

**A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CURRENT HISTORICAL TRENDS
AND UNDERSTANDING OF POPULAR POLITICS**

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Abstract:

Traditional academic historical studies had a fairly constrained understanding of politics. It believed that the actions taken by the government and its institutions made up politics. Politics was long seen as the exclusive preserve of the elites since they had historically entirely monopolised the government and its institutions. The elites remained the exclusive subject of the historians' research. In their investigations, the general population was entirely disregarded. The general populace was assumed to be apolitical and devoid of any political past. However, recent events have seen a considerable opposition to such beliefs. The new research asserted that the people weren't only passive recipients. However, they were shown via a number of methods as actively participating in the politics of the day. Even the conventional idea of politics was questioned. Politics are not limited to the government and its institutions, according to the new literature. However, it asserts that politics permeates every aspect of life. As a consequence, a growing number of historians started looking into the politics of the average person. Professional historical research increasingly focuses on the study of popular politics. In this essay, the researcher will attempt to comprehend popular politics by concentrating on new historiographical patterns that have emerged as a result of recent scholarly work.

Key words: -Tools, Historiography, Marginalised, Subaltern, Politics

Introduction

The traditional historians strongly believed that history should be dedicated to the investigation of politics, which was seen as the exclusive province of elites. They had strong reservations about the populist politics.

This scholarship held that most people were essentially apolitical. The academics believed that although ordinary people were not barred from politics, their politics could not be studied since they did not participate in it. Politics, they believed, belonged to the political elite.

It is possible to find evidence of the widespread scepticism regarding the likelihood of political awareness [consciousness] among the general public even in the writings of historians who wanted to enlarge our understanding of history and politics to make room for the common people. In his influential analysis of *Primitive Rebels*, Eric Hobsbawm, a pioneer of the historiographical movement known as "history from below," argued that the "traditional forms of peasant discontent" should be viewed as a "pre-political phenomenon" because the people were "virtually devoid of any explicit ideology, organisation, or programme" and lacked a "specific language in which to express their aspirations about the world."

Such scepticism, however, has never been widespread. In fact, there have been some historians who have shown interest in the widespread violent opposition during revolutionary upheavals. Michelet attempted to demonstrate the supremacy of the public over the leaders long ago in his well-known work, *History of the French Revolution*. I have brought history down, into the depths of the masses, into the impulses of the people, and I have revealed how the people led their leaders, etc., he screamed. However, radical British historians like George Rude, Edward Thompson, and Brian Manning launched a new historiographical movement known as "history from below," which led to the study of the politics of the common people receiving more serious attention after the 1950s. By doing thorough study, these historians were able to prove that the widespread protests were both ideological and political in origin. With the rise of "Subaltern Historiography" in the field of South Asian Studies in the 1980s, the study of the politics of the common people gained more momentum and really developed into a topic of professional historical research. The originator and mentor of subaltern historiography, Ranajit Guha, said in a bold opening remark that "Elitism has long dominated the historiography of Indian nationalism." This "blinkered historiography," he continued, "failed to acknowledge the subaltern as the maker of his own destiny" and thus "cannot explain Indian nationalism" because it "ignored the contribution made by the people on their own, that is independently of the elite to the making and development of this nationalism"⁶.

The elitist paradigm was characterised by the lack of populist politics, and public opposition was often seen in it as the product of top-down economic exploitation or top-down top-down

mobilisation. He believed that it was urgently necessary to correct the record by looking at history from the perspective of less-privileged groups in society, which he refers to as Subaltern Classes. Thus, the goal of the subaltern historians was to restore the common people as the focus of their own history, dispel the insulting notions that they were a brutish mass that was controlled by the elites, and abandon the teleological interpretation that they were merely a passive cog in a kind of universal historical clockwork.⁸ The popular mobilisation theory, which contends that it was the product of either economic circumstances or top-down efforts, was rejected by historians of the subaltern school of historical thinking. They argued that "subaltern politics" or "people's politics" was an independent field that "neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter."

Its independence was founded on exploitation, and its politics were hostile to the elites. The politics of the people were distinguished by their first methods of mobilisation, which were horizontal rather than vertical (based on family, region, and similarity of living circumstances), by their more impulsive nature, and by a greater use of violent action. This field had an autonomous, self-generating dynamics and was nearly entirely unaffected by elite politics. The charismatic leaders were no longer seen as the movement's driving force. Instead, it was how the public perceived such charisma that became so prominent in the study of a movement or insurrection. As a result, there was a "structural dichotomy" between the realms of elite politics and that of the subalterns, since these two spheres of Indian society existed in mental worlds that were fully independent and autonomous, but not hermetically sealed.

Its goals were to restore its own culture, to pique scientific curiosity in its own cosmos of thought and experience, and to acknowledge the historical significance of people's free and sovereign activity. In other words, it was necessary to show that there was a distinct realm of popular politics that was independent from elite politics and whose idioms, conventions, and values were derived from the experience of labour and social exploitation. The works of the subaltern historians came under fire for a variety of reasons, most notably for their unwavering position on the autonomy and differentiation of subaltern awareness and agency. However, they were successful in bringing the subaltern polity—political opinions, presumptions, and actions of the majority of the populace below the level of the ruling class—to the forefront of the field of mainstream historical research. However, in order to explain people's politics, these historians restricted their attention to solely violent upheavals.

