CHAPTER - V

POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Political socialization process shapes as well as creates and changes the political attitude towards the functional process and system as a whole, at the individual and the community level. It is a learning process of specialized political role behaviour as well. It imparts training as well as instills knowledge to the young citizens as to how to work within the political system either for its persistence or change. It injects the knowledge of role adaptive behaviour giving at the same time political ideas, beliefs, values and education.

A vital question arises, do all the political knowledge, ideas, beliefs, values which individual internalizes come only from the socialization process? Or in other words, does the socialization process represent the only way of political knowledge, ideas, beliefs, and values?

The answer is obviously in the negative. Although at first the process of political socialization impresses persistently political beliefs and attitudes which provide people mental incitement for participation, yet, in turn, the latter reinforces their existing political beliefs and attitudes and/or inclucates new ones. Regarding the relationship between attitudes and actions, Almond and Powell contend that "while actions stem from various sorts of beliefs so also do actions shape beliefs."1
People secure political ideas, knowledge, beliefs and values not only from the political socializing agents but also they can acquire the same through various participatory agencies associated with voting, campaigning, lobbying, strike; etc., e.g., "participation in the process of collective bargaining or involvement with a strike can be a powerful socializing experience for worker and employer alike. The striking laborer not only learns that he can shape the authoritative decisions being made about his future, but he gains knowledge of specific actions, skills, such as demonstrating and picketing, which may be used in political participation."

However both the processes, i.e., political socialization and political participation are essential for the development of the orientations—cognitive, evaluative and affective—which is again utterly necessary for smooth, easy and effective, running of the democratic political systems.

Thus being instilled with the strong fervour of the idea of nationalism, the ignorant masses of the colonial countries had been mobilized before independence and took part in protest, demonstration, meeting, rally, appeal, negotiation, bargaining and after all movement and struggle against alien-rule imposed authority which had supplied them with some sort of knowledge and ideas about democratic norms. After independence, people's mobilization and involvement in democratic institutions like voting, campaigning, debate, discussion, interest articulation, governmental process and also in various government initiated
national and regional project works, management of local problems and developmental works and after all in various governmental and non-governmental organisations — all these have served the purpose of political socialization by increasing their political insight, (of course through trial and error) despite of ignorance and illiteracy.

But despite of that we shall say participation alone cannot increase knowledge, skill, efficacy. Consistent and deep socialization is essential in this respect. As for example, political knowledge received through the courses of civic studies, no doubt grows interest in civic affairs and imparts and increases the sense of civic duty which, in turn, stimulates the energy for civic activity. Thus the sense of civic efficacy fosters political activity.

Moreover, political socialization is the guide force of both ordinary or conventional and extra-ordinary or unconventional participation. The former is the positive aspect of political socialization and the latter is its negative aspect. When the children are inculcated the positive image of the political authority and the political system by presenting the utility of obedience to governmental rules and regulations and compliance to existing political structure, then this type of political socialization leads to conventional or positive participation for system's persistence. On the contrary, when the children are inducted the cynical image of the political authority as well as system explaining the illegality of its existence, then non-compliance and disobedience become the elements of attitude formation.
leading to system's change or instability. The roles played by both the whites and the blacks in the process of political socialization in South Africa may serve as an example in this respect.

Thus this negative aspect of political socialization process should be taken into account too, as it exerts an enormous influence upon the unconventional participation. As Dawson and Prewitt put it: "Issues of political violence, governmental deception, aggressive national behaviour, social stagnation or racial injustice will be better understood when we have become more knowledgeable about political socialization." \(^3\)

The tyrannical activities of the government can only be checked by the people's spontaneous participation in resistance against it and lawful, righteous and justice-based demands and objectives can only be fulfilled.

In the normal period also participation is essential as it fosters peace and promotes stability and order. Not only self-expression is made possible through the process of participation, it also broadens political understanding.

We have already pointed out that participatory political process is also a learning process as people can learn something new when they are in actual process of acting. Professional personnel are concerned with clear behavioural involvement instead of psychological. Thus they gather much more potential and skillful political knowledge and become well acquainted about the governmental process than the ordinary citizens. The area of
the governmental process is the centre for the reconstruction of rationality which promotes personality and skill further and it also helps to change cognitive structure, if necessary.

