

Democracy And Illiteracy Do Not Move Together

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Can a person who cannot read the ballot they are casting, fully understand the implications of their vote? In a world where democracy is touted as ideal form of governance, the question arises: "Can it coexist with illiteracy?" The answer lies in clear denial. Democracy is a system of government in which people hold the ultimate power. Principles of democracy ensure that every citizen has an equal opportunity to influence government decisions, thereby safeguarding individual and collective rights. On the other hand, illiteracy is the significant impediment to individual and society progress which eventually weakens democracy. Illiteracy limits a person's capacity to access information, engage in critical thinking, and participate meaningfully in societal functions. It restricts individuals from fully exercising their rights and responsibilities as

citizens. Moreover, illiteracy destroys the foundation of democracy, creates economic disparities, exploits democratic rights of citizens, causes conflicts, eventually erodes civil rights. On the contrary, efficient and fully functional democracy acts as a means to reduce illiteracy rate and promote education through policy making, empowering education NGOs, encouraging public participation in educational reforms, and offering equal educational opportunities to everyone. To summarize, Democracy and illiteracy are incompatible and cannot coexist. For functional democracy, an informed and educated citizenry is essential to make informed decisions, participate in governance, and hold leaders accountable.

Illiteracy acts as a democracy deficit and pose some significant threats that disturbs the balanced functioning of democratic societies. Some of these profound issues include: barriers in political participation, considering education merely as a political campaign, neglecting the importance of resource allocations and so on.

Illiteracy acts a hurdle for people to engage in political activities which is one of the cornerstones of democracy. In democratic societies, people are expected to

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vote, take part in public debates, and contribute in policy making process. However, illiterate people are excluded from these activities due to their inability to comprehend political discourse, policy documents, and electoral procedures.

For example, In india, a large number of population is illiterate which do not participate in elections, resulting in winning of the candidate that actually do not represent the will of whole society. As political scientist Robert Dahl notes that 'Effective participation in democracy requires minimum literacy and education'. Without these, democracy fails to function as intended; and the voice of the people is not truly heard. According to UNESCO, approx 773 million adults world wide are illiterate, mostly residing in democratic countries, limiting their ability to participate in political process.

Informed citizenship is the heart of democracy. Democracy thrives on the active involvement of public to know their rights, political system and the contemporary issues. However, illiteracy destroys this foundation by preventing access to vital information. A

study performed by ^{the} World Bank shows that only 46% of people with low literacy rates in Brazil could identify their political rights, compared to 84% of the literate individuals. This lack of information among individuals erodes the democratic process. As John Stuart Mill eloquently says that, 'Without informed citizens, democracy becomes a hollow shell, vulnerable to manipulation and corruption.'

Another serious and insidious effects of illiteracy on democratic process include spread of misinformation. In a world where information is power, the inability to differentiate fact from fiction leaves illiterate individuals susceptible to falsehood and propaganda, which can skew public opinion and undermine democracy.

The Pew Research Center found that 64% of adults with lower level of literacy in the US had difficulty in distinguishing between factual and opinion based statements. This was clearly shown in 2016 election of US in which misinformation was weaponized in democracy. Illiteracy fosters blurring of truth, making democracy more endangered.

Illiteracy not only the society but also impacts the individual life of citizens. Democracy offer fundamental democratic rights, such as freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and the right to vote to every human. However, illiteracy prevents the individuals from fully exercising their rights, leading to exploitation by those in power. A report by Transparency international indicated that 'Countries that have higher illiteracy rate have greater chances of voter manipulation and electoral fraud'. Same happens in other developing countries as well. For example, in parts of sub-saharan Africa, illiterate citizens are often manipulated or exploited through false promises or threats by certain candidates. As Amartya Sen argues in his book 'Development as Freedom', 'The Freedom to participate in political process is meaningless if people are unable to understand or exercise that freedom due to illiteracy.' Thus, illiteracy not only undermines individual rights but also weakens the democratic fabric of society.

Education provides ^{individuals with} the opportunities to improve their socio-economic status. Whereas, illiteracy deprives the individuals of these equalizers, creating economic disparities which totally opposes the principles of

equality and just that democracy seeks to uphold. A study by UNESCO found that countries with high illiteracy rates also tend to have higher levels of income inequality. This imbalance not only fosters resentment and social unrest but also threatens the stability of democracy.

A vibrant civil society is required for healthy democracy. Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a crucial role in holding government accountable, advocating for human rights and fostering civic management. However, illiteracy erodes civil society by limiting individuals' ability to participate in these organizations. A survey by World Values Survey found that in countries with lower literacy rates, participation in civil society organizations is lower. For example, in Mali only 10% of people are involved in civil society engagement. Alex de Tocqueville notes in his work, 'Democracy in America', that the health of democracy is measured by the quality of functions performed by its private citizens, showing that illiteracy weakens the very foundation of civil society and democracy itself.

In today's modern era, digital technology has become the necessity of democratic process but illiteracy creates a digital

divide among citizens due to their inability to use internet. A report by International Telecommunication Union showed that only 29% of individuals use internet in low literacy rate countries compared to 82% in developed countries. As UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres mentioned, "Bridging the ^{digital} gap between is essential for sustainable development goals and efficient democratic system." Without addressing illiteracy, this divide continues to widen, undermining democratic governance.

