

Different Approaches to Study Indian Political Thought

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The approaches to studying Indian Political Thought are divided into four different perspectives through which scholars have tried to interpret it over the years. The four approaches which are quite popular in social science discourse are Classical, Islamic, Syncretic and Modern. The modern is not homogenous in terms of its ideological and methodological orientation and could be divided into five different schools of thought, liberal, Marxist, Gandhian, the Feminist, Dalit- Bahujan and the post-colonial.

When we talk of Indian Political Thought, we do so in terms of the period which is spread over three different periods in history- ancient, medieval and modern. The different periods of history produced different priorities for political thinking. But still, there are certain foundational principles through which one can analyse the whole corpus of ideas which are known as Political Thought in India.

Before we turn to these foundational principles and see how they can be understood, we should also remember certain background facts about Indian Political Thought which will help us place it in the proper perspective.

The first important thing to remember is that for several years, Indian Political Thought was not accorded the status of a thought. It was simply considered as an identity question or some kind of articulation of concerns which were driven by the urge to earn identity in the history of ideas. The Western scholars were quite dismissive of Indian Political Thought and Indian Political theory. It largely originated from the fact that Political Thought as an intellectual activity was considered a privilege of the West. The Indians were believed to be

lacking the faculty to reflect, reason and imagine things for the future. One of the important features of Political Thought is to build a utopia, that is imagining a better future for humanity. However, it was believed that Indian Political Thought did not have the required elements to imagine the future or to build a utopia based on certain methodological tools and techniques which the Western thinkers deployed in such exercises. The Western world has indeed been replete with utopia-building exercises whereas there was none in India till Gandhi wrote his Hind Swaraj!

Secondly, it was also believed that Indian Political Thought was mostly experience-centric and therefore it did not have the component of logic and reasoning. The synonym for philosophy in India is 'Darshan' which is suggestive of the experiential nature of Indian philosophy and thought. It was considered to be lacking the logical component based on experience hence there was no inter-subjective communicability.

The third thing which was also often pointed out that Indian Political Thought was intimately tied to religious ideas and religious scriptures, and hence it was simply an extension of the theology.

Additionally, it was also argued that Indian Political Thought was devoid of a quest for truth/knowledge. What was put forth in the form of political thinking in any period in Indian history was not a search for truth and or an explanation of social and political reality. Rather in most cases, it pertained to a justification of existing social structures and hierarchies. In other words, it was status quo in nature and thus not suitable for consideration as Political Thought.

These were some of the arguments based on which it was dismissed as not suitable to be accorded the status of political thought (Parekh, 1992; Rathore, 2017).

But later on, due to India's encounter with the West particularly in the colonial period, a new engagement emerged which resulted in two different types of developments. One of them was that a whole host of people started trying to present Indian Political Thinking in a different frame. There was an attempt to demonstrate that what existed in the West also existed in India, and therefore philosophy, thinking and reasoning didn't have Western provenance as it was normally believed. Attempts were made to present ideas based on certain modern categories like power, nature of authority, and structure of legitimacy. Modern values like freedom, equality, justice and change were shown to be integral to Indian thinking.

However, scholars called such new initiatives imitative exercises resulting in a derivative discourse (Chatterjee, 1986). The title of Partha Chatterjee's book 'The nationalist thought and the colonial world- A Derivative Discourse' (Chatterjee, 1986) is suggestive of this. In other words, the argument was that the important categories used to do theory and thought, particularly in the modern period were mostly derived from the West having no stamp of indigenous thinking. It was simply the result of India's encounter with the West under colonial rule showing a quest to imitate everything Western.

However, we will do well to remember that in reaction to such an encounter with the West, a different trend also emerged in later years. The trend was to romanticise the Indian past. It was argued that whatever happened in the West in the realm of science, philosophy and logic were not only present in ancient India but rather they were far better than in the West!

Thus we get conflicting perspectives about Indian political thought. On the one hand, there has been an attempt to imitate the West and show a dismissive attitude about our past, our tradition, etc. by subjecting them to critical scrutiny through the Western lens. On the other, an attempt to romanticize the past and uncritically glamorize anything and everything which happened in India.