The political party which holds the governing power attempts to socialize the governmental personnel to its ideology, norms and values in order to run its administration smoothly and effectively. Failure on the part of the ruling party in this task would create strain in the administrative system. Thus the governmental personnel are either resocialized or reinforced during their participation in the governmental functional process. The political learning is a cumulative phenomenon in a person's life cycle. Thus these personnel accumulate new and empirical political knowledge about the governmental functional process and theory and practice in the political conversion process. A polity's development depends upon their sensitive and rational participation and participatory attitude.

The political leaders and the active workers are the professional political participants. Political activities are frequently conducted by them for public mobilization. Thus the country's political environment is always under the supervision. A country's development depends on the question — to what extent they are morally courageous, honest, sincere and civic responsibility bearers, although in some countries, it has been found that "certain persons use the party as a vehicle for personal enrichment. The high posts in party or government (which are often nearly the same), are used to a mass fortunes..."
So those who are to perform the specialized political role in practice should be inculcated extra party norms like sincerity, honesty to carry on and implement the party objectives and ideology with sacrifice, hardship and faith. They are regarded as the "brain-trust" of the party-structure or they act as the main engine in the party structure. Because a great responsibility is laid on them as "the political party is one of the few social structures even potentially capable of involving large numbers of people in political action on a sustained and controlled basis".  

Political participation ranges from overt political activity to mere articulation of interest being exposed to any political stimuli. The characteristic of this set of participation is rather conventional or ordinary participation. But in this set of multi-dimensional variables strong political behaviours like violence, non-compliance, disobedience etc. have been excluded. Meadow is of the opinion that "a number of researchers have not considered protests and non-compliance as a form of participations, choosing to limit their analysis to legally sanctioned activities". But unconventional participation occurs in the political system so it claims the notice to be discussed in the conceptual framework of political participation.

India is one of the best non-western democratic participant societies because we have already gathered participatory experiences before independence. According to A.H. Somjee, "within the non-western world itself, India has emerged as a country where
political participation has not only been able to check the arbitrary exercise of power, but is also beginning to generate effective pressure towards economic development and some measure of distributive justice." This was partly due to, as A.H. Somjee holds, "her prolonged nationalist movement and the deliberate involvement of her masses in it under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi at the end of the first world war. Since then, more and more people have been involved in the political process. After independence, it is true that with the introduction of several socio-economic institutions, the Indian people have been provided with ample opportunity for comprehensive involvement in the political institutions. Thus the experimental knowledge of participation of both the present and the past have made the Indian democracy healthy. Socio-economic development promotes political participation.

In the developing society with the increase of the economic and educational institutions the people become conscious of the broader world of politics, learn the norms of active participation and develop the cognitive skills which are essential for political activity. In addition to it; N.H. Nie et al. are of opinion that "changes in the social situation of individuals and their psychological predispositions toward political institutions affect the political involvement of citizens. Universal suffrage and mass election campaigns open participation opportunities." Thus after independence gradual economic development as well as the introduction of universal suffrage in India paved the way for mass political participation.
The political system of West Bengal is the sub-system of Indian political system. The participation in political affairs on the part of the people of West Bengal is the most sensitive phenomenon. As it is in the case of India the legacy of the past has influenced political participation in West Bengal. Both the conventional and the unconventional participation were significant. The flow of these are still continuing in the soil of West Bengal.

We have already pointed out that party system is the best instrument where a large number of people may be mobilized and induced to participate. In West Bengal the competitive party system through the election contest tries to mobilize the people's activity. Thus in the rural areas both the psychological and behavioural mobilization of the people are found. This competitive party system in West Bengal affords ample scope for participation of the rural masses through political discussion and evaluation of different policies undertaken by the different political parties for rural welfare. People have been mobilized well, with obvious exception, breaking the barriers of casteism, racialism, and religious fanaticism.

