

CHAPTER-III

INDIAN POLITICAL SYSTEM AND CHALLENGES

India has adopted democracy as the system to build up her resources and to eradicate poverty and ignorance, safeguarding the freedom of the individual, which is the basis of human development. The fact of India's acceptance of democracy is writ large in the chapters on Fundamental Rights and Directive principles and the vital provisions of the Constitution, which the Indian people as a whole have given unto the themselves.

The preamble is the basic mantra of our democratic dharma.¹ The preamble of the Indian Constitution reflects with the type of government, which is sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic. The word Democratic Republic denotes that India is a democracy, where free and fair periodic elections of people's representatives on the basis of universal adult franchise held. The government is responsible to the people. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan wrote that adult suffrage "is the most powerful instrument devised by man for breaking down social and economic injustice and destroying the walls that imprison men's minds".²

The democratic republic stands for the good of all the people, which means socio-economic justice along with political liberty. The Indian Constitution promises not only political but also social democracy as explained by Dr. Ambedkar in a very forthright speech in the Constituent Assembly. He said, "Social Democracy should recognize Liberty, Equality and Fraternity as the principles of life. These principles are not to be treated in a trinity. They form a union of trinity..."³

In Indian democracy there is liberty, equality, freedom of press, independent and impartial judicial system free and fair

electoral system, parliamentary institutions, and secularism. Although there is freedom of press, freedom against arbitrary arrest yet India faced a period of emergency from 1975-77 when democratic rights were suspended, opposition leaders were jailed, the press was censored and there were no elections. Tens of thousands of opposition leaders and activists from all over the country were arrested. They were from the socialist Party, The Congress (O), The CPI (M), The CPI (L), Akali Dal, Bharitya Lok Dal, Jan Sangh. Censorship was imposed on the press and the fundamental right of equality before law (article 14), the Right to Life and Liberty (Article 21) and protection against arbitrary arrest (Article 22) were suspended. The life of the Lok Sabha, which had been elected in 1971, was extended by a year. On the one hand secularism is fundamental value of Indian State; on the other hand, communalism is posing great threat to democratic political system. Similarly, the institution of Parliament and Electoral system is facing challenges due to corruption and decay of Parliament, Communalism and casteism etc.

With the adoption of democratic polity, the citizens were to function both as rulers and the ruled. However, it is being increasingly, realized that the sovereignty of the masses stands grievously eroded by the manner in which the political system and the public administration have actually worked during the last half a century and more.⁵

All the problems are the result of the lack of ethical basis in political life. A political system has to be justified not only by its Constitutional principles but also by the values, which emerge from its actual working. The main problem before the nation is: how to tackle decay in political morality, which is

responsible for all round distortions and dehumanization on our political system? In this connection the views of Gandhi regarding politics based on high moral standards are worth quoting. He wrote, 'I have always derived my politics from ethics. It is because I swear by ethics that I find myself in politics. A person who is a lover of his country is bound to take a lively interest in politics.'⁶

Although the Indian Constitution is lengthiest and bulkiest no reflection of Gandhi a values and principles can be seen except few in the Directive Principles of State policy. The Indian constitution is merely a legacy of the Britishers. Today the Gandhi an values and principles like non-violence, means and ends, spiritualization of politics, religious tolerance, renunciation, brotherhood have lost appeal in India.

In the present chapter an attempt has been made to examine the various challenges in Indian democracy since independence.

Political Challenges

Decay of Institution of Parliament- India opted for the Westminster model of parliamentary system after independence. It is considered to be the supreme representative institution of the people. The continuous functioning of parliamentary system is one of the positive aspects of the India's post-independent evolution. However, in spite of the continued operation of the system for more than five decades, there has been tremendous erosion in respect and esteem for parliamentary intuitions and the legislators in general. Now a day, the institution of parliament has lost its credibility because of the presence of the tainted ministers, frequent adjournment of the Houses.

Here the legitimate question arise that the founding fathers did not want to have this type of institution, parliamentarians who claim to serve the people but do not bother about their duty to the nation.⁷

The information explosion, the technological revolution, the growing magnitude and complexities of modern administration cast upon Parliament other vastly extended responsibilities. Inadequacy of time, information and expertise with Parliament results in poor quality legislation and unsatisfactory parliamentary surveillance over administration. Inadequacy of education and training in the sophisticated mechanics of parliamentary institutions has adversely affected the performance of both the legislators and bureaucracy.

