



## The study of Indian political culture: A theoretical perspective

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### Abstract

India is a new Nation but an old Civilization, which is famous for its culture. Culture is the legacy of Indian society. The stream has been flowing for ages. It has its unique tradition. Due to this age of its culture, India has been facing many ups and downs and struggles for centuries. When most of the countries of the world were immersed in the darkness of ignorance, the Indian culture was at the peak of excellence. Many cultures of the world like the cultures of Greece, Egypt, Rome, etc. were drowned in the stream of time, but India not only survived because of its cultural heritage but also gave the world knowledge, science, art, and religion, materiality, and spirituality, policy and justice, has been inspiring the dignity and values of life. Not only this, all the castes and species that came to India in the form of aggression, gradually assimilated them into their cultural stream in India. India continued to be a victim of attacks by Shakas, Yuchi, Huns, Kushans, Greeks, Turks, Mughals, Pathans, and the British, but India never allowed its cultural heritage to deteriorate and kept its cultural heritage intact.

**Keywords:** Culture, India, civilization, political, British, independence

### Introduction

What is Indian culture? It is difficult to answer or explain in clear terms. This is because Indian culture is very broad and abstract. It is so ingrained in the Indian psyche that trying to bring it within the ambit of words as a whole is like trying to hold air in one's fist when we know that air cannot come in the grip of anyone, but it is omnipresent same like culture in the Indian people, in their thoughts and ideas, in their beliefs and feelings, in their conduct and behaviour, in their values and goals, in religion and spirituality, in art and science, in dance and music. Culture cannot be separated from Indian life. This culture is completely mixed in the totality of life.

The birth and development of Indian culture have emerged from the works and speech of saints, great men, thinkers, and sages, and their thoughts and philosophy, from Vedas, Puranas, Smritis, scriptures, folk tales and stories, religion, and various arts. It is an approach, suggestion, belief, goal, and ideal towards materiality, spirituality, and salvation for the whole life. In this, there is a feeling of the dedication of the individual towards the whole – towards the entire human race, and there is a feeling of welfare towards all the creatures of the world. It is a symbol of generosity, tolerance, coordination, love, sacrifice, charity, duty, self-religion, justice, etc. This is the manifestation of *Satyam*, *Shivam*, and *Sundaram*. The idea is that everyone should be happy, everyone should be free, everyone should be well and no one should be sad.

Indian culture has a moral and humanitarian idea of "*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*". It has the message of unity in diversity. This is the practical and final view of the whole life. No aspect of Indian life is untouched by it. It is a wonderful coordination and integration of all aspects of life. Life and deeds of life in it and the goal is a unique combination of religion, art, philosophy, spirituality, and salvation.

The political culture of India is an integral part of its general culture and it is derived from the general culture. Political life and political activities in India have been considered a part of the whole life of a human being. State governance,

political institutions, and their activities are in the context of the whole human life. In Indian life, religion has been the lecturer and guide of the whole life. It is in this context that the goal of the state and state policy is. Our sages and thinkers have not considered political life as separate and independent from religion. It has depicted the entire political activities on a religious basis.

Indian political culture, like other cultures, is a set of attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and ideals of the people living on the soil of India towards political life, which gives order and meaning to the political process, as well as the beliefs and rules that govern them. Refers to the factors that determine the behaviour of human beings in the political system. It includes the political ideals as well as the standards governing the state system. Indian political culture is the creation of the collective history of the Indian society, their biography, and beliefs, and the life history of the people associated with the Indian polity. It has its thinking, values, goals, and ideals. It contains the standards based on which the political system functions.

The values, goals, and ideals of Indian political culture are eternal. In this, from time to time, those elements have also been incorporated and assimilated which we have inherited from the experience of our forefathers and which have been in harmony with our eternal values and ideals. Indian political culture is continuous and evolving. In this, from time to time those standards and methods have also been imbibed which help in facilitating the conduct of the political process.

