

**Introduction to Political Theory**  
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**Lecture – 24**

**Democracy - I: Challenges & limits of Democracy; Free Press & Democracy**

Hello and welcome friends, to this third and concluding lecture on democracy. We have discussed in our previous lecture on the idea of democracy, how it has become, the legitimizing idea of our time, that many undemocratic or authoritarian regime, justify, the rule in the name of democracy. For a very long time, democracy was also equated with the idea of mobocracy or the mob rule. It has negative connotation, but in the contemporary modern times, all things that are good and virtuous is associated with democracy. Therefore, it leads to a lot of confusion, misinterpretations or misuse of this term democracy, which we have discussed in the first lecture.

In the second lecture, we have discussed about different models of democracy. Today, we will focus on the challenges or some of the criticisms to democracy. In the last part, very briefly, we will discuss on the idea of free press and how, the free press is related to the functioning or effectiveness of democracy in any society. To begin with, in modern times, as we have said though the idea has become a legitimizing idea of our time, but that does not mean, democracy does not face criticisms or challenges.

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**Intro**

- There are multiple challenges and limits to modern democracies. One of the biggest challenge is to define the term precisely. This is due to ubiquitous use of the term and its association with all thing virtuous or good. Therefore, its virtuous and vices are seldomly discussed or analyzed dispassionately. Political thinkers have criticized democracy from different perspectives. Broadly, speaking there are two kinds of criticism to democracy. One, which question the very idea of democratic rule. Second, which questions its processes and functioning even when they agree with the ideal of democratic rule. They do not necessarily oppose democracy—"rule of the people"—but, rather, seek to expand or question its popular definition. In their work, they distinguish between democratic principles that are effectively implemented through undemocratic procedures; undemocratic principles that are implemented through democratic procedures; and variations of the same kind. Critics of democracy would agree with Winston Churchill famous remark that, 'no one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise'. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time'. Plato, Aristotal, Tocqueville, J S Mill, Schumpeter, Dhal, Habermas have all explained the critical aspect or what Michael Mann has called the 'darker side' of democracy.
- Plato in *The Trial and Death of Socrates* wrote that 'the wisest and most just of all men' have demonstrated the defects of democracy and of popular rule. He decried democracy because, according to him the people are not trained 'to select the best rulers and the wisest courses'. Democracy enables a man with the gift of eloquence and oratory to get votes of the people and secure public office, but it is possible that such man may turn out to be thoroughly selfish and incompetent who may ruin the state and lead it to disastrous consequences.

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There are multiple challenges and limits to modern democracy. One of the biggest challenges is to define the term, precisely. As we have seen in the previous lecture, there are different conceptualizations and meanings which are attached to democracy. That creates a kind of confusion about defining the term, precisely. Whether it is about certain procedures which need to be followed, before a country claims itself, to be a democratic country or there is something, more to that.

In the procedural or substantive notions of democracy, we have seen, how democracy is not just about us following certain procedure, but it is something, which empowers or it is about the substantive transformations in the lives of individuals and community. To define, then, the term precisely, remains one of the biggest challenges.

There are many people, groups, or societies with their different understandings and conceptualizations of democracy. It is often, seen as what a true democracy is and what is a false or virtual democracy, and what is a real democracy. All those debates creates this confusion which makes it almost impossible, to define the term democracy and that remains one of the biggest challenges. And the reason for this is the ubiquitous use of the term that means, everyone claims to be a democrat and to identify, or to say, someone as undemocratic or a society as undemocratic, it is seen as offending.

However, the ubiquitous use of the term, democracy makes it very difficult, and the association with the virtuous is good. So, everything that is good or virtuous is seen as related to democracy. Therefore, its virtues or vices are seldom discussed or analyzed dispassionately. This emotional or psychological association of everything that is good and virtuous with democracy, makes it impossible or very difficult, to analyze or study, the virtues or vices of democracy in a very dispassionate manner.

Thus, people, will have a very passionate understanding or argument about the merits or demerits of democracy. To study, dispassionately is the biggest challenge. Political thinkers have criticized democracy from different perspectives and that we have seen how and on what grounds, they criticized democracy.

Now, broadly speaking, there are two kinds of criticisms to democracy. One, which questions the very idea of a democratic rule. For a number of theorists and scholars, democracy is in itself, a bad system of rule, because it delays, the thing or it postpones the thing, and it is almost, impossible to arrive at any consensus. It is about the

frustration. If there is some quick measures that is needed to be taken to protect the society or to some immediate responses to the circumstances is almost, difficult in a democratic set up. Basically, it leads to the polarization in society, manipulation, coercion and corruption.

In many thinkers, their conceptualizations of democracy and their criticisms to democracy is not just that its practices are bad, but the very system of rule which is based on the number itself, and it is unjustified. Therefore, there is one set of criticism, which questions the very idea of a democratic rule.

Then, we have another set of thinkers or intellectuals, which questions the processes or functioning of democracy, even, when they agree with the ideal of a democratic rule. The idea of democracy is not questioned, but they questioned, the very functioning or process of democracy. That means, they argue about the ways and means, to make democracy, more effective and efficient system of rule. They do not however, question the very idea or ideals of democracy, based on the consent of the ruled.

They do not necessarily, oppose democracy as the rule of the people, by the people, and for the people, kind of understanding, that ideal of democracy that it is ruled by the people directly, or indirectly, through their representatives for the benefit of the people. So, that understanding of democracy or the ideal of democracy is not challenged, rather they seek to expand or question its popular definition. The possibility of doing a lot of undemocratic things or in the popular imagination, the various vices or various corruptions or undemocratic means, deployed, they question those practices and tries to expand the ideal of democracy.

