

Application of Political Sociology in the Indian Context

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Abstract - Independence and the establishment of a democratic republic in India gave rise to the field of political sociology inside the country. It became imperative for the social science fields, particularly sociology and political science, to comprehend not just how contemporary political institutions work, but also how the conventional social fabric of Indian society would adapt to this new political order, in light of this seismic shift. This unique focus on society within Indian political theory is what ultimately led to the development of political sociology. Many Indian sociologists and social scientists set out in the years after India's independence to decipher the shifting social milieu in which political conduct was taking place. A new field of study called political sociology was necessary due to the complex nature of the landscape at the intersection of politics and society. Regardless, the importance of both sociology and political science remained unabated, especially because political sociology emerged as a branch of sociology, despite their close relationship. Examining the work of Dipankar Gupta, this article delves deeply into the history of political sociology in India. His work illuminates the pre- and post-independence social and political climates, as well as the ways in which both the traditional and contemporary values that were embraced thereafter were able to coexist.

Keywords: Traditional, Contemporary Values, Sociology, Indian Society, Political Science.

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INTRODUCTION

It is helpful to examine the fundamentals of political sociology before delving into the more complex issues within this field in India. The key distinction between political science and political sociology is an essential topic for this discussion. [1] Power is at the heart of political science, according to the most popular and comprehensive interpretation. But what matters here is to examine Max Weber's distinction between power and authority. Weber defines power as "the probability that certain specific command (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons" and domination as "the ability of an individual or group to achieve their own goals or aims when others are trying to prevent them from realising them" (Weber, 1968). [2]

In contrast to the central premise utilised to analyse authority, the readiness of the ruled to submit to the ruler is not significant while analysing power. The focus of political sociologists is on the legitimacy of power. Political sociology focusses on legitimate power, as opposed to politics, which primarily deals with power in its widest meaning. [3]

A previous iteration of political sociology was often thought of as investigating the societal factors that shape political conduct and institutions. Factors and variables related to politics were thought to be reliant on factors and variables related to sociology. Societal aspects like class, position, and society were considered independent, while political issues like the constitution, state, and law were considered dependent. [4]

The emphasis, however, has recently changed from sociological analysis of politics to the interplay between political and sociological methods. Concerns voiced in political philosophy have strong ties to political sociology. There is a long and illustrious history of political ideas in political philosophy, dating back to the ancient Greeks and Indians. But Karl Marx really brought into focus questions about political power and how it relates to economic and social order. The field of sociology of politics may trace its roots back to him. [5]

Studying the causes and societal contexts of conflict, as well as how to effectively manage it, is central to political sociology. Human nature and societal factors are the sources of conflict. There will always

be competing interests as long as people have different priorities and endless needs in a finite universe. Since politics is an ever-evolving dynamic process, no one solution has yet been found to end the endless cycle of strife. The purpose of political process is to bring about social order by means of resolving and managing social conflict. [6]

However, even if it were possible to eliminate all disputes, it would need a level of control that would inevitably lead to the destruction of human liberty. A totalitarian society succeeds in uniting its members and denying their variety; it enforces discipline and crushes opposition; it demands conformity and undermines spontaneity; and it is not an ordered society. "Without sacrificing the principles of public engagement and proper adherence to the "game rules," order may be established by the recognition of shared interests and the development of agreement. [7]

Analysing the relationship between society and politics is the major focus of political sociology. Political sociology encompasses a wide range of topics, such as voting and its social and political ramifications, the relationship between socioeconomic class and political views, and the impact of societal attitudes on political engagement. In political sociology, there is a wide range of topics covered. [8]

Political sociology focusses on the decision-making process, which involves societal and economic elements governed by constraints like money, markets, and other resource scarcity. Another important question in political sociology is whether or not the individual making decisions has a firm enough grasp of the people they are responsible for governing. It brings new life to political analysis with the inclusion of the notion of political system. It covers all aspects of the structure in its political aspects, including caste groupings, kinship groups, and formal organisations like parties and interest groups, in addition to studying the major structures of the government like the legislature, courts, and administrative agencies. [9]