But along with these two polar trends - either becoming totally dismissive or uncritically romanticizing - there also existed an attempt to critically evaluate Indian tradition and culture without either getting infatuated with

the West or becoming dismissive of everything Indian. It is because of such critical evaluation and reflection that a very creative engagement with both the West as well as our tradition happened resulting in the flowering of Indian Political Thought in later years both in terms of interpretation as well as creation of new ideas.

It is because of such creative engagement that one can say that today Indian Political Thought is placed in a much more hallowed and respectful position globally than was the case earlier. As a result of such initiatives, we find that today it is being studied in most of the Universities in the world.

With this background let's turn to the four approaches outlined above.

The Classical Approach:

The classical approach, as the name suggests, pertains to the approach adopted by scholars to understand Indian society, culture and political thinking based on certain classical texts like Vedas, Shastras, Purans and Smritis. This classical understanding of Indian society is of course mostly textual. The study and analysis are based on various texts available in India since the ancient period which are mostly religious. For example, the Puranas of different types are a case in point. But there are also texts like Upanishads which are philosophical and speculative.

Besides these, There are also texts which are discourses on law, ethics, administration, etc. Kautilyas Arthashastra is the best example to remember.

But there is no denying that the classical approach simply bases the interpretation on some important texts handed down to us from the past and are used to understand the Indian mind and the thought process.

Interestingly, there are many scholars today in the West who are turning to these Indian texts and are trying to see how Indian philosophical ideas can be distilled from them even if they are laden with religious idioms and language.

Thus today these texts are being subjected to two different types of interpretations; a) understanding these texts with the help of the lens provided by the Western theories. This tradition started way back in the colonial period in India when the colonial state tried to promote an understanding of Indian tradition and Indian culture under the spell of what is called 'Orientalism'. This was particularly quite prominent during the time of Governor General Warren Hastings in the 18th century. Later an

Orientalist versus Anglicist debate also emerged among the colonial rulers and ideologues. In the initial years, the orientalist got state patronage and tried to use these texts to develop a better understanding of Indian society, its people and their culture and language to offer better governance under the empire. For example, some of the great orientalist scholars in India during this period like William Jones and Max Muller were part of this discourse and pursued this project under state patronage (Metcalf, 1995).

One thing is to be remembered here this orientalist approach had a narrow approach in dealing with these texts. Their understanding was largely based on the interpretations given by the pundits in the case of ancient Hindu texts and Mullahs in the case of medieval Islamic texts. The traditional elites or knowledge seekers from the society were seen as the custodians of these texts and hence their interpretations were considered authentic and were given a status of finality ignoring the plurality of voices latent in these texts.

Thus we can say that the entire Orientalist perspective became not only textual but also elitist. Recently we have seen that there has been a lot of refinement in terms of the study and interpretation of these classical texts. Many modern tools and techniques of interpretation have been deployed to see how these texts can provide us with some clues to understand ancient Indian thinking on society, polity and ethics better.

Thus we find that some of the principles through which Western political thought has been understood are also deployed here to interpret these classical Indian texts. For example, the concerns for truth and knowledge, concern for power, authority and legitimacy, concern for emancipation and freedom and concern for equality and justice are foregrounded while reading and interpreting these texts. An attempt is made to see if these concerns are present in these texts or not!

This way we can see the refinement of tools and techniques in interpreting classical texts on Indian philosophy, society and culture.

It has been realized that instead of being dismissive of these texts in the name of rationalism, science and modernity, we should give some autonomy to these texts and the ideas present in these texts. Instead of looking for coherence in these texts as coherence cannot always be the criteria to judge the ideas coming from the tradition, we should look for principles in the anarchic or disorderly corpus of ideas which could unravel the social and political

reality of the time.

It is true that on a closer analysis of these classical texts, it is found that there were certain principles which lay underneath these texts. The principles were mostly informed by a sense of hierarchy. There were three hierarchies through which most of often these texts looked at Indian social, cultural and political reality. Since hierarchies were considered a very significant aspect of Indian social and political life, these texts either offered justification for these hierarchies or explained the logic behind them. In other words, we can say that they constructed some sort of an 'ideal type' and the ideal was one of 'order and change'. The Indian society was seen working through the principle of order. There was also a principle of change existing side by side. The change was integral to it, exogenous and coming from inside. Hence, order and change were the overarching framework through which the classical texts looked at Indian social and political reality (Singh, 1973).

In other words, the classical approach tried to see how this order and change were taking place, how order and change were related to each other and how order and change could be perceived and understood with the help of the text available in Indian tradition, be it the Shrutis, Smritis, Shastras, the Puranas and the Upanishads.

