franchise, secret ballot system, decentralization

Introduction

The present century is regarded as the century of Democracy. Democratic system of government has been adopted by many countries in the world. It has become the most popular form of government and cherished by almost the entire humanity. It has become so popular that almost every body claims to be a democrat. Though it is a key political ideal, it is very difficult to give an accepted meaning of democracy because it is a multidimensional concept. The word is used so loosely in these days that there is a confusion in the minds of many as to what it actually is or what does it actually mean? To some it is a form of government and to others it is a condition of society. It is understood differently by different people. Broadly speaking it is used in three different senses: 1) Political 2) Social and 3) Economic

After getting independence in 1947 of 15th August from the Britishers India emerged as the Sovereign, Democratic Republic since 26th January 1950 when the constitution came into force. The preamble of the constitution of India as it was originally enacted reads as follows: We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a sovereign, Democratic Republic

And to secure to all its citizens –

Justice Social, Economic and political

Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

Equality of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all

Fraternity assuring the dignity of the Individual and the unity of the Nation;

In our constituent Assembly this twenty sixth day of November 1949

Do hereby Adopt, Enact and give to ourselves this constitution.

It may be said that this preamble embodies what is the desire of every Individual of the country, that this constitution should have its root, its authority, its sovereignty from the people that it has;

The preamble proclaims the solemn resolution of the people of India “to constitute India into a sovereign, Democratic Republic”. India had already ceased to be a dependency of the British Empire by the passing of the Indian Independence Act, 1947 from 15 August 1947 to 26 January 1950, her political status was that of a Dominion in the British commonwealth of Nations. But with the inauguration of the present constitution, India became a sovereign Republic like the united states of America or the swiss Republic.

The term “Democratic” is comprehensive in nature. In a narrow political sense it refers only to the form of government, a Representative and responsible system under which those who administer the affairs of the state are chosen by the electorate and accountable to them.

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But in its broadest sense, it embraces, in addition to political democracy, social and economic democracy as well. It is in this sense that the term “democratic” is used in the preamble.

The term “Republic” implies an elected head of the state, called indirectly for a fixed period of five years. A Republic also means two more things: one, Vesting of political sovereignty in the people and not in a single Individual like a king; second, the absence of any privileged class and hence all public offices being opened to every citizen without any discrimination.

Even before the term socialist was added by the 42nd amendment in 1976, the constitution had a socialist content in the form of certain Directive Principles of state policy. Notably, the Indian brand of socialism is a democratic socialism which involves the Nationalization of all means of production and distribution of and the abolition of private property. Democratic socialism, on the other hand, holds faith in a mixed economy, where both public and private sectors co - exist side by side. As the Supreme Court says “Democratic Socialism aims to end Poverty”, ignorance, disease and inequality of opportunity. Indian socialism is a blend of Marxism and Gandhism, leaning heavily towards Gandhian Socialism. The New economic policy (1991) of liberalization, privatization and globalization has, however diluted the socialist credential of the Indian State.

The term secular too was incorporated to the preamble in the 42nd Amendment in 1976. The secular character runs through various provisions of the constitution of India. The Constitution is not founded in any religion, but respects all religions without any discrimination. It provides equal rights to all people. It protects minorities. It respects rule of law. The constitutional fathers incorporated the ideal of secularism in almost the entire constitution. Various provisions in Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles and even many provisions contain the ideal of secularism. We can proudly say that the India has not divided in to parts on the basis of Religion so far since 1947. It shows that the India is strongly stands for the ideal of Secularism.

Working of Democracy In Indian Republic

India has adopted the parliamentary system of democracy as found in Britain. The constitution, which came into force on January 26th, 1950, upholds the principles of liberty, equality and fundamental rights. It also introduces the other features of democracy like adult franchise, periodical elections, the free press, local self-government institutions, secret ballot system, decentralization of power, independent judiciary, political parties etc.

But when we make a critical appraisal of our Indian democracy, we find our democracy lacking in certain requisities. Many people expressed great discontentment on the performance of our democratic institutions. The common man feels disillusioned and utterly frustrated. There are a number of factors which crippled our democracy and they are eating away its very vitality. Hence, some people went to the extent of demanding the imposition of dictatorship in the country atleast for some period. The reasons that compelled them to offer this extreme suggestion are : 1) Illiteracy has not yet been weeded out. Masses in general are steeped in ignorance, 2) Glaring disparities between the rich and the poor still persist. Poverty is appalling and unemployment is rampant in all spheres of life, particularly in the political and administrative fields; 3)

Enlightened citizen ship has yet not dawned. People have yet to imbibe in themselves the true spirit of democracy; 4) Caste exclusiveness, linguistic and communal feelings, and regional tendencies still persist, 5) Sound and effective opposition party has not yet developed. Both at the centre and in the states, the opposition parties are extremely weak and disorganised. Political parties are constituted not on social or economic principles but on regional, sectional, linguistic Considerations. Personality is given greater importance and prominence than ideologies. 6) Social evils like Sati, dowry, untouchability, bonded labour, etc have not yet been totally eliminated; 7) Indiscipline, lawlessness, violence, exploitation atrocities on weaker sections, etc are on the increase, 8) There is a crisis of values in all fields of life. Moral values, the spirit of tolerance, cooperation and compromise are conspicuous by their absence. 9) Inefficiency in administration, lack of wise leadership, growing scams, exploitation, rural poverty, gagged press, absence of economic democracy and an umpteen shortcomings and deficiencies made Indian democracy very weak.

