Application of Digital Networking for Enabling Trust Based Democracy

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Abstract- In this paper, the argument has been established that albeit democracy being a great concept, its implementation is flawed and based on rules limited by technology available at the time it was conceptualized and first implemented. The true power of democracy would be achieved if all people are empowered all the time and not just momentarily during elections. This paper attempts to address this by rethinking the implementation of democracy and tries to bring genuine power in the hands of people. This paper explores the concept of trust delegation and chaining, and application of digital networking technology to achieve the goal of bringing true power to the people.

Key Words- Democracy, Digital Networking, Trust Delegation, Chain of Trust, Digital Technology, Elections, Government, Electorate

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Democracy by its very definition as given by Abraham Lincoln which states, "Government of the people, by the people, for the people" has been specifically designed to give power to the people to choose their own representatives for governance. The purpose of democracy is to end concentration of power in the hands of a few men like Kings and Queens, tyrants and dictators, autocrats and despots.

In theory many countries in the world practise democracy and we all know this fact. For illustration, the origin of democracy started in ancient Greece around 508 B.C. by Cleisthenes and Pericles and then in Roman Empire followed by England which has been looked upon as the cradle of democracy. Many countries including most importantly for us India are now considered democracies in the proper sense.

2.0 DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

For the rest of this paper we will elaborate and discuss in the context of India even though most issues and solutions will apply to many other countries.

The question put forth is whether as citizens of a democratic country one feels really powerful or does one feel helpless. It would be extremely ironical if a lot or most people living in a democratic country feel powerless. Yet if we take a survey we are sure most people feel totally helpless and worst they feel cynical. Democracy then, has failed to make people powerful or even make them feel powerful. We need to understand why this is the case and what can be done today to fix the problem.

Democracy is a great concept in political context for any country. Like many great concepts, the realization of its promise depends on its execution. The implementation of democracy and not democracy itself has failed us. We now look at some of the reasons why and how we propose to fix this dilemma.

Today democracy is executed in the form of elections. Elections are the pivotal activity of democracy. By the process of election people are able to choose representatives who will govern them for the next many years. This is great and certainly does give power to the people to elect their government. In a truly democratic country if free and fair elections are held people do have power for that moment in time but herein lies the real problem.

Elections are the only times when people can truly exercise their right. The representatives are elected and for the next many years people quite literally have no say at all in what happens. There needs to be a better mechanism for the implementation of democracy which empowers people and not just empower them to select representatives.

3.0 DRAWBACKS OF DEMOCRACY

Let us quickly look at the way democracy works today and ask some questions:

3.1 Who can get elected?:

In theory any citizen can stand for election. This is in theory. Practically any person who stands for election without very large sums of money is unlikely to make any headway. He will never have the wherewithal to get elected. As a result of this only large political parties and candidates of those parties can expect to get elected. Hence, the theory cannot be practiced in real life.

3.2 Elected or not elected:

The concept of election is flawed in the sense that you can either be elected or not be elected. This is not as fair as it seems because a person who is not elected may still have a lot of support and backing of a lot of people. Presently someone with a few hundred or thousand more votes can get elected garnering all the power of that position and the rest of the contestants do not have any share of that power nor have any ability to influence.

It is apparent there is a better way. We need to do away with this binary concept of elections. People who do not have a majority support must also have a say and power. We will see how this is possible later in the paper.

3.3 Electorate:

People go out to vote but a very significant number of people are already cynical because they know that they will not be able to make a difference. They therefore do not go out to vote. This cynicism is fought but it is not unfounded. We need to understand that there is a good reason why a large number of people do not participate in elections. It should be noted that it is not due to laziness but it has everything to do with lack of power felt by the voter.

3.4 No choice:

Only in theory you have a choice to vote for someone. The number of people you can cast your vote for is limited only to those who have stood for elections and that also after being selected by political parties. This means that democracy has already been defeated because parties select people based on vested interests.

3.5 No knowledge:

In most cases, except knowing the name and party of the candidate the electorate know "NOTHING" about him or her and yet he or she is expected to vote for them! This is truly absurd and what greater tragedy. In theory in parliamentary form of democracy that we follow the assumption is that people will know who they are voting for because they are geographically closer to them. However, in practice this is not true. In fact it is often the case that people of the whole country know a few people better than those geographically closer.

3.6 Not everyone knows how to vote!:

A large number of people actually are not good at choosing someone. We have given the right to vote to everyone under the assumption that every person knows and understands perfectly what they want. But just like everyone is not good at football or Mathematics, in the same manner everyone is not good at selection.

