

Political socialisation and its agents

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ABSTRACT

Socialisation is a process by which the individual adapts himself to the changing conditions. The process of political socialisation is a part of general socialisation. The political socialisation is a process by which a person gradually learns orientation towards the political system. Through the process of political socialization an individual transmits his political beliefs to the succeeding generation. It is a universal process whose pace may be quick or slow depending on certain factors. This paper attempts to highlight the concept of political socialisation. It also focuses on its characteristics and agents of political socialisation.

Key Words : Political socialisation, Universal process, Political beliefs

INTRODUCTION

Political socialisation is the process through which ordinary people establish their attitudes towards the political system. The political socialisation has a close relation with the political culture of the country. This is the process through which a person gains entry into political culture, maintains it. According to Almond and Powell, "Political socialisation is the process by which political culture is maintained or changes. Through the performance of this function, individuals are brought into the Political culture and their operations towards Political objects are formed"^[1]. According to Robert Sigel, "Political socialisation refers to the learning process by which the political norms and behaviour, acceptable to an ongoing Political system are transferred to the succeeding generations"^[2].

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this paper is to define the concept of Political Socialisation and highlights the characteristics, types and agents of political socialisation. This paper is descriptive and analytical in nature. The data used in it have collected from secondary resources.

Characteristics of Political Socialisation:

The main characteristics of Political Socialisation are given below:

It is a process:

The fact is that political socialization is a theory of the method. By this method, political

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values pass from one society to another and from one person to another. Using this method, a person can acclimatize in accordance with the political culture.

Political Socialisation is a Universal process:

The process of political socialization is not limited to several societies, but is present in all societies. Nature, if the government or the political system can be of any kind, but the process of political socialization will never stop. However, we recognize that the pace of your progress can be fast in some states and slow in some others. For example, the pace of political socialization is slow in dictatorial states and fast in democracies.

Political Socialisation is a Continuous Process:

Political socialisation is not a process that works for a certain period of up to a certain age. This is an ongoing process. Over time, conditions are changing and with this, the political culture is changing.

Political Socialisation can be guided to a Particular Directions:

Another feature of political socialization is that it can be oriented in a certain direction. For example, in Cuba and China, political socialization is carried out only in the direction of communism, since in these socialist states this process of political socialization was directed in a certain direction or orientation. In these states, it is not possible for other ideologies to flourish.

Political Socialisation can be Manifest or Latent:

If for certain purposes political socialisation is used clearly and directly, this is called manifest or direct political socialisation. On the other hand, when no external efforts are made to carry out political socialisation, but is carried out secretly and automatically, this is called hidden political socialisation. This process, as a rule, takes place automatically and unconsciously, and the person it influences will know nothing about it.

The Political Socialisation is both Formal and Informal:

The process of political socialization is a formal and informal operation. If political socialization is consciously carried out by various educational institutions, newspapers and political parties and is carried out directly, this is called a formal process of political socialization. In the formal process, the state is making efforts for political socialization. But if the political culture of people is changed by unconscious and indirect efforts, this is called the informal process of political socialization. In such a situation, the political views of people are imperceptibly formed and changed.

Process of transmitting values from one generation to another:

The political socialization is that process by which the Political culture is transmitted from one generation to the next. Thus, it is a continuous process. But such a political socialization is possible only in those states which displays political stability, and where the political values are based on logic and the people are devoted to their political system. If we

try imposing a particular culture on the people its acceptance by them is likely to be a temporary one because such an imposed political culture cannot live for longer a duration.

Political socialisation differ from state to state:

There is no doubt that political socialization is a universal process, but its speed differs from state to state, because the social, economic and political level of each state is different. In some states, the speed of political socialization is fast, and in some it is slow. Even the speed of political socialization is different in different regions of the same state.

Types of political socialisation:

Manifest socialisation:

In the process of manifest or direct socialisation the information, values or feeling towards political objects are explicitly political. For instance, an individual receives a direct knowledge from family, teachers and other agencies about the pattern and functions of government, about programmes and policies of political parties or about the superiority of any particular ideology. To include such subjects in the syllabi of schools and colleges as will inculcate among the young minds the lessons of obedience, duty, loyalty, and lawfulness are examples of manifest socialisation. Almond and Powell write, “Political Socialisation is manifest when it involves the open communication of information, values or feelings towards political objects”^[3].

Latent socialisation:

It is a process in which a person develops non-political attitudes that later influence his attitude towards political objects in the country’s political system. For example, when a child comes in contact with family, friends, and others, he or she develops feelings of cooperation or suspicion. Later, his tendency will be to influence the attitude of cooperation or non-cooperation with his political leaders and other citizens. These orientations established his loyalty or sense of alienation towards the political system. Almond and Powell write, “Hidden or indirect political socialisation is the transmission of non-political attitudes which affects attitudes towards similar roles and objects in political system”^[4].

Primitive socialisation:

In ancient or primitive societies socialisation comes to a halt at a lower stage. A person is bound by strict conventions, values and customs. In the absence of specific political factors, the roles of persons are diffused social roles. Individuals get in to those roles through the use of power or due to inheritance. Such a socialisation is seen in tribal societies.

