

***Rise of Media Technologies and Emergence of a New 'Political' Popular Culture in South Asia***

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The Asian Conference on Media & Mass Communication 2015  
Official Conference Proceedings

**Abstract**

The advent of media technologies changed the whole course of communication and its dissemination. The convergent global media brought a popular culture that provided a 'third but common space' to the people of different cultures. Of late, South Asia has been observed as the crucial region for the growth in media technology use with a direct effect on the audience in terms of creating a new 'political' popular culture.

The popular culture in South Asia was observed in the socio-cultural change through adoption of cultural traits, fashion, language posed by television, films and music. Apparently, the increasing participation in media consumption and production has given a way to the change in political culture. This development is truly global in nature as it blurred the international boundaries in terms of audiences. As a result, we see a kind of 'global public' that not only participates in its own national political issues but also registers its voice in the matter of international politics. However, it is interesting to note that like 'other' culture, it is still in making and it is providing rather 'pop-up' effects, than being a real *raison d'être* of political change at large. For instance, Democratic movement in Myanmar; and the '*India Against Corruption*' Campaign. By using secondary data, the present study makes an effort to read the discourse surrounding new 'political' popular culture which is a result of the ferment in socio-political process brought by media technologies and its implications especially in the South Asian region.

Keywords: New Media, Popular Culture, Pop-up Effect, Political Change

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## **Introduction**

South Asia including India has witnessed swift changes in the socio-politico-economic fabric. One of the reasons for these changes is the advent of media technologies. Not earlier than two decades, we observed convergent and global media with the advanced media technologies together with satellite television and internet. Sailing on route through the global media, cultural traits and customs saw no boundaries. However, this cultural floating could not break the 'dominant' cultural structures within regions. Consequently, a popular culture that provided a 'third but common space' to the people of different cultures emerged amidst elite and low cultures. The growing media technologies are continuously at work of transforming the social structures hence forth. In this respect, South Asia sets an example not only in the escalating use of new media technologies but also in terms of an interesting form of popular culture. In the 'politically activated' South Asia region, the rise in media technologies is giving a way to the new 'political' popular culture.

The popular culture in South Asia came with adapted cultural traits, fashion, language posed by television, films and music. It was the change in culture socially. Apparently, there is not only a change in media itself but the nature of audience is also changing with increasing participation in media consumption and production as well. This has given way to the change in political culture. The new emerging popular culture can truly be called as 'global' since it blurs the international boundaries in terms of audience, though most of its audience has no prior 'dominant political frame' of reference. As a result we see a kind of 'global public' that not only participates in its own national political issues but also register its voice in the matter of other political regimes. A large public support through the use of media (particularly new media) to the Democratic movement in Myanmar from corners of South Asia is but one example of it.

On the basis of secondary data, evidences and observations on the recent political activities in South Asia, the present chapter highlights the interesting phenomenon of creation of a political popular culture in the region which is, like 'other' culture, still in making and providing rather 'pop-up' effects, than being a real *raison d'être* of political change at large. The implications as traced in Anna Hazare Campaign (India Against Corruption) and the campaign against Delhi gang rape case, for instance indicate how socio-political movements spring up and grow fast with communication process speeded up by media technologies. Nevertheless, they can not be sufficiently called as reaching to a true political consciousness of the people. Such movements run for short period, lead to repression, conflicts and violence and create a 'political' popular culture which is still placed somewhere else than the dominant as well as the participatory political culture.

## **New Media and Popular Culture**

Popular culture is a term which never got a concrete definition and has always been loosely defined. Scholars in cultural studies have defined the 'popular culture' in various ways based on different approaches from quantitative to qualitative. Based on the notion of 'popularity among people' the scholars (Storey, Bennett, Nachbar and Lause) quantitatively defines popular culture as '*simply culture which is widely favoured or well liked by many people*'. However, when one observes the beliefs and

practices involved as the basis of demarcation between cultures – elite and popular; high, mass and popular – one comes across various contextual descriptions of popular culture. For instance, Burke defines it as *'the culture of the non-elite'*; *"The culture which is left over after we have decided what is high culture."* (cited in Parker:2011:151)