People's involvement in several mass-oriented party policies and programme is increasingly found in the rural areas of West Bengal for three reasons; one is mass literacy programme and the other is land reforms and the third is several public assistance programmes to the rural people. The several political
parties and their networks give several instructions for these activities and thereby attract interest of the people and provide information about the political conditions of their surrounding. In India party identification has penetrated all social sectors, particularly the non-mobile peasants in the villages. Indeed it appears that the most traditional groups or population categories reveal the greatest penetration. This observation is also applicable to the rural areas of West Bengal.

Thus in such circumstances political discussion assumes great importance. We know that in the rural areas of West Bengal the channels of mass media communication are very limited. Thus the interpersonal communication of ideas from the party agents, neighbours, rural elites, peer groups, and family members is found to play a greater role than the inadequate structure of modern communication channel (available in the village) in shaping receiver's knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, thought and behaviour.

Political discussion, persuasion by others to vote in a certain manner, campaigning, attending political meetings or rallies — these are the most significant phenomena in which most of the people of rural West Bengal are involved irrespective of their economic status. These phenomena revolve round the 'voting' institution which is an important gateway of political participation in a democratic society. Verba, Nie and Kim refer to voting as "one way in which citizens participate". Voting plays a praiseworthy role in the developing society as it is only one kind of political participation, which includes
campaigning, political discussion, fund giving and running for office. This picture is quite evident in the rural areas of the developing society too. Thus in our rural society of West Bengal such political phenomena like political debate, discussion, campaigning, meetings, rallies, demonstrations for interest articulation and the participation of the rural people in these issues during elections (of Central, State, Local governments and other para-political institutions) and interim periods of elections are clearly evinced.

On the basis of this argument we have drawn the following hypothesis.

(1) Most of the rural people of all income groups are active enough and participate in the political process which takes place in their locality.

To test this hypothesis we prepared the following questions.

(A) Do you participate in political meetings whenever these are held in the area you live? Yes/No

(B) Do you take part in election campaigns in your locality? Yes/No

(C) Do you discuss political matters with the elites of the locality? Yes/No
Data relating to question A (Participation in political meetings)

Table 7.1A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HIG</th>
<th>MIG</th>
<th>LIG</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>125</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have taken three cases in the following.

Case I

High income group

\[ H_0 : P_H = .5 \text{ vs. } H_1 : P_H > .5 \]

That is the null hypothesis is that the proportion of people belonging to high income group is equal to .5 against the alternative hypothesis that the proportion of people belonging to high income group is greater than .5 in relation to attending political meetings whenever these are held in their areas.

Our test statistic is

\[ T = \frac{\hat{p}_H - .5}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{n_H} \cdot p \cdot q}} \]

and we get \( T = 9.57 \)

Thus we reject the null hypothesis at 5% level and accept the alternative hypothesis \( (p_H > .5) \).
Hence we can indicate that more than 50% people belonging to high income group attend political meetings whenever these are held in the areas they live.

Case II

Middle income group

\[ H_0 : \ p_M = .5 \quad \text{Vs.} \quad H_1 : \ p_M > .5 \]

That means our null hypothesis is that the proportion of people belonging to middle income group is equal to .5 against the alternative hypothesis that the proportion of people belonging to middle income group is greater than .5 in respect of attending political meetings whenever these are held within their surrounding areas.

Our test statistic is

\[ T = \frac{\hat{p}_M - .5}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{n_M} \cdot p \cdot q}} \]

and we get \( T = 9.391 \)

So we reject the null hypothesis at 5% level and accept the alternative hypothesis \( (p_M > .5) \).

So we can say that more than 50% people belonging to middle income group attend the political meetings which are held in their surrounding localities.
Case III

Low income group

\[ H_0 : p_L = .5 \quad \text{Vs.} \quad H_1 : p_L > .5 \]

That means our null hypothesis is that the proportion of people belonging to low income group is equal to .5 against the alternative hypothesis that the proportion of people belonging to low income group is greater than .5 in respect of attending political meetings which are held in their areas.

Our test statistic is

\[ T = \frac{\hat{p}_L - .5}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{n_L} \cdot p \cdot q}} \]

and we get \( T = 12.396 \)

Thus we reject the null hypothesis at 5% level of significance and accept the alternative hypothesis \( (p_L > .5) \).

