



## **SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIAN DEMOCRACY**

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**Mrs. Suman**

**Lecturer Political science**

**Govt. girls college, Jhunjhunu**

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### **ABSTRACT**

A form of government known as democracy is one in which members of the populace take part in the making of decisions either directly or indirectly through the use of a system of representation that includes the holding of free elections on a regular basis. It is generally agreed that India's democracy is the largest one in existence on a global scale. In a democracy, the people or their representatives hold the authority, and the people are the ultimate authority in every aspect of governance. This holds true regardless of the type of government in place. On the other hand, in contemporary India, democracy has been met with a number of obstacles, such as social and economic disparities, poverty and unemployment, illiteracy, casteism, communalism, corruption, terrorism, and an ever-increasing population. It is essential that this issue be resolved if India is to continue to function as a genuine parliamentary democracy. In this paper, an attempt is made to investigate and analyse the democratic system that is currently in place in India as well as its implications for the democratic system that exists elsewhere in the world. In addition to this, it proposes a number of feasible actions or adjustments to existing institutions that could be made in order to make India's democracy more robust and long-lasting.

**Keywords:** *democracy, illiteracy, casteism.*

### **Introduction**

A political arrangement known as democracy is one in which ordinary people and their government work together to construct a civil society and create a shared future for all people. The majority of the world's population resides in nations that have democratic forms of governance, reflecting the fact that we are currently living in a democratic period. The majority of nations, including India, have moved to a democratic form of government in recent decades. It is generally agreed that India has the largest democratic population of any country on the list of democratic nations. Ancient Greece is often credited with being the birthplace of the democratic political system. It was a type of government that was used in the ancient Greek city-states at the time. The name "democracy" comes from two Greek words: "demos," which translates to "people," and "Kratos," which means "power." Together, these words form the root of the English word "democracy." Therefore, democracy refers to the power that is held by the people. In other words, democracy refers to a form of governance in which the authority to govern rests with the people, either directly or indirectly through the medium of a representative. This can be accomplished in two ways:

Abraham Lincoln, who was serving as President of the United States at the time, offered this definition of democracy: "the government of the people, by the people, and for the people." This definition of democracy is widely recognised as the most accurate and useful explanation of the concept. According to David Held, "I believe that the form of democracy that is most defensible and attractive is one in which citizens may engage in decision making in a wide array of spheres." Joseph A. Schumpeter provided a second and equally important

definition of democracy when he said, "Democracy is a political method or an institutional arrangement for arriving at political, legislative, and administrative decisions by vesting in certain individuals the power to decide on all matter as a consequence of their successful pursuit of the people's vote." This definition describes democracy as a political method or an institutional arrangement for arriving at political, legislative, and administrative decisions. During the period that spanned from ancient Greece to the modern globe, democracy and its many facets were subjected to various shifts in development. As a direct consequence of this, the model of democracy that predominated in ancient Greece took on a form that was completely unique and novel. In this particular setting, former Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made the observation that "Democracy is tolerance; it is tolerance not only toward those who agree (with us), but also with those who disagree" (Nehru, 1950). Those who do not have faith in democracy or who do not believe in democracy are likely to follow paths that lead to violence and intolerance. The 20th century was witness to a movement that was led by prominent scholars of Political Science that rejected the belief that democracy is a political concept and a way of making governmental decisions and accepted democracy as a way of life. This movement was a reaction to the widespread acceptance of democracy as a way of life in the previous century. Nevertheless, in this setting, John Dewey elaborates that democracy is not only a system of governance, but also an economic system, a social order, and a way of life. It is nothing more than a social faith in which governing decisions can be reached and every person is provided with opportunity to advance in every aspect of life.

