CHAPTER V

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Democratic governance stands for governance in the interest of the people and for their overall development. The nature and extent of political participation determines the effectiveness of democratic governance. In this respect political parties play a crucial role. Political parties are primarily responsible for democratizing the entire process of governance. Political party constitute an institutional mechanism through which people express their views on public affairs for the consideration of government.

Political parties play an important role in formulating public policies. Politicians have preferences over policies if their reward from holding office or the probability of reelection depends on the policies they adopt.\(^1\) Peoples’ active participation in politics makes political parties responsive to the popular needs. Voters must be able to vote out of office parties responsible for bad performance, and the parties they select must be able to enter government.\(^2\) Participation is simultaneously an assertion of control over governments by those who have elected them.\(^3\) A democratic society allows those classes which formerly took a passive part in political life. It expect the participation of almost all people in the process of running the government. Popular participation should not be reduced only to take part in elections, because quality of voting is ensured by continuous

\(^2\) Ibid. p. 48.
participation of the people in political affairs. To R.C. Dutt, participation “involves the central notion of political accountability in two ways: as responsive political authority, and as limits on the exercise of power”. It enables men by giving them a sense of their own dignity and value, alerts both rulers and ruled to their duties and responsibilities, and broadens political understanding.

The study of both the political parties participation and popular participation in the political process is crucial for the proper understanding of democratic governance. Popular participation and political parties participation are interlinked. We cannot study any one without the knowledge of the other.

Political parties’ participation or popular participation is a complex phenomenon, which depends on a number of variables, responsible for increasing or decreasing their interest in political participation. Important among them are social, political and psychological variables. These variables also differ from country to country and from time to time. An attempt has been made here to analyze the effect of these variables on participation in Indian context.

In the social variable we can include education, occupation, income, age, race, religion, sex, mobility and residence which have an effect on participation. Obviously, it includes social and economic status of people.

The theory of social environment emphasizes that race, religion, caste, sex,
education, age, occupation, residence, mobility, etc., play an important role in the political participation and affect the political behavior of individuals and groups.\textsuperscript{6} In the Indian politics, "age and influence, age and power and age and performance will go hand in hand. It could be hypothesized that "the older the age, the greater is their influence in the political process."\textsuperscript{7}

Table 5.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>No.of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>18-20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>21-30</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>28.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>36.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>18.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>51 &amp; Above</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>314</td>
<td></td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table 5.1 reveals that people at the age group of 31-40 participate more actively in political activities than the people from age group of 18-20. While the percentage of respondents is 36.94 per cent in case of age group between 31 to 40, which is only 4.78 per cent in case of age groups between 18 to 20. Again with the increasing age active


\textsuperscript{7} G. Palanthurai, \textit{People's Perception of Politics: An Indian Perspective}, Kanishka Publishers, Delhi, 1995, p.28.
participation decreases. From the above table it is found that people actively participate in politics in the middle ages than in the youth and old ages.

Apart from age, income, occupation, availability of leisure, education, etc., influence political participation of the people. It may be a participation as leader or follower. It is generally believed that participation tends to be higher among well educated, higher occupational and income groups. Men’s participation in political activities is higher than women’s participation. Dominant ethnic and religious groups and urban people take more interest in politics than people of lower caste and living in villages and tribes. This low participation among the villages and tribes and among the lower castes may be due to lack of proper communication and information facilities. Studies have revealed that not all people are equally interested in politics.

For a long time in India people belonging to low castes were denied most of the facilities like good education, access to temple, and many such activities of social nature. They were also not allowed to mix-up with the higher caste groups. Such inhuman treatment made them detached from the mainstream of life. After independence special privileges were provided to them, which slowly increased their social status and interest in political matters. In practice, because of adult franchise many social groups have become aware of their numerical strength and bargaining power, and have realized that they are in a position to put considerable pressure. Numerical strength of castes can be used to put pressure on government to achieve its

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sectarian interest which ultimately contributes to change the power structure. Hence, using the relative numerical strength on the basis of caste, different groups have been able to maintain their own political identity, to overthrow the dominant and vital group or groups from seats of political power and to improve their own socio-economic position.\textsuperscript{9} Individuals and groups which have lost their earlier social status under modernization and democratic process use the same democratic institutions as a means to reassert their historic positions in new forms.\textsuperscript{10} The implementation of Mandal Commission report in 1989 seems that it brought some changes in their social, political and economic life. It also affected drastically Indian political process. Individuals and groups which had been subjected to inequality and deprivation take active role in modern democratic politics in order to overcome inequalities and deprivation.\textsuperscript{11}

Political environment has its own effect on political participation. Individual factors like general interest, economic interest, psychological environment and a sense of competition affects political participation. Political environment that includes party system, elections, nature of campaign, issues of public importance, ideologies, etc., influence political participation. Wide spread participation is presumably further discouraged when the major parties are large, loosely knit brokerage agencies which lack enrolled membership, effective discipline, or vital centers for adopting

\textsuperscript{10} R.T. Jangam, S.H. Patil and S.S. Patagundi, Supra no.6, p.116.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid. p. 6.
party policy. The presence of a large number of political parties perhaps confused the Indian electorate. There were totally 718 political parties in 2004 general elections. Regional parties, which are better representing the regional interests, are getting more prominence over national parties in their respective regions. As a result of this, the task of national parties to influence the voter has become difficult. The umbrella character of the Congress party held different factions together. But, with the decline of Congress, no party was able to hold different factions together. In recent years the BJP has been struggling to be a party of common people. The party is mainly based on Hindutva ideology, it realized the fact that Hindutva alone would not lead the party to power. The strategy of the BJP is to attract the votes of all sections of people like Muslim or Women, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, etc.

The implementation of policy may also have different impact on different people. "It means that political participation cannot flourish until and unless the citizens by reason of his privileged position in society and effective relation to the polity, finds it advantageous to work within the existing socio-political set-up. Heinz Evlen defines this type of political participation as the 'politics of happiness'." The people who are benefited by it may feel more interested in politics than those who are not benefited and vice versa.

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13 R. P. Verma, Supra no. 9, p. 3.
If some segments in the society are benefited by government policies for a long time their interest in politics may diminish. The groups who feel continuously neglected may become more active and pressurize the government to fulfill their demands. This was what happened in Indian politics after 1989. The 1989 election was a landmark in Indian political history. Regional aspirations, which were so far neglected by the dominant Congress party, got their voice represented in the regional parties. As a result of this regional parties started getting more importance thereafter and the status of national parties started declining.

The implementation of the Mandal Commission report by V.P.Singh government brought a number of changes in Indian politics. Subsequently the backward class and castes groups got more representation in every walk of life and got a say more effectively in government decisions. The following table shows that in Indian polity, major segments is represented by backward and most backward groups.

