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### Political Culture: Concepts, Foundations and Formation

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#### Abstract

*Political culture is one of the basic concepts of political science which helps in understanding how the value system, attitudes, belief system, and behavioural orientation of citizens affect the working of political systems. In this research paper, an attempt has been made to discuss the concept of political culture, its theoretical framework, determinants, typologies, and importance in relation to democracy building with special reference to Nepal. Qualitative review methodology has been employed for this study, involving the analysis and synthesis of literature from the classical and modern authors such as Gabriel Almond, Sidney Verba, Lucian Pye, Robert Dahl and others. The findings suggest that political culture is a vital bridge between the political behaviour of individuals and the effectiveness of institutions. It is a product of many aspects of history, geography, socio-economic environment, culture, religion, and ideology which jointly determine political attitudes and behaviour of citizens. Furthermore, political culture is dynamic and not static and there exists no pure form of political culture in any society. Key words: political culture, political socialization, democracy, political participation, political behaviour, political system, Nepal. Rather, there coexist various types of cultures in politics like parochial, subject, participant, civic, elite, mass, traditional, ideological, secular, and sub-political cultures. Despite the controversy about political culture theory in terms of conceptual vagueness and research methodology, the theory is invaluable to analyse political behaviour and democracy. This paper suggests that promoting participatory and democratic culture in politics via political education and citizenship is crucial for democratic institutions and development in Nepal.*

**Keywords:** Political culture, Socialization, Democracy, Political participation, Political behaviour, Nepal

## Introduction

The political culture, which has emerged as a new concept in the present time, certainly plays a major role in the field of political science. Although the concept of culture or culture is basically related to sociology or anthropology (Dahl, 1963 & Ball, 1971). Under which a person's way of behaving, his beliefs, beliefs, honour, duty, conscience and material progress etc. are included. All these things have an impact on the political field and other fields as well. When culture comes into the political context, it becomes political behaviour or attitude. But political culture can also be understood as the entire culture or culture (Bhattacharya, 2008). In fact, the development of the concept of political culture seems to have been aimed at bridging the gap between the psychological analysis of individual political behaviour and the collective interpretation of political sociology. After the Second World War, when new states emerged in large numbers, the theories and concepts that political scientists had propounded until then proved inadequate to explain the political processes operating in those newly independent countries. Political culture is a concept that was propounded in the face of such inadequacy of the old theories (Dhungana & Dhungel, 2015). Nowadays, there is a lot of material available on this subject at the individual and system level, but the credit for initially developing the concept of political culture goes to Gabriel and Allmand. The conclusions and assumptions that Allmand, together with another scholar named Sydney Bharwa, drew from a comparative study of the political cultures of five countries have a special place in this context.

## The concept of political culture

According to Lucian Pye and Sidney Bharwa, political culture is a term used today that attempts to give a more explicit and systematic form to the knowledge related to the old concepts, political ideology, national morality and sentiment, national political psychology, and basic values of a group. Similarly, according to Almond and Powell, "Political culture is the personal attitude and disposition of the members of a political system towards politics. Herbert Sullers' opinion on political culture is as follows.

The concept of political culture assumes that each person must learn and internalize the knowledge and feelings about the politics of his people and community'. What Lucian expresses in this regard is that political culture is a set of ideas, beliefs and sentiments that provide meaning and regularity to the political process as well as provide underlying rules and assumptions to govern the behaviour in the political system (Inglehart, & Welzel, 2005).

When considering the appropriate definitions and other literature on the subject, it is understood that the political culture of an individual or group is its attitude towards politics and political objects. We see different types of people in society. Some are not interested in politics at all, while some even hate it as a dirty game. Some prefer a communist political

system, while some prefer a parliamentary system (Shah, Brett, & Thomas, D., 2020). If a person agrees and participates in the political system of his country, then his view of it is different and alienating. In fact, the mental state of the appropriate belief system of an individual or group is his political culture. The external activities of a person can also be explained on the basis of his similar psychological state. Political culture is the product of the social history of the political system and the life history of its members, so it is equally inherent in both public events and personal experiences (Sharma, 2025). The place of culture in the context of society is the same as the place of political culture in the context of politics. This study has studied the concept of political culture and the foundations of culture formation.

### **Nature and characteristics of political culture**

Political culture is a part of general culture and is a tendency towards an individual or the entire society towards the political system. It can be collectively called political culture. To some extent, it is influenced by political parties, pressure groups and other political and non-political elements (Lipset, 1960). Some of the main characteristics and characteristics of political culture are as follows.