More serious, however, is the sheer dereliction of duty in a vital area that gives Parliament its essential power to keep the executive in check-the power to give money for running the administration and the rights to know whether it has been spent for the purpose approved of by Parliament. What the nation has been watching with dismay is the casual manner in which Parliament chooses to pass the budget these days. For instance, the opposition, NDA resorted to boycott of entire budget session of Parliament (2005) till May 13.⁸ Here the question arises how Parliament would ask the executive next year how it spent that year's allocation when it never bothered to bring the government's demands and policies under scrutiny before vote?

It is unfortunate that Parliament is held to ransom on one issue or another. In winter session of Parliament (9 November 2005) it was volkar Report on which the opposition wanted to move an adjournment motion at the first available opportunity. And the country could have expected a full-fledged debate. It was

an important issue and the opposition is within its right to raise it in the highest debating forum in the country. The house saw the pathetic spectacle of the opposition forcing the speaker to adjourn the house. On its part the ruling combine also played ball with its own sloganeering. In the end no legislative business could be transacted for the second day in succession causing heavy loss to the exchequer (24th November 2005). This is certainly not what the voters want their representatives to do in the supreme legislative body.

The Speaker of Lok Sabha had to adjourn the house twice when RJD and JD (U) members virtually came to below (24th August 2006). JD (U)'s Prabhunath Singh and RJD's Sadhu Yadav exchanged the words like Criminals, Goonda, etc incidentally; non-boilable warrants have been issued against Sadhu Yadav by the session's judge of Gopalganj for his alleged involvement in an assault case. It is reported that proceedings were being witnessed by the media and the visitors and among the visitors were also children who in their formative years had been brought to learn a lesson about functioning of Indian Democracy?⁹

This shows that the number of days on which the houses of Parliament sit each year and the time that is devoted to transacting business has come down considerably in recent years. Even when they do meet, often little gets done. In the face of disturbance and shouting, the Houses have to be adjourned frequently. This is so irrespective of who is in power.

Corruption- Three C's i.e., Corruption, is eating into our political life and system. The combination of corruption and criminalization in politics is proving deadly and posing a serious threat to our democracy Clearly, "Corruption and Criminalization

have a direct bearing on problems such as unemployment, illiteracy, poor health services etc., confronting India.”¹⁰

Corruption is presently the most alarming malady afflicting practically all of India’s more than one billion people save a small number who are very rich and can therefore, bribe their way through or those who hold positions of power in the governance of the country and whom no one can thwart. Corruption is on the rampage depriving the people of fair administration and thwarting the process of development. Things have come to such a pass that from India’s Capital City of New Delhi to the smallest village in the country, virtually no official decision or stamp of approval can be obtained unless and until the requisite bribe has been paid. The giving and taking of Bribe is now commonly accepted as part of the well organized and well oiled graft machine. The poor, who cannot pay, groan and suffer and cannot, further their cause. Those who have the resources shrug their shoulders, pay the bribe and get on with the job. Most of the bureaucracy, the police, the judiciary and the political hierarchy is infected by what is truly a national epidemic.¹¹

The widespread corruption has eroded the entire administrative apparatus and people experienced that their legitimate and lawful work cannot be done in any governmental office without greasing the palms of the dealing incumbents. This complete erosion of honesty has greatly affected the attempts of government servants to practice honesty, for an honest officer has always suffered at the hands of politicians, who force him to act corruptly in their party’s interest. In the past, the perception was that a citizen would have to bribe a public servant if he wants to get a benefit, which was illegal. But

today we have reached a stage when even for getting the legitimate demand satisfied, the bribe is a must.

Today it would seem, corruption has not only become more widespread but it has become more acceptable as a way of life. Remnant corruption now pervades at all levels of Indian public life. "When Gandhi launched his satyagraha at Champ ran a large amount of cash and gold poured in as donations. The confidential report of the British SP of Champaran preserved in Patna Police Museum eulogizes the scrupulous honesty of the people collecting the donations. Birla generously financed the Congress Party for decades but there was never a whisper of any misappropriation. Sardar Patel was the Treasurer of the Congress Party. After his death, his daughter handed over a steel trunk containing large amount of cash to Nehru along with ledgers showing all cash transactions. There was no discrepancy whatsoever, when Lal Bahadur Shastri was enrolled as a Congress worker, he was given a Subsistence allowance of Rs. 40 per month. After a month he returned Rs 15 and stated that he would take only Rs. 25 a month as he could manager with that amount. Even after he became the Prime Minister, he continued to be basically a poor man, leaving very little assets for his family.¹²

Now-a- days Acts of Corruption are transacted overtly, and corrupt people no longer have a fear of social ostracism. Instead of social ostracism the corrupt are more acceptable, in present day politics in India.

