

Democracy & Liberty

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Democracy is a political system where the elected representatives of the people hold power.

Liberty is the power to live and act independently and freely without compulsion. Most people think that Democracy and liberty are synonymous. Democracy and liberty are not the same. In Athens, the birthplace of democracy, was a slave-owning society, there have been democracy without liberty at least for the slave class. Slavery ended in the United States of America after the American civil war. Both the Yankees and the confederates considered themselves democratic. In many of the so-called democracies especially in developing nations, democracy exists only in a form of election, but liberty is lacking because of poverty and lack of education. Democracy without liberty.

In India, the largest so-called democracy in the world, things are not working well. People like the untouchables are not enjoying the fruits of democracy. The government is run sometimes by crooks, fanatics and the leadership of the congress, which have been the ruling party since independence has been inherited. The whole scene is nothing but a devastating example of failure of democracy.

Democracy has spread rapidly in the past ten years, in Eastern Europe, Asia and Africa. There is rejoicing when a country holds its first election. Less attention is paid to the ethnic rivalries and abuse of authority and corruption that so often accompany it. In much of the world, democracy predates liberty, and is not working well.

In the US, there is democracy that produced a dysfunctional political system dominated by special-interest groups, fund-raisers and lobbyists and media. The average US citizen does not know the issues well enough. He/she delegated this to the president and the lawmakers. It takes big money to get elected, well beyond the means of an average American. There is little liberty if you don't have medical insurance, if you are unemployed or poor, if you are of ethnic origin (Black, Hispanic, and Middle Eastern).

Right now in the home of democracies like US, UK, Western Europe, there is a constant erosion of the liberty and privacy of individuals. There is occurring the democratic way, people or their representatives are voting to take away or limit liberties in the name of fear of terrorism. Big business knows everything about each individual based on their use of credit cards. Advertising is turning the young generation into clones in terms of what they eat, wear, and drive.

When liberty is eroded, democracy becomes volatile, and it turns into autocracy. Remember that Hitler and many dictators came to power in democratic elections. We who live in democratic societies have to guard against the erosion of individual liberties and privacy, if we wish to continue living in a democratic society. Liberty, freedom of speech and association, that are enjoyed by every segment of the society, are the only paths to real democracy. Let's not forget it.