According to Dr. Shyam Lal Verma, political culture is teachable and transferable. Its movement is slow and often indirect. Political culture is communicated or taught through processes of socialization. Political culture and circumstances also affect it. Families, societies, economies, religious institutions, specific individuals, etc. contribute to this. The available form of political culture itself also changes in the context of new political experiences of the individual or individuals. Political beliefs and values change and individuals have to be educated and initiated into a new

type of political culture. There is a difference between day and night in predictions. New mental idols and images get replaced. In developed societies, change takes place only in a limited amount, whereas in underdeveloped and developing societies, it is not known what today's deity-form politician will become tomorrow, their various images of political culture are highly variable due to their simple nature. The transition period from the new to the old is sometimes very painful.

Prof. Raghuvver Singh, in his Puntambekar Memorial Lecture, which later on got published in the form of an article "The Political Culture and the Culture of Politics" explains that Indian political culture is related to whole life. It includes all those values and norms which form the basic elements of the overall culture<sup>[1]</sup>. Political culture in the Indian context is based on universal values and eternal truth and it has always been associated with the culture of the land of India, that is why politics and religion were mixed in ancient India, political activities were conducted on a religious basis. They were also evaluated and criticized based on religion and they were also judged on the basis of religion. This religion was based on the concept of discipline which was the yardstick of all political activities.

According to Nagendra Singh, the political system in ancient India was for human liberation or moksha. The continuity of Indian political culture has never been broken. The reason for this is its amazing capacity and mobility. It continues to move forward despite various calamities. When the great empires of the world went into the womb of collapse, the tradition of our political culture remained intact. The political culture which was developed by the great sages of India with their ethics and philosophy could not be destroyed by foreign invasions and rule.

Aurobindo Ghosh is of the view that we can understand the Indian polity properly only when we do not understand it as a separate entity or an independent machinery separate from the life and mind of the people, but understand it as part of the whole of social existence.

Prof. Rajni Kothari has stated the deficiencies in the Indian electoral process. He was the first to find out that political competition based on issues and ideologies consideration is eschewed to a process an ethnic game repletes with the vote banks. He feels that caste and communalism are not an obstacle to the Indian political system rather it is a part of the system. Overall, he talks about the "themes of political culture"

According to Morris Jones, there are "Three Idioms of Politics" in Indian Political culture. He says that - "Not a single honest book has yet been written on Indian politics." Morris Jones thinks that this statement does not mean that the authors of Indian politics books have lied. But it means that it is difficult to get at the reality of Indian politics. Jones writes that a deeper study of India's political life makes it clear that everything that appears here is It is not the same. The ideals presented by the various political institutions of India and the principles preached by the political leaders here, in practice, despised them. That is, there is a difference between the theory and practice of Indian politics.

According to Jones's proverb, the "three idioms of politics" means the three languages of Indian political life, which are named Modern, Traditional, and Sainly language.

Myron Weiner in his article "India: Two Political Cultures" explains that in India mainly two types of political culture are seen one is the political culture of the Elites and another

is the political culture of the Masses. He simply says that the elites are influencing the masses. According to him, the divide-and-rule policy is used vis-à-vis another community, caste, or religion which has become a new genre of politics.

The parliamentary culture which we have adopted as a political culture in modern India. The rule of law in the British system of governance is a tradition that existed in Indian political culture since ancient times. Whether the form of governance in ancient India was monarchical or republican, the rule of law was supreme. All the organs of governance were governed and limited by law. The king, Amartya, priest, and public servant were all under the rule of law. Not only this, the public consent and public acceptance on which the British rule is based, was also present in the political system of the Vedic era. At the highest peak of governance, the king and at the lowest peak, the power and work of the villagers at the village level was based on people-oriented and public consent.

