

DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT IN
INDIA
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Introduction:-

Democracy and Development are compatible to each other or both are inimical to each other. This has always been a matter of debate amongst political thinkers. There have been dividing opinions in this regard. Some scholars articulate that democracy and development are reciprocal to each other (Friedman). Some view democracy and economic development as single-directional; that is, economic development makes way for democracy, but democracy checks economic development. This view can also be articulated as "dictatorships are needed to generate development" (Przeworski and Limongi). Another hypothesis is that economic level is controlled for and the relationship between democracy and economic growth is non-linear, or curvilinear. That is, at lower stages of economic level, democracy would be inimical to economic development, while at the higher level, democracy would be complementary to encourage economic development (Barro). Before leading to the complexities of the relations of Democracy and Development, it would be better to have a brief understanding of both of these.

Democracy

Democracy is viewed as a form of governance that paves the way for arriving at a decision amongst a group of individual. It is not only a form of governance but also a social system as well. The indispensable value of democracy lies in its moral and ethical superiority which takes every citizen's interests in to account and are equally binding on everyone. Democracy conceives that individuals are rational beings who are capable of deciding what is good for them and all individuals should have equal say in the determination of collective decisions, which affect them equally. However, given diverse thoughts and opinions in the society it is argued that unanimity is generally impossible to arrive at a common agreement or decision. Thus the most viable procedure for arriving at a commonly agreed decision is the principle of majority. "Democracy is that form of government in which community itself is given a definite and manageable form and organization to execute its will and authority. Though, it may be in the hands of a minority, that minority represents the people, is elected by the people and is removable by the people. It has no rights of its own. It exists for the majority, is born of it and embodies it. It governs only because it is backed and approved by the majority." (Prof. Puntambekar: Introduction to Civics and Politics, p. 101). This is the reason that Modern Democracy has a set of procedures

and representative institutions. In Modern Democracy people elect their representative and hold them accountable for the governance.

Democracy as a form of governance: Here sovereignty lies in the people and they use their sovereign authority by representative participation. "A democratic state, in short, is simply one in which the community as a whole possesses sovereign authority, maintains ultimate control over affairs, and determines what sort of governmental machinery shall be set up... Democracy as a form of state is not merely a mode of government but is merely a mode of appointing, controlling and dismissing a government." (Hearnshaw: Democracy at the crossroads, pp. 17 and 22)

Democracy as a social system: As a social system Democracy connotes equality. Here equality means equal rights of status and of opportunity for everyone. Equality entails equal opportunity; equal treatment without discrimination, bias or prejudice. State can't discriminate against a citizen on the basis of caste, creed, color, sex, religion or place of birth. "Democratic society is one in which there exists a general equality of rights and a similarity of condition, of thoughts, of sentiments and of ideas." (Dicey: Law and Opinion in England, p.50) Based on certain indices Democracy is defined into two terms.

1. Procedural Democracy
2. Substantive Democracy.

In procedural terms Democracy is viewed in terms of the presence of the democratic institutions, political parties and other similar associations or organization, periodic elections, universal adult franchise, leadership etc. Some observers are of the opinion that Democracy in India has been successful in view of the participation of the people in elections and competition amongst political parties to contest elections. The aim of democratic institutions and procedures is to establish a stable democracy accompanied with urbanization, spread of mass media, education, wealth and equality. Modernization theory of Democracy examines that how universal adult franchise and periodic elections helps in the nation building. This theory perceives that development in India would strengthen democracy and the divisions based on cast, religions, ethnicity etc. would disappear. However, scholars have some reservation on the modernization theory. Emergency was perceived as an aberration to the Democracy.

Substantive Democracy views electoral democracy as a minimal democracy. In its opinion electoral democracy limits the scope of democracy. It says that merely free and

fair election, participation of people in elections, universal adult franchise, political parties, pressure groups and presence of constitution are not sufficient for democracy. Democracy has to be established in the reality of society apart from the merely participation and contention in the elections. The rise of identity politics (dalits, OBCs, tribals, women), ethnicity, environmental issues, civil societies, self-help groups, non-governmental organisations and decentralization (with the introduction of the 73rd and the 74th Constitutional Amendments) has expanded the democracy at the grass root level. However, Fareed Zakaria criticizes the substantive democracy. He says “substantive democracy views democracy in the normative terminology as “good governance”, with a wide range of rights, it does not consider the descriptive democracy.” Rajni Kothari opines that Indian state played very significant role in building democracy in the fifties and sixties. There were many welfare schemes and development programmes implemented. This period was marked by the accommodation of varied interests and building consensus. But since 1970s following the promulgation of emergency the political executive tried to concentrate power in its hand. Atul Kohli argues that “Indian democracy is facing a crisis of governability. It is indicated by the growing disjuncture between weakening institutions and multiplying demand. Erosion in the credibility of political parties, leaders, and the indisciplined political mobilization of various social groups, and class conflicts within the society have caused the crisis of governability in India.

