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SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC WELFARE AND INITIATIVES

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INFLUENCING FACTORS OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR– AN ANALYSIS



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Abstract: Voting is one of the most ordinarily utilized terms in contemporary times of majority rule legislative issues. The always expanding notoriety of majority rule hypothesis and practices has even made this term a commonly recognized name. Inequitable frameworks and their number are very enormous and consistently expanding, every grown-up resident uses 'casting a ballot' as a method for communicating his endorsement or dissatisfaction with regards to legislative choices, strategies and software engineers of different ideological groups and the characteristics of the up-and-comers who are occupied with the battle to get the situation with being the delegates of individuals. The investigation of influencing factors of electing conduct comprises an exceptionally critical space of experimental examination. Man is a normal animal in the philosophical feeling of the term; he isn't so judicious in the domains of his financial or political conduct. An observational investigation of the influence factors of discretionary conduct shows the shocking reality that the conduct of man is affected by a few silly factors and pressing factor bunches in summoning strict and common variables, the impact of cash or alluring character of a pioneer and host of other silly powers have their unmistakable effect on the personalities of the citizens. This paper highlighted some influence factors of Indian voters. In India following main political and socio-economic factors act as determinates of voting behaviours in the Indian Democratic System.

Keywords: Voting, Voting Behaviour, influencing factors

Introduction

Voting is one of the most commonly used terms in the contemporary age of democratic politics. The ever-increasing popularity of democratic theory and practice

has even made this term a household name. In democratic systems, and their number is quite large and even increasing, each adult citizen uses Voting as a means for expressing his approval or disapproval of governmental decisions, policies and programmes of various political parties and the qualities of the candidates who are engaged in the struggle to get the status of being the representatives of the people. In a limited way, voting refers to the function of electing representatives by casting votes in elections. However, according to Richard Rose and HarveMassavir point out, voting covers as many as six important functions it involves voters the choice of governors or major governmental policies; it permits individuals to participate in a reciprocal and continuing exchange of influence with the office- holders and candidates; it contributes to the development or maintenance of voters allegiance to the existing constitutional regime; it contributes to the development or maintenance of a voter's disaffection from the existing constitutional regime; it has emotional significance for individuals; and for some voters, it may be functionless i.e., devoid of any emotional or political significant personal consequences. Voting as such is a function of immense significance for the voters, the candidates and the students of politics. The study of voting behaviour has come to be regarded as an important aspect of contemporary political research and theory.

Meaning of Voting Behaviour

According to Samuel S. Eldersveld, the term Voting Behaviour is not new. But it has been used of late to describe certain areas of study and types of political phenomena which previously had either not been conceived or were considered irrelevant. Voting behaviours is not confined to the examination of voting statistics, records and computation of electoral shifts and swings. It also involves an analysis of individual psychological processes (perception, emotion, and motivation) and their relation to political action as well as of institutional patterns, such as the communication process and their impact on the election.

In the words of Plano and Riggs, Voting Behaviours is a field of study concerned with how people tend to vote in the public election and the reasons why they vote as they do. The term voting behaviour has recently been expanded in meaning and is taken as one major and broad area of study subsumed within the broader designation of political behaviour. It involves a study of human political behaviour in the context of voting in elections. Voting behaviours studies open windows on the minds of the millions of people who are involved in the political process as voters. These constitute an important area of political science in which theory can be systematically and qualitatively measured and tested.

Meaning of Voting Behaviour

Election refers to a process of democratic participation in which all the people express their opinion about personalities and issues by making on a ballot paper.

Election expresses democratic class struggle through voting. Major differences in the political allegiances of different age groups, classes, education, religious or ethnic groups have been reported by voting surveys. Voting for right or left depends upon a person's life experiences.

The study of electoral behaviour constitutes a very significant area of empirical investigation that takes the subjects of politics very close to the discipline of sociology with the result that a new dimension of advanced study, rather a discipline, is becoming more and more popular with the name of political sociology or sociological politics. Man is a rational creature in the philosophical sense of the term; he is not so rational in the realms of his economic and political behaviour.

An empirical study of electoral behaviour displays the astounding fact that the behaviour of man is influenced by several irrational forces. The role of political parties and pressure groups in invoking religious and communal factors, the influence of money or charismatic personality of a leader and a host of other irrational forces have their definite influence on the minds of the voters. The role of these irrational forces can be discovered or discerned in case a student of empirical politics focuses his attention on how the favourable results of an election are obtained. This fact applies to every democratic system and, as such, India is no exception.

However, keeping the case of Indian voting behaviour in view, V.M. Sirsikar well observes: An enquiry into the process of election indicates factors other than rationality. It may be said that India has secured a stable government, but the mass manipulation, cattiest influences, minority fears, and charismatic hold of the Prime Minister have played no main part in this process.

