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Democracy a Citizen-Friendly Polity with Special Reference to Indian Political System

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of democracy is at the centre of fierce debates in political theory as well as in common place discussions in politics. Of all the forms of government, democracy is, no doubt, the best. Among the 193 countries worldwide that are recognized by the United Nations, 123 are said to be democratic. Thus, more than half of these states have set up a form of government that is characterized by the participation of its people, under whatever form that may be. As direct rule of the people in vast countries of the world is impracticable, democracy, now works through the representative system.

The mass conversion of politicians and political thinkers to the cause of democracy has been one of the most dramatic and significant, events in political history. Recent experience has shown that the introduction of democracy is a complex process which involves more than mere political transformations. The transition to democracy concerns the whole body politic- that is to say, all the individuals that constitute it and their social relationships. Well into the nineteenth century, the term continued to have pejorative complications, suggesting, a system of "mob rule'. Now however, we are all democrats, liberals, conservatives, socialists, communists, anarchists and even fascists are eager to proclaim the virtues of democracy and to demonstrate their own democratic credentials.

What is democracy?

The origin of the term democracy can be traced back to ancient Greece. It is derived from the Greek root 'demos' which means 'the people' and cracy which, means "rule of government'. Thus, literally democracy signifies 'the rule of the people'. However, the simple notion of rule by the people' does not get us very far. The problem with democracy has been its very popularity that has threatened the terms undoing as a meaningful political concept. In being almost universally regarded as a 'good thing' democracy has come to be used as little more than a 'hurrah ! word', implying approval of a

particular set of ideas or system of rule. In Bernard Cricks (1993) words". Democracy is perhaps the most promises word in the world of public affairs[3].

History and development of democracy:

The history of the evaluation and growth of democracy is very old, though the modern notion of democracy since the seventeenth century. The term 'democracy' first appeared in ancient Greek political and philosophical thought in the city-state of Athens. Athenians established what is generally held as the first democracy in 508-7 BCE. Clusthenes is referred to as "the father of Athenian democracy". The Athenian democracy was based on lot or rota, a form of direct democracy where citizenship was limited to male and property holder members of society. All citizens were eligible to speaks and vote in the assembly, which set the laws of the city-state. Athenian democracy was not only direct in the sense that decisions were made by the assembled people, but also direct in the sense that the people through the assembly double an courts of law controlled the entire political process and a involved constantly in the public business. Even though the Roman republic contributed significantly to certain aspects of democracy only a minority of Romans were citizens with votes in elections for representatives.

With the renaissance, reformation and enlightenment grew the present form of democracy in the west way back, the Manga Carta (1215) had voiced some freedoms. The first elected parliament by Simon d Montford in 1265, the Petition of rights (1628) curtailed the absolute powers of the king, the glorious revolution (1868) followed by the Bill of rights (1698) cut short the unlimited powers of the rulers on the one hand and made them accountable for their action on the other. All these developments show that the government ahs to be governed by the people. The first nation in modern history to adopt a democratic constitution was the short-lived Corsican republic in 1755. The American War of Independence (1776) and the French revolution (1789), emphasizing the right of man and liberty, equality, fraternity and the revolutions of 1848 in most of the non-Anglo-French countries of Europe and later winning of suffrage rights, brought in focus that the government has to be government for the people.

Concept and Development:

The development of the villages was the immediate problem faced by our country after independence. Hence, the community development program was launched in 1952 with a view to carry out the integrated rural development work. The programme failed on its mission without an agency at the village level which could represent the entire community, assume responsibility and provide the necessary leadership for implementing development programmes. The planning commission in the second five year plan recommended term for the study of community. Projects and national extension service, headed by Balwant Rai Mehta was appointed. The Mehta committee came

to the conclusion that the movement failed to create the required impact because it could not arouse local interests. It recommended the replacement of the old district board with a three tier system at the district, block and village level with an organic link among them. At each level, the authority had to be vested according to its capacity. On October 2nd, 1959, Pt. Nehru inaugurated the Panchayat Raj at Nagaur in Rajasthan. He characterized it as "the most revolutionary and historical step in the context of new India." By the mid 60s, other states also passed legislations for the introduction of the Panchyati Raj.

After the mid sixties, the Panchayati Raj was on decline. In many states, a tendency to postpone the Panhayati Raj elections indefinitely was noticeable. The political leaders viewed the democratization and decentralization of power to the rural sector as a threat to their political stature. So there was a deliberate plan to check the ascendancy. Some other reasons like-

1. Election not being held on a registrar basis.
2. Lack of adequate transfer of powers and resources to Panchayat institutions.
3. Lack of Panchyati Raj bodies to generate their own resources such as tax on sale of land.
4. Non-representation of women and weaker sections on elected bodies.