However, since its early stages, the idea of democracy has been acknowledged as a valid political framework. However, the modern world has taken on additional two aspects of democracy: economic and social democracy. In a political democracy, the government is established on the basis of the consent of the people, and it functions as a system of governance in which individuals who are citizens of the country hold a portion of the power. This democracy is made up of many different parts, some of which include divergent public opinion and criticism of the government. A social democracy is one that respects and upholds the dignity of the individual human being. The democratic system recognises and values every member of the population, both in their social and human capacities. In the context of this form of government, democracy offers a significant number of chances to preserve the dignity of the human community. The goals of economic democracy are to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor, abolish hunger, and ensure everyone's right to social security. This is the most essential component of democracy; without it, both the political and the social forms of democracy would be devoid of any significance.

### **Democratic System & India**

Following its attainment of independence, on January 26, 1950, India formally transitioned into a Democratic Republic by drafting its own Constitution and including a Preamble. The word "Democracy" was utilised in India for the very first time in the Preamble of the country's Constitution, which is founded on the principle of popular sovereignty. The founder of India's constitution established a representative Parliamentary democracy, according to which the executive branch is perpetually accountable to the legislature for its deeds, policies, and other tasks. In India, democracy can take the form of political democracy, social democracy, or economic democracy. All three forms coexist in the country. It has been observed in this context that the Constitution of India seeks to establish an egalitarian society for each and every citizen in order to provide social, economic, and political justice within a social and economic democracy. This was found to be the case when looking at the Constitution in this context. The Constitution of India lays out some of the contemporary essential concepts that are still practised even in modern times. These include the following:

1. In a democratic system, the people occupy the position of being the source of sovereign power, and the government is founded on the consent of the people.
2. The Indian Constitution grants certain fundamental rights to the people who live in the country, and it makes the defence of those fundamental rights the highest priority of the Constitution.
3. The provision of special protection for individuals in India who are on the periphery of society and educational opportunities
4. The rule of law refers to the underlying concepts that underpin democracy and the system of government that is developed as a result of it.
5. The establishment of Directive Principles of State Policy that make social and economic equality a priority in India. The democratic process must first and foremost be extended to the economic sphere.
6. An election that is open to the public, free from interference, and conducted in accordance with the constitution in every region of the country. These are necessary components for the maintenance of democratic governance in the Republic of India.

## OBJECTIVES

1. To study the Indian system of democratic governance and its implications to the world democratic system
2. To study the major issues or challenges being faced by the Indian democratic setup

## Types of Democracy

The practise of democracy in ancient Greece was generally referred to as the "City state system." [Citizens of ancient Greece] In this political structure, the authority to govern was held by the people. One conclusion that can be drawn from this is that it was a form of democratic government in which the entire population of the nation participated. In ancient Greece, the political system known as the "City State" adhered to the democratic principle of exercising power and authority through the election of individuals who met certain criteria. In other words, democracy, often known as the rule of the people, was subject to the control of the citizens who governed the country. There are two distinct flavours of democratic government. Including, but not limited to, Direct Democracy and Indirect Democracy. Ancient Greece is credited as being the birthplace of direct democracy and the first time it was put into effect. In a system of direct democracy, the people of the country join together to create the laws that are necessary for governing, and they also are the ones who are responsible for putting these rules into effect. In addition to this, citizens participated actively and directly in the country's judicial system. The provision of democracy originally required citizens to carry out these responsibilities on their own. In a nutshell, it is possible to say that citizens have the ability to engage directly in the process of governance as well as in the process of decision-making inside the country. This capacity is granted to citizens by the government. Switzerland is often regarded as having the most successful model of direct democracy anywhere in the world. Indirect democracy is yet another flavour of democratic government. Through their elected representatives, citizens in this kind of democracy take part in the decision-making process of the nation in a manner that is more indirect than direct. In today's culture, indirect democracy has been acknowledged as the

superior type of democracy by the majority of the nations of the world. This is mostly because to the big sizes and extensive populations of these nations. Due to the fact that it is run by representatives, this form of democracy is also known as representative democracy. There is no better illustration of indirect democracy than the nation of India, which is also widely regarded as the most populous democratic nation on the planet. People in India pick their representatives at the national, state, and municipal levels due to the country's massive population and extensive size. In India, elections take place at all three levels.

