

# Role of Local Political Elites in the Process of Political Socialization: Special Reference to Members of Local Self-Government Institutions in Prakasam District, Andhra Pradesh

Yedukondalu Kommalapati, Research Scholar,

Dr. G. Veerraju, Research Director

Dr. V. Sreemannarayana Murthy, Joint Research Director

**Abstract:** *Political socialization is a pivotal concept in political science that offers critical insights into the continuity and evolution of political systems. It denotes the developmental process through which individuals acquire their political orientations, values, ideologies, and behavioral patterns. This ongoing process is fundamental to the sustenance of any government system as it shapes citizens' political perceptions and participation. In democratic regimes, political socialization assumes particular importance; the absence of political awareness or public participation jeopardizes democracy itself. Governments, therefore, often expedite political socialization to disseminate their ideas and secure public endorsement. A vibrant political socialization process is indispensable for the survival and effective functioning of democratic systems.*

**Keywords:** *Political socialization*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Political socialization is a pivotal concept in political science that offers critical insights into the continuity and evolution of political systems. It denotes the developmental process through which individuals acquire their political orientations, values, ideologies, and behavioral patterns. This ongoing process is fundamental to the sustenance of any government system as it shapes citizens' political perceptions and participation. In democratic regimes, political socialization assumes particular importance; the absence of political awareness or public participation jeopardizes democracy itself. Governments, therefore, often expedite political socialization to disseminate their ideas and secure public endorsement. A vibrant political socialization process is indispensable for the survival and effective functioning of democratic systems.

Michael Rush and Philip Althoff describe political socialization as "the process by which an individual becomes acquainted with the political system, which further determines his perceptions of politics and his reactions to political phenomena." Almond and Verba similarly define it as the mechanism through which political culture is maintained, changed, and transmitted across generations. David Easton and Jack Dennis view political socialization as a developmental process enabling individuals to acquire political orientations and shape their political behavior. Political socialization is therefore a lifelong process, beginning in early childhood and continuing through to old age or death.

Various agencies accelerate political socialization, without which the process remains incomplete. The family is the primary agency, providing the first window to the external world and the earliest contact with authority. Other influential agents include peer groups, schools, political parties, leaders, elections, workplaces, media, pressure groups, caste organizations, government institutions, and personal experiences. While modern influences such as social media and political parties have gained prominence, traditional agents remain effective in different contexts.

In India, with its vast population and unequal distribution of power and resources, political literacy varies significantly across social sections. Rural areas often lag behind urban centers in political engagement and awareness due to slower



diffusion of education and modern ideas. Nonetheless, political socialization is ubiquitous and continuous, shaping individuals' integration into the political system. Political culture—the collective political attitudes, beliefs, and values of individuals or societies—is both maintained and transformed through political socialization. Pye and Verba define political culture as the system of empirical beliefs, values, and expressive symbols describing political action contexts. Thus, political socialization and political culture are complementary phenomena.

Without political awareness, individuals may fail to distinguish right from wrong for himself or herself, society, or the nation, potentially harming the political system. Although sometimes manipulated by ruling powers to serve their interests, political socialization can also operate independently or even counter to government agendas. The pace and intensity of political socialization differ markedly between urban and rural areas: urban areas benefit from universal media access and civic engagement, whereas rural areas face challenges such as poverty, ignorance, stereotypes, backwardness, and limited communication infrastructure. Despite these obstacles, political socialization in rural areas persists, often in unique ways.

India's democratic parliamentary system depends on citizen political participation. However, low voter turnout and political disengagement indicate a disconnect in many rural areas. Local self-government institutions—Gram Panchayats, Panchayat Samitis, and Zilla Parishads—are crucial for integrating rural populations into politics. Various governmental, semi-governmental, political, and social organizations also influence rural life. Among these, local political elites (LPEs) play a vital role in political socialization due to their access to financial, intellectual, and social resources. They shape political opinions and actions by representing community views, leading political parties, social movements, and governance at the local level.

