



# Democracy in India: Problems and Challenges

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**Abstract:** - Democracy is almost a perfect system in which common people can play an important role directly or indirectly. India is a democratic state. It is the largest democracy in the world. Democracy has many features and characteristics (rule of law, equality, justice, transparency, accountability, promoting individual rights and liberties, etc.). India is also trying to follow these features or characteristics. Democracy is gradually changing its nature day by day. Democracy in present era is not same as it was before. Democracy is redefining its definition. The democracy of India is also changing and facing many problems and challenges.

The main focus of this article is not to discuss about the nature or characteristics of Indian democracy or not to try redefining Indian democracy. In this paper, I would like to discuss mainly the problems and challenges with some examples that Indian democracy is facing.

**Keywords:** - Democracy, Problems, Challenges, India, Accountability, Transparency etc.

**Introduction:** - Democracy in India is not a new thing. It survived with full and equal legal citizenship. It is possible to show that democracy in India has acquired deeper roots for a long period of time. People are disposed towards it today than they were in the post-Nehru era. **1** Indian democracy is not completely a perfect or ideal form of democracy. It has many shortcomings. Political parties are doing many undemocratic activities. People of India are not having a true democratic knowledge. They are enjoying many undemocratic rights in the name of democratic activities. Corruption is the part and parcel of the Indian democratic system. We (The people of India) should keep in mind that democracy does not mean majoritarianism. The problems or challenges of Indian Democracy are as follows-

**Rule of Majority:** - The campaign of the BJP of Hindu Rashtra and to build a Ram temple in Ajothya developed this thought of defining democracy as majoritarian democracy promoting the interest of the Hindus in India. Minority rights are in danger. The way the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, RSS and BJP followers succeeded in demolishing Babri masjid in 1992. Democracy is not only based on majoritarianism; it is a participatory system that based on the principles of justice, equality and freedom. When a decision is made by the majority, it should respect the rights of the minority people. It did not Happen In the year of 1992. **2**

**Poverty:** - People are living under miserable conditions. India is facing the problem of poverty in the 21st century. It is not a country that can secure the basic needs of the people of his own. According to Locke, a modern liberal state should protect the basic rights (life, liberty and property) of all citizens. A satisfactory solution (poverty alleviation Programme) considered by many. It does not able to change the picture of India. Three girls died in Delhi Mandawali area due to starvation in 2018. The eldest of these three was only 8 years old. Fighting against poverty is very crucial in India to success democracy. We should keep in mind that poverty is a violator of human rights. 'We can have democracy or we can have concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. We cannot have both.' This was not said by a die-hard Marxist, but the great American judge and jurist, Louis Brandeis. **3** Securing economic and social justice is a moral imperative for any democracy. Failure to do so results ultimate acceptance of authoritarian regimes. Social justice is still a distant dream and without social justice democracy cannot be a reality.

4 The World Bank's (2005) estimates show that 80 per cent of India's population lives below the international poverty line of \$2 a day. India ranks 80th in this list of 94 countries. 5

**Accountability:** - Accountability is to be adopted not only at the time of elections, but also during the whole life of the government in power. M.N. Roy believed that to make democracy effective, people should exercise this right not periodically, but from day to day. Active citizenry is essential to ensure the successful functioning of participatory democracy and making it a reality. 6 According to Irish patriot Daniel O'Connell, 'No man can be grateful at the cost of his honour, no woman can be grateful at the cost of her chastity and no nation can be grateful at the cost of its liberty.' 7 Democracy suffered a temporary demise in our country from June 1975 till March 1977. Political leaders are more accountable to their parties than the common people. Power is everything in politics.