It has been observed that Corruption in our system flourishes because of the following factors:

1. Scarcity of goods and services;
2. Red tape and delay

3. Lack of transparency; and
4. Cushions of safety, which have been created by the legal system on the principle that everybody is innocent till proved guilty. The legal provisions and procedures are effectively exploited by the corrupt to escape punishment.

Social Challenges

Communalism in Indian Politics- Secularism is one of the major instruments for building a democratic state. It is one of the fundamental values of Indian political system, emphasized by the national movement and the founding fathers of Indian Republic.

No doubt, we believe in unity in diversity, in pluralism, we say that India is a land of many religions, languages, cultures: we claim that we are a tolerant people. And yet Indian democracy is facing the crisis due to communalism.

The most serious impediment to the national integration is, therefore, the phenomenon of the communal riots not so much because of the loss of life, limb or property but because of the loss of confidence, of trust of the people in the government, because of the resulting alienation and frustration.

It has been observed "Communal violence since the early sixties and caste violence since the late sixties has become a part of our life in India. Despite heinous crimes and unimaginable brutalities committed during the riots, our conscience is not shocked nor do we take these organized killings seriously enough to find some way to arrest this fact spreading canker in our national life."¹³

The incidence and intensity of violence, which has become a part and parcel of Indian social life, have been continuously

increasing and consequently undermining and disrupting the process of nation-building.

Eruption of violence on the basis of region, religion, community, caste, sex, etc. has created not only the law and order problem but also made the people wonder whether the objective of quality and freedom could at all be achieved in a society characterized by all kinds of inequality, hierarchy and exploitation of the 'have nots.'

It is pertinent to know how the different scholars have looked at communalism and how the history describes the meaning of communalism.

Zoya Hasan takes the social-economic basis of communalism and communal violence in India. She says, "The process of the fragmented and even capitalist development has created conditions of backwardness which in turn, have facilitated the growth of communalism. Economic stagnation has led to a situation in which certain groups treat each other not only with suspicion and hostility, but also as rivals in the scare market for jobs, concessions and subsidies,"¹⁴ she also contends that various forms of tension among Hindus and Muslims in particular, have assumed corrosive proportions because the bourgeois political parties have, quiet successfully, deflected intra-class contradictions into the stream of communal consciousness to serve their narrow ends.

Syed Shahabudin, a Parliamentarian is of viewpoint that communal violence is Challenge to Plurality, which greatly affects the national integrity, economy, administration and polity. He says that the communal riots adversely affects the process and pace of national integration, saps the sense of national unity and solidarity, because it leads to communal

polarization and puts secular ideals to test. It affects the economic life of the nation as a whole; the entire process of production, distribution and consumption comes to a stop; because it affects capital investment. It strains the capacity of the law and order machinery and consigns development tasks to lower priority.¹⁵

Asghar Ali Engineer considers the economic and political basis of communalism. "The communal phenomenon is political in genesis. Communal tension arises as a result of the skilful manipulation of the religious sentiments and cultural ethos of the people by its elite which aim to realize its political, economic and cultural aspirations by identifying these aspirations as those of the entire community."¹⁶

Similarly, "Economic competition between the two communities often leads to social tensions which can be easily turned into communal tension by exploiting certain situations on the occasion of religious festivals, etc." The increased prosperity among the Muslims leads to increased political aspirations among them.¹⁷

Caste

Caste in Indian Politics- The predominant feature of the social structure in India is the caste system. All social, economic and political relationships for the individual are determined by the caste. M.N. Srinivas opines, "Caste is so tacitly and so completely accepted by all, including those most vocal in condemning it, that it is everywhere the unit social action."¹⁸

