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POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: A STUDY OF DISTT. TEHRI GARHWAL

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ABSTRACT:

The smooth functioning of a democratic Political system is integrally related with the participant behavior of its citizens in the public affairs. In the democratic world today, in which all political power consisted in the common mass, the political activities and political participation of a nation's citizens have a great importance. Few decades ago, Almond & Verba in their distinguished creation named, "The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes And Democracy In Five Nations" observed, the coming world political culture appears to be dominated by the participation explosion what the mode of participation will be uncertain. The emerging nations are presented with two different models of the modern participatory state the democratic and the totalitarian. The democratic state offers the ordinary man the opportunity to take part in the political decision- making process or an influential citizen, the totalitarian offers him the role of participant subject." 1 Now in the changing world scenario political participation has become the key factor for the political development of a nation. Democratic societies are the participant societies where people take part in various political activities and influence the decision-making process.



KEYWORDS: smooth functioning, democratic Political system.

INTRODUCTION

Political participation is typically equated with the citizen's involvement in variety of political activities. Milbrath's conceptual analysis of political participation includes various political activities such as... voting, discussion and opinion leadership; wearing a button or putting a sticker on the car; petitioning political leaders; making a momentary contribution; attending a political meeting; active party membership;

campaigning; soliciting political funds; office-seeking and holding; and protests & demonstrations.² Political participation is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, because it varies from person to person their political activities & political interests. Different individuals tend to concentrate their energies and interests on the particular type of activities while others do not. So in the study of people's

participation in politics Jan E. Leighley views, "....mobilization factors simply cannot be ignored if we see to develop a complete understanding of who participates and why they do so."³ So participation is essential for mass- mobilization which indicates the levels of political development of a society. As Samuel Huntington writes:
" Modernization means mass-mobilization; mass mobilization means increased political

participation; and increased political participation is the key element of political development.”⁴

Thus, the participation is closely linked with the democratic political system and it means the involvement of citizens in the political process. People having political discussions with each other, take interest in politics, express a general sense of competence to influence the government, have sufficient knowledge of politics and active participation in civic affairs indicates political participation. Learner’s study of the Middle East found a positive association of political participation with other indicators of modernization. Learner describes - “A person becomes participant by learning to have opinions.....the more numerous and varied opinions the more participant he is.”⁵

As mentioned earlier the term political participation is closely engaged with democratic political set up. Today’s most of the modernized societies are the democratic societies as well as the participant societies in which every citizen feels oneself a part of the political process and try to involve oneself in various political activities to the extent an individual can. Scholars conducting surveys of individual political participation consistently have reported that an individual’s social status, education and organizational memberships strongly effect the likelihood of his engaging in various type of political activities. Schlozman, Verba and Brady have covered a wide range of political activities in their citizen participation study of America. The activities are voting, campaign work, contributing money, protest, local board membership, organizational involvement and church activity.⁶

The researcher has chosen political participation as a key indicator of political development. The testable hypothesis is that political participation is directly related to political development and modernization. A developed and modernized society is composed of a large number of active and participant citizens. For an analysis of political participation in the rural community of district Tehri Garhwal the researcher has included the following political activities as indicators:

- (1) Political discussion;
- (2) Engagement in political activities such as taking part in rallies, wearing a badge, attending political meetings, & taking part in election campaign;
- (3) Contributing money;
- (4) Membership in a political party;
- (5) Voting.

The main objective of the researcher is to examine the extent and nature of political participation among the people of Tehri Garhwal. So the researcher has chosen 200 respondents from the entire Tehri Garhwal district. Age, marital status, religion, caste, family size, income, education and occupation are the variables that are kept in mind by the researcher while selecting the respondents. An interview schedule based on the questions related to political participatory activities is also prepared by the researcher for measuring the levels of political participation in the district. On the basis of the responses of 200 male & female citizens given in the interview schedule the researcher has found the following conclusions :

1. Political Discussions : The social and political discussions done by the citizens indicate citizen’s awareness about the happenings around themselves and enlarge their opinion range. It is the interpersonal conversation of people by which they can discuss several kinds of issues school teacher, village leaders, other educated persons and friends. These discussions can be persuaded everywhere whether it is teashop, school, restaurant, under a tree in a village, home etc. The hill district of Tehri Garhwal is a backward region, where the print media and modern channels of mass communications are not easily available to the rural and interior areas till yet, and interpersonal discussions with one another is the right way for making themselves aware about social and political issues. Table 2.1 shows the % distribution of the respondents in terms of their frequency of talking politics.

