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**IMPACT OF CULTURE ON PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIES  
OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC**

# IMPACT OF CULTURE ON THE PARLIAMENT LIBRARY IN INDIA

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## I. CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS

### Culture - A Working Definition

The word 'Culture' encompasses a very wide area. It reflects the total image of a community and its environment. 'Culture' could be interpreted as a complex pattern formed by traditions, values, customs, norms, beliefs, habits, philosophy of life, language of communication, knowledge, literature, dance, music, art, architecture, etc. of a group of people forming a composite community, establishing a common cultural identity, very much influenced by the natural surroundings.

The foundation of 'cultural identity' is laid by three fundamental factors - thought, expression and communication. Philosophy, religion, politics, economics, science, etc. are the manifestations of thought. Its expressions are represented by various forms of art, craft, architecture and technology. Language and literature are the vehicles for communication.

### An overview of the Indian culture

India is one of the oldest civilizations with a kaleidoscopic variety and rich cultural heritage. The pattern of life which developed five thousand years ago has flourished with the passage of time.

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India is the seventh largest country in the world, covering an area of about 32,87,263 sq. kms., inhabited by 846.3 million\* people, constituting the second largest population. It is home of many religions, faiths cults and philosophies. It presents a great diversity not only in topography and climatic conditions, but also in regional cultures, food habits, customs, costumes, languages and socio-economic conditions. Efforts of numerous generations of Indians to transform external diversities into an inner harmony have helped in the evolution of a composite culture.

Some of the distinctive features of Indian culture are: (a) deep faith in and reverence for matters spiritual; (b) the spirit of tolerance and coexistence; (c) faith in the utility and principles of ethical conduct; and (d) the spirit of altruism. A rich variety of visual and performing arts and crafts has flourished in India since ancient times along with literature in many Indian languages.

### Institutions

The Department of Culture of the Ministry of Human Resource Development plays a pivotal role in the preservation, promotion and dissemination of art and culture. A comprehensive network of institutions- and academies exists to preserve and promote various aspects of our cultural life. Some of these are: the National Museum; the National Gallery of Modern Art; the National Archives of India; the Archaeological Survey of India (it looks after 3593 centrally protected monuments); and the Anthropological Survey of India.

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- \* 1. Figure as per the 1991 census. About seventy-five per cent of the people live in rural areas.
2. According to a study of the census of 816.2 million people, 82.41 per cent are Hindus, 11.67 per cent Muslims, 2.32 per cent Christians, 1.99 per cent Sikhs, 0.77 per cent Buddhists, 0.41 per cent Jains and 0.43 per cent others.

## Legal Foundations of Culture

### Constitutional Provisions

The Preamble to the Constitution of India declares that India is a 'Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic'; and seeks to secure for all citizens, inter alia, 'liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship'.

Articles 25 and 26, dealing with the Fundamental Rights of citizens guarantee for all persons the right to freedom of conscience, and free profession, practice and propagation of religion and freedom to manage religious affairs. Article 29(1) states that any section of the "citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same". Article 30(1) lays down that "all minorities whether based on religion or language, shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice". Another Fundamental Right which may be interpreted to protect culture is the right to freedom of speech and expression, enshrined in article 19(1) (a).

Article 43, one of the Directive Principles of State Policy, directs the State to secure to all workers inter alia conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life and full enjoyment of leisure and social and cultural opportunities. Another directive under article 49 imposes obligation on the State to protect every monument or place or object of artistic or historic interest declared by or under law made by Parliament to be of national importance, from spoliation, disfigurement, destruction, removal, disposal or export, as the case may be.

One of the fundamental duties of every citizen, mentioned under article 51A, is to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture. Languages constitute an integral part of

the culture of a people. The provisions in Part XVII of the Constitution seek to protect and promote Indian languages.

The Seventh Schedule to the Constitution provides for three lists - Union List; State List and Concurrent List. The Parliament and the State Legislatures can make laws on the subjects allotted to them in these lists (Articles 246-255). Subjects relating to culture have been suitably included in these lists so that the Union as well as the State Governments may be involved in this task.

### Laws on Cultural Concerns

The Parliament of India has enacted a number of laws to preserve, protect and promote the composite culture of its people. The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, was enacted in 1958 to provide for the preservation of ancient and historical monuments, etc. and for the protection of sculptures, carvings and other like objects. The Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library, Patna, was declared an institution of national importance in 1969 by an Act of Parliament. So was the Asiatic Society, Calcutta, by another Act in 1984. The Public Records Act was enacted in 1993 to provide legal cover for the responsibilities of the records creating agencies.