They believed that there were certain principles integral to this entire design and only through these principles one can understand the entire evolution of Indian society, Indian tradition, Indian culture and Indian mind.

Some of the principles which were figured out in these texts by the classical approach were; a) hierarchy and b) holism. Holism was considered a very significant aspect of Indian discourse because the entire social and cultural system were considered part of a whole and the relationship between different parts and the whole was one important dimension present in these texts (Dumont, 1970).

Thus the classical perspective on Indian Political Thought considers hierarchy, holism, continuity and change as important principles to be analysed.

There was continuity, an uninterrupted continuity but there was also a space and scope for change within it. Hence the classical approach believes that hierarchy, holism, continuity and change are the important principles which have informed all the classical texts and through them, we could understand the entire Indian discourse over the ages.

So far as the hierarchy is concerned, the classical approach would argue that there existed foundational hierarchies or structures based on which the Indian society functioned and worked. For example, the first hierarchy discussed in many of the classical texts was that of Varna- that is role institutionalization. The entire society has been visualized as divided into four different Varnas. The caste of course is the by-product of Varna and a lot of people feel that caste itself is a distortion of the Varna principle. The Varna principle was role institutionalization; certain roles were institutionalized for every individual in society which was defined with the help of the hierarchical understanding of social order. So the four varnas, as it is well known, were Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. The four Varnas were initially not based on birth, as it is argued, but they were based on duties or roles which every individual was supposed to perform. Only later it became hereditary, and further distortions took place and caste and many other deformities like untouchability emerged out of it. Nonetheless, this classical perspective would look at Indian society with the help of this important hierarchy of Varna and they would say that this is how Indian Thought imagined a stable and orderly social order and also imagined that change would be possible within it by abiding by the logic of these hierarchies (Singh, 1973).

The second important hierarchy that the classical approach finds in the classical texts is the hierarchy of Purushartha, which is goal orientation. The four different goals of individuals in society have been prescribed. These four goals are - Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. These are the four important principles of Purushartha. The most important goal is of course the Dharma and that is why in prioritizing these principles Dharma comes first. Then is the Artha, material pursuits, and then comes Kama, sexual pursuits, the fourth is Moksha or emancipation or salvation. One can say that moksha was the most important goal. Dharma and moksha were privileged over Kama and Artha. Therefore these four different types of goals of Purushartha were very significant for creating a balance in the social order.

The hierarchy of goals in life shows the individual pursuits of a person in Indian society. It is through these four considerations/goals and prioritizing those higher goals over the lower goals that freedom for the self and society in the Indian context was understood. Therefore it is argued that in the classical approach, the idea of freedom was seen differently from the discourse of

freedom that materialized in the West. The Western discourse of freedom was based on the split of personality, or duality between body and mind associated with the Cartesian duality between the mind and body. However, it is argued that the Indian discourse tried to overcome this duality and tried to integrate the multidimensional character of the human body with the human mind and nature.

Therefore goal attainment was considered to be very important. The four different goals create balance amongst themselves and also create a harmonious relationship between the two hierarchies- Varna and Purushartha- the cornerstone of Indian thought.

The next hierarchy, which is also very significant in the classical perspective is the hierarchy of Ashram, which is the division of life into the fourfold division - Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa. The fourfold division ensures the smooth movement of an individual's life cycle in society. Therefore this fourfold division of life in terms of Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasaa, along with the fourfold goal attainment and fourfold rule institutionalization makes the social order coherent and orderly. The three hierarchies become very important for ensuring interdependence and harmony in society.

Along with these three hierarchies, there is also a fourth one, a hierarchy of time which is also equally important. It is only with the notion of time that the entire notion of continuity and change is understood in Indian thought. The notion of time is seen again with the help of fourfold divisions of historical time, Satyuga, Dwapar, Treta and Kalyuga. In the fourfold divisions of time, one is followed by the other. The notion of historical time here is cyclical instead of linear as it is normally understood in the West. This cyclical nature of time then creates a balance among the other three hierarchies and they together lead to interdependence, order and change in the Indian society.

What is significant to remember is that the classical approach looks at Indian Political Thought with the help of these four hierarchies. As mentioned in the very beginning, the hierarchy as part of holism is central to an understanding of Indian society from the classical perspective. The holism along with these four hierarchies completes the entire life cycle and societal process in India. They are serviced in such a manner that the whole is preserved by integrating the parts while retaining continuity and change.

