



## Democracy, Polity & Governance

*Dr Najma Heptulla*

Democratic ideals represent various aspects of the broad idea of “Government of the people, by the people and for the people.” They include political characteristics that can be seen to be intrinsically important in terms of the objective of democratic social living such as freedom of expression, participation of the people in deciding the factors governing their lives, public accountability of leaders and an equitable distribution of power.

**I**ndia is the largest democracy in the world. We really feel proud of it. While India was under the British dominion, our leaders and freedom fighters, after various fights, revolutionary activities, battles and relentless movements, sacrifices and bloodsheds of the people of India endeavouring to achieve and restore a free India, centuries together, we

became a free India. After much discussion and debates, our forefathers and pro-founder laboured in drafting a Constitution in the form and style of federalism, a Union Government in the Centre and provincial Governments (State Assemblies or Assemblies of the Union Territory). Amidst the complicacies, pluralistic diversities, differences and confrontations, we ultimately adopted a Constitution

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of India on November 26, 1949, opting federal form of Government with the Preamble, "Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic". Our Constitution in its Preamble aspires to build a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic dedicated to ideas of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity.

For nearly seventy years, we have been witnessing the conduct of successful elections, peaceful changes of Government at the Centre and in the States, exercising freedom of expression, movement and religion by the people of the country. However, unfortunately, people of the country, more often than not, experience rampant inequalities, injustice or non-fulfillment of social expectations as assured in the Indian Constitution. Therefore, the original concept, public perception and philosophy behind the term "Democracy" has been degraded because of the misuse, abuse and misinterpretation of the same to fulfil ulterior motives of the vested interests.

Democracy as a system of Governance is supposed to allow extensive representation and inclusiveness of as many people and views as possible to feed into the functioning of a fair and just society. The definition of

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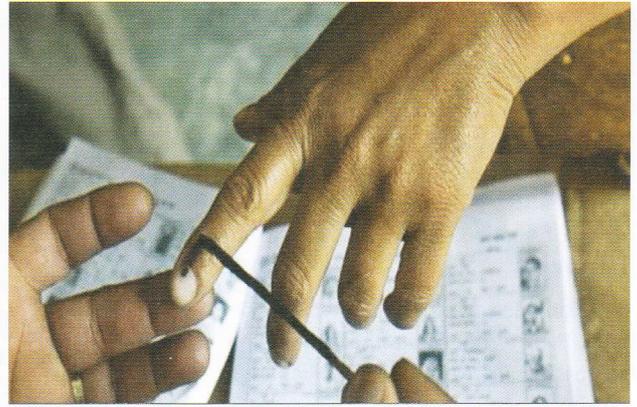
democracy is incomplete unless it is defined in social and individual contexts. Nevertheless, in the recent years in our country, it becomes phenomena that the attitudes and behaviour of the politicians and elected persons and the actions of the political parties, their way of functioning, organisation and the modes of campaigns dilute the concept and philosophy of "Democracy". We have seen and experienced the news of muscle power, money power and worthless propaganda being publicised as their means and ways. Large-scale

false promises by the candidates and political parties are also vividly visible in their election rallies and manifestoes. Even after the elections, the practices of unnecessary and unreasonable horse-trading have also been alarmingly increasing during the last few years.

Democratic ideals represent various aspects of the broad idea of "Government of the people, by the people and for the people." They include political characteristics that can be seen to be intrinsically important in terms of the objective of democratic social living, such as freedom of expression, participation of the people in deciding the factors governing their lives, public accountability of leaders and an equitable distribution of power. Therefore,



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when we say Indian democracy, we mean not only that its political institutions and processes are democratic but also that the Indian society and every Indian citizen is democratic, reflecting basic democratic values of equality, liberty, fraternity, secularism and justice in social sphere and individual behaviour.

Democratic Governance is a condition in which the promise of justice, liberty and equality enshrined in the Constitution is realised in a democratic political framework, where the Government is sensitive to the people's identities, aspirations and needs and where people feel secure and content. Only then the meaning of democratic governance will be honoured.

The biggest challenge and threat that our democracy is facing in India today is the rampant corruption. In spite of establishing various agencies to contain/check, the most dignified symbol of Indian democracy has now become diluted. Today, corruption in public life has been a major concern in India. Corruption continues to exist in covert and overt ways at all three levels— political, bureaucratic and corporate sector. One can see the nexus between politicians, bureaucrats and industrialists which has resulted

in corruption and corrupt practices. The high level of corruption in India has been widely perceived as a major obstacle in improving the quality of governance. In fact, corruption is a sign of political instability and institutional decay, challenging seriously the validity and propriety of governance.

