



A Critical Study Of Challenges Before Political Development In India

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Abstract

For one of the fastest developing countries of the world like India, economic growth and development are the major areas of concern but political development is similarly important which cannot be overlooked. Any discussion regarding political development in India raises the concern about the challenges before political development of the country. Therefore, this paper tries to enquire into the nature of political development in India, explore the major challenges before political development in India and suggest some ways to tackle these challenges.

Key Words- Political Development, Political Development in India,

INTRODUCTION

Political Development in India has been a very complex process involving many changes in socio-economic and political scenario of India since independence. With continuing political development, we can also notice many challenges before political development in India which is the main theme of this paper. Therefore, this paper tries to discuss the process of political development in India, major challenges coming before it and the ways to deal with these challenges. Before moving to the challenges, it becomes essential to understand the meaning of political development and political development in India, then the challenges before it and the ways to tackle these challenges.

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CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING OF DEVELOPMENT

Development means a positive and forward move towards something new, better and advanced. It refers to process or processes of evolution from tradition to modern. It does not essentially mean the end of traditions but reform and revision in it in order to cope up with the growing needs of society and challenges coming before it. The course of development indicates a multifaceted process including economic, political, social and cultural change, where economic development indicates overall economic well-being as per necessity of population resulting in increase in per capita income, gross domestic product, positive trade balance, good living standard of people, food security, security of health, etc. with sustainable practices. Similarly political development indicates the process of development of a political system leading to more stable, accountable, effective, responsive, decentralized and democratic governance. Social development means strong community life with decrease in the impact of exploitative social institutions and practices, decrease in crime and secure and dignified life for all the citizens.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

Since 1960s, the term political development and its various aspects have been defined by various scholars such as Lucian W. Pye, G.A. Almond, Huntington, F.W. Riggs, etc. The concept of political development became more complex as a result of challenges emerging from the third world countries with varied political systems of their own. Then thinkers and political scientists started working on the indicators of political development and tried to define it in their own way. Some important definitions need to be seen to understand the basic components of political development.

Pye identified "political development as a "syndrome" defined by three essential characteristic namely equality, capacity and differentiation. Lucian Pye has argued that these characteristics are found in various interpretations of political development."¹ Huntington argues that "development is fundamentally about institutionalization—creating strong, stable political institutions that can manage the social mobilization brought about by modernization. He introduced the concept of "political decay," arguing that instability occurs when social and economic change outpaces the development of political institutions."² Almond and Powell used a structural-functional approach, defining "political development in terms of a political system's increasing capabilities (e.g., extractive, regulative, distributive) achieved through structural differentiation and the secularization of political culture."³

Huntington described it as "a multi-faceted process involving changes in all areas of human thought and activity and relief from the traditionalist."⁴ It involves "rationalization of authority; differentiation of new political functions and the development of specialized structures to perform those functions; increased participation in politics by social groups throughout society and the development of new political institutions—such as political parties and interest associations—to organize this participation."⁵ Karl Deutches has defined "political development in terms of participation by the people and increased political decentralization."⁶

According to Almond and Powell, "Political development refers to those processes of differentiation of political structure and secularization of political culture which enhance the capability, the effectiveness and efficiency of performance of a society's political systems."⁷

As per the definitions given by different thinkers and political scientists we can identify some major indicators of political development such as increased democratization; decentralization, differentiation, secularization, rationalization and political consciousness, political participation and political recruitment.

INDICATORS OF POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT

The indicators of political development need to be discussed briefly so that we can understand the concept fully. Major indicators of political development which need special mention are democratization; decentralization; differentiation of political institutions; secularization of political culture; rationalization of authority; capacity for problem solving; political consciousness; political participation and political recruitment. Democratization is considered as most important indicator of political development. It has been accepted as the best form of government and also best way to conduct the social, political and economic life of a society. Democratization basically means an order in which people become the central focus not the institutions or organizations formed to serve them. Generally, in any non-democratic system the general masses are pushed at the periphery. But democracy advocates the value of general masses which have the power to decide the order and the manner in which governance of the country should be carried on.

