

# Volitions and Machinations of Political Systems: Reviewing Democratic Indicators of India in the Twenty-first Century

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*Democracy has been considered to be the hallmark of the growth and development of a country's political system since the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the legitimization of a political system in order to gain international recognition as a nation-state has been intricately linked to the democratisation processes it achieves. The largest democracy in the world, India, has been going through various transitions and transformations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, something considered to be very much opined as de-democratization in recent years. The study examines multiple facets of democracy and utilises a mixed-methods approach to study democracy and its indicators across the globe and in India. This includes the utilisation of quantitative and qualitative research in analysing various facets. Data and methodology utilised for the data analysis have been accessed from databases of the World Bank and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.*

**Keywords:** Democracy; India; Empirical; Political System; Voice and Accountability; Whistleblowing

## *Introduction*

Democracy is a form of government in which power is exercised by the people, either directly or through their elected representatives (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; Lijphart, 2012). In a democratic system, citizens have the right to participate in the political process by voting in elections or expressing their opinions through other means, such as protests or advocacy, which includes principles of political equality, majority rule, and the protection of individual rights (Mackenzie, 1911; Schumpeter, 1942; Mutz, 2006). The effectiveness of a democracy depends on several factors, including the level of participation by citizens, the transparency and accountability of government officials, and the existence of checks and balances to

prevent abuses of power. The effective working of democracy requires political legitimacy which is linked to active engagement by citizens to be informed and engaged in the democratic process, a prerequisite to ensure that their voices are heard, and their rights are protected (Wuarin, 1895; *The Lancet*, 1896; Lipset, 1959; Burke, 2010). The study utilises a comparative analysis of political systems and a mixed-methods approach for analysing democracy and its indicators across the globe and in India. The mixed-methods approach includes the utilisation of quantitative (empirical analysis and qualitative research (case study on whistleblowing in India) in analysing various facets. Data and methodology<sup>1</sup> utilised for the data analysis have been accessed from databases of the World Bank and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

### *Democracy in India*

India is a federal parliamentary democratic republic (*refer* Part I of the Indian Constitution), which means that it is a democracy in which the government is organised into a federal system, and members of Parliament elect the head of government. The President of India is the head of State (*refer* Part V, Chap. I of the Indian Constitution), while the Prime Minister (along with the Council of Ministers) holds the real power (*refer* Art. 74-75) and is considered to be the head of the government (*refer* Part V, Chap. II of the Indian Constitution). A few years after India's independence, the first general elections in India were held in the 1950s (ECI, 1955). The country has a long tradition of democracy, and outlines the checks and balances for the different pillars of the Indian Constitution that guarantees certain fundamental rights to citizens (*refer* Part III of the Indian Constitution). This was enunciated at the beginning of India's Constituent Assembly debates. Dr S. Radhakrishnan, when he was called upon as the first speaker for the Constituent Assembly debate on 11 December 1946, emphasised this aspect during his speech. According to him,

*[T]he, people-Whether they are Hindus or Muslims, Princes or peasants,-belong to this one country... It is not possible for us, to think that we belong to different nationalities. Our whole ancestry is there... It is essential for any constitution which is drawn up to make all the citizens realise that their basic privileges--education, social and economic are afforded to them; that there will be cultural autonomy; that nobody will be suppressed; that it will be a constitution which will be democratic in the true sense of the term, where, from political freedom we will march on to economic freedom and equity, Every- individual should feel... proud to belong to this great land (Constituent Assembly of India Debates Proceedings – Vol 1, 1946).*

This summarises the core of the Indian democracy that was elucidated and articulated by the Constitution's makers as a functioning democracy, which involves a free press, an independent judiciary, and a relatively robust system of checks and balances. It has, for large stints of the post-independence period, held regular elections and had a relatively stable political system. Overall, India had a vibrant civil society and a free press, and citizens had the right to freedom of expression, assembly, and association. The Constitution of India guarantees certain fundamental rights to all citizens, including freedom of speech, religion, and assembly. It also establishes an independent judiciary and sets out the powers and responsibilities of the various branches of government. Elections in India are held regularly at the national and State levels and are generally considered to be free and fair. However, there have been some concerns on the rise of illiberal democracy, inadvertently linked to the influence of money, power, position and other forms of corruption affecting the electoral process (Hibbs, 1977; Persson & Tabellini, 1994; Zakaria, 1997; Treisman, 2000).