We find the classic form of the principle of the rule of law embedded in parliamentary culture in the concept of the rule of religion in ancient India. Just as law is a set of collective conscience, in the same way, at that time religion was also a set of collective conscience, which was related to the upliftment of the king, subjects, and human society, which kept the responsibility of the ruler and the ruled. The Vedic period constitution was based on religion and traditions. The king did not dare to encroach on religion. The king used to announce while taking the oath that my life and all my progeny would be destroyed if I betrayed the religion. The king was made to feel that like worship he was also subject to punishment. The Vedic period political culture was very developed in the Ramayana period, Mahabharata period, and Buddhist period. The functioning of the Indian republics during the Buddhist period was based on a mature political culture. This tradition continued in the Indian states in subsequent times, during the foreign rule, an attempt was made to impose foreign culture on us, but the tradition of our political culture did not disappear but was covered by foreign elements for some time, and later on, it became vocal again. The law was supreme in the entire Indian political system, not the individual.

### **Development of Political Culture During the Colonial Era:**

During British rule, the British tried to eradicate Indian culture and impose British culture. They controlled the Indians through rigidly centralized rule and organized bureaucracy. They brutally oppressed Indians and tried to destroy their cultural heritage, ethics, behaviour, and philosophy of life, but our culture, which was alive after facing all the storms for thousands of years, was able to save itself despite the oppression of the British.

The result of British tyranny, incest, and cruelty was the military rebellion of 1857 which failed due to its weaknesses and mistakes but it shook the British rule to the root. After this rebellion, the British rule was forced to think about Indian interests. As a result, Queen Victoria of England assured to protect Indian interests in her declaration. After that, the British rule very slowly tried to increase the participation of Indians in governance through various Acts. Meanwhile, a class of parliamentarians and intellectuals began to emerge in England as well, opposing the oppressive policy of Indian British rulers, they started putting pressure on British rule and Parliament to provide

representation to Indians under Indian rule. Among such intellectuals and parliamentarians, the names of Cobden, John Bright, Kagriv, Dilke, etc. are noteworthy. While advocating Indian interests from time to time, these parliamentarians created such a political environment that forced the British Parliament to adopt a moderate approach towards Indians.

Under the Indian Council Act of 1861, representation was given to Indians in the Council of the Governor General of India. In India, the Indian National Congress was established in 1885 to concentrate Indian public opinion on the initiative of Lord Hume. Due to this, such a platform was created for Indian intellectuals where they started discussing Indian problems in a collective form, providing the national basis for their thoughts, proposals, and decisions and demanding the happiness, convenience, and rights of Indians through parliamentary policy. The names of Dadabhai Naoroji, Mahadev Ranade, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Surendra Nath Banerjee are particularly notable in this direction. The Indian National Congress in its first session passed a resolution that the National General Assembly thinks that by increasing the number of elected representatives of the people in the Central and Provincial Legislatures should be reformed, the British rule and the Parliament were forced to realize that without the cooperation of the educated Indians, the success of the British rule in India is not possible. The then Governor General of India Lord Dufferin and Lord Lansdowne supported and advocated the participation of Indians in the Indian administration. Under the Indian Councils Act of 1892, the Legislative Assemblies were allowed to debate the annual budget but could not vote on it.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the policy of the Congress started changing. Such people started becoming effective in this, who tried to take forward the freedom struggle not through parliamentary methods but through violent means. He was not satisfied with the reform programs of the Congress and the moderates. He wanted to extend this struggle till the attainment of Swaraj. Among such people, the names Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, and Vipin Chandra Pal are particularly noteworthy. Tilak's declared slogan was Swarajya is our birthright and we shall have it, on the other hand at the beginning of the 20th century Curzon introduced brutality and oppression during his seven-year rule. He encouraged Muslim separatism and inspired the birth of the Muslim League, partitioning Bengal, against which the Indian public was agitated. Meanwhile, the Congress was split in the Surat session, and the moderates of the Congress got separated. In 1908, the moderates of the Congress demanded Dominion Self-Government for India at the Allahabad session and also demanded that adequate representation should be given to the Indians in the legislative assemblies.

