DEMOCRACY

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Introduction

Democracy is a form of political organization in which all people, through consensus (consensus democracy), direct referendum (direct democracy), or elected representatives (representative democracy) exercise equal control over the matters which affect their interests. The term comes from the Greek: dmokratÌa "rule of the people", which was coined from dmos "people" and (Kratos) "power", in the middle of the 5th-4th century BC to denote the political systems then existing in some Greek city-states, notably Athens following a popular uprising in 508 BC.Even though there is no specific, universally accepted definition of 'democracy', equality and freedom have been identified as important characteristics of democracy since ancient times. These principles are reflected in all citizens being equal before the law and having equal access to power. For example, in a representative democracy, every vote has equal weight, no restrictions can apply to anyone wanting to become a representative, and the freedom of its citizens is secured by legitimized rights and liberties which are generally protected by a constitution.

There are several varieties of democracy, some of which provide better representation and more freedoms for their citizens than others. However, if any democracy is not carefully legislated through the use of balances to avoid an uneven distribution of political power, such as the separation of powers, then a branch of the system of rule could accumulate power, thus become undemocratic. The "majority rule" is often described as a characteristic feature of democracy, but without governmental or constitutional protections of individual liberties, it is possible for a minority of individuals to be oppressed by the "tyranny of the majority". An essential process in "ideal" representative democracies is competitive elections that are fair both substantively and procedurally. Furthermore, freedom of political expression, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press are considered by some to be essential so that citizens are informed and able to vote in their personal interests. Popular sovereignty is common but not a universal motivating subject for establishing a democracy. In some countries, democracy is based on the philosophical principle of equal rights. Many people use the term "democracy" as shorthand for liberal democracy, which may include additional elements such as political pluralism; equality before the law; the right to petition elected officials for redress of grievances; due process; civil liberties; human rights; and elements of civil society outside the government. In the United States, separation of powers is often cited as a supporting attribute, but in other countries, such as the United Kingdom, the dominant philosophy is parliamentary sovereignty (though in practice judicial independence is generally maintained). In other cases, "democracy" is used to mean direct democracy. Though the term "democracy" is typically used in the context of a political state, the principles are applicable to private organizations and other groups also.

Democracy has its origins in Ancient Greece. However other cultures have significantly contributed to the evolution of democracy such as Ancient Rome, Europe, and North and South America. The concept of representative democracy arose largely from ideas and institutions that developed during the European Middle Ages and the Age of Enlightenment and in the American and French Revolutions. Democracy has been called the "last form of government" and has spread considerably across the globe. The right to vote has been expanded in many Jurisdictions over time from relatively narrow groups (such as wealthy men of a particular ethnic group), with New Zealand the first nation to grant universal suffrage for all its citizens in 1893.

HISTORY OF DEMOCRACY
Ancient Origins

The term democracy first appeared in ancient Greek political and philosophical thought. The philosopher Plato contrasted democracy, the system of "rule by the governed", with the alternative systems of monarchy (rule by one individual), oligarchy (rule by a small Èlite class) and timocracy (ruling class of property owners). Although Athenian democracy is today considered by many to have been a form of direct democracy, originally it had two distinguishing features: first the allotment (selection by lot) of ordinary citizens to government offices and courts, and secondarily the assembly of all the citizens. All citizens were eligible to speak and vote in the Assembly, which set the laws of the city-state. However, the Athenian citizenship was only for males born from a father who was citizen and who had been doing their "military service" between 18 and 20 years old; this excluded women, slaves, foreigners (metoikoi) and males under 20 years old. Of the 250,000 inhabitants only some 30,000 on average were citizens. Of those 30,000 perhaps 5,000 might regularly attend one or more meetings of the popular Assembly. Most of the officers and magistrates of Athenian government were allotted; only the generals (strategoi) and a few other officers were elected. A possible example of primitive democracy may have been the early Sumerian city-states. A similar proto-democracy or oligarchy existed temporarily among the Medes (ancient Iranian people) in the 6th century BC, but which came to an end after the Achaemenid (Persian) Emperor Darius the Great declared that the best monarchy was better than the best oligarchy or best democracy.

A serious claim for early democratic institutions comes from the independent "republics" of India, sanghas and ganas, which existed as early as the 6th century BC and persisted in some areas until the 4th century AD.

The evidence is scattered and no pure historical source exists for that period. In addition, Diodorus (a Greek historian at the time of Alexander the Great's excursion of India), without offering any detail, mentions thatindependent and democratic states existed in India. However, modern scholars note that the word democracy at the 3rd century BC and later had been degraded and could mean any autonomous state no matter how oligarchic it was. The lack of the concept of citizen equality across caste system boundaries lead many scholars to believe that the true

nature of ganas and sanghas would not be comparable to that of truly democratic institutions. Even though the Roman Republic contributed significantly to certain aspects of democracy, only a minority of Romans were citizens. As such, having votes in elections for choosing representatives and then the votes of the powerful were given more weight through a system of Gerrymandering. For that reason, almost all high officials, including members of the Senate, came from a few wealthy and noble families. However, many notable exceptions did occur.

Middle Ages

During the Middle Ages, there were various systems involving elections or assemblies, although often only involving a small amount of the population, the election of Gopala in Bengal, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the Althing in Iceland, the Lˉgting in the Faroe Islands, certain medieval Italian city-states such as Venice, the tuatha system in early medieval Ireland, the Veche in Novgorod and Pskov Republics of medieval Russia, Scandinavian Things, The States in Tirol and Switzerland and the autonomous merchant city of Sakai in the 16th century in Japan. However, participation was often restricted to a minority, and so may be better classified as oligarchy. Most regions in medieval Europe were ruled by clergy or feudal lords. A little closer to modern democracy were the Cossack republics of Ukraine in the 16th -17th centuries: Cossack Hetmanate and Zaporizhian Sich. The highest post the Hetman was elected by the representatives from the country's districts. Because these states were very militarised, the right to participate in Hetman's elections was largely restricted to those who served in the Cossack Army and over time was curtailed effectively limiting these rights to higher army ranks. The Parliament of England had its roots in the restrictions on the power of kings written into Magna Carta, explicitly protected certain rights of the King's subjects, whether free or fettered ó and implicitly supported what became English writ of habeas corpus, safeguarding individual freedom against unlawful imprisonment with right to appeal. The first elected parliament was De Montfort's Parliament in England in 1265. However only a small minority actually had a voice; Parliament was elected by only a few percent of the population, (less than 3% as late as 1780), and the power to call parliament was at the pleasure of the monarch (usually when he or she needed funds). The power of Parliament increased in stages over the succeeding centuries. After the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the English Bill of Rights of 1689 was enacted, which codified certain rights and increased the influence of Parliament. The franchise was slowly increased and Parliament gradually gained more power until the monarch became largely a figurehead. As the franchise was increased, it also was made more uniform, as many so-called rotten boroughs, with a handful of voters electing a Member of Parliament, were eliminated in the Reform Act of 1832.