Table 5.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>No.of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>FC</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>BC&amp; MBC</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>75.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>SC/ST</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>22.29</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>314</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since 1989 no party can dream of getting elected without the support of the backward castes and classes. At present caste is not only a determinant of social status, but has become a deciding factor in the electoral politics. Tribals, Women and many such groups are also demanding more and more share in power.

Beliefs of the people are changing very fast. Now the upper caste or class cannot claim its dominance over the inferior castes or class. Women now are not confining themselves to the household activities. They are demanding equal power with men. Changes in the social and political environment may also be one of the reasons for the change in the psychology of these groups. These groups are becoming aware of their political rights and demanding more and more share in power. So, they can better represent their interest. Political participation, therefore, will increase the extent to which a nation is democratic only insofar as such participation involves at some point influence by the participant over governmental decisions.14

In general psychological variables may be thought of as those stemming from individual personality trait (whether primarily constitutional – genetic or primarily learned) and from cognitive structure, which in this case prevent certain characteristic ways of conceptualizing the self and surrounding socio-political world.15

15 David L. Sills (ed.), *Supra no. 5*, p. 258.
POLITICAL PARTIES’ PARTICIPATION:

Political participation in order to be effective and integrative needs to be organized in political institutions. Political institutions, which are differentiated from social structures, can perform the task of organizing and integrating political participation and relating it to society-wide policy-making process. Political party is one of such important institutions.

Most of the works on political participation deal with popular participation, while political parties’ participation gained scant attention of the scholars. Political parties participation is significant in democratic governance because, political parties provide major channels of linkage between citizens and policy makers. Opinion polls in India have repeatedly shown that people generally prefer to vote for party candidates than independent candidate. The table 5.3 highlights this fact.

Over the thirteen general elections to the Lok Sabha, the number of independent candidates getting elected has declined considerably. The above table reveals that though the number of independent candidates contesting Lok Sabha elections is considerably increasing, the number of candidates who get elected is declining. The number of candidates who had contested elections in 1952 was 849 while elected candidates to Lok Sabha in 1952 was 36. While the number of independents contesting elections in 1999 increased to 1,945 but the number of candidates got elected has come down to 6. But, in 2004 general election 137* independents got elected. The

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total No. of Independent Candidates</th>
<th>Elected</th>
<th>Percentage forfeiting deposits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>849</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>59.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>667</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>51.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>78.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>865</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>86.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1,134</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>94.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>1,224</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>97.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>2,821</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>98.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>3,792</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>98.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>3,712</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>98.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>5,687</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>99.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>10,635</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>99.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1,915</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>99.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>1,945</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>99.33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A sudden increase in the number of independent candidates may be due to the factional politics. Usually the candidates who do not get party tickets are contesting the elections as independent candidates. This also is an important indicator of candidates’ zeal for power. Ideologies, principles, policies and values are sidetracked by the leaders. Their only aim is to attain power. Thus, though the effective participation of political parties is significant in the democratic governance of India, their functioning is not satisfactory. In some cases leaders and candidates are more influential than the party. By and large, parties are more influential than the candidates. Parties are dominated by the leadership and parties get identified by leaders.
Contesting election is an important form of political participation of parties. Political parties contact and register voters, select candidates, organize the campaign and tell supporters what to believe on issues and how to vote. "Parties themselves are often non-democratic in their internal functioning, and even if they are democratic to some extent party bosses play unjustifiably predominant role." Party bosses decide as to who should contest the election which tends to deprive the people of their right to choose those whom they believe to be their real representatives.

Political parties choose candidates for election. Sizable body of research has shown that participation is associated with political awareness, that is, actual knowledge of political affairs. The candidate should be a person with character and wisdom and well aware of the problems of the people in his/her respective constituency. But, in reality, it is different. Caste, class, religion, language, money power and many other factors play a vital role in selecting the party candidate for election.

Campaign is one of the regular modes of activity during elections. "The campaigners are the activists of the party and exercise greater influence in party politics than the ordinary voter, The outcome of the elections, to some extent, depends on the nature of the campaigners and campaigning." Campaign activities of political parties may educate the voters about the problems confronting the country. They also promise of

* the number is derived from http://www.indian-elections.com/resultsupdate/
17 David L.Sills (ed.), Supra no.5, p.258.
18 Keerat Joshi, in Subhash C. Kashyap (ed.), Supra no. 18, p.123.
solution of these various problems. Political leaders try to capture the minds of the people by attractive slogans and appealing speeches. "Slogans like "Gribi Hatao" in 1974, democracy itself in 1977, a government that promised to work in 1980, the slogan of taking the nation into twenty-first century in 1984, the promise of a revolution in 1989, stability in 1991,1996". For the BJP it was "corruption free government" in 1989 when it was an ally of National Front government, the reality of coalition culture and promise of good governance in 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2004 elections.

Political parties educate the voters, nominate candidates for election and by helping to conduct elections they provide opportunities to the members of less favoured class for upward mobility. They make known to the people their policies and programmes on which it contesting elections and assure them of its fulfillment after getting to power. Parties or candidates make policy proposals during campaigns and explain how these policies would affect citizens’ welfare. In electoral campaigns parties propose policies and project the personality of candidates. The questions we need to examine are whether (a) electoral campaigns are informative, that is, voters can justifiably expect that parties would do what they proposed, and (b) pursuing the winning platform, the mandate, is always in the best interest of voters. Politicians want to get elected and reelected. Political

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22 Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes and Bernard Manin, Supra no.1, pp.32-33.
23 Ibid. p.30.
parties expect that voters are vigilant about how they pursue the policies that they offered in their election campaign. If politicians know the preferences of the decisive voters, they offer a platform that coincides with this preferences. If they expect that voters’ preferences will not change or that these preferences will be confirmed by observing the outcomes of implementing the mandate (Huntington 1993a), then the incumbents pursue the announced policy in quest of reelection.24

Up to a point parties bring individuals and groups under their influence in their effort to create, coordinate and mobilize public opinion.25 Political parties therefore are mainly engaged in propagating their programmes and policies, which are important principal means of appealing to the masses. They organize public meetings, rallies, processions, morchas and jathas, dharas, gheraos, signature campaigns, submit memorandums and pass resolutions, door to door canvassing, persuading voters to go to polling booths to vote for their candidates and organizing procession. “The activities of parties aimed at creating public opinion are always organized around their programme. The programme of a party is a collection of its views on topics of national and international importance, and a formal expression of the socio-politico-economic changes it proposes to introduce in conformity with its ideological tenets for the general well being of society. The programme is mainly the product of its doctrine, the image of its socio-economic ideals, and provides a firm basis

24 Ibid., pp.32-33.
and justification for its actions, aimed at securing durable public confidence.”

Campaigners adopt various means to canvass for their parties and candidates. These means are used to mobilize people in their favour. The effectiveness of the means of campaign depends on social composition of society and the level of technological development. Among all campaign techniques most effective is the face-to-face communication with voters. The popularity and the charisma of the candidate is a contributing factor in campaign. Campaign chiefly reaches the faithful, crystallizing partisanship and reinforcing the intention of committed party adherents to vote and to pursue others to vote.