In their work, they distinguish between the democratic principles which are effectively, implemented through undemocratic procedures or principles that are implemented through democratic procedures and variations of the same kind. In their studies, they tries to analyze or explain, how certain democratic decisions are or can be taken, by undemocratic procedures or system of rule, or contrary to that, how in a democracy, it is possible, to take or implement certain undemocratic policies or decisions.

And then, there are a number of variations in between. It is possible that an undemocratic or authoritarian system of rule may take decisions, which is for the benefit of everyone, and it is closer to democratic decisions. In contrary, there is the possibility that within a

functioning democracy, there is the possibility of undemocratic decisions taken by the government.

So, the critics of democracy would agree, however, with Winston Churchill's famous remark, no one pretends that democracy is perfect or all wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government, except, all those other forms that have been tried from, time to time. The argument is that democracy as a system of rule or a mechanism to govern the society is very far from perfect. There are a number of vices or a number of defects in democracy.

However, in comparison, to other system of rules or other system of governing a large society, democracy remains relatively, a much better system of rule based on the consent of people or that works for the interests of the people. There is not a group or a single individual which benefits the whole system as it operates. But it is for the benefit of a larger society or everyone in the community that the legitimacy of rule or democratic rule, rests on. In Plato, Aristotle, Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill, Schumpeter, Robert Dahl, and Habermas, they have all explained the critical aspects or what Michael Mann, called the dark side of democracy. Thus, they have all explained the demerits or defects of democracy.

For example, Plato, in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, wrote, the wisest and the most just of all men have demonstrated the defects of democracy and of popular rule. He decried democracy, because according to him, the people are not trained to select the best rulers and wisest courses. For him, the idea of the philosopher king, who is intellectually, sound or competent enough, to take the state forward is a best system of rule rather than democracy, where most of the people are not trained or competent enough, to select their rulers and also, to take the wise decisions which affects the whole society.

For him, the best system of rule is a rule by the philosopher king, who is knowledgeable, competent or visionary, enough to take the country forward. Thus, in Plato, we have this criticism against democracy, which is seen as based on the consent of those who do not have the training or competence, to either select their best rulers or to take wise decisions.

Democracy enables, a man with gift of eloquence and oratory to get votes of the people and secure public offices. It is possible, in a democracy, a man with gift of eloquence or

oratory to get votes of the people and secure the public office. But it is possible, that such man may turn out to be thoroughly, selfish and incompetent, who may ruin the state and lead it to disastrous consequences.

So, the argument against democracy is that since, people are not trained or competent or prudent enough, to select the wise rulers in those societies or in such circumstances, it is possible, a man with eloquence or having great oratory, or communication skills can manipulate the voters and secure the public positions. But after, securing public positions that person may turn out to be absolutely, selfish, and also, incompetent.

And that may lead to the ruining of state and it will lead to disastrous consequences. So, it is possible in a democracy, where such men with absolute self-interests and incompetency, also, occupy public positions that will be disastrous for the state and community.

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➤ In his classification of governments into normal and <sup>Polity</sup>perverted forms, Aristotle placed democracy among the perverted forms of government since it signified the rule of the mediocre, seeking their selfish interests, not the interest of the state. According to Aristotle, democracy is based on a false assumption of equality. It arises out of the notion that those who are equal in one respect (such as in respect of the law) are equal in all respects; because men are equally free, they claim to be absolutely equal. The challenge is that the expertise and abilities is reduced to numbers, while numbers are manipulated. People can be easily misled. Therefore, Aristotle argue that a mixed constitution, that is a combination of aristocracy and democracy, as the best possible form of government.

➤ Tocqueville in his famous book *Democracy in America* argued about the 'tyranny of the majority' and explained the threat that democracy posed to minorities and individual liberty. He particularly feared its cultural repercussions. Similarly, J.S Mill for all his defense of democracy and political participation considered majoritarianism and mediocre government as the biggest weaknesses of democracy.

➤ Classical elitist theorists like Pareto and Mosca have argued that political power in every society has always been in the hands of a minority, the elite. According to them, these elites are able to rule or dominate due to their ability to manipulate or coerce. C. Wright Mills study of American political system refers to a 'power elite' which dominated executive power and how these elites are closely knit, sharing the same background and common values. Socialists and Marxists shared the same view that in liberal democracies political power is used to protect and advance the interests of a minority. The inherent problem lies in the incompatibility between democracy that is based on political equality and capitalism which is based on the right to private property and market economy which led to unequal access to economic resources.

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Therefore, he questions the democratic system of rule. In Aristotle, what we find in his classification of normal and perverted forms of government, Aristotle, place democracy among the perverted forms of government. The opposite of democracy, for Aristotle, which he considered as the ideal state, is polity. Aristotle, plays democracy among the perverted, that means, a system of rule which is corrupt and not really, for the interest of every section, but in the name of the larger or common interest, it perpetuates or it

represents, the interest of a very few people. And the decisions that it takes is not really, beneficial for every member in the society.

Why, he consider, it as a perverted form of government, because it signify, the rule of mediocre seeking their selfish interests and not the interest of state or every member of the state. So, according to Aristotle, democracy is based on a false assumption of equality. It arises out of the notion that those who are equal in one respect or to that is law or equal in all respects, be it social or economic. Because men are equally free, they claims to be absolutely, equal.