As soon as the boundary between the two was drawn, political sociology began to take shape. The development of this field is attributable to the work of certain academics. Political scientists started to investigate political reality from a scientific stance, or even an empirical one, as a result of the rise of scientific technology and industrialisation. [10]

They were drawn to sociology because of this process; it had already established a name for itself as a positive and scientific field, and it had started to include ideas that would make political science more grounded in science. With the increasing understanding that development issues are fundamentally sociopolitical, and not just technical or bureaucratic. However, questions about political power and its connection to social or economic structure were first brought to light by Karl Marx. He began "Sociology of Politics" by critiquing Hegel's state philosophy, his historical interpretation as a matter of

material facts, and his idea of class as the primary variable in any social or political analysis. Runciman accurately pinpoints the 1840s as the time when this discipline took form, considering this argument. [11]

The German sociologist Max Weber produced the second-greatest impact on political sociology after Karl Marx. His theories on various forms of authority, the perfect bureaucracy, and the addition of status and party to class were crucial in establishing political sociology. In addition to offering a liberal interpretation of historical materialism, a Marxist philosophical framework, Weber did an excellent job of illuminating the dynamics and future paths of social and political evolution. The idea of legitimacy, which allows one to wield power and is generally acknowledged, was another significant contribution that Weber made to the field of political sociology. Lastly, Weber made some remarks on human behaviour, stressing the need of considering the goals and motives of those engaged.[12]

On the other hand, Weber faced criticism for failing to adequately analyse the past. In addition to Marx and Weber, several influential theorists have made significant but less groundbreaking contributions to the development of political sociology. Walter Bagehot was one such thinker; he lived during Marx's time and studied the connections between political structures and people's actions as well as their cultural backgrounds. He also argued that the text is a critique of the parliamentary form of governance and made a distinction between theoretical and practical considerations of the constitution. The influence of contemporary forms of communication like the telegraph, telephone, books, and newspapers seeks to connect the person with the media, according to another French sociologist, Gabriel Tarde. In their seminal books, *The Mind and the Society* and *The Ruling Class*, eminent sociologist Vilfredo Pareto and Gaetano Mosca contributed significantly to the development of political sociology. It is only because the elite circulated or moved that political and economic change occurred, they argue; the elite do not necessarily need to dominate the economic forces." Political parties and their structures were later the focus of several academics. Election procedures, voter attitudes and conduct, and election data were the primary foci of the research. Researchers in the field of political science also looked at the impact of personalities on politics in the 1930s. [13]

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research looks at how political sociology in India has evolved via the use of secondary sources. The study is divided into three parts: We begin by looking at how political sociology deals with the topic of caste practitioners and how they fit into contemporary political systems. Within this framework, the second part examines the ways in which political sociology interacts with caste-related processes and movements. In the last part, we look

at how political sociology includes non-caste social groupings in political landscape analysis.

RESULTS

- **The Historical Background of Democracy, Liberal Thought, and Constitutionalism**

In order to comprehend the rise of political sociology in India, one must take into account the social and political climate both before to and during India's independence in 1947. The fundamental premise upon which the field builds its knowledge of authority and structure is by highlighting the central paradox of a caste-system existing in a society that claims to be a contemporary, democratic republic. The caste system was deeply ingrained in India's patriarchal social order, which sanctioned prejudice and exclusion based on race, religion, and other characteristics. "There was a system of inequality that permeated every aspect of Indian culture, and the hierarchical separation of individuals according to birth and profession was a prime example of this.

The Indian constitution, ratified shortly after the country's independence, proclaimed India to be a socialist democratic society that guaranteed equal rights to all inhabitants regardless of their religion, language, caste, etc. So, there was a modern political constitutional system based on principles of equality, liberty, human dignity, secularism, etc., and there was also the traditional Indian caste system, which maintained a set of discriminatory and asymmetrical power relations. Political sociology has built its research and body of knowledge on this tension between tradition and modernity in Indian politics, which is a key feature of the field. In India, political sociologists were curious in how these two tenets interacted with one another. What made it intriguing was that two seemingly incompatible sets of values could coexist without succumbing to one another. The political sociologists' perspective is that this was made possible by the unique symbiotic moulding and transformation of tradition to support India's political and social modernisation. The preexisting theories of political sociology were unable to account for India's distinctive political and social context, which provided the impetus for the development of political sociology into its own academic field. According to Dipankar Gupta, "the phrase political sociology in India is more appropriate than political sociology of India". This is based on the real reality.