Some of the other Acts are: the Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act, 1954; the Official Languages Act, 1963; and the Rampur Raza Library Act, 1975.

Besides, the State Legislatures have also enacted a large number of laws on cultural concerns.

### International/Regional/Bilateral Agreements

Currently India has Cultural Agreements with 108 countries and Cultural Exchange Programmes with 73 countries.

## II PARLIAMENTARY FRAMEWORK

### Organisational Structure of Government

India, a Union of 25 States and 7 Union territories, is a democratic Republic with a parliamentary system of Government. The executive and legislative powers have been divided between the Union and the States by the Constitution.

The President of India is elected for a term of five years by an Electoral College consisting of the elected members of both Houses of Parliament and the elected members of the State Legislative Assemblies. The Vice-President of India is also elected for a term of five years by the members of an electoral college consisting of the members of both Houses of Parliament.

The Parliament of India consists of the President and the two Houses, the Lok Sabha (the House of the People) and the Rajya Sabha (the Council of States). The Rajya Sabha consists of 245 members at present. Out of these, 233 are representatives of the States and the Union territories. Twelve members are nominated by the President from amongst persons having special knowledge or practical experience in such matters as literature, science, art and social service. The Rajya Sabha is not subject to dissolution but one-third of its members retire every two years. The Vice-President of India is the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

The present strength of the Lok Sabha is 545. Out of these, 543 members are elected from single-member territorial constituencies in States and Union territories, by the people on the basis of adult suffrage in direct election. The President may nominate not more than two persons of the Anglo-Indian Community. The term of the House is five years. The House elects one of its members to be the Speaker.

The President in the exercise of his functions acts in accordance with the advice of the Council of Ministers which in fact exercises the executive power. The Council of Ministers is drawn from both the Houses of Parliament and remains part of Parliament\*. The President appoints the Prime Minister and on his advice other Ministers. The Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha. The President appoints only such a person as the Prime Minister who is likely to form the Government capable of commanding the majority support in the Lok Sabha. Therefore, the leader of the party having a majority of seats in the Lok Sabha is invited by the President to be the Prime Minister.

The Judiciary in India is an authority - co-ordinate with the Legislature and the Executive. It has the power of judicial review. The Supreme Court of India and the High Courts in States form a single integrated judiciary. The Supreme Court stands at the apex of the judicial system. At present the number of Judges of the Supreme Court, including the Chief Justice, is twenty-six. Judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President after consultation with the Chief Justice.

Broadly speaking, the structure of Government in the States follows the same pattern as of the Union Government with necessary variations.

#### Organisational Structure of the Secretariat of Parliament

If Parliament is to be supreme in its own sphere, it must be serviced by its own Secretariat, completely independent of the Executive. Article 98(1) of the Constitution of India inter alia lays down that each House of Parliament shall have a separate secretarial staff. Hence, each House of Parliament has its own Secretariat completely independent of the Executive.

\* If a person who is not a member of Parliament is made a Minister, he should become a member within six months. Otherwise, he cannot continue in office.

The Lok Sabha Secretariat is headed by a Secretary-General who is equal in rank to the Cabinet Secretary to the Government of India. The total number of officers and staff working in the Secretariat at present is about 1792 including deputationists. The Secretariat is broadly organised on functional basis into the following services: **Library and Reference, Research, Documentation and Information Service (LARRDIS); Legislative, Financial, Executive and Administrative Service; Verbatim Reporting Service and Private Secretaries and Stenographic Service; Simultaneous Interpretation Service** - simultaneous interpretation of proceedings from English into Hindi and vice-versa. Interpretations into English and Hindi are also available from certain regional languages; **Printing and Publications Service; Editorial and Translation Service**-undertakes editing of debates and translation of debates, etc. from English into Hindi and vice-versa; **Watch & Ward, Doorkeeping and Sanitation Service; Clerical Service; Messengers' Service.**

The Rajya Sabha Secretariat is also organised on functional basis into ten similar services and has a strength of about 1020 officers and staff.

