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RESEARCH ARTICLE

DEMOCRACY IN INDIA: SEARCH FOR A BETTER GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

Indian parliamentary democracy is a system of democratic governance in India where the Head of the state appoints the leader of the political party holding a plurality of seats in parliament as Prime Minister and he then forms the union council of ministers. This is purely a representative form of democracy and it has been adopted in India by the Constituent Assembly in 1950. This present paper seeks to analyze the economic costs of parliamentary democracy in India. While we are going to analyze economic costs of any form of governance we should first concentrate on the mode of production allowed in the state and subsequently concentrate on the procedure by which this mode of production is being reshaped in the state. Mode of production refers to the forces of production and their interrelationship. Major criticisms labeled against democracy are: (i) There exists no free choice of leadership due to party system involved in democracy (ii) There exists party politics and power struggle among parties (iii) Decision making takes time and (iv) Democracy is regarded as governance of illiterates. Apart from those theoretical criticisms labeled against democracy more strikingly we note that in a representative form of democracy there does not exist any justified desired correspondence between elected representative and his/her electors. Instead we find power monger politicians to appear before election and change of representative through exercise of our voting rights, if we really can, does not yield any fruitful result. Another striking feature of Indian democracy is that people are considered to be little aware of their own benefits and the proponents of representative democracy or so called politicians are the right persons to feel and understand what beneficial for the common people is. Surprisingly they claim to be knowledgeable enough to understand the benefits of their electors and their electors are illiterate enough to fail to understand their benefits. Last but not the least is the administrative costs involved in representative form of democracy in terms of cost of election and allowances paid to representatives. However, this present paper seeks to consider such entire burden of democracy that we do inherit from generation to generation and tries to find out a solution

INTRODUCTION

Democracy is a form of government in which people have the authority to deliberate and decide legislation or to choose governing officials to do so. When people have the authority to deliberate and decide legislation that is known as Direct Democracy and when people have the authority to choose governing officials that is known as representational democracy. The term appeared in the 5th century BC to denote the political systems then existing in Greek city-states, notably Classical Athens, to mean "rule of the people", in contrast to aristocracy, meaning "rule of an elite".¹ Western democracy, as distinct from that which existed in antiquity, is generally considered to have originated in city-states such as those in Classical Athens and the Roman Republic, where various schemes and degrees of enfranchisement of the free male population were observed before the form disappeared in the West at the beginning of late antiquity. In virtually all democratic governments throughout ancient and modern history, democratic citizenship consisted of an elite class until full enfranchisement was won for all adult citizens in most modern democracies through the suffrage movements of the 19th and 20th centuries.

The original form of democracy was a direct democracy. The most common form of democracy today is a representative democracy, where the people elect government officials to govern on their behalf such as in a parliamentary or presidential democracy. World public opinion strongly favors democratic systems of government as opposed to dictatorial autocratic system focusing on opportunities for the people to control their leaders and to oust them without the need for blood shedding revolution. Cornerstones of democracy include freedom of assembly, association, property rights, freedom of religion and speech, inclusiveness and equality, citizenship, consent of the governed, voting rights, freedom from unwarranted governmental deprivation of the right to life and liberty, and minority rights. Indian parliamentary democracy is a system of democratic governance in India where the Head of the state appoints the leader of the political party holding a plurality of seats in parliament as Prime Minister and he then forms the union council of ministers. This is purely a representative form of democracy and it has been adopted in India by the Constituent Assembly in 1950. This present paper seeks to analyse the economic costs of parliamentary democracy in India. While we are going to analyse economic costs of any form of governance we should first concentrate on the mode of production allowed in the state and subsequently concentrate on the procedure by

