

Voting behavior in India: an Analysis

By

Dr. Alpana Sharma

Vice Principal

Assistant Professor- Department of Political Science

SSR College of Arts, Commerce & Science

Sayli, Silvassa

Email- dr.alpanasharma21@gmail.com

Abstract

In Indian political system democracy is the backbone on which whole system stands. Indian democracy is multicolored. Politics at national level is different from State level Politics. If we keenly observe the Indian voting behavior we will find different patterns of voting. Now a day the rural voters have become more aware about their rights, role and importance. They are more active and are becoming a decisive element. Rural voters of every age group want positive results and are giving their valuable suggestions. In comparison with the rural voters, urban voters have different pattern. Urban voters are educated and aware but they have less concern and time to contribute in the system. At certain points/circumstances the rural and urban voters follows the same voting pattern. Factors such as social factors, caste, religion, economic condition, political leadership and personal rational power affect the voting pattern in both rural and urban voters.

Introduction

In Indian political system democracy is the backbone on which whole system stands. Indian democracy is multicolored. Voting is one of the most commonly used terms in contemporary democratic politics. The ever increasing popularity of democratic System and practices has even made this term a domestic name. In democratic systems, and their number is quite large and ever increasing, each adult citizen uses 'voting' as a means for expressing his consent or disagreement of governmental decisions, policies and programmers 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. The study of determinants of electoral behavior constitutes a very significant area of empirical investigation. Man is a rational creature in the philosophical sense of term; he is not so rational in the realms of his economic or political behavior. An empirical study of the determinants of electoral behavior displays the astounding fact that the behavior of man is influenced by several irrational factors and pressure groups in invoking religious and communal factors, influence of money or charismatic personality of a leader and host of other irrational forces have their definite influence on the minds of the voters. The main purpose of the present study is to focus attention on voting behavior in India and to highlight the factors that determine the voting behavior in India. Politics at national level is different from State level Politics. If we keenly observe the Indian voting behavior we will find different patterns of voting. Now a day the rural voters have become more aware about their rights, role and importance. They are more active and are becoming a decisive element. Rural voters of every age group want positive results and are giving their valuable suggestions. In comparison with the rural voters, urban voters have different pattern. Urban voters are educated and aware but they have less concern and time to contribute in the system. At certain points/circumstances the rural and urban voters follows the same voting pattern. Factors such as social factors, caste, religion, economic condition, political leadership and personal rational power affect the voting pattern in both rural and urban voters.

Determinants

Charismatic leadership– In Indian politics charisma of leader plays an important role. If leader is having good personality, speaking skills, vision and approachable attitude then leader can earn good

amount of faith in public. The ability and specialty and of course popularity of the individuals as the candidate also influence the voters. Indian national politics is the best example of charismatic leadership. Indira Gandhi, Rajeev Gandhi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Narendra Modi are the examples of Charismatic leadership. Elections where the Charisma of leaders was reflected in voting pattern the political parties secured good number of seats.

Caste Politics- Caste is another influencing factor of voting pattern. Caste plays vital role in Indian politics. This is the biggest determinant of the voting behavior for the past five decades in India. This is the most ancient and widely used factor. Parties give tickets to the candidate of a caste which has the majority in the constituencies. Political parties' sets vote bank on the basis of caste. People like to vote a candidate who belongs to the same caste. During elections caste of candidate is one of the most important quality/factor that attracts the voters. Leaders of different caste influence voters belonging to their caste. Political parties know that caste politics is the easiest way of influencing Indian voter. E.g. Bahujan Samaj Party has Dalit vote bank and Samajwadi party has Yadav and Muslim vote bank.

Ideologies of the political parties- Firm ideologies of political parties attracts voters. If political parties are ideologically committed and perform, they can easily create their vote bank. Political ideologically can be based on any historical event, sect, religion, movement or ideology. Indian political history proves that voters connect with parties on ideological ground.

Some political ideologies play a deciding factor like democrats, socialism and communism.

Gender and age of the candidates- Age and gender creates psychological impact on voter. These two variables are having huge impact on voting behavior. Attraction of opposite sex works and different age group voter change their preferences. Political parties use this tactics of attraction and allocate tickets to people with glamour and huge fan following. Personality of leaders also influences the voting behavior.

Religion- Constitution of India establishes Secular State and provides freedom of religion as the fundamental right. State government cannot create any discrimination and favoritism on the basis of religion, but surprising fact is that most of the political parties are linked with particular religion. On the name of religion voters are attracted and votes are demanded and Indian voter makes their opinion on religious ground. On one hand religion is the biggest weakness of Indian voters and on the other hand it is the biggest strength of political parties. It is as fact that religion plays an important role especially where both the followers Hindus and Muslims are situated in a constituency. This gave a support to Religion based parties. Though in a secular state like India, it must not be used but reality is far away. Politics of Bhartiya Janta Party is based on Hindu Nationalism. They try to encash the Hindutva Card. Issue of Ram Janam Bhumi and constructions of Ram lala Temple are the issues which mobilize huge voters towards BJP. Shiv Sena is another name in this chain. Muslim league, Akali Dal, Kerala Congress and Hindu Mahasabha are the other examples.