Voting Behaviour and Influence Factors

In the Indian context, the Voting Behaviour is influenced by several factors such as religion, caste, community, language, money, policy or ideology, the purpose of the polls, the extent of franchise, political wave etc. The political parties and groups make use of these variables for the sake of winning the battle of the ballot box. Despite making their professions for enlightened secularism, politicians can be found making appeals to the religious and communal sentiments of the people; they can also be found involved in exploiting the factors of language or money to achieve the purpose of emerging successful in the war of votes. Appeals are issued and canvassing campaigns conducted in the name of a particular policy or ideology for the same purpose. The interest of the voters and accordingly their behaviour at the time of voting is also influenced by the nature or purpose of the elections or the extent of the suffrage. The force of charisma has its part to play whereby the voters are influenced by a slogan like GaribiHatao, or A vote for a pair of bullocks is vote for Panditji and progress, or Indira means India, India means Indira, or Indira means Dictatorship, my heart beats for India versus Rajiv means Bofors and the like. The role of all these factors can be examined

in the study of Indian electoral behaviour. There are several influence factors are responsible for Voting Behaviour in India. This paper highlighted some influencing factors of Indian voters. In India following main political and socio-economic factors act as influencing factors of voting behaviours in the Indian Democratic System.

1. **Caste:** Caste continues to be an influential factor in voting behaviours in India. It has deep roots in society and constitutes an important basis of social relations at all levels. Despite the adoption of several provisions which prohibit action and discrimination on its basis, caste continues to be an influential factor of political behaviours. The politicisation of caste and casteism in politics has been a well-known reality of the Indian political system. The political parties in India, without any exception, while formulating their policies, programs and election strategies always keep in mind the caste factor. Caste is a factor in the selection of candidates for contesting an election from a constituency. Votes are demanded in the name of caste. Jat Ki Vot Jat Ko, Brahmin votes vs. Jat votes or Jat votes vs Ahir votes etc., are commonly used principles for planning an election strategy. The role of caste as a determinant of voting behaviour has been analysed by several scholars and they have come out with the conclusion, as Morris Jones writes, Politics is more important to caste and caste is more important to politics than before. Caste is the main language of voters belonging to rural India. Despite the adoption of democratic values which conceive of a society free from casteism, caste continues to characterise politics in India. Indeed, it has become one of the chief means by which the Indian masses have been attached to the process of democratic politics. The decision to implement Mandal Commission recommendation for reservation of jobs for other Backward Classes (castes) and the reaction it generated in politics testifies to the continued presence of caste as a determinant of politics in India. However, it must be stated that the role of caste as an influencing factor of the voting behaviour has been changing, at least in the urban areas. Issue-based political struggle is gradually taking its shape in the Indian polity. But the situation continues to be paradoxical.
2. **Charisma:** One important factor of voting behaviour is Charisma. It means the exceptional quality of a factor and overrides group elements leader that becomes a source of attraction and reverence for the people in large numbers; in an opposite sense, it also means a source of awe and terror that frightens the people in large numbers not to speak or dare to do anything against the wishes of the mighty leader. Fortunately, in our country, the constructive aspect of charisma has had its role at the time of election. Huge attendance at the meetings addressed by towering personalities like Nehru, Indira, Vajpayee, Modi and a sudden change in the mind of the voters in response to the appeals issued by such great figures may be counted as the concrete

evidence of the role of charisma in the electoral behaviour of our people. The slogan of GaribiHatao worked miracles in the election of 1971; the personality of Gandhi after India's miraculous victory in the Bangladesh War had the same marvellous impact on the mind of the electorate in the State Assembly elections of 1972. The image of Jayaprakash Narayan had the same effect in the elections of 1977. So was the effect of the personality of Rajiv Gandhi in the elections of 1984 and V.P. Singh in the elections of 1989. The personality of Modi, BJP won the election of 2014. That is Why, it is said: Where the group's factors are weak or cancel out, this charisma may be the major.

3. **Election Campaigns:** Each party launches a vigorous election campaign for influencing the voters in its favour. Use of such means as mass meetings, street meetings, personal contacts, posters, poster war, speeches by film stars, TV and Radio broadcasts, newspaper advertisement, handbills, processions and propaganda, is made to win votes, particularly the floating votes. An election campaign is designed to make a voter believe that his interest can be best served by the party, the candidate of the party contesting from his constituency. Poll eve campaigning plays a role in influencing the choice of the voters. A party that is in a position to create an impression through its election campaign that it has a chance to win, can earn some additional votes as several voters try to side with the side which they perceive to be a winning side
4. **Factionalism:** The Indian Political life, from the village level to the national level, is characterized by factionalism. No political party, nor even the cadre-based BJP and the two communist parties are free from factionalism. It is at work, as Rajani Kothari points out, at all levels of the congress. It has adversely affected the strength of the congress as a political party with a glorious past, a weak present and not a bright future. Other parties are also suffering from factionalism. The voters are getting disenchanted with some of the political parties because of their inability to overcome factionalism. They are turning to locally organized parties or regional parties which, because of their small organizational network and limited operational based are relatively less affected by factionalism.
5. **Illiteracy:** Illiteracy has been another factor in voting behaviours in India. It is because of this weakness of the people that political parties, communal groups and militant outfits, are in a position to exploit the sentiments of the people in the name of caste, religion, region and another such factors. The votes of the illiterate constitute a big proportion of the votes polled and hence it plays a big role in determining the outcomes of elections. However, despite this feature, the common sense and maturity born out of the experience of the past have also been playing a big role in influence the voters mind and actions. In 1977 they united to defeat the forces of authoritarianism and in 1980, they again defeat these united non-performers.

