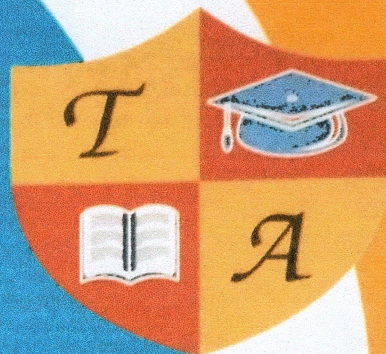


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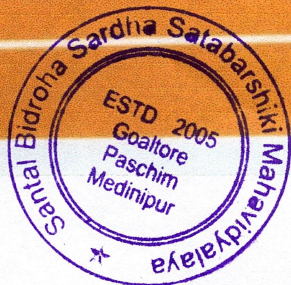
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Table of Contents

| S. No. | Author/Title | Page No. |
|--------|--|----------|
| 1 | Author: Akhilesh Mishra | |
| | Title: Anti-Terrorism Laws and Human Rights in Indian Constitution | 1-11 |
| 2 | Authors: Amit Adhikari, Dr. Amit Kumar Pandey, Dr. Santanu Biswas | |
| | Title: Revolutionizing Education in West Bengal: Enhancing Quality, Motivation, and Sustainability through Green ICT in Teaching | 12-27 |
| 3 | Author: Dr. Debanjan Das | |
| | Title: The Role of Teachers in Shaping West Bengal's Education Landscape | 28-41 |
| 4. | Authors: Dr. Amrita Dutta, Amit Adhikari, Gopal Adhikari | |
| | Title: Old Age Homes: A Challenge for Society | 42-58 |
| 5. | Authors: Chandan Mandal, Mira Mandal | |
| | Title: Policy Shifts and Pedagogical Changes: The Evolution of School Education in West Bengal | 59-70 |
| 6. | Authors: Amit Dimari, Hema Dimari | |
| | Title: A Comprehensive Review of Open-Book Examination Difficulties in the Himalayan Region | 71-83 |
| 7. | Author: Anindita Bose | |
| | Title: Rape and Trauma: its manifestation and effects in Edwidge Danticat's 'Breath, Eyes, Memory' | 84-92 |
| 8. | Author: Ankita Dhawan | |
| | Title: Electoral Trends in Himachal Pradesh: A Study of 14th Vidhan Sabha Election (2022) | 93-117 |

Page | 1



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| | | |
|-----|--|---------|
| 9. | Authors: Dr. Sumedha Vikram Khanna, Dr. Harjeet Kaur Virk | |
| | Title: Job Stress: A Study of the Employees at Eclerx Services Limited | 118-126 |
| 10. | Authors: Dr Jayanta Debnath, Smt. Payel Mondal, Shri Sushanta Deb | |
| | Title: Preventing and Mitigating Electoral Violence in India: A Special Reference to West Bengal Panchayat Election 2023 | 127-145 |
| 11. | Authors: G Kanimozhi, Dr. Sengottuvel | |
| | Title: Examining the Impact of Trust and Online Community Participation in Social Commerce | 146-160 |
| 12. | Author: Anmol Kumar | |
| | Title: Greening the Sectors: ESG Landscape Across Industries | 161-175 |
| 13. | Author: Atanu Sen | |
| | Title: An Overview of Early Marriage Status Among Females of Terracotta Artisans of Panchmura Village in West Bengal: A Socio-Demographic Studies. | 176-192 |
| 14. | Author: Dr. Rajeanlung Kahmei | |
| | Title: Primordial Religion of the Rongmei Naga Tribe of Northeast India: Continuity and Change | 193-203 |
| 15. | Author: Gaurav Sharma | |
| | Title: Digital Literacy | 204-210 |
| 16. | Authors: Dr. Harsandaldeep Kaur, Dr. Nidhi Sabharwal | |
| | Paper Title: Cause Related Marketing (CRM): A Brief Overview of Successful CRM Campaigns in India | 211-217 |
| 17. | Author: Debashis Naskar | |
| | Paper Title: The Culture of Politics in Ancient India | 218-224 |





The Culture of Politics in Ancient India

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ABSTRACT

In Ancient India, the emergence of kings, the birth and development of various political institutions took place over a long period of time. From the time of the Harrapan and Vedic Civilization to the Gupta and post-Gupta periods, Indian political culture evolved into a fully developed and sophisticated monarchical system. Although there is no clear evidence of kings and political institutions in the Harrapan civilization, Historians have acknowledged the existence of a ruling class. Perhaps first mention of the word Raja in India is found in the Rig-Veda. But then he was the leader or group leader. That leader became even more powerful in the later Vedic period. Priestly rituals, animal sacrifices and the culture of deification of the Rajpad began during this period to make the Rajpad more acceptable and powerful to the masses; which is indicative of growth of ruling power and prestige. However, even though the ruling power and prestige increased, the monarchical state structure that evolved in to the later Vedic period did not emerge. Towards the end of the Vedic period and the 6th century BC, the idea of a territorial sate system began to gain strength. Sixteen mahajanapadas emerged during the period with the help of aggressive ruling groups and efficient armies. The development of taxation and administrative organization and the emergence of law and justice also took place during this period. The throne also became hereditary. As the Indian political system was established on a firmer foundation during the reign of the mighty dynasties like Mauryas, Kushans, Guptas, etc. the culture divinity was maintained in the same way.

Introduction

Ancient Indian's contribution to the origin and evolution of Indian political thought is undeniable. The emergence of kings in ancient India, the birth of various political institutions and the emergence of



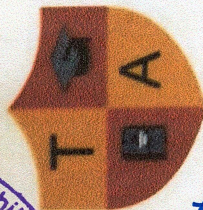
In the post-Kushan political culture of the Gupta period, the practice of taking various grandiose titles continued. Titles like Parambhattacharak, Rajadhiraj, Prithibipati etc. are undoubtedly indicative of the great prestige and power of the Gupta kings. Many of the Gupta emperors also organized Aswamedha yajna to maintain political supremacy. Like the earlier dynasties, they also maintained the culture of deification of the king. They regularly presented to the public that the king was the representative of God or equal to the Gods. Evidence of this is also found in Gupta coins of that time.

The cultural trend of imposing divinity in ancient Indian politics started from the time of Harappan or Vedic civilization and was continued during the Gupta period. This culture of imposing divinity on the rulers was able to establish the political system on a more mature and solid basis. The king became the representative of God and more powerful. As a result, people began to think of him as God's representative rather than as an ordinary person, who is worshiped and whose orders must be obeyed

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