Interest articulation and aggregation functions of political parties are crucial for democratic governance. “Unless interests are aggregated how can a legislator articulate in the decision making forum? So, it is an imperative need to have contact with the constituents either through his representatives or by himself or through party nominee to aggregate their demands. Whether the people feel it or not, legislator has to do it as he has to play a representative role in the legislative body”. Parties are institutions that seek to represent more than a single narrow interest in the society. It is true that most of the parties attempt to aggregate a range of interest in society but the experience with some of the regional parties in

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26 Ibid, p. 320.
28 David L.Sills(ed.), Supra no.5, p.258
29 G.Palanthurai, Supra no.7, p.76.
India is different. They represent interest of some sections in their region and become popular in their respective regions.

Since the society remains stratified into the privileged and the underprivileged and the power resources remain unequally distributive, a system of conflicting interests remains in the society. It is believed that, the under-privileged or the deprived sections of the society can best participate through their respective socio-political organizations who work as vanguards of their interests. It is related to world wide acceptance that political parties primarily represent interests of a particular class or classes. The literature on the subject indicates that almost all the rightist parties, directly or indirectly, have been supported by different interest groups representing a mixture of racial, religious and class interest. Historically it can be proved that the rightist parties have been representing the vested interests of the classes they represent. In India, political parties or groups like the RSS, the Hindu Mahasabha, the Jana Sangh, the Muslim League, etc., are known as the rightist groups or parties. They are supporting the aims and interests of particular communities in India.

On the other hand, the left oriented parties mostly represent the interests of deprived people who constitute a major section of the society. They are supposed to be an instrument of social change. These parties have been struggling for equality, democratization and mass-participation in all

31 R.P. Verma, Supra no.9, p.4.
34 R.P.Verma, Supra no.9, p.5.
sphere of social action. They have been mobilizing the masses through their organizations and respective trade unions to fight for equality and justice and to demand for their legitimate upliftment.\textsuperscript{35} In India Forward Bloc, CPI and CPI(M) are the leftist parties struggling for the upliftment of the deprived people. Congress is considered as the centrist party.

Indian society is heterogeneous in character. Different classes and groups have their own interest. There is a tendency towards a ‘catch-all’ electoral strategy amongst parties.\textsuperscript{36} They try to appeal to each and every section of the people. The party which wants be get elected has to give proper representation to each section and group of people. Party manifestos have to be carefully prepared by political parties, which highlight their position on different issues and policies. Promises made by parties in their manifestos are not binding on them. Usually, they get prominence at the time of elections.

**ELECTORAL POLITICS IN INDIA:**

The nature of electoral politics may be regarded as an indicator of political participation of parties. Electoral issues indicate how parties articulate and aggregate the interest of people. Performing the function of interest articulation and aggregation by parties demonstrate the nature of their political participation. Often political parties seek the support of the people by superficially explaining their ideologies, programmes and achievements and at the same time highlighting on the failures and

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, p.5
\textsuperscript{36} Alan Ware, Supra no.30, p.267.
shortcomings of other parties. These always take backseat in electoral politics. Thus they politicize citizens and involve them in various political activities. They swing the opinion of people in favor of or against a particular issue.\(^{37}\)

Political parties raise different issues at the time of election and convert them as electoral issue. In India caste, class, religion, language, communal tensions, foreign origin, Kargil war issue, were politicized by the political parties. Almost all the studies on political parties in the Indian context have at length discussed the role of religion, caste, linguistic ties and community orders, as the most important determining factors for influencing the electoral behaviour of person.\(^{38}\) "Parties are framed and identified on basis of caste, communal and regional feelings instead of seeking identification with national problems and issues. The emergence of the BJP as a political force is largely accredited to the religious issues such as Ram Mandir and Hindutva awakening.\(^{39}\) Similarly, the voting behavioural pattern of Muslims is greatly influenced by religious sentiments. Issues of national importance are getting scant attention from people where communal tensions prevail. As a result of this, we come across communalization and regionalization of Indian politics.

In the Indian political history religion has been a very powerful tool for mobilizing large sections of the masses and such other communities that are prone to religious sentiments. Since independence the Sikh-Party has

\(^{38}\) R.P. Verma, Supra no.9, p.12.
\(^{39}\) Suprabha V. Sahai, in Subhash C. Kashyap (ed.), Supra no.18, p.33.
been demanding ‘Sikhistan’, a separate state for the Sikhs. Since such a communal demand in the post-independence phase has been politically inopportunen, the demand for a ‘Sikhistan’ found itself distinguished in one for a ‘Punjabi’ speaking state.40 In an effort to encounter the Akali’s demands, the Hindu organizations like the Jana Sangha and the Hindu Mahasabha demanded the creation of Maha-Punjab so as to diminish the proportion of Sikhs.41

Sometimes national political parties are also using linguistic issues for their political gain. For example, “The local unit of the Congress in the Tamil-speaking district of Travancore-Coachin supported such a demand and broke away from the parent organization and formed the Tamil Congress in order to press in order to press for the merger of their area with the neighbouring Tamil-speaking State of Madras.”42

However, the role played by casteism in Indian politics is not so simple, because caste under constitutional provisions can be organized to form formal associations to win benefits for themselves.43 Any caste may support as single political party or it may play an independent political role as in the case of the Kammas in Andhra supporting overwhelmingly the Communist Party of India.44 Sometimes two different castes become opposed to each other and act as political opponents to each other such as

40 R.P. Verma, Supra no. 9, p.7.
42 Ibid. pp.61-62.
43 R.P. Verma, Supra no.9, p.10.
predominantly non-Brahmin, Dravid Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) of Tamil Nadu and the Brahmin-dominated Congress Party in the state. According to The Times of India: "Admittedly the Congress is the most caste-ridden of the Indian political parties, whose factions always revolve around personalities and caste. It selects its electoral candidates, ministers and even judges on the basis of castes, shows caste preference in almost all appointments. Its ministers show favors to their own caste men." 

"Since the boundaries of caste system more or less overlap those of the class structure of India, we find that different castes of the same class status collaborate with each other and display mutual help in protecting their common interests. The main forces working in favor of this trend are: (a) increasing industrialization and urbanization, (b) increasing literacy and social mobility, (c) strong communication channels. All these factors have been found quite effective in developing interest oriented political consciousness among the masses." 

