

## PRESENT SCENARIO OF INDIAN SOCIETY

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### ABSTRACT:

India is the largest democracy in the World. For more than seventy years we have witnessed the conduct of successful elections, peaceful changes of government at the Centre and in the States, people exercising freedom of expression, movement and religion. India has also been developing and transforming economically and socially. At the same time we, quite often, listen complains about prevalent inequalities, injustice or non-fulfilment of expectations of certain sections of the society. These people do not feel themselves participative in the democratic process. You may ask why it is so .You have already read in earlier unit that democracy means 'Government of the people, for the people, and by the people'. It means democracy is not limited to just a process of election, but also fulfilling social and economic aspirations of the people. In India we keep on debating these various aspects of democracy and its achievements and challenges. For a better understanding of the same, we discuss this in this lesson. This paper makes an effort to provide a framework for good governance in India by identifying its essential features and shortcomings in its working and emphasizes need for innovative approaches. No theory of governance could be intelligible unless it is seen in the context of its time. India's democratic experience of the past six decades has clearly established that good governance must aim at expansion of social opportunities and removal of poverty. Good governance, according to the author, means securing justice, empowerment, employment and efficient delivery of services. The paper deals with these subjects in detail and also analyses administrative and political faultlines. It identifies criminalization of politics and corruption as two major challenges. It also highlights shifts in meaning and content of national values of the freedom movement particularly those of nationalism, democracy, secularism, non-alignment, and mixed economy and its impact on the nitty gritty of administration as well as on the intellectual build up of the organs of the Indian State. The paper lists several areas of concern that need to be addressed energetically and calls for synergy of efforts between government, the market and the civil society. Innovations are generally taking place. There are, however, two areas that need special attention by innovators, namely, economic empowerment of women and livelihood programmes based on local resources and upgraded skills. The need is to formulate a national strategy that

accords primacy to the Gandhian principle of ‘*antodaya*’ without sacrificing growth and by making instruments of State accountable for good governance.

**Key words:** Non fulfilment, Governance, Antodaya, Criminalisation.

## INTRODUCTION:

Democracy has been defined in many ways. Bryce believes that “Democracy really means nothing more or less than the rule of the whole people, expressing their Sovereign will by their votes”.

MacIver observes, “Democracy is not a way of governing, whether by majority or otherwise, but primarily a way of determining, who shall govern, and broadly to what ends”.

India is the largest democracy in the World. For more than seventy years we have witnessed the conduct of successful elections, peaceful changes of government at the Centre and in the States, people exercising freedom of expression, movement and religion. India has also been developing and transforming economically and socially. At the same time we, quite often, listen complains about prevalent inequalities, injustice or non-fulfilment of expectations of certain sections of the society. These people do not feel themselves participative in the democratic process. Democracy means ‘Government of the people, for the people, and by the people’. It means democracy is not limited to just a process of election, but also fulfilling social and economic aspirations of the people. In India we keep on debating these various aspects of democracy and its achievements and challenges. For a better understanding of the same, we discuss this in this lesson. This paper makes an effort to provide a framework for good governance in India by identifying its essential features and shortcomings in its working and emphasizes need for innovative approaches. No theory of governance could be intelligible unless it is seen in the context of its time. India’s democratic experience of the past six decades has clearly established that good governance must aim at expansion of social opportunities and removal of poverty. Good governance, according to the researcher, means securing justice, empowerment, employment and efficient delivery of services. The paper deals with these subjects in detail and also analyses administrative and political fault lines. It identifies criminalization of politics and corruption as two major challenges. It also highlights shifts in meaning and content of national values of the freedom movement particularly those of nationalism, democracy, secularism, non-alignment, and mixed economy and its impact on the nitty-gritty of administration as well as on the intellectual build up of the organs of the Indian State. The paper lists several areas of concern that need to be addressed energetically and calls for synergy of efforts between government, the market and the civil society. Innovations are generally taking place. There are, however, two areas that need special attention by innovators, namely,

economic empowerment of women and livelihood programmes based on local resources and upgraded skills. The need is to formulate a national strategy that accords primacy to the Gandhian principle of ‘*antodaya*’ without sacrificing growth and by making instruments of State accountable for good governance.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:**

