



DECLINE OF PARLIAMENTARY IDEAS IN INDIAN LEGISLATURE

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Introduction

Representative democracy and parliamentary institutions have endured in India for seven decades and more. It is a great tribute to the strength and resilience. To say "Parliament of India is not effective" would be a gross over statement. Bashing parliament and parliamentarians have become a fashion by self proclaimed intellectuals. This has to be deprecated because other institutions are perhaps even more declined. Parliament inner polity is the supreme representative body of the people and for that very reason, public perceptions about the functioning of parliament are very important. It is undeniable that during the recent decades, there has been a tremendous erosion in the respect and esteem of parliamentary institutions and the legislators in general.

There is an overwhelming consensus in the academy and civil society for what is called "decline of parliament". Our founding fathers adopted to give us a system of representative parliamentary democracy and today, what if the representatives of the people themselves are losing people's faith in them? There is really a very cause of serious concern.

An overview of development of parliamentary institutions since the first Loksabha reveals some very interesting and some disturbing facts. When a thorough observation is made on the functioning of Parliament, the number of days on which both the houses of Parliament set each year and the time devoted to legislate laws, transact business, has come down considerably in recent years. Even when they do meet, the meetings are not productive because of disturbances, shouting and blaming and the houses adjourn the meetings irrespective of who is in the power. This blame game is very common, be it any ruling party and any opposition party.

Parliament was conceived as the legislature or the law making body but of late lawmaking has caused to be even the most important of its functions either qualitatively. From about 48%, it has come down to occupy less than 13 % of its time. The character of Parliament has also changed as a result of changes in membership composition and many things such as:

- a. corruption,
- b. nepotism,
- c. insufficient and dishonest representatives,
- d. lack of peoples participation,
- e. lack of political education and awareness,
- f. in accountability and irresponsibility,
- g. lack of strict and stringent rules,
- h. election malafides

are witnessed by people today.

There were times when our Parliament could legitimately boast of having some very outstanding and accomplished parliamentarians who were honoured by any parliament in the world. Once a member who drew the attention of Acharya Kriplani to the fact that he was criticizing the Congress party which had attracted his wife. The quick-witted Acharya retorted:

"all these years, I thought congressmen was stupid fools, I never knew there were a gangsters too who ran away with other's wife". The whole house roared with laughter.

The sessions will be held for limited number of days in the legislature but unfortunately our great representatives do not have time to attend and take active part in the debates in the house. Most of the time the opposition party members to walkout/boycott the sessions for protesting the decisions of the government. This is absolute irresponsible behavior of the Parliamentarians and in addition to this, our members do not speak out in the house for anything. But surprisingly, they never fail to take their allowances and privileges which they are accountable to citizens of India.

Until 1977, that is for the first 30 years of independence the opposition while small in number, was more effective and had greater impact potential. Perhaps it was so because of the high quality and character of membership on both sides and largely because a stable Government and secure leadership which could show greater magnanimity and accommodate opposition viewpoints without losing face. Once while rejecting an amendment moved by Rajaji, Nehru said "you see Rajaji, the majority is with me". Rajaji retorted "Yes, Jawaharlal, the majority is with you but the logic is with me". With the house, Nehru also laughed and accepted Rajaji's amendment. Such gesture is hardly conceivable now.



There has been a distinct change in the content, campaign and the culture of debates right from the first Loksabha days. In the earlier Loksabha, there was much greater emphasis and discussion of national and international issues. But today, increasingly more regional and even local problems are coming to gather evidence and become subject of importance to our members. We are more and more looking at National problems from regional, communal, linguistic or otherwise parochial angles rather than the other way round.

There has been, in recent years, quite some thinking about the evaluation of parliamentary authority, deterioration in the quality of members, poor levels of participation and the like. Today, one notices a certain cynicism towards parliamentary institutions and normal parliamentary processes and the parliamentarians. We have an unending debate in regard to the failing standards in the conduct of legislatures as evidenced by poor quality of debates, niggardly attendance in the legislatures, unruly behaviour of members, scenes of pandemonium and the like. Legislatures having members of criminal records, role of money and muscle power in politics are common topics of popular discussion today.

Sanctity of means has lost all value, meaning and relevance. If dacoits, smugglers, gangsters and foreign agents can help put us or sustain us in power, we are prepared to compromise with them. We do not hesitate to buy stability through corruption, bribery, distribution of spoils and yielding to the pressures and blackmail brought by partners and supporters.

Right or wrong, the people feel that the new breed of politicians in all parties are generally selfish, power hungry, greedy, dishonest hypocrites and power merchants for whom the nation comes last and the welfare of the people is at the bottom of their priorities.

Their only concern is to amass wealth and somehow get to stay in power. They are so busy in the struggle for power that they have no time or energy left for serving the people. People are aghast and what is worse is they are helpless. We must deliberate on the highest priority basis why things have come to such a pass and what can be done to restore the legislatures and legislators to their old glory and bring about a Renaissance of democratic faith and parliamentary culture.

Nowadays, the politicians think that the floor of the house is their own property and it is been used only for their political gains and power lobby. Irrespective of political parties, all the members are one. They are reluctant to participate even in serious debates which is the need of the hour and even more unfortunate thing is, our great leaders i.e., MPs talking bribe even to raise their questions in the house.

Conclusion

As we know, Indian Parliament is declining day by day, the people of India are losing their faith in representatives and even in representation. Perhaps, it may take another century for the Parliamentarians to grow up, understand and be responsible in this largest democracy. Though is a Parliamentary Supremacy in India always, there is a tug of war between the legislature, executive and judiciary and ultimately parliamentary decisions will prevail over all the institutions. They emerge as heroes.

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