

THEORISING INDIAN POLITICS : TWO PERSPECTIVES

Partha Chatterjee

V. M. Sirsikar

Edited by

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PREFACE

We are happy to bring out *Theorising Indian Politics: Two Perspectives* in keeping with the department's practice of publishing academic material that could be of use to political scientists and other interested readers. It includes an editorial introduction and the texts of talks delivered by Professor Partha Chatterjee (b. 1947) who is a globally renowned political theorist, and Professor V. M. Sirsikar (1919-2003), former Head of our department and a pioneer of behavioural research in India.

Professor Chatterjee's talk was delivered via Zoom on 12 March 2021 in memory of Professor V. M. Sirsikar, and the latter's lecture was delivered on 27 August 1967 in the Annual Lecture series organised by the Harold Laski Institute of Political Science (Ahmedabad). We are grateful to Professor Chatterjee for accepting our invitation and delivering the memorial lecture despite the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Laski Institute had been founded by the political scientist and member of the Lok Sabha, Professor Purushottam Ganesh Mavalankar (1928-2002), and we are also grateful to his son Dr. Anand Mavalankar (retired Professor of Political Science, Vadodara) for allowing us to include the text of Professor Sirsikar's lecture in this publication.

Mr. Shriranjan Awate (Assistant Professor) and Mr. Akshay Chaudhari (UGC Research Fellow) facilitated the organisation of Professor Chatterjee's lecture, and Akshay put in sustained efforts to help bring out this publication. Several scholars, young and senior, participated in the online programme and some of them put searching questions to the speaker. We gladly acknowledge their contribution. We are particularly thankful to the eminent sociologist, Professor

Sujata Patel, whose valuable epistolary intervention (along with Professor Chatterjee's response) has been included in this publication with her permission.

Ms. Mugdha Hedau (Assistant Professor, ILS Law College, Pune) deserves a special word of thanks for preparing the initial transcript of Professor Chatterjee's lecture.

We also place on record our appreciation of the work done by the staff of our Department, and that of the University's Press.

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ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Professor Mangesh Kulkarni currently heads the Department of Political Science, Savitribai Phule Pune University. Professor Kulkarni has received a Rotary International Grant for University Teachers (1998) to teach at the Chancellor College (Malawi), the Indal Fellowship of the Asiatic Society of Bombay (2000), a Research Grant of the Rockefeller Archive Center (New York, 2004), an Erasmus Mundus Scholarship of the European Commission (2009), and a Guest Fellowship of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (Shimla, 2013). The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (New Delhi) deputed him as a Chair Professor to universities in Austria (2011) and Germany (2017).

Professor Kulkarni has served as a National Joint Convenor (2019-2021), Forum to Engage Men (India) - a pro-feminist network affiliated to MenEngage Global Alliance (Washington DC, USA). He was the Coordinator (2019-2020), UGC Centre of Advanced Study (Political Science), and a Coordinator (2017-2020) of the Teaching Learning Centre (sponsored by the MHRD, Govt of India) at Savitribai Phule Pune University. He served as an Honorary Joint Secretary at the Asiatic Society of Mumbai during 2003-2005.

Professor Kulkarni has been in the editorial team of journals like *Men and Masculinities* (Sage, New York), *Indian Philosophical Quarterly* (Pune), *New Quest* (a Mumbai-based interdisciplinary journal), *Shodharthy* (a Hindi journal of Political Studies, New Delhi), and *Paramarsha* (a Marathi journal of Philosophy, Pune). He has contributed to reputed journals like the *Economic & Political Weekly* (Mumbai), *Wasi* (Zomba), *India Review* (Philadelphia), and *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* (Sydney). Besides a translated book

of V. A. Dahake's poems, *A Terrorist of the Spirit* (HarperCollins, 1992), he has the following edited volumes to his credit: *Politics in Maharashtra* (Himalaya, 1995), *India in World Affairs* (Himalaya, 1999), *Interdisciplinary Perspectives in Political Theory* (Sage, 2011), and *Global Masculinities* (Routledge, 2019).

Professor Partha Chatterjee is a political theorist, political anthropologist and historian. He graduated from Presidency College, Calcutta, and received his PhD from the University of Rochester (USA). He has been with the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, where he was the director from 1997 to 2007. Currently he is associated with the Centre as Honorary Professor of Political Science, and is Professor Emeritus of Anthropology and of Middle Eastern, South Asian and African Studies at Columbia University (USA). He was a founding member of the Subaltern Studies Collective. He is also a playwright.

Professor Chatterjee has published over thirty books and edited volumes in English and Bengali. They include *The Black Hole of Empire* (2012), *Lineages of Political Society* (2011), *Politics of the Governed* (2004), *A Princely Impostor? The Strange and Universal History of the Kumar of Bhawal* (2002), *The Nation and Its Fragments* (1993) and *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (1986). His Ruth Benedict lectures (2018) were published in an expanded version as *I Am the People: Reflections on Popular Sovereignty Today* (2019). His most recent book is *The Truths and Lies of Nationalism as Narrated by Charvak* (2021).

Professor V. M. Sirsikar (1919-2003) was Mahatma Gandhi Professor and Head, Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Poona (now Department of Political Science, Savitribai Phule Pune University).

He subsequently served as the Joint Executive Director at the Centre for Development Studies and Activities in Pune.

Professor Sirsikar published a number of monographs and articles in national and international journals as well as four books including *Political Behaviour in India: A Case Study of the 1962 General Elections* (Manaktalas, Bombay, 1965), *The Rural Elite in a Developing Society: A Study in Political Sociology* (Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1970), *Sovereigns Without Crowns: A Behavioural Analysis of the Indian Electoral Process* (Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1973), and *Politics of Modern Maharashtra* (Orient Longman, Hyderabad, 1995).

INTRODUCTION

- **Mangesh Kulkarni**

Political Science began to gain a secure foothold as a university-based discipline in India about a century ago. The study of Indian politics has been quite naturally a core concern of the discipline. Initially, it was dominated by a traditional approach with a constitutional and institutional focus. With the emergence of the behavioural approach in American Political Science after World War II, a few scholars in India also adopted it and started using empirical techniques to explore the dynamics of political behaviour in the country. This was particularly evident in the electoral studies conducted by Professor Rajni Kothari (1928-2015) and his colleagues at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS, Delhi) during the 1960s. Concomitantly, Professor V M Sirsikar (1919-2003) embarked on a similar research programme in Pune (Maharashtra).

Behaviouralism lost its hegemony in American Political Science during the 1970s, and gradually, the CSDS scholars also moved into different pastures. Large-scale electoral studies were resumed by the Yogendra Yadav-led Lokniti team at the CSDS during the 1990s, which included political scientists from different universities in the country including the University of Pune. Thus, the empirical research tradition came full circle. However, there has not been a great deal of theoretically informed debate on the strengths and drawbacks of the behavioural methodology in the Indian context¹. Indeed,

¹ The following slim volume authored by a team of young Bengali political scientists is perhaps the most significant critique of behaviouralism and the positivist tenets undergirding it: *The State of Political Theory: Some Marxist Essays* - Sudipta Kaviraj, Partha Chatterjee, Shibani Kinkar

political scientists in India have not displayed much self-reflexivity, especially in the methodological domain.² The present publication contributes its mite to the filling of this gap.

Professor Partha Chatterjee's lecture, 'For a Vernacular Political Science', begins with an appreciation of the early empirical research by Indian social anthropologists and political scientists with particular reference to the work of Professor M. N. Srinivas and Professor V. M. Sirsikar. This is noteworthy in view of the fact that he has been a staunch critic of positivism as testified by his contribution to *The State of Political Theory* (1978) cited earlier. He then discusses the attempt to (re)construct a distinctive indigenous tradition of political thought as well as its limitations. His lecture ends with a plea for the exploration of vernacular political discourse in the Indian languages with a particular emphasis on analysing the large-scale exchanges occurring through the social media. His replies to some of the pertinent questions raised after the talk as well as his email responses to two other sets of questions (including mine) find a place in the publication.

