

The Challenges and Triumphs of Democracy in the 21st Century.

OUTLINE :

I. Introduction :

a - Background -

b - Thesis Statement -

" In its modern form, democracy faces multiple challenges such as electoral manipulation, rise in populism, political polarization etc. The triumphs of democracy in 21st century includes global activism for human rights and climate, e-governance, and technological advancements facilitating participation at grass-root level as well as international level."

II. Main body :

a - State of Democracy in the 21st century

b - Challenges faced by Democracy in 21st century -

① Increased political polarization dividing people's opinion.

- ② - Rising populism is harbouring xenophobia and extremism among masses.
- ③ - Accelerated use of social media facilitates spread of disinformation, manipulating public opinion.
- ④ - Role of capitalistic society - "Capitalism is not democratic, democracy is not capitalistic."
- ⑤ - Global erosion of democratic norms i.e. electoral authoritarianism, ethnic cleansing, genocide etc.
- ⑥ - Environmental challenges to democracy i.e. climate change, Pandemic (COVID-19) etc.
- ⑦ - Dominating role of military.

c - Triumphs of democracy in 21st century:

- ① - Digital connectivity allows grass-root participation as well as global activism for various social and political issues.
- ② - Technological advancement promotes efficient public administration through E-governance.
- ③ - Human rights activism and legislation on gender equality i.e. concept of free societies.
- ④ - Democracy promoted international cooperation to address global challenges i.e. climate change, COVID-19 etc.

- ⑤ - Easy access to social media
Online learning

d - Way forward

- ① - Implementation for free
- ② - Promoting level a
- ③ - Ethical regul
- ④ - Global environ

III - Conclusion -

⑤. Easy access to information through social media and inclusive education (online learning).

d- Way forward for democracy :

①. Implementation of electoral reforms for free, fair elections.

②. Promoting participation at grass-root level and reinforcing rule of law.

③. Ethical code for technological regulation.

④. Global cooperation to deal with environmental challenges.

Conclusion -

Although democracy can be traced back to Greece 2500 years ago, democracy in its modern form is very different from past, in some cases the complete opposite. In the 21st century, democracy operates on a constitution, promotes equality, enforces rule of law and provide freedom of expression to every individual. Despite remarkable achievements, democracy still faces multiple challenges such as polarized political views, rising populism, spread of disinformation, eroded democratic norms and a threat of electoral authoritarianism. In the book "How Democracies Die", Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt provide the case study of Europe and Latin America to highlight above mentioned challenges to democracy. The triumphs of democracy includes digital connectivity that facilitates participation at all levels, evolution of democratic systems i.e. e-governance, concept of free societies (all fundamental rights granted) and global cooperation to tackle challenges like pandemic and climate.

"The Third Wave: Democratization in the late 20th Century" by Samuel P. Huntington discusses the third wave of democratization and spread of democracy in the late 20th century. While discussing the transition from Authoritarianism, Samuel highlighted the challenges to be faced by democracy in future. He acknowledged that democracy is not a linear process and that some countries may face setback or reversal.

Today, more than 167 countries are operating on some sort of democracy according to the "Economist Democracy Index". People have the right to exercise their voting rights despite election manipulation in most cases. The democratic institutions are intact although the power is consolidated in some hands. And people have the right to express their opinion although it is lost in translation most of the times.

The severe polarization has made democracy vulnerable. A certain degree of polarization is normal in democratic regimes because it increases the interest of people in political process thus keeps democracy intact - But the use of political rhetoric to satisfy their personal agendas has enabled the political leaders to divide the masses and rule over them. The rise of an "us versus them" mindset in American sociopolitical public is evidence of this partisan politics that leads to polarization.

Similarly the rise of a populist rhetoric politics has led to a cult like following which promotes xenophobia and extremism among masses. Use of religious rhetoric as in case of Iran to galvanise public is just another challenge to democracy. The ongoing Palestine - Israel conflict has its base in the xenophobic mindset of Jews who

are killing innocent Palestinians in their own land, just to satisfy their political motives of gain control over territory -

The age of digitalization came with multiple challenges for democracy. The use of social media has facilitated the freedom of expression as it allows everyone to voice their concerns - however at the same time the line between ^{valid} information and invalid information is blurred and we are left in a pool of disinformation - This not only undermines the true spirit of democracy by manipulating the minds of public but also aids undemocratic institutions to gain control and power over people. In his book, 21 lessons for the 21st century, Yuval Noah Harari says,
"In the world deluged by irrelevant information, clarity is Power."

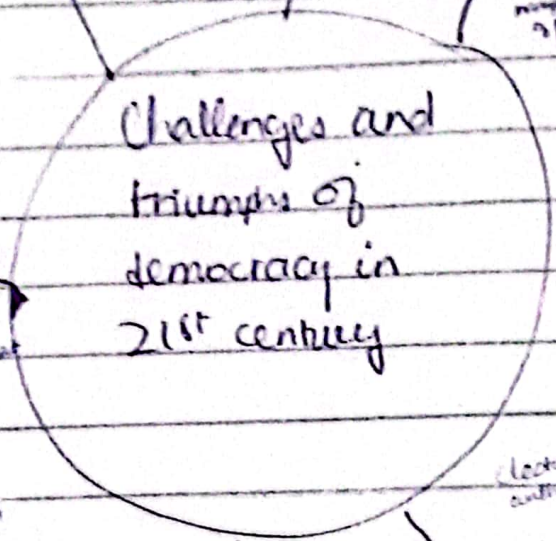
① Introduction

② State of Demo in 21st Century

Developing states

③ Challenges

- a) Pol. polarization
- b) Rising populism
- c) Spread of disinfo through accelerated use of social media
- d) Rising Rate of Capitalist society - "capitalism is not democratic, democracy is not capitalism"
- e) Undermining of rule of law - fundamental rights denied
- f) Global erosion of demo norms such as ethnic cleansing, migrants rights, freedom of expression
- g) Envir. challenges: Impairing democracy such as climate change, water, short election cycles



④ Triumphs

- 1) digital connectivity and direct communication, popular protest as well as global activism for various social & pol. causes.
- 2) Tech advancement promotes efficient public ad. through F-Soc
- 3) HR activism and global equality
- 4) Int. coop. to address global challenges i.e. Covid, climate change
- 5) Inclusive education and access to info through social media & internet

⑤ Way forward/Adopting democracy for the future

- a) explicitly declare reforms for free fair process
- b) limitation of gross-rat participation & strengthening rule of law
- c) Global code for tech regulation

⑥ Conclusion