The challenge is that the expertise and abilities are reduced to numbers, while numbers are or can be manipulated. In democracy, what happens, the expertise or the talent or the abilities of individuals are reduced to number. A philosopher or an artisan or a farmer will have the same value or they are of equal worth. And for Aristotle, a problematic proposition in a democratic rule do not distinguish between the men with the vision or intellect or the men who is not that competent intellectually, or literate.

In this set up of a democratic rule, what matters, really, is not the worth or intellect of a person, but the number, each person carries one or the same value, and that is something, which can be manipulated. The 10 philosophers are equal to the 10 farmers or say, 10 artisans. And in this system of rule, there are chances that people can be mislead or easily, mislead. Therefore, Aristotle, argued that a mixed constitution that is a combination of aristocracy and democracy, as the best possible form of government. His critique of democracy, which we theorized is a perverted form of government.

Tocqueville, in his famous book, *Democracy in America*, is a classic work, on democracy, where, he appreciates the culture of democracy that prevailed in American society. However, it provides a criticism of democracy, by arguing the tyranny of majority. This tyranny of majority is that the decision taken by majority must be followed or it has binding effect on everyone, particularly, those who are not from the majority culture or the community.

The minority in a democracy always, face this threat from the decisions taken by the majority. He explained the threat that democracy posed to minorities and individual liberty. So, the individual liberty and the minorities are always at the mercy or under the

control of the decisions taken by the majoritarian rule. So, it creates a kind of tyranny, where the majority rules prevail at the cost of minority rights or the individual liberty.

Democracy permits the tyranny of majority, and therefore, he is critical of this demerits or defects of the democratic rule. He particularly, feared its cultural repercussions. So, the decisions of the majorities are forced or have binding effects on the minority. Similarly, John Eastward Mills, and we have discussed, Mills, who supported the freedom of speech, expression and liberty, argued that for all his defense of democracy and political participation, he also, considered majoritarians, like Tocqueville, and mediocre government as the biggest weakness of democracy.

Thus, democracy, in a very procedural sense is a number of game. In a democratic structure, only those party or groups get the opportunity to rule, who have the number that is the majority in their side.

Similarly, moving on, about the classical elitist theorists, like Pareto and Mosca, we have discussed in the models of democracy. They criticized this idea of democracy as a system of rule, where it is based on the consent or the popular will. They argued that the political power in every society has always been in the hands of a minority and that is the elite.

According to them, these elites are able to rule or dominate due to their ability to manipulate or coerce others. This elitist theories or particularly, the classical elitist theory, like Pareto, and Mosca, questions the ideal of popular participation and participation of people in the process of governance. For them, it is always, the minority or the small elites in any society, historically, which governs the ruled. And that ability to govern the ruled and the chances to govern for the elites comes from their ability to manipulate and coerce.

C. Wright Mills, similarly, provides a kind of sociological explanation to the elitist theory in United States, where he talks about the power elite in American political system, which dominated the executive power and how these elites are closely, knit sharing the same background and common values. So, this small power elites in America, whether the military leader, economic leader or the political leader, they are closely, tied or knit together and share the same values or cultural sensibilities, which enables them, to manipulate the system or to rule the rest of society. Thus, the elitist

theory of democracy, particularly, criticized this idea of popular participation in the system of rule, where they believe that this rule is basically, the rule by the minority.

However, they also, argued that how to make it acceptable is by allowing that the elite or that elite section is open for the new members. It is not a closed kingship kind of relationship, where the entry or exit is closed. So, in this power elite or the elites theory of democracy, we have the flexibility of new members joining and those who are no longer relevant or credible moving out of this power elite. However, democracy or the democratic system of rule is still the rule by the elite, the minority section of the people. So, that is their criticisms to democracy.

Similarly, the Socialists and Marxists, shared the same view that in liberal democracy, political power is used to protect and advance the interests of minority, that is, the Bourgeoise class or those who have the ownership of property. The inherent contradiction in a liberal democracy, according to the Socialists and Marxists, is that it provides the political or legal equality in the absence of social and economic equality. And in the sense, of the social and economic equality, political and legal equality makes little sense. They are very critical of the social and economic inequality that prevails in a liberal society, even though, it protects and promotes the political and legal equality. Thus, that is their criticisms to democracy.

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➤ **James Bryce** is one of the greatest champions of democracy and its most sympathetic critic. In his two monumental works, *The American Commonwealth* (1893) and *Modern Democracies* (1921) he has mainly treated democracy as a form of government. He defines democracy as 'the rule of the people expressing their sovereign will through the votes'. Ultimately he reduced it to 'the rule of the majority.' Bryce has enumerated six evils of the existing form of democracies:

- 1) the power of money interests to pervert administration or legislation
- 2) the tendency to allow politics to become a trade, entered for gain and not for service
- 3) extravagance
- 4) the failure to evaluate properly the skilled man, and to abuse the doctrine of equality
- 5) party politics
- 6) the tendency of politicians to play for votes.

➤ However, Bryce points out that the first three of these evils are common to other forms of government too and they are not specific to democracy. The last three, of course, are more closely associated with democracy, but they are by no means unsurmountable. Major problems of democracy include self-interest and irresponsibility of power.

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Now, James Bryce is one of the greatest champions of democracy and he is most sympathetic critic. He criticized democracy, but also, he is a champion of democracy or a democratic system of rule. In his two monumental works, *The American Commonwealth and the Modern Democracy*, he has mainly, treated democracy as a form of government. It is basically, about the ruling or governing the society, as we have discussed that democracy is not merely, a system of rule, but it is also, to do with how people and community govern themselves.