The text of Professor V. M. Sirsikar's lecture, 'Behavioural Approach to the Study of Indian Politics' (1967), has been included for a number of reasons. It is probably among the few methodological statements offered by a prominent, practising political scientist engaged in empirical investigation. It

Chaube, Shobhanlal Datta Gupta (Calcutta: Research India Publications, 1978).

² Professor Raghuveer Singh (1929-2011) is one of the major exceptions to this generalisation. Several of his writings were published posthumously in book form as *Perspectives on Philosophy, Metaphysics and Political Theory* (New Delhi: Ocean Books, 2014).

presents a balanced view of the possibilities offered by and the problems stemming from the pursuit of a behavioural research programme. Moreover, the institute which hosted and published Professor Sirsikar's lecture does not exist any longer, and the text of the lecture is not widely available. It also matters that the author headed our department in the 1970s and had a lasting influence on its subsequent course. Hence it is quite appropriate to reprint one of his key texts during the academic year 2021-2022, which marks the 70th anniversary of the introduction of the full-fledged MA programme in the department.

I hope the publication will be of use to political scientists and others interested in the systematic study of Indian politics in this 75th year of our Republic, and that it will generate a meaningful debate on the century-long trajectory of Political Science in India.

For A Vernacular Political Science

Partha Chatterjee

Professor Mangesh Kulkarni (Head of Department) explained the contribution of the late Professor V. M. Sirsikar and welcomed Professor Chatterjee who was then introduced by Mr. Shriranjan Awate, Assistant Professor.

Professor Partha Chatterjee : Thank you very much and my greetings to all of you who have joined this event. I am particularly grateful to Mangesh for inviting me to give this lecture. In fact, he first asked me several months ago; but with these very unusual circumstances of the pandemic and lock down, I must say it completely slipped my mind until he reminded me some time in January 2021 that I had made a promise. So here I am! I have a few things to say. It is a kind of a proposal which I will be explaining to you soon.

Let me first say that I had actually met Professor Sirsikar a couple of times, I think at the annual conferences of the Indian Political Science Association in the 1970s. Those days of course, as you will realise, I was a very young scholar just entering the discipline. I am sure he didn't remember me, but I was aware of his writings, particularly his books on electoral behaviour. I will mention them in a few minutes. But let me say why they were important. As Mangesh reminded us, he was one of the pioneers of the so-called behavioural approach to Political Science. Behaviouralism was introduced in the American Social Sciences in the 1950s, and Political Science was one of them. Professor Sirsikar was one of the pioneers in using that method in Indian Political Science.

I will recount a story from my student days. When I was a student of Political Science in Calcutta at Presidency College in the 1960s, one of my teachers asked me to write an essay on caste in Indian politics and he suggested two books. One was, I still remember, the collection called *Village India* edited by McKim Marriott. At that time that collection had just appeared in what was then the *Economic Weekly*, which later became the *Economic and Political Weekly*. It was a collection of essentially village studies of contemporary India, done by several scholars - a very important book, almost like a classic of what came to be widely known as the Village Studies Approach. So that was one book, and the other book was *Social Change in Modern India* by M.N. Srinivas. That book also had only recently appeared. So I read those books and I must say as a student of Political Science, I was completely confused because they presented a lot of new material about how politics and social relations actually existed in different rural areas of India, and much of this was completely unfamiliar to me. There was nothing in the Political Science I had studied in college, which actually equipped me to make any sense of this material, because in the 1960s the academic study of Political Science was largely confined to Political Theory or Political Thought and Constitutional History or Constitutional Theory. Our only introduction to the field of contemporary India was a study of the Indian Constitution. So, my essay on caste must have been a completely confused piece of writing.

I am saying this simply to remind you of how new Professor Sirsikar's work must have been in the field of Political Science when he first published it. While preparing to give this lecture, I actually looked up some of his books once more. For instance, *Political Behaviour in India* which was published in 1965. As Mangesh just mentioned, it was a

case study based on a field survey of Pune Parliamentary constituency, and it had used the random sample method of picking voters and interviewing them on the basis of a set questionnaire- the usual survey method. One of his key findings was that 33% voters, and don't forget these were the 1962 elections, did not know the issues in the elections and 25% did not even know the candidates for whom they voted. Most voted according to the instructions of caste or community leaders. Now of course as you will understand, this is not something you can ever guess by simply reading the Indian Constitution which says that every adult Indian has the right to vote. But how people actually vote was a question that was never raised in Political Science classes.

His second book, *Sovereigns without Crowns: A Behavioural Analysis of the Indian Electoral Process*, was published in 1973. This was a resurvey of the Pune Parliamentary constituency focused on the 1967 elections. The findings were interesting and we can compare them with today's situation. One of the findings was that there was a very weak party structure in the sense that party leaders and the organisation were extremely weakly connected. Second, social classes were not very distinctly formed. But there was a very strong caste structure. Everybody knew to which caste he or she belonged and what were its relations with other castes. There was little influence of the press. Emotional issues like language influenced voting behaviour to a greater extent than issues like foreign policy. One of the findings was that the minorities voted for the party in power; not for opposition parties. Peripheral groups voted as a community in a way we would call 'block voting'. Women voted like the men in their family. There was no such thing as a distinctive women's vote.

It is very interesting that state-wise voting patterns are more reliable than all-India patterns. In fact, Professor Sirsikar said that it was possible to think of an average Maharashtrian voter, but not of an average all-India voter because there was no general pattern of voting behaviour that would hold all over India. *Politics of Modern Maharashtra*, a book he wrote after he had retired, was published in 1995. The book is essentially on the trajectory of Maharashtra in the 20th century, especially in the period after the formation of the linguistic states.

The behavioural approach has been criticized for its somewhat mechanical empiricism and for its disinterest in the normative dimensions of political life. This approach was not particularly concerned with what should be the right way or the good way of organizing political life, it was not particularly concerned with the ethical standards or normative standards in politics. It was much more concerned with how politics actually operates. But I think it accomplished a very significant move, turning the attention of Indian political scientists to the ground realities of politics. As I said, imagine a young student of Political Science in the 1960s, who was reading an account of how politics actually operates in a village; that student was simply unable to make any sense of that evidence in terms of what one had been taught as political concepts and the principles of Political Science.

Thus, behaviouralism urged political scientists to put aside the great books of Western Political Theory and take seriously the way political actors thought, spoke, and acted. It was very clear, as you can see from some of Professor Sirsikar's findings, that most political actors had no sense of what Hobbes, Locke or Rousseau may have written; I mean this was not part of the way in which ordinary people thought of politics. So how was this huge divide to be bridged? I think

behaviouralism invited political scientist in India to address realities which they had completely neglected. Professor Sirsikar, as I said, was a pioneer in this move. It was an important first step towards what I will describe soon as a Vernacular Political Science.

Until the 1960s, Political Science in India consisted of Western, largely British liberal thought and British constitutional legal theory. American or European constitutional theories were much less important. To some extent, this emphasis on British political thought and constitutional theory was not irrelevant because the State structure which we inherited from colonial times had been shaped within those traditions. The new Indian Constitution was explicitly based on liberal democratic principles and it also retained large parts of the structure created by the 1935 constitutional reforms. The students of the Constitution will know that a large part of it was directly lifted from the Government of India Act 1935. Moreover, the entire colonial legal and judicial structure was retained including the courts and the entire body of law from the colonial times. The only significant additions included a Supreme Court on top and fundamental rights. But otherwise, the entire body of the Indian Penal Code, the Indian Civil Code, all of these were retained and the entire body of precedence in the High Courts was retained. Thus, as far as the state structure itself was concerned, the tradition of British liberal and constitutional theory was still perfectly relevant to India and so there was some justification in making that a major part of what was studied in Political Science.

Behavioural empiricism was carried forward not so much in Political Science as in a field that came to be called 'Political Sociology' to distinguish it from traditional Political

Science. There was some resistance among the older political scientists to actually welcome this as a legitimate part of Political Science. In fact the name 'Political Sociology' was preferred to suggest that somehow it was closer to Sociology than to Political Science. The crucial topics that were tackled in this new field were the power structure in rural society, dominant castes, political elites, and mobilization of votes by parties.