All this does not mean to say that democracy has miserably failed in our country. The experience in the last seven decades reveals that democracy and parliamentary institutions have been doing much better in our country than most of the Asian and African countries which have adopted democratic system of government along with us. In fact, some of the countries in these two continents have abandoned democracy and switched over to dictatorship. Moreover, seventy three years of independence is not a very big period to assess the success or failure of a political system in the history of a nation. A country With vast territory and huge population which groaned under the heels of foreigners could not have established democratic values and traditions overnight. By and large the people of India have exhibited democratic spirit and traditions. Though majority of them are illiterate, ignorant and steeped in poverty, they have shown that they are not unworthy of adult franchise and democratic institutions. So far seventeen general elections were held successfully and peacefully to the Lok Sabha besides elections to the state legislatures and local bodies. With all their weaknesses, the Indian masses cooperated with their leaders, showed much tolerance and patience. On many occasions, for instance in 1977 general elections, when the national emergency was lifted, they showed a great sense of political awakening. Even in times of emergency like the Chinese aggression in 1962, Pakistan's attack in 1965 and 1971, the democratic institutions in the country worked well. When several countries in Asia, Africa and other parts of the world have had great upheavals and witnessed constitutional break down, India continued as a stable nation and her parliamentary democracy remained intact. All this shows the deep faith of the Indians in democracy and democratic traditions. Democracy in our country may not be as successful as it has been in Western countries. It takes some more time for our infant democracy to grow into a full-pledged one. We have to develop true democratic traditions in the country in the meanwhile. At present, democracy in our country is not a failure, but it is relatively successful.

Suggestions For The Success of Democracy In Indian Republic

India is the largest democracy in the world. Political rights

are granted to the citizens of India. By availing the political rights, the citizens can elect or change government. Indian democracy can achieve greater success if the following changes are brought in.

1. **Promotion of socio-economic equalities:** Social and economic equalities are essential for the success of democracy in India. The hierarchical caste structure greatly impedes the smooth functioning of democracy. The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few often resulted in the subversion of democratic institutions. (So the State must take steps immediately to eliminate the concentration of wealth and adopt practices that promote social equality)
2. **Promotion of education:** A large majority of Indians are still illiterate. The success of democracy requires that the citizens are adequately educated. The State, voluntary organization and the intelligentsia must take effective steps for the promotion of education so that the voters can use the suffrage properly.
3. **Responsible opposition:** One of the weaknesses of Indian democracy is the absence of strong and responsible opposition. The opposition parties are often in disarray. They must realise their role in protecting the democratic values. The voters should always remember that success of democracy depends on the strong opposition in legislatures.
4. **Independent Press:** Democracy cannot flourish in a country where the press is gagged and does not enjoy the freedom. The press is regarded as the backbone of democracy. A free press brings to light the arbitrary actions of the Government. Hence it is described as the watch-dog of democracy. It serves as a link between the people and the Government by ventilating the grievances of the people. It offers constructive criticism and force the Government to be responsible and responsive to the needs of the people. It can fulfill these obligations properly only when it is free from the clutches of Governmental control.
5. **Local self government:** Democratic institutions at the local level are essential for the success of democracy. They train people in the art of leadership. Genuine democratic decentralization can alone strengthen democracy at the grass root level. If local self-government succeeds democracy succeeds at the regional and at the national level. So the local self institutions must be given more powers and elections should be held at regular intervals.
6. **Honest Administration:** Honest administration is another important requisite for the success of Indian democracy. Dishonest administration can hardly appeal to the masses. In fact the common man loses faith in the system which is vitiated by corrupt and dishonest administration.
7. **Dedicated Leadership:** The success of democracy in India depends on the dedicated and committed leadership. If leaders do not have immense faith in the democratic values, they do greater harm. People must support only those leaders who have genuine faith in democracy and defeat demagogues.
8. **Vigilance of the people:** The most important condition to make Indian democracy successful is the constant vigilance of its people. All the voters should vote honestly. They must defeat political parties which try to

whip up casteism, communalism, linguism, regionalism etc. The people must fight against all the anti-democratic elements and practice.

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