Even after drawing certain qualitative as well as quantitative lines to define popular culture, the scholars found little consensus. Consequently, due to the cultural practices and complexities involved in differentiating between folk and popular; or, mass and mass culture, we come across a varied views on defining popular culture. From an aesthetic sense, definition of popular culture moves towards its modern technology base. This school of thought believes the technology of the new age as the real harbinger of popular culture. The popular culture, here is not only brought by TV or celebrity related fandom but by participation in *'mass production and consumption'* and John Fiske's virtue of *'resistance'*. Contrary to this, Parker (2011) views popular culture as a practice of maintaining the status quo, as he states: *"One of the most prevalent features of popular culture (both pre- and post-industrial) to which theorists point is precisely its bricolage: the reuse, refashioning, reappropriation of the acts and materials of elite culture."* (155)

However, the unclear boundaries and this *'dialectics'* (Fuchs:2014) of the popular culture as well as of the new media and its communication provide a common singular characteristic. Popular culture and new media, both have a similar character to frequently adopt *'new'*. However, the continuity of the process itself provides a consistency even when they do not possess anything for long. *"...it forces us to ignore stable and established media, even those that have perhaps not received any critical or analytical attention, and to always be looking for the next development."* (Beer, 2013, p.6)

Eventually, the popular cultural content on new and particularly social media has expanded from socio-cultural realm of arts and artifacts to the political sphere. The user-generator of the social media content is increasingly seems politically active on the internet. The social media users have been observed to talk on the issues of global politics along with the issues of their home countries. However a closer scrutiny suggests that it can not be called as pure *'public sphere'* of Jürgen Habermas (1962/1989) or *'subpolitics'* of Ulrich Beck (1997). The study of the new media content and related ideologies lead us rather towards the concept of a political popular culture that works on the central postulation of a dialectical theory of the internet based social media.

### **Conceptualizing 'Political' Popular Culture**

Extending the term *'subpolitics'* defined by Ulrich Beck as politics which is not *'governmental, parliamentary, and party politics,'* but exists in *'all the other fields of society'* (Beck, 1997,52), we can define the political activities of social media as non-politics of politics. Reason – most of the political conversation on new/social media platforms is taking place as an effort of the people to enter into the elitist class of politics and in doing so – *"gathering some people on many dispersed sites fragments the public* and results in *'a huge number of isolated issue public'*

(Habermas:2006:423) which is taking them towards a political form of popular culture rather than transforming them in a public sphere.

The recent ferments in socio-political arena of South Asian countries and their relation with the new media technologies could be seen as struggle against and for dominant order. The movements initiated on the social media platforms aim at the establishment of a democratic society and are *'based on communication commons as part of structures of commonly- owned means of production'* (Fuchs, 2001b). However, the analysis of online political activities suggests that such movements though have a common motive of 'desire for power', they lack a common ideology. Interestingly, user-activists of social media see the production, dissemination and consumption of the online content in terms of power relations but are not able to create a participatory political system enabled with decision making and implementation of the same. The creation of *'public sphere'* (Habermas), political *'participation'* (Fuchs) asks for *'transformative capacity'* (Anthony Giddens) i.e. the power/right to make and alter decisions related to the governance, structures of dominance and *'courses of events, even where others might contest such decisions'* (Giddens:1985:9).

Fuchs (2014) further sees dominant *'ideology and coercion'* as the *'forces of power in contemporary society'*, which deter people from counter-power struggle since they *'keep people occupied with struggling for survival so that they have no time, energy or thoughts for counter-power struggles'* (77). Eventually, the online political activities end up in being what Morozov (2009) calls as *'slacktivism'*. Morozov defines *'slacktivism'* as – *"feel-good online activism that has zero political or social impact. It gives those who participate in 'slacktivist' campaigns an illusion of having a meaningful impact on the world without demanding anything more than joining a facebook group"*.

In the whole process, social media also takes us towards *cultural industry*. Like popular culture which *"includes those things that require only small amounts of cultural capital to produce (dances, whether folk or raves), and also the things that require only small amounts of cultural capital to consume (movies, sports)"* (Parker: 2011), political popular culture online and offline includes those things which are easily approachable. As a result, *"The category of the internet prosumer commodity does not signify a democratization of the media towards a participatory or democratic system, but the total commodification of human creativity."* (Fuchs: 2014:199) This course of action, when expands, sometimes, beyond the media technologies, takes shape of a political fermentation in the societies. The observations tell how such fermentation either is quickly setting down without reaching the desired destination or resulting in the continuing bloodshed (in the name of insurgency) and political instability.