The idea of Swaraj, for example, in the Gandhian philosophy, expands the notion of democracy as self-rule much beyond the rule of government. Swaraj is not just freedom from the British or external interference, but it is also, about how individuals or community themselves govern, itself. It is not just about the system of rule, but it is also, about how individuals and community internalize the democratic principles, to govern themselves. That is here, in James Bryce, we see that largely, democracy is taken as a system or a form of government.

He defines, democracy, as the rule of people expressing their sovereign will through the votes. So, the popular participation and expression of the sovereign will is through vote. Therefore, in all democracies, the periodic election is for every 4 years, 5 or 6 years, the election must be held. And election is the time, where the electorate that means, the people in that country collectively, expresses their will or support and give the mandate. That is the occasion, when a party seeks or tries to ensure their support among the electorates.

So, this voting exercise in democracy, therefore, is a very significant and powerful tool for expressing the popular will or popular sovereignty in a society and that gives legitimacy to a party to rule. For example, in India today, the BJP is the party which is ruling. Prior to the BJP, we have Congress lead UPA. In 2014 election, people did not give mandate to the UPA. But, in 2009, they did reaffirm their support for the UPA. Therefore, we have two terms for the UPA, UPA I and UPA II.

In 2014, people thought that BJP will be a better party to govern them for the next 5 years. And we have election in 2019, there again, people will have the opportunity and scope to express their collective will, and to give mandate to a particular political party to govern, themselves. So, democracy, in James Bryce, understanding is seen as a system

of rule, and this rule is for the people, by the people, through their representatives. The people participate in this system of rule and express their sovereign will through their votes.

Finally, he reduced this system of rule to the majority. So, those who get the majority of votes or shares in the assembly or in the Parliament among the elected representatives of the people, they get the opportunity to form the government. It is a system of rule, which is based on the consent of people or the electorate. And those who secured the majority of votes, among the electorates get the opportunity to form the government.

However, he enumerated six evils or defects of the existing democracy. The first is the power of money, interests to prevent administration or legislation. In all democratic countries, we see the exercise or influence of those who have the control over our economic resources or the money power. Those who have ownership of resources, they tend to influence the functioning of administration and legislation, which is supposed to work, according to, or for furthering, the interests of everyone.

The second is the tendency, to allow politics to become a trade, entered for gain and not for service. In the democratic elections, basically, the exercise is merely, to gain and loose, and largely, those who compete for positions of power forget that the whole exercise is for the service of the people.

The moral and ethical aspects of democratic system is somewhat, compromised, when the actors, for example, the political parties or political leaders or the politicians in democracy, fight election for gaining and loosing. Democracy, which ideally, should be seen as something, more than loosing or winning the election, it is about serving the society or taking the society, together is reduced to a kind of polarizing politics or patrician politics, where the whole exercise of election and democratic process is about winning and losing, and the sense or purpose of service is somewhat, compromised.

The extravagance is again, the cost of elections and it is so huge that it is almost impossible, for those, who do not have means or those who do not have enough resources to contest the election. And even, if they contest, their chances of winning, their proportionality of winning in comparison to other candidates, and their expenditure reduces their chance to get elected. Thus, the extravagance is another challenge or defects or demerits of modern democracy.

The next is the failure to evaluate properly, the skilled man and to abuse the doctrine of equality. In a democratic system, as we have discussed in our previous lectures, it is about number. Those who secured the maximum or majority of votes, get the position of power. Now, in securing those in power, there is no discrimination on the basis of ability of a person, whether it is based on his intellectual capacity or his or her abilities or expertise in particular domain. The equality is seen as the sameness or identical.

So, every single individual in a democratic structure is treated as one and the same or identical to each other without any discrimination, even based on their abilities or expertise. That leads, to the failure to adequately, or properly, assesses the skill of the person. In democracy, what matters is the number and number is one and same for everyone without any consideration of their skills, abilities or expertise. That is the biggest drawback of democracy, as we have seen, while discussing, Aristotle's idea of democracy as a perverted form of government.

Then, the party politics is another defects of democracy, where the parties objective ideally, should be to provide alternative or to provide a platform for the people, to express their views, to come together to participate in the political process. We have seen in the functioning democracy, there is also, the constrain of the representatives of people, who have fought one election on the basis of particular parties ticket, their expression or their expression of public interest is somewhat, curtailed by the party line.

Thus, the party and its ideology, dictates or restrains the representatives of people, and to express themselves, freely. The idea of whip in a modern democracy, where the party ensures that candidates, who win the election from their party, must express in a particular way on any particular issue. That is somewhat, restraining for the representatives of people to express themselves.

And also, the political parties makes the whole process of election not about making people aware about democratic system or providing true alternative to the people, but it perpetuates, the same policies, where the real change or transformation in the economic or social science is not very effective. And yet in the political or popular discourse, it seems that different political parties provided different alternatives to the people.

The political parties in a way, first, restrained the democratic process, the representative of the people, who have fought or contested the election on a particular party ticket are

restrained to express their views on a particular issue, according to the party whip, which is not in accordance with the democratic principle of expressing the interests of the people, they represent rather than the candidates stand to represent the views of the their party, and not of the people. Thus, the political party or politics in a democracy, somewhat, constrains or limits the functioning of democracy.

