



Critical Analysis of Growth of Democracy in West

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Abstract:

Democracy in the simplest words, of Abraham Lincoln, is the government of the people, by the people and for the people. It is a rule by will of the majority of the citizens. To arrive at a proper concept of democracy, the rise and growth of this political concept in both the West and the East, has been discussed. Its gradual development in the West from the time of Homer to the present concept of liberal democracy has been traced. In West, the concept of democracy found opposition in writings of Plato and Aristotle. The concept of mixed democracy that is a combination of aristocracy and democracy emerged with support of philosophers like Aristotle, Polybius and others. With time came Hobbes, Rousseau and Locke's social contract theory which advocated for the consent of the people to be important in any form of rule. This laid the foundation of modern democratic states. In the eighteenth century with American and French revolutions democracy got a written form and by twentieth century the notion of democracy in West got fully evolved.

Keywords: *Critical analysis, Democracy, Growth*

Democracy is an ever developing term. Democracy has been rightly described by Education policies Commission of National Educational Association as, "... a great social faith which, in response to the yearnings and struggles of many races and people has been developing through the centuries."¹

Some important definitions by thinkers of democracy are being given as under:

- a) According to Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), "... democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people."²
- b) John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), describes it as a form of government in which, "...the whole people or some numerous portion of them, exercise the governing power through deputies periodically elected by themselves."³

Democracy comes out to be a complex term and the only way to come out of this complexity owing to its diversity is to analyze each of the meanings attached to it and to trace its development and growth according to time, situation and mental progressive innovations for human betterment.

From the anthropological studies we came to know that democracy existed in the most primitive society that is in early parts of human civilization, when people had just started to live in groups. Though there was very immature form of it yet it could manage to address people for their unity and common progressive claims. Let us briefly examine the notion of the growth of democracy in the West.

Democracy in the ancient times in the Western soil was not so mature and effective form of government or public, political or social groups. In the West, there has been a gradual

development of democracy from the time of Homer to its present form referred to as '*Liberal Democracy*'. In Homer's time, a king needed the support of general body of freemen to make any important decision. Also, in Athens in age of Pericles a form of pure democracy prevailed where assemblies called Ecclesia played an important role in administration.¹¹ In Rome, democracy came into existence after the downfall of the kings and after a struggle between Patrician and Plebian in which power came in the hands of Patrician. The constitution being democratic in nature gave equal rights to the Plebs to participate in the working of government. With the fall of Roman democracy, democracy in ancient times came to an end.

Many great philosophers contributed in the rise and growth of democracy in ancient Greek city-states. Though at that time, the appearance of democracy was by no means considered as an ideal rule. Aristotle (384 B.C-322 B.C) believed that democracy should be 'the rule of many' that is it should not be the rule of mediocre fulfilling their vested interests but should be equally the rule of poor. He agreed with his teacher's (Plato) conception of democracy that it failed to judge and select people or leaders on merits or sound education and mental level. Aristotle observed that all the forms of democracy of his time were perverted with none stable and ideal. He pointed out the merits and demerits of democracy and approved of a *Mixed Constitution* which is a combination of aristocracy and democracy.

In eighteen century democracy forcefully emerged with the writings of Baron De Montesquieu, François-Marie Arouet Voltaire (1694-1778) and Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778)⁴. With Machiavelli's '*Discourses*' and Montesquieu's '*Spirit of the laws*' came the dawn of modern political thought. They took democracy to be pure form of government that could be safely incorporated into state craft only as one component of a mixed republican constitution. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and John Locke (1632-1704) were the early exponents of 'Social Contract Theory' which sort to base political legitimacy on the consent of the people. They challenged monarchy and traditional dictatorship and believed that kings had no divine rights and that the state is a creation of man met to serve their betterment. This theory advocated for placing the power of governmental authority in the hands of common man for the protection of natural liberty and rights of people. This theory forms the foundation of latter democratic government.

Jean Jacques Rousseau was one of the chief exponents of social contract theory. His theory is based on his concept of '*General Will*'. He makes a distinction between will of individual that is the *particular will* and will of community that is the *general will*. When particular will is inclined towards general will it is termed as '*real will*' and when it goes against it is called as '*actual will*'. Therefore, 'actual will' reflects one's 'self interest' while real will involves 'self discipline' invoking nobler supreme thoughts that is thinking about well-being of all rather than for an individual or oneself. This implies that actual will represents lower self while 'real will' represents higher self. Individuals having real will, will cooperate in the betterment of common good and in this way, his own interest would also be served. The functioning of government in such a case would be smooth, fruitful and easy.

The ideals of democracy soon spread rapidly in the West Europe with the extension of franchise, growth of political consciousness among labor class and finally with the European war. Earlier only male citizens had the right to vote. Female franchise was introduced latter for example in U.S. in 1919 and in Britain 1928 and so on.⁵ Thus, democracy in the Western world came to be fully established only in the 20th century and people started participating in it and also initiated means and trends to know and make proper lawful use of it. They learnt that though it has various deficiencies in it, yet it can help people to form government of their choice with the help of their franchise to work for their betterment in various aspects of existence.

The upshot of the above discussion on democracy is that while tracing the growth of democracy from ancient to modern times change is perceived in its idea, form and concept. The ancient democracy was immature and smaller in size and people directly participated in the state affairs that is '*Direct democracy*' existed. In modern democracy political rights are universalized but owing to largeness of states direct democracy is not possible. So a system of democracy called '*Indirect or representative democracy*' evolved. This is a form of governance in which people through their representative who are chosen for a definite period of time form a government and people have choice to replace it after the expire of the stipulated period.

Conclusion

Democracy as a form of government in the west includes the nature of its franchise, the character of electoral system and further the relation between the government and the people, existing in a nation. As a form of government it needs a sense of public responsibility, a vigilant and truly interested public for its true success. Education helps to make sound public opinion and makes people reasonable. It is interpreted in terms of a kind of faith, on humanistic and philanthropic aspects. In a society, there does not exist the sameness of opinion, but differences in status, class and religion do exist. Owing to these basic differences present in a society, democracy stresses upon the values of forbearance, mutual respect, tolerance and equality to be inculcated and imbibed in the people living together and exercising ethical principles which are essential for true triumph of democracy

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