Here, the concept of political popular culture should not be compared with the 'political prospective' of online fan communities idealized by Henry Jenkins (2008) where he sees them as *'preparing the way for a more meaningful public culture'* (239). Unlike this notion where the entire argument evolves surrounding the practice of lobbying by the fans for their respective celebrities, the political popular culture is based on the premises of the questions raised by Toby Miller (2008). While proving a critique of Jenkins, Miller asks about the issues of *'labour exploitation, patriarchy,*

*racism, or neo-imperialism*’ and broadly, ‘*a difference to politics beyond their own selves*’ when relating these to fan politics (220). The conceptualization of political popular culture looks into the behaviour of people using media technology in relation to the governance and politics. Therefore, it can not be called ‘politics within popular culture’ but ‘popular culture in political sphere’ or ‘popular culture of politics’.

Not only the previous studies of digital data of social media, their accretion, organisation and flow indicate towards creation of a popular culture, but also, a microscopic analysis of the political moves of South Asia in the recent past provide the concrete evidence of the creation of such political popular culture which has been built surrounding the newly developed media technologies. The further part of the study, with the help of experiential data from South Asian countries in general and particularly India, endows with the questions – how do media technologies bring such change in the society in relation to the political institution? Why are we moving towards the political popular culture? Also, the study includes the empirical data that offers the answer to the question revolving around its implications in near future.

### **Changing Political Spheres – Governments and the Public**

Before reaching at the role of rising media technologies in political arena, it is necessary to observe the political history and processes of the South Asian region. Most of the part of this region had seen their dark period of colonialism and some of the members of the SAARC are still the countries with lowest per capital income, lowest literacy, high malnourishment, high infant and maternal mortality, high rate of unemployment and social disparities, etc. With the moves of adoption of industrialization and technological advancements, especially in media, the good and inclusive governance was expected through creating a public sphere and participatory democracy in these countries. Yet, due to respective inherent problems of the South Asian nations, the pace of political transformation of the nations into true inclusive-democratic societies is slow. For instance, the introduction of democratic institutions, universal suffrage, industrialization, mass media, etc. were expected to bring democratic values and participatory political culture in India. However, caste, religion and ethnicity have a big share in politics here. Even during General Elections 2014, where social media and other new media tools were heavily used for campaigning by almost every party and which were said to be based on the ‘issue of development’, use of divisive politics, bargaining along with a ‘political-bureaucratic-corporate nexus’ was well evident.

On the other hand, radicalisation and a tilt towards militant groups, is increasingly reflected in the Pakistani society. For example, the militant group, *Jamat-ut Dawa* had successfully brought various religious and political parties on single platform during the Lahore Rally in favour of Blasphemy laws and former Minister Sherry Rehman dropped the idea of drafting a bill to reform blasphemy laws in view of the threats to her life. Thus, “*Pakistan is recognised not as a secular state with an extremist problem but as an Islamic state overburdened with political ambitions couched in religious terms*” (M.P.Shibu:2013:196). After the dramatic moves to restore Supreme Court, the resignations of President Musharraf and Prime Minister Gilani, Pakistan’s constitutional system has moved to a significantly weak centre and more powers to the provinces.

A densely populated, Muslim-majority country, Bangladesh has been witnessed of dialectical situation of having radicalism, fundamentalism, and terrorism, and at the same time, a *'concept of negotiation' 'that is more conducive to the establishment of liberal democracy' and 'democratic institution building'* (Oberst et al.:2014:260). From a one-party, single-leader government of Mujibur Rahman in 1971 to the victory of Awami League under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina in 2009 and onwards, Bangladesh has been greatly suffered from inconsistency and lack of institutional leadership, corruption and *'criminalization of politic'* (Sobhan:2004) taking place. Looking at urban unrest that ignited the movement of Shahbag Squire which was said to be pushed by new media activism, political leaders are paying greater attention to urban areas than to rural ones in Bangladesh.

Political front of Sri Lanka in the recent past (2005 onwards) saw fast changes with the defeat of LTTE. However, President Mahinda Rajapaksa was severely criticized for the *"decline in media freedom, widespread attacks against political opponents, attacks against foreign and domestic nongovernmental organizations, and passage of the Eighteenth Amendment to the constitution, enacting a number of controversial proposals, all of which increased the president's power"* (Oberst et al.:2014:354) The government was also alleged of human rights violation for its military operation to remove LTTE. However, the mass dissatisfaction resulted not in the agitations but the total vote-cast against the incumbent government.