### *Empirical Analysis: A Global Comparison*

A definitive statement about the global state of democracy is largely improbable due to the different political systems and levels of democratic practices in various countries. However, there are several parameters/indicators that enable the option for defining the State of democracy. It is difficult to make a definitive statement about the global State of democracy because different countries have different political systems and levels of democratic practices. However, several indicators can be used to assess the State of democracy in a given country. These include *Free and fair elections*<sup>2</sup>; *Civil liberties*<sup>3</sup>; *Separation of powers*<sup>4</sup>; *Rule of law*<sup>5</sup>; *Transparency and accountability*<sup>6</sup>. Globally, numerous countries around the world meet some or all of these criteria, but there are numerous other countries where democracy is weaker or even absent.

Interestingly, these are interlinked to the politico-social awareness and engagement of the citizens, which either weaken or strengthen the democratic facets of a country. A comparative analysis of the global State of democracy in the top five national economies (based on GDP value in 2021), a comparison between the USA (22.93 trillion USD), China (16.86 trillion USD), Japan (5.1 trillion USD), Germany (4.23 trillion USD) and India (2.66 trillion USD) was undertaken. It was found that China, an authoritarian country ruled and controlled by a one-party system, was the worst performer in various indicators. This included Clean Elections, Inclusive

Suffrage, Free Political Parties, Elected Government, Access to Justice, Civil Liberties, Effective Parliament, Judicial Independence, Media Integrity, Predictable Enforcement, Civil Society Participation, Electoral Participation, and Local Democracy. Based on the data Germany was the best performing country, followed by the US and Japan.

However, India, despite being the largest democracy in the world, was below China in two indicators, i.e., Social Rights and Equality (which comes under the ambit of Fundamental Rights) and Absence of Corruption (which comes under Impartial Administration). Furthermore, a much more worrying aspect is that India is the second-worst, behind only the worst-performing China in many of these indicators. This includes the likes of Representative Government (i.e., Clean Elections, Inclusive Suffrage, and Free Political Parties), Fundamental Rights (Access to Justice and Civil Liberties), Checks on Government (Effective Parliament, Judicial Independence, and Media Integrity), Impartial Administration (Predictable Enforcement), and Participatory Engagement (Civil Society Participation, and Local Democracy). India was only performing the best (joint with Germany) in Electoral Participation).

**Table 1:** Comparative Analysis of the Global State of Democracy in the top five national economies (based in 20121)

	Category	India	Japan	USA	Germany	China
	GDP (trillion USD)	2.66	5.10	22.93	4.23	16.86
1	Representative Government					
1.1	Clean Elections	0.63	0.87	0.79	0.89	0.00
1.2	Inclusive Suffrage	0.91	0.92	0.93	0.96	0.00
1.3	Free Political Parties	0.56	0.74	0.93	0.75	0.14
1.4	Elected Government	0.89	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.13
2	Fundamental Rights					
2.1	Access to Justice	0.57	0.85	0.79	0.96	0.48
2.2	Civil Liberties	0.54	0.81	0.80	0.83	0.27
2.3	Social Rights and Equality	0.41	0.79	0.60	0.93	0.42
3	Checks on Government					
3.1	Effective Parliament	0.61	0.73	0.66	0.92	0.06
3.2	Judicial Independence	0.55	0.57	0.79	0.74	0.17
3.3	Media Integrity	0.54	0.74	0.74	0.78	0.24
4	Impartial Administration					
4.1	Absence of Corruption	0.42	0.71	0.71	0.91	0.48
4.2	Predictable Enforcement	0.59	0.82	0.74	1.00	0.39
5	Participatory Engagement					
5.1	Civil Society Participation	0.56	0.64	0.80	0.77	0.26
5.2	Electoral Participation	0.69	0.56	0.62	0.69	0.00
5.4	Local Democracy	0.67	0.94	0.86	0.99	0.02

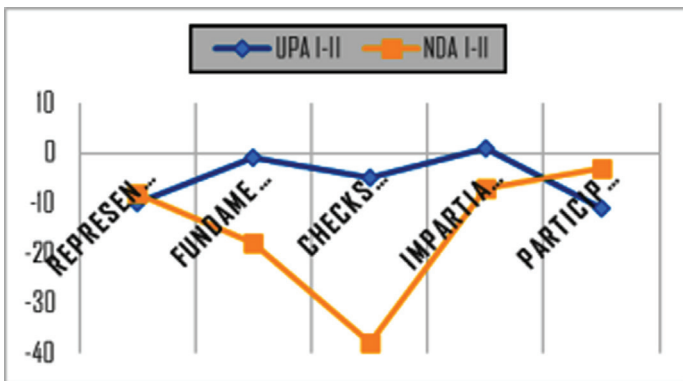
Source: Compiled by the Author from the International IDEA database