Many academics from many fields, all falling under the umbrella of political sociology, have taken an interest in this distinctive aspect of India's political system. Others examined the impact of this seeming contradiction on India's efforts to build a contemporary political system, while yet others investigated the possibility of modern and traditional values and ideals coexisting. Although the ideals advocated by the contemporary and traditional political spheres couldn't

be more different, there were those who sought to understand how the two complimented one another.

Instead than being in opposition to the democratic ideals of a contemporary political system, Rudolf and Rudolf examined how caste groups evolved into political blocs. Once thought of as solidarity groups operating under hierarchical caste identities, caste solidarities in today's political system, particularly in the realm of political mobilisation, have taken on the role of interest groups inside a broader political configuration. It should be emphasised that throughout these changes, just the outward appearance was altered; the hierarchical essence of caste was preserved. The Rudolphs' main point was that the Indian political system has always been centrist.

A number of factors contributed to the rise of centrist politics, including the following: class politics' marginalisation, majority fragmentation, under-represented groups' electoral strength, people's growing political consciousness, and federal system constraints caused by social pluralism and cultural diversity. They also note that the candidate with the most votes is proclaimed the victor under India's First-Past-The-Post voting system. Consequently, political parties can't afford to cater to just one group; they need to reach out to individuals of various faiths and castes. Taking into consideration the voting strength of various caste groups, such political mobilisations would seek to get the highest number of votes. The 'group identity' that many minority populations in India have due to their similar economic, social, and cultural circumstances is another intriguing aspect of Indian politics. Because of these identities, they are better able to get involved in politics. The majority-minority discourse in political sociology has been significantly influenced by identities, whether caste or minority. The political system's approach to negotiating the system's disparities is equally crucial.

Modern Indian politics are studied by political sociologists using these ideas. Examples of caste-based political parties that they analyse are the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and the Samajwadi Party (SP), both of which aim to appeal to traditional caste identities while navigating the contemporary democratic system. In addition, they look at how affirmative action (reservations) and other measures try to address caste-based prejudice while still upholding equality standards.

- **Cast Equity Negotiations**

The National Development Council adopted the recommendations made by the Balwant Rai Mehta committee, which was created by the Indian government in 1957, to create institutions for "democratic decentralisation" or Panchayati Raj. In response, new democratically-based political systems emerged. The impact of these new institutions on the relationship between various castes in Tamil Nadu has been researched by

Beteille. Although they make up a small percentage of the population, the upper caste had significant power over the lower castes and Dalits prior to the establishment of Panchayati Raj organisations. But now things are different.

They may have reclaimed control of rituals and economics, but their political power has been usurped by non-Brahmins due to their numerical insignificance. Thus, Beteille notes that non-Brahmin leaders have been able to rise to power thanks to the establishment of new political institutions and specialised political agencies. The political process has two effects on the caste system, which he notices. Using sub-caste or caste allegiance to one's advantage keeps the conventional caste-based structure in place, while new partnerships that cut across caste loyalties cause the old structure to weaken. Defining the function of the ruling caste and its allies in contemporary politics is central to the problem of domination. A large portion of modern India's democratic political culture has its roots in the country's dominant caste, which may or may not be from an upper caste but has benefited materially from the country's social and economic transformations. Two prominent castes in India's contemporary political system—the Yadavs in the north and the Marathas in the west—serve as examples of this.

In order to take advantage of their power and influence in both the old and new democratic systems, many caste groups and coalitions have become involved in the contemporary political system. This concept of castes as interest groups within various contemporary political groupings demonstrates the continued significance of caste identity in democratic elections. He argues that the political and caste systems were never really separate and that what we are seeing now is more of a change in societal priorities than a radical replacement of either. The individual expressing dissatisfaction with casteism in politics in India is seeking a political system that is unrooted in society, according to him. To discuss India's democratic politics without also addressing the impact of caste on its development would be to gloss over the pervasiveness of caste awareness in the country's contemporary political system.