A system can be termed as a genuine and comprehensive democracy only when it fulfills both political and socio-economic aspects of people’s participation and satisfaction. There may be two major categories: (a) political conditions, and (b) social and economic conditions – the fulfilment of the first leads to political democracy and the second as social democracy. Obviously, the first and the foremost are political conditions of democracy. It is essential that for a system to be democratic, we must adopt a Constitution and laws that vest supreme power in the people. The human rights and social sciences. So the researcher chose this topic **Trends of Indian politics.**

### **REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE:**

There are a number of sources of evidence about the politics, politic of Indian democracy, behaviours, qualities and competences. A key feature of the current review is that we try to limit our attention to trends of new Indian Democracy and new policy makers of India. With at least some justification

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

- ❖ Understand the meaning of democracy in its different aspects;
- ❖ Identify major problems and challenges being faced by Indian democracy;
- ❖ Recognize the corrective measures for improving the Indian democratic system.

### **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:**

The present research work stand upon well as statistical analysis of the data obtained in order to provide richer answers to the research questions unpinning this study. In the interpretive approach, the individual constructs personal meaning when they grapple with the environment around them to make it meaningful, implying the need for an in depth and insightful analysis of data. Statistical analysis was used in our attempt to get a more generalized understanding of the data obtained and to look for general trends among the participants .The present research work also is a historical platform. This study will follow historical method of research. In this method, the researcher discovers, describes and interprets what existed in the past .Here, researcher may

formulate questions that are most appropriate for the past events is investigation and then directs his research towards seeking answer to these questions with help of evidence. Historical criticism like external and internal criticism is also accepted here.

## **DISCUSSION THE OBJECTIVES:**

Long back, former President of the United States of America, Abraham Lincoln said, “Democracy is a government of the people, for the people, and by the people.” The term ‘democracy’ comes from the Greek word *demokratia* which means “rule of the people”. It was coined from two words: *demos* that means “people” and *Kratos* which refers to “power”. That is, in a democracy the power rests with the people. This meaning is based on the experiences of the governments that existed in some of the Greek city-states, notably Athens. And, today also, democracy is defined as a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodic free elections. When you examine the definitions of democracy, as suggested above, you will find that most of those definitions define democracy as a form of government which is run by the elected representatives.

Since independence India has been functioning as a responsible democracy. The same has been appreciated by international community. It has successfully adapted to the challenging situations. There have been free and fair periodic elections for all political offices from the panchayats to the President. There has been smooth transfer of political power from one political party or set of political parties to others, both at national and state levels on many occasions. There are many examples in our neighbouring countries like Pakistan, Myanmar and even Bangladesh where transfer of power has been done through military coups. In India legislative, executive and judicial organs have been functioning properly. The Parliament and the State Legislatures control the Executives effectively. More importantly, some significant enactments like the Right to Information (RTI) Act 2005, Right to Education 2009 and other welfare means have empowered the people. The mass media, including print and electronic, have full autonomy and play a key role in formulating and influencing public opinion. Significant social change has taken place in almost all walks of life and the nation is moving ahead on course of socio-economic development. India is a very large country full of diversities – linguistically, culturally, religiously. At the time of independence it was economically underdeveloped. There were enormous regional disparities, widespread poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and shortage of almost all public welfare. Citizens had enormous expectations from independence. As mentioned above, India has changed a lot. Yet, there are various challenges that the country faces in terms of fulfillment of expectations of various sections of society. The

challenges come both from prevailing domestic and international conditions as well as lack of adequate prerequisites for a smooth functioning of democracy. These are discussed below.