This research focuses on the political process in rural Prakasam district, Andhra Pradesh, specifically analyzing the contribution and significance of local political elites in political socialization.

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of studying the role of local political elites in political socialization in Prakasam district is manifold:

- The research provides valuable insights into the political socialization process among the rural population of Prakasam district.
- It highlights the critical functions of local political elites in enhancing political knowledge and awareness in rural Andhra Pradesh.
- Understanding political participation and socialization in rural areas is vital for sustaining and strengthening democratic governance.
- The study explores how political parties influence rural masses through local political elites.
- It identifies obstacles and challenges hindering political socialization in rural contexts.

The research demonstrates how local political elites mediate information about political and administrative events.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

This study, titled *“Role of Local Political Elites in the Process of Political Socialization: Special Reference to Members of Local Self-Government Institutions in Prakasam District, Andhra Pradesh”*, aims to understand the interaction between political socialization and the influence of local political elites in rural Andhra Pradesh.

Key research questions include:

- How do local political elites disseminate political ideologies and policies to rural populations?
- What mechanisms do they use to communicate political information and shape political opinions?
- How does political socialization operate in the rural context of Andhra Pradesh?
- What role do local elites play in implementing rural development schemes and promoting political engagement?
- How effective are the outreach and mobilization efforts of local elites, especially during election periods?
- Do the day-to-day activities of local elites support and sustain ongoing political socialization?



This study fills a research gap, as there is limited prior work focusing specifically on the role of local political elites in political socialization in Prakasam district. Political socialization is essential for democratic stability; understanding its dynamics and challenges in rural Andhra Pradesh can help strengthen grassroots democratic participation. The study also examines the role of political parties, Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), and government initiatives in this process.

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The literature review focuses on two interrelated themes: Political Socialization and Political Elites, particularly in rural settings similar to Andhra Pradesh.

**E. Lane (1962):** Discussed political socialization in relation to political culture and ideology, offering a theoretical foundation for analyzing rural political behavior. E. Lane's work in 1962 laid a significant theoretical foundation for the study of **political socialization**, particularly in its relationship with political culture and ideology. His approach emphasized understanding how individuals internalize political norms and behaviors over time. By establishing a link between ideology and political culture, Lane provided a comprehensive framework that could be used to analyze the patterns of political orientation among different social groups.

**V. M. Sirsikar (1965):** Studied political behavior during India's 1962 elections, providing tools to assess voter awareness and affiliations. V.M. Sirsikar's pioneering work on the 1962 Indian general elections remains a key resource for analyzing political behavior in a democratic context. His study was among the earliest attempts to apply empirical methods to understand voting patterns, voter awareness, and political affiliations in India. By employing field-based tools and surveys, Sirsikar was able to document how different segments of society, particularly in rural India, approached the electoral process. Sirsikar's research emphasized the role of social factors—such as caste, religion, and occupation—in shaping political behavior. He noted that rural voters often aligned with political parties not just based on ideology, but also due to loyalty to local leaders, kinship ties, and community influence. His analysis helped identify the gap between political literacy and actual voter participation, which remains a crucial issue in Indian democracy.

**Gabriel A. Almond & Sidney Verba (1966):** Their *The Civic Culture* emphasizes the influence of political culture on individual political engagement. Almond and Verba's *The Civic Culture* is one of the most influential studies in political science, examining how political culture affects democratic stability. Their typology of political cultures—parochial, subject, and participant—offered a nuanced way to categorize and understand political engagement across societies. The study suggested that a balanced mixture of these cultures leads to a stable democracy. In the rural Indian context, Almond and Verba's work is particularly useful for identifying why certain communities are politically passive while others are more engaged. Rural areas, often characterized by parochial political culture, tend to show low levels of political awareness and participation. However, as modernization and education spread, elements of subject and participant cultures begin to emerge, altering the rural political landscape. Their emphasis on political efficacy, trust, and civic engagement provides important indicators to assess the success of democratic institutions in India. Almond and Verba's framework can be used to evaluate the extent to which democratic norms have permeated rural India and how local traditions and modern influences interact to shape the political culture in these areas.

