



A CRITICAL STUDY ON THE ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN PROMOTING DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

Tanishka Gupta

Student, B.A.

Political Science, Galgotias University

Dr. Subal Kumar Bagh

Assistant Professor,

Department of Political Science, Galgotias University

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ABSTRACT

This research paper is a critical analysis of the place of political parties in the enhancement of democracy in India, the multi-dimensional roles of political parties in electoral mobilization, policy formulation, representation and accountability. The political parties play a crucial medius between state and people to allow the participation of governance and political education. But practices of corruption, absence of internal democracy, dynastic politics and marginalization of the otherwise suppressed voices are some of the obstacles in their democratic fate. The study supports the idea that internal modernizations such as openness in leadership standards and participation of genders and young people as well as use of digital technologies can be used as a revitational mechanism of restoring public trust and active democracy. Another important aspect about the opposition that is brought out in the paper is the role of opposition in providing checks and balances, pushing of policies as well as maintaining electoral competitiveness. Empowering the ruling and the opposition parties is more vital in standing stronger democratic resilience and representation of all the political factions in India.

Keywords: Political Parties, Democracy, Internal Reform, Opposition, Political Representation.

INTRODUCTION

1.HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The political organization has passed through all the millenniums, and the primitive forms of rule within tribal communities were replaced with highly structured forms within the nation-states. In one of the early societies, the older people, warriors, or even spiritual leaders seemed to be vested



with the power of the leadership and this was based on age, power, or spiritual connection. Due to the rise of human settlement into cities and civilization, the existence of managed decision-making and conflict resolution led monarchies and empires dominated by kings and emperors.

Ancient Greece, and specifically Athens in the 5th century BCE, is considered the origin of formal democratic thought. Democracy in Athens was restricted in that non citizens, women and slaves had no rights to participate in the politics but however the major values were initiated which were participation of the citizen in the politics, making voting and other forms of political negotiations. Next came the Roman Republic when the elected representatives and codified laws started emerging- doctrines that are still embodied in the democratic structure today.

It was during the enlightenment between the 17th and the 19th centuries, that the intellectual basis of democracy was broadened. Philosophers like, John Locke and Montesquieu and Rousseau supported principles of individual rights and division of authority and state responsibility. The concepts fomented the revolutionary French Revolution (1789) and American Revolution (1776) and formed the foundation of popular sovereignty and constitutional governing.

India entered democratic beginnings that had got deep traditions of deliberative assemblies in ancient republics such as Vaishali. Nevertheless, these democratic trends were suppressed by a long reign of the monarchics, as well as the colonialism. This has changed with the independence of India in the 1947 after which India itself assumed a written Constitution, in 1950, which enshrined universal adult suffrage, fundamental rights and a federal democratic polity. India became an active, but rather complicated, democracy, marked with overlying pluralism and the presence of other political parties, and regular elections.

2. POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRACY

There is no democratic society without political parties and the main sources of the functioning of political parties. They are a form of institutional structures that enable citizens to voice out their interest, values and aspirations. Political parties make simplification of difficult community views by grouping people together in programs that offer solutions. Their use helps in reducing the distance between the government and the governed enabling the democratic process to work in a representational organized form.

Electoral mobilization is one of the fundamentals of political parties. Parties inform the electorate of their agenda and policies as well as their aims through some organized campaigns, debates in the streets, rallies, and presentation of the manifesto. They present the electorate with an option by nominating their candidates in elections thus making democracy to become competitive and participatory.

Another important role of the parties in its policy formulation. Upon election, the partisan interest groups have the ability to wield power, whereby they influence the national agenda by significantly putting forward and shaping laws, budgets, as well as, national programs. Such policies are mostly



based on the party manifesto and ideology hence converting the campaign to the acts of government.

Political parties enable groups in the society to offer political platforms to the various voices in the society. They are performing the role of representing the interest of various socio-economic groups including farmers, youth, women, minority and laborers and make sure that their interests are taken care of during the process of policy-making.

The opposition parties are also known to support one of the most important pillars of democracy i.e. accountability. Such parties also investigate the government actions scrutinize the actions, expose corruption, interrogate action undertaken by the legislation and bring transparency. A healthy opposition makes sure that power is not unchecked by one or the other party leading to maintenance of the balance which is the key to a democratic governance.

What is more, political parties play an instrumental role of political education. They contribute majorly towards creating awareness to citizens of their civic responsibility, legal rights and the role of democracy. They can help build political literacy and the democratic participation through debates, publications, and outreach to the general population.

2.1. Political Party and Democracy

Democracy literally an expression of "rule of the people" is practiced through political parties, which entail aggregates of individuals with common philosophies on how they are ruled. Political parties in such democracies as in India not only compete during the elections to seize power but also organize political leadership, collect the opinion of the people and give them a variety of alternatives to choose between, so that they could support particular visions of governance. Parties are a tool of inclusiveness helping women, young people and the marginalized to participate; a more representative system can be built, although it requires these parties to be democratic, transparent and accountable internally. Further, political party maintains peace in periods of elections, handover of leadership and induction of conflicts by dialog and laws being the most important pillars of democracies that are stable and develop.

3. INTERNAL CHALLENGES FACED BY POLITICAL PARTIES

Although political parties are also basic institutions in any democratic system, most of them experience acute internal crises that affect their capacity to operate productively and ethically. These inner complications reduce their democratic merits, decrease the confidence of people, and impede participatory governance.

