

The Phenomenon of Democracy and Development in India

Y Satya Kameswari

Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Political Science, Osmania University

ABSTRACT:

Democracy and Development is a persistent study that lays down the path for the interminable growth of the economy in developing countries. They coexist in unity with diversified circumstances and also have their own identity separate from each other. The roots of democratic rule in India can be seen in the Government of India Act of 1935. It had a design for separation of powers, elections etc. With the attainment of freedom in 1947, the makers of the Indian constitution adopted the democratic form of government for the country. In the early years after independence, predictions were made that the Indian political system would eventually collapse because of the country's diverse population and low per capita income. India, however, has proven its critics wrong and shown the world that democracy has not only thrived and been sustained but has also deepened. Though India had all the advantages of development, due to various invasions and British rule for a very long period have made India underdeveloped. The leaders of the nation at the time of Independence had a very crucial task of developing India in all facets with the limited resources, growing population, illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, and lack of basic amenities for the population. In India, if we have to understand the journey of democracy and development we need to understand the different dimensions of democracy and development in the Indian context. We can classify them as political dimension, economic dimension, social dimension, institutional dimension, cultural dimension and environmental dimension.

Keywords: Democracy, Development, Dimensions, sustainable development, democratic vision

INTRODUCTION:

The interrelationship between Democracy and Development is a persistent study that lays down the path for the interminable growth of the economy in developing countries. There is a need to understand and elucidate the meaning of Democracy and Development which are the basic traits of a democratic nation in the Global South or the developing countries. There is a unique relationship that exists between Democracy and Development. They coexist in unity with diversified circumstances and also have their own identity separate from each other. In developing countries, they act as the pillars of people's confidence, growth and most importantly support for the sustaining political system. They are the trajectories of the developing nations. These nations can claim a developing nation status with the existence of Democracy and Development in harmony with each other and accelerating the growth rate of a nation. In technical terminology, Democracy is an operating system that makes programmes to lead a prosperous life for the people and Development becomes the outcome of the programme. The goals of the democratic programmes and policies taken up by the elected governments are the processors that determine the quality of output i.e., the quality of Development. If the people are satisfied with the

development and the processors of development, then the same people's elected government may come to power again in a democracy. This feedback mechanism acts as a major support pillar in strengthening Democracy.

It is an accepted fact that Democracy has its origin in Ancient Greece, though it was not in the present form of its existence as it is today. Athens, the city-state in Ancient Greece adopted a direct form of democracy with two basic features a random selection of members to the government and the citizen's rights in the process of law-making of the city. The medieval times witnessed the elections. In 1215 AD King John of England signed the famous "Magna Carta" which established the "rule of law". The end of medieval times has seen the realization among the people about their rights and their enforcement. Magna Carta has become a universal document whether it is for modern democracies or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The spirit of the Magna Carta is seen in the Bill of Rights in England – 1689, the US Constitution of 1787 and France's Declaration of Rights of Men and Citizens of 1789 to name a few.

The roots of democratic rule in India can be seen in the Government of India Act of 1935. It had a design for separation of powers, elections etc. With the attainment of freedom in 1947, the makers of the Indian constitution adopted the democratic form of government for the country. The first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru stated that " Democracy is tolerance, it is tolerance not only towards those who agree but also with those who disagree". (Rakesh Kumar, 2017). The father of the Indian Constitution and the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution, Dr B R Ambedkar was a staunch believer in democracy, he opined that Democracy is rather a social organisation than a form of government and its success is based on the social and economic democracy. He believed that economic and social changes can be brought into a democratic system as it sets the conditions necessary for the change. The principles of equality, liberty, fraternity, awareness among the people, justice and the rule of law make it present conditions for democracy to work on necessary development in economic and social aspects of life. (Desh Raj Sirswa, 2016).

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Independent India was not a cakewalk for the framers of policies of development. Independent India was handwoven in the scenario of widespread illiteracy, extreme poverty, a shattered economy and absolutely no development. The glance-off development was not visible shortly. The journey of economic development of India started from agriculture and farming to industrialization and transportation to the service sector to liberalization and globalization and most importantly to "make in India" – "Atmanirbhar Bharat".

Challenges of Adopting Democracy in India:

In the early years after independence, predictions were made that the Indian political system would eventually collapse because of the country's diverse population and low per capita income. India, however, has proven its critics wrong and shown the world that democracy has not only thrived and been sustained but has also deepened. To understand the democratic political system of India we need to look into the problems that India was facing at the time of Independence:- Economic backwardness and Poverty,

Agricultural and Farming society, Illiteracy and lack of Education, Cultural diversities, Social structure etc.

