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- ❖ **The Great Leap Forward**
- ❖ **Climate Change**
- ❖ **Women & Labour Laws in India**
- ❖ **CSR & Mass Media**
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Third Concept aims at providing a platform where a meaningful exchange of ideas can take place among the people of the Third World. The attempt will be to communicate, debate and disseminate information, ideas and alternatives for the resolution of the common problems facing humankind. We welcome contributions from academics, journalists and even from those who may never have published anything before. The only requirement is a concern for and desire to understand and take the issue of our time. Contributions may be descriptive, analytical or theoretical. They may be in the form of original articles, reactions to previous contributions, or even a comment on a prevailing situation. All contributions, neatly typed in double space, may be addressed to:

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Wither Democracy!

Parliamentary democracy in India is hailed as the largest democracy in the world. This may seem theoretically sound, yet functionally this system is being permeated with many ills that are eating into the very vital foundations of this democracy. Democracy implies norms and values, which are enshrined in our Constitution; however, these are being eroded day by day. Saddest aspect of this erosion is the systematic weakening of democratic institutions, especially the Parliament.

Some experts lament that Indian ‘democracy’ now functions at two layers of authoritarianism: At the level of the Centre, there is a majoritarian rule, which has little place for margins, minorities or dissenters. The rule of regimes at the regional level is no less authoritarian. The regional satraps are populist, authoritarian demagogues who manipulate the masses through threats and doles before the election. Some regional satraps turn voting during the election into a virtual act of conspicuous consumption, which makes one realize that there is a kind of regional Stalinism in charge. Electoral democracy has now become a choice of authoritarianisms. A strong Opposition, the very essence of parliamentary democracy, has become a chimera and regional parties seem satisfied in their own turfs. This makes one feel that the idea of opposition as the national art is lost.

In the absence of a strong National Opposition and regional parties confined to their respective turfs, the very idea of a strong national opposition is turning farcical. Democracy in India is stumbling because the two waves of authoritarianism — national and regional — have turned the idea of an opposition into a farcical entity. Attempts at creating a potential third alternative – a Third Front or Secular Front – have thus far not been because some of the leaders of regional satraps talk of opposition to stake proprietorial turfs rather than map out futuristic strategies of politics. It is almost as if there has been a lazy secession of regions, each pretending to belong to an imaginary nation.

One expert opines that with regional autarchies in place, the BJP cannot dent these domains owing to its politics of anxiety. It is further opined that the BJP will emasculate the Indian politics of hospitality. In fact, at every step, democracy as plurality is declining and the BJP is congratulating itself for it. There have been past governments in post-independent India that were supposed to have been established on the constitutional principle -by the people, of the people and for the people. The common man is seldom concerned whether a government has been by or of the people. Legitimacy of a government is best tested by the question whether it has been for the people or not.

While weighing this question, Dr Ambedkar had asserted that it would continue to be relevant as long as democracy survived in India. In the concluding session of the Constituent Assembly debate Dr Ambedkar said: “By independence, we have lost the excuse of blaming the British for anything going wrong. If hereafter things go wrong, we will have nobody to blame except ourselves. There is great danger of things going wrong. Times are fast changing. People including our own are being moved by new ideologies. They are getting tired of government by the people. They are prepared to have governments for the people and are indifferent whether it is government of the people and by the people.” Ironically, even after seven decades of governments by the people, of the people and for the people; we are still struggling to mend the cracks in society caused by caste division. In fact, these cracks are getting widened for narrow political gains at the expense of the nation. Caste-based vote bank has become an important political tool to browbeat the law and order machinery. While calling caste system as anti-national because it brings separation in social life, Dr Ambedkar cautioned against the malaise of caste and its attendant evils if India was to become a nation in reality.

Casteism, corruption, criminalisation and politicisation of the wings of governance have significantly eroded their integrity, efficiency and efficacy. The governments are elected by the people, but very few of them work for the people. These have to be made people-oriented so that people participate in decision-making and policy-implementation processes with increased enthusiasm.

— BK