18th and 19th Centuries

Although not described as a democracy by the founding fathers, the United States founders shared a determination to root the American experiment in the principle of natural freedom and equality. The United States Constitution, adopted in 1788, provided for an elected government and protected civil rights and liberties for some. In the colonial period before 1776, and for some time after, only adult white

male property owners could vote; enslaved Africans, free black people and women were not extended the franchise. On the American frontier, democracy became a way of life, with widespread social, economic and political equality. However, slavery as a social and economic institution, particularly in eleven states in the American South, that a variety of organizations were established advocating the movement of black people from the United States to locations where they would enjoy greater freedom and equality.

During the 1820s and 1830s the American Colonization Society (A.C.S.) was the primary vehicle for proposals to return black Americans to freedom in Africa, and in 1821 the A.C.S. established the colony of Liberia, assisting thousands of former African-American slaves and free black people to move there from the United States. By the 1840s almost all property restrictions were ended and nearly all white adult male citizens could vote; and turnout averaged 60-80% in frequent elections for local, state and national officials. The system gradually evolved, from Jeffersonian Democracy to Jacksonian Democracy and beyond. In the 1860 United States Census the slave population in the United States had grown to four million, and in Reconstruction after the Civil War (late 1860s) the newly freed slaves became citizens with (in the case of men) a nominal right to vote. Full enfranchisement of citizens was not secured until after the African-American Civil Rights Movement (1955-1968) gained passage by the United States Congress of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The establishment of universal male suffrage in France in 1848 was an important milestone in the history of democracy. In 1789, Revolutionary France adopted the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen and, although short-lived, the National Convention was elected by all males in 1792. Universal male suffrage was definitely established in France in March 1848 in the wake of the French Revolution of 1848. In 1848, several revolutions broke out in Europe as rulers were confronted with popular demands for liberal constitutions and more democratic government.

The Australian colonies became democratic during the mid-19th century, with South Australia being the first government in the world to introduce women's suffrage in 1861. (It was argued that as women would vote the same as their husbands, this essentially gave married men two votes, which was not unreasonable.) New Zealand granted suffrage to (native) Mori men in 1867, white men in 1879, and women in 1893, thus becoming the first major nation to achieve universal suffrage. However, women were not eligible to stand for parliament until 1919. Liberal democracies were few and often short-lived before the late 19th century, and various nations and territories have also claimed to be the first with universal suffrage.

20th and 21st Centuries

20th century transitions to liberal democracy have come in successive "waves of democracy," variously resulting from wars, revolutions, decolonization, religious and economic circumstances. World War I and the dissolution of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires resulted in the creation of new nation-states from Europe, most of them at least nominally democratic. In the 1920s democracy flourished, but

the Great Depression brought disenchantment, and most of the countries of Europe, Latin America, and Asia turned to strong-man rule or dictatorships. Fascism and dictatorships flourished in Nazi Germany, Italy, Spain and Portugal, as well as nondemocratic regimes in the Baltics, the Balkans, Brazil, Cuba, China, and Japan, among others. World War II brought a definitive reversal of this trend in western Europe. The successful democratization of the American, British, and French sectors of occupied Germany (disputed), Austria, Italy, and the occupied Japan served as a model for the later theory of regime change. However, most of Eastern Europe, including the Soviet sector of Germany was forced into the non-democratic Soviet bloc. The war was followed by decolonization, and again most of the new independent states had nominally democratic constitutions. India emerged as the world's largest democracy and continues to be so.

By 1960, the vast majority of country-states were nominally democracies, although the majority of the world's populations lived in nations that experienced sham elections, and other forms of subterfuge (particularly in Communist nations and the former colonies.) A subsequent wave of democratization brought substantial gains toward true liberal democracy for many nations. Spain, Portugal (1974), and several of the military dictatorships in South America returned to civilian rule in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Argentina in 1983, Bolivia, Uruguay in 1984, Brazil in 1985, and Chile in the early 1990s). This was followed by nations in East and South Asia by the mid-to-late 1980s. Economic malaise in the 1980s, along with resentment of communist oppression, contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union, the associated end of the Cold War, and the democratization and liberalization of the former Eastern bloc countries. The most successful of the new democracies were those geographically and culturally closest to western Europe, and they are now members or candidate members of the European Union. Some researchers consider that in contemporary Russia there is no real democracy and one of forms of dictatorship takes place.

The liberal trend spread to some nations in Africa in the 1990s, most prominently in South Africa. Some recent examples of attempts of liberalization include the Indonesian Revolution of 1998, the Bulldozer Revolution in Yugoslavia, the Rose Revolution in Georgia, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the Cedar Revolution in Lebanon, and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstanand the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia. According to Freedom House, in 2007 there were 123 electoral democracies (up from 40 in 1972). According to World Forum on Democracy, electoral democracies now represent 120 of the 192 existing countries and constitute 58.2 percent of the world's population. At the same time liberal democracies i.e. countries Freedom House regards as free and respectful of basic human rights and the rule of law are 85 in number and represent 38 percent of the global population.

As such, it has been speculated that this trend may continue in the future to the point where liberal democratic nation-states become the universal standard form of human society. This prediction forms the core of Francis Fukayama's "End of History" controversial theory. These theories are criticized by those who fear an

evolution of liberal democracies to post-democracy, and others who point out the high number of illiberal democracies.

FORMS

Democracy has taken a number of forms, both in theory and practice. The following kinds are not exclusive of one another: many specify details of aspects that are independent of one another and can co-exist in a single system.

Representative

Representative democracy involves the selection of government officials by the people being represented. If the head of state is also democratically elected then it is called a democratic republic. The most common mechanisms involve election of the candidate with a majority or a plurality of the votes. Representatives may be elected or become diplomatic representatives by a particular district (or constituency), or represent the entire electorate proportionally proportional systems, with some using a combination of the two. Some representative democracies also incorporate elements of direct democracy, such as referendums. A characteristic of representative democracy is that while the representatives are elected by the people to act in their interest, they retain the freedom to exercise their own judgment as how best to do so.

Parliamentary

Parliamentary democracy is a representative democracy where government is appointed by parliamentary representatives as opposed to a 'presidential rule' wherein the President is both head of state and the head of government and is elected by the voters. Under a parliamentary democracy, government is exercised by delegation to an executive ministry and subject to ongoing review, checks and balances by the legislative parliament elected by the people.

Liberal

A Liberal democracy is a representative democracy in which the ability of the elected representatives to exercise decision-making power is subject to the rule of law, and usually moderated by a constitution that emphasizes the protection of the rights and freedoms of individuals, and which places constraints on the leaders and on the extent to which the will of the majority can be exercised against the rights of minorities (see civil liberties). In a liberal democracy, it is possible for some large-scale decisions to emerge from the many individual decisions that citizens are free to make. In other words, citizens can "vote with their feet" or "vote with their dollars", resulting in significant informal government-by-the-masses that exercises many "powers" associated with formal government elsewhere.

CONSTITUTIONAL
Direct

Direct democracy is a political system where the citizens participate in the decision-making personally, contrary to relying on intermediaries or representatives. The supporters of direct democracy argue that democracy is more than merely a procedural issue. A direct democracy gives the voting population the power to:

1. Change constitutional laws,
2. Put forth initiatives, referendums and suggestions for laws,
3. Give binding orders to elective officials, such as revoking them before the end of their elected term, or initiating a lawsuit for breaking a campaign promise.