Current caste dynamics in Indian politics are studied by political sociologists using these ideas. They look at how powerful castes use economic and demographic advantages to shape government policy; for instance, they examine the Marathas in Maharashtra and the Jats in Haryana. In addition, they look at how reservation rules in public employment and schools have helped historically oppressed groups gain power.

Equal Protection Clause

Equality and social justice cannot be fully pursued in a caste-based society like India without sacrificing certain aspects of the former. Why? Because the caste system gave rise to long-lasting inequalities. It was important to include language in the Constitution that acknowledged preexisting social disparity when it was

draughted. To ensure that marginalised communities had an equal opportunity to compete and exercise their rights, India instituted a policy of protective discrimination, which included allocating certain positions within the government and educational institutions to members of historically oppressed communities. i) Reservations to certain positions and resources, such as in legislatures, government posts, and universities, were defined by Galanter as one of three forms of preferential treatment for the reserved group. ii) Arrangements for them, such as funding for scholarships and loans, etc. with the purpose of preventing their exploitation (Galanter, 1978). It is hardly surprising that reservations were established based on castes, as the lowest castes were the most marginalised. In accordance with the degree and kind of their backwardness, this was extended to the Other Backward Castes. This, in turn, led to a proliferation of caste organisations, the stated goal of which was to safeguard members of certain castes against outside influence. Separate from the other Scheduled Castes, "the Backward Classes too found their own identity" (Frankel and Rao, 1989). Unlike caste membership, which was inherited, membership in a caste organisation became an acquired one as a consequence of these events. May cause coalitions to form between different castes and divisions within a caste.

How reservation rules affect social mobility and political representation in the long run is a topic that political sociologists research. To measure the success of these programs, they look at statistics on the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes' levels of education, employment, and political engagement. They also look at the arguments over who should be included in the reserve system and who should not, such as the discussion over economically weaker sections (EWS) in reservations.

Movements Opposing Reservations

For India's political landscape, the anti-reservation demonstrations were a watershed moment. The Mandal Commission suggested a 27% reservation for the OBC in its 1980 report, which led to a rise in the reserved quota from 27% to 50% and provided justification for the current reserves for SC and ST. The Anti-Mandal Protests of 1990, which were widespread in nature, followed. Reservations based on caste, rather than merit, were the target of the demonstrations. Prime Minister V. P. Singh resigned as a result and chose to follow the recommendations of the Mandal Commission. The number of student suicides by arson was likewise high.

Because a caste's position varies throughout the nation, it is a big issue even now. Some castes were regarded as untouchable in some regions, while others enjoyed higher social standing, as pointed out by Galanter. So, the Dhobis, who lived as untouchables in Uttar Pradesh but not Bombay, are one example.

While caste was certainly an essential consideration in Indian politics, there were many other elements at play as well. Aside from the anti-reservation protests, India had a plethora of other upheavals, which merit a quick overview.

Modern anti-reservation emotions and movements are studied by political sociologists using this paradigm. Research in this area focusses on the reactions of various socioeconomic groups to shifts in reservation policy, such as the EWS quota or the demands of dominant castes in states like Gujarat and Haryana for reservations. Also covered is the intricate process by which political parties deal with caste-based reservations in the electoral arena.

- **Internal policies and processes that have an ongoing impact on Indian politics**

Tensions arose in several regions of the nation as the image of contemporary political institutions effectively governing India became more prominent. As a result of the ongoing strains on the federal character of the Indian polity, regional disturbances based on religion, language, and other factors began to emerge throughout the nation. The separatist movements in North-East India, Jammu and Kashmir, and Khalistan also caused a great deal of bloodshed and destruction of property for the Indian communities living there.

Equally challenging, and frequently accompanied by tensions and conflicts, has been the task of maintaining the secular principles of the Indian Constitution, which has been the focus of political sociologists' attention in the decades after independence. The extensive communal clashes that have taken place in India are an example of the shortcomings of the contemporary political system. One prime illustration of this is the Indian partition. An important illustration of how tensions between the two groups persisted even after independence is the 1969 Gujarat Riots. Just a few examples like this. Similar occurrences have occurred and continue to occur, posing a significant danger to secular India.