Lack of infrastructure, absence of educational institutions and low literacy rates hinders the democratic state building and public participation in politics in Nepal. The erstwhile monarchy has witnessed chronic governmental instability after 1951 and the problem persists today. The movement against the king Gyanendra (2005-6) can be seen an exemplar of the culture of democratic agitation. The king was finally forced to relinquish power after nineteen days of mass demonstrations in the Kathmandu Valley in April 2006 with support from civil society and an agreement in Delhi to join forces. Meeting with her immediate challenge, Nepal is now ready with a new constitution on 20<sup>th</sup> September, 2015; however, its acceptance among all sections of the people is not out of question yet.

### **The New media and Political Popular Culture: Instances from South Asia**

South Asia emerges as an important actor not only in world affairs but also in terms of rapidly expanding consumer market of media technologies. Nevertheless, the countries of South Asian region have not been seen as mobilized on any issue as the developed nations of the West have been observed. The reason is that the issues of the Regional block make headlines only *'on the social media'* and not on the ground. Since, the people are so engaged in their own issues and problems related to governance for which only momentary protests take place.

The factor of anonymity with social media, which on one hand proved as the strength of new media, has also been a point of criticism on the grounds of *"a form of 'clicktivism' and 'slacktivism' that soothes the conscience of concerned middle-class people who do not want to take risks"* (Fuchs:2014:4) When the scholars (Carpentier and De Clean:2008; Van Dijck:2009) indicates towards *'a minimalist notion of participation'* and *'more passivity'* it becomes pertinent to note how the new media culture is generating a popular culture which is inconsistent and *'trendy'* on the lines

marked by the political elite. The following observations on various movements from South Asia clearly signify the pop-up effects of these movements which were able to seek the attention of all and fermented in no time to create a global environment through the use of new media technologies, however, somewhere failed to provide a strong alternative or participatory politics against the hegemonic traditional political elite.

In **India**, Jan Lokpal Movement and Delhi gang-rape case agitation can be seen as deterrents against the views of James Curran (2012) that *“If the rise of digital communications technology did not cause the uprisings, it strengthened them”* (54). In fact, the built-up movement for Jan Lokpal in India shows how internet based political culture failed to keep the movement consistent when civil society stopped to back it. While initiating the Jan Lokpal Movement in India in 2011 which was *‘the first major beneficiary of the media technology’*, *‘Team Anna (Hazare) recognized the might of new media technology and used it extensively from launching the official website, entering the social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, etc. to getting to people through mobile SMSs.’* (Sharma: 2012:144) But, the new media technology, which was earlier, unlike the mainstream traditional media, proactive and consistent in its approach to give a boost to the movement, in due course of time, just like the traditional media, lost the ground as soon as the civil society ceased to be an actor for the movement. The argument gets further empirical support on the basis of the status of the web applications – as the free mobile application which was launched for Android platform ‘Anna Hazare Anti Corruption India’ is no more active and the movement is only existent on the official website of Anna Hazare i.e. [annahazare.org](http://annahazare.org).

Then again, the Delhi Gang Rape Case of 16 December, 2012 which resulted in a total unrest and outburst of massive agitation of Indian youth who were mobilized with the help of new media technologies, though, brought certain prompt decision by the ‘pressurized government’, however failed to bring justice to the victim and her family. Even after stringent laws for crime against women based on Justice Verma Committee have been put to action, the women in India could not be provided a safe environment. The family of victim ‘*Nirbhaya*’ is still waiting to get justice on one hand and the rate of atrocities and crime against women is on its peak, on the other hand, the new/social media is no more seems ‘active’ towards the movement.

