



Achievements and challenges of Indian democracy standing at the threshold of platinum jubilee

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Abstract

Even in this era of 21st century, the democratic system of independent India, which follows the ancient democratic culture, stands at the entrance of the platinum jubilee year. The long journey of smooth functioning of the governance system of democracy has been very volatile. During this time we also saw the instability and poor system of coalition government while also realizing the harsh decision of majority governments. We have also seen the journey from Nationalization of Banks to Net Banking system, from cash payments to Digital payment and increase or decline in GDP rate. We have seen the creation of new laws in place of traditional laws and to some extent the judicial system of the country has come under the purview of Right to information act. During this period, we saw the increasing participation of youth at every level of the political system, increasing the political consciousness and voting percentage of voters and the common people occupying the top posts of the country. Considering the positive and negative role of the opposition, felt the sensitive and transparent role of the administration, then saw the highest leadership of the country while discharging the role of the "Pradhan Sevak" of the people. Undoubtedly, our democratic system is getting stronger day by day, but some problems related to education, health, unemployment, poverty, migration, security and elections are blocking the path of healthy functioning of democracy. In such situation, a mature political leadership, the formulation and implementation of farsighted policies and our self-determination, self-discipline, self-dependency, discretion and positive thinking will give a "Dimond Status" to the democracy of this country.

Keywords: democratic decentralization, administrative-transparency, politics of development, democratic values and ideals, judicial activism and impartiality, unemployment, poverty, migration, election process

1. Introduction

After hundreds of years of slavery, a new journey started in the path of democracy in independent India. The framers of the constitution represented the foundations of democracy and secularism as the basis for taking this nation on the path of socio-economic and political justice. Keeping on this path, today we have established ourselves as the largest democratic nation in the world. On analyzing this journey till platinum jubilee, we find that-on one hand we have got many achievements but on the other hand, due to circumstantial deviancies have also been deprived of many achievements. While vigorously combating all obstacles, our mature political leadership, visionary policies and programs, sensitive administration, decentralized system and energetic entrepreneurs-all are constantly striving to make this country's democratic system stronger and successful at its own level. Institutional and constitutional elements such as Panchayati Raj System, Independent Judiciary, Independent Election Commission, Adult suffer age, Interdependence of Legislature and Executive and five-year plans, 20-point programs, MANREGA and Make in India schemes have given auspiciousness to Indian democracy. This Indian path of democratic system is not only moving us in the direction of multifaceted development but also establishing us globally.

2. Review of Literature

Re-creating the ancient roots of democratic systems and institutions, the constitution makers decided to take independent India on the democratic path from 26th January 1950. The democratic system and institutions existed in this

country during the Vedic period. In this era, organizations called "Sabha and Samiti" existed. The Samiti was functioning as the representative body of the people and the Sabha-as a small and elected body of senior citizens. Kashyap and Gupta (2005) ^[1] have cited that-"The working Republic states existed in the later Vedic era. These ancient republics represent the ideal example of the people-oriented institutions and self-government in India's. Sovereignty was vested in the people in these republics. They followed many such rules and parliamentary procedures that are prevalent in today's era"(1). Similarly Sir Charles Metcalfe(1830)also describe that-"The village communities are little republics, having nearly everything they want within themselves and almost independent of any foreign relations"(2). Valmiki prasad Singh (2017) ^[4] has also quoted that-"In independent India, the Judiciary, Election Commission, Audit system and the Right to information act can be called an important step towards strengthening democracy"(3). An analytical study of the rich historical legacy of Indian democracy standing at the entrance of the platinum jubilee and emerging new trends after independence has been studied under this research paper.

3. Objectives of the Research Paper

The following two objectives have been set for the analytical study of the research title -

1. Analyze achievements of democratic institution, policies and programs in independent India.
2. Analyzing obstacles and difficulties in the path of democracy and presenting practical suggestions for their solution.

4. Research Methodology

This research paper is completely based on the secondary data. The study material available in the books, journals, magazines and officials' websites has been made the basis for analyzing the research title. Historical, descriptive and analytical method has been used for overall evaluation of the research title.

