



Indian Democracy : Marching Ahead

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Democracy is often described as government of the people, by the people and for the people. India became independence on 15th August 1947 and the founding fathers worked hard to give nation a new Constitution. The Constitution was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 26th November 1949 and came into force on 26th January 1950. Since then our country became a democratic State. The Indian Constitution is a remarkable document as it strikes a balance between tradition and modernity, between a federal structure and a strong centre and between the demands of social justice and the rights of the individual.

Though the founding fathers were proud of the Constitution they had framed, they were also aware of their own limitations. Defects came to light as the Constitution came into operation. Also changes became necessary because conditions changed and needs grew. Changes therefore became necessary and have to be made quickly and easily. As Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the Law Minister, said on the day the Constitution was adopted, “The Assembly has not only refrained from putting a seal of finality and infallibility upon the Constitution by denying the people the right to amend the Constitution or making the amendment of the Constitution subject to fulfillment of extra ordinary terms and conditions, as in America or in Australia but has

provided a more facile procedure for amending the Constitution.” The President of the Constituent Assembly Dr. Rajendra Prasad observed “another important feature of the Constitution is that it enables amendments to be made without much difficulty.”

The first amendment of Indian Constitution was made in 1951 to make it possible among other things to carry out land reforms and abolish the Zamindari. It was also decided that reasonable restrictions could be placed on the exercise of Fundamental Rights in the interest of the society. Since then the Constitution has been amended more than 113 times. Most of these amendments were made to remove difficulties in the working of the Constitutions. But others like the one about Panchayati Raj and Municipalities gave an entirely new dimension to administration by devolution of power to local self-government bodies. The amendment about reservation for women has also added one more dimension to the Constitution. The result is that the Constitution today resembles an ancient edifice to which additions and modifications have been made from time to time to suit needs but in the process, the character of the original structure has been changed beyond recognitions.



When the Constitution was framed, the Assembly had to a large extent placed before itself the Westminster form of Government. In such a form of Government, two political parties vie for power. There was a general agreement on basic problems and policies. The founding fathers had possibly hoped there in course of time in India, two rival parties would emerge. But this has not happened. We have a plethora of political parties. Five successive elections to Lok Sabha didn't give any political party a clear majority. Even when a political party has the majority, its leader is always worried about keeping his flock together. Policies are often framed not so much for national good but for narrow political end.

What is the remedy if the electorate doesn't give a clear verdict in election after election? The Constitution has no provisions for direct rule by the president at the Centre because this might result in subversion of democracy and establishment of dictatorship. At the state level the Constitution provides for imposition of president's rule. Dr. Ambedkar had expressed the hope that this provision might never be used. Events have proved otherwise and in the last 62 years, it has been used more than hundred times. Under present system, the candidate who gets the largest number votes is declared elected.

Frequently the combined votes of the other candidates are more than his votes. It has also happened that a political party might get a majority of votes polled but still not get majority of seats. A swing of a mere five percent can make a tremendous difference. Any review of the constituent must look at this anomaly and find ways to remove it.

It is to the credit of India that while other countries became independent along with their have had long periods of dictatorship of military rule, democracy has continued to grow in India. The Indian voter has been no respecter of men and has not hesitated to throw out powerful leaders if he found that they were not performing well. The base has widened with the devolution of powers to local self-governing bodies. The reservation of seats for women in local self bodies is proof of the fact that political parties forget their differences on giving greater power to the neglected segments of society. Changes have been made in the Constitution to keep pace with the times.

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