



Democracy: The “Crazy” which prevents the “Crazy”

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Abstract

The governing systems of different societies and communities differ. Not all are similar in their principles, but all of them focus on one issue- good governance, which is of cardinal importance in shaping the way a particular political system should function. While ancient polity made the crown the centre of all powers in a monarchical system, modern trends and increasing liberal thinking have shifted that locus of control to the people who now chose the people they want to be governed by. With this system of Democracy having its own pros and cons, and with increasing debates on whether the particular system is at all relevant in present times, my article makes an analysis of alternate forms of governance and how still Democracy survives as the “fittest”

Keywords: democracy, crazy, governing, alternate

Introduction

The growing debate on the relevance of the political system of democracy has been fuelled by the existing systems of epistocracy and technocracy which according to a growing consensus of opinion might be able to replace it in a better way. To scrutinise the emergence of such views, we need to look into the aspects in which Democracy has failed.

Democracy is the worst form of government except for all those others that have been tried.'

-Winston Churchill

The overwhelmingly popular change of “rule by Kings” to “rule by people” might have made the citizens of a country empowered with the right of choosing the ruler of their choice, but they cannot be the rulers in originality. It is ultimately the system which prevails and absorbs all the changes into the fixed pattern. People may get a chance to vote but once the candidates are elected to their positions, it is the bureaucracy that functions and not the individual candidates who have been chosen. The voter gets to vote and that is precisely the culmination of his power, what follows next is the same old pattern wherein the people are exploited and any hopes of a reform gets nullified. The following view is worth being taken into consideration:

*An election promise is a contract between the candidate and his potential voters: You give me your vote, and I will protect your interests. As with any contract, the stronger side makes sure to keep the upper hand: a tenant has to pay a deposit to the landlord before moving in, an employee has to work for a couple of weeks before getting paid (which, in fact, is a deposit he pays to his employer), and the voter has to cast his vote. If a plumber doesn't show up on the agreed date I can terminate the contract; if I hire a cleaning woman who doesn't clean I can fire her; if I vote for a candidate who claims to introduce free medical care for senior citizens and then doesn't. An election promise is the **only** contract in the world which is not binding, and politicians make sure it stays that way^[1].*

In the democratic set up, the voter assumes cardinal

importance in the system of voting and becomes the focus of attention. Naturally being an ordinary person himself, he is motivated by his own personal considerations, concerning his own welfare. In this sense, the choice becomes based on myopic considerations and the system that has to run for the holistic nation fails inevitably.

People who vote include a spectrum of opinions, bias, prejudice, majority-minority tussles, self interests, and within them often a wrong choice takes root. When that choice gets manifested by way of polling. The country or the society has to bear the brunt at large. Hence although rule by people have been appreciated, growing discontent with it has sparked the search for alternatives.

Epistocracy- the “Knowledgeable” are the “Able”

This particular ideology states that the suffrage would be restricted to a subset of people who are knowledgeable in the sense that they will be aware of the science of statehood, conversant of the operating mechanism of the polity of a nation, its specific needs, the way those needs have to be catered to, and lastly would be able to judge public sentiments comparing them with the best interest of the nation as a whole.

For 60 years, political scientists have studied what voters actually know. The results are depressing. Hundreds of different surveys, such as the American National Election Studies, find that the median voter is ignorant or misinformed not only about the social sciences needed to evaluate candidates' policy proposals, but even of basic facts and trends, such as what the unemployment rate is and whether it's going up or down. How we vote matters, but how any one of us votes does not. The chance an individual vote will make a difference is vanishingly small. Thus, we have little incentive to gather relevant information so that we can cast our votes in careful, thoughtful ways. Votes are like lottery tickets. Winning the lottery changes everything, but an individual lottery ticket is nearly worthless^[2].

The system of Epistocracy would not alter the democratic set up, rather it would upgrade the pattern by reducing the voter population. Although it might seem discriminatory but

it would be a refined subset of voters- people conversant with the system and having the ability to comprehend which policies and what candidates could take the country forward. Elections in this system would not be a mere lottery, at which any person can give a try, but a reasonable understanding of the beneficial aspects of an election. The polling process should not merely be a competition among candidates to secure their seats or portfolios, but it should be a judicious choice of which policies to be implemented, the expansion of government machinery, ways to bring about better social justice and demanding of such administrative and legislative provisions that a particular country is in dire need of. The quotient of knowledge or “knowing” comes to the fore in this case when the decision concerning the country needs to be a wise and informed one and not one motivated by a poor understanding of the system. The instances of criminals, incompetent persons, holding elected offices are due to the fact that their voting base or rather their vote banks comprise of people unable to think on broader lines.

