

**Political Ideologies**  
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**Worked examples**  
**Lecture 07**  
**26:54**

Well, we've done a good deal on conservatism and on empirical evidence of conservative attitudes, survey evidence of conservative attitudes in India. We've also looked at the theoretical conceptual issues that conservatism raises and the internal problems it faces. We need to evaluate the kinds of things that we've looked at, particularly the two empirical surveys that we've just summarised.

Here again are the links; we've looked at the first two, this one here, that is the Chhibber and others Chhibber (Chhibber et al.) paper, and we've looked at the CSDS and Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung paper. But we are going to try and evaluate the kinds of things they have said.

If we regard those as our main texts for this part of the subject, well, these other four will help us to evaluate them. Well, the first thing we are going to look at is this one, and we will see what we've been told by way of evaluation for this one. Let us have a look oh right. Now I have got the wrong screen now.

Well, here's one item, a short paper from some years ago. It is - the net gives it as 2019, but it was published in 2009. A short paper by Rajesh Kasturirangan, and what does he say? Well, he does recognise the term conservative is a bit of a curse word, almost a swear word, in progressive circles. He says wherever we say conservative, the word conjures up the image of old, predominantly white, men, smoking cigars in dimly lit rooms and conspiring to keep everyone else out of power, keep them from threatening the old white men's position and authority.

And he says, well, our understanding of the world is essentially ideological. But conservatism means different things in different places. For example, in the United States, conservatism, well, what does that mean there? He does say, a person who believes in capitalism, who gives priority to business interests over labour. More recently, of course, you will be familiar with this. The new Christian Right in the United States are morally and politically very conservative, and are a powerful political force. They hold certain kinds of Christian beliefs and hold them very strongly indeed, even rigidly.

In China, conservatism might be the exact opposite. Someone who believes in total state control, that is, the existing system, and is also an atheist. China as a communist state is an atheistic state. Indian conservatives, well, we may think of RSS pracharaks, so VHP activists seem to be a combination of the American and Chinese models.

Indian conservatives, as we know, seem to hark back to a vision of Indian religious identity, whatever that is, and are sceptical of big business, although as Kasturirangan says the political party most closely associated with them is not exactly averse to big business; he himself says, 'not so squeamish about corporate money'. But this means that conservatism is not a uniform concept.

Well, he says. nevertheless there is a correlation between ideology and nation-state formation in the 20th century. And that means that terms like conservatism, fundamentalism, liberalism, are not very widespread. But we use them in very different ways. He identifies, Kasturirangan identifies, psychological conservatism as one form. And he says the political, the ideological sense of the term conservatism has concealed an older psychological meaning of conservatism. And that is more about a way of living; We've seen that already.

Psychological conservatism is suspicious of radical change, suspicious about the overthrow of tradition, favours deliberation and argument and dialogue over violent revolution. It is a mental outlook, a mental attitude. That would mean then that Barack Obama would be a conservative and George W. Bush a radical. Surprising, well, perhaps we should not be surprised.

In India, for example, the Gandhian movement was conservative, which is one reason Indian communists were extremely suspicious and very hard on it, very critical of it. Because they thought, Gandhianism meant in effect being in the pay of the capitalists and the imperialists. Ambedkar of course, was very hard on Gandhian attitudes, because he considered they were not sensitive enough to caste discrimination and the causes, to casteism, to caste relations.

But Kasturirangan says psychological conservatism has its advantages. It's based, as he says, on what he thinks is a fairly realistic account of the human animal. Notice how this theory of human nature reappears in conservatism as an outlook. It always figures in there. Well, according to Kasturirangan visionaries that might have social utopias in their imagination, but human nature is, as he says, less plastic; it cannot be moulded that easily.

We may not be as fixed in our behaviour as nematode worms. But we are nowhere near as he says the kind of intellectual souls that, create infinite - I beg your pardon, I will say that

again. We may not be as fixed as nematode worms in our behaviour or our instincts. But we are nowhere near, as he says, as Kasturirangan says, infinitely creative souls, as intellectuals, poets, and prophets might want us to be.

So, well yes, individuals may have a tendency to psychological conservatism. How does that translate to the state? Kasturirangan reminds us that Gandhi and Socrates were both killed by radicals, by people who preferred violent prophecy over due process. Violent prophecy in the case of the death of Socrates, perhaps - he was some put to death for apparently allegedly corrupting the youth of the state. He was in his own way, a revolutionary.

But what about the connection between the state and the individual? Well, according to Kasturirangan, the very idea of development is, he says, a wolf in sheep's clothing; it is development that means radical change in - certainly in India, perhaps elsewhere in the developing world.

For example, the idea of development where we think of huge dams, the displacement of millions of people, mighty cities being built up, huge motorways, and so on, all apparently in the name of progress - that is a radical vision of social change, indeed perhaps also of techno-driven or techno-political change.

And therefore he says the Indian state, Kasturirangan says the Indian state is far more radical than we often think it is. But where does the conservatism come in? According to Kasturirangan, for the first few decades after independence, the Indian middle classes were small and small in number I presume, and psychologically conservative. Yes, they did not want rapid or radical change in their lives. But by the end of the 20th century, they'd internalised the radicalism of the state and had become according to Kasturirangan, all developmentalists.

