

An Introduction to Political Culture in India

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Abstract

The nature of political culture depends on beliefs and orientations of the mass towards the political system and the response of the authority and the process to the orientations. Sometimes the process is participatory when the members of the society take active part in the political process and seeks benefits from the process. In the same time, it may be subject political culture when the common people know very little about the process and do not expect any share in the decision making process.

Every political system has its own destined culture. The culture of an authoritarian government is quite different from the culture of a democratic country. Again there are differences in the culture of new democracy and modern democracies.

Political culture is not static or fixed. It is a dynamic and an ever changing process. Political culture goes on changing and changing. It changes as a result of new ideas, structural changes in the system, new innovations, demographic change and changes in the international political environment and of many other factors. Incorporating these changes it continues from one generation to another generation. The socialization process transmitted the culture generation by generations and provides stability to the system.

Political consensus on values is a must for political system to survive and confront pressures, conflict and crisis emerging from time to time. It relates to political culture which is a sub-structure of each political system. Political culture at all levels support the system. It provides the necessary legitimacy to the system and makes the system sustainable for a time being. It encompasses both the political ideals and the operating norms of a political system.

Keywords:- Political, Culture, India, Democracy, System, Government.

Introduction

Culture has been defined in a number of ways. The most accepted meaning of a culture is that it is the total way of life. In its broad meaning it includes man's material civilization like tools, weapons, clothing, shelter, machines, buildings, industrial products as well as non-material civilization like language, literature, art, morality, law and government. Culture means 'the sum total of the attainments or activities of any race, of people, of any specific period and civilization.' It means "good manners and good task." It is related to the inner and external behavior of man, his mode of living, thinking, talking and attitude.

In anthropological literature, the term culture is used in many different senses, but in general writings it is used to indicate social charm and intellectual superiority. Even some sociologists believe cultured individuals to be the leaders of society. Culture includes all those elements for which ceremonies and their consequent impressions are required. It is the process of purification. Culture is simply regarded as etiquettes by some thinkers.

The country of India can be rightly regarded as the store house of diversity of rich cultural heritage of diverse indigenous tribes and non-tribes and there is immense necessity to preserve and develop these cultures for the generation to come.

It is observed that the effect of globalization and the trend of people accustoming themselves to live up to the present standard have led to fade away their rich culture. Therefore, the main aim and objective of the Cultural Affairs Department is to develop, preserve and promote cultural heritage such as folk dances, songs and other related activities amongst different communities.

Further, the Government of India with the view to exchanging its rich culture and attracting national and international tourists has tied up this particular department with tourism department. This will not only facilitate exchange of cultural affairs but will also build mutual relationship with different countries and in the process of generating revenue for the country and the region as a whole.

Definition

Culture implies man's moral, spiritual and intellectual achievements (Sorokin and McIver).

Culture is composed of integrated customs, traditions and current behavior patterns of the group. Culture is the stock in trade of group. It is an antecedent complex of value into which every individual is born. It is a medium within which individuals develop and mature (Bogardus).

Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by men as a member of the society (Tylor).

Culture means the total behavior of the members of a society including their language, values and norms resulting in material artifacts to compose the ways of life (Benjean).

Culture is the characteristic way of life inspired by fundamental values in which people live. It is the sum total of the values expressed through art, religion, literature, social institution and behavior, the overt acts of individuals and mass action inspired by collective urge (Minshi).

Types of Culture

According to Ogburn and Nimkoff, Culture is of two types:-

1. Material Culture &
2. Non-Material Culture.

1. **Material Culture:** Material Culture means the things and objects which are man made, visible objects as tools, implements, furniture, automobiles, buildings, dams, roads, bridges and infact the physical substance which has been changed and used by man. It includes technical equipments like – a printing press, a telephone, a television, a tractor, a machine gun etc. It includes our banks, insurance scheme, parliaments, currency systems etc.

Some Specific characteristics of Material Culture:

- (i) They are man-made.
- (ii) They are visible and audible.
- (iii) It changes very rapidly.
- (iv) It is also known as civilization.

Indian Culture can be cited as an example of material culture. The various material aspects of Indian Culture are – Housing, Food, Dresses, Jewellery, Utensils, Transportation System, Furniture etc.

2. **Non-Material Culture:** The term “Culture” which used in the ordinary sense, means “Non-Material Culture.” Non-Material Culture is intangible, immaterial, intrinsically valuable. It consists of the thoughts ideas, religion, custom, faith, belief, knowledge, language, habits, rituals, practices etc. It thus includes our ways of acting, feeling and thinking.