Two broad methods emerged in Political Sociology. One was the random survey of voters and households. As I just described, Professor Sirsikar followed essentially this kind of method which culminated in election studies. Following the lead given by American political scientists such as Richard Park, for instance, a group led by Rajni Kothari and his distinguished colleagues, Ashis Nandy, Bashiruddin Ahmed, Dhirubhai Seth and others formed the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) in Delhi in 1963 as the leading centre of election studies in India. The scholars specifically adopted the method of Sample Survey of voters. The other method prevalent in Political Sociology was village ethnography in which social anthropologists took the lead. The Sociology department of the Delhi School of Economics, which Professor M. N. Srinivas headed, became the major centre of village studies in India. To this day these are the two broad streams of the empirical study of Indian politics.

One aspect of village studies in particular, is the uniqueness of caste as a social institution. It gave Indian Political Sociology a distinct content that is not present in general Sociology. In a sense one of the greatest claims of Indian Political Sociology was that we have to deal with caste which does not exist in this institutional form anywhere else. Therefore, we are the ones who are legitimately the experts in this field. It is a distinct discipline because it cannot be done in

quite this way using the methods that are followed elsewhere in the world. So it requires a uniquely Indian approach focused on caste.

This is what I have described as the turn to empirical research inspired by the behavioural approach. But there was also a different attempt by Indian political scientists to find a distinctly Indian content in Indian political thought. Now that is a different approach altogether. There were two streams here- the ancient and the modern, and this is where historians took the lead, especially for the ancient part, but also the modern. I will come to this in a minute.

Historians led the study of ancient Indian polities. They took into account kingdoms as well as the so called republics or Gana and alongside there was the study of the principles of statecraft called Niti or Rajadharma within the broader Dharmashastra tradition; especially Kautilya's *Arthashastra* which was 'discovered' in the early 20th century. If I am not mistaken, 1905 is when the first full text of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* was found by Shyama Shastri in Mysore, and of course that provided a boost to this branch of scholarship because for the first time there was a full treatise on what could be called Politics, which was from ancient India. As you know, very often Kautilya was compared to Machiavelli. So the field of ancient Indian Political Thought did get a boost in the 20th century. There was also an attempt by some historians to trace a distinctly Indian version of Islamic Political Theory. Their argument was that Islamic Political Theory was not simply brought over from Arabic or Persian sources; it acquired a distinctly indigenous form by incorporating a whole range of Indian institutions and practices.

The difficulty for political scientists focusing on ancient Indian Political Thought was to establish the relevance

of such thought for contemporary Indian politics, both normatively and empirically. How could ancient thought be made relevant to a Republic based on popular sovereignty, the fundamental rights of liberty and equality? None of these principles found a place in ancient thought. Even in the Gana formations there was no conception of what we would recognise as popular sovereignty; and of course Kingship based on the relation between the king and the praja or the subjects is not something relevant to the modern constitutional form that India has adopted. There was also clearly the huge impact of the entire Varnashrama formation on every aspect of the application of power in society and the law as well. I mean it was not even that the king made laws, as the laws already existed in the form of Dharma, and it was the duty of Brahmins to adjudicate between different interpretations of the Dharmashastra and the king was supposed to follow what was already the law. How could this kind of political thought be relevant to the kind of political formation or the kind of political process and the institutions that had been adopted in modern India through the Indian Constitution? That became a major problem. It raised the issue of what is modern Indian Political Thought.

Now here again what happened was that the study of modern Indian political thought followed the western tradition of analysing canonical thinkers, the 'great thinkers model', which is how Western political thought is still, broadly speaking organised. You have the canonical thinkers from Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau onwards. Biman Behari Majumdar who was at Patna University began the trend in the history of Indian political ideas, through his book, *History of Political Thought from Rammohan to Dayanand*. This book was first published in 1934 and there was a revised edition in 1967. It was very widely read. When I first began

teaching Political Science, its popularity had been exceeded by V.P. Verma's *Modern Indian Political Thought* (1961). In that book successive chapters discussed Rammohan, the Moderates and Extremists in the Congress, Gandhi, Hindu Revivalism, Muslim Political Thought, Nehru, Bose, and socialist thought.

Here the difficulty still remains one of establishing a body of canonical thought that is sufficiently rigorous and analytical, which could be discussed in terms of certain key political concepts. This became a major problem because you distinguish between Moderates and Extremists, and you think of people like M. G. Ranade and G. K. Gokhale as representing the Moderates, and of the so-called extremists like Bipin Pal or Lajpat Rai. But none of them was really a political theorist. They very seldom wrote any rigorously argued treatises on politics. So their thought had to be given some kind of form by drawing on a wide variety of sources including very short articles and speeches. The challenge lay in extracting a theoretical substance from this material establishing a body of canonical ideas which would actually speak to one another.

Even Gandhi, who of course remains even today probably the most widely studied, and I would say, deeply studied modern thinker in India, did not write a political treatise. He was undoubtedly highly original in his thinking, but the absence of a rigorously argued treatise can only be made up by a construction of how Gandhi might be read as a rigorous thinker, and many people including very distinguished scholars, have done this. Some of them have published truly exceptional books. So that became the main way of approaching this subject. In fact, if you ask me, I would say that there are just three distinguished modern Indian thinkers- Muhammad Iqbal, M. N. Roy and B. R. Ambedkar. These three I would suggest actually have rigorously argued

treatises on political topics. They could be discussed the way in which Political Theory can be discussed. But the difficulty is, none of them actually speak to one another. Iqbal doesn't speak to Roy who doesn't speak to Ambedkar. So they do not form a connected field of concepts within which the theories of these thinkers could be discussed. They are not part of a distinctive discursive tradition and that remains the difficulty with both ancient and modern Indian political thought as resources to produce an Indian Political Science. So, we do not actually have an Indian Political Science in the sense in which we have an Indian Sociology, and this is the major point that I want to establish and then move on from there.

Professor Sirsikar highlighted the fact that whereas it was possible to find patterns of political behaviour at the level of the linguistic state, it was impossible to do so for India as a whole and the reason is that cultural formations at the level of the people are formed around language. He was very aware even from his own surveys how important language was in terms of the way in which people thought of, understood and articulated various issues in politics. Professor Sirsikar found that in 1967 language was the most emotive issue in Pune. The struggle for linguistic States was of course still on and do not forget that this struggle actually began with the Congress's decision in 1919 to reorganize all its provincial committees and use regional languages. So in 1919-1920, the Congress decided to adopt the regional languages as the media of political communication. Until then the Congress leaders only met once a year and of course all the speeches and resolutions were in English. The Congress decided that they would no longer do this, because to turn the national freedom movement into a mass movement you would have to communicate in the mother tongue of people. In a sense it was a radical decision to reorganize the Provincial Congress Committees (PCC) on

linguistic lines disregarding the administrative division of the provinces. For instance, you had a Gujarat PCC even though there was no Gujarat province; Gujarat was part of the Bombay province. There was an Andhra Pradesh PCC even though there was no such thing as an Andhra province. All of these were major decisions taken way back in 1920.

Democratic politics has since widened and deepened through communication in the various regional languages; but political scientists have not been sufficiently attentive to political ideas that circulate in Indian languages so as to turn them into concepts. This is one of the key elements of what I am suggesting would be a Vernacular Political Science- to be attentive to political ideas that circulate in Indian languages and to turn them into concepts. Contrast this with Social Anthropology. Village ethnography has produced a completely new conceptual form of Jati. Of course caste or Jati is a core concept in Indian Sociology; but through the village ethnographies what emerged was the variety of Jati formations in India, which was not bound by the Dharmashastra tradition. G.S. Ghurye or Irawati Karve earlier wrote a great deal on caste; but caste for them was still confined very much within the Varnashrama formation as defined by the texts of Dharmashastra. Village ethnography exploded that whole understanding of caste to say, 'that is not how caste actually operates in lots of places.' We know very well that Jati structures actually change almost from district to district and from region to region. A caste may occupy one kind of hierarchical position in one place and a different position elsewhere. Not only that, Jatis, also move up and down in the hierarchy because of changes in economic or political situations. This was not understood within the textual tradition, but was revealed by village ethnography. Social anthropologists were able to produce the relevant concepts for

understanding this mainly through enormously laborious and detailed ethnographic work in rural India.