Of the three measures mentioned, most operate in developed democracies today. This is part of a gradual shift towards direct democracies. Examples of this include the extensive use of referendums in California with more than 20 million voters, and (i.e., voting) in Switzerland, where five million voters decide on national referendums and initiatives two to four times a year; direct democratic instruments are also well established at the cantonal and communal level. Vermont towns have been known for their yearly town meetings, held every March to decide on local issues. No direct democracy is in existence outside the framework of a different overarching form of government. Most direct democracies to date have been weak forms, relatively small communities, usually city-states. The world is yet to see a large, fundamental, working example of direct democracy as of yet, with most examples being small and weak forms.

Participatory

A Parpolity or Participatory Polity is a theoretical form of democracy that is ruled by a Nested Council structure. The guiding philosophy is that people should have decision making power in proportion to how much they are affected by the decision. Local councils of 25-50 people are completely autonomous on issues that affect only them, and these councils send delegates to higher level councils who are again autonomous regarding issues that affect only the population affected by that council.A council court of randomly chosen citizens serves as a check on the tyranny of the majority, and rules on which body gets to vote on which issue. Delegates can vote differently than their sending council might wish, but are mandated to communicate the wishes of their sending council. Delegates are recallable at any time. Referendums are possible at any time via votes of the majority of lower level councils, however, not everything is a referendum as this is most likely a waste of time. A parpolity is meant to work in tandem with a participatory economy

Socialist

"Democracy cannot consist solely of elections that are nearly always fictitious and managed by rich landowners and professional politicians."ó Che Guevara, Marxist revo-lutionary.Socialist thought has several different views on democracy. Social democracy, democratic socialism, and the dictatorship of the proletariat (usually exercised through Soviet democracy) are some examples. Many democratic socialists and social democrats believe in a form of participatory democracy and workplace democracy combined with a representative democracy. Within Marxist orthodoxy there is a hostility to what is commonly called "liberal democracy", which they simply refer to as parliamentary democracy because of its often centralized nature. Because of their desire to eliminate the political elitism they see in capitalism, Marxists, Leninists and Trotskyists believe in direct democracy

implemented though a system of communes (which are sometimes called soviets). This system ultimately manifests itself as council democracy and begins with workplace democracy. (See Democracy in Marxism)

Anarchist

Anarchists are split in this domain, depending on whether they believe that a majority-rule is tyrannic or not. The only form of democracy considered acceptable to many anarchists is direct democracy. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon argued that the only acceptable form of direct democracy is one in which it is recognized that majority decisions are not binding on the minority, even when unanimous. However, anarcho-communist Murray Bookchin criticized individualist anarchists for opposing democracy, and says "majority rule" is consistent with anarchism. Some anarcho-communists oppose the majoritarian nature of direct democracy, feeling that it can impede individual liberty and opt in favour of a non-majoritarian form of consensus democracy, similar to Proudhon's position on direct democracy. Henry David Thoreau, who did not self-identify as an anarchist but argued for "a better government" and is cited as an inspiration by some anarchists, argued that people should not be in the position of ruling others or being ruled when there is no consent

Sortition

Sometimes called "democracy without elections", sortation is the process of choosing decision makers via a random process. The intention is that those chosen will be representative of the opinions and interests of the people at large, and be more fair and impartial than an elected official. The technique was in widespread use in Athenian Democracy and is still used in modern jury selection.

Consensus

Consensus democracy requires varying degrees of consensus rather than just a mere democratic majority. It typically attempts to protect minority rights from domination by majority rule. Supranational Qualified majority voting (QMV) is designed by the Treaty of Rome to be the principal method of reaching decisions in the European Council of Ministers. This system allocates votes to member states in part according to their population, but heavily weighted in favour of the smaller states. This might be seen as a form of representative democracy, but representatives to the Council might be appointed rather than directly elected. Some might consider the "individuals" being democratically represented to be states rather than people, as with many other international organizations. European Parliament members are democratically directly elected on the basis of universal suffrage, may be seen as an example of a supranational democratic institution.

Cosmopolitan

Cosmopolitan democracy, also known as Global democracy or World Federalism is a political system in which democracy is implemented on a global scale, either directly or through representatives. The supporters of cosmopolitan democracy argue that it is fundamentally different from any form of national or regional democracy, because in a Cosmopolitan Democracy, decisions are made by people

influenced by them, while in Regional and National Federal Democracies, decisions often influence people outside the constituency, which by-definition can not vote. In a globalised world, argue the supporters of Cosmopolitan Democracy, any attempt to solve global problems would either be undemocratic or have to implement cosmopolitan democracy. The challenge of cosmopolitan democracy is to apply some of the values and norms of democracy, including the rule of law, the non-violent resolutions of conflicts, and the equality among citizens, also beyond the state. This requires to reform international organizations, first of all the United Nations, and to create new institutions, such as a World Parliament, which could increase the degree of public control and accountability on international politics. Cosmopolitan Democracy was promoted, among others, by physicist Albert Einstein, writer Kurt Vonnegut, columnist George Monbiot, and professors David Held and Daniele Archibugi.

Non-Governmental

Aside from the public sphere, similar democratic principles and mechanisms of voting and representation have been used to govern other kinds of communities and organizations.

➤ Many non-governmental organizations decide policy and leadership by voting.

➤ Most trade unions choose their leadership through democratic elections.

➤ Cooperatives are enterprises owned and democratically controlled by their customers or workers.

Republic

In contemporary usage, the term democracy refers to a government chosen by the people, whether it is direct or representative. The term republic has many different meanings, but today often refers to a representative democracy with an elected head of state, such as a president, serving for a limited term, in contrast to states with a hereditary monarch as a head of state, even if these states also are representative democracies with an elected or appointed head of government such as a prime minister.

The Founding Fathers of the United States rarely praised and often criticized democracy, which in their time tended to specifically mean direct democracy; James Madison argued, especially in The Federalist No. 10, that what distinguished a democracy from a republic was that the former became weaker as it got larger and suffered more violently from the effects of faction, whereas a republiccould get stronger as it got larger and combats faction by its very structure. What was critical to American values, John Adams insisted, was that the government be "bound by fixed laws, which the people have a voice in making, and a right to defend." As Benjamin Franklin was exiting after writing the U.S. constitution, a woman asked him "Well, Doctor, what have we gotóa republic or a monarchy?". He replied "A republic ó if you can keep it."

Constitutional Monarchs and Upper Chambers

Initially after the American and French revolutions the question was open whether a democracy, in order to restrain unchecked majority rule, should have an elitist upper chamber, the members perhaps appointed meritorious experts or having lifetime tenures, or should have a constitutional monarch with limited but real powers. Some countries (as Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Scandinavian countries, Thailand, Japan and Bhutan) turned powerful monarchs into constitutional monarchs with limited or, often gradually, merely symbolic roles. Often the monarchy was abolished along with the aristocratic system (as in France, China, Russia, Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Greece and Egypt). Many nations had elite upper houses of legislatures which often had lifetime tenure, but eventually these lost power (as in Britain) or else became elective and remained powerful (as in the United States).