1. Corruption and Patronage

The issue of corruption continues to plague the political party. Political leaders and candidates are mostly appointed not on merit or vision but on what they are able to fund in upcoming elections or whether they possess patronage relations. This is because patron-client relationships corrupt the



values of democracy because positions get chosen based on party ticket or loyalty instead of an indication of being able to perform the task of serving the population.

This patronage system undermines quality of governance whereby quack people get to hold positions of power. It also puts aside ethical leaders who could not have either the resources or the contacts, lessening healthy competition to the political environment. This leads to disillusionment among the population in regards to the political parties and most of the time the elections can be termed to be rigged or fixed.

Furthermore, corruption is also ensured through vote-buying, favoritism when it comes to allocating public resources and informal quid-pro-quo. Such customs miscarry democracy accountability and render political parties hard to become reform and progress vehicles.

2. Lack of Internal Democracy

Internal democracy is the extent to which a political party is inclusive, transparent and participatory in its decisions making. However, the leadership style in many political parties in India and other democracies is centralized where one or a family, or a clique of people hold power. The change of leadership often comes not by election but by nomination which is deaf to the voices of grassroots and a source of stunting innovation and dissent.

3.1.Lack of Internal Democracy

Democracy however should also exist at the national, internal democracy in the political parties permits members to choose leaders, to make suggestions and to shape up the party. Nevertheless, such practice is lacking among many parties, which are controlled by individual leaders or dynasties that dampen the competition and marginalize the employees at the base or the youth as well as women. It is not always transparent, and there are untransparent funds use, unclear decision-making upon, manipulated internal elections. Not allowing debate and dissent also hinders flexibility which causes internal stagnation, burdens in elections, and disillusionment of the masses. Finally, undemocratic parties at the domestic level are unlikely to practice democratic principles in government, and even when they get the government, they tend to bring back the exclusionary and opaque approaches to governance.

4.PARTY REFORM AND INNOVATION

Political parties need to be restructured and accept innovation as a means of bringing back democratic systems to life. Internal reform will not only be used to redeem the internal eye but also to remodel its relevance, efficacy, and inclusiveness in the quickly evolving political arena.

Internal democratization of structures is one of the most important elements of reform. Open fair candidate selection, open internal elections and decentralized decision making can lower the impact of dynastic politics and favoritism. Internal reforms aid in making sure it is merit and leadership skills and not personal connection and influence by financial resources that will have a say in rankings within the party.



More inclusive leadership could be based on introducing gender quotas and special representation platforms of disadvantaged groups, including youth, women, and minorities. These measures assist in mirroring the multicultural nature of society in the ranks of the parties and resolve the millennium-old problem of political exclusion.

The new digital age offers a variety of new possibilities to innovate parties. Political parties are forced to upgrade their systems by using digital tools of communication, campaign and the public. Younger demographics can be reached via social media platforms/mobile applications and digital surveys that enable such parties to get feedback and respond faster to the issues that the population is undertaking. Such a tech-based outreach increases not only transparency but also improves citizen-based governance.

5.ROLE OF OPPOSITION PARTIES

The existence of opposition parties in any functioning democracy is important in controlling the excesses of one party and in terms of exercising checks and balances, promoting the values of the constitution, and supporting the different interests. The opposition parties are not mere competitors because of elections, but act as democracy guarddogs by making sure that the governing governments cannot become dictators or dictatorships.

This is the main role of opposition party because it offers other policies and views. They provide rich content in the form of alternative views and solutions that can be used in the mass media and make elections meaningful. Such ideological plurality lies at the core of the strength of a pluralistic democracy that no one story should guide political and community endeavors.

Legislative oversight cannot exist without opposition parties. They discuss about laws that will be enacted, look into the government budget, and make governance more transparent. By tools such as parliamentary questions, motions, and being in committees, they reveal administrative weaknesses, point to corruption, and exert pressure toward just policies. Their existence makes governing bodies to explain their activities and remain accountable to the citizens.

Moreover, the opposition parties maintain the electoral competitiveness. Political monopolies are avoided since they use electoral campaigns and create public opinion in order to cause people to participate in voting. Threats of dismissal usually force the ruling parties to work hard, initiate changes, and stay on the same page with the masses.

CONCLUSION

Political parties are an essential component of vibrant democracy that acts as major channels through which individuals communicate, realize their political inclination and input in governance and policymaking. They are electoral enablers, influencers of the discourse, voice to the varied interests of society and check power using organized political channels. Their efficiency as agents of change towards democracy is however undermined by issues like corruption, patronage politics, autocracy and absence of internal democracy, dynastic politics and drawing up of a section of the



population by political parties. Such problems undermine the trust of citizens, and they kill innovativeness in the political scene of any given country to an extent of hindering inclusive development of political systems. Real change is needed, which can be achieved through transparent candidate selection, decentralization of decision making, gender and youth integration, and embracing digital platforms to conduct outreach and engage people allowing the parties to restore their credibility and ability in becoming democratic. In addition, effective and healthy opposition is extremely important in offering policy options, strengthening of parliamentary scrutiny and protection of constitutional principles. Hence, enhancing intra party democracy, inclusion and innovations are the important strategies in ensuring that political parties become more accountable, representative and super able to uphold the tenets of democracy in India.

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Tanishka Gupta
Dr. Subal Kumar Bagh