Under the Indian Council Act of 1909, the number of the Governor General's Council was increased and the representation of Indians in the Provincial Legislative Assemblies was increased. Now arrangements were made for open debate in the legislative assemblies. Now, instead of being just a committee of the government, the Legislative Assembly got an opportunity to debate on every aspect of the administration, analyze the works of the government through supplementary questions, and give advice. Along with this, a provision for communal elections was made in this act. In this way, responsible governance was not

established in India by the Act of 1909, but by increasing the rights of the legislature, the way for the development of parliamentary culture was paved, and at the same time, by accepting communal elections, an attempt was made to distort the secular nature of India. Later on, through Congress, the spirit of independence, self-governance, nationalism, and the indigenous became strong. On the other hand, the militant activities of Lal Bal Pal and the preoccupation to achieve Swaraj started increasing. In the meantime, Mahatma Gandhi entered Indian politics, due to which the national movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi became widespread in the coming years, in which the path of truth and non-violence was adopted. At the beginning of the first world war, on the demands of the British rulers, moderate congressmen and Mahatma Gandhi supported and cooperated with the British during the war and the British government assured the Indians that after the end of the war, Indians would be made partners in the Indian administration and efforts would be made towards responsible governance in India.

After the end of World War I, the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act, of 1919. Through this act, a partially responsible government was established under diarchy, in which an attempt was made to partially give a practical form to the parliamentary culture based on public representation. For the first time importance was given to the role of the legislature in the making of the executive and for the first time a majority of the elected members were kept in the legislature. Indians were given ministerial posts for the first time. Only a member of the legislature could be appointed as a minister. A creative background was created for the development of parliamentary culture by making the provincial government responsible to the legislature by providing the legislative assemblies with the authority to ask questions to the executive, to stop motions, to present general motions, to vote on money bills, and to broaden the environment for the development of parliamentary culture.

On the other hand, despite strong opposition from the Indian representatives, the Central Legislature tried to repress the national movement and national consciousness by passing the Rowlatt Act. In protest against this, Mahatma Gandhi termed British rule as the devil and Rowlatt Act as black law. In protest against this, the Jallianwala Bagh incident took place, which is an example of British oppression and atrocities. In protest against this, Mahatma Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation Movement, in which public consciousness and the spirit of indigenous boycotts of foreign goods prevailed. Gandhi called upon Indians to boycott provincial councils, government courts, schools, positions, titles, and foreign goods. Political consciousness towards Swadeshi became very widespread all over India. This non-cooperation movement was a unique parliamentary style based on truth and non-violence to oppose the exploitation, injustice, tyranny, and slavery prevailing in the Indian political system, which was even more sublime and excellent than the British parliamentary style [2]. It was neither the revolutionary style of France nor the communist style of Soviet Russia, but different from both of them and similar to the British parliamentary style, it was a style based on human dignity, which had continuity and creativity. Violence and malice were completely prohibited in the Gandhian style. The sense of suddenness and quick radical change was prominent in the style of France and Russia, while the sense of continuity and gradual

change was prominent in the Gandhian style. This protest was not only for protest but for change of heart, for the development of personality, for public welfare and to protect human values. This was very much in line with the ancient Indian principle of self-sacrifice and self-purification. In this, importance was given to human dignity as well as self-discipline, self-restraint, morality, and human welfare. Mahatma Gandhi directed the Indians in the form of a Satyagrahi that it is not human religion to accept any injustice, exploitation, and tyranny silently. Injustice should not be opposed by injustice but by religion and evil should be opposed by goodness. If the purpose of Britain's parliamentary style was to get material comforts and rights to the public, then the purpose of the Gandhian style is the comfort the rights of the public as well as their spiritual progress<sup>[3]</sup>.

The political situation in India after 1920 was undergoing rapid resolution. People's non-cooperation movement, the Birth of the Swaraj Party and entry into Legislative Assemblies, Communal violence and tension Revolutionaries' desire for self-sacrifice and self-sacrifice for freedom., the boycott of the Simon Commission, and the Nehru report regarding the future outline of the Indian government and demanded freedom status and later the resolution of the Congress for full Swaraj, the organization of the Round Table Conferences, the civil disobedience movement, etc. were prominent events. Overall, now an intense consciousness of self-governance and independence has arisen in the Indian public. The same voice was being heard in different forms from all directions.

