PROBLEMS OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY: AN OVERVIEW

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Democracy means rule by the people to ensure that every citizen takes part in the decision making process either directly or indirectly through elected representatives. India is the largest democracy in the world. In the last more than 6 decades it has worked successfully well to some extent. But in modern India it has to face many challenges that need to be tackled in order to ensure true democracy. These challenges may include: social and economic inequalities, poverty and unemployment, Illiteracy and ignorance, casteism, communalism, population explosion, regionalism, corruption and terrorism, etc. India needs to develop new proposals to reform democracy. Law plays important role in political reformation and may help to prevent wrong practices and encourage good ones. But mere legal changes alone do not help as the changes in laws may sometimes prove counterproductive and may result into negative impact on society. Therefore, the best laws empower people to carry out democratic reforms. The Right to Information Act is the best example that serves as a watchdog against abuse of democratic principles. The challenges to the democracy may be tackled by way of movements of activist or by the politically conscious citizens. Some of the measures that can be taken to sustain a true parliamentarian democracy in India include: achieving 100% literacy; educating the masses about democratic rights; ensuring better protection of fundamental rights, and to ensure freedom of press, etc. In this paper, the author has attempted to study and analyse the existing democratic setup in India and suggest necessary reforms in order to ensure a sustainable democracy in India.

1.Introduction:

Democracy means rule by the people to ensure that every citizen takes part in the decision making process either directly or indirectly through elected representatives. India is the largest democracy in the world. In the last more than 6 decades it has worked successfully well to some extent. But in modern India, it has to face many challenges that need to be tackled in order to ensure true democracy. These challenges may include: overpopulation, poverty and the huge gap between rich and the poor, proper sanitation, corruption, illiteracy and right to education, violence communal, religious, etc., terrorism, naxalism, caste related violence, law and order, economic reforms, good governance, voter turnout, relationship with neighboring countries, diplomatic issues, protection of human rights, women's and children rights and right to development, implementation of various welfare schemes, protection of freedoms guaranteed under the Constitution of India, environment protection, apathy of media, frequent dharnas, strikes, walkouts, non-cooperative movements, etc.

India needs to develop new legal, political and social proposals to reform democracy. Law plays important role in political reformation and may help to prevent wrong practices and encourage good ones. But mere legal changes alone does not help as the changes in laws may sometimes prove counterproductive and may result into negative impact on society. Therefore, besides good laws, the political ruling and the opposition must work in with a true parliamentarian spirit toward meeting these challenges and hence restoring the true democracy in India. To ensure this Right to Information Act, is the best example that serves as a watchdog against abuse of democratic principles by the politicians and the beaurocrats.

In this paper, the author has attempted to study and analyze the existing democratic setup in India and suggest necessary reforms in order to ensure and sustainable democracy in India.

2. Objectives of the study:

a) To study and analyze the existing democratic setup in India.
b) To study and analyze various challenges that are being faced by the Indian democratic republic, and
c) To suggest measures to meet the challenges effectively and help restore Indian Democracy in its true spirit.

3. Structure of Parliament and its position in Indian Polity:

We have adopted a system of representative parliamentary democracy. The basic premise of true democracy is that every individual irrespective of his caste, creed, colour or sex and irrespective of the level of the educational, economic or professional backgrounds, is capable of governing himself and managing his affairs, the way he deems fir. In a democracy the people are their own masters. But in the modern world of today, direct ruling of country by people by themselves is impossible due to population explosion.
In ancient Greek City-States and also during the Vedic period in India, the people themselves used to assemble together to decide the issues of governance. But due to
population rise, this system almost got extinct except in a few Swiss Cantons where
issues could still be decided by the people at large through vote. But in modern
parliamentary system people rule the nation through their elected reprentatives.

4. Functions of Parliament:

Parliament today is not restricted to law making only, but it has been exercising multiple roles which are as under:
a) Political and Financial role
b) Supervising administrative work
c) Maintain transparency through guaranteeing right to information.
d) Educational and advisory role
e) Conflict solving and preserving national integration.
f) Law making and social development.
g) Amendment of the Constitution to keep pace with the change in the society.
h) Overall leadership role.

5. Political Parties and their roles in India:

In Indian political history, for almost sixty years it had been led by the Indian National Congress (INC) party. The other major opposing party to the congress was and is the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Besides these two, there are also some regional parties which represent their own states. Then after some years came the era of coalition parties, where in the case if any one party did not enjoy the full majority in the elections would take the support of the other parties to form the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the United Progressive Alliance UPA). The most important problem in Indian politics is that at least more than a fifth of parliament members face some criminal charges and around 40 of

them are accused with serious criminal charges. In Indian political setup, there are several parties at national as well as regional levels. Each party however small is playing its own role of looking after the welfare of either themselves or the people that they represent. For example, the way the present companying of the coming general election of blame games between some of the parties is going on.

