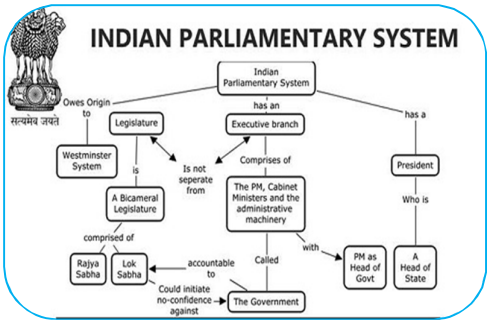
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NATURE AND FEATURES OF INDIAN PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT



Parliamentary Democracy is a refined from of Democracy. The Republican and Federal constitution of free India came into force on January 26, 1950. The constitution provides broadly for a Parliamentary form of Government based on Universal Adult Franchise and the accountability of the executive to the elected representative of the people. The Parliament represents all constitutionally organized shades of public opinion at national level and occupies an important place in the constitutional setup of the country. It has given a stage to the people through which they articulate and realize their aspirations and give vent to their grievances. The successful working of Parliamentary democracy is one of the notable achievements of free India.

The most fundamental and far reaching decision of India's constitution makers was to establish Indian Democracy on the foundation of Universal Adult Franchise and on the principle of "one man-one vote." It was an act of faith, homage to the people, implicit in the liberal outlook of India's freedom struggle. This decision was simple and without controversy but it was by all accounts momentous and revolutionary making every adult Indian citizen irrespective of caste, sex and economic or educational qualifications a share holder in India's democratic system.

KEYWORDS: *Universal Adult Franchise, One Man-One Vote, Public Opinion, Accountability of the Executive, Articulate and Realize of Peoples Aspirations and Redresses of Grievances.*

INTRODUCTION

When India became independent there was behind her considered experience of administration and Parliamentary institution. Rudimentary Provincial Legislature had begun functioning in 1861 and the central assembly in 1921. Beginning of the re-organization of Local–self government had been made in the 19th century. In mid 20th century, the country was already accustomed to electoral processes and to the idiom and style of elected deliberative bodies. Media of communication were fairly widespread. There existed an influential, articulate and educated middle class. There was a deep and wide-spread awareness of the goal and aspiration of freedom and democracy.

Parliamentary legislation regulates the preparation and the revision of the electoral rolls and the conduct of elections. The proceedings in respect of electoral registration are quasi-judicial and are revisable by courts. Every citizen who is 18 years of age on the first January is entitled to be registered as a voter. This is designed to preserve and promote the purity of the electoral process and punish those who deviate and detract from it. The adjudication of electoral disputes is entrusted to the High

Court and Supreme Court who enjoy a high reputation for political neutrality, independence and impartiality.

NATURE AND FEATURES OF INDIAN PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

We have observed the political situation in various countries. It is imperative to have a clear conception of Parliament. Some important nature and features of Parliamentary Democracy are as follows:

1. **Liberty & Equality:** Democracy is based upon two fundamental concepts, Liberty and Equality of the individuals. They are products of the long historical development. Before man recognized the Equality and Liberty of his fellow men he had to discipline his primitive ethics founded on religion and rational thought. Buddhism, the teaching of Christianity, the stoic philosophy in the Greek-Roman world, all denounced the existing forms of inequality and set up the ideal of equality and liberty of individuals.
2. **Supremacy of Law:** In addition to liberty and equality, the supremacy of law is essential for the survival of constitutional government. Democracy will not function unless those who framed the law and those who opposed it when it was being framed agree to submit to supremacy of law. In other words, law must be framed in such a manner so as to give the minorities all reasonable opportunities to express their opinion.
3. **Political Decision by Discussion:** Another characteristic of Parliamentary Democracy is that it is the method of arriving at political decision by discussion. Discussion may take place at various levels. It may take place within the cabinet among civil servants and ministers, between members of Parliament and Government and among all these and citizen bodies of an organized kind. The aim of such discussion is to promote common good. But for good discussion or fruitful conversion certain conditions are necessary. They are a measure of common experience.
    - Capacity to understand.
    - Tolerate and even to appreciate different opinions and interests.
    - Mutual confidence and trust.
    - Absence of fear or favour.
    - Belief in discussion as a suitable means to an abiding solution and the existence of an enlightened electorate.

