

Striving for Inclusive and Ethical Leadership: A Guiding Principle for Good Governance

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Abstract

This new literature has aimed to establish its interconnections and its significance in the democratic governance. Looking at the Indian perspective of governance one can discover new dimensions, directions and developments to maintain the essence of democracy. Being the largest democratic exercise, the democratic politics is dynamic in nature at all the levels of its governing. Certainly, the Indian democracy has been the expressions of governance delving deep into its complexities, diversities and ethnicities to its principles. As rightly said by scholars and historians, the India democracy truly is a mother of all democracies in the world. In the limelight of this statement, the author has here made an attempt to delve deep into the origin of the practice of democracy in the way of republics of Vedic period. The article has thoroughly reviewed the underpinnings of Sabha and Samiti as the core administrative structures of the government. This assessment of nourishing democracy from the roots of Indian dynasties would be enriching for the knowledge of readers in the historicity of democracy prevailed in Ancient India. Therefore, the process of democratic structures and the principles of leaders is the main component of this article.

Keywords: Sabha, Samiti, Republicans, Democratic Governance and Leadership

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Introduction

The origin of democratic system of government can be traced back to the period of Vedic ages where the political system was a blend of the monarchy and republican governments. In Ancient India, the democratic institutions existed at two levels, one at the central assembly level and second at the local assembly level. (Bhat, 1954) The working of political institutions involved an immense participation of people who voluntarily take part in the discussions and make decisions maximizing their self-interest. During the Vedic period, political institutions were known as the Republic, a form of government where citizens elect their representatives who are capable to run a government. So, in ancient India the representative assemblies were popular among the democratic framework. (Jayaswal, 1943) The proposed paper is an attempt to study the concept of inclusive and ethical leadership which can be understood as a guiding principle for good governance from the ancient to modern period in the Indian context.

Methodologically, the paper will be looked upon through the historical approach to study the textual analysis of the historical concepts, terminologies, and political institutions drawn from the early literatures. The framework of the historical ideas can be understood in the context of political factors given in the text. In this regard, the paper will try to incorporate the historian ideas from the classical writings which have sketched the structure of democratic governance and leadership in the ancient India.

Therefore, India, as the mother of democracy triggers our mind to look back into the idea of democracy practiced and theorized in history. With this, it is important to glorify the civilizational ideals of the democratic republics of Bharat. Firstly, the paper will throw light on the theoretical understanding of democratic structures and its basis in the Vedic period where the roots of democracy could be highlighted. The next part would strive to analyze the principles a leader should possess in republics of different religions such as in Buddhism, Jainism, and Brahmanical. The paper would examine the significance of the ancient republic needs to be recognized in the contemporary Indian political philosophy and will make an attempt to trace the

place of Indian republic in today's democratic world.

Democratic Institutions in Ancient India: Rajadharma and Leadership

The democratic framework of Vedic India can be studied as a self-governing body of various regions. The autonomous or the independent bodies of the ancient period has been established in the forms of republics who represents the political cultures of their districts. The republican form of government are the ones who are deliberative and participative in nature. The study attempts to classify the republics of Vedic period through different traditions.

In the historical text, the republican government lays down its foundations on the substantive political institutions as the *Vidhata*, the *Samiti*, and the *Sabha* as the small assemblies of Vedic age. In the early days, the *Sabha* was recognized as the tribal assembly functioned for the inequalities faced by the social classes. In the *Sabha*, initially the pastoral affairs used to be discussed demanded by the people. Later on, the *Sabha* started operating on the grounds of political administrations and exercised the judicial functioning. The members of the *Sabha* were the heads of the family who would express their issues and problems in accordance with the people. Thus, the *Sabha* assembly was constituted as the judicial body of Vedic traditions. (Sharma R. S., 1968) Secondly, the *Samiti* Assembly is understood as a sovereign body which represented the people of the villages and towns. The functioning of the *Samiti* assembly comprised the non-political activities particularly with the discussion on the religious traditions. The administration of these two assemblies was processed under the rule of king who would be elected by the people in a deliberative manner. Indeed, these two bodies were described as the daughters of Prajapati in the text of Atharva Veda. (Jayaswal, 1943) Thirdly, the *Vidhata* Assembly has been identified from the Rig Veda literature as the political institution that provided assistance to the other institutions. The *Vidhata* assembly worked for the urban functionaries of the people in the village. (Singh & Chandra, 2014)