The Lok Sabha Secretariat functions under the overall control and directions of the Speaker whereas the Rajya Sabha Secretariat functions under the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

#### Role of the Parliament Library in the Secretariat

The Parliament Library occupies a pivotal position in the organisational set up of the Secretariat. It is an integral part of the **Library and Reference, Research, Documentation and Information Service (LARRDIS)**. LARRDIS is presently divided into the following functional Divisions: (i) Library Division; (ii) Computer and Parliament Library Building Division; (iii) Research and Information Division; (iv) Reference Division; (v)

Parliamentary Museum and Archives; and (vi) Media and Public Relations Division. At present 243 persons (professionals non-professionals, secretarial and supporting staff) work in LARRDIS. It serves members of both the Houses of Parliament. The Library Committee, which is constituted by the Speaker, Lok Sabha every year to advise him on matters concerning the development of the Library consists of members from both Houses.

### Library Services

The Parliament Library, with the present holdings of around 1.2 million, is one of the finest and richest repositories in the country. It is also a depository library for all the unrestricted publications of the United Nations and its allied Agencies. 197 Indian and foreign newspapers and 658 periodicals in English, Hindi and Indian languages are being received regularly.

The emphasis throughout has been on the concept of building the Library into a dynamic living organism like the great institution of Parliament which it serves, capable of thinking ahead and planning new tools and services to meet the multifarious and growing needs of its special clientele. During the last several years, efforts have been made to modernise and computerise the library and information services.

### Computerization of Information Service to Members of Parliament

The Parliament Library Information System (PARLIS) made a beginning in the field of Computerised Information Service with the establishment of the Computer Centre in 1985. A large number of index-based databases of information generated within the Parliament have been developed by the Computer Centre which cater to the instant reference needs of members, officers and research and reference personnel. The data is available now in PARLIS databases for on-line retrieval.

Some components of parliamentary information have been kept on INTERNET and can be accessed under the Parliament of India Home Page, address <http://alfa.nic.in> from any where in the country through the nation-wide NICNET of NIC (National Informatics Centre).

Members of Lok Sabha have been provided with a Note-book or DeskTop Computer having fax/modem card and a printer and necessary software to help them to get instant and up-to-date information on a wide range of subjects, organise their activities,—receive/send electronic mail and have quick and accurate information on legislative and parliamentary matters on their desk.

#### Communication Linkage

A central computing facility at Parliament House has been set up and connected to the NIC's Satellite-based network known as the NICNET through a Micro Earth Station and leased lines. As NICNET is linked with capitals of all States and district headquarters of the country and the INTERNET, it is possible to interchange information with States in India and foreign Legislatures and also to access international databases, including databases of the foreign legislatures and important international organisations.

#### The Library in the legislative process

The various Wings of LARRDIS endeavour not only to keep members of Parliament well-informed of the day-to-day developments in India and abroad but also to help them in the performance of their parliamentary duties by furnishing authentic, objective and timely information.

The Research and Information Division inter alia assesses in advance the information requirements of members and prepares information material like brochures, information bulletins,

background notes, fact sheets and the like. It also brings out 8 periodicals for the use of members. Two more periodicals are brought out by the Library Division.

The Library not only acts as a storehouse of legislative records, its officers also dispose of a large number of inquiries/references by supplying information on the spot in cases where it is readily available in published sources. References which require more work are passed on to the Reference Service. In 1997, the Library attended to 21,604 spot references, whereas the Documentation Section, Press Clipping Section and Computer Center attended to 1152, 10620 and 1343 references/queries respectively, from members/officers. The Reference Wing handled 4194 references during the year.

#### Role of the Parliamentary Library in Society

The Parliament Library in India is not a Public Library. It is not open to public. It has been established for a special purpose and, therefore, is designed and organised to serve its special clientele, mainly the Houses of Parliament, Presiding Officers, Parliamentary Committees, members of Parliament and officers of the Secretariats of Parliament. But in their own ways the Library and other Divisions of the LARRDIS have been serving the society also. The Parliament Library is one of the richest and well-organised libraries in India. Many of the publications in its collections, may not be available elsewhere. With a view to helping Indian and foreign scholars and students in their research, the Library has been allowing them access to its collections for short durations during inter-session periods.

Old books and publications which are not required are offered to school libraries and other institutions so that they and their readers may benefit.

The publications and periodicals brought out by the Research and Reference Services for the use of members of

Parliament are reasonably priced and also made available for sale to public.

The Media and Public Relations Division is engaged in a whole range of activities aimed at dissemination of information to the Press and electronic media and to public at large about the Parliament. It ~~also~~ attends to requests for information from journalists and public and coordinates work relating to telecasting/broadcasting of parliamentary proceedings with the Doordarshan (official T.V. organisation) and the All India Radio.

The Parliamentary Museum and Archives organises for members of Parliament and the general public exhibitions on different themes mostly relating to the working and achievements of Parliament. In future, its records would be open for consultation to scholars.

