CULTURAL AND POLITICAL TRADITIONS IN ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL INDIA

CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMME
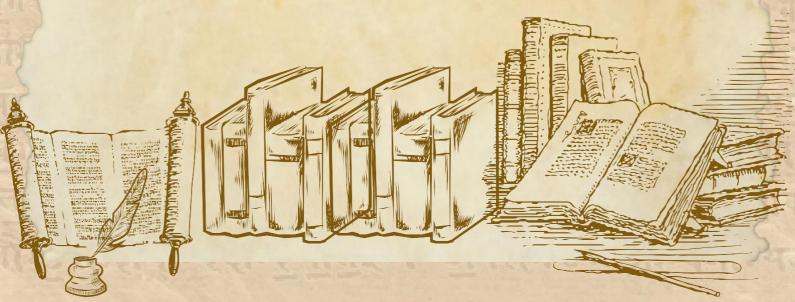
(EQUIVALENT TO A REFRESHER COURSE)

Organised by:
India Foundation
in academic collaboration with
**Centre For Professional Development in Higher Education
UGC, Malaviya Mission Teacher Training Centre, University of Delhi
and Indian Council For Social Science Research**

CONCEPT NOTE

Indian Political thought has leFt a deep impact upon the pages oF history laying the Foundation oF the Indian ideas oF 'State' and 'Kingship.' The Eurocentric understanding so Far has had a minimal reFerence to contributions From non-Western views From the Global South. A thorough understanding oF the traditions in the Indian political thought becomes necessary For a comprehensive analysis oF the concept oF 'StatecraFt' and 'Kingship' which is based on the historical development oF the dominant tendencies in the classical and medieval thought in India. The sources oF ancient and medieval Indian political thought as represented in the extensive literature on Dharmashastras, Arthashashtra, Nitishastras, have conceived political liFe within the Framework oF Dharma and Dand as important constituent oF StatecraFt. Dharma has also been the basis oF personal and social liFe in ancient India.

The Manusmriti, one oF the most authoritative texts in the Brahminical tradition prescribes rules and obligations For the King – rajdharma – and laws related to civil matters. The purpose oF these rigid social rules and boundaries is to preserve dharma – the social order marked by hierarchical varna system. The Shantiparva oF Mahabharata, a discourse on statecraFt conveyed by Bhishma to Yudhishthira, largely describes the Functions, duties oF a good king and the importance oF a welFare state. Furthermore, Kautilya's Arthashastra has been regarded as a primer For good rule by the King and a manual oF statecraFt.

In contrast to the aForesaid treatises, the Shramanic tradition based on Buddhist and Jain literatures have perceived the value oF a moral liFe in terms oF the theory oF Karma. Challenging the hereditary nature oF Varna ashram dharma, they believed in Karma which binds the soul and accordingly embody it in diFFerent incarnations in a cycle oF birth and rebirth. Giving reFerence to the origin and evolutionary nature oF state, Aggana Sutta oF Digha Nikaya challenges the Vedic ideas on divine creation oF the social order, while suggesting that the division oF people in society is based upon need and convenience rather than any hierarchical division.

The capacity building programme reFlects the diversity oF Indian political traditions by diversiFying its Focus beyond North-West India and the Gangetic Plains to the evolution oF these traditions in the South, North-Eastern India, and Jammu and Kashmir. The reFlections oF the thinkers From southern India have been a signiFicant Feature oF dominant Indian political tradition. In this regard, a masterpiece oF Tamil literature, one oF the highest and purest expressions oF human thought written by Thiruvalluvar - the most celebrated poet in Tamil Nadu who wrote Thirukkural in the Form oF couplets, a highly regarded ethical work in Tamil literature is considered as prima Facie evidence oF intellectual tradition oF Tamil society. As an ancient non-religious literature Thirukkural guides society For better living and good governance based on principles oF ethics and morality. It is also worth mentioning here, the contributions oF Basavanna oF Karnataka, a social reFormer who responded to social problems oF the time.

In the context oF the social changes and religious awakening in modern India, the vachans oF Basavanna acquires a special signiFicance. Philosophy oF Advaita based on the commentaries and independent works oF Adi Shankaracharya has also created an indelible impact on the generations to come. Srimanta Shankaradeva's contribution to the Bhakti Movement in Assam and its art and literature leFt a deep imprint on the culture and structure oF Assamese society. Lalla Yogeshwari, popularly known as Lal Ded, bridged the gap between Shaivism and SuFism in 14th century-Kashmir; she is still revered in popular memory and culture For her vaakh, that explore themes in spirituality and selF- realisation.

The spiritual and intellectual quest oF women philosophers in ancient India is embodied by Gargi and Maitreyi through their rich discourses on atman and brahmana in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad; instances oF Feminism can be extracted From the two great epics—the Ramayana and Mahabharata—in the personalities oF Sita and Draupadi.