"Paul Brass, in his study of the industrial Kanpoor City, has pointed out that the Communist Party was able to increase its influence in all occupational categories cutting across the boundaries of different castes and communities. It reflects the increasing orientation of class interests among the voters. He further writes that the voters were influenced by anti-establishment slogans and they preferred a

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45 R.P. Verma, Supra no.9, p.10.
46 Ibid. p.9.
47 Ibid. p.11.
Communist supported candidate, a trade unionist against the Congress party.\textsuperscript{48}

Religion can be used by the political parties for the political mobilization of citizens. Some groups or parties in India had mobilized the people for political participation in the name of Ram Janmabhoomi and Babri Masjid in India. Certain political parties in India are founded on the basis of religions and have mobilized their supporters for political participation.\textsuperscript{49} Caste and religion have become a powerful divisive forces in politics because all major democratic parties and leading social classes have fought their political battle of legitimacy on caste and religious basis.\textsuperscript{50} Political parties have successfully exploited these sentiments of the people for gaining electoral support and for their political mobilization. “There is a regular and organized effort to politicize these feelings of the people. But, parties which avowedly stand for it have so far failed to achieve much success”.\textsuperscript{51} For instance, the BJP played its card more on Hindutva for some time it succeeded in attracting large section of Hindu votes but to attain power at the center it had to sidetrack its ideology. The party realized: “it is only by moving away from the Hindutva bogey that the party could realize its dream of emerging as a real alternative to both the Congress and NF-LF kind of coalition and assume power at the center”.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid. pp.11-12.
\textsuperscript{49} R.T.Jangam, S.H.Patil and S.S.Patagundi, Supra no.6, p.118.
\textsuperscript{51} Surendranath Dwivedy, Indian Political Scenario, \textit{Janata}, 51(21), October 13, 1996, p.5.
\textsuperscript{52} Rjani Kothari, Interpreting 1996-II, \textit{Janata}, 51(15), August 18, 1996, p.11.
Little efforts have been made to rule out political parties from gaining electoral advantages by indirectly appealing to voters on the ground of religion, castes and sub-castes etc. The goal of efficiency in the performance of the government and scope of open entry through merit is being consciously traded off with that of allocation and distribution of opportunities to various groups on a caste basis.\(^5\)

During elections political parties are not throwing up far reaching debates on crucial issues of public importance. The political agenda charted out by parties set the term for debate; these terms are conceived either in trans-class terms viz., populism, or on the immediate issues- corruption, price-rise, national unity, etc.\(^4\) In India political parties relegate policy issues to background and often adopt populist techniques to secure attention of masses.\(^5\) For example after the death of Nehru, Indira Gandhi used the populist method to attract the voters. In the beginning they provided good results but in the long run they failed to provide the expected result. More stress on the populism tends to the subordination of organizational base of the party. Persons' near and dear to the party high command were given the ministerial berth. Rajiv Gandhi tried to strengthen the organization of Congress party but could not be successful. With the weak organizational base of the Congress party, its support base declined. Congress party started losing its hold over the people. This is not the case only with the Congress party but most of the political parties in India lack effective

\(^3\) R.C.Dutt, Supra no.3, p.161.
\(^4\) Ibid. p.149.
\(^5\) P.R.Dubhashi, in Subhash C. Kashap (ed.), Supra no.18, p.88.
organization base and more inclined towards populist measures to attract the voters.

"Generally, political parties through their organizational and propaganda technique would transmit the issues of the society, polity, economy, culture and religion to the people periodically and keep the mass alive in political issues of political action. But it is a major perplexing question whether political parties are really highlighting the issues that are confronting the society?"  

When asked about whether political parties are really interested in bringing issues to the people? 71.34 per cent said political parties are not bringing issues to the people. Table 5.4 explains such facts.

*Table 5.4*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.No.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>90</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>71.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The above table is drawn from the sample survey conducted by G. Palanthurai. Source: G. Palanthurai, People's Perception of Politics: An Indian Perspective, Kanishka, Publishers, Delhi, 1995, p.28.*

The above table indicates that only a small section of people that is 28.66 per cent believe that political parties bring issues of public importance to the people. Political parties hardly provide knowledge about
the major issues confronting the country. "As a consequence the common voter hardly knows anything about the major issues involved or the challenges before the nation when he casts his vote. For example economic reforms for liberalization, privatization and globalization have been the most important issues influencing the fortune of the voters but they have never been issues in the several general elections held during the last decade. How can then the citizen understand the implications of economic reforms or extend their co-operation for making a success of economic reform."57

All these adversely influence inter-party and intra-party competition. As a result of the nature of inter-party and intra-party competition, the political participation of parties as well as people has become mechanical/formal. Nature of party politics may have serious implications for the functioning of democratic governance in India. Politics played by parties in Parliament has weakened the democratic spirit in decision making process and outside the parliament the nature of party politics is adversely affecting the participatory role of political parties.

Basically party politics is nothing but the interaction among political parties. This interaction among political parties is affected by the policies, programmes, ideologies of different political parties. The nature of party politics drastically changed since 1970s. Soon after independence Congress came to power in Centre as well as in almost all States and remained in

57 P.R.Dubhashi, in Subhash C. Kashyap (ed.), Supra no. 18, p.89.
power till 1967. The opposition parties were weak and the Congress was dominant party, Therefore it was described as, One Party Dominant System. The dominance of Congress in Indian politics was so strong that it was not paving the way to any other party to gain strength. Its role in the freedom struggle, its umbrella character and presence of charismatic leaders made Congress more powerful. In the post-independence India, "in the case of the Congress, power served as a factor of unity because it had Nehru, a leader who could serve as the last court of appeal for intra-party disputes and who could evolve policies, domestic and foreign, which had a wide appeal, specially among the intelligentsia in his party."³⁸ After 1967 its control over some states declined considerably.

The 1977 elections put an end to One Party Dominant System. "Mrs. Indira Gandhi sought to centralize power by undermining the role of the Congress chief ministers. In place of excellence, competence and independence of the state level leaders, loyalty to the Prime Minister and control by the high command acquired prominence during her regime. In the post-Nehru era the organizational wing was totally subordinated to the governmental wing."³⁹ The whole period, starting with the emergency and ending in the erosion of the Congress in the social sphere led to growing uncertainty in the arena of democratic politics—.⁶⁰ Absence of charismatic leaders like Nehru, declaration of emergency in 1975, failure in economic

³⁸ S.S. Patagundi in Subhash C. Kashyap (ed.), Supra no. 18, p.156.
³⁹ Ibid. p.157.
field and other factors contributed for its decline. It started losing its hold over many of the States. As a result of this regional parties started becoming more powerful in their respective regions. At the Center, Janata Party and BJP took the advantage of this. Regional parties have become so powerful, that they stated claiming more share in the national politics.

Coalitions or minority politics owing to the plurality of the Indian society and regional diversities resulting into multi-party system has come to stay in the political governance of India. The installation of coalition governments marked the beginning of a new type of governance. As coalition governments have become inescapable political parties started aligning themselves with one or the other party. "As a result, smaller parties and regional parties are getting a significant role in governance and policy formulation but it is more related to political exigency resulting into a process of adopting and accommodation in policies formulation. Ideologically divergent allies/partners are bringing greater conflicts in governance." Every party in a coalition has its own ideology, policies and programmes. To attain power these different parties agree on some Common Minimum Programme. Though the parties in the coalition have agreed on Common Minimum Programme, they have not lost their separate identities. But, even when they evolve what they call a Common Minimum Programme, they are so self-centered that Common Minimum Programme is reduced to common personal programme and national agenda to personal

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61 R.N.Prasad, Supra no.50, p.23.
62 Ibid. p.23.
agenda. The political situation in the Centre does not hold any hope for even minimum good and coherent governance because artificially created majorities cannot conceal the prevailing real vacuum in political power. Coalition politics requires a mechanism of conflict resolution of different interest groups; so that they pursue that they would be better off as a part of the coalition rather than out of it. But this is possible only when political parties’ alignments are based on policy commitments and not on the whims and fancies of their leaders.

While formulating any public policy, the leader of a coalition has to take into confidence not only his coalition partners but also the opposition parties. In the coalition era both inter-party competition and intra-party conflicts pose challenge not only to the existence of the government but also to the democratic governance in the country.

Since the resultant coalition alliances are neither ‘ideological’ nor have any common objective to cement them together, they are merely short term tactical arrangements established by ambitious politicians that are rooted in the exchange of mutual benefits and compulsion for power, the mobilization of electorate is done through a strategy of support to regional cum segmental or ethnic issues without giving overriding support either to national or primarily local issues. Each party before joining coalition, calculates the extent of gains, i.e., payoff. Political parties in parliamentary

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66 www.ncrwe.nic.in
democracy always strive to form minimum winning coalitions. In such a coalition, even a small party can challenge the very existence of a coalition. That is what happened to the BJP led coalition in 1998. The confidence motion moved by the BJP led coalition government under the leadership of A.B. Vajpayee was defeated by just one vote. As Lord Bryce says, "An administration formed by a coalition of parties is usually weak, not merely because the combination is unstable, but because men whose professed principles differ, are likely to be entangled in inconsistencies or driven to unsatisfactory compromises. In multi-party parliaments, each party makes bargains with one another and by their combination, perhaps secretly and suddenly formed, successive ministries may be overturned with injury to the progress of legislation and to the continuity of national policy."67 Political parties are concerned mainly with attaining and maintaining power. In the quest for power, political parties are neglecting their ethical and moral responsibilities towards the people.

The success and failure of working of a coalition government depends on its partners. To make coalition experiment a success, there should be ideological and functional cohesiveness and their conscious efforts to be made to evolve a coalition culture.68 Parties outside coalition desire to capture power. Parties within the coalition are usually unhappy about their ministerial payoff. Consequently, there is constant danger for the very survival of coalition from both parties within the coalition and outside

68 Ram Ranbir Singh and Jagjit Kaur, Supra no. 63, p.87.
the coalition. The governance under coalition arrangements will have to take the course of accommodation and reconciliation to moderate the conflict of interests rather than curb them.\footnote{Trimph of Coalition Politics, Monthly Commentary, October, 1999, p.6.} The whole idea of coalition government is based on fair play. But in India, unfortunately, neither the dominant political party nor the minority groups acted on this basis.

“Parties are fast becoming a type basically because all of them are out to seek power and power they can acquire only after winning elections. Naturally then, the emphasis is not on winning the minds, it is on winning the votes. And now that electoral success has become something that can be achieved by a particular technique, parties appear to be concerned about just that, nothing more and nothing less.”\footnote{Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, in Subhash C.Kashya (ed.), Supra no. 18, p. 163.} Winning election have become their main aim. To win elections political parties started using many cut throat means. The use of money, muscle and mafia power vitiated the participatory process of Indian democratic governance.

To participate effectively in the political process, political parties require funds. Politicians are concerned only with winning elections, but to win they must raise resources.\footnote{Adam Przeworski, Susan C. Stokes and Bernard Manin, Supra no.7, p.34.} Raising funds is one of the important participatory activities of political parties. Funds are essential for effective functioning of political parties. “This money is needed both for winning elections and therefore, for consolidating-or dislodging-the ruling group within the majority party.”\footnote{Rajni Kothari, Democratic Polity and Social Change in India, Allied Publishers, New Delhi, 1976, p.29.} Money is essential for the day-do-day running
of the party organization. "In short it is an essential element of electoral, legislative and party politics. As the money needed has kept rising (multiplied by the new assumptions on the importance of money in winning elections introduced by the fund collectors and-dispersers whose position in the party depends on the need for big money), the system has had to rely increasingly on secret deals-and has become the source of corruption in public life and put a premium on black-money." ⁷³

These funds are collected from the companies, private bodies, institutions and individuals. But when these funds come from companies, private bodies, institutions, etc., they require some favour in exchange. It has placed disproportionate power in the hand of political financiers (largely from private industry) and of those who can manage to get money from such financiers. ⁷⁴ "---politics being treated as private enterprise in which illegal and unauthorized money becomes the principal currency. As this happens, the manipulative aspect of politics gains further in proportion as the participant aspect loses". ⁷⁵

Criminalisation has drastically affected the participatory process of political parties. With criminal elements entering into politics political parties almost cease to be the representatives of the people. Politics has become number game. To attain the required majority number politicians are using criminals. With the use of criminal politicians are, "able to terrorise the voters and the polling and the presiding officers. As a result, in

⁷³ Ibid. pp. 29-30.
⁷⁴ Ibid. p.29.
⁷⁵ Ibid. p.31.
the states like Bihar and UP a number of dreaded criminals have entered the house.”

The interests of the politicians and the criminals are complementary to each other. On the one hand the criminals need protection from the government and on the other, the politicians need criminals for money and mafia power for booth capturing, impersonation, rigging etc. Thus, the politician criminal nexus in one party breeds similar nexus in other parties, because the parties holding clean chits also feel that criminal elements are indispensable for any party to survive in election contest.

Indian political parties have become mainly personality oriented. Unfortunately, they revolve round a particular person. “Where is the question then of democratic processes in that party. Where is the scope for participation of the people when everything is personality centered?”