*Empirical Analysis: Comparison between various regimes*

Overall, India is a functioning democracy with a vibrant civil society and a relatively free press. However, it has faced many challenges during very brief stints of its post-independence period. However, like any democracy, it has challenges, and there is always room for improvement. Like in any democracy, India has its challenges. There have been corruption, violence, abuse of power, and ongoing debates about issues such as poverty, inequality, and the rights of minority groups. There have been debates about the independence of the judiciary and the treatment of minorities and marginalised communities in India. An empirical analysis of the various indicators in India under various regimes have been analysed in Appendix 1 and in Figure 1.

It is essential for citizens to be actively engaged in the democratic process and to work to ensure that the principles of democracy are upheld in the country, which mainly pertains to the involvement in elections in India. Elections in India are held at the national level for the Parliament and the state level for state governments. The Parliament comprises the Lok Sabha (lower house) and the Rajya Sabha (upper house). Members of the Lok Sabha are elected directly by the people, while members of the Rajya Sabha are elected by the state legislative assemblies. The prime minister, who is the leader of the party or coalition with a majority in the Lok Sabha, serves as the head of government. However, despite having a higher level of involvement from citizens in elections, the adherence to the democratic values by the governments in the Centre over the last decade has declined (Figure 1).

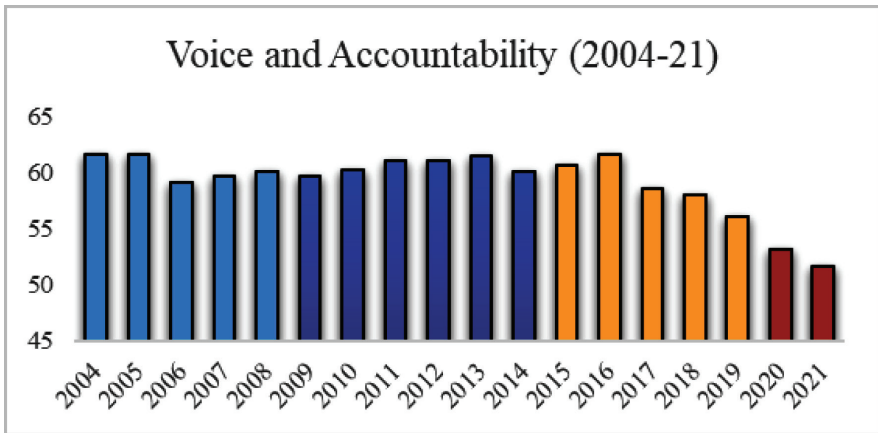
**Figure 1:** Comparative Analysis of various regimes in India from 2004-2021



Source: Compiled by Author from Appendix 1

A significant indicator of the existence, performance and positioning of a country’s democratic values and ideals is that of *voice and accountability*. The World Bank defines *voice and accountability* as “perceptions of the extent to which a country’s citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media” (Compiled from the World Bank). Interestingly, (in Figure 2) despite the slight dip in *voice and accountability* under the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), *voice and accountability* largely remained steady and stable in both the UPA-I (2004-08) and UPA-II (2009-14). However, this has not been the case under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). There has been a steady decline in *voice and accountability* under NDA-I, and especially since 2016; and further under NDA-II, it has been the lowest and worse. This has been the farthest decline in *voice and accountability* during the 21<sup>st</sup> century. A comparison of the voice and accountability amongst Indian governments (UPA and NDA) in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is compiled in Figure 2.