Economically India became retarded because of British rule in the country for around 200 years and their exploitation of resources, agricultural products and wealth in the name of trade. The two phases in which the pre-capitalist economy of India was destroyed by British rule can be identified as (i) the 'drain of wealth' by the East India Company's policy of profitable business as a result of which all the resources were totally under the control of the Company. (ii) With the Industrialization of the resources from India, the handicrafts and handloom industry was destroyed (Zoramthanga, Sep, 2016). British in their rule for over 200 years never really concentrated on the economic development of the nation. This resulted in the imbalance of trade right from the village level to the district level and between the states. On the eve of independence, more than 70% of the population depended on Agriculture. More than 90% of the nation's income was from Agriculture. In such circumstances also the Agricultural and Farming sector was vulnerable. Many setbacks counted for the vulnerability of the sector. The foremost include small landholdings, rain-dependent agriculture, primitive technology used in agriculture, very low production, extensive methods not used and most importantly the drifts between the owner and the tiller. At the time of independence, the literacy rate was 16.67%. (Patel, I., 1996). In 1947 India had 20 Universities and 496 colleges where 241,369 students were registered. It was a very feeble number for a vast country like India. In 1948, the Government of India established the University Education Commission to look into the growth and development of higher education (Jayaram, N., 2007). Enrolment in higher education was low because of poverty and the cost of education which was far beyond the reach of the common man. On August 15th 1947, India inherited 'Underdeveloped' (Bhambhri, C., 1994). status with continuous colonial exploitation. This is a major challenge that lies in front of the nation. The nation had to resolve the major perplexing agrarian conflicts devised by the colonial rulers to divide and rule.

The social belief systems based on caste, religion, rituals and culture were a complex phenomenon in front of the nation to be resolved for establishing a strong democracy with growth. The social structure of the class system was traditional and deep-rooted.

India has a very long and glorious scientific tradition. It is found in the ancient Vedic literature, some of which was compiled as early as 1500 BC. The concepts of astronomy, metaphysics and perennial movement are all embodied in the Rig Veda. India was a very progressive nation in the terrain of scientific and technological development in the world 1500 years ago. Due to repeated loot and foreign invasions, the country's glory of scientific and technological development came to a standstill and lost track. Mathematical concepts like Vedic mathematics, Ayurveda, Yoga etc considered to be the natural sciences lost their glory and were replaced with the Western system of education. These concepts have a proven record of success with the actual implementation and practice in ancient India. Foreign trade in India during the pre-colonial period was blooming with all the potential trade opportunities. At the beginning of the 19th century, a 20% share of India in the World economy had an opportunity to expand. However, the British colonial rule destroyed foreign trade with its policies as it held a monopoly on India's foreign trade and was restricted to Britain alone. These circumstances have not only made India underdeveloped but also made it vulnerable to development.

Post-Independence the development India has witnessed:

Though India had all the advantages of development, due to various invasions and British rule for a very long period have made India underdeveloped. The leaders of the nation at the time of Independence

had a very crucial task of developing India in all facets with the limited resources, growing population, illiteracy, unemployment, poverty, and lack of basic amenities for the population.

Economic development was the launching policy of India at the time of Independence. Post-Independence the economic development in India was guided by five-year plans which emphasised agriculture and Industrial development with the public sector as a centrifugal force. Development was measured in terms of Industrial development with all the policies and planning revolving around Industries. India was primarily a poor country or an underdeveloped country that depended totally on agriculture. With its antagonistic interests of caste, class, religion, region, sex and languages India struggled for development. From socialism and communism to capitalism India has become a conglomerate of different ideologies. Indian economic policies evolved out of this conglomeration of different political ideologies.

The journey of development in India from 1950 to 2020:

This period of the 1950s witnessed more planning and saw a snail growth rate of the Indian economy, less than one per cent a year with no improvement in per capita income and GDP. India was a new-born country with socio-economic and political challenges on all sides. India had to resolve the unresolved problems of communal disturbances that arose with the partition of the country and address the existing poverty, illiteracy and underdevelopment. The first five-year plan emphasised the growth of agriculture and Irrigation, whereas the second five-year plan worked on the development of heavy industry.

