

Grammar of Democracy

Prof. E. Venkatesu

Dept. of Political Science

University of Hyderabad

evss@uohyd.ac.in

Objectives of the Session

- To bring out the historical process of the concept of Democracy
- To discuss about the creolization and deepening process of democracy
- To examine the critical issues in the functioning of Democracy
- To provide a framework for the democratic functioning of the institutions and
- To highlight the best practices from the field

Introduction

- **Monarchial Political system has/had ruled the world for thousands of years**
- **Democracy has been in power for hundreds of years and**
- **Authoritarian/dictatorial political regimes for decades**
- **Relics of Monarchial and Authoritarian political regimes are existing, however, Democracy has been prevailing as a dominant political system in the contemporary period.**

Introduction

- The idea of democracy has been expanding over a period of more than two centuries.
- There has been a plenty of literature both from theoretical and empirical point of view.
- However, there is hardly any consensus on the definition of Democracy
- Rule by the people

Unique Features of Democracy

- **Flexible in operation: Democracy can work in the most advanced as well as the developing countries in terms of Human Development**
- **Tolerance for dissent and protest**
- **Rise of new forces and accommodation**
- **Legitimacy through consent of the citizen**
- **Competing ideas, ideologies, agendas and parties**
- **Recognition for all the social identities and equal treatment**

Basic Principles of Democracy for its continuation and expansion

- **Liberty**
- **Equality**
- **Rights**
- **Rule of Law**
- **Separation of powers**
- **Political Representation**

Procedural Democracy

- Procedural approach concentrates on laws a regime enacts concerning political activity.
- On the basis of procedural aspect one can distinguish whether a political system is Constitutional Monarchies, Presidential System, Parliamentary Democracy, Unitary and Federal.

Substantive Democracy

- The substantive approach focus on the conditions of life and politics a given regime promotes.
- Does the regime promote human welfare, individual freedom, security, equity, social equality, public deliberation and peaceful conflict resolution?

Process Oriented Approach

- **Process oriented approach which identifies some minimum set of processes that must be continuously in motion for a situation to qualify as democratic.**
- **The indicators include effective participation, voting equality, enlightened understanding, control of the agenda and inclusion of adults**

Historical Process of the concept of Democracy

- The term democracy is from ancient Greek city state and its meaning is rule by the people.
- However, the assumptions and practices of Greeks were different from modern democracies
- Greeks never had an idea of rights of the individual and right to political participation was grant to a small minority of the adult residents of the city
- These minority group used to take the political decision by direct vote on the issues and the practice was different from the present representative democracy.
- The philosophers like Plato, Aristotle and Thucydides had poor regards to Greek Democracy

Cont---

- During English Civil War of 17th century, a small group raised the banner of democracy, but hardly, there was any influence on the event.
- The modern sense of democracy came into use during 19th century with reference to representative democracy, where the male members elected the representatives in the free competitive elections

American Democracy

- American democracy is defined in three distinct ways to locate it in the people's sovereignty.
 1. A populist way: in terms of the rule of the people
 2. A pluralist way: in terms of competition between sections and pressure groups and
 3. An institutional way: in terms of a set of institutions and processes.

Parliamentary Democracy

- The supremacy of Parliament Sovereignty
- British monarchical Model/France and India Republic Model
- British model of Parliamentary institutions spread in the colonies
- France Model of Parliamentary institutions influenced Europe
- Collective Responsibility of Cabinet

Creolization and deepening of democracy

- Asia, Africa and Latin America, the concept of democracy was indigenized in the process of nationalism against colonial rule
- The legacy of political institutions and leadership
- Drafting of the Constitution by the enlightened and visionary legal experts and politicians
- Large scale participation of the people in the system provided the legitimacy
- Social infrastructure for taking the idea of democracy to remote areas
- Democratic reforms for deepening of democracy

Democracy Index 2020-Indicators

- Electoral process and pluralism,
- The functioning of government,
- Political participation,
- Political culture, and
- Civil liberties.