There has been no corresponding effort within the discipline of Indian Political Science. So, I do not have a Vernacular Political Science to offer you, but I am suggesting through various examples what it might look like and what kind of problems could be posed. For instance, the regional language words for 'Nation' are among the key concepts-keywords which fly around in Indian politics all the time. In many Indian languages including Hindi, Marathi, and Gujarati, the word for Nation is 'Rashtra'. But in Bangla the word for Nation is 'Jati'. In Assamese and Odiya the word is 'Desh'; in Kannada, 'Desham'; in Tamil, 'Dessam'. Take the word State, again a very key concept. The Hindi, Kannada or Malayalam word is 'Rajya' for the State. In Bangla, it is 'Rashtra', in Telugu, 'Rashtram', in Tamil, 'Arasu'. Each of these words has a different conceptual history; yet they are also in some sense located within the discourse of Indian politics.

So the question would be- is there a translation that goes on in these transactions between the regional and the all-India formations? Everybody understands what a Nation means and yet in different languages the words are different. Sometimes the same word is used in a very different sense in another language. How are these transactions actually taking place? If you simply say that this means 'Nation' and this means 'State' and then you fall back upon our English understanding of what these words mean, we will be missing the rich conceptual history of each of these terms as they are available in that regional language. Because as we all know, the more widespread and more widely used a concept is, the richer the possibilities are of its ambiguities- the way in which people can play upon the meaning of the words. That is the

conceptual richness of a language, and each of these words, for instance the word Jati, the word Rashtra, the word Rajya, can be made to mean a whole range of things. People do a lot of things with these kinds of words as concepts and yet we will be missing out on the rich conceptual history in each of these languages that is attached to words like this.

Let me also point out that common political words change their meanings over time. I will give you an example. In Bangla the most common word used in the political context to mean ‘the people’ in the colonial period was Praja. This implied the familiar relation between Raja and Praja and the understanding was that there were Rajas or the rulers and the ordinary people were Praja or subjects. The word for Republic is Prajatantra in Bangla and it is the same in Hindi and in many other Indian languages. Prajatantra means an overturning of the relationship between Raja and Praja because it means the Praja are now the rulers. Currently, that is the meaning which is attached to the word Republic. This marks an extremely significant transformation.

I was struck by the conceptual use of this word, Praja. I came across a school textbook dating back to 1878, which described the rights of citizens as Prajaswatta. Clearly it was an attempt to explain Rousseau’s General Will for school children. It was a matriculation level book. The General Will was explained as the exercise of Prajashakti. All of this as I said was in 1878. The word Praja would have carried the standard meaning of ‘subjects of a Raja’. But Prajashakti or Prajaswatta have particular meanings attached to them in that context. Today, Praja is no longer used to mean ‘the people’ and that word has gone out of circulation. Today words like Jana or Gana or Jana Gana have taken its place. In Hindi the most common word now would be Janata or Lok to mean ‘the people’.

So I am suggesting that these are histories of key conceptual terms in the various regional languages. They all have these histories, have a particular conceptual load, a particular conceptual richness which should not be lost sight of, because ordinary people are using the ordinary regional languages to make sense of political issues. These are the words and the ideas that are connoted by these words, which circulate in the public arena. Sometimes commonly used words can become technical terms. Bangla is the language I know most deeply and the term for 'Scheduled Caste' in Bangla is 'Tafasili Jati'. Its origin is from the 1935 Act. That is of course the first time that the schedule was produced and Scheduled Castes were defined for the first time. The Bangla translation of the 1935 Act used the Persian word Tafasil which meant a 'List' or a 'Schedule'. Today, nobody knows the farsi origin of the word 'tafasili'. Many people actually think it is a Sanskrit word, a 'tatsam' word (loan word) and so they call it 'toposhili' to make it sound more like Sanskrit. Tafasili is only a technical term and that word is not used for any other context except to mean scheduled caste or tribe. These are the conceptual histories of terms and it would be interesting to know the implication for the understanding of caste or for the understanding of the place of what we know and officially call as scheduled castes.

Vernacular concepts, I am suggesting, are neither purely indigenous; nor are they always derived from textual sources. They have multiple sources. They have unpredictable patterns of circulation and are changeable. Ethnographic studies do often pay attention to such vernacular concept formations in their local circulation. But there are few attempts to connect them to a larger conceptual field in order to gain some theoretical purchase. Often the response is to say 'this is the way it is in my village', and leave it at that. To take the

next step it would be necessary to put the results of many local ethnographies side by side and discover patterns. It requires teamwork of the kind that social anthropologists were able to accomplish in the 1960s and 1970s.

Ethnographic studies and survey research are quite expensive. You have to employ research assistants. You require leave from teaching to travel to a particular field and stay there. For ethnographic studies in particular, you have to stay in a place for a length of time in order to be able to capture the richness of the local culture. So all of these are the difficulties that have, I think, prevented Indian Political Science from doing the sort of things that, people like M. N. Srinivas and Andre Beteille, were able to do in the 1950s and 1960s. Of course, they took the lead and they were able to organise it. I remember a famous story about M. N. Srinivas. He fought with the UGC to obtain six months' leave for a young assistant professor of sociology so that he could carry out fieldwork. This was unheard of. But it was done in the Delhi School. These were of course matters of institutional leadership. It is hard to accomplish this within the bureaucratic structure we now have in Indian universities. So the fall-back upon the textual is in some ways an easier and more practical solution. You can sit in your office or at home or just go to visit a library from time to time and you can do that kind of work. Field ethnography requires a very different kind of allocation of research time.

But I have one final proposal here which is that the new technologies of communication have opened up new opportunities for meaningful research into vernacular concepts. Social media outlets have emerged as a major public forum for the expression of political opinion by a whole range of groups and classes. They provide a huge mass of textualized speech that reveals the formation and circulation of vernacular political

ideas at popular levels that are not captured in books, periodicals and newspapers. Here I mean the huge circulation of text as well as videos, from all sorts of places by almost anybody via social media. Digital Humanities, which of course is a whole new field with completely new kinds of techniques that are emerging precisely for the study of this sort of material, could be used by political scientists to analyse it to identify key concepts that shape popular political opinion and practice.

A vernacular Political Science is not meant to separate 'indigenous' ideas from those of 'foreign' origin because as I said, they are completely mixed up. If you look at the social media, and what circulates there, it will be very difficult to separate what is truly indigenous from what is foreign. In fact the project is not to separate indigenous from foreign; nor is it somehow to decolonize Indian political practice. Even there, for instance, what has emerged and what has come to us from the colonial era have so completely seeped into our practices and thinking that it is futile to say 'let us get rid of the colonial legacy.' It is not practical. It will, in fact, make the vernacular language in circulation a poorer language. Historical processes have woven foreign and pan-Indian ideas into the provincial and the local. They have entered the ordinary language of people and that is where the project of vernacular Political Science must be located. As I said, from the time of Professor Sirsikar, it has been attempted through Political Sociology; but in a piecemeal manner and rather unselfconsciously.

That is the project I am asking younger political scientist to formulate and carry out. It would need collaboration across linguistic regions; but that is how social anthropologists worked in the 1960s and the 1970s. An effort of that kind is required. So that is my case for a vernacular Political Science and I would be most happy to hear your responses and questions. Thank you very much!

DISCUSSION

Prof. Mangesh Kulkarni - Thank you Professor Chatterjee! That was a very stimulating lecture. I thought that you would probably be using the term 'vernacular' to mean 'subaltern'; but the way you used it is actually related to regional languages and the political life they embody or express. It reminds me of a project that was carried out by Reinhardt Koselleck and his colleagues through the 1970s and beyond, that is called 'Begriffsgeschichte' or conceptual history. But that was I think somehow more oriented towards texts of different kinds- thesauri, encyclopaedias, archives of newspapers and periodicals etc. in a predominantly unilingual situation. I think they were looking mainly at German language texts. The project had a clear historical dimension in the sense that they were trying to map the transition to modernity and how a new vocabulary was formed in the process and what sort of a new life-world it expressed.

