INTRODUCTION

India has a hoary tradition of a-political culture. Its identity has been essentially cultural rather than political. It has remarkably maintained this a-political character of its culture even in the face of stormy changes in its political history. It was during the British rule that the nationalist struggle and the freedom movement provided for the first time a massive political mobilisation or a movement of unprecedented scale. Independence was the means by which the political, social and economic goals were to be realised. But the origin and inspirations of these goals were not rooted in the genius and ethos of old Indian culture. Rather, they were derived, from India's unique experience of exposure to the ideas of enlightenment and modernity under the British colonialism. Ironically, these goals and aspirations got absorbed and consolidated in the strong urges of a new emerging intelligentsia to build a modern, open, plural, prosperous and powerful India. But this was the dream which could not stir the heart and mind of a fragmented, poverty-stricken weak diffident and inward looking masses that was the core of India. As a result, Indian political development became elitist, that is by the elite, of the elite and for the elite, leaving behind its mass population in the back-waters.
This elite-mass gap of political culture in India is core concern of this study. The concept of modern political culture has been used as an instrument to measure the political cultures of various groups on the elite-mass continuum and discern, through comparison, if there exists any gap among them. Using survey research method, the study collected structured interview-data from 320 adults comprising the sub-sample groups on the elite-mass continuum in the Meerut city and the surrounding country-side during the winter season of 1990.

The data-analysis evidently shows the existence of a gap in the development of modern political culture in the elite-mass groups. Some factors in the life-space of these groups, like their increasing prosperity, exposure to modern education and mass-media and political socialisation agencies, however, are playing a positive role of bridging this gap by changing their political attitudes, perceptions and value-orientations towards modernity irrespective of elite-mass distinctions.

INDIAN POLITICAL CULTURE: A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

To understand and analyse the Indian culture and its political constituent it is not only necessary but unavoidable to go into the history as the, political culture is the product of both the collective history of a
political system and the life histories of the individuals which have constraining effects on the future political behaviour of its people. (Pye, 1965; Almond and Powell, 1966). India is no exception. Its political culture to a large extent, is based upon the preservation of certain old traditional values" (Mishra, 1980).

Therefore, to understand the problems of development of political culture in India it is advisable to go into the different periods of its history.

Political Culture in Ancient India:

The culture of ancient Indian society which contained the distinguished behaviour patterns and the way of life in which people lived and developed a rich heritage is always remembered for certain features, such as, simple living, sacrifice for the well being of others, tolerance, self abnegation, humanitarianism, compassion, ahinsa, selflessness karma, dharma, raj-dharma and so on. Such values have influenced the Indian society to a considerable degree. It is a different thing which value dominated, when of the Indian society (A.L. Basham, 1976).

But the ancient traditional culture allowed to develop a peculiar brand of political culture. When the country was divided into the small states, king was
believed to be the devine incarnation, religious texts provided the body of rules and state-craft provided a greater role of family or dynasty in state politics. According to Ashis Nandy (1970) traditional politics was s-moral ruthless, marginal to the India's self image and suffered from the absence of authoritative political centre.

There were no means of political education to the masses just as in modern times. King was not playing any role in the political development of society. Basically it was an elite politics and masses could not secure any participatory place in the system. What Rajni Kothari (1970 b) mentions is that political system of traditional India operated in a-political society which did not possess a political centre diversified through the network of benefits and obligations and it could not function politically through out its long history.

Whenever, the roots of Indian political culture are traced into its long history, it is found that a number of invaders who came from outside, over the centuries put a great influence through making India their home (B.P. Singh, 1981). Among them Moguls and the British need special mention who contributed a lot in the formation of Indian political culture.
Muslim Rule and Development of Political Culture:

The major contribution of the Muslim rule in India was the geographical unification of India, development of dominant political style, an authoritative political centre, an extensive and efficient administration for the purpose of enforcement of the law. N.D. Palmer (1976) has to say in this regards: "Indian political tradition has been for more authoritarian than democratic. At no time in her long history was India really united. Prior to 1947 those who most nearly succeeded in unifying India were foreign conquerors notably the Mogules and the British".

Apart from these changes, the arrival of Muslims in India opened the way of hatred between the Hindus and Muslims (Rajni Kothari, 1970 b) as it gave free hand to the Maulvis and Sufis for the conversion of local population. Not only conversion but unification of Indian states created a feeling of regionalism in Indian political culture which further strengthened during the British rule and in post independent India (Iqbal Narain, 1976).

Other feature of the ancient traditional Indian political system remained unchanged during the Muslim rule. The system remained as authoritarian and as elitist in nature.
as ever before. The monarch was the absolute source of power, masses played only a role of conformity with ruling authority, and caste system provided the basis of social hierarchy in politics also. Sayyeds, Sheikhs and Pathans, the three upper most elite strata of Islam dominated the ruling class in India for long time (Dhirendra K. Vajpeyi, 1979).

Throughout its long history monarchy constituted a model for the authority which penetrated the total politics down to the village level. It continues to reflect in the authoritative political behaviour of the elites in the Indian political culture even today (Pamela G. Price, 1989). Non-participatory role of the lower strata continued in Muslim rule also. They could not have any political link with the central political authority. Except the caste panchayats, the political activity of the lower caste was almost nil. This political indifference put a long term constraint on the future development of political culture of India.