Under much pressure, the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act, of 1935, in which many elements of parliamentary culture were adopted. For the first time in India, the federal system was accepted and autonomy and responsible governance were established in the provinces. An attempt was made to broaden the democratic base of the central and provincial legislatures. If the Government of India Act of 1919 was the first step toward responsible governance, the Government of India Act of 1935 was another important step toward responsible governance. Responsible governance was established in the British provinces in 1937 under the 1935 Act. But on the outbreak of World War II in 1939, when the British Government declared India a belligerent country on behalf of Britain, despite strong opposition from the Indians, the Congress ministries in the provinces resigned in protest. Meanwhile, on the encouragement of the British, the Muslim League announced the demand for Pakistan based on the two-nation theory, which ultimately resulted in the partition of the country with independence. Quit India Movement started in 1942 during the Second World War. In this movement, the Indian public became more active for freedom with the national resolution of "do or die". To suppress the movement, the British rule abandoned all its dignity and introduced cruelty. At the end of the World War in 1945, the British realized that shortly Indian independence would be stopped. Finally, in 1947, India became independent with new hope, enthusiasm, and determination, bearing the emotional pain of the partition of the country.

In summary, during British rule, Indians contributed significantly to the development of political culture and in that period Indian political culture became vocal on the following points-

1. Active political consciousness arose among the Indians.
2. There was continuous development of Swadeshi, Swaraj, and Nationalism.
3. Through various movements and political activities, the national outlook became vocal among the Indians.
4. Committed people towards moderate and responsible governance.
5. Secular outlook developed.
6. In place of violent revolution to counter autocracy, exploitation, and tyranny became vocal in the form of the ideal of truth and non-violence.
7. The political participation of the people became vocal and intense.

### **Development of Political Culture During the Post-Colonial Era**

The post-independence Indian political culture is reflected in the constitution which was adopted by the framers of the Indian constitution after much deliberation. While adopting the parliamentary system, the framers of the constitution did not adopt the British model as it was, but based on their past experiences and based on Indian beliefs and needs, they prepared the Indian version of the British God. They took full care that the parliamentary system should be such that it should be able to solve the diverse problems of India and at the same time be compatible with cultural dignity. The framers of the constitution knew very well that we could not achieve our political goals and ideals unless the system of governance was adjusted to the social system of India. As a result, they structured the nature of the governance system in the context of past and present circumstances. In the context of the problems in which they considered the nature of the governance system, the most important are the following:

- To control the divisive tendencies raging after the partition of the country.
- To keep the country's governance system away from the tendencies of autocratic and military rule.
- To develop the tendency of political participation in the vast masses of the country by making them partners in the political system.
- To provide a strong base for the national consciousness by tying the people of different languages and cultures in the thread of unity.
- To provide equal opportunity to minorities to participate in the stream of national development.
- To preserve the cultural diversity of India and give it a national context.
- To build an egalitarian society by ending all kinds of privileges.
- To provide social, economic, and political justice to the oppressed Dalits of the Indian society.

In the context of these problems, it was not possible to adopt a copy of the British parliamentary system. Therefore, the framers of the Constitution did not agree with the British model in many respects. They created an Indian version of the British model in an Indian context. By harmonizing the Executive and the Legislature, they empowered the prime minister, the de facto head of the executive, made the cabinet collectively responsible to the Parliament, and made its existence dependent on parliamentary support. they

created such a constitutional environment that the President should act according to the advice of the Prime Minister and at the same time, in some circumstances, the President also granted rights and should have some real authority. The Prime Minister, the President, and the Parliament together should not transgress the limits of the Constitution and should not act outside their jurisdiction. The framers of the Constitution empowered the Supreme Court to see to it and to prevent them from doing any wrong. They made the Supreme Court the final interpreter and guardian of the Constitution. They established the judiciary as an independent unit instead of making it a part of the executive, so that the judiciary could discharge its duties impartially. To prevent the president and the judges from misusing their power, the constitution makers arranged for impeachment proceedings against them.

