

Future of Democracy In India

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Abstract:

Democracy refers to the system of government run by through the elected representatives of the people of the country. Democracy means that the people should rule themselves. India is a democratic country and has a well defined constitution of her own. This constitution has given us the right to choose our government. It has given us some rights like freedom of speech, freedom of movement, freedom of the press etc. The press guards the democratic rights carefully to ensure the future of democracy. They are free to criticize any action of the government, if it goes against public interest. Democracy in a vast country like India will survive if people are made conscious of their own duties and responsibilities with the inspirations and efforts of the leaders who should stand united irrespective of their political ideologies for the integrity of our country.

Keywords: Democracy, government, constitution, freedom.

Introduction

The achievements of our democracy are many. It has made the people aware of their duties and responsibilities. That India is a true democratic country can be proved by the fact that after the sound defeat in 1977, Congress (I) was re-elected to power by the same voters with Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister within a short span of time. Indian democracy is the wonder of the world. Such a big country is progressing by leaps and bounds through her democratic government. It is really unparallel in the constitutional history of the world. Democracy is the best form of government so far found but it is not without its defects and its critics. We vote for our candidates and it is they who carry on the government for a period of five years. The common people relapse into political indolence after election. They become the victims of their representative who deceive them with large promises and use them for their own private interests. In India democracy there is party system that brings order in the sphere of politics and administration. As democracy is the rule of the whole population, the members either in the Lok Sabha (House of people) or in the Assembly should range themselves in different parties each with its own leader. They should behave like well-organized army for the progress of the country. But the future of Indian democracy is now being threatened by some ugly forces supporting provincialism, regionalism, religionism, casteism, succession etc. Now we see the political unrest in Assam, Jammu-Kashmir, etc. that may put our democracy into jeopardy. The political leaders should stand united against this democracy juncture of our country to give a strong antipode to such antinational forces. Common mass should be educated and conscious of the importance of democracy in India for their socio-economic progress. A strong central government is essential for this purpose.

Basics of Democracy

The word Democracy is derived from two Greek words: Demos meaning "People", and Kratos meaning "Power". It essentially means "Power to the People". The People decide which institutions and laws will govern them and their land. A democracy regards the People's will to be paramount. `Vaxpopuli, vaxdei`,

that is "the voice of the people is the voice of God". Hence, it is highly idealised and eulogised by all as a government "by the people, of the people, for the people". Essentials of a democracy include a just legislature, an independent and strong judiciary, an honest and incorruptible executive and free press. Each of these citadels supports a thriving democracy. India is the largest democracy in the world with a parliamentary system of Government, which for all intents and purposes, is the best means for the expression of the popular will. Our democratic system of governance is run by the representatives of the people, elected periodically. Indian democracy is based on universal adult franchise and a healthy and competitive party-system. These parties play a significant role in the elections and in the smooth functioning of the democracy. These political parties are the very life-blood of Indian democracy. Liberty, equality, justice and fraternity are the very cornerstones of democracy. They are not available under dictatorship and utilitarian forms of government. The Constitution guarantees all the Indian citizens these basic freedoms and rights in the form of six broad categories of Fundamental Rights. There is free, independent and separate judiciary to see that these rights are not violated and tampered with. All are equal before law, right from the Prime Minister to a peon. This is the very spirit and essence of our democracy.

Democracy is the best form of government so far found but it is not without its defects and criticism. Communalism, casteism, regionalism, insurgency, terrorism and illiteracy, etc. are some of the basic problems and challenges being faced by our democracy. Ours is a secular country. Secularism means freedom to profess, practise and propagate one's religion without interfering with that of others. There cannot be any discrimination on the basis of one's faith and religion either. There is no state religion and all religions and sects are equal before the law. But at times, communal and fundamentalist forces raise their ugly heads and cause considerable strain and threat to the spirit of democracy. In our country, there are very many political parties, some of which are communal, regional or limited to a particular class of people. During elections, narrow caste considerations are aroused and exploited by unscrupulous politicians. Thus, the behaviour of a large number of electors is largely influenced by such dirty propaganda. Communal feelings and considerations play an important role in the selection of candidates in various constituencies. The leaders themselves fan communal feelings in constituencies where such a step materially brightens their election prospects. Regionalism is another major factor in deciding the fate of candidates in the elections. The politicians are fully aware of these weaknesses of the people and take maximum advantage of them as the circumstances demand. The recent spate of communal unrests in Assam, Jammu & Kashmir and Uttar Pradesh has time and again put our democracy in jeopardy. Therefore, we have to be very vigilant and circumspect about it. Democracy has been successful in India because we are a tolerant people and have proper regard for the others' point of view.