### **Challenges to Democracy in India**

here are a growing number of obstacles that democracy as a form of government must overcome. The democratic process faces a number of significant obstacles, some of which are listed here.

**The Criminalisation of Politics** - One of the most significant challenges facing the operation of democracies today is the growing prevalence of criminal activity in political life. In general, it refers to the direct entry of criminals into political parties and the legislature through the process of elections, as well as the use of criminal methods and tactics in order to exert influence over political processes. Due to the fact that lawbreakers are given the opportunity to become lawmakers, democracy is negatively impacted as a result. Therefore, there is a risk of a complete breakdown of law and order in the community as well as in the operation of the democratic apparatus. There are a lot of political parties in India that are associated with gangs of criminals for the purpose of acquiring political power or for their own self-interest. There has been a slow but continuous deterioration of democratic norms in contemporary society as a direct result of the criminalization of politics. During the election that took place in Bihar in 1997, as many as 67 lawmakers with a history of criminal activity were elected as members of the Janata Party (Sarmah, et.al. 2004). This has a detrimental impact on the functioning of democratic institutions in modern India.

**Casteism** - Casteism is another problem that hinders the functioning of democracy in India. The caste system that exists in India is one that is unique in its characteristics. Casteism has been present in Indian democracy in the form of caste-based politics, caste-based voting patterns, and caste-based warfare as well. In India, the caste system interferes with the basic rights of individuals, such as the right to live and the right to advance, which are the cornerstones of democracy. The caste system has an impact on democracy in Indian society, both on the sociological and the political levels.

**Illiteracy**- This creates yet another obstacle in the path of the operation of democratic processes. Their ignorance of the inner workings of the governmental apparatus is perilous to the operation of our democratic system. Both democracy and illiteracy cannot coexist in a country like India because of the cultural differences between the two. This is due to the fact that a democratic form of government has the potential to flourish in a community that adheres to the rule of law and ensures that everyone is treated equally. Competent leadership is essential for democracies, yet uneducated and illiterate populations are unable to select the most qualified candidates for political office. They are also incapable of comprehending the fundamentals of democratic forms of administration. As a consequence of this, the feeble framework of democratic institutions in a community that is either uninformed or illiterate is not capable of promoting a healthy democracy in a dynamic manner.

**Terrorism**- Terrorism represents yet another new obstacle that the functioning of democracy must overcome. It brings down democratic governments and causes the deaths of innocent people. Terrorism fosters distorted public debates, discredits moderates, empowers political extremists, and polarises society. This is especially

true in democratic countries like India. At the local, national, and international levels, it poses a significant obstacle. The players such as governments, international institutions, and civil society that are confronting terrorist violence and attempting to minimise its most destructive political implications are doing so not only in India but also across the world. Following the events of September 11, 2001, the United States made the declaration that terrorism is the enemy of the world. Jammu and Kashmir has been the epicentre of India's struggle against terrorism for many years. Terrorist Attack in the Indian Parliament (2001) TajHotel (2008), Pathankot (2016), and Pulwama (2019) are some of the most recent events that have jeopardised the democratic administration in India.

**Corruption-** Another obstacle that prevents democracy from functioning properly is political corruption. The legitimacy of the government, democratic values, and effective governance are all harmed as a result. The political leaders of a country use their positions of power to amass illegitimate money for themselves. In a nation such as India, corruption has direct repercussions for the political system, the administrative system, and the institutions. The presence of corruption in the decision-making process undermines public confidence and accountability in the development of public policy. Corruption also undermines the rule of law in the judicial system and results in inefficient service delivery in the public administration. There is a possibility that corruption will have an indirect effect on the economy of the county.

### **Necessary Pre-Conditions for Democracy**

The following are some necessary pre-conditions required for the successful operation of democracy, which must be met in order to strengthen democracy across the world in general and in India in particular.