In Ancient India, the republican form of government is designated with different terminologies in distinct traditional writings. It becomes important to identify the various republics of the historic

times. Starting with the zone of west north, we have the lands of republics in the region of Punjab and Indus valley where the republics belonged to the class of *Damanis*, *Kambojas*, the *Parsvas* and the *Vrikas*. In the regions of Agra to Jaipur, we could see the *Arjunyaanas* republics who worked in close relation with the *Yaudheyas*, successor of Dharma. The *Yaudheya* republic was stretched from the city of Saharanpur to Bahawalpur in west, from the lands of Ludhiana to Delhi in central. The Ayodhya moved across the regions with three republics like, Rohtak in Punjab, Rajputana and Panchala as Bhaudhanyaka. Likewise, Alexander' historians featured the *Madras* republic of Punjab as similar to the *Kathas* of Saikot state. Also, the *Kshudraks* and the *Malavas* were the pioneer republics mentioned in the Mahabharata. Together, the two republics had migrated towards the Ajmer-Chitor -Tonk regions. Moreover, the *Ambashtas* republican state was signified as the Sabastian of Greece in the neighboring area of Kshudrakas republics. Besides, the regions of north west zones, the existence republics of the north east zones could be identified from the writings of the Buddhists and Jaina texts who have flourished the republican states in the districts of Gorakhpur and Bihar. In these regions, they were two types of republics one as the smaller ones as the *Bhagga*, the *Bulis*, *Koliays* and the *Moriyas*. In contrary, we had the larger ones as the Sakyas, the *Mallas*, the *Lichchhavis* and the *Videhas*. (Altekar, 1949)

The origin of republics in the Buddhist literature has been traced out from the conversation of chancellor of Magadha and Buddha. The chancellor of Magadha wished to know about the thoughts of Buddha on the religious and political constitutions (Sangha). The Buddhist adopted the political name of Sangha as the republican of Bhikshu. The republics denoted the lands of east of Kausambi to the sub districts of Gorakhpur and Himalayas. The very known recorded republics were identified by Panini and Kautilya across the small states of different districts. They were, the birth place of Buddha, the *Sakyas* in the district of Gorakhpur, the *Lichchhavis* in the district of Muzaffarpur, the *Mallas* of the district Champaran. These political organizations functioned independently each having its own assembly for a common meeting, for all termed as *Santhagara* in their region. (Jayaswal, 1943)

The republic of *Lichchhavi* with the capital of Vaishali in the district of Muzaffarpur consisted of

three rulers as, the *Raja* (president), *Upa-raja* (vice-president), and *Senapati* (generalissimo). These rulers came to be known as the republican rulers as termed by Jataka. In the Lichchhavi republic, the head of the family would be elected as the king of the state and the government would follow a system of triple fortifications where the rule would be vested in the foundations of the families of a society. Another typical type of republic has come to be known as the *Mallas* quoted in the *Majjhima Nikaya*. The epic of Mahabharat, positions the Mallas republic into the two branches of political entity. Similar to the Lichchhavi republic, the Mallas government also had an assembly functioned by the head of the tribal families. The Jaina Pali texts recognized the Mallas as the powerful in terms of political powers in those days. (Sharma J. P., 1968). During the period of Jainism evidences can be articulated in the *Nayas* of the Prakrit Jaina texts. The small *Naya* republic is geographically placed in the territory of Kundapura. The text implies that the Naya consisted of the warriors, commanders, generals and the heads of the Kshatriya families likewise of the members of Lichchhavis. The Naya was a small assembly that worked for the welfare of the citizens and would deal with the business of the public. (Sharma J. P., 1968)