5. Hypothesis

The hypothesis has been set for this research paper is that-"Democratic traditions, values, ideals, policies and programs and institutions have played an important role in strengthening the Indian Democracy".

6. Discussion on Research-Paper

Today, India has established itself as the largest democratic state in the world. To truly analyze the 73 years of democratic journey of this country, we have to concentrate on various aspects related to it. Such as the culture of unity in diversity, the functioning of one party and coalition governments, the changing role of the opposition, administrative complexities, lack of adequacy of infrastructure, problems like un-employment, poverty, disease and Casteism, Linguism, regionalism, Communalism, Naxalism and Terrorism. While analyzing the research title, we should not forget that democratic system has flourished in the developed economy and quality education in some western countries, whereas Indian democracy has grown in an environment with many shortcomings and problems. In spite of this, we have not only kept our democracy alive but also gave it sufficient strength.

In independent India democracy started its journey through constitutional provisions like adult suffrage, fundamental rights, independent election commission and fairness of judiciary. In the initial years, a political atmosphere was provided to the citizens through fundamental rights so that democracy can flourish in our country. Later, democracy was pushed towards the progressive path by removing the right to property from the fundamental rights category and adding the right to education in these categories. These rights provided the citizens with an independent environment which later proved to be a nutrient for democracy. Similarly, due to the provisions of adult suffrage, "A system of one man one vote and one vote one value" was established in India. Due to both these constitutional provisions, all Indians including youth not only began to understand the importance of their political rights but also grew in sufficient political consciousness, which is essential for democracy. Today, enough discussion and thinking on activities related to political system from villages to cities has become a part of the daily life of common citizens. The increasing participation of the people at every level of the political system and the increase in the percentage of voting in the general election is a direct proof of our growing faith in democracy.

Article 324 of the constitution of India provides that-"The constitution provides for the establishment of an independent body in the name of Election Commission to superintend the entire process and mechanism of elections and for some other ancillary functions"(4). In our country the independent election commission has conducted the entire election process impartially and with transparency. The electoral process of our country is also very simple, as a

result of which people get connected easily at every stage of the process. The entire history of the election process is a witness to the fact that after the declaration of election results in our country, the transfer of power from one party to another or from one coalition to another is easily done under democratic process.

Similarly, since ancient times, panchayats have been the key-stone of the local-self-government. In independent India, this system started from Nagour, Rajasthan on 2nd October 1959. After this, several committees were formed for expansion of Panchayati raj system at central and state level. Eventually, the central government passed the "73rd constitutional amendment act in April 1993 and granted constitutional status to Panchayati institutions. Under this three tier system, the direct election of representatives was ensured by the people. Similarly, at every level of Panchayati system, proper representation was also provided to all classes including women"(5). Today, after the completion of 25 years of the implementation of this act, we can easily say that the provision contained in the act have strengthened the democratic system by creating a democratic character in the people and people's representatives. Presently, 18 states of India gave strength to democracy by providing 50% reservation to women in Panchayati institutions and giving representation to women in proportion to their population. We should not forget that Panchayati institutions only pave the way for entry into the Assembly and Parliament.

The economic aspect of democracy in independent India has also been gradually strengthened. After independence, where the green revolution made this country self-sufficient in the field of food production, the blue revolution gave it the second position in the world in fisheries production. Similarly, as a result of the white revolution, India became the third largest producer of milk at global level. Along with nationalization of banks, we had modernized them in such a way that consumers can get the benefit of world class banking system. Efforts were made to fulfill the primary needs of all citizens, to raise their standard of living. An attempt was made to control poverty, hunger and unemployment through five-year plan, 20 points programs and schemes like Make-In India and Start-Up India. By adopting LPG policy, it was tried to strengthen the Indian economy by putting infrastructure according to the global economy. Expected success achieved with respect to increase in foreign exchange reserves, efforts to achieve high growth rates are continuing. Integrated tax system implemented through GST across the country. Demonetization of currency was attempted to solve the problem of black money. With a view to strengthening the rural economy the E-Marketing system is being promoted to establish direct communication between the producer and the customers. Overall, the economic aspect of democracy is being strengthened by improving the economic condition of the poor and deprived sections, providing economic stability to the middle class and keeping in mind the needs of corporate houses.

