

# **POLITICAL CULTURE APPROACH**

***KAPILDEV RAY***

# **INTRODUCTION**

- Political culture is essential to an understanding of government and politics.
- Political culture is about how people view the political system as a whole and their belief in its legitimacy. And what they think about political system.
- It is produced by the combined action of individuals and institutions. It has influenced the system theorists to assert that one political system is distinguished from another not only in terms of its structure but also in terms of the political culture.
- This concept (political culture) was first introduced by Gabriel Almond in 1956.
- In comparative politics systematic study of political culture started from behavioural revolution (1950's).

## **MEANING OF POLITICAL CULTURE**

- Political culture essentially involves the basic values, ideas, beliefs, attitudes and orientation about politics as well as political system.
- It has a psychological orientation- attitude, beliefs, and values of individual citizens towards their political system or government.
- It developed through a long and continuous process of socialization.
- For example, India's political culture constitute by liberal democracy such as people have right to speech, opinion, participation, assembly, religion, right against exploitation, untouchability, welfare state etc.

# **DEFINITION OF POLITICAL CULTURE**

- According to **Daniel Elazar**, political culture refers to what people believe and feel about government and how they think people should act towards it or the particular pattern of orientation to political action in which each political system is embedded.
- **Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba** in the book ***"The Civic Culture" 1963***, define political culture as the pattern of individual attitudes and orientations towards politics among the member of a political system.
- Two components of this definition are '**orientations**' and '**objects**'.
- The object of the system include those parties of the political system which are related to structural functional approach.
- Orientations, refers to psychological dimensions, particularly citizens attitude and values and how these affect politics.
- For Almond and Verba there are three sets of different kinds of psychological orientations-
  - a) **cognitive orientations**, which refers the knowledge and belief about political system .( How much people are aware about political system)
  - b) **affection orientations**, which refers feelings about political system, its roles, personnel and performance. (What are their feelings and attachments towards politics or political system)
  - c) **evaluational orientations**, which refers the judgements and opinions about political objects that typically involve combining value judgment. (How they evaluate or assess the outcomes (policies/decisions) of political system)

# **FACTORS OF POLITICAL CULTURE**

- Three factors constitute the foundations of political culture.
- 1) Firstly, **history** determine the foundation of political culture. For example, India's parliamentary democracy is a legacy of British, Britain has followed its many convention and custom towards politics.
- 2) Secondly, **geography** has its own part in laying the foundations of political culture. For example Britain has less problem in terms of immigration as compared to India because of its geographical location or it surrounded by sea. One of the important element is geography behind Switzerland's direct democracy.
- 3) Thirdly, **socio-economic development** also determine the political culture. In urban industrialised society communications system, educational standards are higher, participation in the decision making process is wider than the rural societies. Developments in the field of science and technology have their impact on the process of transportation and communications, migrations and immigrations, imports and exports, revolution and warfares.

# **TYPES OF POLITICAL CULTURE**

- Gabriel Almond and Sydney Verba identify three types of political culture:
  1. ***Parochial political culture*** : parochial political culture predominates in relatively poor, underdeveloped and agrarian societies, where social orientations are local as opposed to national. In parochial political culture citizens are aware of the presence of central government and live their lives regardless of the decisions taken by the state. Parochials know very little or nothing about the political system, its parts and its processes. Hence they are not positively oriented to the input or output functions.
  2. ***Subject political culture*** : subject political culture is characterized by people who are aware of political system and know something about how it operates, but primarily see themselves as subject to authority. Hence they are positively oriented towards the output process of the political system and not to the input side of the system. They do not see themselves as participants in the political system.
  3. ***Participant political culture*** : participant political culture is characterized by individuals who not only know a great deal about the political system, but also are positively oriented towards both input and output processes. They want to participate and receive the benefits of the policy. They believe that they have a positive role to play in the political system. Participant political culture was closely related to development.
- Almod and Verba considered these three types of political culture as **ideal types**. Most importantly, one could find Parochials, subjects and participants in any country. In some the parochial impulse predominated, in others the participant.

# **SECULARISATION OF POLITICAL CULTURE** **AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT**

- The process of secularisation of political culture means **increasing political awareness of the people** enabling them to have a growing information about their political system and their role as a political actor in it. Thus **secularisation of political culture leads to political development.**
- However, political culture is dynamic, it changes overtime. In ancient times politics was dominated by religious values, but later because of the awareness among the people it has changed to liberal values. For example, revolution changed not only the system of government but also the economic system, the social structure and the cultural values of those.
- Moreover, country wise political culture are different. In some states there exists a national political culture along with one or more sub cultures. We can also say about Samuel Huntington 's clash of civilization or how political culture is differ in terms of civilization.
- The factors which help in the secularization of political culture are – **Industrialization and Urbanization, scientific and Technical progress, Spread of literacy, Mass Media, Political Parties, Interest Groups** etc.

# **ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF POLITICAL CULTURE IN COMPARATIVE POLITICS**

- 1) Enables us to understand how laws and constitutions are observed.
  - 2) To know the connection between social and economic factors.
  - 3) To understand the attitude of citizens to the political system.
  - 4) Enables us to understand why similar phenomena do not produce similar results.
  - 5) May provide us with valuable conceptual tool.
  - 6) Made political science a complete social science.
- According to **Dennis Kavanagh**, the advantages of studying political culture are –
- a) It explains the performance of different political systems.
  - b) It influences input output process of political system.
  - c) It lessens micro-macro gap in political system.
  - d) Helpful in bringing progressive political changes.
  - e) It helps us to know the direction of political development.
  - f) It has changed our study centre from individual to society.
  - g) It tells us certain guidelines for political behaviour.
  - h) Linking with rational elements with irrational one's which influences individual behaviour.
  - i) It has made political science pragmatic and dynamic science.

# **CRITICISM**

- Critics argued that the whole notion of national political culture was inherently vague. It is not a very clear concept.
- It is a new name for an old idea.
- Almond and Verba failed to offer a detailed account of the origin and evaluation of political culture.
- No clear distinction between determinants of political culture and general culture.

## **CONCLUSION**

- Though there have some criticism, the Almond and Verba study had an enormous impact on the development of political culture studies. Political culture impact on the political development.



# **PROMINENT THINKERS**

1. Gabriel Almond
2. Sydney Verba
3. Lucian Pye
4. Talcott Parsons
5. Samuel Edward Finer
6. W. H. Morris Jones
7. Rajni Kothari