

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

- Objectives of the Survey -

1.1. In a democratic state, people are the ultimate repository of political power. They govern through their representatives, and representative democracy is basically a government by a party. There is a race among political parties for the capture of power. "Parliament is turned into an arena and its discussions are a ceaseless struggle of the Ins and Outs." Parties in opposition do not spare any opportunity to play down the party in power, trade unions exploit the economic discontent in the industrial population, religious and racial organizations misuse the religious credulity of the people, socialist or communist organisations magnify class disparities under capitalist democracy and local parties exaggerate local issues and sway local passions.

1.2 All such organisations aspire assiduously to dislodge the party in power and in this struggle treat the people as their instrument. When the actions of the state are not compatible with the purposes of the people, their direct intervention and action become imperative. "When the mischiefs of obedience are greater than the mischiefs of disobedience, people consider it their duty to resist the state." The play of reason in politics is often eclipsed by emotions and powerful instincts. Consequently, before constitutional methods of agitation and direct democratic devices are tried, extra-constitutional methods are resorted to by people to right their grievances.

1.3 It is a truism that students are not passive spectators but active participants in affairs political. They are at the root of almost every political trouble. They are to be found invariably in the morchas, processions, demonstrations, strikes, hunger-strikes, hartals, satyagrahas, picketings, political movements, trade-union activities and electioneering. Though they behave in the most irresponsible manner, they have become a force. Consequently, their behaviour has been engaging the minds not only of educationists but also of leaders and political scientists. Unfortunately, the problem of political behaviour of students has not so far received adequate attention.

1.4 With this view in mind, it was decided to sample the political consciousness among college students. The term "Political Consciousness", eludes any attempt at definition and, therefore, the description of the factors which constitute it is necessitated. The reading habits will reveal their knowledge not only of day-to-day happenings in the world but also of the ideologies and programmes pursued by parties. Their discussions and their attendance at meetings will disclose how far they are susceptible to matters political. Their membership of parties, trade-unions and student organisations and participation in their activities will unravel their propensities and their involvement in active politics and thus prove their alignment. Their interest in elections and electioneering will also have a bearing on the same aspect. Some of the questions in the Questionnaire are designed to screen their political aptitudes and aspirations and others will test their knowledge of national and international matters. Eventually, all this will enable me to arrive at certain generalisations regarding their views through which I shall get a measure of their political consciousness.

1.5 These are, in short, the most important objectives of the present sample survey. I do not profess at all that the above mentioned points embrace all the aspects of political consciousness among college students. All the same, the general nature of their political consciousness should be intelligible, with the type of questionnaire I have used.

Scope of the Survey

1.6 The Survey does not comprise all students of Shivaji University, Kolhapur. I have deliberately confined myself to the degree-colleges alone in Kolhapur city, and to the arts students of the post-graduate classes in Rajaram College. This restriction was preferred for had I surveyed all the students of the University it would have been a stupendous work, though not insurmountable. Further, Kolhapur district has almost all the characteristics of other districts over which the University has jurisdiction and, hence, consideration of all the students would have been superfluous. The rural surroundings have been adequately represented (^{48.19} ~~55.8~~ %) in the present survey. The degree-colleges in Kolhapur city could, therefore, be viewed as fairly representative of all the colleges affiliated to Shivaji University, and of its rurality and urbanity.

1.7 The high school students are knowingly excluded from the purview of the survey, because they are very much in a formative period and could, consequently, be irresponsible in their views. They are too young to comprehend political affairs. College students, on the other hand, could be taken as mature and responsible in their views. Their opinions, for that reason, would not only be interesting but also have considerable predictive value.

1.8 Students taking diploma courses in the Polytechnic Institute and those of the S.M.T.T. (B.Ed.) College, are not covered by the survey. Students of the Polytechnic Institute cannot be deemed college students in the strict sense of the word. Students reading B.Ed. are considered to have higher level of the understanding than undergraduates. On account of these debarrings, the findings of the survey will not be adversely affected.

1.9 A questionnaire was administered to a systematic sample of 25 % of students from each class of each college. The total sample-size is 911

Questionnaire

1.10 The questionnaire is split up into seven divisions to obtain conveniently the required information. Nevertheless, these parts are not mutually exclusive, though an attempt is made to group together questions regarding a particular aspect of the objectives. The questionnaire furnishes possible alternative answers to most of the questions. It cannot be claimed that they are exhaustive but its perusal will show that they are sufficiently adequate.