Development

What is development and how can we measure it? This term may mean different things to different people. In general, development refers to something good or better or some sort of improvement in the present situation. In economic terms, development has traditionally meant a sustained annual increase in GNP or GDP at rates varying from a certain per cent to more. Uma Kapila says “a common alternative economic index of development has been the rates of growth of per capita GNP i.e., the ability of a nation to expand its output at a rate faster than the growth of population.” Amartya Sen has provided an alternative model of development. According to him the per capita income and the GNP are important but not enough indices of development. Development in the real sense of the term means developing the human capabilities among the people and entitlements in terms of education, health, infrastructure and liberty. Dudley Seers posed three basic questions about the meaning of development.

What has been happening to poverty?

What has been happening to unemployment?

What has been happening to inequality?

During the 1980s, the World Bank championed “economic growth” as the goal of development, its World

Development Report of 1991 asserted that “the challenge of development... is to improve the quality of life. For the world’s poor countries, a better quality of life generally calls for higher income... and it involves much more. It encompasses, as ends in themselves, better education, higher standards of health and nutrition, less poverty, a cleaner environment, more equality of opportunity, greater individual freedom and a richer cultural life.

Measurement of Development

Development is also a perennial idea in the discourse of political and social change. Scholars of Political Science and Sociology refer to it as a modernization epitome while discussing political and social changes in the society. Critics of this concept however, point to some of the complexities involved in conceptualizing development in such a way. A.K. Dutta says these complexities can be understood in terms of some preliminary questions:

What is the appropriate unit for which we ought to examine development?

Since development connotes improvement, how this improvement can be measured? Whether through single indices such as income and production, utility or some combination of measures? Should we follow what ethicists call consequentialist or a deontological approach? According to whom should we evaluate whether improvements are occurring? What is the appropriate domain of development? Social, Political, Psychological or only Economical. Is development an end in itself or a means to something else?

Evaluation of Development

Normally we are interested in the development of individual human beings but due to some certain reasons we are also interested in the development of groups of people, animals, the inanimate and conceptual system. Second, All single metrics of development like income, production, utility, functioning, and capabilities have some strengths and shortcomings and none of these single metrics trumps the others, we need to take several of them into account while measuring improvements. Third, although actual outcomes are important, we need to also take into account procedural aspects of development, examining rights and freedom as well. Fourth, any discourse on development needs to take into account the views of the people involved in the process, rather than thrusting upon them an expert advice from outside. However, these views need to be based on reasons and have a social character. Fifth, however, development encompasses many aspects of life; focus on economic aspects would be relevant because economic development ultimately leads to political and social development. Finally, Development can be perceived as means as well as ends. For instance, improving education can be an end as it enhances functioning and capabilities, but can be a means to increase income and production.

Democracy and Development

It has always been an arguable discourse that whether Democracy and Development are compatible to each other or they are inimical to each other? Can both be secured together or both poses danger to each other? Deepak Nayyar argues that there has been inherent tension between the economics of market and politics of democracy. He has explained it in terms of the exclusionary nature of market and in the inclusionary nature of democracy. It means that there is participation of the people, especially marginalized and poor people, in the democratic process, but they have been excluded from the economic process. Nayyar says that Democracy is perceived as the tyranny of majority. At the same time market is argued as the tyranny of minorities. In the market people vote with their money whereas in political democracy everyone has equal vote. Thus there is always inherent tension between these two institutions. Pranab Bardhan is of the opinion that democracy and development are irreconcilable. Champions of the incompatibility of democracy and development refer to the South East Asian countries where development has taken place in the undemocratic regimes. Though Neeraj Jayal asserts that this debate of democracy and development in India has been somewhat misconceived and it has basically been engaged by the economists. Amartya Sen has provided a categorical perspective on development and democracy. He says that "They are not incompatible. Rather democracy and development are complimentary to each other. Democracy is possible if people in a society have the entitlements and possess capabilities which enable them to be part of the democratic process. Freedom, which is an essential ingredient of democracy, promotes development in terms of entitlements and the capabilities of people. Development is also contingent upon democracy."