The dominant trend in the Islamic political thought oF medieval India has been reFlected in the writings oF Ziauddin Barani and Abul Fazal in Fatawa-e-Jahandari and Ain-I- Akbari respectively dealing with the nuances oF governance. The Medieval India also witnessed emergence oF Bhakti movement, which was not only syncretic but had a strong Focus on love and devotion to God. The syncretism oF the SuFi and Bhakti movement later became abridge between Hinduism and Islam, harmonising elements oF both Faiths. It did not conFine itselF to the religious domain and had a much larger inFluence on society, Kabir being one oF the leading lights oF this movement. Guru Nanak's syncretic mindset also attempted to Fuse the tenets oF Hinduism and Islam to serve as a guide For all humanity.

Given this rich and diverse tradition oF classical Indian political thought having its roots in ancient and medieval India, India Foundation proposes to organise a Capacity Building Programme in collaboration with the Centre For ProFessional Development in Higher Education (CPDHE), UGC, Malviya Mission Teacher Training Centre (MMTTC), University oF Delhi and the Indian Council For Social Science Research (ICSSR). The Programme will Focus on major cultural and political traditions in ancient and medieval India by experts in their respective domains.

The programme will primarily Focus on the themes and thinkers as mentioned below:

CURRICULUM

1. Introduction to Cultural and Political Traditions in Ancient and Medieval India
2. Research Methodology and Use oF E-Library in Research
3. Academic Writing
4. Political Thought oF Manu
5. Political Thought oF Shukracharya
6. Gargi's Philosophical Views
7. Maitreyi's Wisdom & Contribution
8. Sita and Draupadi as Feminist Icons
9. Political Thought oF Brihaspati
10. Bhishma on Rajdharma
11. Political Thought oF Kautilya
12. Buddhist Political Thought
13. Jain Political Thought
14. Shankaracharya's Philosophy
15. Political Philosophy oF Thiruvalluvar
16. Basavanna
17. Sankaradev
18. Lalla Yogishwari
19. Ziauddin Barani
20. Abul Fazal
21. SuFi Traditions
22. Kabir
23. Guru Nanak
24. Ravidas

DURATION
2 Weeks / 12 Days / 36 Sessions

OBJECTIVES

The capacity building programme provides an overview oF the Indian Political Tradition From an Indic perspective by Focusing on the Following objectives:

- To introduce participants to the Fundamental concepts and ideas in ancient and medieval Indian political thought.
- To provide a comprehensive understanding oF the historical and cultural contexts that shaped political ideas in ancient and medieval India.
- To develop the ability to critically analyse and compare various political concepts and practices From diFFerent time periods.
- To explore the key philosophical traditions and their contributions to political thought in ancient and medieval India.
- To examine the inFluence oF ancient and medieval Indian political thought on contemporary political ideas and practices.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This capacity building programme will not only provide participants with a deep understanding oF ancient and medieval Indian political thought but also develop critical thinking, research skills, and the ability to apply historical ideas to contemporary political issues. By the end oF the programme, participants will be able to:

- Develop an understanding oF key concepts and theories in ancient and medieval Indian political thought.
- Analyse the historical context and development oF political ideas in ancient and medieval India.
- Critically evaluate and compare diFFerent political concepts and practices From ancient and medieval India.
- Gain insights into the major philosophical traditions and their contributions to political thought.
- Assess the relevance and inFluence oF ancient and medieval Indian political thought on modern political theories and practices.
- Conduct independent research on speciFic topics related to ancient and medieval Indian political thought.

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

This capacity building programme would create an engaging, interactive and holistic learning environment through Following assessment tools:

- Presentation
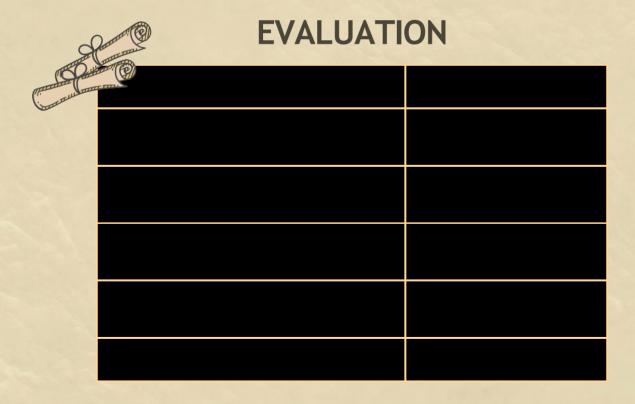- Participation
- Term Paper
- Final Test/Quiz

PEDAGOGY

The Following pedagogical approaches will be used For this capacity building programme:

- Structured Lectures
- Multimedia tools (slides/documentaries)
- Discussion on assigned readings

EVALUATION

DAYS & TIME:
17 - 29 March 2025
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

VENUE:
India Foundation, Core 4-B, 4th Floor,
India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi