



Challenges for Democracy in India

Surya Bhan Prasad

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, M.G.K. Vidyapith, Varanasi,
Uttar Pradesh, India

Abstract

Democracy means democratic government system. In this system, the government is run by the representatives elected by the people. In this, the power does not run according to any one person. Former President of the United States of America Abraham Lincon said, “Democracy is a government of the people,. Democracy is made up of two words Demo means people and Kratos means power i.e. power in a democracy is in the hands of the people.

Keywords : Democracy, Government, Peoples, Illitracy, Poverty etc.

Introduction

Democracy is defined as, a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation, usually involving periodic free elections. Bryce believes that “Democracy really means nothing more or less than the rule of the whole people, expressing their Sovereign will by their votes”. MacIver defines, “Democracy is not a way of governing, whether by majority or otherwise, but primarily a way of determining, who shall govern, and broadly to what ends”.

The biggest challenge of democracy is that any new law, even if it is in the interest of the public, the government has to face many problems to implement it, because no matter what the law is, it is a problem for some people. There is a reason, such people take to the streets to oppose that law and criticize the government. Law and order are flouted.

Democracy is working very well in India as compared to other countries. Democracy has been successfully adapted to the challenging conditions in India. From Panchayat elections to President and Prime Minister elections, all elections are fair and timely. In our country, print and electronic media etc. have got complete freedom and they play an important role in shaping public opinion. Despite all this, illiteracy, poverty, bribery, religiosity, misuse of their position by some ruling people, etc. are the biggest challenges to democracy today in our country.

Important for Democracy

The biggest feature of democracy is that every person here has full right to speak his mind. There is an absolute right to protest against anything. Whereas in countries like China, Japan, Korea, etc., no citizen can raise voice against any decision of the government, whereas in India, due to democracy, any citizen can raise his voice against any decision of the government.

It has been almost 75 years since the establishment of democracy in India. In the general elections of May 2019, the Bharatiya Janata Party got a second consecutive victory and Honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi was re-elected as the Prime Minister.

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) was implemented by Honorable Narendra Modi's government, against which there were violent clashes in India and finally it has been stopped from implementing it now. Similarly the government's plan to introduce a National Register of Indian Citizens has increased the fear of discrimination by the Muslim community. In late February 2020, communal tension in Delhi escalated into violence in which 53 people lost their lives.

At present, the whole world is troubled by the outbreak of Corona virus for the last almost 2 years and due to this the economy of India has also staggered and is facing severe recession. Unemployment is also high in India.

Illiteracy

Illiteracy is a big challenge for Indian democracy. For the smooth functioning of the government in a democracy, it is necessary for every citizen to be educated. When the public is educated only then they can know which laws made by the government are in their interest and which laws are harmful for them. In 1951, the literacy rate in India was only about 18.33% and female literacy was only 8.9%. Due to being illiterate, many times the public does not recognize those who do their best and chooses the wrong people, due to which they have to repent later. Gradually the literacy rate started increasing and today the literacy rate in India is around 75% while the literacy rate among women is still around 66%. Very soon education has been provided as a fundamental right, which is hoped that very soon it will help in educating children universally.

Poverty

Poverty is the biggest curse for democracy. Poverty is actually the root cause of all kinds of deprivations and inequalities. Due to poverty, a person is not able to live a healthy and full life. It is true that due to the British rule for a long time, India inherited poverty and even today a large part of India's population lives below the poverty line. Poverty line means a level of income below which a person is unable to meet even his basic needs of food. In a democracy, the poor person keeps crying about his poverty and keeps on trying to remove his poverty, due to which he is unable to understand the good works of the government. His focus is only on what the government has done to remove poverty, he does not want to know what measures the government has taken for the prosperity of the country and what will be its far-reaching consequences. Without worrying about the future, the poor man ignores the good works of the government and, by reading the temptation of the wrong people, chooses the wrong people in the election, which has far-reaching consequences. That is why poverty is the biggest challenge to Indian democracy.

Casteism, Communalism, Religious Fundamentalism

The Indian democracy faces serious challenges also from casteism, communalism and religious fundamentalism.

The caste system is the most harmful for democracy. This system originated from the division of labor in ancient times. This system greatly weakened the lower castes, they were deprived of education and other social benefits. The democratic facilities - like fundamental rights relating to equality, freedom of speech, expression and association, participation in the electoral process, free media and press, and even legislative forums - are misused for maintaining casteist identity. It is true that India has been an unequal society from times immemorial. The Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (STs) and the backward classes have suffered down the ages from socio-economic deprivations. There are enormous inequalities in our society which are posing serious challenge to Indian democracy.

Communalism and religious bigotry later took a very dangerous form in India. Where is communalism hurting the secular culture of India and also a big threat to our democratic political stability. As a matter of fact, communalism is an ideology of political allegiance to a religious community. It uses one religious community against other communities and perceives other religious communities as its enemies. It is opposed to secularism and even humanism. One of the manifestations of communalism is communal riots. In recent past also, communalism has proved to be a great threat to our social and political life on several occasions.

Religious fundamentalism also reinforces communalists in exploiting both religion and politics. In fact, fundamentalism acts as an ideology which advocates a return to orthodoxy and a strict compliance to the fundamental tenets of religion. Religious fundamentalists vehemently oppose progressive reforms in order to establish their exclusive control on their respective communities.

Regionalism

India is a plural country with diversities of religions, languages, communities, tribes and cultures. It is true that regionalism and sub-regionalism are unavoidable in a vast and plural country like India. It is not always correct to consider every attempt to support or defend regional or sub-regional interests as divisive, fissiparous and unpatriotic. The problem begins when these interests are politicized and regional movements are promoted for ulterior political motives. Such unhealthy regional or sub-regional patriotism is cancerous and disruptive. The continuing regional imbalances have given rise to militant movements in certain parts of our country. Separatist demands in Jammu and Kashmir or by ULFA (United Liberation Front of Assam) in Assam or by different groups in the North-Eastern region are matters of grave concern for Indian polity.

Corruption

Corruption is also a major concern in India. Due to corruption, the laws of public interest made in the country are not implemented properly. India's economy is not recovering only because of corruption. Therefore, corruption is poison for democracy.

Political violence

Political violence has been going on in India for a long time and the use of violence is bad for the existence of any system. Many times, violence is resorted to during elections to vote in their favor, so that the right representative is not elected. Apart from this, violence for the demand for separate states, violence in farmers' movements, violence is used in student movements, which is dangerous for democracy.

Conclusion

Therefore, it can be said that illiteracy, poverty, communalism, corruption, red-tapism, political violence, regionalism, increasing population etc. are serious problems for Indian democracy, and while battling all these problems, maintaining democracy in India is also a challenge.

References

- 1) Democracy in India: Current Debates and Emerging Challenges by Lancy Lobo, Jayesh Shah, Primus Books, 2017.
- 2) Indian Democracy by S. K. Kulkarni, Indus Source Books, 2017.
- 3) Making Sense Of Indian Democracy: Theory as Practice by Yogendra Yadav, Permanent Black, 2020.
- 4) Indian Democracy: Contradictions and Reconciliations by Arvind Sivaramakrishnan, SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2020.
- 5) The Indian Parliament: A Democracy at Work by Rodrigues, Oxford University Press, 2014.
- 6) Challenges to Indian Democracy by Bal KambleEknath Khandve, Diamond Pub., 2012.
- 7) Indian Democracy Problems and Prospects by M. Manisha, Sharmila Deb, Anthem Press, 2012.