I guess most of us have grasped the essential thrust of your lecture and surely younger political scientists will take inspiration from what you have said, especially those who know the regional languages well and are open to doing this kind of research. Indeed, Shriranjan himself, for example, is looking at the political role of social media, and as you said they feature a distinctive vocabulary. I want to quickly add that even in English we have a set of terms which have their origin in our own political realities and reflections on those realities. For example, Licence-Permit-Quota Raj. Look at the way the term 'Pseudo-Secular' has recently gained currency and become normalised as part of a certain kind of common sense in the Gramscian sense. Besides, acronyms like KHAM and AJGAR have been coined to designate social combines that

have played an important role in Indian politics. There is a whole world out there that needs to be explored.

You would surely recall that way back in the 1960's, W. H. Morris-Jones had already talked about three idioms of Indian politics: traditional, modern and saintly. They have not lost their relevance, and sometimes while listening to Yogendra Yadav, I hear echoes of the saintly idiom.

Mr. Muzaffar Ali Malla (Assistant Professor, Dept of Philosophy, Savitribai Phule Pune University) –

Hello Professor Partha Chatterjee. Thank you very much for this very illuminating lecture. I am not a political scientist by any means. I teach philosophy. I have heard you multiple times and I have read you. So it's a privilege to hear you again. While listening to the lecture, at one point, I was reminded of Bhikhu Parekh's celebrated essay on the poverty of Indian Political Theory, and it seemed to me that you were contributing to the same debate. I just want to ask this question- do you think that the vernacularisation of Indian Political Science is altogether lacking or it is not being properly done? Because there is to some extent a gap between how Political Science is done and how Political Theory operates. At one point you said that by Vernacular Political Science you meant that one had to be attentive to the Indian political ideas that need to be conceptualized. Conceptualization is important even while engaging with vernacular languages, and that requires translation as India is a plurilingual community of communities. So, is it a kind of category mistake to expect this task of political scientists? Would it not be better to expect political theorists to perform it? Political Science sees itself as a predominantly scientific and naturalistic discipline, lacking a proper initiation into conceptualisation and theorisation

Mr. Kedar Naik (Assistant Professor, ADY Patil University, Pune) - My question is regarding your book *Politics of the Governed* where you say that Indian politics since Independence has involved an effort on the part of elites to silence non-elite politics. These elites also created vernacular concepts to oppose the Raj. So the vernacular has different layers. How do we deal with these layers? Another problem with vernacularisation is that one's language is essentially related to one's community and when we try to vernacularise something, it might result in communalisation. How do we cope with this risk? And the third problem is about the essentialism of vernacularisation. Having found modern European concepts like equity and equality liberating, why do we need to turn towards vernacularisation?

Mr. Shriranjan Awate- Now I think you have a question bank, sir!

Professor Partha Chatterjee- Yes Shriranjan. Let me respond. Mangesh raised this question of the relation between the vernacular and also about the phrases one might call 'Indian English'. I think that gives me an opportunity to actually clarify what I mean by the vernacular in relation to the rise of Modern Political Theory in Europe. In Europe, while the classical language was Latin, the vernacular was what we now know as the modern European languages. If you go back to Machiavelli, he wrote in Italian and that was considered a real departure. But many of the early modern thinkers including Hobbes also wrote books in Latin which was considered as the scholarly language. One of the crucial transformations that took place in the 16th and 17th centuries was that leading theorists moved away from Latin - the classical - to write in the vernacular. Hobbes is a very interesting example because he wrote both in Latin as well as

in English. Once the vernacular European languages gained wide acceptance as media of philosophical, theoretical work, there was no longer a compulsion to write a scholarly book in Latin.

In the Indian case the very interesting contrast is that for a long time there was a distinction between the classical and the vernacular, between Sanskrit and all the so-called Prakrit languages. In the Islamic tradition you had Arabic and Persian and the various Indian languages. The most interesting thing that happened with the British colonial period was that English also came to be recognised as a kind of classical language in contrast to the Indian languages which were the vernaculars. The word 'vernacular' is no longer used. But when I went to school in the 1950s, English and Vernacular were among the subjects. So you had to study English and whatever Indian languages you were studying, was called vernacular. This terminology had gained currency in the colonial period. So English became a kind of classical language and this is true even today. Anyone who has scholarly pretensions must write in English which is the accepted language of scholarly writing in India.

Now this is a very different situation from the European one. In Europe what used to be vernacular is now the accepted scholarly language. So people in Germany write books in German, which get translated into other European languages. There is a European pool of languages where there is constant translation, and of course many people are familiar with and can read several European languages. So that all of these European languages feed into the discursive field of Western political theory or Western political thought. In the Indian case the difficulty is that the single field is currently constituted by English. For instance, if you do a survey you

would have to translate your English questionnaire into an Indian language in order to carry out that survey. This raises question of the kind Kedar was asking.

Thus, you have to conduct the enquiry in a regional language, but conceptualise in English. This disciplinary situation is productive, but there is also a limitation. It is productive because it will force you to do the translation work. This was done by social anthropologists when they were looking into the Jati structures. Jati was described in local languages wherever they went. They were thus forced into communicating with people in those languages. But when they tried to make their findings available to others, they had to do the requisite conceptual work and produce scholarly texts in English, which constituted the common pool in the field of Social Anthropology in India. That is the way in which the conceptualising had to be done, and it called for a kind of abstraction. Sometimes they were not using European terms in the original sense; so for instance, they would use the word 'caste', but they would mean Jati which is not exactly 'caste', and there would be very specific definitions of what it connoted. Similarly, there are many other words which come from specific languages, but which acquire a conceptual form within the field of Social Anthropology as carried out in the English language.

Now in the Indian case, I think this has an advantage because it forces one to do the conceptualization and do this work of abstraction and translation. It also has a limitation as every time you do it, you create a distance between the linguistic formation that you were studying and your own scholarly language. There is feedback. Can the conceptualization you are doing work backwards into the field? I think what has happened in Anthropology, is that the

scholarly work that anthropologists were able to do made the phenomenon of caste so much more understandable for people like us who read these works in English. But I do not think the work flows back into the larger society. So if you ask somebody in a Maharashtra village about caste, they would still continue to think of it in the older terms of whatever is in circulation with absolutely no feedback or input from what anthropologists may have discovered. That is the limitation, and to overcome it political scientists, anthropologists, all social scientists generally, would have to be bilingual writers, writing both in English as well as in a regional language. But that is one further step in the production of a vernacular Political Science. That is the contrast with Europe, which is particularly relevant in our case.

Let us turn to an interesting question about Indian English terms and how they have entered and become a part of the vernacular. Take the term 'OBC' which is an English acronym standing for Other Backward Classes. Very often people do not know the phrase Other Backward Classes; but they know the acronym OBC, which has become a vernacular word today. How does that happen? That is the very interesting process through which even English terms or terms that come from English have become completely vernacularized in terms of their use in ordinary language.

Muzaffar's question is particularly interesting: How can we conceptualize the vernacular through political theory? My response would be to draw on the legacy of the Anglo-American philosophy of ordinary language. This was an attempt to get away from what was the orthodox scholarly discipline of philosophising, a body of essential work or conceptual formations within a field of abstraction that the scholarly language had produced in Philosophy. It sought to

subject ordinary language to philosophical analysis, which produced a very different kind of knowledge about how concepts are formed and how they circulate in ordinary contexts and not in scholarly contexts. What I am suggesting is something of that kind. Yes, even philosophers can engage in this particular exercise that I am suggesting, which is to first observe patterns, linguistic patterns, and rhetorical patterns in the ordinary language and then conceptualize, try and discover what are the conceptual operations going on in the way in which ordinary language circulates. That would be the sort of exercise I am proposing.

Mr. Shriranjan Awate- Thank you Professor Chatterjee. It was really an intellectual treat for all of us. I thank all the participants and especially Kulkarni sir for organising this lecture. So let us conclude the session. Thank you!

Email Exchange

Professor Sujata Patel (Department of Sociology, S. P. Pune University) : Dear Professor Chatterjee, I hope you are doing well. I wanted to make a comment regarding your lecture yesterday, but somehow my raised hand got lost and so am writing to you.

While I appreciate your argument that ethnographical work can capture popular interpretations of ‘political’ concepts and that political scientists need to trace this genealogy across various regions of the country, there is a need for caution on two issues.