Facts: In practice it may not pay the incumbents to conduct fair elections in countries that have no history of democracy. A study showed that incumbents who rig elections stay in office 2.5 times as long as those who permit fair elections. Above $2,700 per capita democracies have been found to be less prone to violence, but below that threshold, more violence. The same study shows that election misconduct is more likely in countries with low per capita incomes, small populations, rich in natural resources, and a lack of institutional checks and balances. Sub-Saharan countries, as well as Afghanistan, all tend to fall into that category. Governments that have frequent elections averaged over the political cycle have significantly better economic policies than those who don't. This does not apply to governments with fraudulent elections, however. Democracy in modern times has almost always faced opposition from the existing government. The implementation of a democratic government within a non-democratic state is typically brought about by democratic revolution. Monarchy had traditionally been opposed to democracy, and to this day remains opposed to its abolition, although often political compromise has been reached in the form of shared government. Currently, opposition to democracy exists most notably in communist states, and absolute monarchies which appear to have various reasons for opposing the implementation of democracy or democratic reforms. Economists since Milton Friedman have strongly criticized the efficiency of democracy. They base this on their premise of the irrational voter. Their argument is that voters are highly uninformed about many political issues, especially relating to economics, and have a strong bias about the few issues on which they are fairly knowledgeable.

Political Instability

More recently, democracy is criticised for not offering enough political stability. As governments are frequently elected on and off there tends to be frequent changes in the policies of democratic countries both domestically and internationally. Even if a political party maintains power, vociferous, headline grabbing protests and harsh criticism from the mass media are often enough to force sudden, unexpected political change. Frequent policy changes with regard to business and immigration are likely to deter investment and so hinder economic growth. For this reason, many people have put forward the idea that democracy is undesirable for a developing country in which economic growth and the reduction of poverty are top priority. This

opportunist alliance not only has the handicap of having to cater to too many ideologically opposing factions, but it is usually short lived since any perceived or actual imbalance in the treatment of coalition partners, or changes to leadership in the coalition partners themselves, can very easily result in the coalition partner withdrawing its support from the government.

INDIA: THE WORLD'S LARGEST DEMOCRACY

India is a constitutional republic consisting of 28 states and seven center-controlled union territories with New Delhi as the nation's capital. It is the seventh largest and second most populous country with roughly one sixth of the worldís population, making it the largest world's democratic country. It is one of the world's oldest civilizations with a rich and varied cultural heritage. It has achieved widespread socio-economic progress during the last 62 years of its independence. From self-sufficiency in agricultural production to space exploration, India is competing effectively with other developed nations. The politics of India take place in a framework of a federal parliamentary multiparty representative democratic republic. India is the world's most populous democracy. In India, the Prime Minister of India is identified as the head of government of the nation, while the President of India is said to be the formal head of state and holds substantial reserve powers, placing him or her in approximately the same position as the British monarch. Executive power is enforced by the government. It can be noted that federal legislative power is vested in both the government of India and the two characteristic chambers of the Parliament of India. Also, it can be said that the judiciary is independent of both the executive and the legislature. Looking at the constitution, India is a nation that is characterized to be "sovereign socialist secular democratic republic." India is the largest state by population with a democratically-elected government. India has a federal form of government, however, the central government in India has greater power in relation to its states, and its central government is patterned after the British parliamentary system. Regarding the former, "the Centre", the national government, can and has dismissed state governments if no majority party or coalition is able to form a government or under specific Constitutional clauses, and can impose direct federal rule known as President's rule. Locally, the Panchayati Raj system has several administrative functions.

For most of the years since independence, the federal government has been guided by the Indian National Congress (INC), In India the two largest political parties have been the Indian National Congress (INC) and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Presently the two parties have dominated the Indian politics, however, regional parties also exist. From 1950 to 1990, barring two brief periods, the INC enjoyed a parliamentary majority. The INC was out of power between 1977 and 1980, when the Janata Party won the election owing to public discontent with the allegations of corruption of the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. In 1989, a Janata Dal-led National Front coalition in alliance with the Left Front coalition won the elections but managed to stay in power for only two years. As the 1991 elections gave no political party a majority, the INC formed a minority government under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and was able to complete its five-year term. The years 1996-1998

were a period of turmoil in the federal government with several short-lived alliances holding sway. The BJP formed a government briefly in 1996, followed by the United Front coalition that excluded both the BJP and the INC. In 1998, the BJP formed the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with several other parties and became the first non-Congress government to complete a full five-year term. In the 2004 Indian elections, the INC won the largest number of Lok Sabha seats and formed a government with a coalition called the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), supported by various parties. In the 2009 Lok Sabha Elections, it won again with a surprising majority, the INC itself winning more than 200 seats. At the federal level, India is the most populous democracy in the world. While many neighboring countries witness frequent coups, Indian democracy has been suspended only once. Nevertheless, Indian politics is often described as chaotic. More than a fifth of parliament members face criminal charges.

Central and State Governments

The central government exercises its broad administrative powers in the name of the President, whose duties are largely ceremonial. The president and vice president are elected indirectly for 5-year terms by a special electoral college. The vice president assumes the office of president in case of the death or resignation of the incumbent president. The constitution designates the governance of India under two branches, namely: the executive branch and the legislative branch. Real national executive power is centered in the Council of Ministers, led by the Prime Minister of India. The President appoints the Prime Minister, who is designated by legislators of the political party or coalition commanding a parliamentary majority. The President then appoints subordinate ministers on the advice of the Prime Minister. In reality, the President has no discretion on the question of whom to appoint as Prime Minister except when no political party or coalition of parties gains a majority in the Lok Sabha. Once the Prime Minister has been appointed, the President has no discretion on any other matter whatsoever, including the appointment of ministers. But all Central Government decisions are nominally taken in his/her name.

Legislative branch

The constitution designates the Parliament of India as the legislative branch to oversee the operation of the government. India's bicameral parliament consists of the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) and the Lok Sabha (House of the People). The Council of Ministers is held responsible to the Lok Sabha.

State Government

States in India have their own elected governments, whereas Union Territories are governed by an administrator appointed by the president. Some of the state legislatures are bicameral, patterned after the two houses of the national parliament. The states' chief ministers are responsible to the legislatures in the same way the prime minister is responsible to parliament. Each state also has a presidentially appointed governor who may assume certain broad powers when directed by the central government. The central government exerts greater control over the union territories than over the States, although some territories have gained

more power to administer their own affairs. Local state governments in India have less autonomy compared to their counterparts in the United States, Africa and Australia.

Judicial branch

India's independent judicial system began under the British, and its concepts and procedures resemble those of Anglo-Saxon countries. The constitution designates the Supreme Court, the High Courts and the lower courts as the authority to resolve disputes among the people as well as the disputes related to the people and the government. The constitution through its articles relating to the judicial system provides a way to question the laws of the government, if the common man finds the laws as unsuitable for any community in India.

Local Governance

On April 24, 1993, the Constitutional (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 came into force to provide constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj institutions. This Act was extended to Panchayats in the tribal areas of eight States, namely Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan from 24 December 1996. The Act aims to provide 3-tier system of Panchayati Raj for all States having population of over 2 million, to hold Panchayat elections regularly every 5 years, to provide reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Women, to appoint State Finance Commission to make recommendations as regards the financial powers of the Panchayats and to constitute District Planning Committee to prepare draft development plan for the district.