The nationalist elite that took power in 1947 wrote a constitution that contained the democratic institutions parliament and legislatures, elections, universal suffrage, freedom of assembly, freedom for press, legal rights, all based on

the principle of equal political rights. Equality was to be achieved in part through democratic institutions and procedures, particularly universal suffrage, equality before law legislation, banning discrimination, and through the establishment of a system of reservations that would guarantee representation to members of scheduled castes and tribes. Equality was also to be achieved through socialist planning. Equality of opportunity, they said, would come through universal and compulsory elementary education and an expanded system of higher education. The nationalist elite did not promise a classless society, but they did offer the promise of a casteless society in which social status would not be based upon hereditary social ranking and individuals would not be denied opportunities because of their birth.¹⁹

The revolutionary transformation did not course take place. Caste as an ideology may be moribund, but as a lived-in social reality it is very much alive. Castes remain endogamous. Lower castes, especially members of scheduled castes, remain badly treated by those of higher castes. Acts of brutality and terror continue to be a part of the atrocities perpetuated on the dalits and other lower classes, the more so the more they become conscious of their rights and begin to assert themselves. Entire communities are found to be in deep turmoil, facing constant humiliation and growing erosion of their identity and sense of being part of civil society the nation and the state. Ever so often we hear ghastly tales of these atrocities taking place in one or another part of the country. The police, the political parties, the bureaucrats in charge are always found to arrive late on the scene of rampage. Then follow the journalists and the photographers, the lawyers and the human rights activities. The

Ministers and the Chief Ministers arrive still later and, so that the political mileage is not lost, the Prime Minister follows suit in a quick helicopter ride. A commission of inquiry is soon announced, compensation of the families of the dead is widely broadcast and in the meanwhile we are told that it was all the work of some 'anti-social' elements and opposition parties and groups.²⁰

Caste is a determining factor not only at the Central level but at the state and local also. State politics in India has been particularly the hot bed of political casteism. Andre Beteille says, "Caste enters much more directly into the composition of Political elites at the state level--- Thus, the Mysore Cabinet is dominated by Lingayats and Okkaligs, the Maharashtra Cabinet by Marathas and some have referred to the Madras Cabinet as federation of dominant castes."²¹

Caste politics in Andhra Pradesh seems like a game of cock-fighting between the Kammas and Reddys. The four major caste groups in Haryana are Brahmins, Jats, Ahirs and Scheduled Castes. Caste-wise, the Jats are the toughest and constitute the single largest group with the Scheduled Castes coming next. In the case of Karnataka, the tug of war is between two dominant castes, the Lingayats and Okkalingas. In Maharashtra, there are three main castes viz., Marathas, Brahmins and Mahars, which play an important role in the politics of the state.

Bihar in fact represents the scene of clash among forward castes (Brahmins, Bhumihars, Rajputs, Kayasths), backward classes (Yadavs and Muslims, popularly known as the M-Y equation), Scheduled castes (Chamars, Dosadhs, Musahars) and Scheduled Tribes (Santhals, Oraons, Mundas, Hos).

Now the politics parties are mobilizing the lower castes to create the vote banks.

Pollution Problem

- i) The human environment is known as biosphere which consists of a portion of the lithosphere, the hydrosphere and the atmosphere where life can exist. The main constituents which are constantly changing and participating with in the biosphere are oxygen, carbon and hydrogen together with the constituents of living matter which are nitrogen, sulphur and phosphorus. The changes with these constituents were in a dynamical equilibrium till large scale human interference with nature started with increasing population. Technological and industrial activities are injecting greater quantity of sulphur products, carbon dioxide and harmful chemical substances into the biosphere every day. With the injection of these products and substances, the dynamical equilibrium with in the biosphere is increasingly disturbed.²²
- ii) The soil which is the source of agricultural crops contains living organisms. The increasing use of fertilizers and pesticides will gradually destroy the living organisms in the soil. With decay and death of living organisms in the soil, the agriculture which is the primary source of life will rapidly decline. When pesticides are washed into the estuarine areas, they produce considerable number of deaths among the fishes.²³ The mercurial fungicides which are used in agricultural and horticultural operations have clearly shown the harmful effects of mercurial on living organisms. The spraying operations which are increasingly carried out in the modern farm technology charge the

atmosphere above the ground with in particles of mercurial components.²⁴ These eventually get into the lithosphere and the hydrosphere where fishes accumulate toxic quantities of mercury. Mercurial components enter into the human beings through the fishes.