So it indicates that more than 50% people of low income group attend the political meetings which are held in their areas.

Summary:

- \( p_H > .5 \)
- \( p_M > .5 \)
- \( p_L > .5 \)

Thus we can argue that more than 50% people belonging to each income group participate in political meetings which are held in their surrounding areas.
Data relating to question - B (Participation in election campaigns)

Table 7.1B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>M I G</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have taken three cases in the following.

Case I

High income group

\[ H_0 : p_H = 0.5 \text{ vs. } H_1 : p_H > 0.5 \]

That means our null hypothesis that the proportion of people belonging to high income group is equal to 0.5 against the alternative hypothesis that the proportion of people belonging to high income group is greater than 0.5 in respect of taking part in election campaigns in their locality.

Our test statistic is

\[ T = \frac{\hat{p}_H - 0.5}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{n_H} \cdot p \cdot q}} \]

and we get \( T = 8.139 \)

Thus we reject the null hypothesis at 5% level of significance and accept the alternative hypothesis \( (p_H > 0.5) \).
Case II

Middle income group

\[ H_0: p_M = 0.5 \quad \text{Vs.} \quad H_1: p_M > 0.5 \]

That is our null hypothesis is that the proportion of people belonging to middle income group is equal to 0.5 against the alternative hypothesis that the proportion of people belonging to middle income group is greater than 0.5 in relation to taking part in the election campaigns in their locality.

Our test statistic is

\[ T = \frac{\hat{p}_M - 0.5}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{n_M} \cdot p \cdot q}} \]

and we get \( T = 4.919 \)

So we reject the null hypothesis at 5% level of significance and accept the alternative hypothesis \( (p_M > 0.5) \).

Case III

Low income group

\[ H_0: p_L = 0.5 \quad \text{Vs.} \quad H_1: p_L > 0.5 \]

That is the null hypothesis is that the proportion of people belonging to low income group is equal to 0.5 against the alternative hypothesis that the proportion of people belonging to low income group is greater than 0.5 with respect to taking part in election campaigns in their locality.
Our test statistic is

\[ T = \frac{\hat{p}_L - .5}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{n_L} \cdot p \cdot q}} \]

and we get \( T = 5.945 \)

Thus the null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level and the alternative hypothesis \((p_L > .5)\) is accepted.

Summary:

\[
\begin{align*}
  P_H & > .5 \\
  P_M & > .5 \\
  P_L & > .5
\end{align*}
\]

Thus this indicates that more than 50% people of each income group take part in the election campaigns of their locality.

Data relating to question - C (discussion of political matters with the elites).

Table 7.1C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>H I G</th>
<th>M I G</th>
<th>L I G</th>
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<td>114</td>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>250</td>
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</table>

We have three cases in the following.
Case I

High income group

\[ H_0 : p_H = .5 \quad \text{Vs.} \quad H_1 : p_H > .5 \]

i.e. our null hypothesis is that the proportion of people of high income group is equal to .5 against the alternative hypothesis that the proportion of people of high income group is greater than .5 in relation to discussing political matters with the elites of the locality.

Our test statistic is

\[ T = \frac{\hat{p}_H - .5}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{n_H} \cdot p \cdot q}} \]

and we get \( T = 9.213 \)

Thus we reject the null hypothesis at 5% level of significance and accept the alternative hypothesis \( (p_H > .5) \).

Case II

Middle income group

\[ H_0 : p_M = .5 \quad \text{Vs.} \quad H_1 : p_M > .5 \]

That means our null hypothesis is that the proportion of people belonging to middle income group is equal to .5 against the alternative hypothesis that the proportion of people belonging to middle income group is greater than .5 in respect of discussing political matters with the elites of the locality.
Our test statistic is

\[ T = \frac{\hat{p}_M - .5}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{n_M} \cdot p \cdot q}} \]

and we get \( T = 9.213 \)

So we reject the null hypothesis at 5% level and accept the alternative hypothesis \( (p_M > .5) \).