which this mode of production is being reshaped in the state. Mode of production refers to the forces of production and their interrelationship. In Marxian literature we come across various modes of production and its consequences. Historical evidences also confirm the conclusions drawn by Karl Marx. After independence the constituent assembly framed Indian Constitution and it has been stated to make India a socialistic pattern of state through adoption of an economic system that combines aspects of both capitalism and socialism and better known as Mixed Economic system. A mixed economic system synthesizes the elements of a market economy and the elements of a command economy. In a mixed economic system, free markets co-exist with government intervention, and private enterprises co-exist with public enterprises. Mixed economic system protects private property and allows a level of economic freedom in the use of capital, but also allows for governments to interfere in economic activities in order to achieve social aims. The idea behind a mixed economy, as advocated by John Maynard Keynes and some others, was not to abandon capitalism, but to retain a predominance of private ownership and control of the means of production, with profit-seeking enterprise and the accumulation of capital as its fundamental driving force. The difference from a *laissez-faire* capitalist system is that markets are subject to varying degrees of regulatory control and governments wield indirect macroeconomic influence through fiscal and monetary policies with a view to counteracting capitalism's history of boom/bust cycles, unemployment and income disparities. In this framework, varying degrees of public utilities and essential services are provided by the government, with state activity often limited to providing public goods and universal civic requirements, including education, healthcare, physical infrastructure and management of public lands. As it is unlikely that an economy will contain a perfectly even mix, mixed economies are usually noted as being skewed towards either private ownership or public ownership, toward capitalism or socialism, or a market economy or command economy in varying degrees. In "Human Action", Ludwig von Mises argued that there can be no mixture of capitalism and socialism. Mises elaborated on this point by contending that even if a market economy contained numerous state-run or nationalized enterprises, this would not make the economy mixed because the existence of such organizations does not alter the fundamental characteristics of the market economy. These publicly owned enterprises would still be subject to market sovereignty as they would have to acquire capital goods through markets, strive to maximize profits or at the least try to minimize costs and utilize monetary accounting for economic calculation. Friedrich von Hayek as well as Mises argued that there can be no lasting middle ground between economic planning and a market economy and any move in the direction of socialist planning is an unintentional move toward what Hilaire Belloc called "the servile state". Mixed economic system in India is basically characterized by the presence of market economy with some flavor of command economy and there remain the economic costs of parliamentary democracy in India.

Major criticisms labeled against democracy are:

- There exists no free choice of leadership due to party system involved in democracy
- There exists party politics and power struggle among parties.
- Decision making takes time.
- Democracy is regarded as governance of illiterates

Apart from those theoretical criticisms labeled against democracy we are now more concerned about how democracy works. Freedom of speech, freedom of expression, education and independence of Judiciary are considered to be the pillars of democracy. It is needless to discuss all those pillars elaborately as each of them is self explanatory. The one and only one question that is mostly pertinent is the extent to which we can enjoy our freedom. Actually there exist two types of restraint on the enjoyment of our freedom. They are forceful restraint and the other is obligatory restraint. Let us elaborate them one by one. First let us take up the case of forceful restraint. Forceful restraint comes from pre-poll and post-poll violence along with continuous threat to exercise our freedom of choice in respect of

electing our representatives. Obligatory restraint is much more serious and it works through various channels such as schemes announced and implemented by the Government in the name of improving the condition of targeted section of people or helping them rather than finding a permanent solution to their problems, Recruitment in various departments through name's sake autonomous bodies. Here arises a huge economic cost of democracy. In the following paragraph we will take up the issue. Planned economic development has been started in India since 1951 through adoption of Five Year Plans. During the earlier phase of planned economic development we do not find any exclusive policy on employment generation. At the later part of 1970s Wage Employment Programmes and Self-Employment Programmes were introduced for generating employment. Wage Employment Programmes basically aim at making opportunities of employment available to poor unemployed persons. On the other hand Self Employment Programmes aim at extending credit cum subsidy or training facilities to the rural unemployed people. During a long history of thirty two years so many projects, entitled as either 'Yojana' or 'Programme' or 'Scheme', have been introduced for generating Self-Employment or Wage Employment. The number of projects has been keeping pace with the continuously growing unemployment. Government deserves a high credit at least in respect of variety in entitling the projects. Some may argue that even in the event of rapid population growth government has been trying its level best to mitigate the problem of unemployment. But government cannot deny the failure of taking due care of the problem. There are sufficient reasons to have failure in Self-Employment Programmes. A Self Employment Programme becomes successful when it is applied to a sustainable enterprise and therefore it is necessary to find a sustainable enterprise. Sustainability of an enterprise again depends on the existence of sustained market demand. Hence an enterprise without sustained market is bound to collapse despite the availability of credit cum subsidy or training. It has been happening in majority of the cases. As a way out we can think of materializing projects with effective employment potential under government initiative through extracting locally available resources. It would have been much better if money spent for providing credit cum subsidy or training are utilized for finding and running such projects.

Same conclusion can be drawn for the activities of apparently successful Self Help Groups (SHGs). Government may propagate the success of activities of SHGs for very few years at the beginning, but how many of them would survive in near future is an open question. Though creation of wage employment opportunities is morally acceptable, its capacity is very limited. It plays a mere role in mitigating the problem of unemployment especially in the event of rapidly growing population and unemployment problem. In spite of such limitations government knowingly introduces "National Rural Employment Guarantee Act" or "Employment Assurance Scheme" or "Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme" simply to make poor people fools. It is not understandable which magic can create a uniform 100 days' job per one person per poor family in a year all over India. Though the Act speaks of remedial measures to be undertaken in the event of non-availability of job, it is still silent on the penal action to be taken against the offenders. Perhaps it was known that there would arise no question of penal action. Many of my learned friends have already pointed out corruption in respect of distribution of job cards, existence of non-utilization of funds and financial irregularities. But the existence of limited employment opportunities as compared to huge demand is the prime cause of birth of such irregularities. If government limits himself within his actual capacity in taking up the projects, he will be able to keep himself free from the criticism labeled as pretention of helping the poor. Until and unless government initiates new projects with wage employment potential, there would not be any expansion of employment opportunities and solution to the problem of unemployment would remain a far cry. Creation of employment opportunities undoubtedly solves the problems of unemployment, poverty and inequality on a sustainable basis and any move towards keeping people dependent on Government schemes involves a huge cost to the country. The implementation of populist schemes aiming at temporary relief and involving suboptimal or unproductive allocation of resources has