Along with this, they adopted the federal system in the Indian context, made the central government highly empowered, and gave autonomy to the provinces to do multifaceted and regional development by making them responsible governments. Along with this, the framers of the constitution implemented the principle of equality before the law and equal protection of the law by being influenced by the rule of law of England, at the same time, by arranging protection in important areas for the minorities and weaker sections, they were also given political equality. Provided an opportunity to become a participant in the process of economic development.

By adopting these arrangements, the framers of the Constitution created the parliamentary system of India. It was accepted as different from the British system, which is clear from the following facts:

1. In the British system, the constitution is born in the parliament, that is, the parliament has given birth to the constitution. In the Indian system, the Parliament has given birth to the Constitution, that is, the Constitution has given birth to the Parliament. In the UK the constitution is what the parliament says. In India, the parliament is what the constitution says.
2. Britain has the principle of parliamentary supremacy while India has the principle of constitutional supremacy.
3. The British Parliament is adjusted in a unitary system but the Indian Parliament is adjusted in the federal system.
4. In the British system, the constitutional head remains in office for life based on lineage, but in the Indian parliamentary system, the constitutional head is elected by the elected members of the Parliament and Legislative Assemblies and its tenure is 5 years. In this way, there is a monarchy at the center of the British system, whereas, in the Indian system, the monarchical and feudal system has been destroyed.
5. In the British system, the emperor does not make any mistakes because he does not use his powers himself, but the prime minister along with the cabinet does. In India, the President can make a mistake while exercising his powers, and for this, he can be impeached.
6. The British system is based on an unwritten constitution and conventions. The Indian system is largely based on the written constitution and the interpretation of the constitution by the courts.

7. There is no principle of checks and balances in the British system. However, in the Indian system, the balancing theory exists.
8. Whatever work the British Prime Minister does as the leader of the majority party in the Parliament cannot be unconstitutional, but the actions of the Indian Prime Minister can be unconstitutional despite the support of the Parliament.
9. In the British constitution, the privileged feudal system has been maintained in the lower house, while in the Indian constitution, all kinds of privileges have been abolished.
10. There is a complete lack of fundamental rights and their guarantee in the British constitution. Fundamental rights were detailed and guaranteed in the Indian Constitution.

### Conclusion

Political culture is the base of every political society. It appears as a collective expression of the subjective and psychological dimensions of politics. It is the combined product of the history of the political system and its life system. It arises from both public and personal events.

Political culture is a new psycho-sociological term. It includes many concepts, such as political ideology, national ethos, national feeling, national psychology, basic moral values of citizens, people's attitudes and orientations towards the political system, etc. Political culture plays an important role in the survival of every political system. The political system faces many types of pressures, conflicts, crises, etc. and political culture protects the political system from all crises, pressures, and conflicts. It supports influences and counterbalances the political system. Political culture defines the scope of politics, the limits of politics, and the reasonable boundaries of the public and private spheres of life. This political culture determines the entire political process, individual tasks, problems, and participants. It is the political culture that gives momentum to any political system, keeps it alive, and provides the basis and strength to face the conflict, all the pressures and conflicts also get affected by it. According to Dr. Shyam Lal Verma, the political system is pervaded and influenced by political culture. It becomes guided, restricted, dynamic, or static by it. Political culture is often reflected in public events and personal actions.

This helps in understanding the behavior of the political system. For example, the nature of the rule of law, democracy, the basis of propriety, ideology, nationalism, etc., becomes clear in the light of political culture, it has an impact on the values and goals of the system, methods of civic training and public opinion, possible reactions of actors of politics, etc. The working of similar structures in political systems in different ways can be explained with the help of political culture. Political culture is the intangible but influential background that envelops the individual and the group. Due to being an element that includes various social, economic, religious, and political aspects of the political system, all its activities can be seen from its totality. It reveals the coordination of the processes of political and non-political elements. The path of political development also finds the compatibility of political culture. If this does not happen, then one tries to change the political culture.

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