Order, continuity and change are important dimensions of Indian society. It is not that change doesn't take place. The change does occur. But it occurs within the system, or through the principles inherent in the system rather than change coming from the outside.

The argument that India was an unchanging society, apropos Marx, does not stand as per the classical perspective.

This is how the classical perspective has tried to look at Indian Political Thought. This genre of interpreting Indian thought based on the text has of late become quite popular. In fact, in the 1950s 60s, the French sociologist Louis Dumont used this method when he wrote the book *Homo Hierarchicus*. Dumont structured his entire argument on the principles of hierarchy and holism and also argued that the disjunction between status and power was the key principle of Indian social structure through which one could interpret Indian classical thinking on power, authority and legitimacy. He particularly mentions the kind of rules prescribed for the Kshatriyas and the Brahmins- one as a king and the other as a spiritual head. He said that this disjunction was central to this discourse.

Islamic Perspective:

The second perspective is the Islamic perspective which seeks to understand medieval political thinking in India. In this perspective, the political regimes and ideas prevalent during the Delhi Sultanate period as well as the Mughal period are interpreted to see what type of political thinking existed. The writings of the Court historians and Theologians like Ziauddin Barni and Abu Fazl are used to interpret the state power, the nature of the monarchical regime and the nature of legitimacy and authority. Recently studies have been done to analyze the state formation and nature of authority of Hindu kingdoms in various regions in the medieval period to see how these regimes offered a different example of social and political organization in the medieval time and how it impacted political thinking in the later years.

Syncretic Perspective:

The third perspective is a syncretic approach which has tried to look at the multi-cultural and multi-traditional evolution of Indian thinking. Under the syncretic perspective, two traditions are mentioned. One is the Sufi tradition mostly coming from Islam and the second is the Bhakti tradition coming from Hinduism. This perspective tries to analyse the evolution of syncretic thought in India

under which different cultures, faiths and ideas intermingled with each other and created a harmonious syncretic social fabric. And it was not only at the level of practice but also at the level of ideas and governance.

In the analysis and interpretation of the syncretic tradition, two emperors and their regimes are often used as examples of syncretic thought. The Buddhist king from the ancient period, Asoka and the medieval Mughal king, Akbar are cited as examples.

One of the scholars who has worked on Indian Political Thinking, Amartya Sen (Sen, 2005) has used these two icons from an Indian plethora of ideas, one from ancient and another from medieval, to explain that syncretism is integral to Indian political thinking. How they practised tolerance as state policy is made the central theme of his analysis. In the syncretic approach, it is argued that tolerance and pluralism emerged from people's lives and everyday experiences.

It is well known that in medieval times, two movements- the Sufi movement and the Bhakti movement - spread in different parts of India. Traces of these two traditions are still around. These traditions emerged as a protest movement against certain practices through which an attempt was being made to homogenise society and its culture and ideas. Hence these two protest movements tried to present culture, tradition, and faith in a different light saying that there is GOD but the priestly mediation is uncalled for. People's actions and people's association with the almighty can materialize even without the help of any mediation.

These two movements impacted art, music, culture and even politics. Subsequently, we have seen that the entire policy of tolerance which is presented in the form of secularism in modern times refers to this syncretic culture of India Which is seen as an important hallmark of Indian culture and tradition.

Jawaharlal Nehru, when he wrote his *Discovery of India*, made a special mention of these two movements, Sufism and Bhakti and tried to show how Indian society was at home with such ideas which were tolerant, syncretic, and harmonious based on the interdependence and intercultural dialogue and harmony. Dialogue and tolerance are very important in Indian tradition and Bhakti and Sufism represent that. It is argued that this Indian tradition, Indian culture, and Indian society have functioned on the principle of dialogue and negotiation.

Amartya Sen when talking of modern democratic culture emerging in India, believes that Indian society

from the very beginning had the tradition of negotiation and dialogue among the people, different faiths and different cultures which helped in easily adjusting to modern liberal institutions. Therefore, he feels that despite illiteracy and poverty, India succeeded in its democratic journey as this traditional resource of dialogue and negotiation, tolerance and harmony helped in this endeavour. Therefore he believes that syncretism is integral to India.

