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For the People, People's Policy

Swapan Hati

Assistant Teacher of Political Science, Harasankar Garkilla Santamayi High School (H.S.)

Abstract

The grand narrative of democracy can be said to define the modern world. People have created revolutions with their blood, sweat and tears only to realise that it has to be thrown out with greater sacrifices. Nations have succeeded in casting away the yoke of foreign rule only to discover that they have to fight a new against their own system which remained infected with the ethos of the repressive and exploitative past. Ordinary men and women struggle to save the dream of a life of dignity being washed away by a system that refused to wipe their tears and listen to their sighs. Democracy has remained the lodestar on the political firmament of nations. There is no doubt we have had our share of success in bringing a sliver of smile on the face of our people. The country has displayed enough tenacity and grit to hold on the chosen path and forge ahead to mark its place in the world. The civil services, the policies, the administrative apparatus of the state and the architecture of governance provide the instruments to actualise the vision into reality. India inherited an extensive and well defined administrative set up from the British but challenge to change its spirit and motivation, attitude apparatus itself from being SAHIBS to SEWAKS. The state, in a democratic system, must derive its legitimacy from the degree to which the people feel capable of shaping their own destiny, their own institutions, articulate and realise their aspirations effectively.

Key Words: Democracy, Development, Good Governance, Swachhata, Digital India.

Introduction:

“The most enduring development victories are not those that are imposed, but those that are embraced by communities, carried forward and made an intrinsic part of people’s daily lives”

-Henrietta H. Fore

Executive Director, UNICEF.

Indeed to redeem its tryst with destiny, India needed to infuse its democracy with energy of inclusiveness. Undoubtedly, the foundation of this inclusiveness was laid with the solid edifice of democracy that was built brick by the foundation of this inclusiveness was laid with the solid edifice of Nehru and Baba Sahab Ambedkar. But this has not been an easy process. It is matter of some satisfaction though, that scores of innovative experiments have carried out in the country to make the administration people oriented, responsive, transparent, effective and efficient. Legislative

measures like RTI and Lokpal are seen to be systemic milestones to put a leash on corruption. However, democracy is a continuous process which has to evolve in response to the changing realities of the world. The furious pace of technological change in the world, rapid globalisation and growing specialisation in various fields of administration require the administrative structure to be agile and flexible. No system is perfect. There are likely to be shortcomings always. However, if these shortcomings start impacting the basic interest of the public, they have legitimate claims for the redressal of their grievances. A complaining citizen can be a good opportunity to show how good you are. That is why public grievance redressal is said to be the corner stone of any well governed democracy. The central theme of democracy is that the government is accountable to the citizens for all policies and activities. And only an effective and efficient democratic mechanism can build trust with the citizens and assure them that it is a government –‘of the people and for the people’.

Democracy: Democracy happens when people voice. It happens when people speak about their needs, wants and desires. This essay we shall encounter three kinds of peoples and why and how they voice. Those people who have lots of money are most vocal and speak a lot about their desires. Those who have some surplus money after meeting their need are able to talk about their wants. However, those who have little money to meet even their basic needs only seldom voice. Democracy happens when many people speak especially when those who have little are able to say what they feel. Those who have more money, speak more.

Democracy, literally, is rule by the people. The term “ Democracy” is derived from the Greek word ‘demokratia’, which was coined from ‘demos’ (“people”) and ‘kratos’ (“rule”) in the middle of the 5th century . Burns defined democracy as – “Democracy, as an ideal, is a society not of similar person but of equals, in the sense that each is an integral and irreplaceable part of the whole. ‘Democracy’ word is described as letter by letter – D= Decentralisation of power, E= Education, M= Motivation, O= Organization, C= Co-operation, R= Rights & Responsibilities, A= Active part, C= Creativity, Y= Yearning for truth. Churchill defined democracy as “the worst form of government except for all those others that have been tried.” Democracy, the least bad system, has been the flavour of the 21st century. According to Amartya Sen, “democracy remains the only system of government that commands global respect.” Ironically, democracy is in trouble in many places, even as its triumph is proclaimed. There is a lot of backsliding as well setbacks in countries that experienced democratic revolution following the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Larry Diamond, author of *The Spirit of Democracy*, calls it ‘Democracy recession.’ There is also consolidation of dictatorships among authoritarian rulers wary of democratic advance in their neighbourhoods. Even though democracy is not yet ‘sell-by-date’, we may have progressed democratically but democracy is regressing.