The Computer Centre of Parliament Library has been instrumental in placing the "Parliament of India Home Page" on the World Wide Web Site of the INTERNET. The information contained in the documents of the Indian Parliament/Parliament Library, which till now existed in printed form is being converted into an electronic one so that people may access it. This has added a completely new dimension to the role of Parliament Library in society.

### III PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION OF PARLIAMENTARY LIBRARIANS

#### Developments in the education and training of Librarians

Introduction of modern technologies into various operations and activities of libraries has made a significant impact on Library and Informative Service (LIS) education. Educational curricula are being reviewed and restructured to give

exposure to students to computer applications and other facets of information technology. This of course is a welcome development.

However, there is need to groom people not only into good information professionals but also into efficient managers. The role of the librarian as a manager has been underplayed by library educators. For many middle managers in library services, the reality is that their initial professional qualification has not prepared them to perform many of the managerial activities assigned to them now. Resourcing, material procurement, inventory, human resource development, financial management, satisfying customers' needs, etc. are as relevant to a senior librarian as to any other manager. Therefore, there is a need to promote integrated M.B.A. programmes in Information and Library Management covering library science, information technology and management education.

#### Continuing professional education

While fresh entrants into parliamentary library service have good theoretical knowledge of the principles of library science, they still need to be given specialised training. First of all they have to imbibe parliamentary work culture. Speed, accuracy and sincerity in work and non-partisan approach in dealings with members have to be developed. They have to familiarise themselves with the organisation, nature and range of collections as also with the library methods in use, and acquire knowledge about the organisation, functions and rules of procedure of Parliament and its Committees. Usually this kind of training is imparted on the job by the supervisory staff.

It is necessary that staff members are given exposure to the entire range of services rendered by the Library. This entails periodic transfers from one desk to another.

More formal methods of staff development include ensuring participation in professional seminars, workshops and training programmes.

In India, the Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training of the Lok Sabha Secretariat organises training programmes for staff working in the legislative libraries. The Secretariat encourages continuous updating of knowledge and skills and approves participation of staff in relevant training courses, seminars, workshops and conferences of library associations. Senior staff members are nominated to short-term Management Development Programmes.

#### Breakthroughs in the Library Profession

The advent of information technology is slowly but certainly changing the face of the library profession. Computers, networks, electronic databases, CD-Rom, audio-video libraries, electronic publishing, micrography, reprography, Fax, E-mail, etc. are revolutionising the library services and adding tremendously to the knowledge, skills and image of the librarian. It is expected that there will be increase in collection, storage and transmission; bulk of printed materials will be reduced as more and more use of electronic databases is made. Librarians will be free from routine jobs like acquisition, cataloguing, circulation control, etc. which can be done through computers. The knowledge, skills and time thus gained could be used for acquiring specialist knowledge of information sources, providing better services to users and making library the 'heart' of the institution.

#### IV PRESERVATION OF LEGISLATIVE HERITAGE

With a view to protecting the holdings from destructive agencies e.g. heat, dust, insects etc., the Parliament Library takes all usual steps. Microfilming of publications and records has also been undertaken.

The most precious possession of the Parliament Library is the original calligraphed copy of the Constitution of India in Hindi and English as adopted by the Constituent Assembly and signed by its members. It is preserved in the most suitable environment in the Library.

The National Physical Laboratory, Delhi, and the Getty Conservation Institute of the USA devised appropriate technology for the long-term preservation of the Constitution. They developed an inert atmosphere preservation technology involving fabricated glass receptacles filled with nitrogen gas.

The Parliamentary Museum and Archives (PMA) seeks to preserve historic documents and articles connected with the Constitution and the Parliament and through them to make the history and growth of parliamentary institutions and the political system better understood. At present the PMA has three distinct Sections viz. (a) Parliamentary Museum, (b) Parliamentary Photographs and Films Section and (c) Parliamentary Archives.

The Museum seeks to show with the help of models, charts, illustrations, photographs and other visual techniques, the evolution and functioning of parliamentary institutions in India and abroad.

The Archives Section acquires and preserves the records connected with the working of parliamentary institutions and the private papers of parliamentarians.

## V PROSPECTS

### Impact of Culture on the development of Parliamentary Library

Parliament is the mirror of society. Whatever happens in society is reflected in parliamentary proceedings. Culture is an inseparable part of society and therefore cultural concerns of the people are also reflected in the debates. In large countries members themselves come from different regions, religions and backgrounds and represent cultural diversities of the society in the composition of the House.