Contemporary Approach:

The contemporary approach looks at Indian political thought from five different perspectives. They are the following:

The liberal Approach:

Liberalism emerged in the West in the 17th and 18th centuries. The ideas which are central to liberalism are autonomy of the individual, freedom, individual volition, and rationality. The Individual is seen at the centre of the universe. Liberalism, it is argued, started in 18th and 19th century India in the aftermath of renaissance and reformation in Bengal and Mahabharata. Unlike the West where they were separated by 100 years, in India both renaissance and reformation happened simultaneously. Ram Mohan Roy and his Brahmo Samaj, along with many such discourses like the Young Bengal movement of Derozio are seen as the harbinger of the liberal discourse in India. Gradually it spread to Maharashtra and Prarthana Samaj of Ranade and similar organizations emerged to give new impetus to liberal ideas. Jyotiba Phule and others carried this tradition later.

This reformist streak in Indian political thought continued even in the 20th century and the Dalit-Bahujan discourse of Phule- Ambedkar which picked up momentum in the 20th century is a case in point.

The liberal perspective does not feel shy in highlighting the deficiency of liberal values in Indian thinking. The liberal approach argues that

Indian Political Thinking is society-centric and group-centric where the individual is not accorded priority. In other words, the Individual is at the margin of this discourse and because of this individual's identity gets submerged in the identity of the group, be it the family, the caste or religion.

Therefore, Indian liberal discourse believes that Indian culture and tradition don't have much to contribute to heralding a liberal worldview. The Bengal Renaissance

which was started by Ram Mohan and others, was essentially directed toward the mission of creating a liberal worldview based on rationalism and freedom.

Since the other concerns of liberalism are justice and equality, the liberal discourse attributes the loss of freedom during the colonial period less to the colonial rulers and more to the follies of Indian society. They argued that Indians themselves were responsible for the loss of their freedom. The liberals argue that gender and caste were the markers of India's degradation which were used by the colonial rulers to justify the colonial rule. Hence it is not a chance that these two issues became central to the reformist politics, be it Ram Mohan, Vidyasagar or Ranade (Bayly, 2012).

Thus one can say that the liberal tradition has been an important approach to understanding Indian Political Thought in modern times and this discourse continued even later after the attainment of freedom when the Constitution was written. Some of the liberal ideas and values found a place in the constitution and therefore Indian democracy started with this commitment that it would ensure that people would enjoy all these values in free India which are integral to the liberal worldview (Bhargava, 2000).

The liberal approach has on the whole been critical of Indian tradition and Indian culture. They would not go with the textual reading of Indian thought or the Indian tradition. For example, the classical approach often saw the hierarchies as value-neutral. These hierarchies only provided the foundations based on which the entire society worked so effectively over the ages. However, the liberal approach has considered these hierarchies as hegemonic, exploitative and inegalitarian leading to the degradation of both women and certain sections of society in the name of caste. Therefore, they would subject these hierarchies to critical scrutiny, unlike the classical perspective which would simply use it as an ideal type to understand Indian society.

The Marxist Approach:

The next approach is the Marxist approach. The Marxist approach started in India in the 20th century in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution and over the years has become an important approach to understand and explain Indian society, culture and tradition. Karl Marx had indeed written in the 1850s in the New York Daily Tribunes on the colonial rule in India. In those writings he had predicted that British rule in India would be a

mixed baggage; it would produce both negative as well as positive results in India. The negative, he argued, would be in terms of plundering of resources. But on the positive side, he argued, that it would lead to some major changes in Indian society. He had specifically singled out the railway system which would break the backbone of India's stagnation, that was the caste system.

Subsequently, a whole host of Marxist scholars emerged who tried to use the tools and techniques of Marxism to study Indian society and Indian thought and thereby tried to interpret Indian Political Thought within the Marxist frame. Their interpretation is largely based on the dialectical and historical materialist interpretation of history where the tool of the mode of production has been used to analyse the social formation in different periods in Indian history. Initially, they went by Marx's observation on India that there was no normal development of the society and there was an Asiatic mode of production different from the West (Kaviraj, 1983).

Marx argued that the Western world could be understood with the help of class and modern categories. But in India class and other modern categories would be ineffective because they have a different kind of social system based on autonomous village republics at the bottom and autocratic state at the top. They are linked to each other only with one important function which is the distribution and allocation of water. Subsequently, of course, Marxist historians modified this position and a very interesting debate on the transition in Indian society has taken place which has become famous as the Indian feudalism debate.