First, regarding the term vernacular- a colonial term which was to represent the language of the regional dominant (caste) groups (at the expense of the dialects used by the subalterns) and institutionalised as regional languages once the country got divided into linguistic States. Since the late 19th century these languages have been used by the regional elite as a political project in which for example Hindu-Hindi has been confluenced leading languages being sanskritised and with it persian terms being eliminated (e.g. Hindi shuddhi movement associated with Lala Lajpat Rai as also similar movements in Gujarat and Maharashtra). That is why the dalit movement has questioned Brahminism through literature-language. If this power dimension is missed out there is little hope that an excavation of terms and meanings can be grasped through an ethnographic methodology.

Second, Srinivas, a Kannada Brahmin did his ethnography of Rampura by staying in the Brahmin locality and he admits that he did not have intense engagement with the lower castes (his village has no Muslims) who might have had different interpretations of the political in terms of their apbhransh Kannada. Of course, he has been credited with the

concept of “votebanks” but that is because he used it in context with ‘dominant caste’ and discussed it as middle caste mobilisation of lower groups to create what we call a power block and his theory of social change was explicitly caste-ist wherein the upper castes could mobilise upwards through westernisation and lower sections through sankritisation and later follow the upper castes to become western (quite unlike Ambedkar). No wonder Oommen (2008) suggests that his ideas can be called ‘methodological hinduism’. Pandian had earlier made a similar critique.

But there are other criticisms of Srinivas which needs to be taken into account- his sociology was reduced to social anthropology, his ethnography was functionalist and his field view if it substituted book view generalised from the village to imply the nation, thereby collapsing the macro in to the micro. Given that Srinivas’s work became the dominant paradigm in sociology we had theses after theses written in this fashion. Since the 80s and 90s there has been strong criticism of his ethnography (given that his ethnography has been reduced to description and for insider-caste/patriarchal/Hindu bias) and his disciplinary proclivity for social anthropology. Since the late 80s and 90s Srinivas’s limited approach has been highly criticised (I have also written on him-Patel, 2006 and 2017 and so has Satish Deshpande 2007). Valourising his social anthropology for a new social science project confuses rather than helps future political scientists. Instead, if examples of good practices in ethnography have to be highlighted then Kathleen Gough’s work done in a similar time frame to Srinivas can be used. She used ethnography to make a caste and class critique. And Buroway has a more contemporary understanding of ethnography in his text *Global Ethnography*. Today sociologists as social theorists use triangulation and grounded theory and combine multi-sited ethnography with

surveys and historical methods; this is the future I think for all social scientists. Thank you.

Professor Partha Chatterjee: Dear Sujata, Good to hear from you after such a long time. I didn't realise you were in the audience yesterday. Thank you for listening so carefully and writing to me now.

I completely accept the points you make about how ethnography as a method has been used, including the inherent upper-caste bias of the Srinivas variety of village studies. I was first made aware of it some forty years ago through an article by our mutual friend David Hardiman criticising the theory of sanskritisation. But ethnography today has moved out of that colonial-sanskritik bias. I had a student who recently did a Ph.D. studying the people who live in Shivaji Nagar which is a massive garbage dump near Deonar in Mumbai. She actually lived on the garbage dump for several weeks and went out into the sleazy slush where women and children walk everyday to pick metal and plastic scrap. It is possible to overcome many of the problems of the Srinivas method without giving up ethnography.

On the colonial antecedents of the vernacular, I did try to make the point that the Latin/vernacular contrast in Europe has its parallel in India in the Sanskrit/bhasha and English/Indian languages divide. But while the Latin/vernacular divide in Europe has been resolved by the disappearance of Latin, the English/Indian languages divide is very much with us. Yes, the regional language itself has structures of dominance within it. My own sense is that in many cases, the spread of education and the media will inevitably see the further disappearance of many local languages. On the other hand, with changes in local politics, we could see the emergence of languages like Bhojpuri,

Chhattisgarhi, Tulu etc as standard regional languages. My concern in my talk was not with the relevance of local languages as such, but with the languages of mass politics.

I was also pointing to the fact that as far as social science is concerned, while we must do the survey or ethnography in the local language, we have to do our theory in English. That is the situation in India and I see no way of getting beyond it. Interestingly, I have noticed a similar perception among scholars in Japan and China where the younger generation feels that they cannot do social theory without engaging with English.

Finally, I was not arguing that political scientists should take up ethnographic studies. They are expensive, difficult to conduct and take long periods of collaborative work to produce a conceptually rich body of theory. Instead, I was suggesting the new techniques of Digital Humanities to work on the massive body of social media output that is being generated everyday in dozens of Indian languages. We have no idea of what the biases or pitfalls may be in that research. But it would be an entirely new direction of study.

Professor Mangesh Kulkarni: Dear Partha-da, I have a few comments/questions regarding your thought-provoking lecture, 'For a Vernacular Political Science'.

1. I feel the key term 'vernacular' was not adequately theorized, resulting in its equation with the (standardised?) regional languages.
2. Assuming it is necessary to grapple with the political discourse contained in the regional languages, which methodological approach(es) would you recommend?
3. (a) You commended the social anthropologists' (eg M. N. Srinivas's) engagement with the vernacular understanding

of caste. But was the engagement truly critical? (b) Also, they were dealing with a (largely) indigenous discourse; while most examples of vernacular political vocabulary you cited, are translations of exogenous concepts like 'nation' and 'state'.

4. You seemed to suggest that behaviouralism brought Political Science into close contact with the vernacular domain. But was the resulting engagement critical (cf. 3.a)?
5. How do you respond to the ethnographies of the Indian State, produced by Akhil Gupta, Veronique Benei et. al?
6. Can we conceptualize 'elementary aspects of vernacular political consciousness in India' in the wake of Subaltern/Cultural Studies?

Professor Partha Chatterjee: Dear Mangesh, Thank you for these questions. I have addressed some of these in my response to Sujata. But here are a few more comments.

I completely understand why in 2021 we should feel that Srinivas's ethnography of caste is not sufficiently critical. I was trying to tell you how radically new and critical it must have appeared to those who, in the 1960s, were used to understanding caste according to PV Kane, Ghurye or Irawati Karve, or Indian politics according to liberal constitutional theory. Ethnographic findings posed a completely new challenge to social and political theory in the 1960s. Same with behaviourism whose methodological flaws are now well known to us.

One more point. Nation, state, people are terms that have accompanied new institutions and practices brought into India from elsewhere. But words like *rashtra*, *rajya*, *desh*, *jati*, *lok*, *jana* etc are not foreign words. They have long conceptual

histories in each language in which they are now used. And the same word ‘nation’ or ‘state’ are translated by different indigenous words in different Indian languages. Does the concept remain the same? When a Telugu-speaker says ‘desam’ or a Bengali-speaker says ‘jati’, does she mean the same thing as what is meant by the Hindi-speaker when he says ‘rashtra’? I don’t know, because no one has really asked the question seriously enough.

Behavioural Approach to the Study of Indian Politics

V. M. Sirsikar

The politics of a democratic country is a matter of concern to its citizens - specially those who could be regarded as constituting the 'political population'. In no country, democratic or otherwise, all the people are interested and involved in the country's politics at all times. Even the interest and involvement of the political public is not the same all the time. It is obvious that they reach a high level when general elections are held or a president is chosen. The intensity ebbs out to a markedly low level in the period between elections if the times are normal and stability is the rule of the day. No one can say this about our country today. This explains the sustained interest of the people in politics. An effort to understand politics on the part of most of us generally stops at the newspaper level - a spicy story about a corrupt minister. But a serious student must undertake a patient research into the treacherous quagmire of politics, to know about the underlying truth.

A community's political arrangements could be studied in ways more than one. The study of politics has an ancient tradition. It has attracted the attention of the best minds of all times. Till recently there was not much change in the methods used to study politics. If it is the business of Political Science to study man in his relation to state, it is necessary to form hypotheses about this relationship and make effort to test them by whatever techniques available. These two activities- formulation of hypotheses and their testing could be carried out by observing political behaviour.