6. **Language:** India is a multi-lingual state. Linguism also serves as a factor in voting behaviour. The organization of states on a linguistic basis fully reflects the importance of language as a factor of politics in India. There have been problems in states like that of the status of one particular language in that state, or relating to the quality of the status of a language of a state. Since people have an emotional attachment with their languages, they easily get influenced whenever there comes up any issue relating to language. Linguistic interests always influence voting behaviour.
7. **Money Factor:** India is a poor country with a large number of people living below the poverty line. Money as such plays a vital role in determining the voting behaviour of the people in India. A rich candidate or party has always better chances of winning the elections. But it is to be pointed out here that it happens only in normal circumstances and not during a wave-election or when other key issues are involved. Despite organizing a very expensive election campaign, Congress(I) lost power in 1989.
8. **Performance of the Ruling Party:** Each Political party contests elections based on an election manifesto, and after coming into power, it is expected to fulfil the promises made there. Good or bad performance of the ruling party, just based on the election promises made and promises fulfilled influence the basic behaviour of the people in a big way. We experienced it in 1989 in India, when the Congress (I), which got a thumping majority in the 1984 election could not win even a simple majority in the very next election held in 1989 mainly because it failed to perform successfully. In 1989, the Congress Party and in 1991 the Janata Dal failed to win because they failed to exercise power and maintain their political stabilities. This has happened mainly because of a corresponding increase in the number of floating voters or switchers who are mostly young men and women from the educated upper middle class and are ready to shift their support from one party to another based on their performance.
9. **Public Esteem of the Candidate:** A candidate report with the people with constituency or his known qualities or contribution in any value spread of activity always acts as a factor of voting behaviour. Apart from his party's loyalty or opinion on various issues and problems, a voter while making his choice always takes into account the nature and level of his association with the candidate. A positive image of a party's candidate is a source of popular support for the party. A voter prefers to vote for a candidate who is approachable and who can help him anyway.
10. **Religion:** The establishment of a secular state in India, by guaranteeing the right to freedom of religion to everyone, treating every religion equal and non-recognition of any religion as a state religion has not been successful in preventing the role of religion as an influencing factor of political behaviour

in general and voting behaviour in particular. The existence of such political parties and neo-political groups as stand linked with a particular religion, for example, Muslim League, Akali Dal, Hindu Maha Sabha, Shiv Sena etc., have been one of the reasons behind the continued role of religion as a determinant of voting behaviour. Religious pluralism of the Indian society is a major feature of the environment of the Indian political system and it greatly influences the struggle for power among political parties. The selection of candidates is done with an eye upon the presence of a religious majority in a particular constituency. The candidates do not hesitate to seek votes by playing the religious card with co-religious voters and the secular card with members of other religious communities. The use of religious places for political ends is also standard practice, particularly during elections. The religionization of social-political issues is again resorted to by political parties and other groups. The voters very often vote on religious considerations.

11. **Sub-Nationalism:** Ethnic pluralism, communalism, regionalism and sub-nationalism are the hard realities of Indian society. Of late sub-nationalism has become a crucial factor in influencing the voting behaviour of the people. At times a secessionist group gives a call for the boycott of elections and uses pressure tactics to force the voters either not to vote in favour of a particular party. Some regional political parties like some fractions of the Akali Dal, Naga Nationalist Organization, Gorkha League, Jharkhand party, AASU and AAGSP in Assam have raised parochial slogans from time to time and have disturbed the emotional stability of the people of their states. Such actions of some political parties have at times influenced some people to organize themselves on narrow and parochial lines.

Conclusion

These are thus the important influence factors of voting behaviour in India. The continuity in the operation of India's political system as a developing democratic political system is gradually training the Indian voters. The process of emergence of an issue-based political struggle in place of a caste, religion, personality, dominated struggle for power is very slowly but gradually taking shape. Elections occupy a prominent place in India. It is a means through which people express and enforce their political opinion and regulate the political organization of society. However, the behaviour of a voter is influenced by several factors such as religion, caste, community, language, money, policy or ideology, the purpose of the polls, the extent of the franchise and the like political parties and groups make use of these variables for the sake of winning the battle of the ballot box. It is, therefore, imperative that the use of these influence factors should be avoided and elections should be conducted in a very free and fair manner. It also depends upon whether the system allows freedom of thought, expression and association to the people. The mere presence of an electoral system does not make a

political system democratic. The will of people is expressed through voting in elections and therefore, all undemocratic and unfair means like manipulating and rigging need to be avoided in the elections. No such action is taken which would in any way undermine the popular will expressed through elections.

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