But, he sees Manmohan Singh and Modi as both bearers of developmentalism of this kind. As he says the technocrat is a radical with an innocent demeanour, a deadly combination. We'll meet this one when do technocracy and managerialism in a later topic, but well, yes, Kasturirangan sees that to be labelled anti-development is to be labelled a political pariah, pariah in Indian languages.

But he says everyone wants instantaneous change, well, that's radical. But if the nation is too poor and too large to change quickly, and - he could have added has the attitudes which make rapid change difficult - and those who have the money and the power are enclosing themselves in little enclaves, where they can bring about all the change, they require.

Radicalism, as Kasturirangan says, is leading to the destruction of the commons, the commons, the shared space.

Now, he says, well, radicalism not work for India. A psychological conservative is always suspicious of revolutions. And that could be that the conservative has identified something important about humanity, radical change? Well, as he says, no matter in what cause, has caused much more harm than the evil it is sought to eradicate.

So Kasturirangan argues that the conservative has identified something important about humanity. And one of the things that conservative has identified is that very radical, very rapid change is enormously destructive, and leads to all manner of evils, almost invariably. Okay, that's the paper by Kasturirangan.

We are going to look at another one. We will summarise another one, here it is I'll see if I can bring it up for you. Well, this is a relatively recent item - December 2018, in a journal called the diplomat by somebody called Krzysztof Iwanek. I take it that the name is Polish, I understand he's Polish.

But he is asking the question - is India's ruling BJP becoming more conservative? What's his evidence? This is written before the parliamentary elections in India at the beginning of 2019. And of course, it was a parliamentary election, as we know, April, May to April, April 2019, May 2019.

But - four months before the parliamentary election, Iwanek raises the, raises the question well, he says the parliamentary elections in India are some time away. But a very visible issue that the ruling party is raising is defending a temple from women. You will be familiar with the Sabarimala temple issue. And what is happening here is that the government of the day defended the right of the temple's authorities, the temple authorities, to refuse admission to women in a particular age group, I think it was between the ages of 10 and 50.

Now, is this a conservative attitude? Can the party be called, can the ruling party be considered conservative? Or is this a smokescreen, a mask as he says, for the sake of the forthcoming election campaign? Well, this means We've got to look at conservatism not only in the party but in Indian society. Here we are; Iwanek refers to work by Swapan Dasgupta, a self-declared conservative, someone close to the party, an academic, a perfectly respectable academic.

And he once refined, defined I beg your pardon, defined Indian conservatism as five points. Let us have a look at these five points. The first, the preference of community wisdom over individual choice. The second, the importance that attached to the sacred in maintaining life.

The third, the authority of the state must be circumscribed, must be limited by the will of society. Therefore, conservatism is inherently suspicious of states, state-sponsored cultural engineering. The fourth, importance of character and self-control. The fifth - conservatism sees itself as the embodiment of the national identity.

Now, Dasgupta made these points in 2015 in a speech in London, I think it was King's College London, and the text is available. But can we see these points? According to Iwanek, can we see these points in the BJP's narrative? Well, Hindu religious traditions, bedrock of the, bedrock of the party's ideology. It's defended the Sebrimala temple, the authorities in the Sebrimala temple, it's pledged once again to construct a temple devoted to Rama at Ayodhya.

It's initiated a project to revive the mythical/ancient Saraswati river. And it's given a chief ministership to a religious leader. I presume Iwanek refers to Yogi Adityanth. Well, yes the point fits the Sabarimala case. But according to Iwanek, only if the community involved is a traditional Hindu one. The same applies to his third point, if the authority of the state should be limited by the will of society, then it has to be assumed that the society mainly represents traditional Hindus, not just any old Hindus, but traditional ones.

When the Supreme Court ruled on Sabarimala. Well, and part of the BJP reacted against the judgement, to organise protests, as we know, well that, according to Iwanek, is an example of conservatism resisting progressivism. But these are, as he himself says, Iwanek himself says relatively easy examples, there is another one, the ending of the triple Talaq custom, and that was done by a Supreme Court ruling on this point, the ruling party, the BJP, agreed with the Supreme Court.

But - conservatives among Indian Muslims regarded this as a part of their traditional religion or traditional part of their religion. In the same way as the Hindu conservatives thought the exclusion of women in a certain age range was a traditional thing to be preserved over the Sabarimala temple. Now Iwanek says if a government can force open the gates of a temple, or ban a traditional form of divorce, well, are those not forms of state-sponsored or at least state-approved cultural engineering. In other words, Iwanek is raising questions about the extent and nature of conservatism within India's ruling party, and showing that its commitment to conservatism in different issues appears to be contradictory. It could be that the contradiction is resolved, if we accept that the party itself is moving in more conservative directions, irrespective of the issues - and irrespective of contradictions between the issues.

