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The Relation between 'Democracy & Participation'

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Meaning & Conceptual Framework

Democracy & participation both are interrelated & interchangeable. Democracy is a situation in which everyone has to right to self-determination, to choose their representative in the state mechanism process. Democracy is the least criticized and most popular political system of the world. It preserves the people's right to take part in the governing body of the state. On the other hand, the counterpart, participation is an ingredient of every political system weather despotic or democratic. Literally participation is known as the involvement of the people in the political process or system. Participation is impossible unless a democratic set up is established. Participation is the principle means by which consent is granted or withdrawn in a democracy and rulers made accountable to the ruled. The term political participation denotes to those voluntary activities by which members of a society share in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly, in the formation of public policy (Johari, 1989 : 301). These activities are like casting role, seeking information, holding discussions, attending meeting for the public policy, making financial contributions to political parties, staging strikes and demonstrations, communicating with the legislatures and other figure (Ibid).

In every society, people tend to develop more or less standard expectations about political system. When the political system is complex and stable, political roles develop systematically. Most of the people have ideas about political system, democracy and the involvement of the people. Perhaps the most obvious political roles are played by persons who create, interpret and enforce rules that are binding on members of the political system. We may say that political participation tends to get polarized into opposite lines of thinking and gets manifested in support of or in opposition to a particular principle.

Democracy, is a form of government. The terms 'Demos & Kratia' are derived from Greek words. The word 'demos' refers to people and the word 'kratos' refers to the strength of the people. Thus, democracy came to be the power of the people to rule over themselves. When we discuss democracy, perhaps nothing give rise to more confusion than the simple fact that 'democracy' refer to both an ideal an actual meaning. The definition of Abraham Lincoln is the ideal now it is also dated off. Many Politician & Philosophers have engaged in endless debates about actual meaning of democracy, where-as inclusive human value & norms, certain goal &

objective within a government. The actual democratic norms represent a superb government, theoretically when the government consists of all kinds of power, which is totally responsible to the people is a democratic government. That's why democracy depends upon the functions of government. If the government can't address the desire of the people, the reflection of democracy arose easily. Robert Dahl describes that, there are some opportunities of democracy (Dahl, 1998 : 38)

1. Effective Participation
2. Equality in voting
3. Gaining enlightened understanding
4. Exercising final control over the agenda
5. Inclusion of adults

Participation as a means stresses the results, the achieving of predetermined targets is more important than the act. Participation as an end relates to a process, which unfolds overtime, and whose purpose is to develop and strengthen the capabilities of the peoples. Participation is a continuous process of empowering is the more radical approach. This approach equates participation with achieving power. It is a basic ingredient of development process is believed to get the beneficiaries commitment, to build the local capacity (Quoted in Nepali, 10 Jan. 2004). Political participation refers to those voluntary activities by which member of a society share is in the selection of rulers and directly or indirectly, in the formation of public policy. These activities typically include voting seeking information, discussing and proselytizing, attending meetings, contributing financially, and communicating with representatives. The more active forms of participation include formal enrollment in a party, canvassing and registering voters, speech writing and speech making, working in campaigns and competing for public and party office. We shall exclude form this discussion such involuntary activities as paying taxes, serving in the armed forces and performing jury duty. Political participation is an ingredient of every polity, large or small. Whether the society is an oligarchic or a democratic someone must participate in the exercise of power.

On the other hand, democracy empowers the participation. All the participatory activities are vested on democracy. The forms of participation are various viz; economic, political religious cultural etc. The right to participate is an essential element of democratic government, inseparable from such other attributes of democracy as consent, accountability, majority, rule, equality and popular sovereignty. Indeed the growth of democratic government is in part measured by the extension of the suffrage and co-relative right to hold office and to associate for political purposes. The measured of participation depend upon the democratic government. It would be a grievous error to expect too much of any government, including a democratic government. Democracy cannot guarantee that its citizens will be happy, prosperous, healthy, wise peaceful or just. To attain these ends is beyond the capacity of any government, including the democratic government. Whereas traditional monarchies restrict power and participation largely to the nobility and their agents. In spite of its flaws, however, we

must never lose sight of the benefits that make democracy more desirable than any feasible alternative to it (Dahl : 60) :

1. Democracy helps to prevent government by cruel and vicious autocrats.
2. Democracy guarantees its citizens a number of fundamental rights that non-democratic systems do not and can not grant.
3. Democracy insures its citizens a broader range of personal freedom than any feasible alternative to it.
4. Democracy helps people to protect their own fundamental interests.
5. Only a democratic government can provide a maximum opportunity for persons to exercise the freedom of self determination- that is, to live under laws of their on choosing.
6. Only, democratic government can provide a maximum opportunity for exercising moral responsibility.
7. Democracy fosters human development more fully than any feasible alternative.
8. Only a democratic government can foster, relatively high degree of political equality.
9. Modern representative democracies do not fight wars with one another.
10. Countries with democratic governments tend to be more prosperous than countries with non-democratic government.

Conclusion of Political Participation

Political factors, thus may cause participation rates to vary but one must keep in minds that the overall rate of participation for a given country in a given era tends to remain fairly stable and that changes in the rates of participation from one election to another are usually small. This suggests that the broad social and psychological predispositions earlier discussed set severe limitation on the play of political and situational elements. The relationship between participation & democracy, here in this article, I have mentioned about actual & ideals forms of democracy which encouraged to participate. It is a widespread political activity while desirable in some respects also carries disadvantages. While we think, participation is only political participation for election or electoral process. A too active electorate may impede those who rule from making the decisions they are best qualified to make. A highly politicized electorate may lead to exercise controversy fragmentation and instability. The existence of a large number of 'indifferences among the electorate lends flexibility to the political system. Those people, who fail to participate in the political system are not properly represented. Government is thereby deprived of it's broadest possible assessment and of the benefit of whatever these non-participants have learned from their experience. In a democracy, participation is power. Rulers can therefore afford to ignore the needs and interests of non-participants. Even if the opinion of the non-participants are presently ill-informed, there is no better way to improve the quality of their judgment than by the experience of participation. In the course of participating, one is impelled to acquire the knowledge needed for sound judgment, to become aware of one's best interests, to learn how the system works and what principles and beliefs it values. Voters looking for guidance and prompted to seek out information, to discuss politics with others, and so on. Therefore,

participation not only stimulates political learning but also heightens responsibility, deepens awareness and increases one's sense of political effectiveness.

The people must participate in politics to have government by the people. Conventional forms of participation contacting officials and voting in elections-come most quickly to mind. People are motivated to participate in politics for various reasons, to show support for their country, to obtain particularized benefits for themselves. The tendency to participate in politics is strongly related to socio economic status (Kenneth Janda, Jeffrey M. Berry, Jerry Goldman, 1992: 260). Education one component of socio economic status, is the single strongest predictor of conventional political participation. Because of strong effect of socio economic status on political participation, the political system is potentially biased towards the interests of higher status people. Pluralist democracy, which provides many avenues for resourceful citizens to influence government decisions, tends to increase this potential bias. Majoritarian democracy, which relies heavily on elections and the concept of one person one vote offers citizens without resources the opportunity to control government decisions through elections. However, election also serves to legitimize government simply by involving the masses in government through voting and it builds up the participation.

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