According to Atul Kohli's analysis of the Indian political crisis, four distinct elements contributed significantly to the current state of affairs: "I" refers to the deinstitutionalising role of national and regional leaders. "II" is the influence of weak political parties. "III" is the undisciplined political mobilisation of different types of groups, including those based on caste, ethnicity, religion, and other factors. "IV" is the growing conflict between the well-off and the poor in civil society. There was more going on than what was widely believed to have been caused by Indira Gandhi's leadership style, and this was a big mystery in Indian politics that drew the interest of political sociologists. "The gap between the haves and the have-nots, which has been widening in modern India, is something that Kohli himself implies might hold the key".

Using these frameworks, political sociologists examine modern threats to the secular fabric and federal structure of India. For example, they look at the Vidarbha and Gorkhaland demands for independence as examples of regional autonomy movements. Studying events like the Ram Janmabhoomi movement and arguments over a unified civil code, they also investigate the growth of Hindu nationalism and how it affected India's secular government.

Failure of the State:

The Indian government's efforts to bring together culturally diverse segments of the population have drawn criticism from many quarters. "It is important to realise how the myriad diversities in India have been undermined and their interests stifled for the sake of unity at the centre," Adding that just talking about a crisis of governance is insufficient. Despite the state's claims to be protecting all citizens, it really benefited urban elites, exacerbating existing inequalities.

Atul Kohli said that West Bengal stands out as an exception to this state failure. An ideological commitment to excluding the propertied classes from state governance, a pragmatic attitude towards entrepreneurial classes that pose no threat to political authorities, and a centralised and decentralised apparatus for party and political organisation are the defining features of this administration.

With many demonstrations taking place against various government programs, the legitimacy of the government became an important subject that needed answering. "The question of legitimacy became a very important area of investigation due to the changing political scenario of India in recent decades, particularly after 1975" (Gupta, 1996). It was only logical that political sociologists concerned with the legitimacy of the governing party would pay heed to such sentiments of anti-government. The 1975 declaration of emergency by then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was a watershed event that quickly transformed a lawful governing party or ruler into an illegitimate one. In this contemporary political climate, the authoritarian inclinations of the governing elite and the frailty of state institutions were laid bare by the Emergency. Even if we are in the midst of a dark moment in Indian politics, it is worth remembering that the Congress was defeated in the elections and the Constitution was altered to prevent future governments from imposing emergency rule. Unrest persisted even after the government changed hands during the Emergency period. Various forms of protest and movement must be considered in order to have a full view of India's political climate.

Modern problems with Indian government administration are studied by political sociologists using this paradigm. Some have linked the state's inability to provide development to underprivileged populations in central India to the Maoist insurgency,

which is one of the topics they investigate. They look at examples of good government, like Kerala's reaction to the COVID-19 outbreak, to figure out what makes governmental involvement work.

Ethnic Movements:

Ethnic movements have occurred often in Indian politics, which has piqued the interest of many political sociologists working in the country. In this case, it's crucial to examine the definition of ethnicity. T. K. Oommen posits that the severing of ties between a people's culture and their physical location gives birth to ethnicity. A path to equality and a resolution to the ethnic problems, in his view, is citizenship. Ethnic migrations are likely to continue occurring in India due to the country's rich cultural diversity. When there is ethnic friction, it's because one group is trying to make another group feel like they don't belong in their community.

Ethnic conflicts in modern India are studied by political sociologists using these themes. They look at campaigns for language rights, including the ones who want Marathi and Kannada recognised as classical languages. Also covered are identity-based politics in the Northeast, with topics like Assam's National Register of Citizens (NRC) and its effects on racial tensions being studied.

Regional, linguistic, and nativist movements:

Many doubted India's potential for national achievement due to the country's diverse population. The Partition, to some extent, validated this uncertainty. Nevertheless, there were a few bright spots in the years after Partition. Tolerance increased on both the part of the state and its citizens. The era immediately after independence was characterised by three distinct movements, according to Dipankar Gupta. Two types of social movements emerged: linguistic and nativist. Additionally, there were regional movements.