Well, that is exactly what he says; do we have to conclude that the BJP represents Hindu religious customs, not Muslim ones? But well, when the BJP, as he says, as Iwanek says,

was calling for an end to the triple Talaq system. It's been doing that for years by the way. At that time, it resorted to progressive ideas, gender equality, women's rights, women's empowerment. We have seen that with an earlier issue that Howard Erdmann talked about, where conservative political movements in India used the language of social democracy, broadly progressive social attitudes, in order to resist land reform legislation in Parliament.

So, we may say, of course, this is just party politicking. But what about the caste system? Well, the BJP shares this with a lot of other Indian political parties, in not initiating any major reform that would counter, undermine, or even abolish the caste system. And well, yes, the party does continue to try and reach towards the lower caste for votes, most certainly so, and we're very familiar with that.

But the upshot, the problem here really is that nationalism seems to require conservatism - and that is what leads to contradictions in or apparent contradictions in the attitude taken by India's current ruling party, the party of government, the BJP, over different issues. Does that then mean we have to see it as a conservative party? First and foremost, because that is the only way to reconcile the contradictions in its specific policy positions, and, for example, its apparent abdication of any serious attempt to put an end to the caste system.

So that's, very roughly, Iwanek's conclusion - that the BJP has to be - Well, he raises the question whether the BJP is, is conservative, or if it is anything else. That's Iwanek's argument. We're going to look at another one, here we are. This is a report in the *Huffington Post* on the recent survey that we have already covered. This is by S Rukmini, published 2017 in the *Huffington Post* post for the fourth of April. It summarises the survey published by the CSDS and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung; we will have a brief look at this.

This is just a very brief summary, the headline, young Indians conservative, opposed to homosexuality, like to get married within their caste, want a government job. We are familiar with these findings - just cover them very briefly, quite simply, the survey shows that support for among young people is low for what we might call progressive issues. More young people support banning movies which hurt religious sentiments than oppose the ban, more support the death penalty than oppose it; more disagree, right - a majority disagree that the consumption of beef is a personal choice.

Now these attitudes do vary by religion, and the findings are published. Nearly 80 percent, we have seen, 78 percent say they pray quite often, nearly half watch religious shows on television, 45 percent, observe religious fasts. A majority also believe that, 47 percent believe, that religion should take precedence over science. Marriage and sexuality, we have

seen where young people, the people between 15 and 34 in the survey, were really fairly conservative, we have seen that.

But here is the figure - 65 percent would like a government job. We, I got the figure wrong earlier, the figures is 65 percent, just 2 percent out of this age actually have government jobs 65 percent would like them. So there we are well, that is a brief summary and of course the headline focused on attitudes to sex, because those are always eye-catching headlines for any newspaper editor, we shouldn't be surprised that is in the Indian press, no surprise.

What about the final item for us to look at here? This is from the *Economist*, a very long-standing, highly respected, explicitly conservative journal, published in London - it is a British journal and here's its editorial, the fourth of July 2019. I will see if I can call it up, it may not let us in but I'll give you a brief summary. Right - the editorial is called 'A global crisis in conservatism' - or 'The global crisis, I beg your pardon. 'The global crisis in conservatism', the *Economist*, fourth July 2019, quite recent.

[Start with by quotation starts with a,] It starts with a quotation from Vladimir Putin, Russia's President, who's declared the liberal idea obsolete. The *Financial Times* and the *Economist* disagree; the *Economist* certainly disagrees. It says the idea most under threat in the west is not liberalism, but conservatism, and it says you do not have to be a conservative to find that idea rather worrying.

In two-party systems like the US and broadly speaking Britain, the right is in power, but the economist says the right has jettisoned the values that used to define it. The centre-right is being eroded in many countries, in Germany and Spain; it's being eviscerated - which is much nastier - in France and Italy, the centre right and in other places like Hungary, which according to the *Economist* has a shorter democratic tradition from the end of the communist system in Europe in 1990, around those years. According to the *Economist* the right has gone straight to populism without even trying conservatism.

Now, the *Economist* goes on to say, well, this is not a good thing. The *Economist* supports, generally supports, conservative virtues - a measured response to change, cautious evaluation before the abandonment of a tradition or discarding a tradition. Certainly opposition to wholesale change in society; as conservatives often say, the cure is often worse than the disease. So that is, that concludes our analysis of conservatism. We've done the major theoretical elements with examples. We've looked at what is involved in being a conservative, We've looked at the major, some of the major writings in conservatism.

We've looked at the specific attitudes a conservative would have, or could be expected to have. We've looked at the problems and we've looked at very serious problems in conservatism. We've then gone on to look at examples, survey examples of conservative attitudes in Indian society, whether in politics or in society and we've concluded with broadly supportive analyses which conclude first that India is deeply conservative and secondly, that Indias ruling party is moving in more conservative directions, irrespective of contradictory directions. It has to take in political action in order to reinforce its conservative attitudes.

And we've rounded up, we've wound up by looking at a major conservative journal, which considers that or seems to consider that the greatest threat to conservatism exists, it's global, and that it's coming from the far right, from right wing populism in effect. So that winds up our topic of conservatism. We shall move on to liberalism and that's our next topic, topic three.