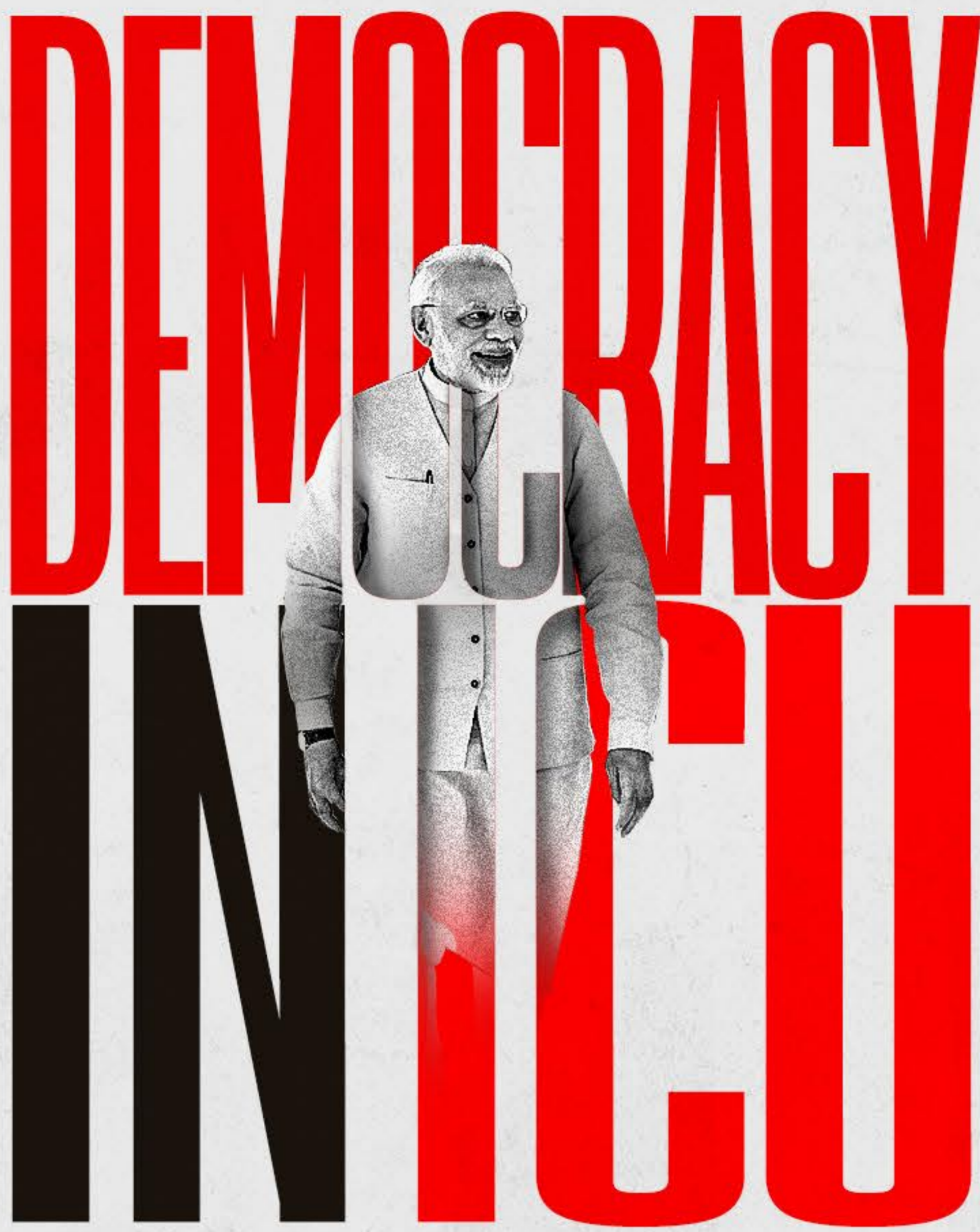


DEMOCRACY INDIA



Ten years after Modi's government came into power, India's democracy is on its last legs. India's democracy which flourished under the unapologetically pro-people UPA government, has evolved into a government for the select few. The principle of a democratically-elected government intended to be "of the people, by the people, and for the people", is being replaced by a government that serves a handful of billionaires at the expense of the people who voted them into power.

In the last decade, our institutions have been undermined, weaponised, and their autonomy weakened. Our press has been bought out to feed us a narrative that everything is fine, silencing voices that raise questions against the government. In the last decade, farmers and young people fighting for their haq have been met with police brutality. A record number of MPs have been suspended for questioning the breakdown of law and order in Manipur, for questioning the security breach in Parliament, for questioning the Modani Raj. The BJP government is afraid of questions,

India's Prime Minister does not believe he is accountable to its people.

Citizens are entirely excluded from the decision-making process, leaving them without a seat at the table. In 2016, Indians were informed by the Prime Minister that their hard-earned money was suddenly illegal. Demonetisation or notebandi intended to combat black money, resulted in 1.5 million Indians losing their jobs. The COVID-19 pandemic further revealed the government's preference for silencing its people over being accountable to them. Instead of addressing the urgent healthcare crisis, Modi called for Thali Bajao. Rather than acknowledging mismanagement during COVID-19, the government misrepresented the number of COVID deaths.

Manipur has been embroiled in ethnic violence for nine months, resulting in a state partitioned on ethnic grounds with no community feeling safe. Over 200 people have died, and 75,000 people have been displaced. Despite this, the BJP-led government has not taken steps to alleviate the situation or accept any accountability. The Prime Minister remained silent on the Manipur crisis for 75 days and then only briefly spoke about the devastation. Narendra Modi seemed to empathise more with Manipur's Chief Minister, perhaps seeing a reflection of his own tenure as a Chief Minister, where he too failed to maintain law and order that killed hundreds.

Over the past decade, public mandates have been dismissed in numerous states. Through its Operation Lotus, the BJP government has manipulated and enticed opposition leaders in Goa, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Chandigarh, and Maharashtra. The BJP disregards the peoples' vote, prioritising being in power, regardless of the nature of the method. Companies have been targeted for investigation by agencies such as the CBI, ED, and Income Tax to generate

funds for the party. These agencies have also pursued INDIA-alliance leaders in attempts to undermine the opposition and state governments not led by the BJP.

Both the Parliament and the Supreme Court have suffered from the assault on democracy. In May 2019, the Supreme Court ruled that the control over services in Delhi would be with the Delhi government. However, a week later, the BJP government issued an Ordinance, removing services from the legislative purview of the Delhi assembly. In doing so, Modi disregarded the Supreme Court's decision and the voice of Delhi's residents.

This same government suspended 146 opposition members for questioning a security breach in Parliament. Meanwhile, significant Bills, such as the Criminal Laws and the Selection of the Chief Election Commissioner and EC, were passed without any debate. During the BJP's second term, less than 20% of Bills were referred to a Parliamentary Committee. In contrast, during UPA's second term, 70% of Bills were sent to Parliamentary Committees.

On the same note, in states governed by opposition parties, Governors have been

weaponised to delay Bills, even though they've been passed by state assemblies. The message is clear: institutions will operate to the extent that they can do the BJP's bidding.

India finds itself in an unusual and alarming situation, with a government in power that is increasingly emboldened to erode its strong institutions. Babasaheb once said that "democracy is not merely a form of government, it is essentially an attitude of respect and reverence towards fellowmen." Modi's government has consistently demonstrated that it is not a government for the people. In a country where Babasaheb's Constitution is under constant assault, we must strive for justice, fight for nayay, and defend the pillars upon which this great nation was built.