made it possible on the part of Indian politicians to make people fool and obligatory restraint to freedom has become operative. Another case of obligatory restraint is substantive as well as temporary recruitment in various departments through so called autonomous bodies controlled by the Government. Obviously such an arrangement gives rise to suboptimal allocation of human resource resulting in under utilization of productive capacity. Education performs an important role in the formation of human capital and entire education system is modeled in such a way that it produces a class of dependent job seekers who will have no other alternative but to support the ruling Government. Basically quality is measured by contribution of the learner after completion of learning. Now in order to measure a learner's contribution we may identify some specific fields where a learner uses to contribute. These fields may be job market, family life, locality, society or country. The main key of achieving quality in higher education is to pay attention to the contribution to be made by a learner. In this line of thinking the present day educationists in our country are keen on propagating some innovative steps, which they claim to be instrumental to ensure quality in higher education. Nowhere counseling for admission is used in true sense of the term. What is actually done is to select students only on merit basis, nothing else. Admission through counseling has an obvious advantage of having proper manpower planning and it involves a lot of time. Unfortunately educational institutions are not having proper infrastructure to implement counseling in true sense of the term. Teaching-learning process is not at all commensurate with the development of inquisitive mind among learners, extraction of potentialities of the learners as well as development of thinking ability among the learners. At different points of time the third tier has been suggested to introduce innovative steps to extract the potentialities of the learners. Unfortunately both syllabus and examination pattern are not so motivated. In-depth study habit is not being developed due to faulty examination system. For effective functioning of an institution activities of its management is required to be assessed and streamlined so that the proper objective of quality education can be ascertained. As management is bound to function within the limited sphere of liberty, its working in the matter of ascertaining quality is also bound to be limited. At the same time streamlining of management must be in conformity with the stated objective, not with the intention, of the Government. In an ideal situation there should not be any gap between intention and stated objective. It is highly unfortunate to note that our education system is suffering from the very existence of such gap. Persistence of such gap will surely lead to have continuous qualitative degradation in our education system. Last but not the least is the role of teachers in ensuring quality in higher education. Only sincere dedication and devotion to teaching can bring about success provided they are supported by the peripheral commitment to achieve quality education. Present day education policy lacks commitment and is full of ornamental suggestions. These suggestions are simply to divert attention from the core of the problem. There are so many people who are of very positive attitude on those suggestions. But very humbly I beg to differ with them in most of the cases as my understanding of the problem follows an inwardly different stream. What to do? I can't change my observations and feelings. In order to ensure quality in education the measures, which are really able to bring quality, are to be suggested and implemented. Hollow advices and so to say big words are bound to bring higher education devoid of quality. Hence there emerges a huge misallocation of resources and involves an economic cost of democracy. With a broken heart we note that in a representative form of democracy there does not exist any justified desired correspondence between elected representative and his/her electors. Instead we find power monger politicians to appear before election and change of representative through exercise of our voting rights, if we really can, does not yield any fruitful result. We the people are to be satisfied with the percolated benefits that are derived through the process of politicians being well established in power to rule us in accordance with their will. The entire arrangement involves an unimaginable huge economic and social cost in the parliamentary form of democracy. Another striking feature of Indian democracy is that people are considered to be little aware of their own benefits and the proponents of representative democracy or so called politicians

are the right persons to feel and understand what beneficial for the common people is. Surprisingly they claim to be knowledgeable enough to understand the benefits of their electors and their electors are sufficiently incapable of understanding their benefits. Last but not the least is the growing drainage from the public exchequer to meet the expenses of elections and bye-elections. As per the CMS report published on June 03,2019 "In the last 20 years, involving six Parliamentary Elections held between 1998 and 2019, election expenditure has gone up by about six times, from Rs. 9,000 crore to around Rs.55,000 crore." Therefore we can easily conclude that the theoretically claimed best governance involves huge economic cost at least in India. It has occurred due to a great deal of selfishness on the part of Indian politicians. Until and unless their attitude be changed we the people of India are bound to be the sufferer of Indian politics. Democracy will be like imitation jewelry and we should be in search of another better form of Governance.

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