

Political culture

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ABSTRACT

Political culture is a universal concept. This helps us to understand the working of political system and the political behaviour of the people living in political system. Political culture is a set of beliefs, values, and emotions of the people about the political system of a country. Political system functions within the frame work of political culture of any society. Political culture refers to the overall pattern of political psychology or the pattern of psychological orientation of people of a society toward political objects. The success or failure of political system depends upon the political culture. This paper attempts to highlight the concept of political culture. It also focuses on its characteristics, components, types and factors which influence the political culture.

Key Words : Political culture, Political behaviour, Beliefs, Values

INTRODUCTION

Political culture is the sum total of the people's belief, values, viewpoints about politics. The concept was propounded by American Political Scientist Gabriel Almond in 1958 in his essay, 'Comparative Political System.' According to him, Political culture is a set of attitudes, cognition, value-standards, and feelings towards the Political System, its various roles and role-incumbents. It also includes knowledge of, values-affecting and feelings towards the inputs of demands and claims into the system, and its authoritative outputs"[1]. According to Lucian W. Pye, Political Culture refers to the over-all pattern of people's "attitudes, sentiments, and cognitions that inform and govern political behaviour in any society" [2]. According to Sydney Verba, "Political culture consists of a system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols and values which define the situation in which political action take place"[3]. Political is part of general culture. Each political culture has its own sub-culture.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this paper is to understand meaning, components, and types of political culture. This paper is descriptive and analytical in nature. The data used is collected from secondary sources

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Characteristics of Political Culture:

Political Culture is a universal concept:

Every political system in a country should have a different political culture. Whatever the nature of government in a state, people may or may not be aware and they may or may not own political consciousness, but they should have a different view of politics.

Political Culture is a comprehensive concept:

Political culture is a comprehensive concept which consists of attitudes, beliefs, values and emotions of the people about the political system. Just as the common culture of a country includes behaviour of the people, their values, habits, beliefs, conventions, customs etc, similarly the political culture includes the people's political character, political awareness, political habits, customs and political behaviour. It also includes the political interests and styles of functioning of the political leaders and citizens and also the methods of functioning of political institutions in the country.

Every political system has distinctive culture:

Every state has a distinctive political culture. Political culture of developed state is different from developing countries. This is the reason that when one form of government is successful in one country and fails in some other country [4].

Political culture is a part of general culture:

It is a part of the general culture of the country. The general culture possesses the complete beliefs, values and customs but we include only political attitude, political consciousness of the people. The basic principles of general culture influence the political culture [5].

Sub-culture of political culture:

Every political culture has several parts in it, called Sub-cultures. For example, each political system possesses a ruling class and ruled class. The ruling class is called the elite class. Its political culture is different from that of the ruled class. Their political behaviour too is different [6].

Political culture influences political system:

The influence of political culture on the efficiency of the political system is quite natural. For example, if the people lack political consciousness, the running of a democratic government may well be doubted [7].

It is a dynamic concept:

Political culture is a dynamic concept and it keeps on changing with time. Whenever social, economic development takes place it affects the political beliefs of the public. For example, in India, the spread of education has also brought political awakening among the people.

Subjective in nature:

Political culture is subjective in nature because while analysing political culture. We study the viewpoints of the people about the political system. These views points differ from person to person [8].

Components of Political Culture:

According to Almond and Powell the orientation of the people to the political system may be of three types [9].

Cognitive orientation:

It implies by the amount and the type of knowledge an individual has about the political problems and the political system. The knowledge can be both right and wrong. Some people have an explicit picture of politics in their minds while in some the picture is vague being based on wrong beliefs. In both cases, a person's knowledge influences his political behaviour.

Affective orientation:

It refers to the amount of devotion and interest of the people towards their political system. It also includes its influence over their minds. The emotional attitude of an individual motivates him to participate actively in politics or make him totally inactive. Then accordingly he accepts or rejects a particular political system.

Evaluation orientation:

Each political system has certain objectives to achieve. For the fulfilment of these political systems performs certain functions. The people would try to understand the extent to which objectives have achieved. We cannot correctly understand the political culture of the people without understanding their evaluation orientation.

Factors responsible for the growth of Political culture:

The factors which influence political culture are given below:

Historic factors:

The historic background of each country significantly contributes to the formation of its culture. Thus, it is desirable to explain ourselves with the history of a country in order to properly understand its present culture. For example, if we find that the people in India, as a general rule, obey the state laws and do not violate them, it may be attributed to the prolonged period of political servitude of the people in India. The feeling of submission has not yet completely gone. Similarly, if some state has been experiencing political stability, the pace of progress of political culture would have been accelerated. If on the other hand there had been political instability in a state it would result in the pace of progress of political culture being retarded. In such a state the political values and beliefs will not flourish. Every historical event affects the political culture of a society.

