

CHAPTER - IV

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

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Political participation is closely connected with Political Awareness. In fact political awareness is the very basis of Political Participation. Greater the political awareness greater is the Political Participation. Ofcourse, Political awareness and political participation are to be discussed in the context of prevailing political system. The political system may be democratic, totaliterain or of mixed type.

There is a co-relation between Political awareness and political participation. Milbrath has pointed out the relationship between the two in a nice manner. "The more sophisticated a person's cognitions and belief about politics, the greater the likelihood of his participation in the political process".¹

Political awareness is nothing but cognition and beliefs about politics Such as the constitution of his country political developments in the country, problems facing by the country, political parties, political leaders, various political issues and political events in other countries.

* 1. Lester W. Milbrath, M.L. Goe¹, Political Participation
P.35.

MEANING OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATIONS : -

International encyclopaedia of Social Science (Vol. XII) defines Political Participation as "These voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers directly or indirectly in the formation of public policy".¹

According to this definition the activities like casting vote, seeking information, holding discussions, attending meetings of political nature, making financial contributions to political party, going on a strike, staging demonstrations, communicating with the legislators, and other leading figures. However, the most active forms of political participation are formal enrolment in a party, canvassing and casting votes, speech writing, working in a political campaigns and competing for public and party Offices."²

A Social scientists defines Political Participation as "being the process through which the individuals plays a role in the political life of his society and has the opportunity to take part in deciding what the common goals of that society are and the best way of achieving the goals."³

According to this definition an individual can play a role in the political life in the society. He can participate in deciding common goals and try to achieve them. There are the contents of Political Participation.

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1. International Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences (Vol. XII).
 2. J.C. Johdri - Principles of Modern Political Science - P. No. 301
 3. Terry Clay Eakin - Students and Politics - Page . 96.

In every society individual can participate directly or indirectly in political activities. But it does not mean that each and every person has taken part in the political activities. Thus there are two groups one is participant group and the other is non participant group.

The degree of the participation of the participant group may vary from almost small activity to a very active and effective participation. Political participation in democratic polity is voluntary. But in a totalitarian system it is to a large extent coercive. In the fascist and a communist set up political participation is generally not voluntary.

There are various types of political participation.

TYPES OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:-

1. Individual and Mass Participation. :-

Individual participation is voting at the time of election, giving donation to the political party, to listen news of political events on radio and to view the political news on television, to read political news in the daily news papers etc.

There is also mass participation in politics. It includes attending public meetings, taking part in political conferences, going on strike, staging agitations etc. The mass political participation is very useful to influence government's policies.

2. Open or Secret Participation : -

In every political system there may exist open or secret participation. But generally participation is open as the democratic set up invites and honours open and large Political participation by the people. In totaliterian state there are restrictions on open political participation as individual freedom is curbed to a large extent in this set up. The secret participation is preferred by the people particularly when they have to oppose the policies of the Government and the Government itself. Generally this type of Political participation is more or less underground.

3. Voluntary or Compulsory Participation :-

In democratic state the political participation in politics is not compulsory. But their participation is supposed to be very important. Generally the individuals take part in political activities as and when they want and to the extent they select. In democratic states freedom of expression is given to the people by the constitution. People in such countries take part voluntarily in the political activities. But in totalitorian states people's participation is made obligatory. For example in the Communist Russia voting is made compulsory. Therefore some people go for voting against their will.

4. Supporting and Opposing Participation : -

There are two kinds of Political participation. One is to support the policies of the Government, the other is

to oppose the government policies. The activities to oppose the government's policies are protest, agitation, gherao and strike etc. To support the political leader or to the Government is a participation in favour of the Government.

As there are different kinds of political participation there are also various means of political participation.

MEANS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION : -

1. Election and Voting : -

During election period, people can participate in many ways, such as taking part in propaganda in favour of a particular political party, attending public meetings, delivering speeches on political events, giving donations and collecting donations for the political party, giving slogans voting for a candidate etc. Generally a candidate who is contesting an election tries to win it.