"Decentralization is also an important indicator of political development."⁸ It should be seen as a prerequisite for a democracy to function properly. The concept of decentralization should not be seen only in terms of decentralization of administration, functions and powers rather it should be understood in terms of democratic decentralization. It gives emphasis to democratically elected representatives at all the levels of decentralized system. These representatives can govern as per the needs and aspirations of people.

Now as the third indicator we can take up the differentiation of political institutions. On one hand, it avoids the risk of misuse of authority by any one person or group of persons sitting in a particular institution and on the other hand it ensures a better protection of rights of the people. Traditionally, there was no differentiation amongst the political institutions. Power was concentrated in the hands of any one institution or a few people or group of people. But development has emphasized on differentiation of political institutions so that different functions should be performed by different institutions which increases the efficiency of each institution.

Similarly, secularization of political culture is also an important indicator of political development. It emphasizes on freedom from certain traditional religious and cultural beliefs, values and attitudes, which are, definitely, an obstacle before the development of any country.

Rationalization of authority is the next step of secularization of political culture. Authority focusing on secular and rational ways of governance and administration will enhance the capacity of authority and administration. Governance becomes more efficient, responsive and transparent.

“Development leads to increase in political consciousness amongst the ruled.”⁹ It brings awareness amongst the masses regarding the functioning of the state and their role in governance of the country. With increasing political consciousness, development leads to increase in political participation of people, either directly or indirectly. When the participation is direct, then it turns into political recruitment, which is a formal entry in the politics of the country through political parties, pressure groups or other means.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

Development is a continuous process which has no beginning or end. It shows a departure from the traditions, especially exploitative traditions, for better. In this context, we can study how far India has witnessed political development and the challenges before political development in India. In India, we find a continuous movement from traditions towards modernization and development. Even before independence, especially during the British rule, India has witnessed the process of socio-political and economic reforms. Many social, economic and political reformers contributed their part in the overall development of the country by shedding off old traditions, which were exploitative in nature such as caste discrimination, untouchability, gender discrimination, child marriage, widow system, feudal structure of society, etc.

Since independence, India has moved on the path of political development in a very steady and fast pace. The document which has provided the breeding ground for overall development of the country is the Constitution of India, which is guiding the country since its adoption. It has guided the country towards development by carving its way through many socio- economic and political challenges. Modern values such as democracy, social, economic and political justice, liberty, equality, fraternity, ‘socialism and secularism’¹⁰ became the guiding principles of our country with the adoption of the constitution.

India has been a vibrant democracy since independence. With a strong constitution, India is ensuring peoples’ participation in political process directly through casting their votes and involvement in party politics or indirect participation through pressure groups and civil society, peaceful transfer of power by means of fair elections, accountable and responsive government ensuring welfare and overall development of different sections of society by means of formulating and implementing laws, policies and programs and an independent judiciary interpreting laws in order to impart justice, clear cut distribution of power between all the organs of the government and amongst different levels of government starting from the central government to provincial governments down towards the urban and rural local self- governing bodies and an efficient administrative structure. India has been an inspiration for many countries in the world. The functioning of democracy in India is inspiring many countries struggling to practice democracy and attain peace and prosperity. The smooth functioning of democracy in India is nothing but the real political development which we seek to attain.

Development and growth comes with certain challenges also. In case of India, political development and smooth functioning of democracy is also having certain challenges which are discussed below under major categories.

CHALLENGES BEFORE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA

In India, there are different challenges before political development which can be categorized under headings such as socio-economic challenges, political challenges and structural and institutional challenges.

Socio-economic Challenges

There are some socio-economic challenges which are posing a severe challenge before the political development in India such as caste and communalism. These social institutions are sociological but they are still playing a significant role in the politics of country in the 21st century. Starting from the British period, these traditional forces are still active in different forms and extent at different levels of electoral politics and society at large. Casteism and Communalism in politics have proved to be an impediment in the path of political development and political modernization in India. It has slowed down the pace of development of secular politics in the country.

Identity politics in the name of language, culture and region has also been some important socio-economic challenges since independence of the country. Considering the vastness of the country and diversity in all its forms and types it has been a very difficult task for the governments to manage economic and political development since independence. Several separatist movements, autonomy movements and protests have been a reality in different parts of the country from north to south and west to east and especially north eastern states. It has been very challenging for the governments to keep the country intact.