British Rule and Development of Political Culture:

British rule proved very decisive in relation to the development of political culture in India. Among the invaders, it was only the British who could make substantive changes in the life of Indians as they
belonged to the nation which was politically, economically, socially and culturally, much more developed than the feudal India. Culturally they had a high sense of patriotism and politically they were living under one politically integrated regime. This is why throughout the whole history of the British conquest of India one hardly comes across Britons who betrayed the interests of British in India in contrast to the hundreds of Indians, princes, generals or merchants who went over to the British and assisted them to dominate India (A.R. Desai, 1966).

Among the changes, most significant were the administrative unification of India, creation of hierarchical grade public services and subordinate services, equality of all the Indians in the eyes of law, enforcement of law through the hierarchy of tribunals, abolition of caste based discrimination, introduction of uniform currency, new economic relations in business and agriculture, new economic institutions, industry to repair imported technical items, education to all sections of society, etc.

But being a colonial ruler, whatever changes they introduced were for the fulfilment of their own interests. Eisenstadt (1966: 110) has to say, "The colonial rulers have not attempted to foster parallel changes within the
broader strata of the society, especially at the local level, i.e. the level of the village, community, or tribal unit." They developed new institutions in every sphere of social life and provided modern technical education to some of Indians. Christian Missionaries also provided support for it. This process generated a middle class in India which was highly educated, English speaking, engaged in different professions, such as, journalists, doctors, lawyers, engineers etc. Urban based, western in ideology with liberal attitude, dipped in British culture, composed of high castes such as, Brahmans, Kayasthas, Parsis, Banias and other Muslim upper castes, educated in well known Western Universities, engaged in creative political and social discourse through the mass media (Y. Singh, 1973).

This group of intelligentsia possessed some qualities of modern political culture and began to spread it to others which was reflected through their nationalistic behaviour, participation in freedom movement, activities of social reform, demand of representation in politics and administration (M. Venkatarangaiya, 1966).

But larger Indian masses were deprived of these qualities of modern political culture. Infact India
remained a society where common man lived in the peaceful conditions, without any feeling of dissatisfaction towards the political system, even without any relation with the political authority. They looked up to their immediate masters in the person of 'Zamindars' appointed for the collection of revenue. Such questions, as the constitution of the political authority, legitimacy of power, the obligation of obedience to the law and directives of the rulers, did not bother the common man (S.D. Singh, 1980). In this regard the mention of D.S. Chandran (1966) seems to be very relevant, "Dynasties came to power and perished, empires rose and fell, yet the common man was blissfully indifferent to, and even ignorant of, all the kaleidoscopic changes."

To sum up, the foregoing description of the state of politics strongly suggests that the fragmentation of political culture on elite-mass basis has roots deep into the Indian history.

Post - Independence Era and Development of Political Culture in India:

Independence opened new vistas for the development of Indian political culture. Political leaders who founded modern India introduced new socio-economic and
political changes, such as, universal adult franchise, federal politics, secular constitution of Anglo-American type and totally Western in idiom and ethos with the guarantee of fundamental rights to its citizens, introduction of panchayati raj, community development schemes, the constitutional provisions including the upliftment of depressed classes, legal abolition of untouchability, spread of education, emergence of political parties, spread of mass-media to encourage the people to participate in politics and democracy which is based on representation can function for the political upliftment of masses.

Analysing such changes in Indian society, specifically in terms of the development of political culture, after more than four decades it is an uphill task cannot be done without the help of studies and observations of political scientists. In the words of S.D. Singh (1980) "Majority of the Indian population gives little meaning to them and their life continue in much the same way as before." N.D. Palmer (1976) mentions explicitly, India is still bedeviled by local and regional loyalties. There is still little sense of national unity. The decentralizing tendencies in India are strengthened by
linguistic and historical differences. D.L. Sheth (1970) and B.C. Agarwal (1971) studied political behaviour of Indian electorate. They found that India has continued to utilise its traditional methods of decision making. S.K. Srivastava (1988) presents the current scene of Indian political culture which include unhealthy trends in Indian politics, such as, self before the nation, political families, snobbery, politicization of caste and religion, corruption etc. J.R. Siwach (1985) also gives an account of post independence political culture of India which include the role of religious leaders in politics, corrupt bureaucrats, judicial favouratism, misuse of political power.

The foregoing will bear out that despite the noble and lofty goals as enshrined in the Indian constitution, India has not risen to them. Its old archaic traditions and ethos still holds the psyche of its people. India has lost its sense of value and direction both individually and collectively. What India needs is not only the modern political structure for its political modernisation, but there is need of modern culture also. There cannot be a political awakening prior to cultural awakening. B.B. Khare (1974) says that it would be a folly to undermine the role
of culture and its impact on the developmental process. Man Mohan Singh (1987) quotes a Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes, who said "Without the culture of tradition we would not have the tradition of culture."

In case of India tradition of culture was its dissociation from politics as the culture and politics grew separately and autonomously, where self love shadowed the selflessness, materialism eroded the sense of sacrifice, intolerance has severely damaged the social harmony (S. Panda, 1987). In certain cases traditional culture impede the growth of participatory political culture. In India the higher castes and lower castes have to act as per the traditional theories of Dharma and Karma even today. This distinction still keeps the lower castes aloof from national politics. Elite section of the society which is much more smaller than the broader stratum of Indian mass, could not do much for the political development of the country. Therefore, elitist nature of Indian politics which is continuing with us from the traditional days and which could get support during the colonial days is also creating many major developmental problems in India. This constitute essentially the core of the problem to which this study is going to address itself.