Democracy Index 2020 by Nature of Regime

Regime Type	No. of Countries	% of Countries	% of World Population
Full Democracies	23	13.8	8.4
Flawed Democracies	52	31.1	41.0
Hybrid Regimes	35	21.0	15.0
Authoritarian Regimes	57	34.1	35.6
Total	167	100	100

(Source: The Economist)

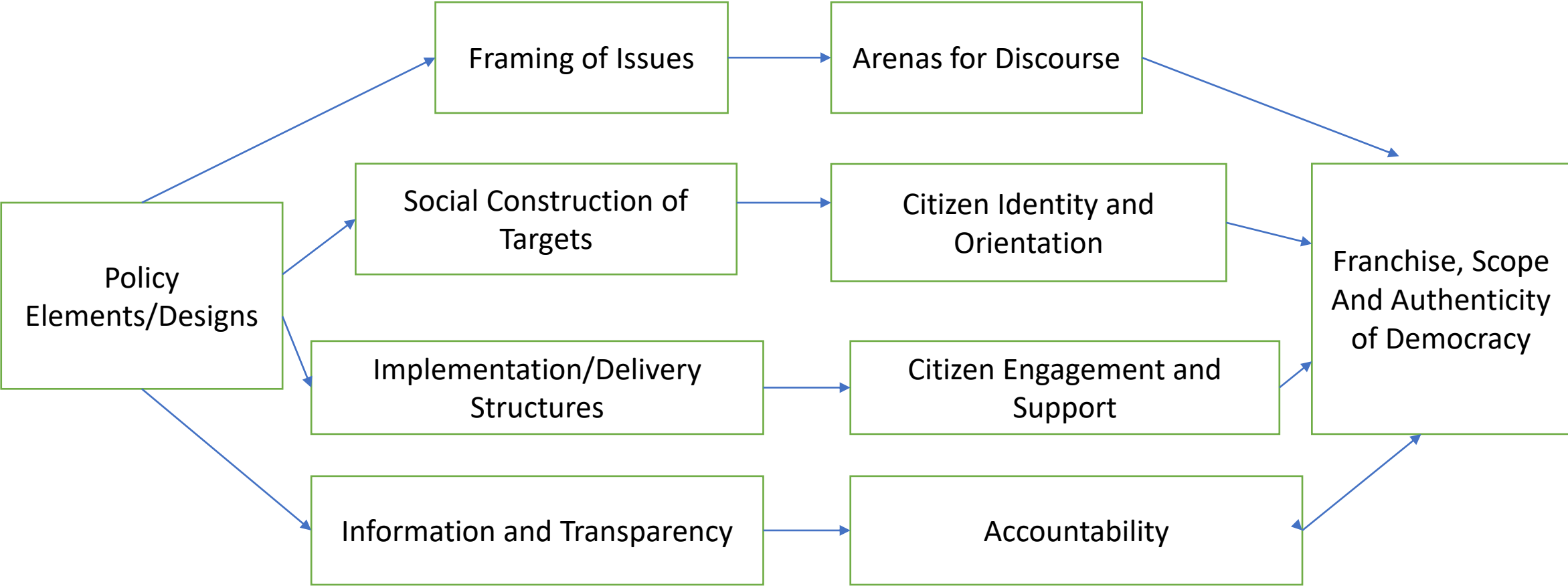
Critical Issues in the functioning of Democracy

- Political accommodation
- Political participation
- Transparency
- Social accountability
- Legal disputes/PIL
- Media
- Question of ethics in public life
- Human rights
- Social activism

Developmental Administration and Democracy

- **Puzzle Solving or Conflict Resolution**
Conflict over policy goals is an unending process
- Different groups has got different priority of policy goals
- The conflicting goals economic growth vs. social welfare and clean environment, safer zones, protection of human rights.
- **Critical Listening:** Information, Preferences, Values, Identity, and Local Knowledge
- **Seeking Advise:** Research, Analysis, Options, Consultation, Proposals and Decisions

Developmental Administration for Democracy



Pro-active District Administration: A Kozhikode Model

- **Compassionate Kozhikode**

It was in 2015 February, Prasanth Nair, a 2007 batch IAS officer took charge as Collector of Kozhikode. Since his first week in office he created a social media page in the name of 'Collector Kozhikode' and extensively used it to interact with the people.