Finally, the tendency of politician is to play for votes. So, all the considerations or calculation in the democratic politics for a politician or leader is to secure vote. They then, lack the courage to take decisions, who are compromising their votes or support base. So, usually, the politicians do not take the risk of losing their votes. And, all the policies or decisions which a government or party in power takes in democracy is about securing the maximum votes and how to manipulate those votes. These are some of the defects that James Bryce, argues, in a democratic system.

However, Bryce, points out that the first, three of these evils, that is, the power of money, the tendency to allow politics to become a trade and extravagance is common to other forms of government. Two, it is not specific to democracy. The last three, is about the defects or demerits which is associated with democracy, but it can be resolved, also. The major problems of democracy are into the self-interest and irresponsibility of those who exercise power. The party or the leaders are not as much committed to promoting the collective interests, as to secure their own position or their own self-aggrandizement at the cost of common interests.

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**Major Challenges to Democratic Processes and Outcomes**

- **Political instability:** Democracy is criticized for not providing adequate political stability. As governments are frequently elected there tend to be frequent changes in the domestic and foreign policies of democratic countries. These frequent policy changes particularly with regards to business and immigration are likely to deter investment and thus hinder economic growth. For this reason, many people have argued that democracy is undesirable for a developing country in which economic growth and poverty reduction are topmost priorities.
- **Short-term goals:** Democratic decisions and policies tend to cater to the immediate needs and short term priorities at the cost of long term visions and plans for a country e.g. social and economic transformations, global warming and so on.
- **Illiteracy and economic inequality:** Voters may not be educated enough to exercise their democratic right to vote prudently. Politicians may take advantage of voters' illiteracy. Lipset has argued about the need of an educated population in for forming democracy. In many of the developing countries in Asia and Africa a majority of people are still uneducated and lives in poverty. And therefore their political rights are open for manipulation. This is the biggest challenge to democracy in developing countries.
- **Post-truth politics:** This is the new form of challenge to democracy all over the world. In 2015 media and Politics scholar Jayson Harsin coined the term "regime of post-truth". In post-truth politics debate is framed largely by appeals to emotion disconnected from the details of policy, and by the repeated assertion of talking points to which factual rebuttals are ignored. A defining trait of post-truth politics is that campaigners continue to repeat their talking points, even when experts in that field and others provide proof to the contrary. Political commentators have identified post-truth politics ascending in many democratic countries, notably in the United States, India, the United Kingdom among others.

Now, moving onto the major challenges of democratic processes and outcomes, some of the major challenges are the political instability. So, that is, when, democracy in most of the societies is an indirect form of democracy, where people govern themselves through their representatives. And sometimes, as we have seen in India, for a very long time, no one party got the complete majority on its own.

Therefore, they form the government which we call, the coalition government. And that coalition government, we always, risk the chance of losing the majority support. This element of democracy and the frequent elections lead to a kind of challenge, where the political stability in a country is always, somewhat, compromised. So, one of the challenges to democracy is it leads to political instability, where the change in the government leads to change in needs, domestic, and foreign policy, particularly, about trade or same immigration.

Now, these frequent changes in government leads to changes in the policies that creates a condition, where a lot of social and economic transformations, and opportunity for investment or development is somewhat, lost. Therefore, we have seen, in many countries in Asia and Africa, particularly, in developing countries, for whom, many societies have this opinion that undemocratic or a kind of authoritarian regime is far more desirable, for the social and economic transformations in comparison to democracy. And democracy is seen as somewhat, a system of rule for those who can afford it. Thus,

the real priority for the society is social or economic growth and development, and transformation. It is also, about poverty alleviation.

So, if, that is the topmost priority of the nation or country, then many people argue, it is based to be governed by the authoritarian regime. In comparison, to China and India, we have seen many people, in comparison to, Chinese economic transformation and development, India is far more, lagging behind. However, what distinguishes between the two countries is the idea of democratic functioning or the multi-party system of democratic rule in India, and one party, regime existing in China.

This kind of comparison is there, but however, what we have to understand that the economic transformation or development in a democracy, leads to its wider distribution in society and not in the concentration of wealth. So, the political democracy or democratic system of rule, provides the opportunity to individual, to prosper or to develop and express themselves freely, without any restrictions or constrains by the government.

In the undemocratic and an authoritarian regime, the very freedom of doing something, or expressing oneself, freely and expressing is compromised to a great extent, even when there is some basic, social and economic needs are met. So, one of the challenges or criticisms to democracy is this political instability that leads to changes in the policies of the government.

The next is the short-term goals. So, all the democratic leaders and the political parties will care to formulate the policies that serve the short-term interests. And keeping in mind, the next election or getting support in the next election leads to a kind of compromise to the long-term visions and long term goals of the society.

For example, the climate change or the social and economic transformations, requires a long-term planning or a long-term investment. In a democratic system, as the parties and leaders are largely, governed by the short-term goals or all the policies are directed towards gaining the support in the next election, then these long-term goals and objectives are compromised somewhat.

The other challenge for the democracy is the illiteracy and the economic inequality in society. So, if the voter or the electorates are not educated enough to exercise their

democratic rights, to vote prudently, then that democratic system of rule is always, open for manipulation by the politician. So, illiteracy is one of the biggest challenges for the democracy, because people do not recognize the significance of their votes. And, the money and muscle power plays a role in securing those votes, where people do not take decisions prudently, and they do not recognize the significance of their vote in selecting the rulers or the parties or the representatives of the people.

So, the politicians may take advantage of the voters, illiteracy and leaves it argued about the need of educated population in performing democracy. In many of the developing countries in Asia and Africa, a majority of people are still uneducated and lives in poverty. Therefore, their political rights are open for manipulation. So, if, people are unaware of their political or democratic rights or if they are too poor, then they may not exercise these democratic or political rights, effectively.