**Democracy & Political Freedom:** - Freedom of political expression is the essential first step that must be taken before democracy can be established. It does it in a way that allows each and every person of the democratic country to completely and freely express their political choices. It is a fundamental right of the people to organise themselves politically, as this is the means by which they can express their preferences in political matters. Citizens in a country like India have the right to vote, the right to run for office, and the right to hold political power. In addition, people in India have the right to exercise political power. Citizens in India are given the ability to criticise the government and create associations as a result of the country's commitment to political freedom.

**Democracy & Political Consciousness:** - Political consciousness is the second crucial precondition that is necessary for the successful operation of a democracy. In a broad sense, "political consciousness" refers to people's awareness of the status of politics and the political process. It incorporates healthy competitions, tolerance, clear perceptions, and consensus with regard to governments, political institutions, the state, and politics. On the other hand, having a political consciousness is necessary for the effective operation of a democracy.

**Democracy & Political Education:** - Education on political issues is an additional key component necessary for democracies to thrive. In addition to this, it is an important aspect that plays a role in shaping political consciousness. It is the best forum for granting citizens the right to learn about the principles and ideals that underlie democracy. People's capacities for offering the government constructive criticism can be improved through political education, which in turn can assist those same people in making more informed decisions regarding the direction the government should take. It need to be a standard element of the educational process.

Citizens can either become effective leaders themselves in the future as a result of political education, or they can pick their leader intelligently without being persuaded by reasons that are unethical in the present.

**Democracy & Economic and Social Security:** - Economic and social security come in at number six on the list of essential components for a well-functioning democratic system. Freedom from economic constraint is a precondition for the effective exercise of political rights. It contributes to the eradication of poverty and gives assurance that possibilities to take part in the production process in an equitable manner are readily available to be taken advantage of. The consolidation of wealth in the hands of fewer people and the elimination of economic disparity are two of the most important steps that need to be taken in order to guarantee economic liberty for all segments of society.

**Democracy & Sound Party System:** - The existence of political parties is another component essential to the effective operation of democratic systems. Political parties have a number of vital functions, one of the most significant of which is to organise public opinion and create an environment that is conducive to making policy decisions. It makes efficient use of the various governmental forms to carry out the functions of government. In order to make democracy more successful, it is vital to have an opposition party that is both healthy and influential so that it can keep the incumbent government in check. As a result, the existence of a robust and robust party system is necessary for the efficient operation of the democratic setup in India.

**Democracy & Independence of Media:** - The independence of the media is the fourth essential precondition that must be met for democracy to function effectively as a political system. The fourth and most important pillar of democracy, according to Edmund Burke, is the media. It is a crucial component in the transmission of the workings of the government and plays a significant role in this regard. It serves in the role of the democracy's watchdog. The public is made aware of issues like as terrorism, nepotism, and corruption thanks to the efforts of the media, which also spreads democratic ideals. Therefore, it is imperative to emphasise how important it is to have a media that is free, independent, and unbiased when it comes to the formation and expression of public opinion.

**Democracy & Decentralization of Power:** - The decentralisation of authority is the seventh pre-condition that must be met before democracy may function properly. In order to successfully operate a democratic form of government, the power that the state wields must be distributed throughout all of the various components that make up the population. The most effective method for the distribution of power comes in the form of democratic elections. As a result of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, which was passed in 1992, local self-government was established. This allowed the people to directly take an interest in the administration and provide their complete support to the government. Through the use of the Panchayatiraj system, democracy guarantees a larger participation of the people in the government process. According to what De Tocqueville remarked, "Local institutions constitute the strength of the free nation," and he was absolutely accurate. A nation can institute a free government, but it is impossible for that nation to have the spirit of liberty if it does not have functioning local institutions. The development of individual Indian villages is a necessary step for India's overall progress toward modernization. For the sake of the efficient operation of democracy, the Village Panchayat ought to be granted additional autonomy in its functions.