TABLE -2.1
FREQUENCY OF POLITICAL DISCUSSION

S.No.	Frequency of Political Discussion	Respondents					
		Male		Female		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Very Often	58	37.2	09	20.5	67	33.5
2.	Less Often	67	42.9	15	34.1	82	41.0
3.	Never	31	19.9	20	45.4	51	25.5
Total		156	100	44	100	200	100

The data shows that 37.2 % male talk politics very frequently while 20.5 % females were fond of discussing politics very frequently. 42.9 % male and 34.1% female respondents reported talking politics occasionally whereas 19.9% males and 45.4% females never discussed politics in their day-to-day conversations.

2. Engagement in Various Political Activities: Only persuading political discussions occasionally and participate in one or more political activity only by chance does not make a citizen participant. For a complete participant citizens, one should be engaged oneself in various kinds of political activities such as taking actively part in election campaigns and big elections rallies, attending political meetings, wearing badges of the party they support, carrying a flag on their houses, vehicles etc. The rural people of district Tehri Garhwal have involved themselves in public and political affairs in both the ways psychologically and behaviorally. The Uttarakhand movement demanding for a separate statehood of Garhwalis an example of mobilization of Garhwali people. They organized and participated in big rallies, processions, picketing, strikes etc. in support of their demands. On the basis of the frequency of their involvement in these activities a three level index is formulated. Table 2.2 shows the respondents level of engagement in the various political activities.

TABLE - 2.2
LEVELS OF POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

S.No.	Level of Political Activity	Respondents					
		Male		Female		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	High	24	15.5	06	13.3	30	15.0
2.	Medium	79	51.0	13	28.9	92	46.0
3.	Never	52	33.5	26	57.8	78	39.0
Total		155	100	45	100	200	100

3. Contribution Of Money : Contribution of money is a part of political participation. There are individuals who have desire to be engaged in political activities but due to their profession, their nature of work and several other reasons they can not participate in public rallies, processions, public meetings and political campaigns. So these people sometimes offer monetary contribution to the political parties as the expression of their support. In the hill district of Tehri Garhwal contributing money as a political activity is not too popular because this district has ever remained a backward region of Garhwal due to the reign of kings. There has always been a widespread poverty and scarcity of the rich persons. The people of district Tehri are the victims of exploitation. Table 2.3 indicates the following impressions :-

TABLE - 2.3
EDUCATION AND MAKING MONETARY CONTRIBUTIONS

S.No.	Contributing Money	Education of Respondents							
		High		Medium		Low		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Very often	08	13.3	11	15.3	02	2.9	21	10.5
2.	Less often	09	15.0	15	20.8	05	7.4	29	14.5
3.	Never	43	71.7	46	63.9	61	89.7	150	75.0
Total		60	100	72	100	68	100	200	100

On the basis of the collected data only 25% respondents contributed money to a political party. Only 13.3% of highly educated respondents and 15.3% of moderate educated respondents were reported contributing money very often. On the other hand 15% of the highly educated and 20.8% of the moderate educated respondents contributed money occasionally. In the low level category 2.9% individuals contributed money very often and 7.4% individuals occasionally.

TABLE - 2.4
INCOME AND MAKING MONETARY CONTRIBUTIONS

S.No.	Contributing Money	Income of Respondents							
		High		Medium		Low		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1.	Very often	00	00	10	13.3	11	9.2	21	10.5
2.	Less often	01	20.0	12	16.0	16	13.3	29	14.5
3.	Never	04	80.0	53	70.7	93	11.5	150	75.0
Total		05	100	75	100	120	100	200	100

An interesting factor revealed from the data that none of having high income respondent contributed money to the political party very often. Only 20% of high income respondents contribute money less frequently. 29.3% respondents with moderate incomes and 22.5% with low income contributed money more or less frequently.