They are running away from ideologies, principles and values. “It is seen that our democratic pattern allows the rule of a party and most of the parties are guided by and led by either a charismatic personality or small group of persons. In both these cases neither the will of the people nor the welfare of the people is reflected.”

“A number of political parties emerge with the popularity of a particular leader and sink with his political career. We have observed emergence of several new political parties on the election eve; and most of them either disappear as soon as the election is over or are merged

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77 Subrabha V.Sahai, in Subhash C. Kashyap (ed.), Supra no.18, p.31.
78 P.A.Sagma, in Subhash C.Kashya (ed.), Supra no. 18, p.158.
with some other dominant party. We still have to develop healthy democratic tradition of ideologically organized political parties, instead of leader centred parties, such as Lok Dal (Charan Singh), Congress (T) (N.D.Tiwari), congress for Democracy (Jagjivan Ram) and Janata Dal (V.P.Singh).” After Nehru, sycophancy was the order of the day and Congress men looked towards an individual leader (Mrs. Indira Gandhi) for retaining their electoral position. It is not the case only with Congress but in other Indian political parties also, the high command or the leader became dominant in deciding the party affairs. In the functioning of the parties, personalized control has become more important than any other issue. It is generally agreed that powerful leaders are partly responsible for the deinstitutionalization of the Indian party system. “--- that the inherent inadequacies have come to the surface and provided a framework in which a highly centralized and narrowly confined elite has established itself in power, lost touch with the people and become insensitive and non-productive.” Neither the opposition nor the government really cared for the people and all that gained importance was a game of power within a narrow elite which had lost all contacts with the people.

However, it is essential to emphasis that however distasteful the working of our political parties and politicians may have been a conscientious citizen cannot afford to show indifference.

80 Subrabha V.Sahai, in Subhash C.Kashya (ed.), Supra no. 18, p.32.
81 S.S.Patagundi in Subhash C.Kashya (ed.), Supra no. 18, p.158.
However, it is essential to emphasize that however distasteful the working of our political parties and politicians may have been a conscientious citizen cannot afford to show indifference.83

POPULAR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION:

Much of the contemporary research in political behavior revolves around the role of citizens' perception of politics and their participation in the political process of the society.84 By popular participation we mean the participation of people in politics. One of the foremost concerns of contemporary political writers is the manner and the degree of citizens' participation in politics. The central focus of governance is how a society through the nation state, handles the affairs of the state, which enables its people to lead a peaceful orderly and reasonably prosperous and participative life in running their affairs.85

Public participation is generally intended at direct participation of public in administrative decision-making and policy-formulation, its implementation and evaluation.86 Direct participation of the people in the decision making process is not possible in modern democracy. The representatives of the people are formulating policies on behalf of people. Popular participation can make their representatives accountable and responsive to the fulfillment of their needs and aspirations. "Alex De Tocqueville, the French political thinker, was of the view that civ:.

84 G.Palathurai, Supra no.7, p.20.
participation is a must for saving democracy. The very existence of democracy is endangered when the general public is unable to influence government decisions."  

It is pertinent to understand why to participate and whether participation should be open to all or restricted to those who know how to use it wisely. In this regard number of political philosophers and scientists have different views. Political participation is not a natural activity but can be learnt through socialization process. For learning one must have capacity, motivation and opportunity. As Bryce observed, only a small group gives constant attention to politics, a slightly larger group is interested but comparatively passive, while the masses of men are largely indifferent.

With regard to popular participation, we can classify the thinkers mainly into two groups. Some thinkers believe that high participation of community is essential to preserve democratic spirit. On the other hand, there are some thinkers who believe that participation by all people in the political affairs is dangerous to democracy.

The advocates of the higher participation hold the view: "a situation which results in high participation by members of a group normally has higher potential for democracy - that is, for the maintenance of an effective opposition - than one where few people show interest or participate in the public affairs." 

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87 Ibid. p.189.
88 David L.Sills(ed.), Supra no.5. p.256.
political process". 90 "... participation in politics provides groups with the opportunity to offset their social and economic disadvantages, at least to a degree, by giving them the means to reduce such disadvantages through the active exercise of political power." 91 "Greater participation may provide more effective checks on the power of sinister interests. It may also give increased assurance that no interests are excluded from the governmental process and left out of account". 92

There are some observers who believe non-participation may create some problems. It may tend to inadequate expression of the interest of some sections of society. As far as possible government attempts to give representation to various sections of society. In spite of this, some sections may not be adequately represented. Such sections of society have to raise their voice to get adequate representation in the government. In this respect political parties and NGOs presuppose to play an important role in promoting awareness among the neglected sections of society. Ultimately, this contributes to get adequate representation for the neglected sections of society.

"Widespread apathy increases the chances that government will be dominated by men who are unresponsive, self-aggrandizing and unscrupulous; participation, on the other hand, reminds those who govern

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91 R. P. Verma, Supra no. 9, p. 315.
that they must attend to their duties and serve the electorate". Increased participation is required to, “the most simple and obvious reason, whether or not sound, is to achieve improved governmental output – better policies more efficiently and fairly administered.”

According to some political philosophers universal participation is not possible and neither desirable. “Rousseau, in a famous passage in The Social Contract links emancipation and sovereignty to direct involvement, arguing passionately that to be represented is to give up-to alienate-powers that individuals alone can rightfully exercise. Deputies are acceptable since they are merely the agents of the people. Representation, on the other hand, an odious modern idea, involves a form of slavery-a negation of will (1968: 141).” It was believed that little is gained by making the citizens who are politically uninformed and uninterested. “Such people are likely to misperceive their own and societies best interest. They are likely to have the poorest understanding of the requirements of a democratic system (civil liberties, tolerance of non-conformity, etc.) and are more susceptible to misleading inappropriate leader".

Whatever may be arguments of the scholars, “the founding fathers of India’s republic built the entire edifice of her constitution and democratic polity on the quintessential principle of sovereignty vesting in the people. Democratic governance can be ensured only when citizens can stand up for

93 David L. Sills (ed.), Supra no. 5, p.263.
94 J. Roland Pennock, Supra no.92, p.441.
96 David L. Sills (ed.), Supra no. 5, p.262.
their rights. Alertness, vigilance and active and continuous participation of the citizens in the affairs of governance are vital to the sound functioning of democratic system. A constitution alone may not suffice to ensure good government, unless the citizens continuously take interest in the proper working of the constitutional provisions. In representative democracy, the citizens have to remain active. It is made meaningless by the complacent citizen who avoids participation or declines to accept responsibilities for what the government does, thinking of politics in terms of “we” who are governed and “they” who govern. Governments are “accountable” to the people only when voters can have the ability and capacity to decide whether governments are acting in their interest or not. So that those incumbents who act in the best interest of citizens win reelection and those who do not lose them. Accountability representation occurs when, 1) voters vote to retain the incumbent only when the incumbent acts in their best interest, and 2) the incumbent chooses policies necessary to get reelected.