Role of Political Parties

As any other democracy, political parties represent different sections among the Indian society and regions, and their core values play a major role in the politics of India. Both the executive branch and the legislative branch of the government are run by the representatives of the political parties who have been elected through the elections. Through the electoral process, the people of India choose which majority in the lower house, a government can be formed by that party or the coalition. India has a multiparty system, where there are a number of national as well as regional parties. A regional party may gain a majority and rule a particular state. If a party represents more than 4 states then such parties are considered as national parties. In the 61 years since India's independence, India has been ruled by the Indian National Congress (INC) for 48 of those years.

The party enjoyed a parliamentary majority barring two brief periods during the 1970s and late 1980s. This rule was interrupted between 1977 to 1980, when the Janata Party coalition won the election owing to public discontent with the controversial state of emergency declared by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The Janata Dal won elections in 1989, but its government managed to hold on to power for only two years. Between 1996 and 1998, there was a period of political flux with the government being formed first by the right-wing nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) followed by a left-leaning United Front coalition. In 1998, the BJP

formed the National Democratic Alliance with smaller regional parties, and became the first non-INC and coalition government to complete a full fiveyear term. The 2004 Indian elections saw the INC winning the largest number of seats to form a government leading the United Progressive Alliance, and supported by left-parties and those opposed to the BJP. On 22 May 2004, Manmohan Singh was appointed the Prime Minister of India following the victory of the INC & the left front in the 2004 Lok Sabha election. The UPA now rules India without the support of the left front. Previously, Atal Bihari Vajpayee had taken office in October 1999 after a general election in which a BJP-led coalition of 13 parties called the National Democratic Alliance emerged with a majority. Formation of coalition governments reflects the transition in Indian politics away from the national parties toward smaller, more narrowly-based regional parties. Some regional parties, especially in South India, are deeply aligned to the ideologies of the region unlike the national parties and thus the relationship between the central government and the state government in various states has not always been free of rancor. Disparity between the ideologies of the political parties ruling the centre and the state leads to severely skewed allocation of resources between the states.

Social Issues

The lack of homogeneity in the Indian population causes division between different sections of the people based on religion, region, language, caste and race. This has led to the rise of political parties with agendas catering to one or a mix of these groups. Some parties openly profess their focus on a particular group, for example, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam's focus on the dravid population, and the Shiv Sena's pro-Marathi agenda. Some other parties claim to be universal in nature, but tend to draw support from particular sections of the population, for example, the Rashtriya Janata Dal has a vote bank among the Yadav and Muslim population of Bihar and the All India Trinamool Congress does not have any significant support outside West Bengal. The Bharatiya Janata Party, the party with the second largest number of MPs in the 15th Lok Sabha, has an image of being pro-Hindu, and anti-Muslim and anti-Christian. Such support from particular sections of the population affects the agenda and policies of such parties, and refute their claims of being universal representatives. The Congress may be viewed as the most secular party with a national agenda, however it also practices votebank politics to gain the support of minorities, especially Muslims, through appeasement and pseudo-secularist strategies. The narrow focus and votebank politics of most parties, even in the central government and central legislature, sidelines national issues such as economic welfare and national security. Moreover, internal security is also threatened as incidences of political parties instigating and leading violence between two opposing groups of people is a frequent occurrence.

Constitution

The government of India is framed according to the Constitution. The architects of Indiaís constitution, though drawing on many external sources, were most heavily influenced by the British model of parliamentary democracy. In addition, a number of principles were adopted from the United States Constitution,

including the separation of powers among the major branches of government, the establishment of a supreme court, and albeit in modified form, of a federal structure (a constitutional division of power between the union [central] and state governments). The mechanical details for running the central government, however, were largely carried over from the Government of India Act of 1935, passed by the British Parliament, which served as India's governing document in the waning days of British colonial rule. The new constitution took effect on January 26, 1950 and proclaimed India ìa sovereign socialist secular democratic republic With 444 articles, 12 (later 12) schedules (each clarifying and expanding upon a number of articles), and 97 amendments, it is one of the world's longest and most detailed constitutions. The constitution includes a detailed list of ìfundamental rights, a lengthy list of ìdirective principles of state policy (goals that the state is obligated to promote, though with no specified timetable for their accomplishment), and a much shorter list of ìfundamental dutiesî of the citizen. The constitution of India draws extensively from Western legal traditions in its outline of the principles of liberal democracy. Unlike many Western constitutions, its principles aspire to end the inequities of traditional social relations and enhance social welfare. The constitution has fostered an increasing concentration of power in the central governmentóespecially the Office of the Prime Minister. This centralization has occurred in the face of the increasing assertiveness of an array of ethnic and caste groups across Indian society. The government has responded to the resulting tensions by exerting authoritarian, albeit constitutional powers. Together with the public's perception of pervasive corruption among India's politicians, the state's centralization of authority and increasing resort to coercive power have eroded its legitimacy.

Law Commission

After independence, the Constitution's Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy gave a new direction to law reform geared to the needs of a democratic legal order in a plural society. Though the Constitution stipulated the continuation of existing Laws pending amendment or repeal, there had been demands in Parliament and outside for establishing a Central Law Commission to recommend updating of the inherited laws to serve the new country. The Government established the First Law Commission of Independent India in 1955. The Ministry of Law reviews the Commission's reports, consulting with the concerned administrative Ministries, submitting them to the Parliament from time to time. They are cited in Courts, in academic and public discourses and are acted upon by concerned Government Departments depending on the Government's recommendations. The Commission's regular staff consists mostly of research personnel. Priorities are set, topics are identified and preparatory work is assigned to Commission members.

Media

Indian media portray the Indian people and enjoy a monopoly on the people's trust. Print media originated in 1780. The screening of Auguste and Louis LumiËre's films in Bombay in during July, 1895 marked the beginnings of among the oldest and largest film media of the world. Radio broadcasting initiated in 1927. Indian private media has been free and independent throughout most of its history. During the Period

of Emergency (1975-1977), declared by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the media faced potential government control. India consumed 99 million newspaper copies as of 2007ómaking it the second largest market in the world for newspapers. By 2008, India had a total of 60,000,000 Internet usersócomprising 6.0% of the country's population. 4,010,000 people in India had access to broadband as of 2008, ranking it the 18th largest in the world. In 1997, India ranked 8th worldwide in the number of television broadcast stations.

Factors Affecting Democracy

The success of democracy in India defies many prevailing theories that stipulate preconditions. Indian democracy is best understood by focusing on how power is distributed.

Religion: Religion is a major cultural influence and also plays an important role in politics. Political party support greatly depends upon religion. The main religions are Hinduism and Islam and many political parties are identified by the religion of their supporters. Many national religious issues are the key points of the success in elections.

Caste: The caste system crosses religious boundaries to infect both Hindu and Islamic peoples. Hindus have four main castes and hundreds of sub-castes. Many political parties draw supporters from specific castes or sub-castes.

Population: India is the second most populous country of the world after China. The one billion-plus population has challenged the country's ability to provide jobs, health care, and education. Slowing population growth has been a major issue for the government.Its not an issue for the government because they think that the votes being produced.