4.0 DEMOCRACY BY TRUST DELEGATION

Democracy as executed today is handicapped because its execution is based on the technologies and thought processes of several centuries in the past. The only progress we have made is move from paper vote to voting machines. This is a very poor evolution, in fact there is no evolution of democracy. So, in this paper we are introducing a new concept called democracy by trust delegation and chain of trust to overcome some of the earlier mentioned drawbacks.

4.1 What is democracy by Trust Delegation?:

The new concept of democracy by trust delegation has been presented in this paper which is a fundamental rethink of how democracy can be executed by application of technology which now exists and also most importantly focusing on addressing the problems of the execution of democracy as we have seen earlier.

The fundamental idea here is to use trust chain to implement democracy. This fundamental but paradigm shift in thinking will resolve the problems listed above and bring true power into the hands of people.

Most people in the world know someone they trust more than themselves for a particular task. For example, I don't know how to cook but I definitely trust my wife for cooking. The important thing is that I know that she can cook and she will do a good job. I can therefore confidently delegate the responsibility of cooking to her. I would absolutely not be confident if someone came to me and just told me that he/she can cook.

We can see that this analogy can be applied to democracy. People know others in the family or outside world whom they trust more than themselves because may be they have seen them and talked to them and know that they are wise or good. They would want to delegate their vote and trust to that person and let him or her take it forward.

This starts forming a trust chain of delegation. For example, people in a family of 5 would have delegated to someone they trust to be an astute political observer. Such a person would then have 5 + 1 = 6 weight points. This person further trusts someone else and gives his trust to that person. This process starts forming a network of people and cumulative concentration of trust towards people. This cumulative effect of trust concentration starts happening but via a trust chain. The lowest person in the chain may not know the person having 10,000 trusts because he is far from him or her but yet that person with 10,000 trusts got his trust through a chain where each link trusts the higher links. Contrast this with voting where a person by virtue of casting a vote is compelled to give his trust to someone he does not know at all.

In democracy by trust delegation a person may withdraw his trust or reassign his trust at any time.

This network of trust is of course maintained digitally and using a mobile application and identification via Adhaar type of identification.

In this system it is possible that the chain goes up a few levels and then stops because the person does not delegate further. Even in this case there is some concentration of power which is more than 1.

4.2 Cycles are not allowed:

A person cannot delegate to anyone who is forming the link up to him already. The concept envisages that eventually the network would become balanced with massive concentration of trust in well-known people who could still be politicians however now there are many differences.

5.0 ADVANTAGES OF DEMOCRACY BY TRUST DELEGATION

Firstly the system acts as a trust builder.
You don't have to stand in an election to get trust.
Each trust matters.
There will be threshold beyond which a person can be considered as a member of the government. Such a person will be actively involved in running the government but his power will come via a trust chain and not arbitrary votes casted for him due to massive advertising budgets.Trust can be revoked at anytime so someone in power cannot take his trust chain for granted.
There are no elections. Trust either keeps stable or keeps moving and people in governance will keep coming in or out.
People will feel empowered because they can revoke trust at any time and not just only once in five years.

Intermediate trusted people will be empowered and higher people will listen to lower people in the chain because they do not want to lose their trust.

Everyone will be empowered at all times. They may be active or passive but they are participating.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

1. Democracy was and is a great concept. Its vision of ensuring power rests with the people is a necessity if humanity is to survive and prosper.

2. Democracy was conceived centuries ago and like many philosophies it is timeless. Nonetheless the implementation of democracy can and must be changed. Many decades of hindsight has given us enough experience to know that the ultimate goal of democracy has not been fulfilled and in fact vested interests all over the world have more or less reduced it to a sham a way to keep the population happy with the illusion of power. Depending on the country the balance between illusion and fact varies.

3. Massive technological changes have occurred which now enable us to think of stronger ways to implement democracy in a failsafe and dynamic way which was not even conceivable just a couple of decades ago. It is time we leverage out this advancement in technology to bring real power into the hands of people.

4. The fundamental concept proposed in this paper is that of chain of trust in the implementation of democracy and the end of election as a means of selecting people to power. This ensures that people only delegate power to those whom they know intimately rather than someone who advertises few days before an election.

5. Death of election will eliminate a massive source of corruption of the electorate exercised on a wide scale in many countries including India such as distributing money for votes.

6. Overall it is now possible to give power to people in the real sense with the concepts presented in this paper.

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