Therefore, for the functioning of effective democracy, a literate or educated population with certain degree of economic prosperity is absolutely, necessary. And so, many people, argue, the economic development provides the conducive environment and circumstances for the functioning of a democratic system of rule. And in the absence of democracy in those countries and societies, where there is deeply, economic divide or large or the majority of population are illiterate, then, the democracy or democratic system of rule is open for manipulation. The illiteracy and economic inequality is thus, the major challenges to the democratic processes and outcomes.

The next is the post-truth politics, which is somewhat a recent phenomenon, especially, with the rise of social media and new forms of communication and technology. So, this is the new form of challenges to democracy all over the world. And this popular democracy, which tends to trigger the emotions and psychologically, driven statements, and policies by the parties are the biggest beneficiary of the post-truth politics.

In 2015, the media and political scholar, Jayson Harsin, coined the term, 'regime of post-truth' and in post-truth politics, debate is framed largely, by appeals to emotions disconnected from the details of policy, and by repeated assertion of talking points to which factual rebuttals are ignored. In the post-truth regime, we have the statements made again and again, by the political party, and its ideologues which trigger certain

emotions. And the actual dispassionate rebuttal on the basis of truth is somewhat, ignored or somewhat, sidelined.

The defining trait of post-truth politics is that campaigners continue to repeat their talking point, even, when the experts in the field and others provide proof to the contrary. The opinion of experts or the truth, really, does not matter. There is one statement which defines this functioning of post-truth error. So, if we do not know the answer, we can say anything, which may not be the lie, but which will be a kind of rebuttal of the actual issue or do not respond to the actual issue.

This post-truth regime gives us the scope to make the points, even, when that point is not direct to the questions or the issue that is at stake. And the expert opinion or the actual fact or the truth is somewhat, ignored and lies doctored or the manipulative statements or news becomes, the guiding measures. Thus, the political commentators have identified the post-politics, ascending in many democratic countries, especially, in the United States, India, and United Kingdom among many other democracies. So, these are the other major challenges of democratic processes and outcomes in the contemporary times.

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**Democracy and Its Future**

➤ John Dewey writes that, 'a democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience'. In his celebrated work, *Democracy and Education* (1961), Dewey sought to compare democratic method to the scientific method in which public is conceived as a community of inquirers trying to solve their common problems. Freedom of speech, elections and other democratic institutions maintained by liberal democracy enable people to adopt rational attitudes in politics. A successful democratic politics does not depend on the judgment of each citizen considered separately. When people arrive at the judgment through their constant interaction, their decision is likely to be rational and sound.

➤ Democracy, has its own defects, but no government is a panacea for all the social and political evils. Democracy is still better than other forms of governments such as aristocracy, oligarchy or dictatorship. Democracy is preferred form of government across the world. And the idea of democracy has become legitimizing idea of modern times where even the undemocratic rule tries to legitimize their rule in the name of democracy. John Stuart Mill argued that 'after giving full weight to all that appeared to me well-grounded in the arguments against democracy, I unhesitatingly decided in its favor'. Press, people and political parties have now freedom to criticize the government. This is possible only under democratic rule. On this basis, while acknowledging the various challenges and limits to democracy, still one can argue that the future of democracy is bright and it is likely to remain a preferred form of government.

Now, if we, look at democracy and its features, John Dewey, writes that democracy is more than a form of government. It is primarily, a mode of associated living of conjoint communicated experience. So, John Dewey's, explanation of democracy is something,



which is much beyond a system of rule, which teach the individuals and the community to live together or to live an associational life.

In his celebrated work, *Democracy and Education*, Dewey, sought to compare democratic methods to scientific method in which public is conceived as a community of enquirers trying to solve their common problems. The freedom of speech, elections and other democratic institutions maintained by the liberal democracy, enabled people to adopt rational attitudes in politics. So, beyond irrationalities, psychological or the emotional issues, people began to argue, or communicate and participate in a rational manner, if they take this mechanism of liberal democracy effectively, and use it effectively.

So, a successful democratic politics does not depend on the judgment of each citizen considered separately. The voice of each citizen matters in a democratic set up, but it does not matter independently, or separately, from the rest. When people arrive at judgments to their constant interactions, so what matters, is interaction, dialogue, and deliberation that we have discussed in the models of democracy. And their decision is likely to be rational and sound, when they discuss in a free and fair manner on public issues in public platform, where nobody, is denied his or her participation, and they participate and argue in a rational manner.

The chances are when the system of rule ensures boarder participation, the decisions it takes or the policy that it formulates are most rational, taking into account the consideration. So, it ensures the rational attitude to politics, where the freedom of speech and expressions or frequent elections ensures that the decisions are taken through the collective discussions or deliberations.

However, democracy has its own effects, but no government is a panacea for all the social and political evils. Democracy is still better than other forms of government such as aristocracy, oligarchy or dictatorship. So, there are different forms of government, but in comparison to, their defects or demerits, democracy is found to be still a better form of government. Democracy is a preferred form of government across the world, and the idea of democracy, as we have discussed has become the legitimizing idea of modern times, where even the undemocratic or authoritarian regime legitimize their rule in the name of democracy.