Political behaviour like all other human behaviour takes place in a certain context of social milieu, political structure, economic development, historical background and cultural heritage of a society. It does not take place in a

vacuum. In any effort to build a theory, cognisance of these factors will have to be taken. This does not mean that the factors like political ideologies, belief-system of a community or emotional issues are to be ignored. On the other hand one could argue that all these factors are inter-related. Political structure and economic development are closely related to the ideology currently popular and ruling in the country. Social structure affects the economic development and in turns is influenced by it. A theory of economic development is in essence a theory of social change. Thus all the factors are continuously acting and reacting. It is in this process of action and reaction, that the political behavior takes place to choose a new set of political elites to rule the mass for a specific period. Democratic Elections could be defined as an effort on the part of the elites and the counter-elites to present their ideologies and programmes as extremely similar to the utopias currently held by the people. The two sides of the process, the voters and the candidates, both know on their part that this effort is not exactly the reality - the reality of a cruel struggle for power.

In a traditional society, experiencing rapid socio-economic and political change, social structure assumes a new significance. The release of the individuals from the traditional bonds of the family, kinship, caste and neighbourhood is neither complete nor universal. Even in the most urbanised areas, a majority of citizens cling to their age-old ties. Thus, excepting a small fringe of Western-educated, self-alienated class, the rest of the society is mostly traditional. If this sociological background could be forgotten, there is really no need of an independent theory of Indian politics or for that matter, Indian political behaviour.

Political behavior, no doubt, is merely an aspect of social behavior, taken out for a closer study and systematic

analysis. But this behavior becomes meaningful only against the background of the Society - its various social groupings and their interactions. To understand an individual's political involvements and what these mean to him, one must know his other social roles, involvements and associations. Because these affect and influence his behavior in the political sphere. It is not possible to understand a part of human behaviour unless there is a total perspective of man. This only brings out the necessity of having a common frame of reference for behavioural research. The parts have a meaning only as parts of a whole.

All efforts at research, whether traditional or behavioural, are attempts to understand and explain the social reality. The resources which are now available to modern researcher were unknown not only to Plato, Aristotle and Kautilya, but also to Marx and Pareto. Aristotle would have written his *Politics* differently if he had his I.B.M. computer and the same can be said of Marx. The amazing increase in the scientific techniques which could be applied to political problems in the post-World War II period has opened up vast areas to fruitful empirical research. The behavioural revolution brought in its wake its standard bearers and its sworn enemies in the West, especially in the United States. Fortunately in India there is as yet no open conflict between the 'behaviouralists' (if there are any) and the 'traditionalists'. It may appear a little unnecessary to distinguish between behaviourism and behaviouralism. The first was a psychological concept, associated with J. B. Watson. The Stimulus-Response paradigm has given place to Stimulus-Organism-Response. But the behaviour theory in psychology has never been adopted by any political scientists interested in new techniques and concepts. To avoid terminological and conceptual confusion it is necessary to call the new approach as behavioural and not behaviouristic.

It would not be out of place to take a very brief look at the development of this approach in the West. The history of the so called behavioural revolution is of the last two decades. One could say that Graham Wallas, A. F. Bentley and Charles Merriam were the forerunners of this new approach. But the flowering of the movement was after World War II. During the last twenty years, there has begun a new epoch in the Social Sciences in general and in Political Science in particular. The impact of physical sciences on the social sciences has been ever increasing. It was out of this that the attention of social scientists was drawn to the fact that their methods were lacking in scientific rigour. But Behavioural approach is not to be confused with the mere use of scientific techniques. "It stands for a new departure in social research as a whole; it is the most recent development in a long line of changing approaches to the understanding of society. It means more than scientific techniques, more than rigour"¹. Behavioural approach in political science means certain things. It is possible that no two behaviouralists would agree to a common definition. But the following description of the approach by its leading exponents could be considered as adequate for understanding it.

1. It specifies as the unit or object of both theoretical and empirical analysis the behaviour of persons and social groups rather than events, structures, institutions, or ideologies. It is, of course, concerned with these latter phenomena, but only as categories of analysis in terms of which social interaction takes place in typically political situations.
2. It seeks to place political theory and research in a frame of reference common to that of social psychology, sociology and cultural anthropology. This interdisciplinary focus follows inevitably from a concern with behaviour overt or

symbolic. Even though the particular transactions studied are limited to those carried out in pursuit of political roles and political goals, political behaviour is assumed to be a function of personality, social organization and society.

3. It stresses the mutual interdependence of theory and research. Theoretical questions need to be stated in operational terms for purposes of empirical research. And, in turn, empirical findings should have a bearing on the development of political theory. Its empiricism is, therefore, quite unlike the 'brute facts' approach of an earlier descriptive empiricism. It is self-consciously theory oriented.
4. It tries to develop a rigorous research design and to apply precise methods of analysis to political behaviour problems. It is concerned with the formulation and derivation of testable hypotheses, operational definitions, problems of experimental or post-facto design, reliability of instruments and criteria of validation, and other features of scientific procedure. It is in this respect that the political behaviour approach differs most conspicuously from the more conventional approaches of political science. Yet, it does not assume that the procedures of the scientific method can be simplistically and mechanically applied to the analysis of the political process.²

In the absence of the behavioural approach, the study of political life would mean the analysis of the environment. But politics is a function not only of the environment and institutions, but of the responses to these by men for whom the institutions are created. The traditional approach neglected this vital link. It did not attempt to explain why an individual responds to the environment and political institutions the way he does. The new approach tries to do

this by understanding the attitudes of individuals and their responses to the environment and institutions. Thus the new approach tries to answer questions like - Why do some people get involved in politics? Why do some people tend to be apolitical? Why do they vote for a particular party? Do the citizens care about the elections whose consequences are remote and difficult to understand? What are the factors which socialize the newcomers into politics? What are the clues to the mystique of leadership? Why do certain persons succeed in becoming leaders? Why do others fail?

It would not be out of place to emphasize the nature and aim of the new approach. The new approach is eclectic by nature and hence has no inhibitions to use new and varied techniques. It aims at building up a science of politics. One would agree with David Truman, one of the leading exponents of the approach in the United States, when he says that 'the ultimate goal of the student of political behaviour is the development of a science of the political process...' ³ It is of interest to note that this was said in 1951.

II

As in many other fields of intellectual activity, the behavioural approach was adopted in India at a very late stage of its development. It is a little surprising that with a large number of Indian Universities having personnel trained in American Universities, the behavioural revolution did not affect political science research in India till the Sixties. The best example of the earlier neglect of this useful approach could be given. The country held two General Elections in 1951 and 1957, and these momentous events which provided excellent opportunity for the use of the behavioural approach

were never studied from this viewpoint. Or it may be said that the senior Indian political scientists were even more sceptical than their American and Western counterparts in accepting the 'Young Turks'. The probable reasons are to be found in the heavy and continued influence of Philosophy, History, and Constitutional Law on the earlier generation of Political Science teachers in India. Recently there are a few signs to indicate that things have been changing. One could say that by 1960 younger political scientists in the country became conscious of and interested in the behavioural approach because of its utility in analysing the complex Indian politics.

The 1962 elections were studied in the country with the use of new techniques and new perspectives by many. Here again we may not confuse the study of elections as an indication of the adoption of behavioural approach. But it could be said that there were a few who consciously adopted this new approach for the study of elections. It is necessary, therefore, to distinguish between the study of political behaviour and the behavioural study of politics. The distinction is not simply a play on words. It is possible to do research on political behaviour without making use of the concepts and methods of the behavioural sciences'.⁴ During the last five years there has been almost a rapid increase in the influence of the approach in the discipline. Increasing attention is now being paid to this approach and its application to new problems. Before turning to more specific problems in India one could say that there is an urgent need for greater sophistication in applying the approach to the problems of research in India.

Indian politics has a quality of its own. Western scholars of this country's politics have sometimes expressed their dismay at the mystifying mixture of many currents and

strains. Some have tried to analyse it in terms of a modern-traditional dichotomy, with certain qualifications. Without blaming the western scholars, one could argue that the politics of a country would always have the flavour of the soil from which it springs. The 'modern' cannot dissociate itself completely from the 'traditional' in the Indian society. In no country politics has been of simple, made-to order variety for the convenience of the researcher. It could not be so in a country like ours, with an unbelievably long but living past, a huge population with many religions and many more castes and languages. Imagine for a moment that we had only one religion, one caste and one language, many of our present apparently insoluble problems would simply disappear. Modern politics of a traditional society undergoing rapid social change, has all the complexity one could think of.

