5. Challenges faced by Indian Democracy

As we have said earlier, democracy is a continuous living process. Mere adoption of democracy does not bring democracy into practice. Alert and conscious efforts are required to sustain democracy. It is necessary to understand threats to democracy in time and deal with them in a democratic manner. In this chapter we will primarily focus on challenges before democracy in India. But before that let us have a look at challenges before democracy at the global level.

• Today every nation in the world claims to be democratic. But in reality very few nations in the world have democracy that protects the rights and freedom of people and gives priority to the welfare of people. Many democracies are facing the challenge of military take over. Spread of democratic values at the global level and adoption of true democracy by all nations is a major challenge at global level.

> Which democratic institutions need to be established for transformation from non-democratic system to a democratic system?

• Democratic values are found to be very weak even in those nations where democracy appears to be deep-rooted. In nations like India, democracy appears in the form of voting, elections, governmental structure, judiciary etc. However this is only a political form of democracy. To become a way of life democracy must be practiced in each and every aspect of social life. Several measures such as inclusion of all social components, autonomy to social institutions, empowerment of citizens, protection of human values need to be adopted for real cultivation of democracy.

Can you tell?

In democracy, to get power, political parties contest elections. But do political parties organise internal elections? It is necessary that political parties should hold elections at the organisational level. Are such elections held?

Questions in my mind

China adopted economic reforms and also became a member of the World Trade Organisation. But China continues to have a one party system. Is China a democratic nation?

• Another challenge before democratic nations is to ensure that democracy becomes deep rooted. Freedom, equality, fraternity and justice, peace, development and humanitarianism are the values that should be practiced at all levels of the society. The mass support for this purpose can be gathered only through democratic means.

Challenges before Indian Democracy

To make democracy more meaningful the government of India decentralised power and adopted the policy of reservation for women and weaker sections of the society. But we should think whether such measures really gave power in the hands of citizens?

Communalism and terrorism : Religious conflict and the resultant terrorism is one of the major challenges before Indian democracy. Social stability gets hampered due to increasing religious hostility. People's participation in democratic process reduces to a great extent due to terrorism.

Left extremists - Naxalism : Naxalism is a major problem in India. Naxalism began as a movement to remove injustice against aggressive landless farmers and tribal people. But today Naxalism has become a violent struggle. In the Naxalite movement the importance of the problems of farmers and tribal people has reduced. Instead, violent measures to oppose the government policies, attacking the police forces and such other tactics are used by the Naxalite groups.

Corruption : In India the extent of corruption is said to be very high in the public sector. Government's working capacity is reduced due to corruption at the political and administrative levels. People develop distrust and dissatisfaction about the entire governmental system due to delay in governmental work, poor public services and facilities and different financial blunders. Corruption in the electoral process, bogus voting, bribing the voters, abducting the voters and such other things reduces people's confidence in the democratic process.

> **What do you think ?**
>
> Family monopoly in politics is a major problem before democracy in India. Monopoly of just one family in politics reduces democratic space. Common people cannot participate in the public sector.

Criminalisation of politics : Increased participation of criminals in political process is another serious problem for democratic systems. Sometimes political parties give candidature to people having a criminal background, facing criminal allegations and allegations of corruption. This increases the role of money and muscle power in politics. This may also lead to violence during elections.

Social challenges : Apart from the challenges mentioned above, Indian democracy faces other social challenges. The problems like unemployment, unequal distribution of resources, increasing gap between rich and poor, caste based issues, need to be resolved.

What steps should be taken to make Indian Democracy successful?

(1) Majority opinion has a lot of importance in Democracy. In a democracy, Political party getting majority of votes comes to power. Parliament takes all decisions by majority. Democracy aims at the welfare of majority of people. When the importance is given to majority it is possible that injustice may be done to those who are marginal and who are in minority. Though democracy is a government by majority, minorities should also be included in the process of decision-making. It is the duty of government to take into consideration the interests of minorities. In short, in democratic government everyone's opinion should be considered important. Similarly majority government should not be the government of majority community. All religious, linguistic, ethnic and caste groups should get equal opportunity to participate in the decision-making process.

(2) Judiciary in India is seen to be making conscious efforts to make political process transparent. To prevent criminalisation of politics, judiciary has adopted measures like strict punishment

to criminals and prohibiting criminals from participating in political process.

(3) To make democracy successful in India, it is not just sufficient to make efforts at the level of government, administration and judiciary. Everyone at social and individual level should make conscious efforts towards it. Education for All campaign, Clean Bharat campaign, Gram Samruddhi Yojana, Self-help Groups, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and such other projects are undertaken at the level of Government and Administration. To increase political participation of women, 50% seats are kept reserved in local self-governing institutions.

(4) To make Indian democracy truly successful, it is essential to increase participation of people at all levels. If such participation increases especially at the level of the government it will help in changing public policies. Public polices are made through interaction with the people. Interaction with those who are not in power is also important for the success of democracy.

The values of equality, liberty, social justice, secularism should be respected and implemented even in our personal life. For the success of democracy, everyone should keep in mind that we are responsible citizens of the nation.

Exercise

1. Choose the correct option from the given options and complete the sentences.

(1) In a democracy .... participate in elections and get political power.
   (a) political parties   (b) courts
   (c) social organisations
   (d) none of the above

(2) The major challenge faced by all democratic nations in the world is ....
   (a) Religious conflicts
   (b) Naxal activities
   (c) Deepening the roots of democracy
   (d) Importance to muscle power

2. State whether following statements are true or false. Give reasons for your answer.

(1) Alertness is required to sustain democracy.

(2) Importance of the problems of farmers and tribals has increased in the left extremist movement.

(3) People may lose confidence in the democratic process due to corruption during elections.

3. Write notes on

(1) Left-extremism   (2) Corruption

4. Answer the following questions in brief.

(3) Which factors are required for the success of democracy in India ?

(2) What are the effects of criminalisation of politics ?

(3) What efforts are undertaken to bring transparency in political process ?

Project

(1) What measures will you suggest to control corruption? Make a list of it.

(2) Organise a group discussion in your class on the problem of terrorism in India.

(3) Present a street play on 'how to get rid of addiction ?'.

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