

A strong government is a myth! | Sakshi Guest Column On Strongest Government

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It is a myth that the best governance can be achieved only through one party and one leader. This myth leads people to believe that coalition governments are ‘weak’ and unable to make decisions. But history shows that there is no difference between unitary or coalition governments in passing laws. After the Great Depression in America, welfare policies were implemented as part of the ‘New Deal’ (1933). This happened during a government that did not have an absolute majority. Coalition governments have become mandatory in India since the late 1980s. It was during this period that the Indian economy was liberalized. Decisive poverty alleviation programs were implemented.

The prevailing narrative of re-electing the current central government is based on the myth that a vast country like India can only be best governed by a single party and a single leader. This myth of ‘strong government’ – multi-party, coalition-based governments are ‘weak’, unable to make decisions or pass laws. However, research in the field of political science shows us a different picture.

Globally, there are mainly three types of democratic governments. They are: Presidential, Parliamentary and Consociational governments. In each of these forms of government, evidence shows that multi-party governments or coalition governments are not only more stable but also better in terms of citizen welfare.

America follows a presidential system. In this system, Adhya Kshadi is directly elected as the executive head. But treasury powers, the ability to raise taxes and spend money, are vested in the House of Representatives. David Mayhew's book *Divided We Govern: Party Control, Lawmaking and Investigations, 1946–2002* debunks the common misconception that the American national government is only effective when a single political party controls both the presidency and Congress.

This book reveals that there is no difference between a unified party or different parties in passing laws. In fact, after the Great Depression, welfare-based policies were implemented as part of the New Deal in 1933. Also, the current President Joe Biden's recently passed Inflation Reduction Act, 2022 includes measures to keep inflation low, lower drug prices, and support clean energy as part of welfare-based policies. They were approved only under governments that did not have an absolute majority.

In contrast, the Affordable Care Act (ACA), also known as the Obamacare Act, was passed in 2009 when the Democratic Party held the presidency and held majorities in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. However, the Republican Congress members and governors strongly opposed this law. Efforts have been made to cancel it. This suggests that the opposition would oppose such legislation, even if they knew it would have health care benefits for their constituents, when they could not be part of it.

Parliamentary democracies in Western Europe, such as Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium, are often governed by coalition governments centered around left-wing or conservative parties. Since 1945, Germany has been ruled by right-wing or liberal coalition governments. The 'Christian Democratic Union of Germany' represents the right-wing party and the 'Social Democratic Party of Germany' represents the centre-left government.

And 'organised' governments can be seen as a sub-division of the parliamentary system. These include only coalition governments. In countries like Italy, Lebanon and Ethiopia, different ethnic, religious and linguistic groups are forced to coexist. Coalition governments are formed by the consensus of all these groups. have veto power. Here if one group blocks another on something, the latter is likely to block that group in return.

Coalition governments have become mandatory in India since the late 1980s. It was during this period that the Indian economy was liberalized. Decisive poverty alleviation programs were implemented. It also demonstrated the country's nuclear weapons testing capability. The Congress-led UPA government at the Center from 2004 to 2014 enacted several citizen and rights-based laws. These include Right to Information Act (RTI) of 2005, National Rural

Employment Guarantee Act of 2006, Forest Rights Act, Right to Education Act of 2009, Right to Food Act of 2013; There is the Land Acquisition, Resettlement and Resettlement (LARR) Act.

It led to BJP's victory in 2014 when he propagated the myth that the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was a weak and puppet government. But let's see what 'strong leadership' has brought us since 2014. This government has not passed any rights based laws. There is no evidence of governance transparency and accountability.

Instead, the Modi government wants to hold people accountable. Show me your money through demonetisation; Pay me your taxes through GST. Abrogation of Article 370 and Citizenship Amendment Act were also done. It was only after protests that three farm laws brought by the central government in 2020 were scrapped.

Distribution of gas cylinders or construction of toilets under the Swachh Bharat scheme are just extensions of the existing welfare policies. This government has not shown any new innovation or new direction. Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana provides financial services to open around 50 crore bank accounts. However, 4.12 crore people have zero balance by July 2023. Meanwhile, since January 2018, no transactions have taken place in 6 crore accounts.

Rights-based laws have been weakened under this government. Funds allocated to Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme have decreased. By weakening the Right to Information Act, the government has kept itself above scrutiny. The various schemes or the attitude of the government are not to promote welfare. Part of creating a kind of feudal dependency. The feudal lord Prime Minister himself appears on all gas stations and on all our Covid vaccination certificates.

When we review the history of one-man government vs. coalition government, we realize that the arrogance of strong leaders is not always good for their people. Islamic law includes the concept of ijma. That means consensus. It is based on the understanding that a community of scholars comes together to make decisions on behalf of the larger community.

We are witnessing a phenomenon in the form of opposition alliance 'India'. Many parties are coming together to represent different groups of people in India. Hope voters will give them a chance.

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