**Figure 2:** *Voice and Accountability in India during 2004-21 under various regimes*



Source: *Compiled from World Bank Database*

### *Whistleblower Protection: Case Study on India*

Whistleblowing is defined as “the disclosure of information related to corrupt, illegal, fraudulent or hazardous activities being committed in or by public or private sector... which are of concern to or [threat to] the public interest... individuals [and also] entities” (Transparency International Sverige, 2017). The whistleblower protection legislation in the country is linked to citizen rights and engagement,

which is a significant indicator of democracy and its facets in the country (deHaven-Smith, 2011; Terzls, 2016); like the *Absence of Corruption* in which India performs the worst. Whistleblowing supplements (and often complements) the system; and thus plays an essential role in exposing corruption and structural inadequacies. Hence, they help uncover the elements that threaten the nation and its resources. They enable the effective existence of democracy, the rule of law and society as a whole to exist, develop and perpetuate sustainably. The whistleblower (the person who does whistleblowing) helps expose corruption and thus enables uncovering of the elements that threaten a nation and its resources. Whistleblowers can be classified as internal (about wrongdoings within the organisation), external (outside organisation), alumni (former employee), government (government officials) and corporate (of a business corporation) (Wilde, 2017; Weiss, 2009; Tsahurldu & Vandekerckhove, 2008).

Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran (2005) have analysed the inherent issues of organisational and institutional structures, while Dyck *et al.* (2010) entail the need to provide financial incentivisation for whistleblowers. According to Magnus-Magnus & Viswesvaran (2005), this is correlated to retaliation and backlash, particularly related to the lack of mechanisms, initiatives, and actions in dealing with the issues that arise. The meta-analytic nature of the empirical research undertaken as part of the study by Magnus-Magnus & Viswesvaran (2005) laid the foundation for the modern-day understanding of whistleblowing research and processes (pp. 277-297). Meanwhile, Dyck *et al.* (2010) focused on the large number of frauds that have been discovered only because of the direct and/or indirect contribution of whistleblowers. This increases motivation amongst people to come forward and provide information about the fraud. The work also provides “an in-depth analysis of the cost-benefit trade-offs faced by actual whistleblowers” (pp. 2213-2215). This can overcome the lackadaisical or staggard nature of auditing procedures and consecutive inconclusive reports that often create more vagueness in understanding corruption and fraud.

The scholarly works by Dworkin & Callahan (1991), Dworkin (1992) and Dworkin & Baucus (1998) have examined the issues faced by whistleblowers, especially cases of being fired, harmed as well as experience extensive retaliation internally and externally. The use of *nullification* and *isolation* to silence whistleblowers, and to deride activities related to revealing evidence of corruption, fraud or wrongdoing has been evident. These studies indicate the need to protect whistleblowers, in the public as well as the private domain. They need to be provided

with accessible and reliable channels to report matters and provide robust protection from all forms of retribution, retaliation, disadvantage, discrimination or harassment. There is a need to put in place mechanisms for disclosure to promote reforms in rectifying legislation or procedural inadequacies, as well as prevent any future redundancies or lapses.

The scholarly works by Tudu (2020), Raghuraman & Babu (2019), Guo (2015), and Poocharoen & Brillantes (2013) brought to the fore the issues in Asia-Pacific countries lagging behind the West in regard to the whistleblower protection regimes mechanisms and processes. There has been an emphasis on including whistleblower protection laws as one of the important components to ensure the protection of merit-based systems. Based on a survey conducted in India, only 20.9 per cent of respondents reacted positively to the aptness and efficiency of the whistleblower protection laws. In India, the lack of accountability and transparency has often forced many whistleblowers, with the likes of Satyendra Dubey (1973-2003), Shanmugam Manjunath (1978-2005), Satish Shetty (1970-2010), Lalit Mehta (1972-2008) and others to take unconventional methods in uncovering the deeply entrenched roots of corruption in both public and private sector companies. But they have often been targeted, threatened, attacked, and/or killed by those responsible (Choudhary, 2019; Brody *et al.*, 2020). The lack of awareness of the whistleblower protection schemes is also a massive issue in the effectiveness of working of civil servants in India (pp. 140-160). The further sections of the paper delve into the aspects of whistleblower protection in India, undertaking both legalistic and empirical analyses of the situation.

Under the Companies Act 2013, the auditors (are responsible to) act as whistleblowers by reporting (suspicious or illegal) activities directly to the authorities or government. The Prevention of Corruption Act of 1988 provided the earliest framework for whistleblower protection in post-independence India and focused on information sharing with public officials and investigative agencies (GoI, 1988). The Securities and Exchange Board of India ('SEBI'), in a circular in 2003, amended the Principles of Corporate Governance incorporated in the Listing Agreement, whereby companies should formulate a Whistleblower policy and establish mechanisms for employees for reporting (Blair, 2018; Kalyan & Aseem, 2015).



