

The Role and Challenges of Democracy in India

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Abstract

Democracy is a governance system wherein individuals participate in decision-making via elected representatives and unencumbered elections. India is regarded as the world's largest democracy. In a democratic system, the people hold the ultimate authority in governance. However, social and economic inequality, poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, casteism, communalism, corruption, terrorism, and rapid population growth are just a few of the significant obstacles that India's democracy must overcome. These problems have an impact on how well the nation's democracy operates. This essay seeks to investigate and evaluate India's current democratic system as well as its impact on democracy globally. It also covers potential remedies and institutional changes that could support India's development of a robust, stable, and long-lasting democracy.

Keywords: democracy, casteism, corruption.

Introduction

A democracy is a form of government where citizens and leaders collaborate to create society and mold a shared future. One of the most popular forms of government in use today is democracy, which is practiced in many nations, including India. India is regarded as the world's largest democracy. The concept of democracy originated in the city-states of ancient Greece. The Greek terms "demos," which means people, and "kratos," which means power, are the roots of the word "democracy." Thus, "power of the people" is what democracy means. The people, either directly or through elected representatives, hold the power of government in a democratic system.

Democracy is "government of the people, by the people, and for the people," according to former US President Abraham Lincoln. This is regarded as one of the most popular definitions of democracy. According to David Held, democracy functions best when people are involved in making decisions in various spheres of public life. According to Joseph A. Schumpeter, democracy is a system in which the people's votes and support give leaders the authority to make decisions. From ancient Greece to the present, democracy's definition and organization have evolved. Democracy changed into new forms as societies did. According to Jawaharlal Nehru, tolerance and respect for individuals with differing viewpoints are the cornerstones of democracy. Those who oppose democracy frequently condone intolerance and

violence. Many political philosophers of the twentieth century saw democracy as a way of life as well as a political system. According to John Dewey, democracy allows citizens to participate in and grow in various facets of life while also having an impact on the economy, society, and government. Democracy was initially primarily viewed as a political idea. But in the contemporary world, democracy also encompasses social and economic facets. Political democracy, in which citizens share political power and participate in governance, is founded on popular consent. Important aspects of political democracy include the freedom of speech, public engagement, and the ability to criticize the government. Human equality and dignity are central to social democracy. It gives people the chance to live with dignity and respect and respects all facets of society. This type of democracy encourages social justice and treats each person equally. The goal of economic democracy is to lessen wealth disparity. Additionally, it prioritizes eliminating hunger, offering social security, and enhancing citizens' access to economic opportunities. Because political and social democracy cannot function effectively without economic equality and security, economic democracy is regarded as a crucial component of democracy.

Democratic System & India

After gaining independence, India adopted its Constitution and Preamble on January 26, 1950, making it a Democratic Republic. The Constitution's definition of democracy is predicated on the idea of popular sovereignty, which holds that the people own the power. Political, social, and economic democracy are the three main facets of democracy in India. By guaranteeing social, economic, and political justice for all citizens, the Constitution seeks to create a just and equal society. Additionally, it aims to advance equality, respect, and equal chances for all members of society. The Indian Constitution establishes a number of important democratic principles that help to strengthen the country's democracy. First, democracy is predicated on the notion that the people are the source of sovereign power and that the people give their consent for the government to operate. Second, one of the Constitution's primary duties is to safeguard the fundamental rights that all citizens are guaranteed. Third, the Indian Constitution gives socially and educationally disadvantaged groups extra protection. Fourth, the rule of law, which guarantees that all people and institutions abide by the law equally, is a fundamental tenet of democracy. Fifth, promoting social and economic equality is a goal of the Directive Principles of State Policy, which is crucial for economic democracy. Lastly, the continuation of democratic governance in India depends on free, fair, transparent, and independent elections held by constitutional election bodies.

The objective of the study

The following are some objectives of the study:

- A. To study the democratic governance system in India.
- B. To identify the major issues and challenges faced by the Indian democratic system.
- C. To suggest effective measures for addressing these challenges and strengthening the sustainability of democracy in India.

Challenges of Indian Democracy:

India has operated as a responsible democratic nation since gaining its independence. The international community has praised its democratic system for successfully addressing numerous issues. Free and fair elections have been held on a regular basis in India for a variety of political posts, including the presidency and local panchayats. At both the national and state levels, the nation has also seen peaceful handovers of political power between various political parties. On the other hand, military coups rather than democratic processes have brought about changes in government in some neighboring countries, including Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Pakistan.

1. **Illiteracy:** Since India's independence, illiteracy has continued to pose a serious threat to democracy. Socioeconomic development and education are critical to a democratic system's efficient operation. India had a very low literacy rate at the time of independence, particularly among women. Nonetheless, over time, a significant number of Indian citizens participated in elections and cast ballots, demonstrating strong democratic engagement. Because it enables people to comprehend political issues, actively participate in elections, and responsibly exercise their right to vote, literacy is crucial in democracies. Additionally, education fosters self-awareness, self-assurance, and social respect.
2. **Gender Discrimination:** Despite the fact that equality is a cornerstone of Indian democracy, gender discrimination persists in many spheres of society. All Indian citizens, regardless of gender, are guaranteed equal rights and treatment under the Constitution. Nonetheless, social, economic, and political inequality still affects women. The Women's Reservation Bill, which suggests reserving 33% of Parliamentary seats for women in order to boost their involvement in politics, is a significant example.
3. **Poverty:** One of the main obstacles to democracy's efficient operation is poverty. Individuals who find it difficult to provide for their basic needs, such as food and shelter, might not be able to fully engage in politics or exercise their democratic rights. During British colonial rule, India inherited widespread poverty. Employment opportunities are not expanding at the same rate as the population. Furthermore, social justice and the gap between the rich and the poor have not been fully guaranteed by economic development. As a result, poverty still poses a significant threat to Indian democracy.
4. **Casteism:** Discrimination against individuals based on their caste identity and place of birth is known as casteism. In certain regions of India, the caste system that originated in ancient times is still in place. Additionally, it gave rise to customs like untouchability, which has been outlawed but is still practiced in some places. India's democratic and political progress has been adversely impacted by casteism. Lower caste members frequently face discrimination and social injustice. Rather than concentrating on social justice and equal development for all citizens, political parties frequently use caste groups as vote banks.

