

Political Culture in Contemporary India: Changes and Challenges

Nani Gopal Bhunia

Asst professor department of political science Yogoda Satsang Palpara Mahavidyalaya ,
Palpara Purba Medinipur, India

Abstract : In today India, it's almost heard every day that, Indian political culture is subject to erosion. There is no ethics and principles in politics. Nepotism corruptions, taking bribes are rampant in politics. It has become a field of earning money without any investment. Politics today seems to be a principles of an unethical practice. Indian politics now is losing its past glory and grandeur. Political leaders are constantly changing parties like the changing clothes. There is no political obligation and commitment among the leaders of the various political parties. One who today is affiliated to Left, tomorrow is of Ram, and day after tomorrow is of another one. In this very context, in this paper, I would like to analyze and explain the political culture of India following the method of desk research.

Key Words: Political culture Political parties, political leaders, ethics, Corruption, nepotism

Introduction :

Culture is an integral part of human community. It is the reflection of a community or a nation of how it reacts, responds and grows. It ties a community to their ancestry and provides a sensation of longevity authentic life. Hence, culture has its own intrinsic value that teaches tolerance and helps each other to come closer in one's good or bad. Thus culture contributes significantly in properly shaping a nation or a community. Honestly speaking, India despite being the poor country due to long rich cultural heritage, it is greatly appreciated by the World. Generally culture refers to a set of values, beliefs, attitude, behavior and mental makeup which are gathered through social learning and that is inherited from one generation to next generation. Just as the identity of a clan or group of people is exposed through its social culture similarly the identity of a nation emerges in its political culture. The political culture of a country signifies how is the Country? how is the governance of the Country? And how is its

administrative and political frame work? That is the political culture of a Country cannot be said to be necessary for the development of a Country or a nation. In this writing I would like to make an attempt to understand and analyse the recent trends of political culture in India.

Methodology:

It is purely a desk research based study. The information gathered for this research article is mainly based on secondary sources books, journals, newspaper, print Media as well as other written documents etc.

What Political Culture is :

Political culture is the product of both the collective history of a political system and the history of its community or the member of a political system. That means political culture is the life blood of any political system. For this every political system is embedded is a particular political culture.

The concept 'culture' in politics is first used by Gabriel Almond an American Political Scientist in 1956 (The Journal of Politics, 1956). In his paper 'Comparative Political System' he remarks that, the prime object of his writing is to suggest the application of some Sociological and anthropological concepts in the study of politics and political system. One of the concepts used in his paper is 'culture' though conceptually 'culture' in politics is relatively new but its space, nature and scope of analysis lies in the history and tradition of a Country becoming a nation state. India is no exception to this. India's long colonial legacy has great impact on its political culture, In terms of renowned American Political Scientist Myron Weirer's concept of Indian Political Culture, it can be said that his concept of 'elite' and 'mass' Political Culture was also observed in British India. Before the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian Politics the Political Culture was mainly elite in nature. Which took definitely its 'mass' form at the hands of Mahatma Gandhi. In other words, elite Political Culture was transformed into mass political culture by Mahatma Gandhi.

Foundation of Political Culture :

1. History may an important role is moulding political culture of a political system. The political culture of India was immensely influenced by the British Colonial rule and by our nationalist movement.
2. Geographical location is also a factor to the political culture of a Country. The political culture of India is different from the political culture of other parts of South Asia due to its geographical location.

3. Socio – economic factor of a Country affects the political culture of a political system. That is why Indian political culture is different from the political culture of America or Great Britain.
4. Ethnic factor is another important aspect is making political culture of a Country. For this Indian political culture does not resemble to the political culture of Middle East of Africa.
5. Another most important factor which affects political culture of a political system is religion. That is why political culture of a multi- religious Country is different from the political culture of a Country of one religion.

Historical Overview of Indian Political Culture :

Indian Political Culture has been discussed and debated over the years. Different political activists and political theorists have discussed Indian Political Culture from their own view points and from different aspects. The name which comes first in the discussion of Indian political culture that is Myron Weirer an American political Scientist and a renowned scholar of Indian Politics. In view of the minor weirer Indian political culture can be divided in to two types according to the views attitudes and mission of the then Indian Politicians and political activists one is 'elite' political culture and another is 'mass' political culture. He opines that 'elite' political culture is noticed in them, who are in favour of running Indian Politics and political institutions from a modern progressive mindset. This type of political culture is mainly observed in urban areas. On the other hand 'mass' political culture is seen among those who are in favour of conducting Indian Politics and political institutions from the traditional or conventional way of thinking. Basically this culture prevails in rural areas. MekunMarriet and Milton Singer while highlighting their experiences about Indian political Culture they said the whole of Indian Political Culture could be studied with the help of two concepts 'Little Tradition' and 'Great Tradition'. Little Tradition consists of local customes, rites, rituals, etc. And Great tradition contains legitimate form of all these things. In other words the folks or the peasants are included under little tradition and Great tradition includes the elite group or 'reflective' W.H. Morris Jones a leading scholar of South Asian studies who in discussing of the political culture in India has identified three distinctive idioms of Indian politics which he has as modern traditional and saintly. Here by idiom he un the language used in politics and political institutions. Accordingly he explains that the modern idiom can be noticed in the law courts and the higher administration. The traditional idiom is the language of the villages of the caste and the tribes and communities . And is the rest case the idiom of saintly politics refer to the politics of Mahatma Gandhi and VinobaBhave. SudiptaKavirajon discussion of Indian political culture

has used Foucauldian term 'discourse' to illuminate 'two cultures' existing in political arena as 'upper discourse' and 'lower discourse'.