Development: India is still an emerging country, making the pace and shape of development a major concern. India began as an explicitly socialist nation and continues with a large public sector and many constraints on private enterprise, although recent governments have reduced some of these restrictions. Their reward has been faster economic growth, particularly through the growth of tradeoriented industry. Some recent governments got removed because economic growth was too low.

Regions: India is very densely populated. Some advocate splitting some twenty eight states and seven union territories.it is completely correct.

Other factors: Factors such as education, corruption, women's issues, student politics, criminalization of politics, leadership strategies and the design of political institutions affect national and local politics.

DEMOCRACY AND VIOLENCE

As a rule, dictatorships guarantee safe streets and the terror of the doorbell. In democracy the streets may be unsafe after dark, but the most likely visitor in the early hours will be the milkman.

Violence is the greatest enemy of democracy as we know it. Violence is anathema to its spirit and substance. This follows, almost by definition, because democracy, considered as a set of institutions and as a way of life, is a nonviolent means of equally apportioning and publicly monitoring power within and among overlapping communities of people who live according to a wide variety of morals. Under democratic conditions the means of decision-making are neither owned nor wielded privately. While its institutional forms are highly variable, democracy as we know it today minimally requires public respect for others who are equal but different, and such respect extends to their entitlement to organise themselves into opposition to the powers that be. Democracy requires citizens to stay alert, to open their eyes and their mouths - to understand that societies of sheep typically beget governments of wolves. It facilitates criticism of power. In principle, democracy enables everybody to act at a distance from its power centres by means of a functioning civil society that is independent of publicly accountable governmental institutions; together, elected, responsible government and the dispersal of power within civil society provide organised protection from the fear or fact of injury or loss of life.

India follows a parliamentary type of government. The subject matter of the election is contained in the Indian Constitution as well as the Representation of Peopleís Act. The democratic government takes a lenient view of the popular risings because it fears losing the support of the people. Leniency on the part of the government encourages anti-social elements which make the life of common man miserable. Consequently, there is dissatisfaction and frustration among the peace loving people of the country. Today, violence is the only method to dissolve differences and to talk of non-violence is to keep oneself completely divorced from the realities of life. Politicians are exploiting religion, caste and other differences. Religion and politics are so mixed that politics has religious overtones. Political differences, when they get the support of the religion, harden into fanaticism. It is this fanaticism that has made Akali agitation in Punjab violent, that has turned Babri Masjid issue in to a conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India. No religion teaches impatience with any other religious ideology. If religion is pursued in its true spirit, it can bring people closer. It can finish worldly considerations but unfortunately, religion is used for worldly gains. In fact, democracy demands a self-imposed discipline. The most vulnerable section of the society, from the point of view of discipline, is the students. Revolutionary and new fledged ideas have a great appeal for them. They cannot stand the charm of persuasion. The voters must realise their responsibilities and should not fail in performing their duties. No nation without discipline can work for progress. The law and order situation in India is not a very happy state-ofaffair.

There has been communal trouble which many a times is the result of deliberate effort to disturb peace. If militancy has come to an end in some of the states, it has become more powerful in other states. Consequently, innocent lives are lost, property is destroyed and ill-will generated. This type of situation within the country does not allow political stability and economic betterment.

CHALLENGES FOR A MINIMUM SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

While the discussion on social democracy in western countries often puts the emphasis on its high costs and issues of incentives for work and enterprise, in India high inequality, massive poverty and a vast informal sector make the challenge of implementing social democracy extremely daunting as much as it is highly imperative. More than six decades after the establishment of the Indian Republic (which is constitutionally declared as 'socialist'), even the barest minimum social protection remains unavailable for its masses of people. Even in western social democracies the large social protection programmes for workers are suffering from stresses and strains, particularly from the point of view of fiscal stringency, anxieties of global competitiveness and shifts in political attitudes towards immigrant recipients of benefits.

In India where inequality and mass poverty are large, there are doubts about the fiscal feasibility of even the barest minimum programmes and about the large-scale wastes and thefts such programmes often involve. In addition the vast informal sector (larger than in most major developing countries: even outside agriculture more than 80% of Indian workers work informally) implies special difficulties and costs of administering such programmes.

Rights-Based Approach

In the Indian discussion there have been different approaches to the question of how to tackle social protection. A very popular approach these days is to couch it in terms of 'rights' (to food, education, information, jobs, etc), and there is a great deal of commendable activism on this front, and already some achievements to show, particularly in the landmark legislations on the right to information and to work on public works projects (though their implementation in many states are as yet rather slow and feeble, and facing a great deal of resistance from bureaucrats, contractors, etc). This approach can, at the minimum, serve to raise consciousness among the poor and vulnerable about their entitlements, a sense that they are not mere supplicants to the politicians or bureaucrats, that if the latter fail there is access to courts to enforce these rights, and public interest litigation and court injunctions on these matters have attracted a great deal of attention.

But at the same time one should recognise some limits to this rights-based approach. If the delivery structure for implementing some of these rights remains as weak and corrupt as it is now, mere promulgation of rights will remain hollow and will, after a point, generate a great deal of cynicism. The Indian public arena is already littered with hundreds of unenforced or spasmodically enforced court injunctions, and there is some danger of the proliferating judicial activism in stretching the

interpretation of the constitutional 'right to life' ending up, for all its good intentions, in undermining the credibility and legitimacy of the judiciary itself. For example, if the right to food is exerted with no consideration of the efficiency and costeffectiveness of the ways of implementing it (like the current public distribution system (PDS) which in many states is an enormous project of theft and wastage – a rough estimate is that less than a quarter of the subsidised foodgrains reaches the poor), it is an unwarranted and unfair burden on taxpayers who fund the galloping costs. In any case the programme as currently administered is weakest in the poorest regions that need it most. Food stamps that have been advocated from time to time will reduce some of the wastage and theft in the storage and distribution by public agencies, but will not eliminate the problems of (a) fraud rampant in non-universal means-tested targeting like that to below-poverty-line (BPL) people, and (b) the development of secondary markets where merchants buy up the stamps in exchange of some (smaller) cash– in which case you might as well directly give people cash rather than stamps. The recent Right to Education Act does very little for the poor quality – and quantity – of education services actually provided in government schools (that drive children to private schools even though teachers there are by and large less qualified and less well-paid) or about the negligence with which the new poor students foisted on the private schools are likely to be treated without a proper qua lity evaluation of schools in place, or the remedial education that the poor-performing children (at private or government schools) and the school dropouts desperately need.

The current National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), the largest of its kind anywhere in the world, for all its fl aws (which would have been far less if a regular and institutionalised system of independent social audits were in place – only Andhra Pradesh government has institutionalised them), provides a possible fallback option for many able bodied rural adults for working on mostly construction projects for a period of 100 days every year (though this limit of 100 days and timely payment of wages have so far been reached only in very few areas). This may have already exerted some positive indirect effects on the rural wage earned by the poorest people.