Looking at the internet usage in **Pakistan**, Google, Facebook, YouTube, Yahoo, Blogger.com, Wikipedia and Twitter are the most popular websites in the given order. (Alexa.com 2013) Pakistan is the first country in the world to implement such technology, which is designed to provide high-performance, high-speed Internet access over a larger area than other wireless technologies that offer either greater coverage or greater bandwidth can provide. (OpenNetInitiative 2012) *“On the one hand, Pakistan is regarded as among those few countries in the world that is grasping the latest high-end Internet technology with greater bandwidth. On the other hand, Pakistan continues to implement the most controversial laws regarding the use of online media by its citizens.”* (Arif, Rauf:2014:31) However, the Lawyers’ Movement for restoration of Judiciary (2007-2009) could be seen as a mass political protest that used social media. As a result of the movement, Musharraf had to quit and Judiciary with Democracy was restored in Pakistan in 2008. However, the problems such as, issues of governance, blasphemy law, problems of minorities are still there and the government of Nawaz Sharif is not strong enough to come out the shadow of military

rule even today. On the other hand, the elite class is ruling the social media because of their command on English language and the common people are far from creating the public sphere, though the use of mobile technology has increased to 53% in 2014 from 5% in 2002 who use the technology mostly for 'taking pictures and videos' (Dawn.com).

Put forth as a 'national awakening' the Shahbag protest of 2013 in Bangladesh sets another example in the row. It was begun as a massive movement with the demand of capital punishment for war criminals. The social media activists demanding capital punishment for Abdul Quader Mollah, who had been sentenced to life imprisonment, and for others convicted of war crimes by the International Crimes Tribunal of Bangladesh, successfully mobilized people to come to the grounds of Shahbag Squire. The 'unruly' protest of forceful confrontation turned into sporadic violence. Though, hundreds of people joined the movement in January at the beginning, but their numbers had declined by mid-April and the original protest site is no more there. *"All of these developments, which clearly indicate a gradual fraying of the political fabric"*, however could not keep the movement consistent and *"have troubling implications for the future of democracy in Bangladesh"* looking at the nature of protest (Oberst et al.:2014:311).

In **Srilanka**, the issue of Tamil Eelam has remained a burning issue not only till the militant operation and defeat of LTTE, but the political discourse is still alive online. *"The new generation of Tamils particularly those born after Rajiv Gandhi's assassination tend to be more emotional and expressive on the question of Tamil Eelam and even display undeterred resolution in supporting the cause of Tamils in Sri Lanka"*. (Jegannathan:2013) The activists on social media calls the online discourse as 'Sri Lanka's new war zone' (Jegannathan:2013), yet it is not at all vocal on real grounds because the social media activism not gaining the support of civil society in the country which is rather weak. According to the socio-political scholars, the interest groups are controlled by major parties. The interest groups have a close affiliation with either the ruling government or with an opposition party and thus they do not play any adversary role against the state. In such situation, *"access to power is indeed a personal affair"* (Oberst b:1985:34) and *"Interest groups tend to be ad hoc"* (Phadnis:1976:273). As a result, people active on new media platforms try to chase the power and be participatory in political issues at some moments.

Till now, lacking constitution, **Nepal** has also been facing the crunch of basic infrastructure related to education, communication, health, etc. However, like other South Asian countries, internet based mobile telephony is getting a pace in business and so is the social media use with Facebook having a more than 5% of penetration among the population of Nepal (Kshetri: 2012). Facebook is the most used social network in Nepal (97.25%) of the total usage for non-political or meager-political use followed by Twitter with 2.38% (Statsmonkey.com). Still, the country having a culture of protests and bandhs, is not getting to find a fine momentum on the virtual grounds. Eventually, the violent protests *sans* active participation from civil society and intelligentsia, is somewhere failing to achieve a democratic-participatory society. Like, Sri Lanka, here too, compromising ideological differences, many civil society organizations and NGOs work in close connection with various political party leaders. *"As political loyalty and affiliation seem to pay off more than being independent, many in the media, professions, and academia nurture their relationships with*



*political leaders and political parties. This becomes a problem when the civil society is small and a large proportion of it has partisan affiliations” (Oberst et al.: 2014:447)*

The 8-8-88 pro-democratic movement of **Myanmar** matured in time with adoption of a new constitution in 2008; General elections in 2010 and President Thein Sein instigating sweeping reforms; by-elections in the 2012 and the main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) winning 43 seats in parliament one of which was won by Aung San Suu Kyi. This democratic transition was well focused by the global and social media that highlighted the images of brutality by military on the agitators, time to time. Employing new media technologies, the Burmese pro-democracy movement, from an early stage in its development, consciously transformed itself into a transnational/global social movement (Dale:2011; Strefford:2014). However, the movement was tactfully twisted and turned by the political elite at times and ‘participatory public’ came in role during the “politics of opportunities” as thought beneficiary by them. For instance, the recommendation to the BSPP (Burma Socialist Programme Party) Congress by Ne Win to have a referendum on a multi-party political system (which was turned down by the Congress) provided a focus for the pro-democracy movement that it had not previously had. This announcement provided the protestors with a political opportunity (Bertil Lintner (1995) cited in Strefford:2014).