The article discusses the identifications of various republics discovered by different texts in different district with different terminologies. And now, it is equally important to understand the working of the political institutions in these republics. In general, the working of the political system can be understood from the literature of Buddhism where the administrative system of the larger republics differed from the smaller republican states. The smaller republics like the *Sakyas* and the *Koliyas* had a control over few of the villages. These republics had a Local Assembly Hall where they would meet together and discuss on the matters of business affairs like on the issues of zamindari. The members were known as the *Raja* and *Uparaja* who would govern with the group of artisans, farmers, and servants. On the other hand, administration of the larger republican states like of *Lichchhavis*, the *Malavas*, and the *Yaudheyas* had the supreme power vested in the Central Assembly. These republics worked in different provinces engaged with privileged classes. These republics likely had the dominant voice of the headman of the families. Also, they served the purpose of religious and social ceremonies in the towns. So, the assemblies

of their respective districts functioned as the multipurpose hall for the people.

It is also significant to study the administrative proceedings of the matters practiced in the central governments of the Buddhist Sangha's. The central government of Buddhism literature consisted of the executive and legislative Assembly to manage the law-and-order affairs of the republican states. The two assemblies can be generally understood from the work on "State and Government in Ancient India" by Anant Sadashiv Altekar, who has explained the comprehensive aspects of the ancient polity. On one hand, we had the Executive Assembly that consisted of the head as the chief executive officer, elected as the President of the assembly. The main aim of the president was to ensure inner harmony in the regions. The council had different chambers working on different dealings. For instance, the justice chamber looked into the civil cases, the state fundings were handled by the treasury chambers and the international relations were dealt with the foreign affairs chamber. (Altekar, 1949)

In the same way, we can see the current executive body of our parliament being functioned under different departments with each having its official heads. On the other, the Legislative Assembly, as the supreme assembly constituted with a huge number of members. It is the law-making body with supreme powers that formulates the laws in concern of all the aspects of political life. The proceedings of Assembly conduct deliberate decisions on all problems. The opinions on the matters are taken into considerations in the presence of all the members. So, the different districts had units of republic who would function to safeguard the territorial integrity.

Leadership as the Key to Good Governance: Ancient to Modern Period

The principle of good governance provides for a systematic processing approach by the government directing, controlling and accounting its citizens and the nation. The core elements of course lie in the fraternity of an administration including the rule of law, equity, and effectiveness, transparency and integrity. While the leadership provides the just of how it should be and why it should be in getting the things done, it is the human ability to influence, inspire and intimate the people towards achieving a desired goal. For a good governance, one must have a principled and

personified leader who sets clear direction, determination and dedication for a sustained and accountable administration. In this light, the paper talks about three different types of leadership that would act like some important features to be inherited in a leader.

Political Leadership

The phenomena of leadership in the Indian elections acts as an important tool in deciding the governance of the democratic system. A charismatic leader showcases the ability to convince the people through their speeches, visions and behavioural acts. In a competitive game of power, the element of leadership is so important that the leaders tend to be connotated as the future of the country. The role of political leadership as a perspective leads our mind to look at three important characteristics a political leader must have. The first feature of a political leadership is the core *willingness to communicate* for two main reasons; to develop communication skills and to appease the masses in their favour. Thereby, this may result in the effectiveness of communication and confidence. Secondly, one of the most important characteristics is the *storytelling by a leader* to build up his followers and strengthen the organization. As rightly said by the scholars, the right statement seems to be a worth of thousand theories. The stories narrated reflects the sparking message with a transmitting of values and mirror down the knowledge and personality of a political leader. Lastly, the critical feature of showcasing the *emotional competent* of a leader. This feature outlines the rational mind of a leader, the ability to negotiate and shape the public opinion, and deliver the most effective speeches. Here, the important part is of channelizing the emotions countered while delivery of words in public. Therefore, the political leadership is an interactive endeavour largely shaped by the narratives narrated in the public gatherings. From a viewpoint of political communication, leadership is the most effective when the key measures fuel the impressions of communicating. Hence, at the core of the human experience one can say that leadership in general and political leadership in particular is an action rather than a position to compete for.