5. **Religious Fundamentalism:** Strict adherence to religious doctrine and customs is referred to as religious fundamentalism. Communal groups frequently use it to influence society and politics. This ideology encourages conservative thinking and could impede social advancement by widening the gaps between various communities.
6. **Communalism:** This ideology splits society along religious and communal lines. It violates India's secularism principle and causes strife between various religious and social groups. By encouraging conflict and division among individuals based on caste, religion, or community identity, communalism undermines democracy.
7. **Regionalism:** India is a multicultural nation with a wide range of communities, languages, cultures, and religions. Feelings of discrimination and regional imbalance can result from unequal development across regions. Regional issues are occasionally exploited by political parties for their own gain, which can be detrimental to democracy and national cohesion.
8. **Criminalization of Politics:** When people with criminal histories participate in political activities and elections, it is referred to as criminalization of politics. To obtain power, some politicians employ unethical or unlawful tactics. This practice undermines democratic principles and interferes with democracy's ability to function properly.
9. **Corruption:** One of India's biggest issues, corruption affects a wide range of industries, including business, government administration, education, health, agriculture, and transportation. It exists at various levels of bureaucracy and politics. Corruption erodes public confidence in institutions and undermines democracy. Strong measures are therefore required to lessen societal corruption.
10. **Majority Rule:** The Bharatiya Janata Party's campaign for a Hindu Rashtra and the building of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya have sparked worries that democracy is primarily seen as rule by the majority. Opponents contend that this strategy may advance the interests of the Hindu majority while undervaluing the rights of minorities. Minority groups may face difficulties in a democratic society as a result of these trends. The demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992 by members of the BJP, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, and Vishwa Hindu Parishad is a prime example. Democracy is more than just majority rule. Additionally, it ought to be founded on freedom, equality, justice, and participation. Minority groups' rights must be respected and safeguarded by the majority in a democratic system.

Suggestions

The following are some important suggestions for the effective functioning of democracy in India.

1. People should be politically conscious and informed about their rights and responsibilities since citizens are the cornerstone of democracy. Meetings, seminars, workshops, and other grassroots initiatives can raise political consciousness.

2. Illiterate people should receive appropriate education so they can cast informed ballots for qualified candidates. A lack of political knowledge can make democracy weaker. For India's democratic governance to function effectively, political education and knowledge dissemination are crucial.
3. Government agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should collaborate for the nation's advancement. Programs that aid in social and economic advancement ought to be supported.
4. As the fourth pillar of democracy, the media should actively contribute to the dissemination of correct information and the defense of democratic principles. In order for the public and the government to receive accurate information, media freedom is crucial.
5. Additionally, politicians are crucial to the advancement of democracy. Instead of focusing on power or personal benefit, they ought to work with a spirit of public service. Rather than promoting politics based on caste, religion, or communal divisions, political leaders should concentrate on national development and public welfare. They should play a part in maintaining and bolstering India's genuine democratic spirit.
6. The nation's leaders ought to be morally upright, truthful, and honest. Leaders should be chosen by the public based on their behavior, character, and aptitude for handling public affairs. Instead of focusing on their own interests, political leaders should prioritize the good of the public. They ought to be young people's role models as well. Therefore, the moral principles of both the people and the government are essential to the success of democracy.
7. For the social and economic advancement of the populace, the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), as stated in Part IV of the Indian Constitution, ought to be given more weight.
8. The three primary pillars of democracy—the legislative, executive, and judicial branches—should cooperate responsibly for the advancement of the nation. These organizations ought to uphold democratic principles and adapt to the shifting demands and circumstances of society.

Conclusion

It is clear from the discussion above that, despite being one of the biggest democracies in the world, India still faces numerous obstacles that prevent its democratic system from operating smoothly. Issues like illiteracy, corruption, terrorism, and Maoist activity still pose a threat to the nation's democratic governance even after more than 70 years of independence. India faces social, economic, political, and religious difficulties, just like other democracies. By working together, the people and the government can lessen these issues. Only when citizens and the government cooperate and understand one another can democracy run smoothly. Public confidence in democracy has been eroded by some political leaders' corruption and self-interest. Even though all Indian citizens are guaranteed equal rights and responsibilities,

political leaders, governments, and citizens must cooperate for the nation's advancement. People ought to take an active role in democratic governance and processes. To stop democratic values from being abused, the Right to Information Act should be successfully implemented across the nation. Addressing the issues facing Indian democracy also requires political consciousness and education about democratic rights, obligations, and ideals.

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