According to the provisions contained in the Indian constitution, all classes in India have been provided equal opportunities in all fields of life. Similarly, our constitution has reserved some post for SC, ST and OBC'S in parliament and assembly. These classes have also been provided reservation in central-state government jobs. The biggest proof of the success of Indian democracy is that the common citizen of this country can also achieve the highest

post of governance and administration according to his ability and capacity. Providing constitutional, economic and legal protection to women, children, labors, old people and Divyangjan is auspicious sign for Indian democracy.

The experience of the last 7 decades tells us that the independent and impartial judiciary has protected democracy with its free and fair decisions, on the other hand, the free press and media, which are considered as the fourth pillar of democracy, also played a very important role in strengthening democracy by generating political consciousness and awakening among citizens. People's faith in the democratic system is increasing due to the transparent system of accounting and auditing. The Right to Information Act provided in 2005 not only ensures administrative transparency, but now even the judiciary (with some exception) has been brought under its purview.

The successes of democratic systems have given this country a dignified status at the global level. Similarly, the growing faith in our rich historical heritage, ideals and values established by national heroes, our tendency to co-ordinate despite of ideological variations and our inclusive attitude and mindset have also provided stability and strength to our democracy.

Despite these achievements, different types of challenges have been faced by Indian democracy from time to time. Some challenges exist permanently even today, some have been the result of time and circumstances, but despite all these challenges democracy has stood firm like the strong roots of a huge Banyan tree.

Today the biggest challenge before Indian democracy is to maintain internal peace and security. Recurrence of terrorist incident in various parts of Jammu and Kashmir, expansion of disruptive events in north-eastern states and the increasing expansion of Naxalite network in many states is fatal for democracy. In fact, such elements are constantly trying to weaken democracy on the strength of certain ideological power and strength. Similarly, problems like Linguism, Casteism, Regionalism have been highlighted from time to time but the satisfactory fact is that in the last few years the central and state governments have succeeded in controlling this problem to a great extent through mutual co-ordination and co-operation.

Although the judiciary in our country is fair and independent, but the difficulties like legal terminology and the complexity of the judicial process still exist as a challenge before us. The success and beauty of the judicial system depends to a great extent on the fact that all citizens have adequate knowledge of their constitutional rights and they are aware of the entire judicial process. But the irony is that even today there is a large group of citizens in our country who are not familiar with their constitutional rights, nor have knowledge of the judicial process and they are not even in such a high economic condition to fight a long legal battle. In many pending cases, our judiciary announces decisions when they are timeless." In the last decade in our country, the number of cases pending in the courts has increased. As on April 2018, more than 3 crore cases are pending in the Supreme-Court, High-Court, Sub-Ordinate and District-Court"(6). Therefore, judiciary must focus on quick decision and free legal advice is required to be given to all the citizens who need it, only then democracy will get stability and strength and its purity will be maintained.

Although it is true that from the time of independence, we had to face formidable problems like poverty and starvation.

Under this category, the number of untrained laborers, migrant laborers and people engaged in agriculture and public works is the highest. Since independence, efforts have been made to find a solution to this problem through five-year plans, 20-point programs, MNREGA, Jan-Dhan Yojana etc. Despite the impressive implementation of these attractive schemes, today the irony is that innumerable families in our country are still spectrum, compelled to live in an environment of hunger and poverty. It is also notable that-"The number of people living below the poverty line in 2011 was 270 million (14.9%) but in 2017, this number has reduced and come down to 84 million (7.0%)"(7).