**Democracy & Free and Independent Elections:** - The holding of free and fair elections in India is the seventh component essential to the effective operation of democratic government that must be present. In order to keep the wheels of democracy turning smoothly, it is necessary to have an independent election machinery that is in

charge of running the elections for both the union and the state legislatures. In India's constitution, Article 324 stipulates the establishment of an independent electoral commission that is endowed with constitutional standing specifically for this objective. Reforms to the electoral process as well as changes to the electoral rules need to be enacted across the entire nation in order to maintain a robust democracy. It is a well-established truth that the right to vote is a crucial component of democratic governments. Therefore, holding elections that are free from influence, uninfluenced, and on a regular basis helps to establish the faith of the people, and it also respects the views of the people.

### **Possible Suggestions**

**The following are some necessary suggestions for the successful functioning of Indian democracy**

1. It is essential to keep in mind that the population eligible to vote is the beating centre of a democracy. The voting public ought to be educated on the importance of maintaining a political consciousness. It indicates that individuals are able to know or be conscious of their rights and responsibilities. At the grassroots level, they need to educate themselves on their rights and privileges by holding seminars, workshops, conferences, and other events of this like.
2. Illiterate individuals in India's democratic system need to have access to appropriate education in order for them to be able to cast votes that are informed and accurate for the candidates of their choice. The absence of consciousness poses a threat to democratic institutions. Therefore, this shortcoming in India can be corrected by offering political education and ensuring that information is widely disseminated. If the general population does not understand the nature of the political challenges they face, then the democratic form of government will not be successful.
3. Nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and government institutions should always collaborate for the country's overall benefit. They are obligated to support activities that will contribute to the country's economic and social advancement.
4. The media, the fourth pillar of democracy, should take an active part in bringing about genuine facts and sustaining the true spirit of democracy by playing an active role. In order for the Indian government to find out the truth about the society, it is imperative that the independence of the media be protected there.
5. Politicians are an essential part of the process of preserving democracy. They need to have the mindset of a democratic citizen who serves the country as a servant, rather than one who sees themselves as the master of the country. They need to engage in activities that contribute to the growth of the nation and should also adhere to the principle of providing service to the community. In India, the politician is free to engage in politics on the basis of issues, rather than on the basis of caste, religion, or communal politics. They have to play such a role in the country that the genuine spirit of democracy is brought back to life and reimagined in order to ensure that democracy continues to function without hiccups.
6. The person who is in charge of the country should have high moral standards and be honest. Citizens have the highest level of responsibility, which is to select their leader based on that individual's behaviour and character. It is essential for the leader to have a deep and thoughtful comprehension of

the administration of public affairs. They are obligated to uphold fairness and a selfless commitment to serving the general public interest. The leaders ought to serve as examples for the young people to follow. Therefore, the success of democracy is dependent not only on the high moral standard of the government, but also on the high moral standard of the people.

7. The Directive Principles of State Principles (DPSP), which are listed in Part IV of the Indian Constitution, should be transformed into justiciable rights just as the fundamental rights, which are mentioned in Part III of the Indian Constitution. The DPSP's primary concern should be the continued improvement of the people of India's economic and social conditions.
8. The three branches of government that make up the country's democracy—the legislative, executive, and judicial branches—should coordinate their efforts to monitor what's going on in the country at all times.
9. These institutions ought to always work in a manner that upholds the genuine spirit of democracy and make an effort to keep up with the rapidly transforming reality in the country.

## CONCLUSION

The preceding discussion leads one to the conclusion that, despite the fact that India is widely regarded as one of the largest democracies in the world, the democratic republic of India continues to face a number of pressing problems that prevent it from operating without hitches, despite the fact that the country is home to some of the most advanced democratic institutions in the world. In spite of the fact that seventy-two years have passed since India gained its independence in 1947, there is still a significant amount of illiteracy, corruption, and terrorist and Maoist activities in the country, all of which pose a threat to the foundation of democratic governance. This is a matter of debate. Every single democracy that has ever existed in the modern world has been forced to contend with a myriad of economic, social, religious, and political challenges. The combined efforts of the people could be used to find solutions to these difficulties.

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