The multiplicity of parties also causes lack of a strong opposition, which is essential for smooth functioning of democracy. A strong opposition party is capable of providing an alternative government, if such an opportunity arises, and it also keeps a check on the authoritarian tendency and high-handedness of the government in power. They criticise the government policies in a democratic and constructive spirit so that national integration, secularism, unity, liberty, and the rights of the people are preserved and further strengthened.

Possible Threats To Democracy

Needless to say that democracy is a philosophy that has to be put into practice with certain degrees of variations in different parts of the world, without sacrificing its essence. Indian democracy is

comparatively young and not as strong as western democracies. It does still suffer from many ills, which are likely to linger for some time before they are completely removed. The greatest ill of our democracy is that a large number of people in India (approximately 70 per cent) are illiterate. They do not properly understand the functioning of democratic institutions. They are unaware of the great value of their votes. These ignorant and illiterate people are easily swayed by cheap propaganda, empty slogans and attractive promises. Shrewd and unscrupulous politicians misguide them with tall talk and exploit their ignorance for their selfish objectives.

Another significant evil in our democracy is that the people have not been able to overcome the feelings of caste-ism, communalism and regionalism. During elections narrow caste considerations are aroused and exploited by unscrupulous politicians. Thus the behaviour of a large number of electors is largely influenced by such dirty propaganda. Communal feelings and considerations play an important role in the selection of the candidates in various constituencies. Sometimes, it is seen that the leaders themselves fan the communal feelings in constituencies where such a step materially affects their election prospects. Regionalism is another major factor in deciding the fate of candidates in the elections. The politicians are fully aware of these weaknesses of the people and take maximum advantage of them as the circumstances demand.

Another bane of our democracy is the influence of big money in the elections. Elections are very costly affairs. The political parties and individual candidates as well, spend large sums of money on elections. Money has become a major decisive factor in our elections. In every election money is squandered on transport, film shows, and propaganda to influence the electorate. Political parties collect large sums of money from big businessmen and industrial concerns. After having won the election the political parties try to protect and further the interests of their donors. The real sufferer in this political corruption is the common man, who is neglected, and progressive and welfare schemes to ameliorate his pitiable conditions are shelved.

In our country there are very many political parties the multiplicity of parties is the cause of lack of a strong opposition party, which is essential for smooth functioning of democracy. A strong opposition party is capable of providing an alternative government, if such an opportunity is available, and it also keeps a check on the best in every individual. Violence is the anti-thesis of democracy. It is a bad sign. The democratic process has no place for violence. Democracy functions on the basis of majority or consensus. Another serious problem that confronts our infant democracy is that of political defection. It has polluted our democratic life and is regarded as a serious weakening factor that breeds instability. The above mentioned weaknesses and evils do exist in our democracy and they have been hindering the healthy growth of democratic practices and traditions in India. It can be claimed without any fear of contradiction that India is the biggest and the strongest democracy in the world. Nevertheless, the people in India have shown remarkable faith in democratic institutions. Indeed democracy promises a government wherein each individual has a say in the affairs of the administration; parliament is representative of the people: and the independence of the judiciary is indisputable.

The functioning of democratic institutions in India has been satisfactory on the whole. Scope for improvement is always there. Let us hope that with the expansion of education and eradication of social evils, India will have the biggest and the most efficient democracy in the world. Democracy is a form of government that has been defined variously by different thinkers. Abraham Lincoln, the

famous President of the United States of America, described democracy as 'the government of the people, by the people and for the people.' Mahatma Gandhi's notion of democracy, was that under it the weakest would have the same opportunity as the strongest. There have been political thinkers and statesman who have rejected the philosophy of democracy by designating it as a bourgeois conception being wretched and masquerade. There is no doubt that present age is the age of democracy and it has developed into a very strong movement all over the world. Even the communist countries which reject the basic Western philosophy of democracy call themselves people's democracy because they cannot resist the temptation of being regarded as democrats.

Conclusion

Needless to say that democracy is a philosophy that has to be put into practice with certain degrees of variations in different parts of the world, without sacrificing its essence. Indian democracy is comparatively young and not as strong as western democracies. It does still suffer from many ills, which are likely to linger for some time before they are completely removed. The greatest ill of our democracy is that a large number of people in India (approximately 70 per cent) are illiterate. They do not properly understand the functioning of democratic institutions. They are unaware of the great value of their votes. These ignorant and illiterate people are easily swayed by cheap propaganda, empty slogans and attractive promises. Shrewd and unscrupulous politicians misguide them with tall talk and exploit their ignorance for their selfish objectives.

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