Lack of quality, skills and employment-oriented education is also proving to be a hindrance in achieving the desired goals under the democratic system." According to the 2011 encrusted average literacy rate in India is 64.8% of which male literacy rate is 75.3% and female literacy rate is 53.7%"(8). Currently the rate of general education and digital education is increasing but it is not possible to give employment to a large group of educated youth as per their choice. Sometimes this huge group of unemployed youth tries to weaken the roots of democracy by having links with criminal or anti-national organizations. In such a situation, it is very important to connect these youths with the mainstream of the country by providing employment or motivating them towards self-employment. In the last few years, through the schemes like Deendayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushal Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna, youth are being trained according to the needs of the global market and providing positive direction to them. Today." India is on second position at global level in terms of internet users after China and it is expected that by 2021, there will be 70 crore internet users in our country"(9). Hence the analog of the digital age, schemes like Digital India, E-Governance and M-Governance are being operated. Through these digital schemes, the person sitting at the end of the society, is not only getting information about democratic policies & programs, but also being connected to the democratic process.

There is no doubt that in independent India, especially in rural areas, there has been a lack of adequate health facilities from the beginning. Rural India has been battling for doctors, medicines, medical equipment and infrastructure for many years and even today improvement is expected in this direction. Although it is true that only after independence, there has been a gradual expansion of health facilities in our country, immunization program was implemented and many diseases were eradicated from the root. It is the result of continuous efforts in this direction that today many Metros of our country are able to provide world class health facilities at low expenses. An increase in the average age of the citizens is being recorded and through the "Ayushyaman Bharat yojana", more than 1 crore citizens are being provided with proper health protection.

Similarly, challenges like corruption and criminalization of politics have also been present in front of Indian democracy. Many corruption cases like 2G spectrum scam, stamp scam, share scam, Hawala scam, Defence deal were exposed and these cases certainly tainted Indian democratic system, but the satisfactory fact is that there has been a significant reduction in corruption related incidents in the last few years. Similarly, after the recommendations of Bohra Committee, differentiation between 'Criminalization of

politics' and 'Politics of crime' has become very challenging. "In 2009 general election where the number of candidates with criminal background was 15%, in 2014 general election it increased to 17% and during the recently concluded 2019 general elections the number of such candidates increased to 19%"(10). Today, the increasing representation of these tainted faces in holy democratic institutions like Lok-Sabha and Assemblies surely compels us to consider the situation of democracy in future. But the satisfactory fact is that both the Judiciary and the Election Commission of India should try seriously to control this problem. Recently, the supreme-court, in one of its decisions, has ordered that-"political parties must published complete details of candidates having criminal background on their website, social media account and in newspaper at the time of Lok-Sabha and Legislative Assembly elections, so that the transparency and accountability should be maintained"(11). While analyzing this issue, we must differentiate between criminals and politicians because many politicians are wholeheartedly not only providing protection to democracy but also providing prosperity to it. In spite of all these achievements and shortcomings, we can say that making the youth work force self-sufficient with creative mindset, by making women a respected partner in various areas of life and work practices, maintaining an optimistic view of vibrant civil society and the public welfare approach of governance and administration will surely pave the way for the creation of new India.

7. Conclusion

On evaluating the journey of Indian democracy of the last 73 years, we come to the conclusion that-In the future, India will be able to present itself with a lot of strength in terms of technology, education, health, space, transportation, Poverty prevention, creation of employment and promotion of political consciousness. Active role of media, visionary political leadership, administrative transparency, strong governments, Aggressive but positive role of opposition will give new highs to our democracy. World class digital facilities like E&M-Governance-commerce, online education-healthier-banking will brighten the future of political and economic democracy. Smart city, smart village and smart management will help us in the future in terms of infrastructure enrichment. Solid efforts such as the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization act, the surgical strike and citizenship amendment act demonstrate the commitment to keep Indian democracy intact. Changing concepts like 'Sabka vikas' "and "development politics" are giving maturity to Indian democracy. Overall, we can say that due to the smooth and successful operation of democracy, we are moving towards multi-dimensional development and self-reliance, this condition and direction of development will surely prove to be able to establish Indian democracy as a super power in the 21st century.

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