#### **Political culture is an abstract of moral concept**

The basic basis of political culture is the political values and beliefs of the individual and society. These values and beliefs are part of the general moral concept and cannot be obtained in a tangible form like other physical elements (Phuyel, 2009). It can only be experienced and understood.

#### **Political culture is a collective or coordinated form of many elements**

Political culture is generally a part of culture and is a collective and coordinated form of many elements such as general culture. Historical situation, geographical situation, general culture of society, ideology, political system and in addition to all these, social structure etc. act as the basis of political culture (Jain, & Fadia, 2010).

### **Dynamics in Political Culture**

Political culture is influenced by historical and geographical conditions and is regulated by the socio-economic structure. The socio-economic structure and other elements of political culture are not static but are constantly evolving (Huntington, 1968). From this perspective, all political cultures are necessarily dynamic. Some may have a slow pace of change, while others may have a rapid pace of change.

### **Foundations of Political Structure**

Different political systems have their own form of political culture, which must be similar to each other. There is no such thing as a political culture. In some political systems,

political culture is homogeneous, while in others it is heterogeneous (Pye, 1966). This naturally raises the question of what are the foundations that determine the nature of the culture of a political system. Even in systems that embrace different types of political ideologies, it is believed that historical, geographical, socio-economic, general cultural, religious beliefs and ideological foundations are responsible for the diversity and different nature of political culture (Lipset, 1960). These are the foundations on which the building of the political culture of any country is built.

### **Historical Foundation**

No political system, whether it emerged from peaceful development or from a long-term bloody revolution, can completely break away from its past. In fact, the strong foundation of history is the foundation of the present and future of any country's political system. Countries like China, Vietnam, and Algeria have not been able to free themselves from the influences of the past despite their constant efforts (Bhattacharya, 2008). Therefore, on how political culture develops differently due to the history of that country, a scholar named Alan Ball has said that the political stability and peaceful change of power found in the history of Britain and France indicate the attachment of the British people to the traditional values and qualities. The political continuity found there is the result of a smooth process of allowing old values to merge with new perspectives. There has never been violent internal strife in Britain and it has always been free from the domination of foreign powers (Ball, 1971). As a result, Britain has managed to maintain the continuity of political culture, but on the other hand, from the perspective of historical development, France presents a model of a different and rebellious society. Since 1789, 16 constitutions have been adopted. Since 1946, 24 councils of ministers have been formed. Because of this special history, there are sometimes conflicts between different subcultures even today. This is the basis behind the diversity in political culture found in developing political systems (Huntington, 1968). The historically developing political culture in Nepal can also be viewed in terms of the French political culture concept.

### **Geographical foundation**

Another important factor that directly affects the formation of political culture is geography. The geographical structure of a country has a similar effect on politics. The influence of geography is also important because other factors can easily change, but geographical change is not that simple (Gena, 2005). This is due to geography. Some countries are islands while others are landlocked. Some countries are rich in natural resources while others are deprived of them. It is natural for such different geographical factors to have an indelible impact on the political system and culture (UNESCO, 2015). Since Britain is an island, it did not face foreign invasions and there was no sudden arrival of foreign races there. America, which is geographically separate, became prosperous due to its abundant natural

resources and never faced foreign invasions (Easton, 1965). In Nepal too, Panchayat leaders often resorted to this geographical basis to justify this system.

### **Socio-Economic Foundation**

The socio-economic structure has a special role in changing or maintaining the imprint left by history and geography on political culture, and if there is heterogeneity in these subcultures, its impact will be felt in the entire political system. If there is a sense of isolation in a society due to different experiences of language, religion, caste and past, then its impact will not go unnoticed in political culture (Dahl, 1963).

Differences in economic conditions also leave an indelible mark on political culture. In urban and industrial societies, a person can be a large part of the society. As a result, his perspective becomes broader, he has a tendency to participate and starts taking interest in socio-political events (Varma, 1975). But if the society is rural and based on agriculture, then the perspective of the people of that society becomes narrow, the development of thinking beyond the family circle is not complete. There is no sense of participation. It is not clear how to change or influence the policies and programs of the government (UNESCO, 2015). These facts also confirm this. The socio-economic conditions of the relevant political society have a profound impact on the determination of political culture.

### **Foundation of general culture of society**

According to Sidney Bhavan, 'There is an analytical difference between political culture and the more general cultural order of society. Political culture is an integral part of general culture.' What is clear from this is that political culture is a part of the general culture existing in society. But this conclusion should not be drawn from this that political culture does not have its own separate and autonomous existence (UNESCO, 2015). The main reason for the political upheaval and chaos that we see in most developing political systems is that there has been an attempt to impose modern political culture on those political systems contrary to the existing general culture there. But such an imposed culture has become ineffective because it has not been able to get nourishment from society (Norris, 2002). As a result, such political systems have the effect of certain political behaviour and are prone to political instability and chaos.