*Table 2. Legislations dealing with whistleblower protection practices*

Country	Legislations
<i>India</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988</li> <li>◆ Public Interest Disclosure (Protection of Informers) Bill, 2002</li> <li>◆ Principles of Corporate Governance incorporated in the Listing Agreement (Amended in 2003)</li> <li>◆ Right to Information Act, 2005</li> <li>◆ Public Services Bill, 2006</li> <li>◆ Companies Act, 2013</li> <li>◆ Guidelines on Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability for Central Public Sector Enterprises, 2014</li> <li>◆ Whistle-Blowers Protection Act, 2014</li> <li>◆ The Whistle Blowers Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2015<sup>+</sup></li> <li>◆ SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Requirements or the Listing Regulations, 2015</li> </ul>

Source: *Compiled by the Author; Note: +passed in Lower House of Parliament*

The Principles of Corporate Governance incorporated in the Listing Agreement (2003) and the Guidelines on Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability for Central Public Sector Enterprises (2014), released by the Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises (through the Department of Public Enterprises), was prioritised and targeted towards improving the system of whistleblower protections in the public sector enterprises (PSEs). The interest of whistleblowers is “shareholders’ interest and in the larger public interest”. Similarly, the Listing Regulations, 2015 prioritises the conduct of independent directors (IDs) “to act as whistleblowers and act in the shareholders’ and the public interest for the implementation of corporate governance norms” (Shroff *et al.*, 2018). This conceptualises the framework and activities for the involvement of a whistleblower involves:

*[Providing the need for a publicly] listed company should have a vigil mechanism for directors and employees to report to the management concerns about unethical behaviour, actual or suspected fraud or violation of the company’s code of conduct. The vigil mechanism should provide for adequate safeguards against [the] victimisation of any person who acts as a whistleblower, including direct access to the chairman of the audit committee, in appropriate and exceptional matters (Ibid.).*

The Whistleblower Policy of the Listing Agreement contravenes the real intention of protecting whistleblowers, as it restricts whistleblowing in the interest

of the Company. Moreover, the Act doesn't penalise or even define the complainant's victimisation, providing limited powers to the Central Vigilance Commissioner (CVC). The Public Interest Disclosure (Protection of Informers) Bill (2002) would have recognised, categorised and legitimised whistleblowers for the first time within the legal framework as informers. The whistleblower protection framework was created on a pan-India level and applied "to public servants outside India", and encouraging "disclosure of information relating to the co (p. 1). This also provided options to circumvent the Official Secrets Act (1923) bottlenecks, except Article 33 of the Indian Constitution (Law Commission of India, 2003). However, this bill influenced many of the later legislations and mechanisms on public interest disclosure, which is inherently linked to the debate of fundamental (individual) rights versus that of national (state) security.

The Right to Information Act (2005) has been described "as 'twin sister' of whistleblowing... [and] has been used effectively to expose off the illegal activities" (Agrawal & Agrawal, 2021). The information obtained from RTI has often been the spur provided to increase and improve the country's whistleblower ecosystem, one which has been hitherto heard of. All major whistleblowers in India have utilised the RTI Act to obtain information on illegal transactional methods, activities and other related facets of various issues. It has often acted as a major champion for the defender of the fundamental rights of the country's citizens and, in many ways, the champion and proponent of protecting the Indian Constitution. The RTI Act increased transparency and accountability of the State at all levels and strengthened the democratic constitutionalism of the country. It has strengthened the use and purpose of all legislations preceding and succeeding it, particularly for improving the whistleblower protection ecosystem in India.

The Whistle Blowers Protection Act (of 2011, w.e.f. 2014) provides a mechanism that protects whistleblowers while emphasising public interest disclosure by public servants or any others before a Competent Authority (PRS Legislative Research, 2017). If any person is being victimised or likely to be victimised, they may file an application before the Competent Authority (like Vigilance Commission) and seek redressal. This law was enacted to offer protection against retaliation for whistleblowers. In instances of alleged retaliation, the burden of proof is on the public official to show his action was not retaliatory (vandePol, 2016; Chatterjee, 2015). Thus, this improved the condition and acceptance of whistleblowers in Indian society, legitimising the activities for future whistleblowers to act against any potential illegalities and the information that may arise. It also institutionalised the

status of a whistleblower and its activities within the public and private spheres.