People should organize themselves and fight for their rights. There is need to make all citizens aware about their fundamental rights. The knowledge of political affairs and awareness affect both the amount and the quality of participation. If people become actively involved in the process of government, so the argument runs, they will be motivated to obtain more,
better, and more coherent information on public affairs.101 Men without a sense of involvement become apathetic or some times turns rebellious.

"Citizens contribute something to the public good through participation in political process and such participation increases their creative energy. Political participation makes a government responsible to people and responsive to their demands and aspirations".102 "It is the people who are the best judges of their pleasures and pains. They can maximize their pleasures and minimize their pains by actively participating in the political process".103 In the words of Saul David Alinsky: "There can be no democracy unless it is a dynamic democracy. When our people cease to participate to have a place in the sun then all of us will wither in the darkness of decadence. All of us will become mute, demoralized lost souls".104

According or Almond and Verba, the citizen of a democratic polity is expected to:

"Engage in political discussion;
Take interest in politics;
Vote;
Knowledge of politics;
Express a general sense of competence to influence the government;
and Participation in civic affairs".105

101 J.Rolland Pennock, Supra no. 92, P.442.
103 Ibid. p.115.
105 Dhirendra K. Vajpey, Modernization and Social Change in India, Manohar Publications, 1979, New Delhi, pp.73-74.
Among all the citizens, the democratic citizens have ample opportunities to participate in political process in several ways, with different degrees of involvement and at various levels of political systems. But, because of difference in standard of living, level of education, social environment, political culture, etc., we find variations in citizens' participation in political process.

Operation of democratic institutions and expression of people's desires are facilitated through political participation like, voting, campaigning, contesting, holding elective offices, etc. Most popular participation includes voting, seeking information, discussing and proselytizing, attending meetings, contributing financially and communicating with representatives. Citizen can participate in political activities in a variety of ways. But, most of the studies mainly focus on voting. Voting indicates citizens choice, but it communicates little information about the preferences or interests. The scope of the outcome is very broad and it affects every citizen.

The nature of party politics affects election turnout. Where parties are competitive, participation tends to increase; whereas single party consistently wins elections, turnout tends to be lower. In India during the Congress rule election turnout was less. With the emergence of competitive

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107 Ibid. p.115.
parties, which have the ability to challenge the Congress party election turnout is slowly increasing. The table 5.5 highlights this point.

**Table 5.5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Duration of Holding Elections</th>
<th>Voter Turnout</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>26 days</td>
<td>56.73 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>57.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>62.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>61.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>*56.00 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Voter turnout in 2004 general election’s is derived from website http://www.indian-elections.com/resultsupdate/  

The voter turnout was high in 1998, that is 62.00 per cent. After 1998 again we can find slow decrease in the voter turnout, that is 61.00 per cent in 1999 and 56.00 per cent in 2004. The low per cent of turnout in 2004. Coalition politics and unstable governments can be one of the factors for this low percentage of voting. So, we can say that competitive parties alone are not responsible for increasing election turnout. There are other factors, which are equally important such as dissatisfaction, distrust and desire for radical change as was seen in Indian electoral politics. During the last decade of twentieth century voting turnout increased. People were fed up with the Congress rule. Their desire for a change in party was reflected in the voting turnout. The problem is that during normal time the citizens
are somewhat unenthusiastic and indifferent to exercise their voting rights.\textsuperscript{110} The emergence of regional parties and with them the emergence of coalition governments aroused new hopes in the minds of electorate. People of India want to lead the nation in different direction, the direction in which welfare of the people should be the main motto of the government. But, the experience with coalition governments made it clear that with the change in government style there is not any change in its governance. All political parties were concerned more about their welfare and not much worried about the welfare of the people. With this again there is considerable decline in the voting turnout in 2004 general elections.

Genevieve Knupfer believes that, "the economic and educational limitations accompanying low status produce a lack of interest in and lack of self-confidence in dealing with certain important areas of our culture; as a result, there is reduced participation".\textsuperscript{111}

Most people believe that right to vote is a sacred right. Yet, it is not clear that high turnout is in itself desirable. Increased turnout brings those who generally do not vote to the polls. Habitual voters vote in part because they believe that they should participate – that participation is essential to democracy.\textsuperscript{112} Critics believe that even this kind of participation is very low. They believe that the decline reflects “alienation” a feeling on the part of the nonvoters that voting is futile because they don’t like any of the

\textsuperscript{110} U.C. Agarwal, in Subhash C. Kashap (ed.), Supra no. 18. p.87.  
\textsuperscript{111} R.P. Verma (ed.), Supra no. 9, p.43.  
\textsuperscript{112} Seymour Martin Lipset, Supra no. 109, p.919.
realistic options or because they feel powerless to affect the result in any significant way.\textsuperscript{113}

The primary means by which citizen control their government is voting in free and fair elections. "For the healthy functioning of democracy, it is essential that the voter must not only be free to vote as per the dictates of his conscience but also that he should be aware of the philosophy and ideals of the political parties and candidates in the fray. It is only then that his vote will be an informed one, cast after due consideration".\textsuperscript{114}

The fuller and whole hearted participation of citizens is further discouraged by:

"(a) incorrect and incomplete voters list;
(b) intimidation of voters to prevent them from voting;
(c) exercise of money and muscle power to get votes;
(d) winning elections with minority of votes;
(e) defections after elections."\textsuperscript{115}

The elections are manipulated right from the time of enlisting the voters whereby some people are debarred from voting and fictitious names are included as voters thereby frustrating the very basic concept of 'adult franchise'.\textsuperscript{116} "The voters' list, which is the first prerequisite in any election, is manipulated in various forms. False, non-existent persons' name find place in voters' list by deliberate manipulation.

\textsuperscript{113} J.Rolland Pennock, Supra no. 92, p.438.
\textsuperscript{114} M.G.Chitkara and B.R.Sharma, Supra no. 104, p.42.
\textsuperscript{115} U.C.Agarwal, in Subhash C. Kashap (ed.), Supra no. 18, p.83.
The candidates are chosen by political parties and no individual or any candidate has much to say. The candidates appear that they are not genuine representatives of the people. The making and unmaking of the ministers is in the hands of the party high command. Thus everything is controlled by party high command.

Yet, elections have also been marked increasingly by use of violence on an unprecedented level, rigging, booth-capturing, threatening of polling staff, use of big money, legitimization of criminals as granting of party tickets to people with criminal records.

For the democratic polity to function properly it is important that all citizens exercise their right to vote and that they cast their vote rationally i.e., make their choice among the candidates after proper consideration.