Thus, the instances show that new social movements are somewhere failing to connect the policy makers (political institutions) and civil society “*because of an assumption that they will inevitably co-opt the social movement*” (Dale:2011:13) and hence the possibility of influencing the decision-making process.

### **Implications of New Media driven ‘Political’ Popular Culture**

Though social media initiates a movement through a post, however, it makes people to forget it by ‘overloading’ of myriad of newer momentary information by other posts upon it. Each time a new ‘activity’ takes place on the net, each time the ‘particular’ social issue and related movement is lost in the social media networks.

Since power and elite has been seen by the rest as an aspiration and the common perception sees a close link between political elite and the forces necessary for upward social mobility, everyone wants to follow the political elite. However, politically the people are not able to find such place since political sphere is occupied by politicians (political elites) and public sphere by the members of civil society (again, who most of the times act as political elites). As Holt N. Parker (2011) noted, “*By this is meant the structure of the distribution of instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed*” (p.160), the material cultural goods, artifacts and cultural traits of popular culture give them a feeling to be at par. The aspirations of the ‘left overs’ has been, thus, met on the digital platforms particularly on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter that becomes a part of the material culture in the process. The ‘likes’, ‘shares’, ‘hashtags’, ‘one-liner posts’, etc., thus, tend to be the material culture of the ‘popular’. There was ample evidence of the emergence of such popular culture during the Jan Lokpal Movement where people were using this ‘virtual’ material culture along with the real material culture such as – Tricolor flags, Gandhi caps, posters, etc.

The people who seem, thus, 'active' in political sphere, however remain deter from the hard political affairs and a spiral of silence works even online. The statistics show how twitter topics are dominated by entertainment and politics is not a particular important topic in contrast to entertainment (Fuchs: 2014:190). "*Mutual symbolic interaction is rare in political Twitter Communication mostly consists of one way comments.*" "*File sharing is political. A website is political. Blogging is political. But this very immediacy rests on something else, on a prior exclusion. And, what is excluded is the possibility of politicization proper*" (Dean: 2005:65). Along with this, even when some real activism start to take shape, the extremist moves (as has been observed in Bangladesh where prominent political bloggers like Niloy Chatterjee, Ananta Bijoy Das, Washiqur Rahman Babu and Avijit Roy were killed) discourage the people to come up.

Because of the lack of *universal access* and *quality of political discussion* most of the 'Facebook movements and protests' could not be realized on ground. Many 'participants' in calls for protests on Facebook, but at least 70% of them don't show up at the actual demonstration. Another factor is the short existence of the social media websites itself. The history of these sites shows how once popular, Orkut disappeared in no time after Facebook grabbed the popularity. At present, the market analysts indicate at the decreasing popularity of Facebook as compared to Twitter. Eventually, online activism either ends in showing up the supporters of political parties like the traditional political ground reality or just ends up in nothing but like a bubble burst, as seen during the political movements of most of the South Asian countries, particularly, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Myanmar.

## **Conclusion**

It is, thus, evident that the media technologies have brought ferment in socio-political process; however, it is more of a path to achieve some other motive, than the motive in itself. The patterns of media production and consumption have undoubtedly created a global audience and in turn, change in political culture. The participatory audience of new media is increasingly becoming politically active on domestic as well as global issues. Yet, it has not given space to the 'decision making enabled participatory politics' as outlined by the political *Gurus*, and instead has created a political popular culture due to the cultural practices of collective individuals who intend to be in power relations. As soon as the people think themselves to be a part of political elite, they do not make attempts to be associated with the movements any further. Consequently, the political fermentation quickly sets down before reaching the desired destination, if not supported by the civil society.

Nevertheless, the popular political culture which, as of now, is far from the dominant or the participatory politics, should not be seen as a passivity, since it indicates towards the transition of political systems in South Asia and the upward mobility in terms of political awareness among 'the public' (outside the political elite and civil society). The continuity of such a popular culture in the long run would prove to be a precursor of the '*participant political culture*' in which individuals are oriented towards an activist role of the self in the polity (Almond and Verba: 1998:18).

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