4.Membershipina Political Party: Being a member of a political party also a kind of political participation which serves a dual purpose in developing the personality of an individual. On one hand, through these organizations, an individual is able to relate himself to the political system and at the same time he develops a participant citizenship syndrome .Being a member of a political party, the citizen feels protected and close to the institutions of politics and government. Table 2.5 shows the percentage distribution of party membership according to their caste.

TABLE-2.5
CASTE AND PARTY MEMBERSHIP

S.N.	Political Party	Caste of Respondents									
		Brahmins		Rajputs		SC/ST		Others		Total	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	B.J.P.	12	19.0	18	15.3	-	-	-	-	30	15.0
2.	CONG.(I)	07	11.1	11	9.3	-	-	-	-	18	9.0
3.	U.K.D	02	3.2	09	7.6	-	-	01	33.3	12	6.0
4.	C.P.I. (ML)	01	1.6	03	2.5	-	-	-	-	04	2.0
5.	No Membership	41	65.1	77	65.3	16	100	02	66.7	136	68.0
Total		63	100	118	100	16	100	03	100	200	100

It was found out that 32 % respondents reported formal membership of any political party in which only 3 % respondents were females. 15 % respondents having membership of BJP, 9.5 % of CONG, 6 % were from UKD and 1.5 % respondents were having membership of CPI(ML).

BJP and CONG. are the two major political parties having influence among the common mass of Tehri Garhwal. Among the respondents having membership of BJP, there were 60 % rajputs and 40 % brahmins. In case of respondents having membership of CONG there were 61% rajputs and 39% Brahmins. There were no member of SC/ST and other castes in both the parties. Uttarakhand Kranti Dal, a regional political party constituted for the fulfillment of the regional aspirations of Garhwal , too, had its enough grip among the common mass even at the grass root level.

Table 2.6 shows education and income of the respondents reporting membership in a political party.

TABLE -2.6
EDUCATION, INCOME AND PARTY MEMBERSHIP

S.N.	Political Party	Education			Income		
		High %	Medium %	Low %	High %	Medium %	Low %
1.	B.J.P.	18.6	16.9	10.0	-	17.6	14.0
2.	CONG.(I)	6.8	16.9	2.9	20.0	9.5	8.3
3.	U.K.D	6.8	5.6	7.1	-	6.7	6.6
4.	C.P.I. (ML)	3.4	1.4	-	-	1.3	1.7
5.	No Membership	64.4	59.2	80.0	80.0	64.9	69.4
Total		100	100	100	100	100	100

It can be seen in the table that 18.6 % of highly educated, 16.9% of medium and 10% of less educated respondents were the members of BJP, in which 17.6 % were from middle income group and 14 % respondents were from less income group.

In case of CONG. 6.8 %were highly educated , 16.9 % were moderate educated and 2.9 % were less educated , where 20 % were from high income group , 9.5 % from middle income group and 8.3 % respondents were from less income group.

5.VOTING: Voting is an actof individuals in which they physically participate and cast their vote in support of different political parties of different political ideologies. This activity is also connected with human psychological character. There is a tendency that can be seen in people campaign for a political party and vote to another party.At the same time people wear the badge of a party and vote to another party. Elections generate a lot of activity and fun fare in India. People eagerly wait for the voting day and go to the polling booths along with their friends and relatives. Most of the voters living in the villages go to the polling booths in large numbers. Even the very old and weak are sometimes carried to the polling booths. In Indian democratic system, government has modernized the election procedure and voting is done now a days through electronic voting machines.

Table 2.7 shows the voting participation of the respondents.

TABLE - 2.7
VOTING PARTICIPATION

S.No.	Voting Frequency.	Parliamentary Elections %	Assembly Elections %	Local Elections %
1.	Many times	75.5	80.5	80.0
2.	Once	17.0	13.0	12.0
3.	Never	07.5	06.5	08.0
Total		10S0	100	100

The present study found that 79 percent of the respondents had exercised their franchise many times during the national, state and local elections. Table 2.8 shows respondents participation in parliamentary, assembly and local elections

There is a general conception that the educated people are more eager to cast their votes than the less educated persons, as educated people are much aware about the democratic process of the nation. But, it is found in the study that 45.5 % apathetic who never cared to exercise their voting right were highly educated people. The increasing corruption, criminalization of politics and cheap politics done by the political leaders for their own political interest can be cited the major factors responsible for the apathetic in the educated class.

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