Similarly, gender discrimination has been an age old problem in India which can be seen in the form of denial of equal opportunities and equal rights to women as the men get and also in the form of exploitative practices against women such as sati system, devdasi system, child marriage, dowry system, etc. This has not only restricted the women participation in the politics of India but also confined them to the personal sphere. Due to several affirmative actions taken by governments since independence, women have been officially given reservations in political positions at the grass root level, 'but most of the women seating at such positions are just dummies'¹¹. Economic dependence of women over male partner has reduced to some extent but political empowerment is yet to be achieved. Empowering women without providing them security in society is impossible. Women are still facing problems such as physical and sexual abuse, domestic violence, rape, kidnapping, trafficking to name a few.

Similarly, illiteracy and poverty are other socio-economic challenges which are impediments before political development of India. Due to illiteracy, people do not have basic understanding and awareness of the politics of the country, their rights, duties and their role in democratic polity of the country. Lack of political consciousness results in misuse of authority by the ruling and administrative class which leads to corruption in different forms and. Similarly, poverty has resulted in misuse of authority and power by economically and politically dominant sections of the society by means of influencing political choice of poor people. People often fail to understand that democracy is all about strengthening the general masses, but unfortunately, they accept the government as their master.

Political Challenges

There are also some political challenges before political development in India which can be seen as impediments such as lack of political consciousness, lack of political representation, lack of political participation, criminalization of politics and personality factor in politics.

Generally, political development indicates increased political consciousness, representation of people and maximum participation of general masses in the politics of any country. Like this a modern political system also emphasizes on strong political ethics based on certain ideological base, but in India, we can clearly notice that people are still not conscious about their roles in democracy. People consider voting as the only means of participation in the politics. A continuous interaction between the people and the government is often missing in Indian politics. Most of the people remain away from politics and have a general conception that all political parties and political leaders are almost same. This mindset results in political disinterestedness amongst people which further results in low political participation. In this scenario, the people having money and power dominate the politics and make democracy look like an oligarchy. Criminalization of politics has been a big challenge before political development of the country.

Personality factor has been playing a very important role in the politics. Political parties are known by the name of their leaders, not their ideology. Most of the people have no idea about the ideological difference between one party and the other. These are some apprehensions which can be seen as impediment before the development of Indian politics.

Structural and Institutional Challenges

The Constitution of India has laid down a proper framework for structural differentiation and has assigned different functions to each one. In India, there are different institutions and agencies performing different functions, but the problem is with proper functioning of these agencies. Most of the institutions lag in ensuring transparency in its functioning and also lag in accountability because they are not accountable to the people directly. This often results in increase in cases of corruption, which is posing a threat before the political development of the country.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Thus, we can say that much more is to be done for political development in India. The challenges discussed above must be addressed and special emphasis is needed on three aspects namely the people, the environment and the institutions. Firstly, regarding people i.e. the general masses of the country, there is a need to spread political awareness and consciousness among them which can help us resolve some major issues mentioned above and especially discrimination and exploitation on basis of caste, community, gender, misuse of power and position by people on important positions, corruption, and misuse of caste, communal, regional and lingual sentiments of people by political parties and political leaders.

Secondly, the environment in which the system is functioning needs to be made conducive for political development, for which effort is needed to counter corruption in different forms, reduce economic inequality and establish socio-economic and political justice in the society for this proper emphasis should be laid on promoting education in the society, economic and food security amongst the people and proper monitoring should be done and all these actions need to be taken at the grass root level.

Thirdly, at the institutional level, some measures should also be taken for increasing transparency, responsiveness and accountability of people in politics and the administration towards the general masses. The problem is not with provisions rather it is the outcome which matters in this case. Several measures have already been taken for ensuring good governance which can make India politically modernized, but practically no care has been taken to ensure its practical implementation.

Political Development in a continuous process which should be kept going with proper pace in order to tackle the challenges rising in its path from time to time. It is not that at a particular point of time we can claim that we have achieved the goal of political development. This is a journey which needs focus on all the aspects of political development and proper monitoring of institutions involved and the stake holders i.e. the people. At any point of time if the political system or the institutions fail to respond to the new challenges or needs, then it should be taken care of otherwise this will bring distrust and disinterested in the minds of people leading to reversal of the process of political development into political decay.

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