Where these conditions exist Parliamentary Democracy exists.

In other words, economic factor is not the decisive factor. A regime, which commands the confidence of the citizens, will survive even the most serious economic set-back as the congress Government had survived the economic crisis of 1950. A regime insecure in the hearts/minds of the people may win spectacular materials victories and yet may not survive long.

4. **Well–organized & strong Opposition Party:** It is also another necessary feature for the existence of Parliamentary democracy. There is need for strong opposition which would be in a position to replace the ruling party. If there is no well-organized opposition the Government of the day becomes corrupt and thereby facilitates the standing army, as in Pakistan, Thailand, and Sudan, to usurp the political Saddle so there should be no occasion for the creation of a political vacuum. Further, the Government of the day must consult the leader of the minority party or parties on all important measures and the opposition must abide by the decision of Parliament. It should not adopt unconstitutional methods outside and inside the Parliament for the redressal of its grievances.
5. **Speaker must not be a member of any party:** The presiding officer of the House should not be a member of any political party after his election as speaker. As a matter of fact he should resign his party membership immediately after his election as a speaker and by convention the speaker's seat should not be contested. This convention ensures order and decorum in the House and impartiality in the conduct of business.

6. **Representative must uphold the public opinion:** It is also another one of the features of Parliamentary Democracy. Representatives must feel the pulse of their electorates. They must understand what the people want. Accordingly, they should influence Parliament. Further, there is the lobby opinion which is more important than the opinion of the House. Both directly and indirectly the lobby impresses the whips and the whips impress the ministers. Thus in Parliamentary Democracy Government is very susceptible to public opinion.
7. **Party Government:** Parliamentary Democracy is Party Government but, there is no room for dictatorship of one party seeking to hoist itself into power by fraud, force or by persuasion but at least of two parties each trying to maintain itself in power by persuasion. These parties are based on different views of national interest and each appeal to public opinion to vote for its own policy.
8. **The Method of Expose:** Another salient feature of Parliamentary Democracy is the method of exposure. Any defect in administration, any weakness in precept or practice, any blunder of policies is soon brought to light and held up to ridicule. Thus the Government functions in the glare of pitiless publicity and through keen competition between the Government and the opposition.
9. **Right to speech of opposition (Importance of opposition)**: In Parliamentary Democracy the opposition has the right to speak and therefore must be heard. It has the right to demand that policies should be formulated openly. It compels the Government to defend itself by open and rational arguments and the opposition also is compelled to state the alternative. Further, the majority does not ride roughshod over the minorities because it has cultivated the habit of tolerance for other man's point of view and dislike for oppression. There is the opposition ready to pounce upon the ruling party's injustices and oppressions even more readily than upon defects of policy. The Government also does not want to alienate the people by resorting to oppression.

Thus Parliamentary democracy is a Government assisted by the opposition. The functions which the leader of opposition performs are as important as the functions of the Prime Minister. The one permits the other to govern because the second permits the first to oppose and together they operate the Parliamentary machinery.

So far we have considered the chief characteristics of Parliamentary Democracy. Let us consider the practice of Parliamentary Democracy in India.

CONCLUSION

The Parliamentary Democracy is well suited to the Indian temperament. Its functioning in India outsoared the bravest expectations of the stoutest optimist. Let us consider the Indian record of working of Parliamentary Democracy.

After partition of India and the accompanying massacres in the Punjab, law and order had been maintained. Large sections of the people did not defy the authority of the Government and Parliament. Ministers did not encroach upon the rights of Parliament. The Union and the State Governments respected the distribution of powers. Supremacy of constitution has been accepted.

The decisions of courts have been respected. The separation of Judiciary (Independence of Judiciary from executive) from executive has been carried out. The professional elements like the soldiers, the sailors and the civil servants have been kept at safe distance from politics. The executive is showing due veneration and respect to the elected members. The civil servant is vindicating the principles traditionally observed in Parliamentary democracy, loyalty, anonymity and service. Corruption was not rampant and the standard of administration had not been alarmingly lowed.

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