### ***Illiteracy:***

Illiteracy among people was a matter of grave concern for the successful functioning of democracy in India on the eve of independence and it still continues to be a major challenge. The level of education of citizens is a key to both the successful functioning of democracy and socio-economic development of the country. And perhaps, more importantly, it is an essential condition for human dignity. But the state of formal literacy was almost dismal when India achieved independence. The literacy rate in 1951 was mere 18.33 percent and female literacy was negligible with 8.9 percent. It was, therefore, feared by many that the citizens would not be able to play their roles effectively and exercise their right to vote meaningfully which is an individual's expression of the power of the people.

### ***Poverty:***

It is generally said that for a hungry person right to vote does not have any meaning. For him the first requirement is food. Therefore, poverty is considered as the greatest bane of democracy. It is, in fact, the root cause of all kinds of deprivations and inequalities. It is the state of denial of opportunities to people to lead a healthy and fulfilling life. Of course, India inherited poverty from the long exploitative British colonial rule, but it continues to be one of the gravest problems today. Even now a considerable proportion of Indian population lives below poverty line, called 'BPL'. The poverty line means an income level below which human beings cannot provide for their basic necessities of food, much less for clothes and shelter.

### ***Gender discrimination:***

Discrimination against girls and women exists in every walk of life. You must have had such experiences of prevailing gender inequality in our society and polity. But we know that gender equality is one of the basic principles of democracy. The Constitution of India enjoins upon the State to ensure that men and women are treated as equals and there is no discrimination against women Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties as well as the Directive Principles of State Policy make these intensions very clear. Women are key to good governance. Their increasing representation in democratic institutions have provided stability to Indian polity. Women can bring constructive, creative and sustainable solutions to the table. Women participation in economic programmes needs to be augmented for in women we get expendable providers, educators, caretakers and leaders.

***Casteism:***

The caste system which presumably originated in the division of labour in the ancient society has become a more or less rigid group classification, based on birth. This has led to segregation of so called low castes or 'Dalits', depriving them of education and other social benefits. The Dalits have been typically performing menial labour and some of the hardest physical work in society. Casteism has played a negative role even in the democratic political processes. In fact, casteism has become notorious as a strategy of exploitation of caste consciousness for narrow political gains. The caste system acts against the roots of democracy. The democratic facilities - like fundamental rights relating to equality, freedom of speech, expression and association, participation in the electoral process, free media and press, and even legislative forums - are misused for maintaining casteist identity. Casteism has also been contributing towards continuation of socio-economic inequalities. It is true that India has been an unequal society from times immemorial. The Scheduled Castes (SCs), the Scheduled Tribes (STs) and the backward classes have suffered down the ages from socio-economic deprivations. There are enormous inequalities in our society which are posing serious challenge to Indian democracy.

***Communalism:***

Communalism and religious fundamentalism have acquired a very dangerous form and alarming proportion in India. They disrupt the pattern of co-existence in our multi-religious society. Communalism is an affront to India's nationalist identity and a tragic setback to its evolving secular culture. It is subversive of our democratic political stability and destroyer of our glorious heritage of humanism and composite culture. Quite often, communalism is wrongly used as a synonym for religion or conservatism.

***Regionalism:***

Indian democracy has also been struggling with regionalism which is primarily an outcome of regional disparities and imbalances in development. We all know that India is a plural country with diversities of religions, languages, communities, tribes and cultures. A number of cultural and linguistic groups are concentrated in certain territorial segments. Although development process in the country aims at growth and development of all regions, the regional disparities and imbalances in terms of differences in per capita income, literacy rates, state of health and educational infrastructure and services, population situation and levels of industrial and agricultural development continue to exist. Existence and continuation of regional inequalities both among States and within a State create a feeling of neglect, deprivation and discrimination. This situation has led to regionalism manifested in demands for creation of new States, autonomy or more powers to States or even secession from the country. It

is true that regionalism and sub-regionalism are unavoidable in a vast and plural country like India. It is not always correct to consider every attempt to support or defend regional or sub-regional interests as divisive, fissiparous and unpatriotic. The problem begins when these interests are politicized and regional movements are promoted for ulterior political motives.