So, the idea or the power of idea is very much acknowledged across the globe among the different systems of rule. John Stuart Mill, argued, that ‘after giving full weight to all that appeared to me well-grounded in the arguments against democracy, I unhesitatingly, decided in its favor’. So, the press, people and political parties have now, freedom to criticize the government. And this freedom to criticize the government that one elects is possible and permitted only, in a democratic system of rule.

On this basis, while acknowledging, the various challenges and limits to democracy, still one can argue that the future of democracy is bright and it is likely, to remain a preferred form of government. Of course, there will be challenges, there will be criticisms, defects and demerits, through democratic system of rule. But, it is a kind of ever expanding, and in a critical system of rule which ensures the popular participation and gradually, taking everyone along in the social and economic transformation in the any society through popular participation.

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**Free Press and Democracy**

*"Our liberty depends on the freedom of the press, and that cannot be limited without being lost."*  
—Thomas Jefferson (1786)

- Free Press is regarded as absolutely necessary for the effective functioning of democracy. It ensures the accountability of the government. Jefferson understood that a vibrant and free press is critical to sustaining the rule of law. Beside, popular discourse and literature in which the press is hailed as the 'fourth estate', invoke this argument, where the vibrancy of a democracy is seen in terms of freedom of the press.
- Along with free speech, a free press is indispensable for people to be informed and to participate in the democracy processes. A free press contributes to the transparency of government. A free press serve as a 'watch-dog', monitoring government's activities, and ensuring accountability and transparency. Particularly in the age of digital news, free media outlets can act as a forum – a place in which people from all backgrounds can discuss different issues and ideas.
- Transparency makes a government works better, decreases the risk of corruption and ultimately makes a country safer. However, changes in the technology particularly social media and the way people consume news, have brought newer challenges such as fabricated/doctored news. That leads to erosion of trust and the erosion of trust in institutions be it media or the legal profession, weakens the foundation of a democratic system.

If we look at briefly, the relationship between free press and democracy is regarded as absolutely necessary, for the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of government in a democratic system of rule. So, Thomas Jefferson said that our liberty depends on the freedom of press, so the our, here is say, the liberty of the individual. So, the guardian or the protector of individual liberty is the freedom of press.

So, a free press ensures that the government, which has the monopoly of violence or the state which has the monopoly of violence should not take away the liberty that is guaranteed to the individual by the constitution in a democratic system. So, in a democratic society, individuals as citizens has such certain inalienable rights, and for the protection of those rights, it is necessary, to have a free press. So, Jefferson, argues that our liberty, depends on the freedom of press and that cannot be limited without being lost. So, liberty can be lost, when you do not have freedom of press.

The freedom of press or a free press is regarded as an absolutely necessary, for the effective functioning of democracy. It ensures the accountability of the government. Jefferson understood that a vibrant and free press is critical to sustaining, critical for sustaining the rule of law. Beside, popular discourse and literature in which the press is held as the fourth estate, invoke this argument, where the vibrancy of a democracy is seen in terms of freedom of press.

Again, how vibrant a country is in terms of democracy is seen, how much freedom is given to the press, to express its opinion independently, to criticize the government, when there is some violation of rules and procedures. So, along with free speech, a free press is indispensable for people to be informed about the decisions of the government and its policies, and to participate in the democratic processes. A free press contributes to the transparency of government. And a free press serves as a kind of watch-dog, monitoring government activities and ensuring its accountability and transparency.

So, a free press ensures that the government is accountable to the people. It provides information about government decisions to the people, to take informed decisions and participate in the democratic process in an empowered manner. And that leads to the effectiveness in the functioning of government and transparency, and also, accountability. Particularly, in the age of digital news or paid news, information is available, and accessible, in a very easy manner to everyone. The free media outlets can act as a forum, a place in which people from all backgrounds discuss different issues and ideas that concern them.

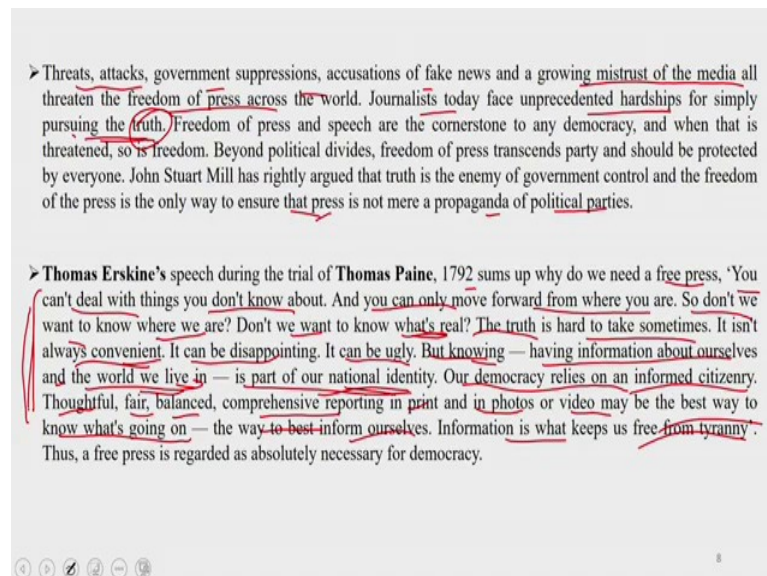
And transparency, makes a government works better, decrease the risk of corruption ultimately, makes a country safer. So, a free press ensures that the government functions according to, the rules and procedures, under which it should perform or all its functions.

If, it transpires that, it highlights, its exposure of the government to public scrutiny, and that ensures that no corruption, no manipulation and such things is taken place. And if it does, there has to be a political or the electoral cause to and such manipulations or translations.