So, in order to strengthen the system of Panchayati Raj 73rd and 74th amendment act passed, which laid down the framework and guidelines in regard to the obligation to holding regulation election, restricting the period of suppression, providing for reservation for SC/ST and women etc. These amendments to the constitution of India constituted a milestone in the process of establishing decentralized democratic administration through local bodies and taking administration to the doorsteps of the people to insure economic and social justice. The important thing is that now Panchayats are to be directly elected by the people like the Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

The peculiarities of the administrative system that came into being as a result of the 73rd and 74th amendments were-

1. The local self governments got structural uniformity through out the state.
2. Quinquinial election became compulsory at the level of local administration.
3. The responsibility to conduct the election to the three tiers of Panchayats was entrusted to the State Election commission.
4. 33% of the seats of the Panchayat were reserved for women.
5. Gramsabhas were constituted to ensures people's participation in the developmental process.
6. The responsibility of the local bodies in developmental planning activities was emphasized.

Role of Panchayat raj institutions:

Panchayati Raj (PR) played a significant political role at local levels in bringing about a greater interfusion of local level and trans-local politics in various states. Panchayati Raj in India has turned

out to be a powerful engine of political change and the working of PRIs has been permeated with micro as well as macro politics. It is alleged that PR elections has given birth to party politics and groupism in the villages. Besides all these, many development programmes have been taken by Panchayati Raj institutions like-

a) Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY).
b) Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY).
c) Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).
d) Indira Awas Yojana.
e) Pradhan Mantri Gramodaya Yojana (PMGY).
f) Credit-cum-Subsidy scheme.
g) Swajaldhara etc.

Factors affecting Indian democracy:

.There are many factors affecting Indian democracy in many ways these factors play an important role in functioning democracy. These are

Religion:

Religion as a major cultural influences plays an important role in politics. Political party support depends greatly on differentiating the electorate along religious lines. The major religious communities are those of the Hindus (although not a homogeneous block), the Muslims (gain they too are differentiated as Shias and Sunnis) and the Sikhs; and many political parties are identified by the religion of their supporters. Many national religious issues are the key point of the success in elections. Even some of the political leaders uses religion for their own sake and sues it as a medium of their political stability.

Caste:

The caste system crosses religious boundaries to infect both Hindu and Islamic peoples. Hindus have for main castes and hundreds of sub-castes. Many political parties draw supporters from specific castes or sub-castes. The four main caste were Brahmins, kshatriyas, vyshar and shurdars. Brahmins were the upper caste and they are allowed to do worship in temples. Shakthriya's rule country and vyshar included people like merchants etc. shurdars was the most oppressed one at that time.

Population:

India is the second most populous country in the world, next only to China. The over a billion population poses a challenge to the state's ability to provide everyone with jobs, health care, education and other public services. Showing down the rate of population growth has been a manor issue for governments, over time. India being a democratic country the ever increasing population can only be checked by voluntary means, with the informed consent of the people. With the current growth rate, India is set to leave China behind by 2025.

Development:

India is still an emerging democracy, setting the space and shape of development. India began as an explicitly socialist nation and continues with a large public-sector and many constraints on private enterprise, although recent governments have reduced some of these restrictions. Their reward has been faster economic growth, particularly through the growth of trade-oriented industry. Some recent governments were voted out due to a sluggish economy.

Regions:

India is very densely populated. Some advocate splitting some twenty eight states and seven union territories.

Review of literature:

Several books and several articles have written on democracy. Prof. O.P. Gauba in his book 'political theory' has written about the various forms of democracy and how these forms are implementing for people to rule themselves. He also emphasized on various forms of representation. He also outlined various conditions by which working of democracy can be successful and serve the cause of the people directly.

"Janaki Srinivasan" emphasized how democracy is applied s a method in decision making process. Does it reflects the wishes of the whole people in a particular group. She has proved that democracy is based on majority people. She has written that in many cases one person takes decision for whole group. Is it a democratic one.

Scope of study:

The present research study aims at providing knowledge about democracy that how people understand the meaning and importance of democracy. The research work provides an idea about how democracy evolved and how it developed through ages. The findings of the research will spell out the practical implementation of democracy. The findings will also spell out how democracy is working in the worlds over and as well as in India successfully as a citizen-friendiy polity. And what are the major challenges before democracy and how through social movement the world is moving towards democracy.

Objectives of the study:
The general objective of the study is to impart knowledge about the importance and meaning of democracy.
The specific objectives are-
(a)   To analyse about how democracy is functioning practically.

(b)   To analyse how democracy is successful as a citizen friendly polity in India and as well as in the world and how it help people to rule themselves.

(c)   To analyse about challenges against the smooth functioning of democracy and tried to find out its remedies.

(d)   To know how democracy is best form of government and how it helps in selecting national leaders to rule over the country.

(e)   To analyse has democracy became a blessing or a worse for citizens.

Hypothesis:

(a)   Democracy is a government by the people and based on the principle of political equality. It is useful for everybody equally

(b)   Democracy has been functioning well in Indian political system. The people have lost faith in the democratic system.

CONCLUSION

      Democracy has been the centre of debate right from the dawn of human civilization. No other system of government has created so much controversy in political history than democracy. According to the past experiences of political scientists, democracy best flourishes in a small territory and small population, because human beings in a small group feel closer to one another. Rousseau's view, a well- nigh essential condition for a genuine popular government. It creates a greater possibility for every citizen to attain a respectable position that generates a deeper sense of participation and accountability among them.

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