### **Religious Beliefs**

Religious beliefs can also be seen to have an effect on political culture. Especially in those states where the followers of Islam are in the majority, it has had a significant influence on political culture, but this influence is gradually decreasing.

### **Ideological Foundation**

The modern era is called the ideological era. Since the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia in 1917, fascism and Nazism, which have been mutually antagonistic among political

ideologies, have become new forces of opposition. An important experiment was started in China under the leadership of Chairman Mao in the sixties. Today, in many developing political systems, attempts are being made to forcibly in still new political culture in society through religious fanaticism and military power (Phuyel, 2009). In Nepal too, attempts are being made to forcibly in still new and changing political culture after the People's War.

### **Classification of Political Culture**

Almond and Baale, after a comparative study of the political culture of five countries (America, Britain, Germany, Italy and Mexico) in 1959-60, published a book called 'The Civic Culture'. Their research is considered an important milestone in the study of political culture. Based on the four pillars of the above-mentioned institutions and the new findings of a person's knowledge, feelings and attitudes towards political objects, Bryce ssman has classified political culture mainly into 3 parts.

#### **Parochial Political Culture**

Parochial political culture is found especially in simple, traditional political systems where the ends are less specialized. Political actors play political, economic and religious roles simultaneously. In such a culture, he/she is negative towards objects. He/she remains unaffected by central government agencies and his/her consciousness is hardly interfered with by the government (Easton, 1965). As a result, the person knows only the formation and functioning of his/her local community. In transitional societies, there are also rural groups far from the capital and remote and isolated who do not know anything about national politics. In Nepal too, Chepang, Kusunda and Raute are such races groups whose political culture we can call parochial.

#### **Subject (Praj) Political Culture**

The group of members of the political system who have knowledge of the national political system is also divided into two parts. One is the subject and the other is the participant subject. Those individuals or groups with political culture are those who are oriented towards the political system (Pye, 1966). They know the effects of the output bodies of the system. They enjoy the services and facilities provided by the system through its output bodies. But before that, their level of consciousness has not risen. They are aware of the process of participating in the input bodies of the system (Inglehart, & Welzel, 2005). Even though they receive the goods and services provided by the system, they do not know how to participate in the input bodies to influence those goods and services. Their relationship is only with the output bodies, not with the input. They cannot influence the input bodies by making demands. In fact, the relationship of a person or group with such a culture with the government is passive. Although such a culture can be seen in all types of political systems,

traditional, transitional and modern (Huntington, 1968). But this cultural predominance is especially prevalent in colonies.

### **Participant Political Culture**

Another group with knowledge about national politics is participation. It participates in the entire process from expressing to making decisions. Such a person or group is fully aware of their rights and duties as a citizen and also knows where and when to use them. What distinguishes them from subjects is that they are also involved in the output of the political process (Noris, 2002). Under this culture, the participation of the individual does not have to be positive and beneficial, it can also be negative and harmful. The introductory feature of this culture is that the individual is fully oriented towards all four types of political objects, such as the system, its input-output process and its own role (Jain, Fadia, 2010). There is a commitment and interest in political matters.

The political culture of any society is not completely exclusive, subject or participatory. In any society, these different cultures are also mixed. Even Almond and Powell themselves have considered mixed political culture to be the mainstream today. The form of mixed political culture can be narrow-subject, narrow-participatory and subject-participatory (Dahl, 1963). Despite this, political scholars define that society as a society with that culture for the purpose of analysis.

### **Other Political Cultures**

#### **Civic Political Culture**

It is not necessary that the political culture of a society is the political system of that society. In some Western societies, participatory political culture is fine, but on the other hand, what happens if the same political system is authoritarian but the culture of a large group of people is participatory? In such a situation of contradiction, such a society will definitely move towards the path of political uncertainty for some time. But in civic culture, such a situation of contradiction does not exist. In the words of Almond and Bharwa, "civic culture is a participatory political culture, in which political culture and political structure are in harmony with each other.

#### **Elite culture and mass culture**

Those who are equipped with political power, different from the general public. Their culture is called elite culture. They have a different political outlook from all the general public (Jain, & Fadia, 2010).

