

Critical Study of the Uniqueness of Indian Democracy

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Abstract

This study explores the unique trajectory of Indian democracy, emphasizing its distinct development compared to other democratic systems. Unlike democracies shaped by capitalist industrialization, Indian democracy emerged with a focus on national sovereignty and constitutional principles rather than individual liberties. The integration of Western republican ideals with a strong emphasis on state power has resulted in a distinctive democratic model. Key findings reveal that, as articulated by Rajani Kothari, the Indian state has evolved to mediate conflicts among diverse societal groups while centralizing power, which has facilitated socio-economic management but also heightened tensions related to class, ethnicity, and nationalism. The transition from elite-centered politics to a mass-oriented system has politicized caste dynamics, leading to both competitive alliances and aggressive movements. The rise of populism and the weakening of institutional frameworks pose significant threats to liberal democratic values, resulting in societal fragmentation and increased violence. The study underscores the necessity for institutionalized distributive justice and the protection of liberal freedoms to maintain democratic stability. The evolving political landscape, marked by weak political parties and undisciplined mobilization of diverse groups, requires ongoing scrutiny to ensure effective and stable governance in India.

Keywords: Indian Democracy, National Sovereignty, State Power, Populism, Caste Dynamics, Liberal Values.

1. Introduction

This study investigates the unique trajectory of Indian democracy, emphasizing its distinct development compared to other democratic systems. Unlike democracies shaped by capitalist industrialization, Indian democracy emerged with a focus on national sovereignty and constitutional principles rather than individual liberties. This divergence has resulted in a democratic model that integrates Western republican ideals with a strong emphasis on state power. As Rajani Kothari articulates, the Indian state has evolved to mediate conflicts among diverse societal groups while centralizing power. While this centralization has facilitated socio-economic management, it has also heightened tensions related to class, ethnicity, and nationalism. The shift from elite-centered politics to a mass-oriented system has politicized caste dynamics, fostering both competitive alliances and aggressive movements. The rise of populism and the weakening of institutional frameworks pose significant risks to liberal democratic

values, leading to societal fragmentation and increased violence. This study underscores the need for institutionalized distributive justice and the protection of liberal freedoms to sustain democratic stability. The evolving political landscape, marked by weak political parties and undisciplined mobilization of diverse groups, requires ongoing scrutiny to ensure effective and stable governance in India.

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach, focusing on the analysis of historical texts, political theories, and scholarly interpretations to understand the unique evolution of Indian democracy. It begins with a comprehensive review of literature from key figures like Rajani Kothari, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Atul Kohli, establishing a theoretical framework centered on liberal democracy, state-society relations, and populism. The methodology includes textual analysis of primary sources such as Nehru's speeches and the Indian Constitution, examining how national sovereignty and state power were emphasized over individual liberties. Contextual analysis situates Indian democracy within the socio-political landscape of post-colonial India, exploring challenges like ethno-nationalism and the rise of populism. Comparative analysis is conducted to highlight the differences and similarities between Indian democracy and other democratic systems, particularly the impact of populism on institutional frameworks. Case studies illustrate the practical manifestation of these trends, such as the politicization of caste and increasing regional tensions. The findings are synthesized to draw conclusions about the current state of Indian democracy and its future, critically reflecting on the role of political elites and the pressures on state institutions. This approach provides a nuanced understanding of the unique trajectory of democracy in India.

3. Result & Discussion

Democratic Trends in India: In 1951, Jawaharlal Nehru declared his commitment to fight against religious violence, emphasizing the unique nature of Indian democracy. Unlike many democracies, India's political system developed independently of capitalist industrialization and was not a direct result of the freedom struggle. Instead, the focus was on national sovereignty rather than individual liberties. The Indian Constitution established a democratic state, ensuring rights such as liberty, equality, justice, and fraternity for all citizens. India's model combined Western republicanism and liberal democracy, influenced by the ideas of an enlightened elite. Rajani Kothari noted that this liberal democracy reflects a particular view of the relationship between state power and society. Rajani Kothari highlighted that Indian democracy relied on moderation, restraint, and the broad distribution of power, maintained through conflict resolution. The state evolved as a mediator, resolving societal conflicts related to class, ethnicity, and nationality.

Three key changes occurred:

- National identities were shaped within political entities based on territorial divisions.
- Sovereign nation-states became the dominant structure, asserting internal and external authority.
- The state expanded its governance, managing socio-economic activities and promoting social homogenization.