2. Political Parties : -

Political parties are another means through which people participate in politics. People become the members of political parties. They attend party's meetings and try to win their party. Their members try to collect donations and support their party candidate.

3. Pressure Groups : -

Pressure groups also one of the means of political participation. In every society, there are various kinds of association, labour unions. They try to pressurise the government to change its policy in their favour.

4. Political Movements : -

Various kinds of pressure groups and various political parties try to mobilise public opinion and try to pressurise the Government to change its policy. People take part to submit, petition, to organise public meeting, to publish articles in the news paper, enlist support of the people. Thus participate actively in the political process.

5. Legislature and Executive:-

The elected representatives of the people take part in the activities of legislature and executive branch of the government. They enact new laws and amend or abolish old laws. Thus they actively participate in political activities as a matter of fact they run the government.

6. Mass Media : -

Mass Media is one of the important means of political participation. Thus the news broadcast through radio, television, the news published in the news paper influence the people and motivate them to participate in the political activities in one way or other.

Political Participation can be arranged in hierarchical order as under : -

HIERARCHICAL ORDER OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION : -

1. Gladiatorial Activities : -

- a) Holding public and party office.
- b) Being a candidate for office.
- c) Soliciting for political funds.
- d) attending a strategy meeting.
- e) Becoming an active member in political party.
- f) Contributing time in political campaign.

And activities like these are termed Milbrath as Gladiatorial Activities. In this category full political activists are there. They often hold official position in party or in the government at various levels. They are thus political elites. They provide major link between the political systems and the masses.

2. Transitional Activities : -

- a) Attending a political meeting.
- b) Making a monetary contribution to a party candidate.
- c) Contacting a Political Leader.

The above activities are grouped under transitional activities.

3. Spectator Activities : -

- a) Wearing a button or putting a sticker on the car.
- b) Attempting to talk to another into voting a certain way.
- c) Initiating a political discussion.
- d) Exposing one self to political stimulate.

Activities like these are described as spectator activities.

In every society there are some individuals who have no interest in politics. They are called apathetics. They are the lowest in order in the hierarchy.

4. Apathetics : -

Apathetics are those who never participate in political activities. Neither do they vote, nor do they show any interest in voting. And it is a fact that about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the citizens in U.S.A. fall in this category.

In India the number of apathetic is much larger than U.S.A. because the apathetics are literally unaware of the political world. India is a democratic state. Almost half of the people in India are illiterate. The Political Participation and voting behaviour in India is discussed as under:

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN INDIA : -

Men turn out in majority to participate in voting than women, especially in rural areas and among low caste groups. This is due to the fact that social connection and lack of education have kept women in the background. The percentage of apathetic women category is however increasing with every new election.

There are states whose literacy is very high, but urbanisation is relatively low as in the case of Orissa and Assam. However, Gujarath and Kashmir, with the lowest rate of literacy in India and also low in urbanisation have shown the second highest voting through out in 1962 elections.

Voting through India differs greatly from State to State. It also varies greatly from one constituency to another even in the same state and from election to election. In general turn out has been relatively high in such relatively more developed states as Tamil Nadu, Harayana, Punjab, West Bengal and Maharashtra, and relatively low in such under - developed states of Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bhihar. Kerala is to some extent a class in itself. It has shown one of the highest turn outs of any Indian states in spite of the fact that it is by no means an economically developed state. High participation rate in Kerala is explained in terms of high rate of literacy in political awareness.

We can conclude that level of political participation will vary from State to State. ¹

Against the historical background and in the light of the discussion of concepts such as political awareness and political participation, an analysis of the replies given to the queries can be undertaken. The next Chapter deals with a part of it, i.e. personal information and working conditions of the respondents.

*1. K.N. Sharma - Modern Political Analysis P.224.