- iii) Large-scale technology has made serious inroads into non-renewable resources. The fossil fuels are none the verge of virtual exhaustion. The group of scientists at Massachusetts Institute of technology in U.S.A. sounds a note of warning that human race faces disasters within the next hundred years unless the current rate of growth is checked. The present rates of growth in population and industrialization will lead to depletion of non-renewable resources in the world. These scientists maintain that the earth has limits beyond which the activities of man cannot grow and these limits are rapidly being reached. The non-renewable resources will not go on supporting the rapidly growing world population.²⁵ Dr. S. Chandrasekhar, renowned demographer, said that the world population in the recent times has rapidly been growing: The world took 18 million years to reach one billion populations. Later on as a result of agricultural and industrial revolutions, the same world took only a century to add the second billion. Further health revolution made it possible to add the third billion within thirty-two years. Following modernization in many parts of the world, the fourth billion was added to the world population just within the next fifteen years. The current rate of growth in population may add a few more billions at the end of this century. The non renewable resources will not keep pace with increasing millions of

people.²⁶ The present rate of population growth and insatiable desire for higher and higher standard of living will exhaust non-renewable resources within a short period.²⁷

- iv) The thermal power is a major source of air pollution in major cities of the world. Most of the pollutants go into the environment close to the earth's surface. Maximum turbulence takes place both in the atmosphere and in the oceans. Consequently the pollutants are pushed on from one process the composition of the pollutants may undergo chemical changes. There can be a feedback mechanism by which the pollutants may enter into man and produce unhealthy effects.²⁸
- v) Rivers and ocean have been polluted by industrial waste. It is reported that the vitality of the Mediterranean sea has diminished by 40 to 50 percent due to dumping of waste and mechanical destruction. Biological death of the Mediterranean sea may very easily take place within a short period if the pollution of this almost landlocked sea is not prevented in time it is said that the Mediterranean's sea can be a test case for the big oceans in matter of water pollution.²⁹

These problems can be solved through Gandhian concept of swaraj. The concept of swaraj is not political, it touches all aspects of life – cultural, social, economic and ecological – Swaraj, a sanskrit word compounded of swa and Raj "self" and 'rule' has the first meaning of 'self ruling' and the secondary meaning of 'self resplendent' of 'self-luminous'. Gandhi Ji used the term Swaraj both the individual and the nation according to the real swaraj one be achieved through non-violence, swadeshi,

Aparigraha, bread labor, trusteeship, non exploitation and equality together. These thought is very relevant in present Indian politics on the pillars of truth and non violence Gandhiji created. – Political economic, moral and social structure this entire thinking was based on the ethical vision in which individual had the central position. He did not agree with the views that material advancement leads moral development. He stated, "if inward change is achieved outward change take care of itself. He visualized swaraj at the individual level, Gram Swaraj at the local level and sarvodaya at Global level. At ethical level, there is much durations of ethical norms and moral principals in our life.

ECONOMICAL CHALLENGES

Unbalanced Economic Growth- The modern economic system has many defects. A few of them shown below serve as a pointer in the direction:

The modern industrialism which is based on non-renewable resources like fossil fuels and mineral wealth consumes the very basis on which it is built.

Though mechanization leads to greater production, it results in unemployment and glaring inequalities.³⁰ Veracity of this statement is proved by the example of a fishermen's village in Sri Lanka. Before the introduction of technological change in fishing, the fish-catch used to be thirty tons. After the introduction of imported diesel motor crafts, fish-catch rose up to two hundred to two hundred and fifty tons in 1975, this is the growth measured in terms of output which is many more times of what it was before the replacement of traditional equipments. But from the employment point of view, it decreased by fifty per cent. Out of the remaining fifty per cent, ten to fifteen families

emerged as fishing entrepreneurs with network of bots. This gave rise to a class of a few privileged families on the one hand and a mass of many impoverished families on the other. This naturally resulted in glaring economic inequality. What is true of fishermen's village in Sri Lanka is true of all the regions of underdeveloped countries where there is confrontation between automization and unemployment.³¹

Large-scale technology has led to concentration of wealth in few hands. It is reported that about seventy-five top industrial houses in India own and control about fifty per cent of industrial complexes in the private sector and from among these the twenty industrial house have disproportionately increased their wealth.

The growing population and mechnization have added to the problems of housing and employment in India. It is estimated that thirty-five lakh new jobs are to be created and twenty-four lakh new house are to be constructed every year. The labour saving large-scale machinery cannot absorb the growing population. On the other hand, the modern leaders have been adding to the existing unemployment by periodical automation.

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