

B.A. (Hons.)-Political science Semester –II Topic- Public Opinion

INTRODUCTION

- The desires, wants, and thinking of the majority of the people - or the collective opinion of the people of a society or state on an issue or problem - is called public opinion.
- Public opinion plays an important role in the legitimacy of the Government. Government has to make policies as per the opinion of the people.
- Public opinion occupies an important place in democracy. The democratic government derives its powers from the public opinion and it is based on it. Each government tries to keep the public opinion in its favour and it should not go against it at any cost.
- It relates to the views people entertain regarding the policies of the government and how they are implemented.

DEFINITION

- According to Sir Henry Maine, "Voice of the public opinion may be voice of God".
- According to Bryce, "The term is commonly used to denote the aggregate of the views men hold regarding matters that affect or interest the community. Thus understood, it is a mixture of all sort of different nations, beliefs prejudices and aspirations".
- According to Lippman, "the picture inside the heads of human beings, the picture of themselves, of others of their needs, proposes and relationships are their public opinion".
- According to Lowell, "Public opinion involves a choice between differing views which may be rationally held".
- According to Carrol, "Public opinion refers to the composite reactions of the general public".

CHARACTERISTICS OF PUBLIC OPINION

- Opinion of the people.
- Opinion based on reason
- Opinion concerning public interests
- Based on public welfare
- Majority are unanimity is not compulsory

IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC OPINION

- Importance of public opinion in monarchy and aristocracy
- Importance of public opinion in dictatorship
- Importance of public opinion in dominion state
- Importance of public opinion in democracy
 - Public opinion is the base of democracy
 - Public opinion is the life of democracy
 - Public opinion is the watchman of democracy

- Public opinion is protector of civil rights
- Public opinion is main base of social system
- Public opinion is criteria of the success of democracy
- Importance of public opinion in international field

AGENCIES FOR THE FORMATION AND EXPRESSION OF PUBLIC OPINION

- The press
- Human factor
- Public meetings
- Political party
- Political literature
- Radio, television, cinema
- Elections
- Educational institutions
- Rumours
- Legislative Assemblies
- Religious and cultural organizations

HINDRANCES IN THE WAY OF FORMING SOUND PUBLIC OPINION

- Illiteracy and perverted education system
- Biased press
- Neutrality towards civil life
- Lack of political consciousness
- Poverty and economic inequality
- Formation of political parties based on wrong principles
- Communalism and classism
- Social evils

NECESSARY CONDITIONS FOR THE FORMATION OF SOUND PUBLIC OPINION

- Expansion of education
- Ideal education system
- Impartial press
- End of poorness
- End of communalism
- Social unity
- Freedom of personal liberty and expression
- Unity about national ideals

MEANS FOR MEASURING PUBLIC OPINION

- Election
- Direct contact
- Referendum