One of the principal propositions in this case includes a test or an examination to be conducted to assess the voting capability of the voters and to test their knowledge of the system. In this way there can be a set of people who would qualify each time as voters and would make an informed choice for the country as well. The question that epistocracy poses is: why don't we discriminate on the basis of knowledge? What's so special about letting everyone take part? Behind it lies the intuitively appealing thought that, instead of living with our mistakes, we should do everything in our power to prevent them in the first place – then it wouldn't matter who has to take responsibility^[3].

Technocracy – The “Cracy” full of “Skilful”

A technocracy is an ideology or form of government wherein decision-makers are chosen for office based on their technical expertise and background. A technocracy differs from a traditional democracy in that individuals elected to a leadership role are chosen through a process that emphasizes their relevant skills and proven performance, as opposed to whether or not they fit the majority interests of a popular vote^[4].

Consequently the people possessing such technical knowhow are called Technocrats. The most important question which Technocracy has put up is about the expertise of a governing regime – the basic need of any Government is to discharge the principal functions concerning the country, be it economic, social, political or educational to name a few. However if the appointed people do not possess such qualifications and cling on to their offices nevertheless, the efficacy of functioning would be quite naturally disrupted. The administrative machinery of any country wants its portfolio holders to give the accurate solutions to the most complicated problems. Challenges include;

A Depression in the Economy that needs a skilful economist to shape the plans and strategies to combat the situation,

A social dispute between the majority-minority counterparts, or a religious tussle between communities that needs to be controlled by trained social scientists adept in their jobs,

Or even an educational plan or a medical plan requiring implementation by skilled technocrats in medicine or

scholars to understand the situation and carry on the administration accordingly.

Instances

1. In November 2011, Greek democracy was suspended and an elected government was replaced by a cabinet of experts, tasked with stabilising the collapsing Greek economy before new elections could be held. This was an experiment in technocracy^[5].

2. In *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy* (2015), political theorist Daniel A. Bell provides a strongly positive interpretation of the current situation in China. As Bell sees it, the fact that Chinese leaders, such as President Xi, have spent years managing cities and provinces as well as serving time in national ministries develops a level of expertise in both engineering and economics^[6].

In these various instances, the viability of the system has been established as a wise and constructive alternative to Democracy.

Democracy still wins big

After a really well informed and technical discussion on the possible alternatives to Democracy there are two introspective insights on the topic –

Firstly, the determination of a knowledgeable subset of population for Epistocracy, and secondly the administrative competence of a skilled technocrat who may be a highly efficient practitioner in his own field.

The answers to these questions are obscure and ambiguous at the same time. While we discuss about “cracy” or the form of Governance, the principal importance must be given on what the people want, what they deem fit for themselves, be it an ordinary person, a ruralite or an urbanite, the decision rests with them by virtue of being a citizen of the country in which the person exercises his right. Information about politics and administration is required, but defining only a scholar as possessing such information is biased-knowledge biased. People have the right to know what is going on in the affairs of politics in their own country and they are free to interpret it in whichever way they want to, even if they choose not to, it should be their own discretion. The choice which they make may not always be an informed one but it is always a free one, which can have both positive and negative outcomes, but at least the voters would be able to take responsibility of those choices which they have made.

Skills are highly important for running a governance but a technocrat no matter how much is he able to excel in his discipline, may not be an able administrator. People look up to administrative efficiency and not skills when it comes to governance. An able administrator or a portfolio holder may not possess expertise in his department but can always take technical assistance in combating issues and disputes concerning the country.

Democracy – the only system of governance or the “cracy” which prevents the “crazy” is justified in the sense that it is that viable option, the “fittest” surviving means of political administration which serves as an essential check on any fanaticism or overwhelming autocratic inclination, or a technological dictatorship of the Governing body. It makes people responsible by providing a pedagogical experience of how their choice can change the way they thrive and survive.

Rereneces

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