6. Issues in India:

The issues that are posing a great challenge to the Indian Democratic setup include:

a) **Overpopulation:** Indian population has reached upto an estimated 1.27 billion. This is one of the greatest challenges that have hindered the possible progress of our country to some extent. Government of India which is already facing challenges from various angles has failed to control the population growth.

b**) Poverty:** Though India is approaching towards becoming an economic super power, it has equally great challenges towards tackling the poverty. According to the World Bank's estimates on poverty based on 2005 data, India has 456 million people, ie.,41.6% of its population, living below the new international poverty line of $1.25 (PPP) per day. The world Bank further estimates that 33% of the global poor now reside in India. Moreover, India also has 828 million people, or 75.6% of the population living below $2 a day, compared to 72.2% for Sub-Saharan Africa. The major reason for poor population in India is due to its uneven distribution of wealth with 10% of income groups earning 33% of the income.

c) **Sanitation:** Statistics conducted by United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) have shown that only 31% of India's population is able to utilize proper sanitation facilities as of 2008. Studies by UNICEF have also shown that diseases resulting from poor sanitation affect children in their cognitive development.

d) **Corruption:** Corruption is widespread in India. India is ranked 95 out of a 179 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, but its score has improved consistently from 2.7 in 2002 to 3.1 in 2011. In India, corruption takes the form of bribes, tax evasion, exchange controls, embezzlement, etc. Right to information Act, 2005 has played a major role in unearthing various scams which are politically motivated. Corruption is one of the main cause that hinders the progress of a nation.

e) **Education:** Education has remained one of the priorities of the Indian government since independence. Though many initiatives have been taken up by the Government of India to ensure maximum literacy in India, but still, education continues to persist as an impediment to development.

f) **Violence:** Constitutional speaking, India is supposed to be a secular, but large-scale violence have periodically taking place in since independence. In recent decades, communal tensions and religion-based politics have become more prominent.

g) **Terrorism:** The areas where a lot terrorists activities take place are Jammu and Kashmir, Central India and Seven Sister States and Punjab. Terrorism in India has often been alleged to be sponsored by Pakistan.

h) **Naxalism:** Naxalism is a communist group that has been emerged out of the Sino-Soviet split in the Indian communist movement. Naxalism is found in areas such as West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh.

i) **Poor voter turnout:** India's political parties are eagerly waiting for the 2014 national elections next year. But are Indian citizens equally excited about casting their votes. Since voting is not a compulsory duty of the people, many of them do not exercise this right and they choose to remain in their houses and do something else on that day.

7. Democracy in India: its Problems and Prospective:

Soon after attaining independence, India gave herself a Constitution and became a Democratic Republic on 26th January, 1950 and has since been governed by this Constitution. This was indeed a commendable achievement, more particularly when one looks at some of the countries in our neighborhood and even around the world. For it established a system of governance, a sound legal system and a fairly sound basis for a democratic socialistic society when elections were held regularly and the popular mandate was respected. Thus we may say that the democratic system has been established as accepted as an indispensable part of Indian political life; yet we have to recognize that in practice, there have been serious shortcomings and these will have to be addressed sooner or rather than later. Democracy is not a modern phenomenon; it was practiced with some measure of success in ancient Athens and in ancient India; also they laid down some of the fundamental principles of a democratic society which will be very relevant to us even in modern times.

8. Suggestions:

The author would like to suggest following recommendations for the successful functioning of Indian democracy:
1) The electorate should be imparted with the knowledge of political consciousness. They should be made fully aware of their rights and privileges through organizing programmers such as conferences, seminars, workshops, symposia's ,etc.
2) The illiterate masses of India should be provide proper education so that they can sensibly vote for the right leaders. The USA, Britain, Germany and Japan are successful democratic countries and gave progressed in every sphere because the masses are literate.
3) There must be a complete ban on Opinion Polls as they cannot be scientifically relied upon.
4) The media must also play its important role bringing about true facts and maintaining the true spirit of right to speech and expression.
5) The politicians should also respect the true spirit of democracy by playing their crucial role not as a master but as servant of the represented. They should refrain from corruption caste and communal politics.
6) The citizens should elect leaders with good moral values and integrity.
7) People should be guided to choose their true representatives. They should not be influenced by anyone in this respect. Individuals should learn tolerance and compromise and understand that freedom is not unbridled but dependent on not harming another individual's well being.
8) Democracy demands from the common man a certain level of ability and character, like rational conducts, an intelligent understanding of public affair, independent justice and unselfish devotion to public interest.
9) The Directive Principles of State Policies must necessarily made justiciable rights just like fundamental rights of part III of the Indian Constitution.
10) People should not allow communalism, separatism, casteism, terrorism, etc to raise their heads. They are a threat to democracy.
11) The government, the NGOs and the people together should work collectively for the economic development of the nation.

12) Changes should come through peaceful, democratic and constitutional means.
The talented youth of today should be politically educated so that they can become effective leaders of tomorrow.
13) Legislatures and Judiciary should keep track of what is going on around the
world as far as some of the sensitive human rights related issues are concerned
such as same sex marriages, abolition of death penalties, etc. and try to keep pace with the changing world around us.
14) Finally, it is the duty of the elected representatives be it ruling or opposing, to be
a role model for the youths who are going to take over their responsibilities in
future. They should do away with the practice of blame game, indecent and
violent behavior in the four corners of the Parliament and Legislatures towards
each others.

9. Conclusion:

Finally it can be concluded that it is very sad that our democracy after 66 years of
independence has given us some illiterate and corrupt ministers who are ready to do any kind of scams for their welfare. Our Autonomous agencies like CBI, Income Tax and Sales Tax Departments, are seem to be paper tigers in dealing with these scams and are unfortunately acting only on the guidelines of corrupted ministers. Some politicians have also tried to divide our country on religious grounds only to full their vote banks which have gave rise to various communal violence. These and many more activities have caused the Indian democracy to loose its respect in the world. However, at the same we must be also fortunate enough to live in a democratic country like India because it is only democracy that can provide us equal rights and duties.

Thanks to the Constituent Assembly. It is equally true that Indian is the only country in the world where people are united together in spite of the fact that we belong to many religious, cultural and traditional backgrounds. So, finally I can be said that that no government or country is perfect.

There is nothing wrong in the Indian Constitutional Law, in fact it is the responsibility of citizens to make efforts to actively participate in the functioning of the
government and make their country perfect.

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