Democracy and Development: Indian Perspective

The national freedom struggle that gave birth to an independent India left a deep impression on the nature of post-colonial Indian state. The national movement or the freedom struggle was a multi-class popular movement of the Indian people. This century-long struggle led to a national revolution, national in the sense, and cut across caste, class, community, gender, age representing them all, even if differentially. This was rare example of revolution of any country which attracted the finest of its people from all diverse spheres. Social and religious reformers, writers, poets, musicians, philosophers, traders, industrialists, lawyers, political thinkers, statesmen all joined hands with common people, gave direction to and learnt from their initiative to bring about one of the biggest mass movement in human history. Apart from all embracing, mass character of the national movement, there were certain other basic features of this

remarkable occurrence which not only explain the survival of the nation state but its distinct character. These were its deep anti-imperialism, total commitment to secular democracy and an egalitarian, pro-poor orientation. This is why after liberation from British rule, India chose parliamentary democracy for the solution of all its problems posed by colonial rulers. To assess the implications of relation between democracy and development during post-independence period, we can look it in three phases.

Democracy and Development in India:1947-1967

Inspired by the idealism of national struggle, in the initial years of independence the strategy of economic development was shaped by a political consensus. The political executive of that period accommodated the poor people under the rubric of socialism. Under Nehru-Mahalanobis strategy the nation state took the responsibility for the provision of infrastructure as well as large and heavy industrial investment. The nationalist leadership of the time visualized a democratic republic which ensures social, political and economic justice; liberty; equality; fraternity and freedom for all its citizens. Universal franchise was a great leap in the direction of spreading democratic consciousness. The objectives of political executive of that time was, at the one hand, to catch up with the industrialised countries and to improve the living conditions of the people on the other. Initially it was assumed that industrialization should be preferred to agriculture as industry was supposed to bring more returns and greater employment opportunities rather than agriculture. The strategy of growth laid emphasis on the rapid industrialization with a focus on public investment, capital goods sector, more emphasis on heavy industries. The Congress was the ruling dominant party of that time with legacy of leading an anti-colonial struggle inspired by the core principles of nationalism and development. There was a political consensus that industrialization meant development and national interest was to be matched with individual's interest. Lack of redistribution of resources, lack of land reforms was persistent during that period. This period was largely criticized in terms of failure of land reforms and the rise of high cost industrial economy. Corruption was also emerged in the institutionalized manner. In that period, however, a conscious effort was made by the Indian state to reconcile economic policies with the compulsions of the political process so that the conflicts between the economics and politics could be minimized.

Democracy and Development in India:1967-1990

This period witnessed the qualitative changes taken place in the interaction between the political democracy and welfare economics. Now the social groups who were earlier marginalized and were lying dormant became empowered with political voice and awareness. The consensus of political leadership was also diminished in

this period in the aftermath of the Kamraj plan because second generation of political leadership was devoid of the legitimacy, acceptance and charisma of the nationalist leadership. Regionalization, ruralisation, identity politics was emerged at this time. This period witness the rise of the dominant caste rich peasantry like Jats, Yadavs, Reddis, Kammas and Kapus etc. This period also witnessed the green revolution. Land Reform measures received partial success with the notable exception of the states like Kerala, West Bengal, Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir were now not pursued. Many poverty alleviation programmes like DPAP, DWAKRA were launched. In the absence of serious programmatic efforts, the political executive of that period resorted some populist actions in the form of sloganeering, nationalization of banks, and abolition of privy purses. The success of India's democracy has led to growing demands on the state by various classes and groups included marginalized and poor people. To accommodate these demands all political formations, since the late 1970s began to indulge in competitive populism using state resources to distribute largesse to the various constituent classes of the Indian state including the poor and marginalized. Subsidies (on food, fertilizers, diesel, exports, electricity, to name just a few, proliferated to unsustainable levels pushing the country to the brink of default and economic chaos. Emergency was considered as an aberration to the Indian democracy. Nevertheless the victory of the Janata Party not only reflected the sagacity of the Indian electorates but also proved conclusively that the spirit of democracy had embedded in the political imagination of the Indian people. The failure of Janata Party government reflected the limitation of the coalition politics devoid of ideological unity and purpose. The return of a much chastened and insecure Congress party's government mobilized the politics of populism and patronage. The centralization of political power, politics of nomination, and marketization of polity – all continued to remain the features of the period between 1980 to 1990. Massive allocation of funds were made under employment generating programmes like RLEGP, NREP and IRDP. Deepak Nayyar says, "There was hardly much interaction between the economics and democratic politics now unlike the Nehruvian India." The money and muscle factor entered into electoral arena now dominated by what Rajani Kothari called the vote contractor. Suitcase politics became the order of the day. Caste, ethnicity and religion now began to play far more significant role with the assertion of identity politics.