Job vs Economic Security

This is, of course, quite different from the right to a job often demanded by organised workers in the formal sector. The right to a job, if narrowly interpreted as the security on a given job, can considerably distort the labour market, if it freezes the ability of the employer (public or private) to adjust to changing conditions in technology or market, thus hurting the whole economy, and the job prospects of less privileged workers. It is very important to distinguish between economic security and job security. A worker should have the right to expect from society general economic security, but not security on a given job. My own empirical judgment, however, is that stringent labour laws that are aimed at ensuring job security in large industrial firms may not be the most important constraint on Indian industrial growth; other constraints like infrastructure, credit and marketing may be more important in many cases, but that they constitute a constraint cannot be denied. There is ultimately no

alternative to a package deal between employers and organised workers: allowing more flexibility in hiring and firing has to be combined with a reasonable scheme of unemployment compensation or adjustment assistance, from a earmarked fund to which employers and employees should both contribute. No Indian politician has yet gathered the courage or imagination to come up with such a package deal. The distinction between economic security and security of a particular job (usually in the formal sector) also brings to the foreground a particular conflict among workers which organised trade unions would rather ignore. It is wellknown that social democracy in western Europe came out of a historic compromise between capital and labour (the latter gets socially protected and a reasonable share of the economic pie, and in return gives up its democratic power of expropriating the former, so that it can carry on its innovations that expand the pie). In India where the informal sector is massive, social democracy may require an additional implicit compromise in the labour market, between formal and informal workers – since in many ways their interests may be in conflict (one example is that stringent job protection of formal workers may be at the expense of the potential expansion of job possibilities for informal workers; another example is that the general strikes and bandhs frequently called by formal sector unions as part of their organizational muscle-flexing paralyse city life and rob the daily informal workers and street vendors of their subsistence). Besides, the strongest organised workers are those in the public sector services, and it is their corrupt and callous service non-delivery which the poor informal workers as potential recipients have to face every day. In general, one should not look at the social protection rights in abstraction from costs (direct and indirect), delivery mechanisms or even their political consti tuency. Well-designed, welladministered, cost effective programmes of implementing some basic rights generate more political support even among those who are paying for them. One should, of course, mention here that one positive implication of the rights approach is that of universal prin - ciples and standards, which in some cases may help better administration. For example, it has been pointed out that the PDS for food generates less malfeasance when it is universal (as in Tamil Nadu and Chhattisgarh); as we have indicated before, when some people are excluded under a targeted system of delivery, it leads to dual markets and more incentives and opportunities for fraud, apart from eroding its larger political support base.

Universal Basic Income

On the universalistic principle of social protection, one of the cleanest and least incentive-disruptive ideas, both ethically and economically compelling, is that of Universal Basic Income (UBI), under which everybody, rich or poor, gets an unconditional annual (or periodic) income supplement. This is an old idea, originally inspired by some European 'utopian socialists' in the 19th century, tried unsuccessfully in McGovern's 1968 presidential campaign in the US in the form of a proposed 'demogrant', currently supported by some Green Parties in Europe, and actually implemented in non-socialist resource-rich Alaska since 1999 (in the form of an annual Permanent Fund Dividend). In the west the discussion in opposition to the idea usually centres around the encouragement this may give to idleness and dependency and the 'unfairness' of a handout to the rich as well. But we need to worry less about

idleness in a country where the overwhelming majority of the people are extremely poor and overworked. Giving to the rich as well may be found administratively tolerable by many who know the formidable problems of monitoring and corruption in India in trying to target it only to the poor. The main question is: if we want it to be universal, can we afford it Of course the answer depends on the amount to be given out, if it will be a replacement for the existing transfer programmes which have a lot of wastage and misappropriation, how the problem of misappropriation of the basic income supplement will be handled, etc. Suppose in a country of 1.2 billion people we want to give out every year Rs 5,000 to each family (assumed to have five members). This amounts to Rs 1,20,000 crore (not counting administrative costs, which need not be large, with electronic help). Let us assume, for the time being, that with the forthcoming installation of the electronic Unique Identification (UID) system the administrative costs of this unconditional transfer programme will be minimal. Let us now compare this sum of Rs 1,20,000 crore with some benchmark figures. The total estimates of how much is currently spent by the government on all the anti-poverty programmes together easily exceed this amount. What is even more important is that this amount is much less than the total subsidies the government gives out to the relatively rich every year. We do not have iron-clad estimates of the latter. The National Institute of Public Finance and Policy has from time to time estimated the total amount of subsidies (implicit as well as explicit) given out by the central and the state governments. This comes to about 14% of GDP every year. These subsidies are classified into 'merit' and 'non-merit' subsidies.

Without going into the intricacies of the definitions, let us say, very roughly, that the non-merit subsidies mostly go to the relatively rich. Of the 14% of GDP in total subsidies, roughly two-thirds have been estimated to be non- merit subsidies: that comes to about 9% of GDP. Let us make a conservative estimate and bring this figure down to 6% of GDP as going to the relatively rich. In 2009-10 the annual GDP of India was about Rs 4,5,00,000 crore (at 2004-05 prices); 6% of this comes to Rs 2,70,000 crore. So what the government pays out as subsidies every year to the relatively rich is more than double the amount it will need to pay out a basic income supplement of Rs 5,000 to each family, rich or poor. In other words, if one can somehow halve the existing subsidies to the relatively rich, that will be more than enough to cover the basic income supplement for everybody. And if this replaces some of the existing dysfunctional programmes (like PDS) or not very effective cash transfer programmes (like the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana or the Indira Awas Yojana), the income supplement can be even larger (or the reduction in the sub sidies to the rich may be smaller). All this is based on a very rough and ready calculation and one should not take the estimates too seriously, but it gives us some sense of proportion. But are the possibilities of misappropriation that afflict most social protection programmes in India seriously lower with the basic income supplement idea fortified with UID If the money is electronically deposited in an account (at a nearby post office or bank) from which withdrawals require biometric identification, and no meanstesting or rich-poor classification is necessary, many of the current problems of fraud and corruption and manipulation of BPL category are likely to diminish considerably. Yet one cannot rule out possibilities of clerks who

would issue the withdrawn money demanding bribes, or local musclemen regularly extorting some of the cash from the defenceless recipient (like thieves in many countries taking their victims to the ATM machines and forcing withdrawals). Of course, when PDS gives a poor man subsidised food that can also be robbed and sold in the market, but the lure of direct cash may be stronger for the criminals. Similarly, chances of alcoholics and drug addict recipients blowing the cash are a problem that worries many critics of such programmes. In some sense the NREGS is one such programme, of cash conditional on work, with self-targeting saving some administrative costs and leakage as the nonpoor will not usually want to work on such manual, often back-breaking, construction works. UID may reduce a great deal of current leakage in the form of false muster rolls of workers. In the delivery of social services, nothing on the scale of Oportunidades in Mexico or Bolsa Familia in Brazil has yet been attempted in India.