Case III

Low income group

\[ H_0 : \ p_L = .5 \quad \text{Vs.} \quad H_1 : \ p_L > .5 \]

That means our null hypothesis is that the proportion of people belonging to low income group is equal to .5 against the alternative hypothesis that the proportion of people belonging to low income group is greater than .5 in respect of discussing political matters with the elites of the locality.

Our test statistic is

\[ T = \frac{\hat{p}_L - .5}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{n_L} \cdot p \cdot q}} \]

and we get \( T = 9.36 \)

Hence we reject the null hypothesis at 5% level of significance and accept the alternative hypothesis \( (p_L > .5) \).
The summary of the three cases is as follows:

\[ P_H > 0.5 \]
\[ P_M > 0.5 \]
\[ P_L > 0.5 \]

Therefore we can say that more than 50% people belonging to each income group (high, middle, and low) discuss political matters with the elites of the locality.

The summary of each question relating to hypothesis-1 is given in the following:

(A) \[ P_H > 0.5 \]  
(B) \[ P_H > 0.5 \]  
(C) \[ P_H > 0.5 \]

Thus we can say that in the rural areas more than 50% people of each income group take part in political meetings, election campaigns, and political discussions with the elites of the locality.

This finding approves our hypothesis-1.

Besides taking part in the political process of the locality, the rural people of West Bengal are found to take part in the para political institutions and organisations and other voluntary socio-economic organisations. These institutions play a great role in articulating interests, influencing the governmental decisions during non-electoral period. Thus
the Kisan Sabha, Tantubai Samiti, Matsyajibi Samiti, etc., are found to articulate their interests and create pressure on the decision making authority. "Organizational involvement may represent an alternative channel for political participation for socially disadvantaged groups".13

Moreover, the voluntary organisations of socio-economic importance like village co-operatives, home guards, mahila samiti, youth organisations, library and cultural organisations, etc., also provide opportunity to the people to be involved in collective activities of the rural areas which provide the resources of enriching cognitive structure of the latter.

Almond and Verba are of opinion that voluntary associations are helpful for avoiding parochial attitudes of the people and unwanted political influence and with the help of these they are rather mobilized and are made politically informed. Thus these organisations help the people to build up a rich set of political resources which grow out according to their varied interests.14

However on the basis of this discussion we have drawn the following hypothesis:

(2) Most of the rural people are associated with the para-political institutions and they know how to exert influence on the decision-making process.

To test this hypothesis we asked the following two questions:
(A) Are you a member of any para-political organisation e.g. social organisation, economic organisation, community association or organisation of any other kind? Yes/No

(B) Do you take part in meetings, debates, discussions of Kisan Sabha or any other interest group and try to influence the decision-making process? Yes/No

Data relating to question A (member of any organisation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>MIDDLE</th>
<th>LOW</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>125</td>
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</table>

We have taken the following case for test.

\[ H_0 : p = \frac{1}{2} \text{ Vs. } H_1 : p > \frac{1}{2} \]

That means our null hypothesis is that the proportion of the people belonging to three income groups (high, middle, and low) is equal to \( \frac{1}{2} \) against the alternative hypothesis that the proportion of people belonging to all income groups is greater than \( \frac{1}{2} \) with respect to being member of any para-political institution.

Our test statistic is
Thus we reject the null hypothesis at 5% level and accept the alternative hypothesis ($p > \frac{1}{2}$).

Data relating to question B (taking part in meetings, debates, discussions of any interest group and influencing its decision-making process)

Table 7.28

<table>
<thead>
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<th>H I G</th>
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<th>L I G</th>
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<td>No</td>
<td>61</td>
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<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</table>

We have taken the following case for test.

$H_0 : p = \frac{1}{2}$ vs. $H_1 : p > \frac{1}{2}$

That means here our null hypothesis is that the proportion of people belonging to all income groups (high, middle, and low) is equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ against the alternative hypothesis that the proportion of people of all income groups is greater than $\frac{1}{2}$ with respect to taking part in meetings, debates, discussions of Kisan Sabha or any other interest group to which they belong to and influencing the decision-making process.
Our test statistic is

\[ T = \frac{\hat{p} - \frac{1}{2}}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{n} \cdot p \cdot q}} \]

and we get \( T = 5.724 \)

Thus we reject the null hypothesis at 5% level and accept the alternative hypothesis \( (p > \frac{1}{2}) \) mentioned above.