A number of linguistic organisations in the 1950s called for a reorganisation of the states according to language. The State Reorganisation Commission was established as a result, and states were later created according to language. "These demands were finally put to rest in the 1950s with the accession of unilingual provinces with the State Reorganisation Commission, with the exception of Punjab, where the matter was finally settled in 1966".

A number of nativist groups emerged in India during the '60s and '70s. This was done by the indigenous, sometimes known as the "sons of the soil," who wanted to ensure that individuals of other language groups didn't interfere with their local economy and that they got economic advantages instead. The Shiv Sena movement, which fiercely opposes the influx of immigrants from other states into Maharashtra, is a prime illustration of this phenomenon. Members of the Shiv Sena, which BalThackeray established on June 19, 1966, blame non-Marathis for seizing chances that

they believe are rightfully theirs. After a linguistic reorganisation in 1960, the Bombay Presidency became the states of Gujarat and Maharashtra. But many individuals from the southern Indian subcontinent settled in Maharashtra, and the majority of the state's industrialists were Gujarati speakers. Against this background, the Shiv Sena movement emerged.

In the 1980s, when this stage had passed, regional movements emerged, which were intensely politicised and eventually gave rise to political parties. One example of this politicisation is the Akali Dal, followed by the DMK, etc. The regional movements opposed the federal government, in contrast to the non-national nativist and linguistic movements. These factions were more concerned with economic justice than with ethnic or cultural issues. Central government officials, according to Gupta, are making an effort to turn regional and secular problems into cultural and ethnic ones. As an example, consider Punjab in the 1980s. It was formerly believed that Sikh fundamentalists were the root of the Punjab agitation, which started with purely secular demands like Chandigarh, water redistribution, and territorial delineation. However, the movement had been ethnicized by the Centre throughout the years. The government's attitude, not cultural differences, was the real issue, in his view.

This was closely related to the Green Revolution and the agricultural crisis in Punjab. It was successful at first, but it had unsatisfactory results in the long run. The disparity between wealthy and impoverished farmers widened as a result of the rising cost of farming. Since the goal was to "build on the best," this, according to Vandana Shiva, led to the de-peasantization of the peasantry." Even the government subsidies ended up in the hands of the wealthy farmers because of how resources were distributed. Due to the lengthy and complex process of obtaining institutional credit, small farmers were compelled to seek out non-institutional loans at high interest rates, leaving them vulnerable to falling into debt traps.

Punjabi farmers began to feel victimised in the early twenty-first century, a very short time after the Green Revolution. According to Vandana Shiva, tensions arose between the federal government and the Punjab government since the former was in charge of Green Revolution policies while the latter was subordinate. According to her, the subsequent events, which included both pro- and anti-Sikh demonstrations, as well as a resurgence of Sikh cultural identity, were less of a cultural clash between Sikhs and Hindus and more of a reaction to the Green Revolution's dilution of regional autonomy and the moral and cultural standards of life in Punjab. But the Centre quickly communalised and militarised the Sikhs' fight as a religious group and as farmers.

Modern regional and language politics in India are studied by political sociologists using these ideas. Their research is on nativist movements, such as the

'insider-outsider' conflict in West Bengali politics or the resistance to Hindi imposition in the states of South India. They also look at regional parties' strategies for balancing national integration with regional ambitions, like as Odisha's BJD and Tamil Nadu's DMK.

CONCLUSION

Modernisation and its impacts on various segments of Indian society gave rise to political sociology, which emerged in the country as a consequence of its distinct socioeconomic circumstances. Political sociologists have a treasure trove of data related to the caste system and subsequent events after independence. Numerous post-independence movements were meticulously researched by political sociologists. These included nativist, ethnic, linguistic, regional, anti-reservation, and farmers' movements. Such shifts were used to evaluate the administration. Some considered these kinds of activities as a symptom of the Indian government's failure to adequately rule, while others saw them as a triumph. The 1975 declaration of emergency by Indira Gandhi was another noteworthy event. Among the many intriguing subjects for India's political sociologists was the legitimacy of her authority before to the Emergency era and its subsequent steady deterioration. It was in response to these profound changes that political sociology first emerged in India; the need and potential for such a field was clear.

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