### ***Corruption:***

Corruption in public life has been a major concern in India. In 2011, India was ranked 95th of 183 countries defined as corrupt in Transparency International's **Corruption Perceptions Index** (CPI). In fact, corruption is rampant in all walks of life, be it land and property, health, education, commerce and industry, agriculture, transport, police, armed forces, even religious institutions or so-called places of spiritual pursuits. Corruption continues to exist in covert and overt ways at all three levels - political, bureaucratic and corporate sector. One can see the nexus between the politicians, the bureaucrats and the industrialists which has resulted into corruption and corrupt practices. The tentacles of corruption have affected all organs of government, including the judiciary.

### ***Political criminalism:***

In recent years, criminalization of politics in India has become a debatable issue. There have been allegations that there are some elements in politics who do not have faith in democratic values and practices. They indulge in violence and take refuge in other unhealthy, undemocratic methods to win elections. Undoubtedly, this is not a healthy trend in politics and there is an urgent need to apply serious check on such tendencies. Criminalization of politics is the very negation of democratic values and has no place in a democratic set up. Democracy can be strengthened by adopting and promoting democratic values and shunning criminal activities. Recently, the judiciary, while taking a serious note of criminal tendencies in politics, has showed signs of adopting remedial measures to apply a serious check on such elements. The Central government and many State governments have been taking steps to address this issue effectively. This is a matter of great satisfaction and a healthy sign for the successful functioning of democracy in our country. We, as awakened citizens and as voters of the largest democracy in the world, can also contribute by discouraging such persons who have a criminal background, from contesting elections.

### ***Political violence:***

Violence has been with us for long, but use of violence for political end is dangerous for the existence of any system. In India we have been witnessing various forms of violence. Communal violence, caste violence and



political violence in general have attained serious proportion. Communal riots are engineered by vested interests for political, religious and economic reasons. Caste violence in various shapes has been increasing. Despite agricultural development, abolition of zamindari system, and developments like green revolution and white revolution, there are still powerful feudal elements in the society. A serious conflict of interests has emerged between higher and middle castes and this has led to aggressive competition for political power which many a time leads to violence.

## CONCLUSION:

It is thus clear that democracy in India faces certain serious challenges. These are causes of serious concern to all. In fact, the leadership of the freedom movement and especially the framers of the Indian Constitution themselves were very much aware of these issues. They made a number of constitutional provisions to address the same. Since independence governments have taken various measures to respond too many of these challenges. There have been significant improvements in some of these. However, lots still have to be done. For that, efforts have been going on. There is need for collaboration among governmental agencies, political parties, civil society and citizens in general. Certain significant corrective measures that have been adopted and can be initiated are as follows:

### *Education for all:*

The significance and necessity of education for efficient functioning of democracy was appreciated by the framers of the Indian Constitution. Which is why, free and compulsory education to all children up to the fourteen years of age continued to remain constitutional commitment in India. Various governments at national and state levels have been making efforts to attain this goal. As a follow up of the National Policy on Education 1986, a National Literacy Mission was set up in 1988 to plan and implement programmes for the removal of illiteracy under the platform, "Sarvasiksha aviyan". But the goal of universal literacy is yet to be attained. Currently a nation-wide programme known as "Saakshar Bharat" is being implemented. It aims at developing functional literacy and numeracy to non-literate and non-numerate adults in the age group of fifteen and above, to enable them to continue their learning beyond basic literacy and acquire equivalence to formal educational system.

