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Context to the nugget

Jay talks about what how successful politicians have managed to stay relevant over time and have reinvented themselves. He also talks about how technology is begin to level the playing field in favour of people who do not necessarily come from a family of politicians with an established brand and mobilisation infrastructure.

Transcription

Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): How people stay relevant in a profession over decades when you look at politics how do you think about staying relevant as a politician over decades and what have some of the successful politicians have done? And you spoke about the music metaphor but let's expand on that a little bit on how you stay relevant?

Baijayant Jay Panda (JP): So I have asked this question of many senior politician and I think somebody who have been a chief minister many times, has been a cabinet minister many times told me an interesting aspect so his way of staying relevant was to have done so much for his constituency that he wouldn't even have to campaign to win this is a person who won in a particular constituency multiple times and all that hard work that he put in decades ago means that he has an if you will a pocket bearer so one method of, this is the key method of remaining relevant is to ensure that you are always in parliament if you are not in parliament then your relevance of course decreases so this is one way to ensure relevance is to create such a situation back home in your constituency that you will always or almost always come back re-elected into parliament and parties can't ignore you so that's one key aspect and I have taken this to heart and tried to follow it myself there are others who have found ways to remain relevant they have catered to niches or subsections of the polity and an appeal to their concerns in a way that larger parties or other politicians have not so they have become champions of certain groups or sub sections of the population and that has kept them relevant there are many other ways of staying relevant, people who are glib and can communicate very well can remain relevant irrespective of changes of leadership irrespective of changes of government. Another way to stay relevant is to be loyal to somebody else who has certain entrenched position and will always be around so that has been a way of staying relevant, there are many different ways.

DJ: In what ways has technology changed the game? Both in terms of staying relevant but also in terms of the various elements of politics, including building a personal brand?

JP: Technology is beginning to have a huge impact, but it has really only started impacting Indian politics in the last decade and especially in the last five years so I am fond of using an example. One of the reasons that we have many dynastic politicians is that if you come from the political family

there is a certain branding already associated with you and this is collaborated by studies and books which says that people expect you to stand for something if you are with the particular family with the certain surname, but maybe even more important is that if you come from a political family you have a generations old network to mobilize for you, people who will organize crowds for you, people who will mobilize voters to go to the booth on voting day people who will put up your posters and banners, so that ground network had been very crucial, now both of these are getting up ended by technology and as I said especially in the last five years now starting about 10 years ago we started seeing the use of telecom technology with bulk SMSs and bulk voice messages going out from leaders to millions of voters, subsequently in the last five years social media has begun catching the imagination as many hundreds of millions of Indians get on the Internet and many of them are on social media and other instant messaging platforms we have already seen many examples of first generation politicians creating a brand for themselves and creating mobilization of their message, of their voters through social media and through instant messaging platforms so to that extent the ground has been levelled that your family name and your family networks are no longer such a huge advantage as they used to be and as I said the use of technology has levelled the playing field.

DJ: Back to the point about thick skin, perseverance and resilience how do you see technology playing out in the context of all the discussions about fake news and the ease with which it's easy to manipulate people's minds, how is that playing out?

JP: So there are two sides of the coin, we have had a world where information was curated where what is news was decided by limited number of editors and reporters so a few thousand people decided what, hundreds of millions of people should view or read that has got completely rent ascender by social media on social media and using technology everybody is a reporter, everybody is an editor so it has gone from the paradigm of one to many to a new paradigm of many to many and so that curating of news has been destroyed and many people are objecting to that that I don't agree is a valid objection, the curator of the news whether they be editors or whether they be reporters or whether they be opinion makers or politicians or others who were able to add weightage to a certain view point, this democratization of news has totally destroyed that, there is fake new but equally we have to recognize that fake news is not from any one sides, sometimes it gets projected as a fake news is coming from one side of the political spectrum, that's not true, there is fake news, there is trolling from all across the political spectrum, it has a darker sight to it, it inflames passions it sometimes target certain sections of the community and it creates all kinds of new issues that uncurated information will create, I will believe it's a phase that will transition as follows, recently just last week tweeter has announced certain steps, so that the use of boughs to retweet and recreate trends of certain news which large numbers of boughs are tweeting will be curtain to some extent, now Facebook had been facing similar allegations and they have also started taking steps to put filters on this kind of efforts, now fake news used to be somebody planting a conspiracy theory or a totally fake document, recently there have been revolutions about Ira in Russia doing that, in the US and in other country's elections, I believe the answer to fake news is not to try and curtail social media but to have even more transparency, as social media develops further as it becomes ubicuters, I think there will emerge more trusted sources of news, more verifiable sources of news and it's a process so I am very much against the idea of restraining any kind of opinion, with one proviso that social media should not give you the right to threaten people any more than you can threaten people in real life so intimidation, threats, valance publishing your address so that people can create trouble for you, these are things that right to privacy should be translated into the law and by the way I have filed the first right to privacy law in parliament as a private members bill but besides the certain narrowly defined set of redlines no number of intimidation threats etc, opinions should not be restrictive.

Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Jay talks about Fake News being an issue that Facebook is grappling with. There is also a data privacy issue that is turning out to be a bigger and bigger deal. Case in point – what we are seeing with Facebook and the episode with Cambridge Analytica. I guess, like in any new technology, the regulation will catch up and we will get to some point of equilibrium. The big takeaway for me here was that the democratization of media has provided a window of opportunity for an individual with a credible, authentic and trusted voice to connect with his or her audience. Something that wasn't an option a few years back where the access to the wider masses was monopolized by a few players.

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End of nugget transcription

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About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock human potential of senior executive’s / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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Podcast Transcript [26.04 Baijayant Jay Panda - Staying relevant and leveraging technology](#)

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