Summary:

Question - A: \( p > \frac{1}{2} \)

Question - B: \( p > \frac{1}{2} \)

These statistical findings indicate that more than 50% rural people (of all income groups) are the members of any para-political organisation and take part in the debates and discussions of such organisation and try to influence the decision-making process.

This finding approves our hypothesis-2.

In the rural areas of West Bengal it is found that in order to preserve their existing socio-economic status and influence in the society and to promote their feudal interests, the people of high income group are found more to persist in their early voting preferences and party ideologies which are rightist in nature and interested in protecting the interest of the wealthy section.
On the contrary, in order to improve their socio-economic status, the people of low income group, too, persist in their early voting preferences and party ideologies which are leftist in nature and interested in promoting the welfare of the socio-economically backward sections of the society.

Thus the people belonging to these different income strata, are found more to persist in their early voting preferences and party ideologies for two different specific purposes unlike the people belonging to middle income group who rather fluctuate in casting their votes and consequently apply their prudence in this respect.

On the basis of this discussion we can draw the following hypothesis:

(3) The people of high and low income groups are more persistent in their early voting preferences than the people belonging to middle income group.

To test this hypothesis we asked the following question to the rural people of Nadia district.

Did you cast your votes for the same political party in all the elections? Yes/No

Table 7.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>H I G</th>
<th>M I G</th>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>125</td>
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<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We have taken the two cases in the following to test the hypothesis.

Case I

\[ H_0 : P_H = P_M \text{ Vs. } H_1 : P_H > P_M \]

That means our null hypothesis is that the proportion of people belonging to high income group is equal to the proportion of people belonging to middle income group against the alternative hypothesis that the proportion of people belonging to high income group is greater than the proportion of the people belonging to middle income group in respect of casting votes for the same political party in all previous elections.

Our test statistic is

\[ T = \frac{\hat{P}_H - \hat{P}_M}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{1}{n_H} + \frac{1}{n_M}\right)p_q}} \]

and we get \( T = 8.999 \)

Thus we reject the null hypothesis at 5% level and accept the alternative hypothesis \( (P_H > P_M) \).

Case II

\[ H_0 : P_L = P_M \text{ Vs. } H_1 : P_L > P_M \]

Here our null hypothesis is that the proportion of people belonging to low income group is equal to the proportion of people belonging to middle income group against the alternative hypothesis that the proportion of people belonging to low income
group is greater than the proportion of people belonging to middle income group with respect to casting votes for the same political party in all previous elections.

Our test statistic is

\[ T = \frac{\hat{P}_L - \hat{P}_M}{\sqrt{\left(\frac{1}{n_L} + \frac{1}{n_M}\right) \cdot \hat{p} \cdot \hat{q}}} \]

and we get \( T = 5.931 \)

Thus we reject the null hypothesis at 5% level of significance and accept the alternative hypothesis \( (P_L > P_M) \).

Summary:

Case I: \( P_H > P_M \)
Case II: \( P_L > P_M \)

These findings indicate that the people of both high and low income groups are more persistent in their early voting preference than the people belonging to middle income group.

This finding approves our hypothesis.

Democracy encompasses both agreement and disagreement in social atmosphere. Disagreement, usually, leads to conflictual political situation both during election and non-election periods. In the rural areas of West Bengal clashes among the political parties, especially during election periods with respect to their respective ideology propaganda and voters' mobilization are the
most frequent phenomenon and this should be taken into account as an active political participation. However, in all elections, especially in panchayat elections, tension assumes a high rate and the people are found to be involved in both physical and psychological conflict.