### *Poverty alleviation:*

From the 1970s, a number of programmes have been implemented for alleviation of poverty in India. These programmes fall into two broad categories: (i) There are programmes to lift beneficiaries above poverty line by



providing them with productive assets or skills or both, so that they can employ themselves usefully and earn greater income. (ii) Programmes are also being implemented to provide temporary wage employment for the poor and the landless. In 1999, Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) was conceived as a holistic programme of micro enterprise development in rural areas with emphasis on organizing the rural poor into self-help groups (SHGs), capacitybuilding, planning of activity clusters, infrastructure support, technology, credit and marketing linkages. This programme has impacted many rural poor. Similarly, the Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY) is a programme for the creation of rural economic infrastructure with employment generation as a secondary objective. The programme is implemented by the village panchayats and since its inception it has generated 27 crore men-days of employment each year. The Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) covers 1,778 drought-prone, desert, tribal and hill area blocks. The programme was designed to provide employment in the form of manual work in the lean agricultural season. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) is being implemented to enhance the livelihood security of people in rural areas by guaranteeing hundred days of wage-employment in a financial year to a rural household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work.

#### ***Gender elimination:***

It is now being recognized that the goals of democracy “of the people, for the people and by the people” cannot be fully realized if the female population are not included in all ways in the processes of socio-economic and political development. That is why, besides constitutional provisions, several laws have been enacted, policies have been made and implemented, and institutional reforms have been carried out for the development of women. The 73rd and 74th amendments of Indian Constitution in 1993 are the milestones in the process of political empowerment of women. These amendments have reserved one-third of the seats in the Panchayati Raj Institutions, Municipalities and Municipal Corporations. Another significant development has been the adoption of the National Policy for Empowerment of Women in 2001, the overarching goal of which is to “bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women.” But a lot needs to be done to attain this goal. Remove of religion imbalance; Redressing regional imbalances has indeed been a vital objective of the planning process in India. Efforts are on to reduce regional disparities. Besides, the State specific efforts for reducing intra-State regional disparities, a number of Centrally Sponsored Programmes have been in operation for the last two to three decades for taking care of specific aspects of backwardness of such regions.

***Reforms of administrative and judicialism:***

The success of all the above stated corrective measures primarily depends on the efficient functioning of administration and independence and righteousness of the judicial system. But on both counts, a lot needs to be done. The performance of public administration in India has come under close scrutiny in the last few years. Rampant corruption, inefficiencies, wastages and irresponsiveness to the needs of citizens are some of the commonly acknowledged problems afflicting the administration. No doubt, the Indian judiciary has remained independent and neutral; there are serious problems of (i) slow disposal of cases leading to delays as well as accumulation of backlog, and (ii) very low rate of prosecution in criminal cases. Administrative reforms have continuously been on the agenda of the government ever since independence. A number of Commissions and Committees have been set up in this regard. But bureaucratic reluctance to change has prevented the reforms to take place in full measure. The recommendations of various Commissions and Committees focus around the need (i) to make administration accountable and citizen friendly, (ii) to build its capacity for quality governance, (iii) to orient administration for promoting peoples' participation, decentralization and devolution of powers, (iv) to make administrative decision-making process transparent, (v) to improve the performance and integrity of the public services, (vi) to reinforce ethics in administration, and (vii) to inculcate readiness for e-governance. Judicial reform also has been a critical concern since long. Various recommendations have been made on many occasions. The major issues that need consideration in this regard are : (a) Simplification of Rules and Procedures, (b) Repealing out-dated Laws, (c) Increase in the Judge Population Ratio, (d) Time-bound filling of Vacant Posts in Judiciary, (e) Transparency in Appointment, Promotion and Transfer of Judges, (f) Judicial Accountability; and (g) Transparency of Court Proceedings.

***Sustainable development:***

Indian democracy can adequately respond to all the challenges when it moves forward on the path of sustainable development. A model of development without taking into account the basic needs of millions, today as well as in the future, cannot be conducive for the survival of democracy. Development has to be human-centred and directed towards improvement of quality of life of all the people. It has to be focused on removal of poverty, ignorance, discrimination, disease and unemployment. The development process has to aim at sustained economic, social and environmental development fundamental rights, such as equality, liberty of thought and expression, belief, movement, communication and association must be protected by the Constitution. The democratic system has to have universal adult franchise as the basis of electing representatives at various levels of the government.

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