In this article, I would like to talk about the two another variant of leadership that entails a critical aspect for a just governance. The democratic politics strive for inclusive and ethical leadership where each plays a substantive role in deepening democracy.

Inclusive Leadership

This form of leadership is a way of governance which seeks to actively represent the different segments of society such as gender, religion, race, caste, etc. The core idea of inclusive leadership is to promote equal opportunity to people in a free and fair means. This entitles the system to ensure the uniformity in representation, participation and decision-making process. The 75 years of electoral journey has narrowed the gap of exclusion of marginalised sectors and has widened the scope for subalterns. Some of the key characteristics of inclusive leadership are; Firstly, *empathy* where the leaders here listen to the problems and concerns of the marginalised sectors. They tend to show their empathy towards working for their wellbeing. Secondly, *flexibility* as an inclusive leader considers a wide range of approaches to diversify their thoughts. The mind mapping skill becomes strong here since a leader thinks and act in a multidimensional way. Thirdly, *equitability* as a good leader is the one who gives equal opportunity to others and tries to build a strong team force. He/she gives a chance to others irrespective of any form discrimination to ensure growth and development for all, with all. Lastly, *accountability* as it is the responsibility of a leader to maintain transparency and accountability in its working. It is to promote inclusive environment with full cooperation and coordination of the team members.

Therefore, we can say that, the inclusive leadership could be more efficient at the grassroot level of democracy which would bring in transparency and accountability in a more coherent way. However, at the national level the leaders with an inclusive approach can embrace the innovations and creativity of the team members in free and fair deeds.

Ethical Leadership

The form of ethical leadership is seen when the charisma of leadership is formulated or developed on the vital principles of trust and respect for the common good. The ethical leadership forms the basis of practicing its leading tenets in a morale manner. To understand the basis of practices involved in processing ethics at the ground level, we must look at few of the features of this kind; First, *respect* the foremost requirement in a leader is to respect the rights, dignity and individuality of others. A good leader can claim to be good only if one knows how to respect

others belongingness and national identity. Second, *trustworthiness* in an ethical leadership, trust tenet takes a cornerstone in the process of leadership. This quality of leadership is the only element which makes the leader reliable to its citizens in a country. The world around develops trust for their chosen leader in a belief of leader's promises ventured for them. Third, *fairness* in the leader of a nation is considered to be ethical when he/she knows the real common man and their dire needs. They make decisions on the basis of the needs and welfare of the common man. This involves an equity and transparency in serving the communities and citizens with right goods. Last, *sustainability* is an efficient leadership quality entails for a future perspective in every aspect of a nation. They strive for longevity, stakeholders, political gains in democratic politics.

Moving beyond the popularity and power, the ethical leadership strives for a conviction towards its citizens and communities. The leader expresses a strong commitment to its values, accountability and integrity. One can visualize an ethical leadership in leaders of federal level elections. Since, they believe in building a strong connection with the citizens and promises to work for them consistently.

Concludingly, we can see that our modern institutional framework of democratic system can be compared with that of ancient times. For instance, the Sabha and the Samiti during the early Vedic phase corresponds to modern day legislative assemblies and councils. Indian society shares an inextricable link with democratic values. Rulers and kingdoms during different time periods have provided participation and autonomy to the villages, people, and the administrative units, etc. Thus, one can see that there are various evidences to highlight the republican nature of ancient Indian polity and society. The existence of various mechanisms that existed back in the ancient times include the systems of deliberations, institutions of democratic self- governance, representation, consensus, participation among others. Therefore, modern Indian society and polity hold the democratic values that existed in the past and it shall go on, strengthening the future course of India's democratic journey.

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