1965 and 1966, two consecutive years witnessed monsoon failures which affected the Indian agrarian economy. There was a 12% rise in the inflation rate during 1965 – 1968. The steep increase in the prices of food grains to almost 20% during the same time was also due to the wars with China (1962) and the war with Pakistan in 1965. This culminated with the fiscal deficit of 7.3% of the GDP in 1966 – 67 resulting in the national economic crisis during the tenure when Mrs Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister. (Bipan Chandra., 2008).

India lost its support and food aid from the United States of America as a retaliative action against the Pakistan War in 1965 and took a non-aligned position during the Vietnam War. The economic conditions were inflamed by the political pressures from the US, IMF and World Bank to

- Liberalize India's markets
- Devalue the rupee and
- Adopt a new agricultural policy

The efforts to move the strategy of development from agrarian and industrial areas to open markets with foreign aid have become unsuccessful which has witnessed movements of anti-foreign trade. (Acharya, Shankar & Ahluwalia, Isher & Krishna, K.L & Patnaik, Ila., 2006). One of the most successful stories of this period is that of laying the foundation for the Green Revolution and harvesting the first crop of High-yielding variety of Wheat.

The period from 1969 to 1980 marked a new policy of the government by nationalizing the private sector in the fields of insurance, coal, banks and parts of the steel industry. Under the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act (passed in 1969), many industries in the private sector were controlled by the government. This has paved the way for the withdrawal of multinational organizations like Shell, IBM, Coca Cola and Caltex from the country. Not only nationalization but also the government has decided to take over the “sick industries” which included several textile mills. To create food security

“green revolution” was introduced. High-yield variety seeds, chemical fertilizers and other extensive techniques of farming were introduced to give a boost to the agricultural sector. There were also a few remarkable external pressures during this period. In the 1971 India-Pakistan War, two crucial rises in oil prices first one in 1973-74 and the second one during 1979-1980. With all these, the GDP got stagnated at 3.5%. In a way, this period marked the continuation of socialistic ideals with liberalization seeking a back seat. In 1974 a major development that changed the face of Indian scientific development was the Pokharan Nuclear test which showed a path for a new Indian outlook, at the same time India faced sanctions from the developed nations. This did not stop the Indian work on the scientific development of the nation.

Indian economy during the period of 1980 - 1990 has seen growth, as the state has given utmost importance to the growth since 1980 with a more pro-business and export-oriented strategy. (Kohli, Atul, 2006) The total productivity factor accounted for the increase in the growth rate during this period as the organizations benefitted from globalization and the income thus gained was spent on education, investment and physical capital. This period has marked a remarkable change in growth and development with the GDP growing at 5.6 per cent per annum, which is at a higher rate when compared to 1959 – 1980 which was at 3.6 per cent on average. During this decade it is observed that the government’s control over exports and imports was reduced and the Indian economy became an open book for external trade and investment as there was participation in the global market that led to the increase in growth rate. Not only the changes in trade, but this decade also marked the development of technological outlook. The Telecommunications revolution has changed the communication system in the country. As Harsh Sethi says in his article “The Great Technology Run” the values of technology innovation cohabitated with democracy and became an oratory in India (Harsh Sethi., 1988). Indian economy adopted according to the needs of the development structure and shifted to a liberal economic model of development consecutively. Under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh as the Finance Minister, India walked into the path of the LPG model – ‘Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization’. The liberalization process that started in the middle of the 1980s gained proper shape and momentum to open the Indian economy to trade and foreign direct investment in the 1990s. A proper design was set to boost the efficacy of the Indian economic condition by reducing the trade barriers. A humongous task was initiated to have a specified path with a transparent system to reduce unnecessary controls and lay a policy template to move India towards open markets.

This period from 1991 to 2001 marked a significant change and development in India’s role in the global economic scenario. Significantly India emerged as an exporter of its Information Technology services globally. Increasing employment opportunities, improvement in human development indicators and most important literacy rate has increased significantly from 52% during the 1990s to 73% in 2011. Relatively socioeconomic indicators have witnessed major changes such as enrolments in schools, the establishment of schools by the state and central governments and the establishment of technical institutions all over the country. The supply of safe drinking water to the household has increased by 10%. (Saikia, Dilip., 2012)

Though the take-off of liberalization helped the Indian economy to initiate the free market principle and accelerated the growth of the economy in the initial stages, the year 1997 saw a halt in the growth. The coalition government’s uncertainty was illustrated by the political crisis which ended the Deve Gowda Government and led to the United Front government of I.K.Gujral. Coalition governments are formed

more by trial and error methods than by any specific ideology. This led to the slowdown of development in India as the coalition governments failed to uphold democratic development.