Regionalism- In politics, regionalism is a political ideology that focuses on the interests of a particular region or group of regions, whether traditional or formal (political divisions, administrative divisions, country subdivisions or sub national units). After 1990s it is getting more and more importance. Demanding separate region, promoting region specific interest, claiming representation to end exploitation etc. are the main emerging causes from regionalism. Regional Political parties promote the issues of regional problems and provoke voters. Voter's behavior is easily molded on the regional interest. They find regional interest more urgent rather than national.

Race - Race has become an important influencing factor of voting behavior. In last five years north – east politics of political parties and look East policy of Indian government is continuously changing voting pattern of north - east India. Last State assembly elections of Mizoram, Manipur and Assam

clears change phenomena of voting behavior on the name of race .It will be very difficult for a North east candidate to win in South and a South Indian candidate from any other region of India.

Linguism - India is a multi-lingual state. Language does not play a big role at national level politics but it is a deciding factor at state level politics.Linguism also effects voting behavior. The associations and political parties of states on linguistic basis fully reflect the importance of language as a factor of politics in India. There have been problems in states like that of 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 emotional attachment with their languages, they easily get influenced whenever there comes up any issue relating to language. Linguistic interests always influence voting behavior. South Indian politics is based on linguism.

Development and existing government performance - Development factor is practiced in developed democracy. It is a Symbol of old, firm and strong democratic system. It is expected that this is the main and desirable factor that should play a big role in determining the voting behavior. It reflects in current political environment. Educated voter evaluate the work of existing government and decide their vote. Good performance of the government appeals to voter and voting pattern can be changed.

Incidences and current issues- Some important and sudden events and incidences can change the equations in politics. Government's failure on sudden events like if government was unable to provide adequate public assistance at the time of natural disaster, any type of economic crisis , threat at international level or any domestic and social challenge. This type of issue disconnects the support of people from the government. Impact of incidences and current issues gives immediate effect on voting behavior. Impact of Demonetization and GST was seen in State Assembly Elections of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh.

Cadre - Some of the voters are emotionally attached to the political parties and political leaders and they vote in the name of the party and leader only. This type of voting pattern does not change with time and situations. Each political party has their own cadre. Voters are least bothered about the candidate and his ability. They vote for party not for leader. Same way some political leaders have their own cadre. Their supports do not have any concern about their leader's party status. If leader is contesting independently, they will vote for him. Change in political party does not change the voting behavior of this cadre.

Election Campaigning Strategies –At present we can see that elections are contested at huge level and to attract voters political parties are taking the help of PR agencies. Different types of strategies are used to attract voters like use of Social Media Platform, Rallies, Movies, Advertisements, Paid news, Slogans and Programs. Twitter, Facebook, Whatsup, bulk massaging and many other apps are used to approach voter. Social media is the biggest platform where opinions are made to attract voters and as a result change in voting behavior can be seen.

Influence of Money, Muscle and Media– M – 3: Money, Muscle and Media are the major influencing factors of present democracy. To attract voters political parties uses money and muscle power. Studies showed that in last twenty years political parties used money and muscle power at large number. In the decade of 90s parties gave tickets to **Bahubalil** leaders where money and threat worked to change voting behavior. At present role of media has become more important. Maximum media houses are biased. Media created opinion effects voting pattern of Indian voters. Uneducated voters are greatly influences with TV. They understand what they see on news channels. They do not have time and understanding for verification of information which is telecasted.

**Conclusion**

Voters are influenced by sociological factors such as income, occupation, education, gender, age, religion, ethnic background, geography, and family. – Voters are also influenced by psychological factors such as political party identification, specific candidates, and key issues.

Indian voting behavior has many dimensions. There is different graph of rural and urban voter. In rural and urban areas again voting pattern is different on the ground of education. Educated voter acts differently in comparison of uneducated voter. Caste based equations, reservation and religion changes the mind set of voter. Media houses are continually generating different type of opinions. Present Indian voter is having many options and notions which is contently pushing him. It is very difficult to say that voting behavior will reflect in certain pattern because Indian voter is more confused rather than aware.

References:

- J.C.Johari, "Indian Government and Politics," Political Dynamics, Vishal Publications, 1998.
- Fadia,B.L,Indian Government and Politics, SahityaBhawanPublications,Agra.
- J.C.Johari, "Indian political System,"AnmolPublication,New Delhi,2002
- <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org>