**POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

Political participation is a term that is applied to the activities of people from all level of a political system. Sometimes the term is applied more to political orientation than activities. It refers to those voluntary activities by which members of the society have a share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly have a role in the formation of public policy. These activities include voting, seeking information, discussing, attending public meetings, contributing financially and communicating with representatives.

**Definitions**

Verba and Lucian Pye defines,” political participation as those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take”.

“Political participation is the involvement of masses in the decision-making process or policy-formulation” –Heinz Eulau

“Political participation can be defined as the involvement of the members of society in the decision-making process” – Almond and Powell.

**Nature**

The political participation of an individual depends upon four kinds of motives such as:-

**1.Deferential participation** – it results from the actor’s deep respect for and strong identification with the influencer and his attendant desire to be and to appear to be influenced by him. This is typically found in the rural areas of the less developed countries where villagers often vote en masse out of deference for their traditional leaders.

**2.Solidarity participation** – it is motivated by a desire to affirm one’s solidarity and loyalty to his larger social group such as village, clan, tribe, ethnic or religious community and social class etc.

**3.Instrumental participation –** is participation in anticipation of some kind of material gain. This type of participation may take variety of forms, depending on the kind of incentives or inducements to which the voters respond.

**4.Civic participation** – is based n a sense of moral obligation or duty to participate. This sense of obligation may be derived from the beliefs about the nature of the good society or state or from strongly held positions on a single issue or set of issues. In either case, the participant does not anticipate personal, communal or sectoral gain.

**Forms of political Participation**

**1.Direct Political Participation** – when people play a direct role in the election of their rulers and in the decision-making or policy-formulation process, political participation is identified as Direct Political Participation.

**2.Indirect Political Participation** – In representative democracies, the people elect their representatives indirectly and through them take part in the decision-making process. The representatives are accountable to the people and they represent the people in the decision-making and policy-formulation.

**3.Active Political Participation** – When people actively participate in the political processes, leadership recruitment, elections, electoral politics, political communication, party politics, pressure group activities etc., the political participation is referred to as active political participation.

**4.Low or Passive Political Participation** – When the people have little interest in the political process and they are not fully oriented towards the political system and its sub-systems which makes them politically apathetic, the political participation is called Low or Passive.

**5.Instrumental Political Participation** – When people participate in politics with definite ends in view which they want to achieve in politics, the political participation is identified as instrumental political participation

**6.Expressive Political Participation** – When people participate in politics without any commitment to a definite objective but for satisfaction of their feelings or sentiments or emotions, the political participation is referred to as Expressive political participation.

**7.Political Participation through Legitimate Means** – When people participate in the political process through legitimate and constitutional means, the political participation is identified as Legitimate political participation.

**8.Political Participation through Illegitimate Means** – Participation in politics through violent and non-constitutional means – riots, violent outbursts, destruction of public property, involvement in political violence, electoral malpractices etc., fall under the category of political participation through illegitimate means.

**9.Tutored and Coerced Political Participation** – In Totalitarian and Authoritarian political system(Despotic and Dictatorial States) the power holder always try to secure people’s participation in politics in a desired way. This is designed to show the popularity and credibility of their dictatorial regimes. Such a political participations are unreal, tutored and coerced political participation.

**Determinants of Political Participation**

The role that the people of a political system play in the political process, particularly in decision-making or policy-formulation is influenced by several factors. These factors are referred to as the determinants of political participation. They are:-

**1.Psychological Factors –** Participation in politics is influenced by several psychological factors. Several people participate in politics for satisfying their psychological urges. Love for power and other values always impels people to get involved in the political process. Many persons find the political field useful as it provides them opportunities for winning over others or for reducing their tensions. The introverts are less likely to get involved in the struggle for power.

**2. Social Factors –** Political participation is always affected by social factors, education, social stratification, sex, age, caste, religion, language, residence, region, urban-rural gap and ethnicity. The nature and level of political participation in societies which have a high literacy percentage always differ from societies with low literacy rate. In developing societies like India, caste, religion, sex and language are the determinants of political behaviour and political participation.

**3. Political Factors –** Political factors are always the major determinants of political participation. Nature of the political system, the constitution of the state, the organisation of government nature and organisation of the political parties, nature of press and other means of mass media etc., are all the determinants of political participation. People have the right to vote, right to contest elections, right to hold public offices, freedom to criticise the policies of the government and opinion on all subjects, freedom to form political parties, interest groups and associations and freedom to participate at all levels of politics. These conditions encourage the people to voluntarily participate in the process of decision-making.

**4. Economic Factors –** Economic motives always influence almost all human relations. These are also the determinants of political behaviour and political participation. The expectation of rewards in terms of economic gains always provides a basic incentive to people’s involvement in the political process. The urge to get involved in the decision-making or policy-formulation is always governed by considerations of economic gains. The role of money power in politics is a major factor of political participation in developing countries like India.

**5. Environmental Factors –** Political participation is also affected by environmental factors. Geography, industrialisation, level of technology advancement and demographic features also determine the nature and level of political participation. The people living in hot climate do not come forward to participate in political campaigns, movements and elections, particularly during summer. People living in hilly areas are usually less active in politics. Geography conditions as such influences their political participation.

**6. Situational Factors –** The existence of British rule over India and the need to end it acted as a strong motivation in a big way. After Independence, the political legacies became the determinants of political participation in politics. The emergency rule (1975-1977) also produced an increased political participation as a reaction against repressive policies of this era. In every political system, the policies adopted and formulated by the government of the state often act as inputs of political participation.

**Conclusion**

The concept of political participation gained prominence in political science literature mainly in the context of the advanced capitalist societies of the West. Political participation is viewed as one of the major components of this political stability. In recent years, the non-governmental organisations are often projected as appropriate agencies for participatory development. The emergence of what has been called ‘new politics’ reflects some changes in the nature of political participation.