During non-election periods, too, people belonging to different party colours are found to be involved in conflictual situation relating to ownership of land as well as eviction from the land. In the rural West Bengal, the implementation of land reform programmes have struck a great blow in the root of feudal hegemony of the past centuries. The people of high income group are the most severely affected. Thus the abolition of Zamindary system, introduction of land ceiling Acts, distribution of pattas on vested lands, the programme of operation barga, etc., all these land reforms measures have forced most of the rural people to face direct confrontation with each other and thereby getting involved into conflictual political situation in which the rural people are guided by their respective parties and the latter provide them with support and get their problems solved. This signifies the participation on the part of the people in the functional process of the political parties.

On the basis of this discussion we can draw a hypothesis as the following:

(4) Most of the rural people are more or less involved in conflictual political situation.
To test this hypothesis we prepared the following question for the rural respondents.

*Have you ever got involved in any conflictual political situation? Yes/No*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 7.4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIG</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We have taken the following case for study.

\[ H_0 : p = \frac{1}{2} \text{ Vs. } H_1 : p > \frac{1}{2} \]

Here our null hypothesis is that the proportion of rural people belonging to all income groups is equal to \( \frac{1}{2} \) against the alternative hypothesis that the proportion of rural people belonging to all income groups is greater than \( \frac{1}{2} \) in relation to involving in any conflictual political situation.

Our test statistic is

\[ T = \frac{\hat{p} - \frac{1}{2}}{\sqrt{\frac{1}{n} \cdot p \cdot q}} \]

and we get \( T = 4.562 \)

Thus we reject null hypothesis at 5% level of significance and accept the alternative hypothesis \( ( p > \frac{1}{2} ) \).
Therefore this statistical finding indicates that more than 50% people belonging to all income groups are involved in conflictual political situation in the rural areas of West Bengal.

This finding approves our hypothesis-4.

We have already pointed out that the party institution has deeply been ingrained into the soil of rural West Bengal. The people of rural areas are either supporter or member or money-contributor or at least sympathiser of their respective political parties. However this kind of participatory attitude is usually found both in election and non-election periods in our participant democratic society. We asked the following question for this purpose:

Are you a supporter/sympathiser/member/money-contributor of any political party? Yes/No

Table 7.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HIG</th>
<th>MIG</th>
<th>LIG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporter</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathiser</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money-contributor</td>
<td>03</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HIG</th>
<th>MIG</th>
<th>LIG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supporter</td>
<td>69.60</td>
<td>60.00</td>
<td>75.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathiser</td>
<td>8.80</td>
<td>15.20</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member</td>
<td>15.20</td>
<td>14.40</td>
<td>8.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money-contributor</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>10.40</td>
<td>4.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This table shows that the most of the rural people of each income group are the supporters of their respective political parties.

This table also presents the fact that the rural people are not apathetic as well as parochial. They are either supporters or members or money-contributors or at least sympathisers. Thus they are either directly or indirectly involved in the functional process of the political parties.

The concept of democratic decentralization with the diffusion of power-structure from top to bottom of people's participation in the rural areas of West Bengal has created a new flow of energy and enthusiasm in the field of participation.

Thus in the rural areas of West Bengal, the people, especially belonging to middle and low income groups are more interested in taking part in the local political periphery of Panchayati Raj Institutions rather than the national and state political process because their immediate local interests are served by the local governments where the authoritative allocation of resources is found just in the state and national level.

In the rural scene, several interest groups of peasants, artisans, occupational caste cluster, are found to create pressure on the panchayats to get their interests fulfilled.
The rural people are also found to be active to create pressure on the upper levels of governments like national and state through launching blockade on roads, demonstration before offices, strikes, etc. However in this case, the people belonging to high income group are found to express greater interest and enthusiasm by taking pioneering role.

However the participatory role of the rural political leaders is significant in respect of organising the rural people for the participation in the political process. Besides this, they help the village masses to understand their respective party ideologies and objectives and other political problems and matters of their locality. Moreover, during elections they inform the techniques of using ballot papers for casting votes in the polling stations in which their names have been registered. This type of engagement in the voting arrangement in the rural areas of West Bengal bears a great significance not only in the study of political participation but also in the study of the process of political socialization. Thus both the process of socialization as well as participation go on side by side.
REFERENCES


2. Ibid., P. 69.


8. Ibid., P. 132.