However, change in the technology, particularly, the social media and the way, people consume news, have brought newer challenges such as fabricated or doctored news that leads to erosion of trust in the media, and erosion of trust in institutions, that is, this media or legal professions, weakens the foundation of a democratic system.

So, in this new era or new digital era, where the news is often, doctored or fabricated, the challenge is to reassert or refund the trust that one has with media, which is regarded as the fourth pillar of democracy. The other three, being the executive, legislature or the judiciary, free media in a or free press in a democracy, would as if watch-dog as the fourth pillar of a democracy, which face a lot of credibility, you in this new digital age, where the way people consume news or the way, it is presented to them is largely, through fabrication or in doctrinarian, which actually, make people apprehensive or suspicious to the news that they read. That creates a lot of erosion of trust, and it further, leads to the weakening of democratic foundation in a democratic country.

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The threats, attacks, government suppressions, accusations of fake news, and a growing mistrust of the media, all threaten the freedom of press across the world. Journalist today, faces unprecedented hardship for simply, pursuing the truth. So, the truth has a universal

value in a democratic system or in ensuring that government is accountable to the rule. And freedom of press was one such form which ensures that the truth is pursued, but in contemporary societies, we have seen that how journalist who pursued truth is persecuted. They face threat from the community, from the government.

And also, the acquisition of fake news to the media, which questions or which interrogates the government makes the functioning of free media absolutely, challenging. And freedom of press and speech are however, corner stone of any democracy, and when that is threatened, so is freedom. So, with the reduction or with the limits to the freedom of press, it also leads, to reduction in the freedom that individual as a citizen enjoy in a democracy.

So, beyond political divides, freedom of press transcends party and should be protected by everyone. So, the freedom of press has to be beyond partisan politics, it should be a bi-partisan issue, where everyone should come forward to protect and promote free press. John Stuart Mill has rightly, argued that truth is the enemy of government control and the freedom of press is the only way, to ensure that press is not mere a propaganda of political parties, and it works for the interests of the people.

The last point, then, we will conclude on this connection between freedom of free press and democracy. Thomas Erskine's, speech during the trial of Thomas Paine, in 1792, sums up, why do we need a free press? He argued that you cannot deal with things, we do not know about. And we can only, move forward from where you are. So, when you have the knowledge about, what you are only, from there you can move forward. So, do not we want to know, where we are? Do not we want to know what is real, and what is not? So, what is truth or what is fake? The truth is hard to take sometimes. It is not always convenient, it may not be convenient for those who exercise power or those who are in the government, it may not be convenient to many communities, but a truth has its own value.

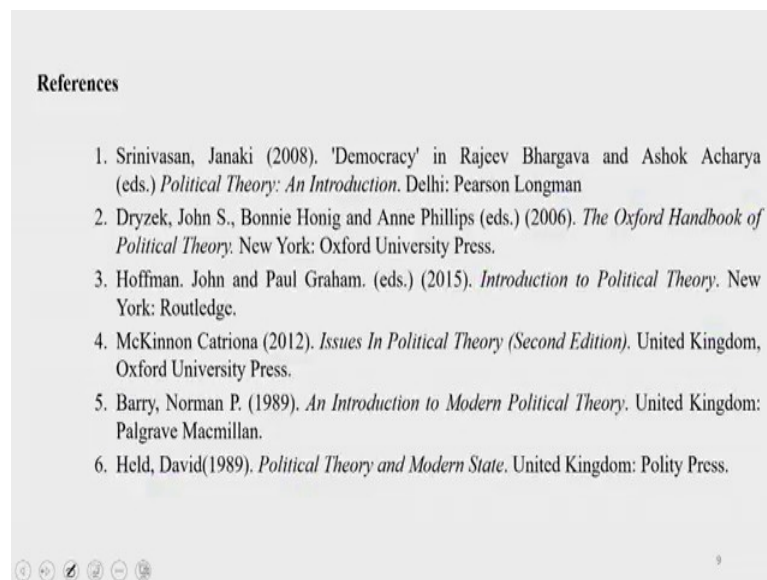
It can be disappointing or may not be convenient, it can also, be ugly. But, knowing having information about ourselves and the world we live in that is the reality, is part of our national identity. Our democracy relies on an informed citizenry. Thoughtful, fair, balanced, comprehensive reporting in print and in photos or videos may be the best way to know, what is going on the way, to best inform ourselves. Information is what keeps

us free from tyranny. So that is the role of free press in terms of making oneself aware of what is going on, about the reality, and also, how to move forward from that reality.

However, inconvenient, ugly, or disappointing that truth may be, but that is necessary, for us to take step forward or to move forward in the life as an individual or collective identity. So, information, which is provided by a free press, is therefore, absolutely, necessary, which keeps us free from any kind of tyranny or tyrannical rule. So, thus, a free press is regarded as absolutely, necessary, for democracy. So, I hope you understand now, what is the significance of free press in a democracy and the functioning of effective democracy.

In the absence of free press, there is no public scrutiny of government which exercises enormous legal power or monopoly of violence. It is a free press which ensures or exposes the government and its functioning, where if, it transgress or by pass, certain rules and established procedures. A free press, is therefore, regarded as a sign code for the modern democracy.

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So, with that, we conclude this lecture. And you can refer to some of these books to understand some of the themes, we have discussed in today's lectures. That is all on this lecture, today. We conclude this lecture on democracy. The next topic will be on citizenship which, we will discuss in our coming lectures.

Thank you for listening. Thank you all.