These developments increased state power and centralization, but Kothari warned that democratic elites are now shifting towards populism, risking the erosion of liberal values. Marginalized societies in India, lacking internal surplus, have relied on external capital, worsening inequalities along regional, ethnonational, and class lines. While cultural issues haven't significantly challenged liberal democracy, the rise of class divisions, ethno-nationalism, and the Hindutva debate have become central to governance. The shift from elite-centered politics to mass society has politicized caste dynamics, creating competitive alliances but also more direct and aggressive caste-based movements.

Political elites have turned to populism, weakening institutional frameworks and intensifying tensions in minority politics, language politics, and regionalism. This shift risks undermining efforts to build a multi-religious, multi-racial polity, leading to alienation, provincial autonomy, and societal fragmentation, often managed through suppression and increased violence. Increased awareness and politicization of lower sections and marginal groups. This national politics of populist hypocrisy also puts down inter-elite sensibilities as well as consciousness and the political course of action and policy which is based on a particular minimum regulatory policy of the game. Society cannot be able to survive and live to tell the tale without a dominant elite who shares such minimum standard of values and objectives. In this context, the notion and gradually amplified Populism in the democratic governance or regime eradicates both the functional role of the people and management elite's performance in the society. The basic fact is that distributive justice must also be recognized and institutionalized. It is important to state that liberal freedoms and notions like equality before the law must be guaranteed by the state. There is nothing automatically about either the organizations of parliamentary democracy or distributive justice based on economic development. It has to be consciously formed on basis of the scheme for nationwide development and also the nature of the state organization.

If it fails, the liberal democratic freedoms also would, at any degree, collapse for extensive segments of the people in the state. The notion of equality, at that time, turn out to be a hollow watchword which is used to exclude the freedom of choices that subsist, as an alternative of providing financial supports to the weak sections and the marginal groups in the society, bringing up their expectations and, on that basis, getting their loyalty and their voting supports in the electoral conducts. Then again, the educated and middle-class educated persons, and relatives of several persuasive people greatly influence the system which is based on the notion of justice without its institutionalization. This particular notion stands supported by Rajani Kothari's concept of the nature of the state. He argued that: 'These pressures

strain the state apparatus well beyond normal bounds of efficiency and draw into it a large lumpen element that then becomes a drag on the exchequer. Thus, arises the parasitism of the urban middle classes.' In the institutional positions, the development theory has denoted growth to increasing trust in centralized organizations. After all, both the liberal policy of an open society and the communist principle of an egalitarian society based on the notion of classless have recognized the centralized bureaucracy which can play an influential role for attaining social objectives. Throughout the very periods of time when the participation has turned out to be the influential value with people everywhere, in the functional practice, it does not make much. The development of the technocratic state has harshly restricted citizens' ability to participate in social progress in more advanced countries due to the exclusive degree of monopolization and the centralism of the most institutions of the state. In this context, there is not a far difference between correctly democratic states and states that openly have constancy in democratic centralism. Atul Kohli, the renowned writer of Indian politics, correctly pointed out the four major factors which have been mobilizing the nature of Indian politics: (i) the deinstitutionalizing role of national and regional leaders; (ii) the impact of weak political parties; (iii) the undisciplined political mobilization of various caste, ethnic, religious, and other types of groups; and (iv) the increasing conflicts between the haves and have-nots in the civil society.

4. Conclusion

This study elucidates the unique trajectory of Indian democracy, shaped by its distinct historical, political, and social contexts. Unlike many democracies that developed through capitalist industrialization, India's democratic model emerged from a focus on national sovereignty and constitutional principles, blending Western republicanism with a strong emphasis on state power. Key findings reveal that the Indian state, as envisioned by Rajani Kothari, has evolved to balance conflicts among various societal groups while centralizing authority. This centralization has facilitated socio-economic management but has also intensified tensions related to class, ethnicity, and nationalism. The shift from elite-centered politics to a more mass-oriented system has heightened the politicization of caste dynamics, leading to both competitive alliances and aggressive movements. The rise of populism and the erosion of institutional frameworks pose significant risks to liberal democratic values, contributing to societal fragmentation and increased violence. The study highlights the urgent need for institutionalized distributive justice and the protection of liberal freedoms to uphold democratic values. As Indian politics continues to evolve, influenced by weak political parties and the mobilization of diverse groups, careful attention is required to ensure the stability and effectiveness of democratic governance.

5. References

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