Democracy offers equal rights and opportunities to all citizens ^{whereas} illiteracy prevents individuals from resisting against authorities due to their inability to understand political system and policies. Freedom House Research found out that countries with low literacy rate have higher authoritarian score i.e 5.2 out of 7, compared to 2.1 in literate societies. In the past, Nazi Germany regimes were targeted on illiterate people. Same happens in North Korea today, where illiteracy is used as tool of oppression, undermining democratic institutions and consolidation of power in only few hands of leaders.

Dem The pluralistic nature of democracy encourages diversity which can lead to conflict if not managed properly. Illiteracy exacerbates these conflicts due to inability of people to accept

and understand others' point of view. According to Uppsala conflict data program, countries with literacy rate below 35% are more likely to experience internal conflicts. In conflict-ridden societies like Nigeria, Sudan, illiteracy is the major cause of conflict which threatens the democracy and weakens the stability and cohesion of society.

Illiteracy has been linked to the increased crime rate in society, undermining rule of law. Education provides individuals with the opportunity to differentiate between right and wrong, and reduces the chances of engaging in criminal activities. A study by US department of Justice found out that 80% of juveniles who come to court are functionally illiterate. This state shows the importance of education between for safe, and just society with strong pillars of Democracy.

As it is evident that illiteracy pose significant challenges to functioning of democracy^{the} society. However, democracy itself holds the potential to counteract these challenges. The basic principles of democracy help to reduce illiteracy, empowering citizens and strengthening foundations of a just and equitable society.

Democracy's basic principles include promotion & protection of human rights including right to education. To promote literacy, UN declaration was adopted in United Nations in 1948 to promote free education. Finland is a stark example, where democracy has worked on provision of ~~provis~~ free and universal education for everyone. As Former UN-Secretary noted, 'Education Economy is the foundation of democracy, economy, and the society'. By upholding education, democracies reduce illiteracy and enable citizens to participate in democratic processes.

Human rights not only include rights to vote but also right to be educated. Democratic societies prioritizes educational policies. For Example, In India, Right to Education (RTE) Act was promulgated by democratic government on public demand. Democracy implements such helpful policies to reduce illiteracy and empower individuals.

Keeping in view, the importance of education, democracies allocate effective resources for to promote literacy. According to OECD Report, democracies allocate 5.2% of their GDP to education on average, compared to 2.8% in non-democratic states. For Example, In Denmark, efficient resources are invested on Teachers' Training,

school infrastructure and study material. By efficient resource allocation, democracies reduce illiteracy and promote social mobility.

In addition to resource provision, the government's conducive support to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) fosters the education culture. For example, In Bangladesh, an NGO named BRAC, in collaboration with the government, has been successful in educating millions of children and adults. This cooperation between democratic state and civil society promotes the culture of learning and reduces illiteracy rate.

Beyond all other essential components of democracy, public participation is the hallmark of democracy, that extends to the realm of education. In democratic states, governments encourages citizens to participate in educational reforms and policy making, ensuring that it meets people demands. For Example, In USA, citizens participate in educational development process through local school boards, parents - teachers associations, and community organizations. By involving public, democracy is able to make inclusive policies which reduces literacy at greater extent through practical ways.

Informing and educating public

is crucial for democracies. Therefore, govt. allows media to be free to promote literacy campaigns. For Example, In South Africa, 'Kha Ri Gude' campaign was promoted by Media, which was aimed at teaching basic literacy skills to everyone. Media, due to its high potential of reaching to diverse audience, creates awareness among public and reduces illiteracy rate.

Among others, Gender equality is one of the core principles of democracy. Therefore, democratic states focus more on women education, reducing illiteracy rate with a major gap. According to UNESCO, countries that focus on females' education have seen clear increase in literacy rate. For example In Rwanda, The literacy rates ^{rose} ~~used~~ from 48% to 77% over last two decades.

Prioritizing girls education reduces illiteracy by educating half of the population of the world and strengthens democracy.

In democratic state, illiteracy is reduced by making education a political mandate during elections era. Fulfilling commitments of educational improvements by govern ment significantly reduces illiteracy and promotes social progress. For example, In Brazil, 'Bosla

Familia' program was launched to fund the education of the children. Such literary initiatives solidifies democracy by decreasing illiteracy rate.

Comittment to equality is another defining feature of democracy that ensure all citizens have access to quality education regardless of their socio-economic background. For example, In Canada, the government has implement range of policies aimed at ensuring equal access to education, for everyone. These policies have contributed to Canada's high literacy rate and strong educational outcomes. By offering equal opportunities, democracy reduces illiteracy and promote social mobility.

In addition to all other features of democracy, sustainable development is one of the profound responsibility of democracy that goes for educational sector as well. Democratic states attracts educational investment from both national and international levels. For example, South Korea investment in public and private sector of education makes it among the top countries with highest literacy rate and quality education. By welcoming educational investments, democracies not only reduce illiteracy but also promotes progressive and equitable society.

To conclude, democracy and illiteracy cannot move together. They act as antagonist to each other. Illiteracy destroys the democratic status of a state by offering barrier to political participation, paving way for corruption, spreading misinformation, exploiting basic democratic rights and eventually erodes civil society. On the contrary; efficient democracy act as an important means to reduce illiteracy through promoting education right, public participation in educational reforms, encouraging media for literacy campaigns, empowering women, and providing enough resources for education.