Attempts have been made by some Marxist historians like R.S. Sharma and D D. Koshambi among others to establish that in India the methodological tools of Marxism could also be applied.

Therefore the debate among the Marxist scholars has led to a new understanding of Indian society and politics adding a new dimension to the understanding of Indian Political Thought (Seth, 1995; Sarkar, 1994).

Though the Marxist approach, with few exceptions, has been dismissive of Indian philosophy and Indian Political thought due to its close association with religion, particularly Hinduism. They have ignored the finer distinctions between religion and philosophy, that there are certain aspects of philosophy which are integrated with religion in traditional societies like India which need careful and close reading. But still, the Marxist approach offers valuable methodological insights in understanding

the political and social thought in India.

The Gandhian Approach:

It is a tradition which is quite popular in contemporary times to interpret Indian Political Thought. The Gandhian tradition is based on the writings and ideas of Gandhi. It is to be remembered that Gandhi was one person who neither rejected tradition completely nor idealized tradition uncritically. Therefore, Ashis Nandy calls Gandhi a critical traditionalist who subjected traditions to critical scrutiny. For example, he talked not only about Swaraj in culture and politics but also about ideas. While talking about Swadeshi and Swaraj, he didn't accept everything that was Swadeshi. He did not accept untouchability which was a swadeshi thing. He privileged Swaraj over Swadeshi to a great extent.

The Gandhian approach is based on the principle of non-violence and truth through which Gandhi looked at reality. Gandhian approach offers very useful resources to understand religion. Gandhi's attempt to see close relationships between politics and religion becomes the guiding principle for this approach. For him, religion was not simply faith. Religion was also philosophy, ethics, and science. Certain principles of science have also come out of religion in the West. Therefore, things like ethics, philosophy, and science are wrapped with religion along with faith. It is a different matter that sometimes faith becomes over-dominant and creates problems.

Therefore Gandhi while talking about the close association of religion and politics tries to look at the ethical and philosophical dimensions of religion. The Gandhian perspective is quite significant so far as the contemporary approach to understanding Indian Political Thought is concerned (Parekh, 1989).

Post-colonial Approach:

This is one more perspective which is quite popular these days. A lot of people are trying to use this framework to study Indian Political Thought. The post-colonial approach draws on the new genre of writings in political theory and philosophy like postmodernism and post-structuralism. This approach also uses the methodological insights given by Edward Said in his book "Orientalism" to explain the colonization of ideas and knowledge by Imperialism when it turned the colonial subjects and its knowledge system into object of exploitation, degradation and humiliation. The colonial subjects were turned into objects robbing them of any

agency in history. The subaltern school has carried forward this tradition in social science and history by studying colonial rule in India.

However, the critiques point out that in its attempt to give subjecthood to colonial society and its people, it has moved to another extreme and become some sort of reverse-orientalism making the West an object of study. Thus, instead of breaking, the binary of subject-object has been further reified through this approach (Currie, 1996, Chibbar, 2013; Chakravarty, 2001).

Dalit-Bahujan approach:

In recent years Dalit- Bahujan approach has emerged as a powerful intervention and is bringing new issues in the understanding of Indian political thought. However, it goes back to the colonial period when Phule-Ambedkar- Petiyar tradition emerged as a powerful counter to the existing perspectives on Indian Political thinking. But in contemporary times, this approach, while swearing by the Phule-Ambedkar tradition, has brought forth many insights into unravelling the hierarchical and inequalitarian character of social and political thinking in India (Guru, 2011; Mani, 2008). The Dalit- Bahujan approach is based on ‘experiential epistemology’ and like the Feminist theory is drawing heavily on the phenomenological tradition in philosophy.

Feminist Approach:

In the last two or three decades, the Feminist approach has also come up which has offered a new perspective in understanding Indian Political Thought. By offering a feminist reading of the Indian classical texts and also bringing in the contributions of some modern Indian Feminist thinkers, the Feminist theory offers a different perspective on Indian Political Thought based on ‘standpoint epistemology’ (Chakravarti, 1993; Sangari and Vaid, 1990).

Thus we can say that these are some of the important approaches today through which social science is trying to study and analyse Indian Political Thought.

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