Modern socialisation:

In modern socialisation, young boys and girls are prepared for new and specific rules through different measures. Such syllabi are prescribed in schools, colleges and universities which arouse loyalty and respect for the constitution, trust in the political system, political responsibilities, feeling of maintaining country’s security and integrity. An attempt is made through TV, Radio and newspaper to influence an individual’s political values, ideas and

feelings. In India fixing secular state, Democracy and Socialism as national goals is an example of modern socialisation^[5].

Agents of political socialisation:

The agencies of political socialisation play a key role in this situation and co-ordinate the whole process.

Family:

Among all the agents of political socialization, family occupies the leading place. The family plays a vital role in transmitting political culture from one generation to the next. For a long time a family continues to meet the physical and psychological needs of the child. The family provides warmth and protection to the child. It is natural that the family can influence children's attitudes. All children have a natural tendency to imitate the elders. It is natural that they accept the political beliefs and values of their parents. From intensive researches conducted in America, it is clear that 3/4 part of the younger generation participates in the political preferences of their parents. Members of one family have been associated with one particular political party for several generations. Indirectly affects a child's attitude toward family authority. A child learns lessons of discipline, obedience, co-operation and tolerance in the family. As he grows up and enters into politics, the same qualities determine his attitude towards the political system. A family makes a collective decision. The child's participation in such decisions increases his political competency; it provides him political skills for political interaction. Then when he grows adult, it increases his ability of taking active part in the political system^[6].

Educational institutions:

Next to the family comes the role of educational institution as an agent of political socialisation. It is often seen that educated people are more aware of the effects of government on them. That is why they take more interest in political affairs and show high level of ability in political processes. In the modern states, the governments themselves set up educational institutions or otherwise help them to be set up. The education institutions perform the function of political socialisation both directly and indirectly^[7]. The direct socialisation occurs when such subjects are taught in schools and colleges which arouse love for national history and traditions and generate a sense of pride for the great leaders and increase faith and loyalty towards the country. The indirect socialisation occurs when students take part in different societies and their activities at school or college level. That arouses sense of responsibility in them. There is a certain pattern of taking decision at school and college level. This is in a way similar to that at family level, though different in degree. It influences the students. The participation in the process of decision- making at schools and colleges can make up for a lack of it at home or can reinforce the previous patterns^[8].

Peer groups:

The peer group at the common levels can be helpful in establishing values and orientation towards politics Where family ties are lacking in industrialized societies and as a result,

family training does not seem to match the social environment of young people, there the formal and non-formal peer groups can play an important role in shaping orientation towards the political system. Such peer groups include professional organisations of workers, teachers, doctors, engineers, traders, all entertainment clubs, groups of like-minded people etc. There are emotional ties among members of such groups and they can easily reach out to each other in such groups. There is always an exchange of ideas between them. Such discussions and exchanges are also bound to affect their political thinking. The members of these groups take part in the process of collective decision taking and it develops their political skills^[9].

Political parties:

Party structure is also an important agent of political socialisation. They are one of the social structures in which a large number of people take part in the political process for a long time and regularly. There are two types of political socialization brought about by political parties. In one kind they lend strength to the existing political structure and maintain continuity in it. In the other kind they can initiate important changes in the existing patterns of political culture^[10].

Mass media:

The mass media as TV, radio and Newspaper contribute in a large way to process of political socialisation. They not only circulate information regarding current political events, but can even in the long run change a person's cognitive map. Some facts are emphasized more than the others. Some symbols are explained in an emotional context and some events are kept side by side. A regulated order of mass media can be an important source of establishing political beliefs. In a totalitarian state, a regulated mass media is the very foundation of its support and existence^[11].

Pressure groups :

Pressure groups exert pressure on the government in order to influence it for a particular course of action. Such groups are called pressure groups that exist in all states. These pressures play a huge role in the process of political socialization. The members of these groups establish contacts with the important government officials and put pressure on them for the fulfilment of their particular interests. They also propagate their views among the people and thus able to influence the public opinion^[12].

Direct contact with political system :

Direct contact with the political system is the largest single factor of political socialisation. No matter how positive the view of political system which has been inculcated by family and schools, when a citizen ignored by his party, cheated by the police, starved in the bread-line and finally conscripted in the army, his views of the political realm are likely to be altered. The direct formal and informal relations with particular classes in the political system are essentially a powerful force in changing the attitude of individuals.

Speeches of leaders:

The speeches and writings of national leaders are also agents of political socialization.

At different times the great national leaders place before the people their political views and people get influenced by these. The people from their values and believes accordingly. Apart from this the writings of great people also work as miracle on the people and the historic speeches of Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru and Mahatma Gandhi are the proof of it.

Conclusion:

Political socialisation is an idea which aims to achieve political stability. According to Robert Sigel, The aim of political socialisation is to arouse and awaken the people in a way that they should become active members of political community. Political socialisation helps in maintaining the political culture. It works as a link between social and political system. It provides legitimacy to political system and the legitimate political system enjoys the respect and confidence of the public. System will become more stable.

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