

An Overview of Recent Challenges to Indian Democracy

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The Journey of world's largest democracy started from its independence in 1947 but the democratic ideas are deep rooted in its history. Democracy as defined by 16th US President Abraham Lincoln as a government of the people, by the people and for the people describes the most of the democracies all over the world. These democracies while getting matured faced number of different challenges for their survival, some survived and some are still struggling. Indian democracy is no exception, it also faced many kinds of issues and challenges and is still maturing as the developing democracy of the world. This paper focuses on major challenges faced by Indian democracy and overviews how it survived all of them.

Rise of Regional Political Parties has given rise to issues related to integrity and unity of the nation, as these parties are primarily focussed on their regional aspiration and they give preference to regional issues as compared to national issues. Many a times it is seen regional parties creating divide between people of same nation by giving preferences to the people of the particular region. The son of soil doctrine is the better example for the regional aspirations of these political parties. They also give primacy to clothing, language, culture, religion, caste, etc and are seen many a times forcing people not belonging that region to adopt their culture and tradition. The rise of regional political parties is not any issue for the democracy but the agendas and aspirations of these parties create rift in the unity of the nation.

The horse-trading in politics is another major issue which has disturbed the very essence of the democracy. As we have moved towards multi-party system, no particular party is able to get perfect majority to form the government and to secure the perfect figure many a times it is seen that major parties start horse trading in politics and it is also seen that even if any particular coalition is able to form government, the opposition instead of accepting the mandate of people in elections, always tries to challenge the majority of the formed government through any means necessary. The anti-defection law was introduced to prevent such happenings but its proven that it's not been sufficient to prevent such happenings and more laws are needed to be introduced to further strengthen the democracy. The discretionary powers of the governor have created further nuisance in the stability of the democracy and instead of promoting cooperative federalism and healthy competitive federalism it has created major challenges to centre state relations. The recent issues can be seen that a majority party that is able to secure stable government in centre but is unsuccessful government in some state, tries to rule the particular state through discretionary powers of the appointed governor by them. The position of Governor itself has created a lot of trouble in recent times in the federal structure of Indian democracy.

Migration in search of jobs from one state to another, migration for marriages, migration for businesses etc has led to low voter turnout in elections. Also, the lack of voting awareness in new generation youths and disinterest in

politics by many has become the major challenge to the India democracy. This causes the imbalance in the basic structure of the democracy, as minority voters decides the fate of the majority non-voting citizens and further leads to distrust about the government that comes to power. The people who vote on regular basis are lured by the politicians through freebies given during elections. The rise of awareness is necessary in these people regarding value of their votes and ill effects of accepting the freebies. Judiciary forms a very important pillar of Indian democracy which works as protector and guardian of democracy. The recent incident of four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court, who held a press conference and raised a banner of revolt against the Chief Justice of India (CJI) doesn't reflect the nature of healthy democracy and judicial system in particular. The mechanism should be developed and the democratically responsible ways should be used to resolve the internal conflicts. Though media is also the important pillar of Indian democracy but bringing the conflicts before media through press conference has complicated the issue rather than solving it. Media also plays important role in bringing before the people day to day affairs, but the recent crises in media of paid news and TRP race has degraded the quality of journalism in India. The degraded and sold media which fails to provide checks and balances on government is also another sign of disturbed democracy.

Indian parliament is the most important temple in Indian democracy and the behaviour of Indian politicians in the parliament, disruptions caused during the proceedings reflects nothing but the immature democratic principles. Politicians should be made aware about their responsibilities in parliament and importance of every minute of the proceedings as it decides the future of Indian democracy at large. There are also other challenges like Illiteracy, Poverty, Gender Discrimination, Casteism, Communalism, Religious Fundamentalism, Regionalism, Corruption, and Criminalization of Politics which challenge the very foundation of Indian Democracy and steps are needed to be taken at the earliest eradication of these. The incidences of misuse of data on social media sites, private data of users and social media to influence important political outcomes is also another major challenge which needs to be tackled by the higher authorities. This misuse of data not only reflects the challenges to the democracy but also attacks the very fundamental right of privacy given by constitution. Nepotism in Politics, Dynastic politics, lack of strong opposition at the centre and Religion based politics are another some challenges to healthy democracy which in some countries has led to the rise of dictatorship and authoritarian governments. Whenever injustice happens courts are the only medium to get justice for common man but the delays in disposal of cases by the courts in huge numbers has led to the disruption of very important principle of just democracy.

The above challenges can be resolved by various steps like Universal literacy i.e. education for all, poverty alleviation, elimination of gender discrimination, removal of regional imbalances, administrative and judicial reforms and sustained economic, social and environmental development. Some set of rules can be introduced which would curb the menace of defection as well as the misuse of powers of the governor's office. A defecting politician can be disqualified from contesting or becoming a minister. Also, distinctions need to be drawn whether a member is leaving a party for ideological differences or for money and power. The

discretionary powers of the Governor can be abolished and replaced with clear guidelines based on recommendations the Sarkaria Commission. Stricter data protection laws are required to ensure that political parties do not indulge in practices that involve undue influencing of voting behaviour. Voter education, electoral reforms and periodically publishing of the performance of elected representatives can help to strengthen and empower the voters to take the insightful decisions in elections. Compulsory voting is not the solution but people must exercise their right to vote, participate in democracy and contribute towards the development of the country, awareness programmes play important role in this scenario. Considering the demographic stats of India, youths must be aware of the problems that the country is facing and choose the candidate who is most likely to bring about the necessary developmental changes according to the needs of the nation. It is impossible for a Democracy to survive without both citizens active participation and accountability of politicians towards the nation. The perfectly healthy and stable democracy can only be realised through collective action in civil society.

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