Apart from rampant corruption, criminalisation has also tarnished the image of Indian electoral politics in the present situation. Glaring example is that criminalisation of politics means to use politics or political power for immoral gains. Therefore, criminalisation of politics is totally opposite of democratic values and has no place in a democratic set up. Here, our voters, political parties and the law and order machinery of any State of the country are all equally responsible for this. It is quite painful to know the unholy nexus between politicians, civil servants and business houses during the last few years to influence on public policy formulation and governance.

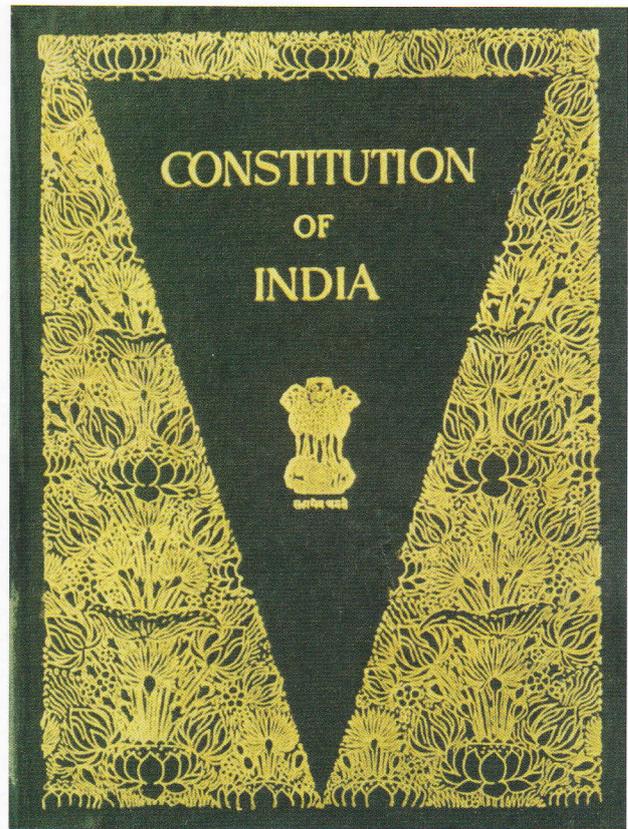
The crisis of governance in India has been taking place very frequently. As a matter of fact, it is a consequence of the breakdown of democratic institutions and the emergence of an unholy nexus between inefficient, corrupt civil servants and vote-hungry politicians. To have/establish a



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good governance does not occur by chance. It is associated with responsible political leadership, enlightened policy-making and a civil service imbued with a professional ethos. To have a good governance is a collective effort and not individual. However, a team of dedicated and honest public leaders from every field is quite indispensable at this critical juncture. The presence of a strong civil society including a free press and independent judiciary are also the pre-conditions for such good governance. It must be demanded by citizens and nourished explicitly and consciously by the Nation-State.

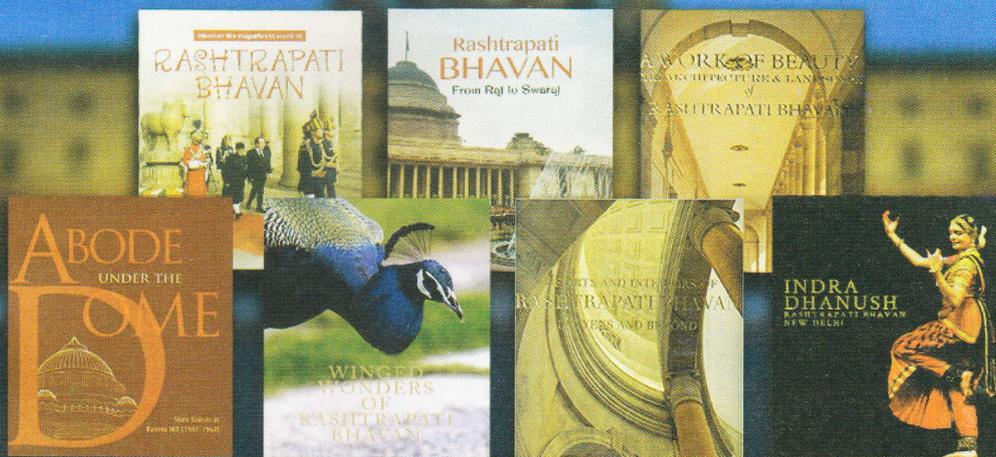
In addition to the above highlighted points pertaining to good governance, the greatest threat to the Indian democracy and polity today is disunity among the different communities of the country. Unity or disunity existing at a particular moment is also always an issue. It is a fact that during pre-independent period, Hindus and Muslims of India were fairly united. If the status quo is again now maintained, Indian Democracy, Polity and Governance will be meaningful. At this critical juncture, we the people of India need dedicated, selfless and honest rulers/administrators in order to see the real democracy, polity



and good governance. All the citizens of our country should always remember that India is a Nation of “Unity in Diversity”. We all should always unitedly uphold the value of “Democracy, Polity and Governance”. □

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