Peoples' participation in political process generally comes once in five years. "After voting once, for five years they have nothing to do with the process what is necessary is not merely participation in the electoral process but participatory democracy. Participation in democracy has to be a continuous process. To ensure peoples' continuous and active participation it is most important to create awareness among the people. Electoral results have a vital impact on the lives of all the people and also on the future of the country. Therefore a choice has to be made and made as carefully as possible because; at the moment it is only from among the

117 M.G.Chitkara, B.R.Sharma, Supra no. 104, p.40.
118 R.C.Dutt, Supra no.3, p.148.
existing contender that the future government of the county will be formed. Voters’ awareness and their active participation in the election process from selection of the candidates by the political parties to election campaign and actual voting can definitely make a difference. “--- it does not suffice for the government as a whole to be accountable to the electorate; but rather the voter should be able to identify the responsible authorities and hold them accountable as a group for their deeds and misdeeds.” Political participation therefore, will increase the extent to which a nation is a democratic only insofar as such participation involves at some point influence by the participant over governmental decisions.

Some NGOs and group of people make efforts, to make the people aware about their political rights. “We do have some NGOs and group of people in may places in the country doing some work in the area of political awareness. But, these activities and programmes are adhoc in nature and they are seasonal and their purpose is very limited in scope.” The programmes of such group are informal and unorganized but their impact is not felt to the extent it should. Much had been talked about Voters’ Council to minimize the evils in the election process but we do not have any such model.

Electoral process has brought an increasingly politicized voter into the participatory process. Voting provides an opportunity to the people to

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121 Vote for Whom, Editorial, Janata, 46(15), May 19, 1991, p.4.
122 J.Roland Pennock, Supra no. 92, p.267.
123 Kurt L. Shell, Supra no.14, p.60.
124 Himmat Bhai Patel and Shantibai, in Subhash C. Kashap (ed.), Supra no. 18, pp.103.
125 Ibid, pp.106.
elect a government which can be responsible to the people and responsive to their needs. But, at the time of elections, electoral behavior is more influenced by the factors like, money power, muscle power, liquor, caste, language, community, religion, etc. They may prefer the candidate of their own caste, religion, language or while electing them.

In India religion, language, caste and class are powerful tools for mobilizing various sections of people. They have become the part and parcel of individuals life and so emotional is its hold that a person is prepared to make supreme sacrifice to uphold its prestige and sanctity. "The last decade of 20th Century saw a sharp rise in political mobilization on the basis of social cleavages based on ascriptive identities, in particular of religion and caste. Casteism, communalism and personality domination have been the main planks around which the fragmentation of political parties has taken place, which has resulted in more caste and class-based political violence in the society."126 "Citizens' participation in the voting process has degenerated as it is being promoted to be more on communal and caste lines rather than on the basis of merits of individual candidates. In many instances of voting candidates with criminal backgrounds of one's own caste or religion were found to have been preferred and elected instead of good, well qualified and meritorious candidates of other castes or religions."127

126 www.ncrwc.nic.in.
Campaign activity is second mode of participation available to the citizens. For campaigning it requires group of people having similar interests. It can communicate more information about the participants preferences because campaign activists are a more clearly identifiable group with whom candidates may be in close contact.\textsuperscript{128} This activity requires lot of co-operation among citizens. "Political campaigns are episodic, but working in them requires a considerable amount of time. Self-confidence and a feeling of social ease are important pre-requisites to participation in the socially interactive phase of campaigning."\textsuperscript{129}

Communal activity is the third kind of popular participation available to the citizens. It involves two types of activities. It may be a contact by an individual with government official or it may be a contact by group or organization with the government official for some general social purpose. These kinds of activities provide more information to government about their preferences. The amount of pressure depends on the influence of the participating individual or group.

The next mode of popular political participation is particularized contact. Here, an individual contacts a government official to solve his own problem.

"Contributing money is also an important indicator of an individual's interest in politics. Money is a powerful weapon to influence policy-makers, and rich and busy persons who are not able to take time off

\footnotesize{\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{129} Dhirendra K. Vajpeyi, Supra no. 105, p.77.
\end{itemize}
to attend rallies and meetings look upon monetary contributions as a substitute for their personal participation in ‘gladiatorial’ activity. This is more so in the Indian case where money is scarce”.130

The more active form of popular participation includes formal enrollment in a party, canvassing and registering voters, speech writing and speechmaking, working in campaign and competing for public and party office.131 Popular political participation “enables men by giving them a sense of their own dignity and value, alerts both rulers and ruled to their duties and responsibilities and broadens political understanding.”132

Saenger points out, political activity is not merely a matter of awareness of what is going on but is also affected by the “amount of time and energy specific activities require”.133 Political participation is closely associated with the Leisure available to the citizens. Political participation has little relevance to a person who hardly gets any leisure. The table 5.6 portrays the details of leisure available to the individual per day.

*Table 5.6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>No.of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 – 3</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>68.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>4 – 7</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>23.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8 – 10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>11 &amp; above</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>210</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The above table is drawn from sample survey conducted by G. Palanthurai.

130 Ibid. p.78.
133 R.P. Verma (ed.), Supra no.9, p.39.
Out of 210 respondents only 10 people get more than 11 hours leisure per day i.e., 4.76 per cent only. If an individual gets leisure time, then also there is no guarantee that he/she spends it in political discussion. The table 5.6 highlights on this fact.

From the above table 5.7 it is inferred that, out of 210 respondents 136 respondents that is 64.76 per cent citizens were interested in discussing on Cinema. Only 37 people that is 17.62 per cent were interested in political discussion.

*Table 5.7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. No.</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>No.of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Talk about others</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>27.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Self Development</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Politics</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>17.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Cinema</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>64.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>34.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Country</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>210</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The above table is drawn from sample survey conducted by G.Palanthurai.

With such a low percentage how can we expect qualitative participation by the citizens? It is true that the popular political participation increases awareness about politics. But, to increase awareness citizens should have interest to participate. Political interest and awareness are
related variables that are even more difficult to assess than participation, because their manifestations are less overt.  

"Political participation is not “natural”, but must be learned and for learning to occur, one must have capacity, motivation, and opportunity. In some strata of the society, all three are preconditions are missing."  

It is pity that the elite class which is supposed to be the backbone of citizens participation in political awareness programmes, not only participates in party politics but directly and indirectly supports and many a time encourages and initiate the process of corrupt practices in politics. Political leaders of courage placing national interests above group/partisan interests, who are prepared to face the wrath of their narrow populist supporters in the interest of the nation, are becoming scarce. This is a class of citizens if collectively they decide to assert themselves for upholding the democratic values in society can make a difference.

136 R.C.Dutt, Supra no.3, p.161.