1.11 The first portion of the questionnaire deals with general information about the student and incorporates questions regarding the occupation and education of his guardians.

1.12 The second section is concerned with his reading of newspapers, periodicals, party organs, party-literature and political literature.

1.13 His participation in discussions : general and political

and attending meetings: public meetings and caste meetings; and study-circles are covered under part three.

1.14 The fourth division of the questionnaire deals with the student's membership of parties, trade-unions and student organizations and his involvement in their activities. His sympathies for them also are tapped here.

1.15 The fifth section is devoted to the consideration of questions about his interest in elections and electioneering.

1.16 The sixth part assesses ~~his opinions regarding social and political work. It also attempts to gauge~~ his political aspirations and occupational preferences. *It also attempts to examine his political loyalty.*

1.17 The last section is devised to learn ~~of~~ his political knowledge of matters national and international.

Execution of the Questionnaire

1.18 There were 3,644 students during the second term of 1963-64 on the rolls of the colleges covered under this survey. This frame was most complete and adequate. In all 911 or 25 % of the students were covered by the survey. I had decided to have a systematic sample with the help of the attendance registers of the students.

1.19 The questionnaire was finalised after it was tested on a pilot sample of 20 students, four of whom were from each of the five faculties. My conversation with these students was so useful that it enabled me to remove some obscurities in the questionnaire and consequently I incorporated some of their apt suggestions in it.

1.20 Prior to the administration of the questionnaire, I requested principals of the colleges to make me available the required number of the students of each class. My request was conceded by them readily. The students who were required to fill in the questionnaire had no previous intimation. In a day, with the assistance of a professor, I used to administer the questionnaire to the students of one class only.

1.21 Upon distributing copies of the questionnaire to the students, I acquainted them, in short, with the nature of my work and impressed on them the importance of answering questions fearlessly and without reservations. Besides the written promise in the questionnaire that the information furnished by the students shall not be adversely used against them, I once more repeated the same assurance orally to make them dauntless in the expression of their opinions. While filling in the questionnaire, I did not permit students to consult with each other. In case, a student had any doubt about any question or point, I used to dispel it immediately.

1.22 On an average, a student spent an hour and a half on the questionnaire. All the same, the time taken for filling in the questionnaire used to vary and consequently, students returned the schedules not at a time. This gave me time to immediately look over the schedules and persuade them to answer whatever questions were left unanswered. This considerably eliminated cases of non-response. It can confidently be asserted that, on the whole, the response of the students was very warm and encouraging.

1.23 In consideration of the deteriorating standard of English, a Marathi version of the original English questionnaire

was issued to all the students.

1.24 I began collecting the data in the first week of January, 1964 and completed it before 15th March, 1964.

Processing and Analysis of the Data

1.25 Processing and analysis of the data was carried out by the Gokhale Institute of Economics and Politics, Poona-4; in the following manner :

A) Coding : Three card-types for each of the 911 schedules were prepared.

Card Type 1 : General information, reading newspapers, periodicals, party-organs, party-literature and political-literature. Discussions among friends and attending meetings (36 columns)

Card Type 2 : Membership of, sympathy for and participation in the activities of parties, trade-unions, and student organisations; voting and canvassing at elections; and tendencies noticed in all elections (36 columns).

Card Type 3 : Occupational choice, preference for political or/ social work, entrance in political life, political aspirations, emotional integration of India, India's foreign policy, political differences among nations, survival of political system, world unity, possibility of third world war, guarantee of world peace by U.N. (36 columns).

B) Punching : The coded information was transferred to the punch-cards in the usual manner. The punching work was duly verified.

C) Sorting : All the card-types were analysed on the sorter and tables were prepared finally.

Presentation of the Tables

1.26 Since every question having a bearing upon the political consciousness was to be studied from the point of view of faculty, sex, caste and place of origin, the following scheme was adopted for the presentation of the tables:

a) Cross-tables for faculty vs sex were shown. Faculty includes Arts, Science, Commerce, Law, Agriculture and Post-graduate class (Arts). The schedules of the arts + students of Rajaram College, Gopal Krishna Gokhale College and Kirti College were combined. Similarly the schedules of Science students of Rajaram College and G.K.G. College were put together.

b) Cross-tables for caste vs place of origin were presented separately.

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