The Indian economy has seen astonishing growth during this period from 2001 to 2014 and emerged as the fastest-growing economy and tried to equate her external and internal issues. Despite this growth, there was a continuous debate on the human index development, agricultural sector, creation of employment opportunities, reduction of poverty and inequality, inflation crisis etc. one of the oldest targets of planning in India was the eradication of poverty which couldn't be achieved till the 1980s. The change was visible with the reforms of the 1990s.

Contributions of Democracy to Development in India

This is a continuous debate or rather ongoing debate in India as to how Democracy contributed to Development in India. This is more addressed by economists than political scientists. At any given point in time development is considered to be the part and parcel of economic growth only. Here comes an important point to be noted, economic growth or any development in the country would be possible only if the elected government worked towards the development of the nation and in turn took up policies that are conducive to the development of the nation in all aspects not just economic. There has been a school of thought which promoted that the poor in India were included in the democratic process of electing the government and at the same time they were not part of the economic development. To a large extent, it is true, that the poor in the country were vote banks. Slogans like "Gharibi Hatao" were part of election campaigns only to acquire seats in the elections. Eleven five-year plans were launched by the governments to eradicate poverty and alleviate the poor starting in 1951. According to Amartya Sen development and democracy are inseparable and are complimentary to each other. When people imbibe the capabilities and have acquired them to be part of the complete democratic process democracy can work towards development. The rights and freedoms which are part of democracy make it possible for development to take off in the right direction. (Shukla, S., 1994)

In India, if we have to understand the journey of democracy and development we need to understand the different dimensions of democracy and development in the Indian context. We can classify them as political dimension, economic dimension, social dimension, institutional dimension, cultural dimension and environmental dimension.

Economic dimension:

If we look at the Indian scenario, the most important achievement is the enlargement of economic freedom in the second phase with the liberalization and globalization policies of the government. There is an underlying accord between the political and economic dimensions of democracy. Political democracy's fact of existence is based on economic democracy. Intense economic differences can hamper the growth of the nation as the extreme economic classes can conflict at all times. This economic dimension of democracy in India has witnessed the conflict and with the political dimension and policies it could intervene and to a large extent evade the conflict of classes. The public distribution system is one such policy which helped in diminishing the conflict. The needy could get their basic requirements at affordable and subsidised prices. Development in India is often identified with economic growth, poverty reduction and improvement in living standards. This dimension focuses on factors such as GDP growth, employment generation, infrastructure development, access to basic services and poverty alleviation. With the growing population, it may not be completely possible to eradicate poverty at the same time

government can work towards eradicating the same and alleviate the standard of living of the people. When we look at the Indian scenario in the present times we can witness the same. Poverty still exists but with an increased poverty line. It would be a surprising factor that today the lower income group has access to the technological development in India. They can gain access to mobile phones and e-payment portals. This shows that today India is moving towards Digital India and streamlining its services to all sections of people.

Social dimension:

In India social development consists of various factors like education, healthcare, gender equality, social justice and empowerment of marginalized sections of society. It emphasizes inclusive and equitable social systems that promote social adherence and address social disparities. when it comes to social aspects in a country like India with its humongous population, caste, religion, race, cultures, traditions and sex a conducive atmosphere to ensure equality and fraternity and eliminate all possible discrimination on any of these grounds is a tough task. Despite its diversities, India could attain equality in almost all aspects. There may be some dissatisfaction here and there, but throughout its existence as a democracy, it could attain equality and fraternity. If we look at the social dimension of democracy it is not the only type of government that assures and promises rights to minorities but also that form of government which guarantees and assures a place for ethnic and cultural groups through the rights of equality and fraternity. The fundamental rights enshrined in the constitution in part III, from articles 12 to 35 give confidence for the individuals to have faith in democracy, specifically in the social dimension of democracy. this strengthens and sustains democracy. Though initially there were inequalities in the nation at the time of independence, the government taking initiatives and creating reservations for the needy and giving a special status brought down those innate qualities and created a conducive atmosphere for this dimension to have sustained development with a democratic outlook.