Herbert H. Hymans introduced a psychological dimension to the study of political socialization. He emphasized how individual personality traits, cognitive patterns, and emotional development influence political attitudes. Unlike purely structural or sociological analyses, Hymans focused on how individuals internalize political values through experiences, perceptions, and identity formation.

His work drew attention to the primary socializing agencies such as family and schools. He argued that early childhood experiences, parent-child interactions, and the hidden curriculum in schools play a critical role in shaping political orientations. This understanding is especially important in rural societies where formal institutions may be weak, and informal mechanisms dominate value transmission. Hymans' emphasis on emotional conditioning and behavioral reinforcement has implications for rural India, including Prakasam district. In contexts where political awareness is limited and ideologies are passed down through generations, psychological factors deeply affect how citizens relate to politics, authority, and social change. His work helps explain the persistence of political apathy or loyalty to particular parties in such areas.



Leach and Mukherjee conducted a historical and sociological examination of elites in South Asia, exploring their role in shaping political power structures. Their research is foundational in understanding the continuity and transformation of elite dominance from colonial to post-colonial India. They argued that colonial administrative structures created a new class of Western-educated, landed elites who continued to dominate politics post-independence. In rural India, this analysis is crucial for understanding local power dynamics. Even within democratic frameworks, elite capture of institutions often undermines equitable representation. Their findings show how the formal structures of democracy may coexist with informal systems of dominance rooted in caste, landownership, and patronage. This has direct relevance for places like Prakasam district, where local elites often control Panchayati Raj Institutions. Leach and Mukherjee's insights help explain why marginalized communities may remain politically underrepresented, despite constitutional safeguards. It also underscores the need for structural reforms to democratize leadership at the grassroots.

### **Role of Local Political Elites**

Local political elites in Prakasam include village heads (Sarpanches), ward members, and influential party workers. Acting as intermediaries between government and citizens, they facilitate political communication, influence voting behavior, and organize community political activities.

### **Political Socialization in Prakasam**

Political socialization here involves rural citizens learning about political parties, governance, and rights largely through local elites' influence. Members of local self-government institutions run awareness programs on government schemes, shaping political awareness. The district's political culture combines traditional loyalties with party alignments, with local elites playing a decisive role.

### **Recent Newspaper Insights (2024)**

**The Hindu (Andhra Pradesh edition):** Reports emphasize Panchayat members' role in spreading awareness of COVID-19 relief and organizing vaccination drives. Local elites actively campaign during elections, influencing voter turnout.

**Eenadu (Telugu daily):** Coverage shows how local elected representatives prioritize development projects and mediate community conflicts, highlighting their influence on rural socio-political priorities.

## **III. CONCLUSION**

Local political elites in Prakasam district serve as key agents of political socialization by disseminating information about government policies, organizing community engagement, and shaping political attitudes through both formal and informal means. Newspaper reports from local and state dailies underscore their influence on electoral behavior, governance participation, and social development, reflecting the broader democratic process at the grassroots level.

## **REFERENCES**

- [1]. Ranney, Austin. *Governing: An Introduction to Political Science* (4th Edition). Prentice Hall Inc., New Jersey, 1987, p. 53.
- [2]. Easton, David, and Dennis, Jack. *Children in the Political Systems: Origin of Political Legitimacy*. McGraw Hill, New York, 1969, p. 7.
- [3]. Ranney, Austin. *Governing: An Introduction to Political Science* (4th Edition). Prentice Hall Inc., New Jersey, 1987, p. 53.
- [4]. Ball, A. R. *Modern Politics and Governments*. McMillan, London, 1971, p. 69.
- [5]. Pye, Lucian W., and Verba, Sidney (Eds.). *Political Culture and Political Development*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1972.
- [6]. Lane, E. *Political Sociology*. The Free Press of Glencoe, Illinois, 1962.
- [7]. Sirsikar, V. M. *Political Behavior in India: A Case Study of 1962 General Election*. P. C. Manaktala and Sons, Bombay, 1965.