When Parliament itself is so much influenced by culture, it is but natural that culture should have a bearing on the development of its Library also. This impact can be seen in its collections, environment, etc.

### Literature in Indian Languages

India is a multi-linguistic society. As many as 18 regional languages have been included in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution of India. Members come from different regions. Members from each region expect the Library to have a rich collection of books, etc. in their regional language and acquire atleast leading newspapers and magazines published from their State.

Therefore the Parliament Library has been laying great emphasis on developing its language collections. A separate wing containing nearly 70,000 holdings in various Indian languages has been carved out in the Library. The Library has to make special efforts to locate staff members who know these languages for transliteration of the titles, and other such work.

The Library at present receives 37 newspapers and 60 periodicals in Hindi and 91 newspapers and 69 periodicals in regional languages.

### Rare and Art Books

The Parliament Library possesses a rich collection of over a thousand rare books on art, painting, sculpture and architecture, both Indian and foreign. A separate section has been set up for these collections.

### Gandhiana

As a mark of respect to the memory of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of the Nation, and to make available all the works by and on the Mahatma at one place, a separate Gandhiana section was opened in the Parliament Library on 9 August, 1978. It contains about 2,000 books by and on Mahatma Gandhi in English, Hindi and various Indian languages. It has been furnished in keeping with the Gandhian aesthetics.

On the pattern of Gandhiana, a separate section of books on and by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has also been set up.

While laying more emphasis on the collection of publications on constitutional, legal, parliamentary and political subjects, the Library has also acquired substantial collections of other subjects including on history, culture, crafts, literature, religions and philosophy.

The Audio-Video Library has acquired audio and video cassettes of linguaphone courses in many Indian and foreign languages for the use of members of Parliament. It also has a good collection of audio cassettes of classical instrumental music and patriotic songs.

Out of 535 exhibits/items in the PMA, 183 relate to the cultural heritage of India and 69 to the cultural heritage of foreign countries.

Impact effect of culture on the Parliamentary Library -  
Sensitivity to changes

Political changes

In India where supremacy and independence of Parliament in its own sphere is enshrined in the Constitution and complete independence of the Secretariats of Parliament from the Executive is ensured, and the Secretariat of each House works under the control of its Presiding Officer, political changes do not have any adverse impact on the Parliament Library. Staff members are groomed to provide courteous and efficient service to all members, irrespective of their party affiliations.

Technological changes

With the advent of Information Technology, the traditional methods of handling information are becoming obsolete. Parliament Libraries have, therefore, to change their attitude towards information handling. Staff and users also have to change their attitude and methodology to information searching. To introduce and operationalise changes relating to information technology inter alia the following are essential: sufficient funds; manpower development (training) to attend to information technology; motivation of manpower to adjust to the changing environments; development of data bases; and networking. The 'motivation' and the 'training' of professional staff and users are the factors which may be adversely affected by general human tendency to continue with traditional methods and resist change on grounds of inconvenience in learning new skills, etc. Such tendencies, if any, have to be tackled appropriately. Parliamentary Libraries are leading institutions and cannot afford to lag behind in modernisation.

In the Parliament Library in India suitable training programmes are being organised for the staff and the users.

### New Parliament Library Building

The present accommodation available to Parliament Library in India is too limited to store the growing collections. The need for a separate library building has been felt for the past many years. It is estimated that about 14 thousand sq.m. of space will be required for stacking of about three million publications which the Library is expected to have in the next four decades or so. Therefore, a new Parliament Library Building has been planned and its construction is going on in full swing.

The new Building has been conceived in the rich Indian traditions. It would have the ethos of planning ideals from the temples of Raunakpur and Datia and the Taj Mahal.

The new Parliament Library Building would house a functionally viable library providing for an advanced and sophisticated storage and retrieval system. It would be one of the most modern libraries in the country keeping pace with the rapid developments taking place in the field of information technology.

Multi-media facilities are proposed to be provided at the reading tables in the reading rooms for members of Parliament. A Closed Circuit TV network would be provided for viewing live the proceedings of Parliament. A 'Media Centre' equipped with latest telecommunication facilities as part of the Press and Public Relations Wing; an Audio-visual Unit; a multi Media Viewing Room, a Digital Library and a Microfilm Reader cum Printer Room is also planned.

A full-fledged Conservation Laboratory/Workshop for restoring old and rare documents, with its Bindery Unit, will also be there. It is also proposed to have an Archival Room with temperature below freezing point round the clock to preserve audio/video materials, computer tapes, microfilm rolls, etc.

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