

An Indian-Australian research partnership

Project Title: Sustaining Democracies

Project Number HSS0489

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Research Academy Themes:

Highlight which of the Academy's Theme(s) this project will address?

(Feel free to nominate more than one. For more information, see www.iitbmonash.org)

1. Advanced computational engineering, simulation and manufacture
2. Infrastructure Engineering
3. Clean Energy
4. Water
5. Nanotechnology
6. Biotechnology and Stem Cell Research
7. Humanities and Social Sciences

The research problem

Define the problem

Sustaining Democracies

Contemporary democratic political theory acknowledges the need for emotional support for good political principles, yet fails to adequately define this support or explain how democracies can achieve it. Democratic laws and norms rarely come into being or remain stable over time without emotional support (Nussbaum 2013). Constitutions and formal laws are often powerless to motivate or transform the “secret courts” of citizens’ hearts (Lee 1960). An overlapping consensus about abstract laws and norms is therefore insufficient to

sustain democracies. Democracies need to figure out not only how to protect the rights of minorities or refugees by law, but also how to shape an emotional climate that supports or sustains good laws and institutions.

Associate Professor Siby George and Dr. Michael Ure's joint research project therefore investigates the problem of whether and how it is possible for democracies to sustain their citizens' emotional commitments to fundamental democratic principles of justice. They aim to develop a political theory of how the emotions should be understood within a theory of democracy and within the political pursuit of justice between and among groups who differ in their view of the best life. How can democratic states and public cultures sustain the emotional climate that fosters democratic norms and actions? In particular, what kind of emotional climate do multi-cultural and multi-religious democratic polities like India and Australia require to develop or sustain their citizens' commitment to equality for all within their borders? How do formal and informal institutions and practices support these 'sentimental' citizens? And how can democracies develop an emotional climate that is conducive to their normative commitment to extending and applying these principles to those beyond their borders? Can the democratic sensibility become a cosmopolitan sensibility or is it necessarily limited and partial?

The proposed PhD will be oriented around ONE aspect of George's and Ure's broader joint research project. It may contribute to this project through: e.g. a political theory thesis that investigates and assesses contemporary theories that address the issue of moral and political sentiments and their social and political regulation; a comparative thesis that examines and assesses the role of the emotions in different practices of transitional justice in post-conflict and post-colonial societies; or an empirical investigation of how the post-national constellation is shaping or reshaping democratic citizens' sentiments as they respond to the flow of refugees/asylum seekers, systemic global inequities, or climate change.

Project aims

Define the aims of the project

- To understand and explain the emotional foundations of complex, multi-religious, multi-cultural democracies like India and Australia, especially in cases of conflicts of identity and belief.
- To investigate whether and how democratic states can both respect civic freedom while also playing a role in sustaining citizens' emotional commitment to fundamental principles of justice and equity.
- To develop a better account of the relationship between law and emotion, particularly how collective sentiments can play a significant role in democratic legal transformations
- To identify when and how emotions impede rather than support democratic laws and norms

To propose a critical and normative ethico-political framework for democratic governance within and between states that takes into account democracies' emotional foundations.

Expected outcomes

Highlight the expected outcomes of the project

- The development of a new model of democratic governance that understands and explains democracies' emotional foundations
- The development of this model to identify the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary democratic governance

The application of this model to contemporary issues of democratic governance such as multiculturalism, historic injustice and cosmopolitan norms.

How will the project address the Goals of the above Themes?

Describe how the project will address the goals of one or more of the 6 Themes listed above.

Capabilities and Degrees Required

List the ideal set of capabilities that a student should have for this project. Feel free to be as specific or as general as you like. These capabilities will be input into the online application form and students who opt for this project will be required to show that they can demonstrate these capabilities.

- Masters degree in political or social science fulfilling other requirements for selection for IITB's PhD programme.
- Good knowledge of and interest in modern political theory & philosophy
- Good knowledge of and interest in contemporary issues central to democratic governance – e.g. globalisation and inequality, sectarian and religious conflict,
- Ability to relate political theories critically and appropriately to practical issues and case-studies

Excellent English language ability

Potential Collaborators

Please visit the IITB website www.iitb.ac.in OR Monash Website www.monash.edu to highlight some potential collaborators that would be best suited for the area of research you are intending to float.

Please provide a few key words relating to this project to make it easier for the students to apply.

Governance, Democracy, Democratic Theory, Justice, Emotions, Security & Conflict Resolution