Rajni Kothari another eminent scholar coined Indian political culture as the 'theme'. The themes of Indian political culture that he identifies are –

- a. Tolerance and ambiguity,
- b. Fragmented, dispersed and intermittent authority,
- c. A close relationship between ideology and politics.

Asith Nandy sought a new framework for analyzing Indian Politics and Political Culture. In his seminal essay "The Making and Unmaking of Political Culture in India" he identifies Indian Political Culture as an act of choice. This act of Choice is shaped by societies unique orientation towards politicization and political participation. To his this orientation is the product of four interrelated features –

1. The traditional view of politics as an amoral, ruthless statecraft or a dispassionate pursuit of self interest.
2. The concept of Dharma.
3. Concept of hegemonic civilization consider other cultures inferior.
4. Inseparability of society and culture, that is society is organized around its culture.

Recent Trends :

In view of the above context one thing is clear that the discussion on Indian Political Culture has gained new dimension day by day. Coming to the present day new new features of the political culture have reached is critical juncture where corruption has received social sanction. Communalization, technicization and manipulation has changed the entire political scenario in this new millennium. Therefore Indian Political Culture again demands a fresh discussion. In this context the aspects and trends of Indian political culture can be cited as follows.

1. Pluralistic character of political culture popular or mass culture is meant for the behavior, practices, rites, rituals, beliefs of the common people of a particular period which are dominating in the society and which have also universal acceptance in the society. Today's age of cellphone, computer and the internet popular culture is very influential in society people are projecting their thoughts, creations and experiences of everyday life easily on social media. In effect popular culture has a way of influencing an individuals attitudes, orientation towards certain topic. The idea and ideology of cultural pluralism is

gaining more and more prominence in our society. Which in turn is accelerating in multifaceted development of society and individual. Hence, any kind of political or administrative activities of a Country does not dare to ignore mass culture. That is the correct feature of Indian political culture is cultural pluralism.

2. Media Culture :The another feature of Indian Political Culture is Media Culture. Social Media or mass media is politics refers to the use of online media platform is political process and activities that pertain to the governance of a Country or any part of it. The internet has created channels of communication that play a key role in circulating news and information and public message. In effect it has become possible to bring change in political power along with pace of activities. Over the past few decades, Indian political parties have been using the electronics media as a way of their political publicity and gaining popularity of political figures. Especially during electoral politics which is very much noticeable. Even today, some political parties also have their own media organization. In a word, media culture has become an essential part of Indian Political Culture.
3. Indian's politics in the past was mainly the working field of an upper class or high middle class elites and educated persons. Now it has changed form and become the working field of all the rich or the poor and elites or non elites.
4. In the past there was hardly any distinction between central and regional politics in India. And in that case the influence of central politics was more prominent. Now that scenario has changed. A clear distinction is seen in most the cases between central and regional politics. Even if the same party is in power in central and regional politics then also their political strategy, practices, activities, plans and programs are different. In fact now politics has become much more regional.
5. The traditional secular feature of Indian politics now is isolated in many respects. Now religious influence and religious polarization can be observed more in politics. The ethics of politics has now become the politicization of religion.
6. One more novel feature of Indian Political Culture is the political role of non political figures that is political role to be played by such persons coming from the field of other than politics like sports, culture, literature, films or the like it is not that non political figures did not have political role in the past. What used to be mainly a South Indian Political Culture is now observed in Indian politics.
7. Indian Political Culture has now become the politics of words and taking contest. This propaganda plays a key role in politics. But today's politicians or political activists have made it as a tool to stay in power. They less take about the needs and demands of the people or the development and interest of the

nation or Country. Rather they talk much words of lips and mouth. They want to stay in power is binding people with words, false promises and talking nonsense. Better the speaker better the politicians. Politics is merely now not about doing something but about saying something.

8. Along with the political communalization, criminalization of politics has become a part of Indian Political Culture. The arrival of roused in politics is not a new matter. But criminalization of politics is a matter of recently past corruption, nepotism, taking a bribe or use of official power and position for self interest has become the part and parcel of today's political culture.
9. Political violence, the exercise of muscle power, the use of force, threatening etc. Are now going rampantly in Indian politics. That means political authority is unable to command spontaneous loyalty and support of the people. That is the legitimate crisis is emerging and whenever legitimate crisis occurred the political authorities have to resort to the use of force, muscle power or violent activities to stay in power.
10. Coalition politics is becoming more and more integrated with the political culture in India. Coalition politics can now be observed at all levels of the central and regional politics. The History of Indian Politics in the last two or three decades bears that testimony. In a word, coalition politics has become institutionalized in Indian Political Culture.

A Brief Remark :

In critical Analysis it has to be said that the Indian Politics has lost its past glory and beauty to some extent. The great political ideas and ideals of Mahatma Gandhi, BimoraBhabe or Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose seems to have become irrelevant today. Communalization of politics, criminalization of politics, political violence etc. are making common people reluctant and skeptical about politics. People are now afraid of politics. It will not be irrelevant today that the current political culture picture of India is not much healthy and hopeful.

Conclusion :

At the end of the discussion it has to be said that no interpretation or prediction about Indian Political Culture is proven enough. That does not necessary mean, those who have discussed on Indian Political Culture lack scholarship. Infact, India's own unique characteristics are the main reason for this. Indian Political Culture belongs to a distinct genre. India is a diversified Country divided by caste, color, religion. As a result the Political Culture of India has taken different form at different times. That is why any discussion on Indian Political Culture at any

particular time has subsequently proved party less significant and less complementary. Therefore, Indian Political Culture has always to be understood in view of its social and cultural traits and trends.

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