The Whistle-Blowers Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2015 was brought up in the Parliament. It was intended to amend the 2011 Act passed by the Lok Sabha and provide mechanisms to receive and inquire into public interest disclosures against acts of (potentialities, potencies and possibilities of) corruption and/or any form of illegalities. But it disallows disclosures that the Official Secrets Act 1923 covers, often creating a dilemma in disclosure that might require certification by the State (PRS Legislative Research, 2017; SEBI, 2020). Overall, the public and private sphere’s whistleblower protection ecosystem was improved, though issues do circumvent potential whistleblowers due to legal, social, political, economic and/or cultural factors. An analysis of the impact of whistleblower protection in India’s public and private sector are provided below (Table 3).

**Table 3: Impact of Whistleblower Protection in the Public and Private Sector in India**

Rating in Sector		Public	Private
Transparency		Average	Poor
Reporting	▪ Internal	Excellent	Average
	▪ External	Average	Poor
Anonymity		Poor	Poor
Confidentiality		Average	Poor
Prevention of Retaliation		Average	Poor
Remedies		Average	Poor

Source: *Compiled by the Author*

The following measures and steps need to be undertaken.

- ◆ There is a need to inculcate best practices in whistleblower legislation in India, including internal whistleblowing for reporting, with transparent and accountable mechanisms to investigate and remediate issues. The implementation of mechanisms (including their creation, maintenance and updation) should be simple and effective. It should also incentivise early internal reporting in order to reduce, if not prevent (the instances of) loopholes and drawbacks in stagnating the system.
- ◆ The company reporting systems should be secure and confidential (at all times), enable easy access provisions for all potential whistleblowers, and operate independently from regular internal business reporting channels. This helps provide anonymity, and confidentiality, while optimising the effectiveness of

reporting and widens the scope of reporting to encompass and provide access to more significant but largely ignored or invisible sectors. This can prevent retaliation, victimisation or other related adverse consequences for whistleblowers. The legal requirements for the private sector should accommodate system requirements (even by local laws), thus reducing the friction in interpretation and implementation.

- ◆ The provision of training, education and guidance should be provided to (potential) whistleblowers, which, coupled with guidelines, will encourage the employees to come forward. In the private sector, employees would promote reporting of corruption and enhance the ability to detect this offence.
- ◆ The emergence of technology in the world has greatly transcended not just the role of whistleblowers, their methods, and the corresponding impact in the field. Thus there exists a need to transform current mechanisms and measures, with emphasis on the preservation of the rights of whistleblowers, and a provision of anonymity (except under emergency or limited situations), all of which is a prerequisite in effectively combating corruption and enhancing transparency as well as accountability in public and the private sector. Similarly, a precise statute of limitations can allow adequate time, reduce delays in the justice system, and improve predictability for completing the entire judicial process.
- ◆ Finally, strengthening, monitoring, and auditing mechanisms, as well as the compliance programs (due diligence, communication, monitoring, review and the like), can reduce and mitigate (often prevent) cases of misconduct and the occurrences of corruption and enhance the institutionalisation of corruption-free culture not only within the workspace but in the society.

### *Conclusion*

Democracy in India has been under a more significant transition and has become under grave threat in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The democratic ideals of a country like India have been questioned during earlier periods but have steeped very low in the recent decade. This is linked with the issues that emerged with the emergence of the NDA, which led to a considerable fall in democratic facets of the country, like the protection of fundamental rights, checks and balances on the government, and impartial administration. Globally, amongst other major national economies and even in comparison to an authoritarian one-party nation-state like China; India has performed poorly in indicators like social rights and equality and the absence of

corruption. This, along with newer challenges to democracy like digital transformations, misinformation, threats to individual privacy, and the transitioning nature of democracy to majoritarian democracy, are all causes for concern. The impact on *voice and accountability* in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and particularly the steep decline under the NDA regime, have been very evident, indicating the challenge to the freedom of expression, association, and, more importantly, the fourth pillar of democracy, i.e., free media.

