

Political Socialisation

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Political Socialisation

Gabriel A. Almond and G. B. Powell. Political socialisation the process by which political cultures are maintained and changed. Through the performance of this function individuals are inducted into the political culture, their orientations towards political objects are formed.” Thus, political socialisation is the process by which the ethos and behaviour of a political system is communicated from one generation to another generation. Therefore, political socialisation is a continuous unconscious process.

Robert Sigel. "It is the gradual learning of the norms, attitudes and behaviour acceptable to an on-going political system.”

Political Socialisation

Stephen L. Wasby. "Thus the subject matter of this concept is the process by which people acquire political values not simply during active political participation, but also in the period before they engage in an explicitly political activity." Thus, political socialisation includes all types of learning, formal and informal, planned and unplanned, manifest or unmanifest, which influences political behaviour.

Michal Rush and Philip Althoff. "Political socialisation may thus be defined as the process by which the individual becomes acquainted with the political system and which determines his reactions to political phenomena.

Political Socialisation

Irwin L. Child. “Political socialisation thus covers the whole process by which an individual born with behavioural potentialities of immense range, is led to develop actual behaviour which is confined with a much narrower range—the range of which is customary and acceptable for him according to the standards of his groups.” Political socialisation is based upon the idea that unless the political norms and values get internal sanctions of the individual, the political system cannot be maintained. The most important characteristic of political socialisation is the fact that through it political values are communicated from generation to generation. This helps in maintaining the political system. Thus it is a comprehensive process.

DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL SOCIALISATION

- **Socialisation in Childhood.** Like the human child, society is also a growing process. Through socialisation, the child gradually adopts adult behaviour. Political socialisation starts with the influence of the environment upon the child. It is in the family that the child learns attitudes towards the authority, obedience, opposition, cooperation and non-cooperation etc.

Easton and Dennis posit four stages in the process of political socialization in the childhood.

- (i) Recognition of authority through particular individuals such as parents, policemen and the president of the country.
- (ü) Distinction between public and private authority.
- (ii) Recongition of impersonal political institutions like national legislature, judiciary and voting behaviour.
- (iv) Distinction between political institutions and persons engaged in the activities associated with those institutions so that idealised images of particular persons such as the President or the Congress-men are transferred from the Presidency and the Congress. Thus, political socialisation starts in child

DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL SOCIALISATION

Socialisation in Adulthood. This however, does not mean that the adult political behaviour is completely determined by the childhood experience. In this connection Rush and Althoff have pointed out, "The knowledge, values and attitudes acquired during the childhood and adolescence will be measured against the experience of adult life, to suggest otherwise is to suggest a static political behaviour. If the process of adult socialisation tends to reinforce those of childhood and adolescence, the degree of change may be limited to that of increasing conservatism with age, but where conflict occurs, than radical changes in political behaviour may result, such conflict may have its roots in early political socialisation, but it may also be attributable to the experiences of later socialisation."

DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL SOCIALISATION

Socialisation in various direction. In fact, political socialization influences in various directions. Its process goes on in life everywhere the example of U.S.A., Almond and Sidney Verba point out the people owing to the practice of political democracy in the country subsequently demand the practice of democracy in school, shops and churches. Since the demand is often met, school children, workers and others acquire in articulation, debate and decision-making. These experiences in turn help them towards developing the skills with which to participate in political life and either to help bring about or to accept political change thus socialisation process contributes not only to a society's political stability but also to change and to the strain at ease with which change takes place

FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL SOCIALISATION

- **Maintaining political culture.** This function is performed by communicating political culture from one generation to another generation. Under stable conditions this is an important function. But since the political field is generally disturbed, the political socialisation does not always act for maintaining political culture.
- **Modification of political culture.** Therefore, an important function of political socialisation is the modification of political culture. This aspect is clear from its relationships to change.
- **Creating political culture.** With the establishment of new political system every society needs the creation of a new political culture. This function is performed by means of the process of political socialisation.

FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL SOCIALISATION

- **Continuity and Change.** The above discussion shows that the political socialisation works in the directions of both continuity and change. In it change and modification is a permanent feature. However, this change too has stability. Sometimes this process is fast and sometimes slow. Clear results in the political field may be seen by too fast or too slow political socialisation. This is also influenced by the policy of the state. In some states the government clearly makes efforts in this direction while in other states it is not so.

FUNCTIONS OF POLITICAL SOCIALISATION

- **Foundation for present patterns of political system.** In open societies there are sufficient opportunities for difference of opinion and opposition. On the other hand, the totalitarian states do not accept difference of opinion and opposition. They are continually propagating in their favour. On the other hand, in democratic societies it is not so difficult to maintain traditions. Therefore, political socialisation can be imposed strictly according to the rigidity of the social systems. On the other hand, the political socialisation will be as much changeable as social system. But in both the types of societies the function of political socialisation is to maintain the present patterns of political

CHIEF MEANS OF POLITICAL SOCIALISATION

- **Family.** According to Ball the family should be described as the Cast window to the outer world for the child, it is his first contact with the authority.

Robert Lane has admitted three means of circulation of political beliefs.

- (1) It happens by the circulation of distinct and indistinct political principles.
- (2) In it the child is placed in a particular social environment.
- (3) It becomes possible by modification in the child's personality.

Thus most of the political personality of a person is determined in the family, years before his actual participation in politics. The father symbolises authority in the family and the child's attitudes towards him determine his political behaviour towards authority in adult life. Large scale researches in U.S.A. have confirmed that more than three-fourth children of a generation follow political values of the parents though the social and economic environments of the two generations may be widely different.

CHIEF MEANS OF POLITICAL SOCIALISATION

This importance of the family in political socialisation may be due to several reasons.