**Tolerance:** - There should be freedom to express the views. Freedom of speech has no meaning if there is no freedom after speech. In a free democratic society tolerance is vital. An authoritarian regime cannot tolerate the expression of ideas which challenge its doctrines and ideology in the form of writings, plays, music or paintings. Intolerance is incompatible with democratic values. The rise of intolerance all round is alarming. It is not confined to any particular political party or group or sect. Any criticism of Madame Sonia Gandhi and her style of functioning by any Congress person is visited with unpleasant consequences. Justice Chinnappa Reddy in the Jehova's Witnesses' case, has rightly reminded us that: 'Our tradition teaches tolerance; our philosophy preaches tolerance; our Constitution practices tolerance. Let none dilute it.' 8 Fighting among religious groups is a common fact in India. Democracy does not support this. Indian constitution never supports this.

**Leadership:** - Louis Brandeis rightly reminds us that 'democracy in any sphere is a serious undertaking. It is more difficult to maintain than to achieve. ... Success in any democratic undertaking must proceed from the individual'. 9 The prime need is to bring about a revolution in the mindset of the common people. We need persons whom Roy calls 'detached individuals; spiritually free individuals'. 10 A good leadership is very important to success democracy. A leader should be free from corruption and should be impartial, not biased. Indian political leaders are not free from all these. Lalu Prasad Yadav, a former chief minister of Bihar, is an example of this (The Fodder Scam). India needs a true, impartial and unbiased leader to success its democracy.

**Election:** - According to Ambedkar, "Democracy in India is only a top dressing on an Indian soil which is essentially undemocratic". 11 A legislator from Assam told former Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee in the Lok Sabha debates "Sir, you keep talking about the rapid growth of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) - from 2 seats in 1984 to the majority party in 1996. But, sir, not all growth is good; some growth is cancerous" 12 If the governments go against the interests of the common people. Citizens can do nothing except to wait for the next election (after five years). They are less interested to think about the candidates. They are being influenced by the party leaders. Rigging, booth jam and threats are very common in elections. India is facing all these challenges. India should fight against all these to make its democracy very powerful and perfect.

**Communalism:** - Communalism is another serious problem facing the Indian society today. There is religious fanaticism everywhere in India and thousands of people have been killed and property worth crores of rupees destroyed. Communalism has become the single most important ideology in contemporary India. Our society appears prone to continuing communal violence with potential for political destabilization. Communalism is an affront to India's nationalist identity and a tragic setback to our secular culture. 13 Constitutionally India is a secular state. It means Indian State has nothing to do with religion. People can freely exercise their religious rituals. State will not do anything in favour of any religious group. After the 42th constitutional amendment of Indian, the term 'secular' added to the preamble of Indian Constitution. Religion has become an important instrument for the Indian Government to win the political game. All political parties are same. They are same in nature. BJP, TMCP, Congress etc.) All are playing their religious game. Minority religious people are not secure in India. Indian State should treat equally. But this is not happening in reality. So, it is a major challenge that Indian democracy is facing.

**Existence of Institutions:** - Democracy always supports the existence of institutions. In a democratic system, institutions can promote its activities through peaceful means. It makes a democratic system very strong and powerful. Individuals should follow the rules and regulations of all institutions. All functions are divided among institutions. If state wants to fulfill the needs and demands of the people. Then state has to do so. State is an institution but not all. Political leaders try to subordinate the role of institutions. They try to make institutions passive or inactive.

**Lack of Moral Values of Political Leaders:** - Parliamentary democracy in India has been passing through a severe crisis. There has been a decline of moral values that have been our guiding spirit. The increasing incidents of booth capturing, violence, kidnapping or killing of candidates, etc. are a serious threat to the very existence of parliamentary democracy. Despite various hurdles, India has shown resilience in sustaining democracy. The successful conduct of

periodic elections to Lok Sabha, State Legislatures and other democratic bodies and people's active participation in the electoral process demonstrate their strong faith and trust in the system. **14**

**Conclusion:** - The time has come to discuss such a change. It is the right time to review our commitment to a government that truly represents the people. Our current form of democracy is clearly falling short on this count. **15** The functioning of democracy has not provided a scope for a revolutionary advance in India. But it has provided to a new kind of democratic progress. **16** A century that saw a steady expansion of the meaning of democracy from formal political freedoms to the socio-economic rights and then to the pursuit of multi- dimensional liberation from class, caste and patriarchal domination. **17**

### END NOTE

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