The plight and condition of the whistleblowers in India have inherent issues that need to be dealt with. The mere existence of legislation and institutions cannot in itself lead to significant improvement in the condition of whistleblowers and their protection. But these legislations should be supplemented by actionable mechanisms and intentions from the authorities, institutions, and society together as a whole. In the public and private domain, there is a need to encourage and protect whistleblowers and provide them with accessible and reliable channels for reporting (whistleblowing) matters. Thus, there exists a need to transform current mechanisms and measures, with prior emphasis on the preservation of the rights of whistleblowers. A provision of anonymity (except under emergency or limited situations) of which should be a prerequisite in effectively combating corruption and enhancing transparency as well as accountability in the public and the private sector. The whistleblower regulations and procedures should be highly visible and understandable, with transparent, timely and enforceable mechanisms in place which can be reliable and trustworthy. The whistleblower regulations, policies and procedures should be strengthened, made highly visible and understandable, transparent, timely and enforceable, making the mechanisms (in place) which can be responsible, reliable and trustworthy.

## Notes

1. The tools utilized by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance include the “Best Electoral System Test”, “Dialogue on Codes of Conduct for Political Parties in Elections”, “Digital Parties Portal”, Electoral Redistricting App”, “Electoral Risk Management Tool, Global overview of Covid-19: Impact on elections”, “Global State of Democracy Indices”, “IntegriTAS Threat Assessment System”, “INTER PARES: COVID-19 Pandemic Parliamentary Responses – Data Tracker”, “Interactive Overview of Combinations of Electoral Systems & Quota Types”, “Interparty Dialogue Skills and Training Module”, “Myanmar Constitution Academy”, “Online Electoral Cycle”, “Political Finance Design Tool”, “Special Voting Arrangements”, “State of Democracy Assessments”, “Summit for Democracy Commitment Dashboard”, and “Youth Democracy Academy” (Source: Compiled from International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance database).

- 2 This is a fundamental aspect of democracy, as it allows citizens to choose their leaders through a fair and transparent process.
- 3 In a democracy, citizens should have freedom of expression, freedom of the press, freedom of association, and other civil liberties.
- 4 In a democratic system, the government is typically divided into different branches (e.g. executive, legislative, and judicial) with checks and balances in place to ensure that no one branch becomes too powerful.
- 5 In a democracy, the laws apply equally to all citizens and are enforced impartially.
- 6 In a democratic system, elected officials and other government officials should be transparent in their decision-making processes and accountable to the people they serve.

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Appendix 1: Democracy Indices in India under various regimes

Category	INDIA			
	Average Score of Government/Alliance			
	UPA-I 2004-08	UPA-II 2008-14	NDA-I 2015-19	NDA-II 2020-21
1 Representative Government				
1.1 Clean Elections	0.86 (+1)	0.80 (-6)	0.76 (-4)	0.63 (-13)
1.2 Inclusive Suffrage	0.91 (-3)	0.94 (3)	0.93 (1)	0.91 (-4)
1.3 Free Political Parties	0.66 (-1)	0.68 (+2)	0.68 (0)	0.60 (-8)
1.4 Elected Government	0.89 (0)	0.89 (0)	0.89 (0)	0.89 (0)
2 Fundamental Rights				
2.1 Access to Justice	0.59 (0)	0.59 (0)	0.60 (+1)	0.57 (-3)
2.2 Civil Liberties	0.63 (-2)	0.63 (0)	0.54 (-9)	0.51 (-3)
2.3 Social Rights and Equality	0.43 (0)	0.44 (+1)	0.43 (-1)	0.40 (-3)
3 Checks on Government				
3.1 Effective Parliament	0.68 (0)	0.69 (+1)	0.62 (-7)	0.58 (-4)
3.2 Judicial Independence	0.65 (+4)	0.60 (-5)	0.58 (-2)	0.55 (-3)
3.3 Media Integrity	0.78 (-2)	0.75 (-3)	0.59 (-16)	0.53 (-6)
4 Impartial Administration				
4.1 Absence of Corruption	0.48 (0)	0.47 (-1)	0.46 (-1)	0.44 (-2)
4.2 Predictable Enforcement	0.60 (0)	0.62 (+2)	0.62 (0)	0.58 (-4)
5 Participatory Engagement				
5.1 Civil Society Participation	0.71 (-1)	0.71 (0)	0.57 (-14)	0.56 (-1)
5.2 Electoral Participation	0.61 (-5)	0.56 (-5)	0.70 (+14)	0.69 (-1)
5.4 Local Democracy	0.64 (0)	0.64 (0)	0.64 (0)	0.63 (-1)

Source: Compiled by the Author from the International IDEA database. Values in (x) indicate change in the current value from previous value.