1. Family alone fulfils all the needs of a child for a considerably long period due to which he becomes over dependent on the family. Therefore, it is natural that the political beliefs and attitudes prevailing in the family should influence him.
2. The children have a natural tendency to imitate the parents. The mother and the father present ideal patterns of behaviour for the daughter and son respectively. With the increase of the age the importance of the parents diminishes and the child learns a lot from outside the family. But the influence of the parents is never completely wiped off from the mind, this is atleast true about the less educated and less intelligent persons.
3. All the members of the family should naturally carry similar political ideas, values and behaviour due to residing in the same environment. About the role of the family in political socialisation, it should be remembered that generally it is conservative. Family is the chief means of preservation of Customs and traditions and therefore it is also the main hurdle in social and political change. It is natural that social-political change will be as much difficult as is the control and influence of the family in a society

CHIEF MEANS OF POLITICAL SOCIALISATION

- **Peer groups.** After the family enters into play groups the friendship groups and lineage groups which are based upon primary relationships and known as peer groups. They also carry important influence upon political socialisation. Generally, the status of the individuals in upper group is equal, it has no hierarchy as it is found in family relationships . This equality is characteristic of equal age, equal functions and equal economic status. This does not mean that peer groups have no lead leaders do not enjoy authority, characteristic of the parents Just as in the socialisation of the of the child the maximum, similarly the adolescent is influence by the peer groups and friend circle. In this age he needs explanation of political changes and participates in them.

CHIEF MEANS OF POLITICAL SOCIALISATION

□ Education

- (i) **Educational institutions.** After coming out of the family and the peer group the individual comes in the contact of the educational institutions. The schools, the colleges and the universities carry important influence upon him. In fact, it is not an exaggeration to say that the influence of educational institutions upon political socialisation is more than that of the family. Hence in most of the countries, the government try to control the educational institutions. Attempt is made to control the universities by means of economic aid and other means. This helps the government to propagate political culture favourable to it. Educational institutions are the biggest means of propagating political ideas, values and patterns of behaviour in communist countries. Various types of educational institutions have more or less influence upon political socialisation
- (ii) **Curriculum.** The curriculum directly socialises since it establishes respect and faith in national values, national history, national literature customs and traditions, political leaders and the political system.
- (iii) **Teachers.** The teachers also help in this process. The students taught to surrender before the authority in the name of discipline in school

CHIEF MEANS OF POLITICAL SOCIALISATION

Political parties. In modern times various political parties directly or indirectly propagate their ideologies in the colleges and universities. Each political party have its youth section in every college and university of the country. In India and everywhere one finds active members of political parties among the teachers.

Political ideologies. Different universities exhibit predominance of different ideologies. The students organisations receive economic and moral support from the political parties. The training and experience of political activities in the colleges and universities help student leaders to become leaders in the actual political field later on. In the present time the colleges and the universities may be called the most important means of Political socialisation

CHIEF MEANS OF POLITICAL SOCIALISATION

Secondary groups. The influence of secondary groups is less in simple and undeveloped societies and more in complex and developed nations. As the complexity and development increases in society so does increase the value of secondary groups. The main reason of this importance is the fact that relationships in the political field are similar in nature as these are found in secondary groups. Secondly, some secondary groups such as political parties or political youth wings are organised manifestly to achieve political aims, propagate political ideas and values and train political leaders which may be used for political activities. These groups are part of manifest socialisation.

Then, there are some other secondary groups, which are not manifestly political such as labour unions, student unions or unions of workers. These groups aim at collective bargain in their particular field. But even these groups are led by the leaders following particular political ideologies. Some of them are even active members of a particular political party. Therefore, indirectly their aims are political. They impart political education to their followers and take part in active politics from time to time. However, some secondary groups can not be called political even though socialisation by them may be helpful in adjustment and success in the political field. Such are the self governing organisations found in different government aid.

CHIEF MEANS OF POLITICAL SOCIALISATION

Mass communication media. The most modern comprehensive and influential means of political socialisation are the mass communication media such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines. Due to unprecedented technical growth of these media, their importance has considerably increased in recent times. It may be remembered here that their influence very much depends upon the nature and level of society where they are being used. Secondly, the ideas and values communicated by them do not belong to the members but come from outside. Due to the government control upon the media in most of the states communication is in favour of the government, at least it is not against the government.

Therefore, rather than calling it a means of political socialisation it should be called it instrument. Media do not directly influence the people. Opinions, ideas and values communicated by them influence the viewers and readers and thus circulate in a very wide field. Media itself do not establish any values or ideas but strengthen or weaken communicated values and ideas. Generally they support the status quo and therefore they cannot be called the fore runner of change. However, in the countries where various political parties develop freely and people are left free to use the means of communication, media becomes the fore runner of change

CHIEF MEANS OF POLITICAL SOCIALISATION

- **Political parties.** Though political parties are counted among secondary groups, it is necessary to deal with them separately here due to their important contribution to political socialisation. Political parties form the government. Different political parties form the government at different times. Whosoever political party forms the government, it uses the schools, universities, other institutions and the media for political propaganda in its favour and hinders the progress of other political parties. Therefore other political parties are always looking for the opportunity to increase their power, singly or jointly so that when an opportunity arises they may present the alternative for the government.

Therefore they are also busy in propagating in their favour and also against the government. If the speed of this opposition is normal, the speed of social change is normal. But if the opposition is cut throat it may lead to bloody revolutions. Social institutions. Besides family. the religious, cultural and social institutions contribute to political socialisation. Of these, the religious institutions have maximum influence in muslim countries. In the multi-caste or multi race societies, youth movements help in national integration Associations, unions and organisations formed to protect vocational interest of various vocations also help in political socialisation.



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