It is not necessary for me to dwell upon the complexity of Indian politics at any length. One could say that by definition it is so. Within this given framework one has to attempt to understand and explain the social reality. It is felt that the adoption of the new approach would considerably help in this matter.

Let us consider for a moment the use of a formal legalistic approach to understand an important aspect of the recent elections - the nomination of candidates by various parties. What would come out of patient research in the formal procedures of nomination? There is no possibility of any light being thrown on the real political process involved in securing the nomination. Formally speaking, a candidate or candidates apply for a particular party's ticket. There are regular forms, procedures and deposits for such an application. There is a duly constituted parliamentary board of the party. It meets and selects the best among the applicants and gives him the

nomination. Everyone knows that though this is what appears on the surface, a tremendous activity takes place beneath the surface - the informal political process which remains hidden and therefore unknown to the people at large.

It is here that the new approach becomes urgently necessary. It takes into account the formal procedures and rules, but does not stop there. It tries to know about the formal and informal processes by interviewing the political actors - the selected candidates, the selectors, the 'rejects' and others connected with the process. By piecing together the personal experiences of the different actors, the jigsaw puzzle slides into a meaningful design. The new approach tries to understand and explain the informal but real process, with its overtones of caste-politics, favouritism, big money influence, political linkages and what not. It is not an accident that generally in the case of ministers, there are no applicants in the constituency.

It is not intended to convince the audience about the utility of the new approach. What I have undertaken to do is to put before them the new developments in the field with special reference to our country. In this connection it could be pointed out that certain areas have been explored by Indian political scientists with the application of the new approach. Areas of Political Science, which have been investigated with a behavioural approach and have resulted in improving our knowledge and understanding, could be easily listed. The studies of voting behaviour have to be described as the pioneering efforts made in this direction. These have thrown light on many points about which we were not aware before such studies could be made. The relation of socioeconomic class and voting trends, the constants and the changers, the opinion-leaders, the crosspressurised voters, the non voters and

such other phenomena have been explained by the behavioural studies. In the area of political participation, the new approach has revealed new facts about the participation, involvement and interests of the political public. The effect of communication process on strengthening loyalties of partisan voters came to light only by behavioural research. The decision-making and the decision-makers have been analysed. This analysis gives a new insight in the political process. The approach has been very fruitfully utilised in understanding and explaining the psychological make-up of the homo politicus. The effort to understand the personality and attitudes of the political actors, whether, they are voters, leaders decision-makers or power-elite, has resulted in acquiring very useful knowledge about them.

From a strictly Indian point of view it could be argued that the new approach should be utilized to understand and explain political change and political development. After the 1967 elections the need for such studies has been very clearly indicated. No work has been done in these very sensitive and delicate areas. Bnt the neglect of these areas may prove disastrous in the present context of rapid change and unstable political loyalties. The possibilities of the use of the new approach are immense. The only limiting factor could be the paucity of properly trained researchers. Briefly it could be said that most of the problem areas of modern Indian politics are succesptible to behavioural study. Not much work has been done in any of these potentially rich areas. The field is almost virgin and there is an urgent need of sustained research work.

III

A basic reason for the late acceptance of the behavioural approach in this country is the out-dated syllabi of the discipline in most of the Indian Universities. The

Universities in this country have a certain rigid structure. The Education Commission has commented on this aspect extensively and has recommended a flexible approach to courses of study. Innovative suggestions are generally frowned upon by the authorities. Generally it takes almost two years to introduce any change in the syllabi. The ignorance and incapacity of many teachers comes in the way of modernising our syllabi. It is not sometimes realised that in the post-1960 world, the study of social sciences could not be carried out with outdated syllabi and teaching remniscent of the 19th century. It is not a problem with one institution. There is an urgent necessity of 'adult-education' of most of the social science faculty in the country.

The way out of the present situation appears to depend on a multi-pronged attack. It is obvious that the out-dated syllabi in most university courses in Political Science has to be improved and brought up-to-date. But that will not help unless other efforts are made simultaneously. The training of younger teachers in the new methods, techniques and approaches is an urgent necessity. This could be undertaken with the help of the U.G.C. But what is more important is the continuous interaction of these newly trained political scientists. This could be secured by undertaking cooperatively joint research projects. Efforts towards such a venture have not succeeded in the past. One need not be pessimistic to believe future efforts would meet the same fate.

The growing awareness about the new approach among the younger political scientists has to be directed into proper channels. This would demand careful planning and coordination of research efforts on the part of the University departments and colleges. Without such preparation, there might result a sizable wastage of scarce resources both human

and material. It is to be hoped that the policy makers would be aware of this danger.

IV

The nature of the behavioural approach sets certain limits to its use. By itself it may not give a complete understanding of politics, specially its normative aspect. To a certain extent the normative aspect is present in all research activities. The very selection of a particular area or problem for investigation depends on the 'primary value judgements' of the researcher. 'Behaviouralism will inevitably be used within a framework of value judgements which cannot be supported through behavioural techniques alone. The behavioural investigator is confined by an unbehaviourally derived set of primary value judgements, just as he is restricted by a whole framework of ultimate assumptions about the nature of the thing he is investigating.'⁵ Thus the behaviouralist would provide scientific explanations of political behaviour under carefully given and controlled circumstances. The same would be true of his predictions about behaviour in future.

Can we expect the researcher who provides scientific explanations of the behaviour observed, to apply the same techniques to his own behaviour? At best 'he might provide an interesting hypothesis to explain his conduct, but this could hardly be verified by the statistical and other methods which he uses to study the behaviour of groups'⁶. But a more serious limitation of the approach is regarding the problem of first order values. What a behavioural investigation can tell is what one should do under given circumstances if one wants to pursue certain values. But what values are more important or what values one should pursue is an area beyond the behavioural approach.

In the field of policy making the behavioural approach can help in an empirical analysis of what people value under certain circumstances. But policy-makers have to make a choice between alternatives, to use resources for defence or for improving living conditions of workers. In this choice value-judgements are involved - a moral aspect. Here the new approach cannot be of any help to the policy-maker.

There are other limitations of the approach as Heinz Eulau points out, 'limitations of time, opportunity, and resources; limitations arising out of bias, fear, and short sightedness; limitations inherent in the scientific enterprise itself - false starts, wrong moves, errors of omission and commission; and limitations in the armoury of available research tools and methods. But, if inquiry remains open, these limitations are surmountable'.⁷

A plea for adopting the behavioural approach is justified on many counts. It is advocated not as a substitute for political philosophy, but as a complementary way to understand the complex political reality. Even accepting that the behavioural studies result in understanding the parts, it could be argued that understanding parts is essential to the knowledge of the whole. The new approach need not be caricatured as a crusade for scienticism. It only believes that 'politics is not immune to scientific enquiry into human relations and behavioural patterns can justify the entire venture called "Political Science".'

The use of the behavioural approach to macro studies is an urgent necessity. A social scientist who applies the approach to micro studies always feels shy about making any generalisations about the larger field. He feels very confident about the small area investigated by him. But his findings have a significance for the small area. By taking up macro studies

the social scientist would be in a position to apply the new techniques and infer generalisations of wider validity.

This raises the problem of the relationship between the macro and micro studies. It is obvious that both the types of studies are essential for a proper understanding of the political reality. How much of macro studies to be combined with how much of micro studies would depend on the particular situation.

Adoption of the new approach will not set the Ganga on fire. No one believes that a new approach, a new technique would be a panacea for all our problems of research. What could be argued is the use of the new approach in areas susceptible to it. This would result, it is hoped, in new insights in certain difficult problems. It is needless to say that behaviouralism is not a substitute for the older approaches or theories. It is complementary to the traditional efforts to study political problems. The potentialities of the new approach are immense. It could be fruitfully applied to many segments of contemporary Indian politics.

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