However, the idea of democracy is open to multiple interpretations. It is true that parliamentary democracy with universal adult franchise is the most acceptable form of democracy in the world today, but it is often more representative than participatory. The representative democracy has been criticised for retaining the people and the state. The state, even in a democratic system, must derive its legitimacy from the degree to which the people feel capable of shaping their own destiny, their own institution, articulate and realise aspirations effectively. It is inclusiveness which works as the bridge between a representative democracy and a participatory democracy.

Democracy directs the process of development. People who have lots of money and are enterprising require avenues for investment, whence growth takes place. Such people form organizations that lobby for policies and laws, rules and regulations to make investment possible and also to ensure on their investment. In this manner, they contribute to material progress of the economy. In a sense, they are able to give direction to the economy and thus play a legitimate role in the system. Sometimes scrupulous elements try and take an unjustified advantage in the system. It is in the nature of democracy that lobbying takes place and people are able to take such advantages. However, there are vigilant institutions that keep a surveillance: Planning Commission (NITI Aayog), Comptroller and Auditor General and others. So democracy and development do not follow a linear path. They intertwine with one another and there are several crusts and troughs that come across their progress. More the money, more could be lobbying and also undue advantages. But democracy in India has successfully overcome many such situations when government and people with money have been checked by institution and through elections. In times to come when money increases in scale, democratic institution will face new challenges.

Development: Development— the word has different connotations in different situation. It could mean development of a person – physical or mental, development of a concept or idea for a researcher or development of a theme for a choreographer. For a nation, development has wide-ranging perspectives. It means improvement in various sectors relating to a country's economy, issues affecting daily life of the common man, child development, gender justice, etc al. It also entails inclusive growth.

Development is essentially related to production of material goods and services for consumption of people, which is reflective in indicators like gross domestic production per capita. The concept of development has been further expanded to include education and health. The expectation is that those educated could contribute more to production than the uneducated. Similarly, healthier the populations, more is the desired production. Unhealthy and uneducated population is seen as worthless and a drain on resources.

It is popular, both in current casual and serious discourse, to talk of a trust deficit in the interaction between the people and the state. The nature of a relationship between an institution called the State and its Citizens can only be in the nature of a social contract. This definition and expectation of trust, is an act of faith and takes away from the equal, causal and rational relationship that democracy seeks to establish through its system. If we look at some of the essential requisite of democratic institutional structures; to send representatives to panchayat, assembly and Parliament, there is implicit in the election process an obligation for representatives to be accountable for their actions. We transfer our sovereignty under contract and constitutional obligation to perform in accordance with the promises made to us. The act of faith and trust seems a misplaced concept in the relationship between the citizen and the State. One quarrels even with Gandhiji's dream of a just relationship emerging through 'Trusteeship'. It is not possible in any, but in an Utopian society. In the Indian political context of democracy and governance, skewed by caste, class, gender and religious prejudices, with layers of identities and divides, a concept such as trust would do well to be left alone – to individual and intimate relationships.

Good Governance: Good Governance is another vital aspect of national development because it ensures that the schemes and programmes of the Government reach the persons they are targeted towards. Key reforms in education, health, child development, regional development, legal police and judicial reforms are all part of good governance. It was often blamed for social unrest and

political upheaval in many parts of the world. But freed from the element of coercion and external force, the concept retained a certain attractions spurring a number of policy initiatives based on the demand for participatory development, transparency in decision making and empowerment of people to decide and shape their destiny.

The word governance derives from the Greek verb 'Kubernao' which means to steer and was used for the first time in a metaphorical sense by Plato. It then passed on to Latin and then on to many languages. And, in English has been defined as supremacy, ascendancy, domination, power, authority, control etc. Governance is the act of governing. It relates to decisions that define expectations, grant power, or verify performance. Over the years, there have been many definitions propounded by experts for governance. Just to take a look at a few definitions, the Wikipedia defines it as governance is the act of governing. It relates to decisions that define expectations grant power or verify performance. It consists of either a separate process or part of management or leadership processes. These processes and system are typically administered by a government. When discussing governance in particular institution, the quality of governance within the institutions is often compared to a standard of good governance.

Governance consists of the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country exercised. This includes the process by which governments are selected, monitored and replaced; the capacity of the government to effectively formulate and implement policies; and the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions among them.