#### **Traditional or Primitive political culture**

From the perspective of development, the most primitive and backward political culture is traditional political culture. In such a culture, political roles are not differentiated

from other roles in society. Rigid beliefs based on customs, broad and ascriptive views prevail or traditional political culture is of a narrow nature (Lipset, 1960). The perspective of the person is not raised above the narrow circle of caste, race, religion, region, etc. The existence of the political system and its difference with other activities of society should not be known (Jain, & Fadia, 2010). Even if it is, it is very vague and blurred.

### **Ideological Political Culture**

There are many contradictions in the process of transition from traditional political culture to the culture of absolute politics. One of these contradictions is ideological contradiction. When a person abandons the broad, imposed and rigid beliefs determined by tradition and embraces a specific political belief, he fails to embrace the openness and bargaining perspective that is considered an integral part of absolute culture (Lipset, 1960). That person's culture is called ideological culture. Even after abandoning the rigid traditional beliefs, the person embraces another type of equally rigid political belief (Varma, 1975). In the modern era, communist political culture is a vivid example of this.

### **Secularized Political Culture**

From the perspective of development, the highest and most developed culture is absolute political culture (Lipset, 1960). When a person's political thought rises above the narrow confines of custom and tradition, it becomes pragmatic, specific, and based on give and take. We call it absolute culture. In a society with such culture, the political environment is like a market. Where participants bargain and transact with each other to achieve their limited goals (Varma, 1975). Here, there is a lack of radicalism and the person believes in compromise and reconciliation.

### **Political sub-culture**

The political culture of different individuals and groups in a society is not the same. The level of homogeneity (Hologenic) of political culture varies in different societies. Due to differences in the level of education, ethnic membership, geographical location, economic and social status, and religious beliefs, different groups of political culture appear even in the same society (Jain, & Fadia, 2010). Thus, if there is a political culture that is clear and different from the mainstream political culture within a political system, it is called a political sub-culture for the purpose of analysis (Lipset, 1960). Such sub-cultures arising from various reasons are not a significant problem in developed societies, but many states in the developing region are still suffering from serious problems arising from such sub-cultures.

### **An Evaluation**

Two main accusations have been made against the concept of political culture. Firstly, it is an attempt to give a new name to an old idea. Neither is there a determination of

universally accepted cultural signs in it nor is their consensus on it. It is also said that knowledge of the characteristics of political culture can be obtained from intuition and intuition. There is no need or use for any research in this regard. Secondly, political culture is constantly becoming more complex, profound and evolving and its structure is constantly evolving. In such a situation, the task of theory-building becomes very difficult. In addition, political culture is often considered to be a specific and determining element of political structure. And at the same time, it is also a result of cultural values. This is definitely a fundamental logical weakness.

Despite these accusations, the concept of political culture is of great importance. At present, two types of studies are carried out in political science. Firstly, in the field of behavioural studies, the psychological explanation of the political behaviour of individuals is carried out. Which can be called micro analysis. And secondly, for political sociology, studies based on general variables are carried out, which can be called macro or macro study. But the roots of political culture lie in both public events and personal experience, and from this perspective, the theory of political culture has attempted to unify psychology and sociology. It has used both the revolutionary discoveries of contemporary depth psychology and modern techniques in sociological techniques for dynamic political analysis. It has also added ease of measurement from the perspective of mass societies. In fact, political culture has proven to be an important development in contemporary political analysis. It has presented such efforts. Through which we can study the entire political system without losing the benefits of individual psychology. In the words of 'Eric Rowe', 'The basis of political behaviour is political culture.'

## **Conclusion**

The concept of political culture continues to be an important notion in the field of politics since it clarifies how the citizens' values, beliefs, attitudes and orientations impact on political institutions, democratic politics and political stability. The above literature review has explored the definition, bases, types, and significance of political culture through synthesizing classical and modern academic perspectives on the issue. From the review, it is evident that the political culture is a changing and developing process which is affected by many issues including historical, geographic, socio-economic, cultural, religious and ideological ones. It is not something which exists as one uniform process but rather different political orientations exist at the same time within the society. Political culture in the Nepalese context is also affected by the historical, social, cultural and democratic experiences of the country. The development of political culture becomes important in order to strengthen the democratic institutions and enhance good governance.

These findings are vital for public policy and civics education. Policy makers need to invest in civics education, good governance, knowledge of constitution, media literacy, and

citizen participation in order to create knowledgeable and well-behaved citizens. Educational institutions need to in still democratic principles, critical thinking, and civic mindedness in their teaching and learning process. The future study needs to focus on empirical and comparative studies that would look into the changing role of political socialization, digital media, and socio-political changes on the political culture of Nepal through its different regions and ethnicities.

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