(a) Characteristics of Non-Material Culture:

- (i) They are abstract and invisible.
- (ii) They are traditional.
- (iii) Changes very slowly.

The various non-material aspects of Indian Culture are – Customs, Belief System, Value System, Languages, Symbolism, Traditions, Folkways and Mores, Art and Craft, Music, Political System, Educational System, Religion etc.

- (b) Primitive Culture: Primitive Culture is nothing but simple culture. It is simply living in gathering, hunting and fishing type of culture. Human Culture first appeared on earth about one million years ago. A Culture can be called primitive when there is no technology, literature, industry and commerce. This type of culture is more based on environment which determines the way of life.

Political Culture

Political Culture is a combination of attitudes, beliefs, emotions and values of a society with particular reference to political issues. It can be measured in terms of public opinions, surveys, public statements and writings. It varies from nation to nation. Political Culture can be both diverse as well as homogeneous but in both the cases it is the product of many inter-related factors. It is influenced by historical, geographical and socio-economic factors and these are its very foundations.

Political Culture has different aspects of study. One aspect is how the people view their national political system. Then another is whether the people feel proud of that or they just tolerate that. Then another is what is the attitude of the people towards public servants i.e. about their integrity and sense of duty. Then another is whether the people just tolerate or appreciate the view point of their bosses on major issues etc.

Symbols like national anthem and national flag express the idealised elements of political institutions.

Political Culture is not static. It is a dynamic and an ever changing process. It changes with the changing nature of time and environment. Each and every country have their own political culture.

The culture of an authoritarian government is quite different from the culture of a democratic country. Again there are differences between old democracies and new democracies.

Some people considers Politics as a dirty game. Other people in advanced democratic countries of the world says that Political Science teaches us to be a Good Citizen.

Political Culture in India

Indian Democracy is facing a major crisis of political culture even though the formal provisions are being maintained. There are several elements in this crisis like the acrimony in the interactions between the ruling party and the opposition , the growing legitimization of majoritarianism in a highly diverse society, a loss of confidence in the effectiveness of provisions for the enforcement of fundamental rights and the rule of law, erosion of federalism with the union government steadily encroaching on the constitutional rights of states, development policies oriented more towards electoral impact than long term challenges.

Our constitution saw India's future as a secular liberal democracy because it was a strong response to the communal basis of partition, an outlook that is evident when one reads the debates of the Constituent Assembly. In the Nehruvian era this was maintained by a leader who was secular at heart and had great respect for parliamentary traditions and the role of the opposition in a democracy. The fact that the ruling party was in effect a coalition of diverse interests prevented ideology driven governance. Today the dominant ruling party is not a coalition of diverse interests but an ideology driven political force.

This respect for parliamentary traditions and the opposition was not unique to the Nehruvian era. It was also seen much later during the tenure of PV Narasimha Rao, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh as Prime Ministers. But today the degree of acrimony in the interaction between the government and the opposition and a very low level of consultation prior to framing laws and policies have led to a breakdown of trust on which democratic self government has to function.

The most crucial challenge we face is restoring faith in our future as a secular and liberal democracy and a much wider sense of tolerance for diversity. This is implicit in the foundation of a Constitution which requires governance based on universal suffrage. This necessarily means respect for differences of religion, ethnic origin, language, gender and all of the things that make one person different from another.

The promotion of universal suffrage in the forties led to the emergence of a sense of equality in a society where the acceptance of hierarchical inequality is deeply embedded in social structures and even in personal psychology. Instructions went out from the Constituent Assembly secretariat to all civil servants in the districts, asking that such a universal roll be prepared. Existing electoral rolls were far from universal and often organized by community. The bureaucrats took this order

of universality seriously. For instance, the district collector in Bombay asked how one could leave out street dwellers who had no local address. The answer, decided by bureaucrats I believe, was to attribute the nearest residence to where they slept as their address, a principle which continues. Such a commitment to the basic principle of universality – not just for electoral purposes but for all acts of governance – is what we need in the bureaucracy of free India.

Conclusion

Indian Political Culture is based on the ideology of democracy. Today India is one of the largest democratic country in the world. But unfortunately, there are several challenges to the functioning of the democratic system in India. Population explosion is one of the major problems of a developing country like India. Apart from that, there are several other challenges like caste system, poverty, unemployment, terrorism and so on. Even though India is considered to be the largest democratic country in the world, but some people are not able to respect it in true spirit.

India is a multi-cultural state, where people from different communities resides. Each and every communities possess their own unique identity like language, religion, customs, traditions, beliefs and so on. But it is important to remember that our India is an undivided country with all the differences and diversities. It stands united on the principles of Unity in Diversity.