Swachhata: In India with 74 percent population being literate is still grappling with the problem of sanitation and lack of cleanliness even after 73 years of independence. It is recognized worldwide that while inadequate sanitation causes diseases. Improvement in it contributes in bringing positive health and decent living. The Millennium Development goals (MDGs) enjoin upon the signatory nation to extend access to improved sanitation to at least half the urban population by 2015 and 100 percent access by 2025. This implies extending coverage to households without improved sanitation and providing proper sanitation facilities in public places to make cities open defecation free. However, sometimes, there are assessments causing worry regarding sanitation scenario in our country. The WHO/ UNICEF joint monitoring programme for water supply and sanitation has said that at its present pace, India would take time till 2054 to meet its Millennium Development goals 2015 on sanitation.

There are a few key issues which need to be looked at for making Swachh Bharat Abhiyan successful. These are mainly the following:-

- i. Availability of water in all habitations.
- ii. Availability of private or public toilets in all habitations.
- iii. An appropriate sewage and garbage disposal system.
- iv. Basic facilities to maintain cleanliness.
- v. Mass awareness to make this avhiyan successful.

A recent compilation of essays titled 'The Swachh Bharat Revolution' by the Department of Drinking Water and sanitation, Ministry of Jal Shakti has also followed 4Ps structure for the book, which chronicles the implementation journey of the flagship programme. 4Ps-

- a) Political leadership;
- b) Public financing.
- c) Partnerships.
- d) Peoples' participation.

Once again, the issue of swachhata has come into the mainstream with the government launching a nation-wide programme of cleanliness. It is true that swachhata programme has been part of government policy for a long time but earlier it did not get the 'big push' both in terms of administrative effort as well as media coverage. Now, the government is committed to spend a large sum of money over the next few years on urban waste management, construction of toilets, public education on the issue of hygiene and cleanliness in close cooperation with the state government and private sector like industries, corporate bodies, NGOs etc.

Digital India: The world is getting and can India remain far behind? The rapid adoption of digital technology across various sectors through business process engineering, technology and data analytics is reshaping the way government programmes are being designed and implemented. The digital revolution has now touched many areas of relevance to the common man. The best example is the 'mobile revolution', with almost every Indian, industrialist or a rickshaw-puller, a student or a house wife, owning a mobile phone. Many services are now available through digital platforms where earlier one had to go physically or stand in queues. Passport and Visa services, railway bookings withdrawal of cash-have all been digitised. The government has, on its part, initiated many programmes to further this revolution. Aadhar was the first major initiative of the government to streamline government service likes Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), JAM trinity, Public Finance Management System, e-marketplace, digital payment transactions through BHIM App, Rupay debit cards etc are making government responsive through a new interface. E-Sign has been introduced to facilitate digital signature on documents. Jeevan Pramaan has made life easier for the old who can now get verification of life through digital life certificate to draw their pensions. Common service centres, digital classrooms and e-hospitals have enabled access to service in rural and remote areas.

The world is getting digitized at a rapid pace in all aspects be it enterprises making products and selling them, humans transacting their daily lives and governments delivering social services to their citizens. The astronomical pace of digital data generation, dropping costs of data storage and compute infrastructure have enabled digitalisation at unprecedented levels which is now being termed as the 4th Industrial Revolution. Government of India and various State Governments have identified the transformational potential of Digital India and have started proactive adoption of these technologies.

Change Parameters: The purpose of this discussion has to draw out of the attributes that will be required from the system in the forthcoming period. These would include amongst others:-

- a) A sense of vision and direction in which the Indian socio-polity is moving, including its very diverse cultural plurality;
- b) An ability to appreciate some of the real scarcities that are emerging as also the strengths of society to cope with them;
- c) An ability to interface with modern technology, which provides the cutting edge to many solutions;
- d) At higher levels of the system an ability to network with local government organisation, cooperatives and other professional and people's beneficial change;
- e) Energy to pursue objectives;
- f) A sense of fair play, honesty, political and systemic support;
- g) Compassion for the underprivileged and above all.

Conclusion

It must be remembered that administration 'provides social legitimacy to the system'. In recent times, the country has witnessed a heightened sense of anger and frustration among people which points to a deep erosion in the perceived legitimacy of many of our cherished institutions of governance. It is matter of some satisfaction though, that scores of innovative experiments have been carried out in the country to make the administration people oriented, responsive transparent, effective and efficient. However, we can repose our trust in the resilience of this great nation to emerge pulsating with a new and vision for future. Hasn't the poet said-

If there's fire on the mountain
Or lightning and storm
And a god speaks from the sky
That means someone is hearing
The outcry and the birth-cry
Of new life at its term.

(Seamus Heaney)

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