Geographical factors:

Some scholars are of the view-point that geographical factors like climate and topography

etc. also influences the evolution of political culture in a country. Buckle and Rousseau are of the view that the hot climate conditions breed absolutism and the temperate climatic conditions are conducive to the establishment of an efficient system of government in a country, similarly the political culture of the peace-loving country will be different from a country which is surrounded by ruthless enemies.

Social factor:

Social factors also affect the political culture of a state. The political culture of the educated and intellectual people is different from those of the uneducated ones. The political culture of the uneducated people is comparatively under-developed. The rural people are tradition-ridden and conservative in comparison to the urban people.

Economic factor:

The economic factors also affect political culture. The political values of the rich are different from those of the poor. If starvation, famine, unemployment and economic dissatisfaction are on the increase in a state, the political culture of such people is bound to be affected accordingly. They will be dissatisfied with the political structure and will try to change it while rich person does not like any changes in the political system.

Spread of education:

The spread of education also significantly contributes to the progress and changes in political culture. An educated person possesses more political consciousness than his uneducated counterpart. The educated people are able to correctly understand the various political problems and are able to evolve their own independent views about the various political problems. They are never blind-followers. This is the reason that those areas of the state where education has spread in a substantial manner represent a political culture different from the political culture of the region where education is poorly provided. An uneducated individual is not able to make his own correct assessment of a political problem.

Ideological basis:

Every political system has its own ideological basis which influences the political culture. For example, if a political system is based on liberal democratic ideology, there the people will be politically more active and will also be aware of their rights and duties. But if the political system is based on Marxian ideology, it will have its own influence on the values and believes of the people.

Radio, Television and Newspapers :

The contribution of radio and television in the evolution and progress of political culture cannot be ignored. These are very strong means of propaganda because most of the people take an interest in the various programmes telecast over these means of information. In socialist countries, special programmes are shown through such means so that the belief of the people in social economy or ideology may be further strengthened. In liberal democratic states the radio, television and newspaper are a general rule, autonomous bodies but the

respective governments are able to exert pressure and control over these agencies and get programmes modified according to their will.

Types of political culture:

The parochial political culture:

The parochial political culture is found in conventional societies where people have no political consciousness and where the leader performs different political, economic and religious roles simultaneously. Such a political culture is found among old tribal societies where the tribe chief acts as the leader of the tribe in religious, political, and other matters [10].

The subject political culture:

This political culture is found in such states where people do not take much interest in the political system. They do not see any possibility of influencing the political system and thus give consent to all decisions of the authorities without demur. The citizens follow all instructions given by leaders submissively [11].

The participant political culture:

This type of political culture is found in those countries where the common people are fully aware of the political system. They play an active role in the decision making process. They are fully aware of their rights and duties. The individual considers himself an active member of the state and a participant is oriented towards political issues. The political system is evaluated and criticized at all levels [12].

Civic culture :

The idea of civic culture is associated with the names of Almond and Verba who together studied the political culture of five countries. It is a mixture of subject political culture and participant political culture. In this culture, the common people accept the right of the elite in making political decisions but they have the right to criticise the elite and make it responsible. Such a political culture is found on democratic states [13].

Ideological political culture:

Ideology is the bases of the political system as also of the lives of the people. It arises when a person regulates his political behaviour according to a particular political ideology and does not participate in political activities in an independent way. The ideology determines the political behaviour opposition is not tolerated and every effort for its growth and development is suppressed.

Homogenous political culture:

This culture is found in such countries where there is a general consent among the people regarding objectives and methods of achieving them. Even the opposition parties as a general rule, do not criticise the ruling party for the sake of criticism.

Fragmented political culture:

This culture is found in a society where different groups of people have different political

values, objectives, and view-point. This is the antithesis of homogeneous political culture. It contains different ideologies.

Secular political culture:

In this type of political culture, the people are not tied to a particular ideology but the basis of their view-point is logic and reasoning. The people have maximum political consciousness. They are also competent to understand their individual role in their political system [14].

Conclusion:

Political culture is a set of values, the emotion of the people about the political system of the country. By distinguishing between behaviour and attitudes, we can explain the functioning of different political systems and their structures through political culture. The political culture helps us to associate our individual attitude to the characteristics of the political system. It helps to narrow down the micro-macro gap in political principles. The level of political development also varies from society to society and the concept of political culture helps us to understand these diversities.

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