Political Dimension:

Democracy in India is defined by regular elections, political participation, freedom of speech and an independent judiciary. This political dimension lays its focus on political institutions, practices of governance, transparency, accountability to the people, rule of law and protection of civil liberties. The political dimension of democracy is very popular and imposing on the people of India. In India, people exercise power through their elected representatives. Elections are held every five years with multiple parties contesting for democratic power. For Lok Sabha and State assemblies, elections are held at regular intervals of five years. If we look at the political dimension of Indian democracy, we can see them in two different phases one from the attainment of independence to 1980 and the second one from the adoption of liberalisation by the government in the 1990s to 2014. People were participating in the elections and the elections in both phases. Their decisions are being followed, the matter of importance is that the second phase has seen an upliftment in the poverty line than in the first phase. This is due to more political freedom gained by more political participation and more number of political parties both at the national and regional levels that came into existence. This accelerated the political freedom with which there was an acceleration in the growth of middle-class participation and their growth. Apart from the political growth, the second phase has also seen new rights coming their way in the form of the Right to Information Act in 2005. Every aspect of the government has become an open book to the public and this democracy has become more participatory.

Environmental dimension:

Apart from the traditional outlook on democracy and development India is also showcasing new dimensions to the nation's democracy and development. One such dimension is the Environmental dimension. With the growing population and development in science and technology, the need for sustainable growth has gained importance. Sustainable development is becoming increasingly important in the Indian context. This dimension focuses on managing natural resources, environmental conservation, climate change and most importantly policies of the government that promote a sustainable environment. The increasing demands of the population are to be met with sustainability for which there is a need to conserve, preserve and generate natural resources. There is a need for the preservation of the Earth to fit in the growing population. From water to oil and gas, agricultural products to energy sources there is a growing need to meet the demand. In such circumstances, the government of India is coming up with new policies for controlling pollution and conserving oil and natural gas by looking into alternative methods. Electronic vehicles, the inclusion of solar power, the use of biofuels, and the preservation of rivers and forests are some of the new environmental dimensions that are on take-off. There is a huge need for development to progress in this dimension, the commendable consolation is that the government is taking steps to work on this dimension as well.

Cultural dimension:

India is a country of diverse cultures and traditions. Development and Democracy in India have a huge impact on the cultures and traditions and vice-versa. This dimension includes aspects like cultural diversity, respect for ethnic inclusiveness, resilience and social consensus. The concept of cultural dimension has been given considerable importance in the present-day contemporary political system. The analysis of the cultural dimension gives us a picture of the framework of the understanding of the political process that takes place. (Joseph, S., 1991) Protection of the culture against alien encroachment is a very important project for the present-day government in India. (Joseph, S., 1991, p. 49) The cultural struggles have become the platform for the political stage and the political struggles have made culture a platform for their growth. They have become increasingly dependent on each other. If we have to look at an example the festival of Dussehra in the state of Telangana is marked with the celebration of Bathukamma by the women. This culture of celebrating Bathukamma has become a political platform for the political parties. The cultural dimension of democracy and development in India has taken a new stage. These cultural festivals when they are taking the political stage directly or indirectly lead to development.

Institutional dimension:

This dimension of democracy and development in India focuses on the efficiency and effectiveness of institutions in promoting development and democracy. It includes aspects such as the bureaucracy and its capacity, administrative reforms and decentralization of power. The variations in the Indian society and the vastness of the Indian nation were withstood with the test of time by the Indian democratic institutions. The formal institutional factors of democracy are held constant inside the perimeter of the Indian nation. (Heller, P., 2000)

Democracy whether it is a political, environmental, cultural, institutional, social or economic dimension cannot be operated on any of the individual dimensions. All these dimensions should be aligned to have a perfect democracy and achieve its goals. These dimensions are interrelated and mutually beneficial.

Sustained development requires a robust democratic framework, while democracy thrives in a society that is multidimensionally developed.

CONCLUSION:

For any democracy to sustain development is very important. Development contributes to

- Strengthening of Democracy,
- Sustained Democracy and most importantly
- Democracy with a vision.

If we look at the Indian scenario development in the initial stages when it became a newly independent India with a democratic government, democracy was able to strengthen with those developments like five-year plans that could help develop the nation in single steps. Over a period, these small steps to develop reach people and people could understand the need to develop and the possibilities of it in a democracy. This was witnessed in India till 1990. Indian Democracy was strengthened. India started emerging as one of the largest democracies. Democracy got sustained with more development when the country got opened to the global markets and there was more inflow of technological development. It took almost four decades to strengthen democracy in India, whereas within a decade of witnessing a sustained development democracy was sustained. To understand the next phenomenon, one needs to ensure that democracy and development together create a vision. When it took four decades to strengthen and another two decades to sustain, it took less than a decade to move forward with a vision to develop the nation in all dimensions and create an “Atmanirbhar Bharat”. Once democracy and development are on track take off for the nation towards its vision becomes evident.

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