Most of the conditional cash transfer programmes for these services in India have been relatively small and aimed at ensuring the survival of girl children (and their mothers at the time of birth), and their continued education in schools and in raising their age at marriage. We do not yet have enough rigorous evaluation of these programmes. It will require some time for the supplies (private as well as public) of these services to be induced by increased demand and a great deal of regulations to ensure minimum quality. Of course, on the supplyside, our bureaucracy is often not mindful of (or interested in) the fact that the government may be the financier but need not be the actual supplier and can work out all kinds of innovative solutions. For example, it can finance the education services but outsource some of them (as in the case of charter schools in the US); just as in the case of PDS, the Food Corporation of India can outsource its warehousing to private companies, instead of letting its procured grains rot outside (about one quarter of the total in late 2010 and early 2011) for lack of public warehousing space. The main bottleneck in the delivery of social services in India is, of course, in the governance mechanism and the incentive systems in operation. There are very few performance incentives in the reward structure for officials. Promotion is largely seniority-based. Frequent transfers, sometimes arbitrarily determined by the political bosses, discourage the development of any stake in any particular locality of service. Bad performance is very seldom punished; in any case the measurement of performance is 'noisy' particularly when the quality of service is necessarily multidimensional. This promotes a rampant culture of impunity. The schoolteachers and doctors and nurses, for example, are not punished for the dereliction of their duties, their salaries and promotions are decided from above, not by the local people who bear the brunt. This obviously suggests the need for decentralisation and accountability downwards. In fact there is some evidence that in some cases (e g, in Nagaland) where even a very small fraction of the teachers' salary was paid by the local panchayat, it immediately led to a significant improvement in services. But in most parts of India, while local elections are now regularly held, effective decentralisation is missing, on account of a severe dearth of devolved funds or delegated power or appropriate professional personnel. Local elections are usually fought on supra-local issues, and more often than not the state level politicians and bureaucrats hijack the process of mandated devolution. Such

hijacking is made easier by the lack of inner-party democracy in almost all political parties, so that local political leaders are at the mercy of the highertier leadership. It has not been widely recognised in India how the lack of inner-party democracy, apart from making political parties structurally undemocratic, has the sideeffect of corroding the vitals of local democracy in India.

Health Services

The other incentive and structural problems in governance in social services may be illustrated from the health sector (qualitatively some similar issues arise also in education or nutrition programmes). At the moment healthcare in India is primarily private (and largely unregulated). Household survey data suggest that 85% of all visits for healthcare in rural areas, even by the poorest people, are to private practitioners. While the poor quality of service in public clinics and hospitals (and absenteeism by nurses and doctors) often drive patients to private doctors (some of them quacks or crooks), in some cases even when the public services are available, the patients prefer going to private medical practitioners who more readily oblige them with unnecessary anti biotics and steroids.

The public health delivery system is afflicted by poor provider incentives, coupled with low accountability to the patients. The medical personnel are paid a fixed salary independent of the number of patients or of their visits, so they have no economic incentive to serve them in the public clinic (they have all the incentive to ask patients to come to their private chambers for paid service and send them for unnecessary diagnostic tests at labs in which they have a monetary interest). The poor have very little organized 'voice' in sanctioning the errant provider. They are assertive in elections, but even a local election is a blunt instrument of sanction for any particular service: electoral platforms are multidimensional where specific grievances about any particular public service provider get diluted, often by larger statewide issues. In addition, compared to curative medical services, the Indian system is particularly deficient in systematic planning and delivery of preventive public health services or sustained programmes of large-scale disease control. One of the cost-viability problems for any public health insurance service for the poor in India (like the as yet fledgling programme – Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana – that is supposed to cover up to Rs 30,000 for only hospitalisation-related expenses for BPL families) is that the poor in most cases go for hospitalization with illnesses (like diarrhoea or typhoid or malaria) which could be prevented by basic public health programmes like provision of clean drinking water, sanitation, spraying, etc. Thus the defi ciencies of public health administration in India in carrying out its primary duties make healthcare insurance so costly. Outside of government or private provision of health services there can be other alternatives. Several NGOs in India, as part of their development programmes, have initiated community health insurance schemes for poor people, often linking up with an insurer (with a larger risk pool) and purchasing healthcare from an external provider. Self-Employed Women's Association in Gujarat is an important example of organizing community health insurance for its members and their families in this way. This and other similar models need to be studied and replicated in a much larger scale in worker associations and cooperatives in India,

particularly in the informal sector. In the history of German social welfare programmes worker associations played a leading role. In India where the informal sector is much larger, small-scale associations need to be mobilised for social insurance, the NGOs can play a mediating role with insurers and help processing payments of premium (apart from identifying beneficiaries and giving them the requisite information), and the government can introduce some provider accreditation systems to help the choice of providers.

In conclusion, while the discussion on social democracy in western countries often puts the emphasis on its high costs (particularly in view of the austerities necessitated by intense global competition) and issues of incentives for work and enterprise, in India high inequality, massive poverty and a vast informal sector make the challenge of implementing social democracy extremely daunting as much as it is highly imperative. The particular governance issues in India, with inept, corrupt and unmotivated public officials in charge of the delivery system, make the mobilization of social groups and community organisations and various participatory processes all the more important. But there is a more fundamental issue here that involves the interaction of the productive system and the political culture. As we have mentioned before, European social democracy is the outcome of a class compromise and a social pact: the workers who are electorally powerful enough to expropriate the capitalists and end the capitalist system have chosen not to do so, they have fi gured out that capitalism is the only viable way left for adequately expanding the pie, so they are prepared to bear some cost ('exploitation') and let the capitalists have a reasonable share of that pie which induces the latter to keep at their efforts at bringing about dynamic innovations. After the demise of the short-lived Swatantra Party, India has not had a full-scale pro-business conservative party; even the right wing parties are largely populist on many economic issues when they go to the electorate. In spite of the great flowering of entrepreneurial energies in recent years throughout the country, there is a strong anti-capitalist (particularly anti big- capital) streak in Indian political culture. This is not surprising in a country where small people (small and middle peasants, self-employed artisans and shopkeepers, bazaar merchants and petty middlemen, clerks, schoolteachers and service workers) constitute an overwhelming majority of the population, and their ranks are swelled by the inexorable demographic pressure and by the traditional inheritance practices involving subdivision of property. There is a deep suspicion of market competition whereby the larger economic interests, often utilising their advantages of economies of scale, deeper pockets and better political connections, can devour the small. Gandhi had given sensitive and eloquent expression to this anti-market, anti-big-capital, small- is-beautiful populism and mobilised it in the freedom movement against the British. In recent decades those bearing the legacy of the Gandhian moral critique of market expansion and competition have joined forces with those espousing the left critique of capitalist exploitation of workers, peasants, and other small people and their rights over natural resources, in building active grass roots movements in parts of the country for the protection of the environment and of the traditional livelihood of the indigenous people, against the depredations of the capitalist oligarchy. Even though the private corporate sector is thriving in India and in some sense its 'hegemony' looks

more pervasive today than before, it is involved in the work life of too few people (as it directly employs not more than 2% of the Indian work force), and it is not clear that the electorate is still ready to accept the class compromise like the one behind the social democracy enterprise in the west. On the other hand, the populist opposition, for all their strength in numbers, have not yet succeeded in pointing to any viable, incentive-compatible (i e, not entirely dependent on revolutionary or moral zeal for sustenance), systemic economic alternative, outside the esoteric confines of their wishful thinking or utopian anarcho-communitarianism. The passionate intensity of their negative critique of capitalism is not matched by a convincing demonstration of a sustained positive alternative system on a scale large enough to generate the necessary surplus. Until this tension is resolved, the social democracy project in India will remain somewhat tentative. Under the circumstances the great danger for the social-democratic striving is that it may dissipate itself in various costly and in the long run harmful populist schemes, utilised by the political process for narrow patronage distribution goals.

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