However, it has been noted that the reliance on violent conflicts to understand the politics of the non-elite portions of the public has only given us "an episodic history of popular politics" in more recent times. When there were no riots, such a method may be of little use in examining the politics of the masses. It has been questioned if the lack of unrest during a certain time period indicated that the populace was politically unaware at the time or had entered a protracted era of political apathy. What about those who choose not to participate in the riots that really took place?

Were they politically indifferent or did they not differ from the rioters in their opinions?

As a result, in more recent times, researchers have started to focus on these concerns. Our knowledge of the nature and importance of the politics of the people has improved as a consequence of their thorough research, as have the strategies we use to try to reclaim these politics. These studies have demonstrated that there are different ways and means by which people can challenge the status quo or express their political beliefs depending on the kind of power or repression that the protesters had to deal with or the cultural context to which they belong.

In order to get insight into the politics of the common people, these studies emphasise the diversity of resistance strategies. Of course, one of the key ways that popular politics was expressed throughout the pre-modern era was via protests in the form of open rebellions. It has been noted that even though the peasant uprisings appeared to us from the outside to be more purely economic forms of protest, they were frequently fundamentally political in nature because the rebels were making statements in public about how they believed those in positions of authority should rule. Ranajit Guha has noted that the subaltern identity was political in that every specific grievance required that the established power nexus be turned on its head. He has shown that as British influence in India pervaded every level of the rural framework under which the peasant worked, the rebellions spread to social structures in which the Raj could be seen to have some decisive influence in every situation.

However, there were more ways for regular people to express their political views. Rumours are described as "mechanisms through which ordinary people could comment upon their political circumstances" by Ethan H. Shagan.

He effectively demonstrates how

“the protean character of rumours allowed individuals to express their opinions about Church and State by changing rumour’s wording or surrounding the core content of a rumour with their own gloss’ and thus that ‘every person in the chain of rumour’s transmission participated to some degree in the creation of a popular political discourse”.

Andy Woods examines and exemplifies popular politics in plebeian speech, including seditious phrases, the diverse respect and defiance dialects used by the poor, and is more often referred to as "the politics of the speech."

Alastair Bellany approaches libels from a similar vantage point, arguing that they provided a certain form of space where "dissident, marginal, and oppositional voices..... could speak without serious risk of intervention" and "made room for a politics of the excluded."

James Scott urges us to examine subversive tactics that are thought to be presenting a potent symbolic criticism of the current political order. In countries where dissent and resistance to dominant regimes were not permitted, these clandestine methods—which he has called a "weapon of the weak" or "everyday forms of peasant struggle"—formed a potent vehicle of symbolic protest.

Additionally, even the conventional understanding of politics itself is under scrutiny nowadays. According to the old viewpoint, politics was strictly defined as activity that took place in institutions of government and was engaged in by people who worked there. But many political scientists now believe that such a view of politics is overly constrictive. Adrian Leftwich has therefore claimed that:

“politics comprises all the activities of cooperation and conflict, within and between societies, whereby the human species goes about organizing the use, production and distribution of human, natural and other resources in the course of the production and reproduction of its biological social life.”

According to this perspective, politics permeates every aspect of life. As Leftwich goes on:

“politics is at the heart of all collective social activity, formal and informal, public and private, in all human groups, institutions and societies, not just some of them, and.....it always has been and always will be.”

The definition of politics has been further widened by modern feminists. Even the intimate is political to them.

Thus, this new study attempts to investigate all various ways that individuals could be observed expressing their political ideas, whether explicitly or secretly, in addition to popular demonstrations that take the shape of violent battles. Although violent resistance during popular demonstrations is seen as an essential way for people to express their political views, it is not believed to be the only way that popular politics are expressed. Therefore, it is not assumed that the lack of overtly violent opposition indicates a "general acceptance of an undesirable world order" or "common people's political indifference." Politics, according to Alastair Bellany, "takes on a greater variety of forms" and occurs "in a greater variety of sites" than is typically acknowledged, and he emphasises the importance of investigating politics in symbols and ceremonies, on hearses and on corpses, at the ends of ropes and on knife points, in churches and on church doors, in words and in images, on walls and on paper, in print and on script, indoors and outdoors, among the elites and among the general public.

These realisations liberate us from the episodic method of studying the politics of the lower classes.

Conclusion

We can see from the in-depth discussion above that there has recently been a paradigm change in the field of history with relation to how it views popular politics. Popular politics have expanded our knowledge of politics, as well as being a respected topic of historical research. The average person is no longer seen as being apolitical; instead, they have their own politics. This has been excellently demonstrated by contemporary historiography via their diligent investigation. Theoretical contributions from modern history have been useful for understanding the political attitudes and behaviours of the vast majority of people living below the ruling elite.

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