CHAPTER II

POLITICAL ALIENATION: A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Studies in political alienation seem to have drawn heavily from empirical work on voting behaviour and political decision-making processes. Conclusions drawn on the basis of studies in these areas have thrown some side-light on political alienation phenomenon as well.

A good deal of analysis of political alienations, however, in modern times, comes from the mass society theorists. They have shown concern with the growing sense of powerlessness. Mention may here be made of the theoretical formulations of C. Wright Mills, William Kornhauser and Robert Nisbet.

Mills's (1951) analysis of the power elite was suggestive of the phenomenon of political alienation in the sense of powerlessness. He also sought to analyse the characteristic emergence of this phenomenon in the growing democratization in America, but his analysis went a step further than that of Tocqueville and Fromm. He lamented that the modern democratic society in America was fast developing into a mass society, in which the levers of political power were controlled more by the power elite rather than by the masses. The power elite, through their control of media of mass communication, were increasingly able to manipulate the tastes and opinions of the masses. In this situation the masses remained only at the receiving end and could not answer back. Thus, the power
elite manipulated to remain at the top while at the bottom in the mass, the individual remained powerless to influence events and institutions. Mills stated, "It is not only that institutions of power have become large scale and inaccessibly centralised; they have at the same time become less political and more administrative, and it is within this great change of framework that the organised public had worked."

Kornhauser (1959) also suggested that, in a mass society, the alienates might be mobilised by some political elites and may pose a serious danger to the existing political system. In a mass society there was a heightened readiness to form hyper-attachments to symbols and leaders. This situation of mass society lead to (a) showing atomization (loss of community); (b) widespread readiness to embrace new ideologies (quest for community); and (c) totalitarianism (total domination by pseudo-community. In this universe of discourse, mass society was a condition in which elite domination replaced democratic rule. Mass society was objectively the atomised society and subjectively the alienated population. Alienation heightened responsiveness to the appeal of the mass movements...people who were atomised readily become mobilised. "If many people felt ineffective in public affairs, it was no small part due to the complexity of public problems and events, rather than the result of the lack of opportunity to engage in political activities."
Kornhauser observed that a feeling of political importance did not stem from the powerlessness of the individual alone.... The sense of ineffectiveness resulted also from the difficulty for citizens to meet and speak together in public realm dominated by issues of great complexity and by impersonal means of communication. Political apathy appeared to be in large part a response to the resulting distance between the citizen and the locus of major events.

Misbet(1962) also regarded totalitarianism as a process of the annihilation of individuality. The individual, in fact, becomes powerless. Totalitarianism resulted in the atomization of old values and associations. But these did not have, for long, an associational vacuum. The genius of totalitarian leadership lay in its profound awareness that human personality could not tolerate moral isolation. It lays further in its knowledge that absolute and relentless power would be acceptable only when it came to see the only available form of community and membership. This, Misbet regarded as due to the fatal affinity of power and individual loneliness. He quoted from Hitler, who sensed this affinity in his early career. Hitler wrote in his Mein Kampf: "The mass meeting is necessary only for the reason that in it the individual who is becoming an adherent of a new movement feels lonely and is easily seized with the fear of being alone, receives for the first time the picture of a greater
community. Something that has a strengthening effect upon most people." Thus, Mises felt that knowing the basic psychological truth that life apart from some sense of membership in a larger order was intolerable for most people. Thus leaders of the total state direct their energies not just to the destruction of the old order but to the manufacture of the new. This new order was the absolute, the total, political community. The absolute political communities centralised and omnipotent, founded upon the atomised masses, in turn, destroyed all those autonomies and immunities that were in normal society the indispensable sources of the capacity for freedom and organisation. Thus total political centralisation lead to a state of political isolation or say political apathy or alienation.

Mention may also be made of the active contributions made by such political scientists as Plato, Machiaville, Hobbes, Grotius, Locke, Rousseau, Paine, Hegel, Marx, Tocqueville, Mill, Fromm, etc., whose global thinking provided the basis on which the late research workers could design their studies. Modern empirical researches in the field of political alienation have derived their vitality from the thinking helped in understanding the issues pertaining to political alienation, as for example, origin of political alienation, nature of political alienation and the etiology of political alienation. Although, these thinkers have showed
wide variations with regard to their views on political alienation phenomenon, they have helped in examining the problem from different angles — social, political, economic, sociological, psychological, anthropological and the like. But, how far their thinking and theories have matched realities in the political field require that these are subjected to a thorough examination.

Interest in the study of political alienation seems to have developed after Campbell et al., (1954). Since then, numerous studies have been designed with different hypothetical models, experimental procedures, research strategies, samples and variables. Surely these efforts on the part of research workers have been responsible for bringing the political alienation phenomenon from a purely subjective arm-chair philosophical mental groove to an objective and empirical behavioural domain. Campbell's study was primarily designed to analyse the behaviour of the voters in the Presidential election of United States, 1952. Why an individual voter does or does not vote, Campbell thought, would provide an answer as to his political involvement or alienation. Voters who deviated from predominant tendencies of their major social-group affiliation have been characterized by Campbell as deviant cases. The characterization of the dominant cases by Campbell and associates approximates to the behaviour of a politically alienated individual. Two other concepts which find place in his discussion of deviant cases are those of
political responsibility" and "political efficacy." After Campbell and associates, an important study of political alienation was conducted by Levin (1960). He found that "alienation is related to anomie and personal disorganisation, but that it is not identical with them." According to him, alienation might be expressed through 'rational activism', 'projection', 'withdrawal', and 'identification with a charismatic leader.'

Levin's theoretical framework of political alienation revolved around his concept of political maturity. Levin called "political maturity" as the ability of an individual to handle feelings of political alienation through rational rather than regressive mechanism." He believed that political maturity could be achieved if a person perceived 'realities of the political structure, political goals which were protentially operational, and attempted to develop institutions through which goals might be realised. Horton (1960), in a cross-cultural study of political alienation, found that alienation was a factor of protest voting to the extent that the alienated were power conscious. Following these theoretical and empirical early works on political alienation, a good number of studies have been conducted on political alienation with a view to analyzing the voting or political behaviour of the voters or citizens in different cultural settings. Mention may here be made of