Democracy and Development in India:1991 onwards

The long term constraints that were building up over a few decades and debilitating the Indian economy combine with certain more recent and immediate factors led to a massive fiscal and balance of payments crisis that climaxed in 1991. This economic crisis pushed India into

initiating a process of economic reforms, which in the Indian context were almost revolutionary. In nature, were ironically started by a minority government led by P.V. NarsimhaRao, and guided by on the most distinguished economists of post-independence India Manmohan Singh, as finance minister. This period has witnessed an absence of consensus regarding its strategy of economic development as well as the evolving nature of its democracy. The long term vision of political leadership of Nehru has been replaced by short-term strategies, as the adoption of the new economic policies of liberalization and the emergent politics of empowerment seem to be moving the economy and polity in the opposite direction.

Now it is a question that what is the implication of economic reforms of India on the democracy and development of India. Political instability in the present coalition era with recurrent elections explains the prevalence of the short term interests driven politics. Weak political executives instead of taking hard measures to stabilize the economy and risking the adverse electoral verdict winning popular support in the elections, the continuation of populist measures have become the dominant factor in the policy making. In terms of democratic politics also, the consensus is absent. The corrupt and inefficient bureaucracy remains incompetent to carry out the reforms. Patronage, corruption and nepotism still continued unabated. The nature of investment, whether foreign or domestic, remains suspect as most of the investments are in the consumer sector and not in the primary or capital good sector. The withdrawal of the state from the social sector has been affected the poor and marginalized people as the whole notion of welfarism has come under question. In the name of fiscal discipline and consolidation the state investment in the primary sectors of employment, health and education has been dwindling. Mani Shankar Aiyar argues that implication of the economic reforms has been in such a manner that higher growth invariably leads to wider inequality. Despite electoral democracy and participation of people the situation of marginalized and poor people is deplorable. However, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) rate is increasing but number of poor people is also increasing. India is prospering but Indians are not. One third district of the India is under insurgency. Tribals are displaced from their natural habitat without providing alternative. IT sector is very strong but number of people getting employment in the sector is proportionately very low. Growth alongwith social justice is hardly seen in the economic reform. New economic policies driven by market laws of demand, supply and maximization of profit are hardly concerned with the poor and marginalized class. The state seems also to tend to overlook the labour rights as they look for private investment.

Democracy is all about delivery of services to the needy. Delivery of services is more important than growth. But it is seen that wider growth leads to wider inequality because method of delivery of services is not working properly for the needy. It means that we have done development at some cost i.e. wider inequality. If we talk about Indian democracy and development we must know to things (i) What is the current situation? (ii) What should be done in future? Actually Indian democracy is still taking its root with the electoral participation going up. Since last two decades or so at the one hand it is being noticed that lower section of society's participation is increasing in politics while people are talking more about freedom; equality of status and of opportunity; social, economic and political justice and dignity of the individual. Media is also at the one hand a strong tool for democracy, proving to be a challenge for the democracy with the reality that biggest corporate house is biggest media power in India. Institutions like Bureaucracy, CAG, Election Commission, Supreme Court have taken initiative to establish their relevance whereas political classes have started to see them a challenge for parliamentary democracy. Recent Public Accounts Committee report observed that CAG should be made accountable to the Parliament. {The Hindu : dated 10.09.2015 New Delhi.} Actually the survival and growth of the sovereign, democratic Indian state requires strong state. Here strong means a nation inclined not only to democracy, decentralization and empowerment of the people but also strong in the sense that it can while accommodating moderate deviations suppress force that threaten democracy by operating outside its limits like terrorists, separatist insurgencies, fanatical, fundamentalists and violent casteist or religious communal forces.

In choosing desirable alternatives, it ought to be remembered that the economic development experience of the post-liberalization period have shown some improvement in terms of some indicators but sustained long-term economic development has not to be achieved because this development has come at the cost of wider inequality among people. Actually political space for mobilization in favour of the poor and marginalised has still largely remained untapped, although simple democratic arithmetic has secured the poor and marginalised several concession as all political parties have to seek their votes. Some NGOs, SHGs and other similar groups have provided an idealistic youth for a for equality among people but in the absence of their generalisation through wider political interventions their efforts and activities have limited results.

We must remember that while persisting poverty, insurgency, tribal displacement, discontent among marginalised and underprivileged people have been the most important failure in India's post-independence

development, the survival of the democratic structure have been its grandest success. The further deepening and maturity of this democratic structure is an important step in the direction of meeting the needs of the underprivileged. The recent efforts to empower the local self governing institutions with the Panchayati Raj amendments to the constitution {73rd and 74th Constitution amendment} offer much promise. Recent popular mobilisation leading to progressive legislation like Right to Information, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, JAM {Jan dhan yojna, Aadhar, Mobile}etc. has created the conditions for further deepening of democracy and held out much promise of reaching out to and empowering the poor and under privileged. We hope that in future the Indian nation state will keep social justice as one of its central objectives and will guide the Indian economy on to a path of rapid development and modernization, based on the advanced scientific breakthrough of the contemporary world without resorting to the populism.

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