- Seeing the huge immediate positive response from the people of Kozhikode he initiated a web platform called 'compassionate Kozhikode'. By 2016 there were 1000 active volunteers in association with the 'compassionate Kozhikode'. It was these members handled and managed the project which had carried out works worth 25 million rupees within its first year of establishment.

- **Operation Sulaimani**

As per the project 25 'Sulaimani' Distribution centres in 14 zones of Kozhikode district were set up for needy people. These Centres provide coupons which can be exchanged for a good meal in any of the listed more than 100 hotels in the district. This project was planned and executed in association with the Kozhikode Hotel and Restaurants Association. Moreover, the general public who have observed the initiative at Kozhikode started to contribute towards the project in the donation boxes that were kept in the hotels.

Pro-active District Administration: A Kozhikode Model

- **Cleaning a lake**

In 2016 through his Facebook page, the collector invited people to clean up ‘Pisharikavu’ lake in Koyilandi, 57,000 square metered water-body which was filled with silting and waste. He offered delicious Malabar biriyani to those who participate in the action. 750 people turned up in response to his call and cleaned up the entire lake within a day. The biryani was prepared the financial support of the Drought Prevention Fund of the District Administration.

- **First, takeaway from the case study is that the district administration has taken an initiation for the voluntary involvement of the community to contribute for the filling of hungry stomachs and voluntary labour (*shrmadhanam*) through extensive usage of the social media to mobile.**
- **The initiation of the district administration was a informal one to be more closer to the community.**

Role of Gram Panchayat in handling Covid-19

- **Frontline workers such as ANMs, ASHA Workers created awareness and helped in containment of covid-19.**
- **Awareness regarding covid-19 through whatsapp group of *sarpanches* and villagers**
- **People who tested positive for the disease are shifted to Covid-19 first line treatment centre and Covid-19 Hospitals**
- **Local governments recorded the details of each returning worker including their name, age, sex, age, family details along with where they work and how they arrived at the village.**
- **Gram Panchayats ensured that returning migrant workers adhere to a compulsory 14 day quarantine and converted *Anganwadis* and schools into quarantine centres**
- **Sanitized village by spraying Sodium hypochlorite and village youth come forward and provided free services regarding spraying in the villages.**
- **Mask making by SHG in rural areas**
- **Sealing of village borders by panchayat members.**

Role of Gram Panchayat in handling Covid-19

- **In order to minimize social contact with the outsiders and basic needs of the people are met in the village itself.**
- **Villagers stood round the clock on the entry point of the village to avoid any unwanted entry or exit from the village.**
- **Gram panchayats identified places where social distancing is to be observed and circles have been worked with white/yellow colour at the distance of 2 meters at all the public places such as PDS shops, Markets, Participation in wedding ceremonies, funerals to avoid the close contact of the people**
- **Local bodies helped in ensuring intensive containment efforts in association with Panchayat secretary, Mandal Parshid Development officer, District Panchayat Officer, Revenue administration (Village Revenue officer/ Village Revenue Assistant, Revenue Inspector, Mandal Revenue Officer, District Revenue Officer) and Police Personnel.**

Role of Gram Panchayat in handling Covid-19

- **Gram Panchayats across Telangana supported migrant workers who are in transit and operated community kitchens and provided food and other essential items.**
- **MGNREGA has become a big source of employment in rural areas during Covid-19 crisis.**
- **Union government allowed the panchayat to use the 14th Finance Commission funds for covid-19 related activities and *Sarpanches* used these resources for providing food and medicine to the community**