

Voting Behaviour: a Practice of Democratic System.

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Abstract : Voting is a very very significant part to success a fruitful democracy. It was Athence which was the pioneer of the democratic process all over the world. In India the largest democratic country of the world, democratic process had its very root in the Indian citizenship Act, 1924. Since, 1952 India is practicing a very successful and participating-democratic procedure and in this connection voting behavior is a very pertinent and relevant area of discussion. This voting behavior in India has some specific determinants which are at the same time very interesting as well as significant. These voting behavior cast an impact of the democratic process of Indian Society and politics

Key words : Democratic Process⁴ Voting, Voting Behaviour, Participation, Empowerment.

Introduction :

'Voting' has been used as a feature of democracy since the 6th century BC, when democracy was introduced by the Athenian democracy. The right to vote began in 1776 when the Decentralization of independent had been signed by the people of united state of America . In Vedic period of India , the Raja (chief) of a gana (a tribal organization) was apparently elected by the gana, But Indian citizenship Act of 1924 declares ail non-citizen Native Americans born in the USA to be citizens with the right to vota. After independence in India the first generation election held in 1951-1952. Thèse elections were the biggest experiment in democracy anywhere in the world. Having right to vote, there were over 173 million voters, most of them poor, illiterate, and rural, and having no experience of elections, so , the big question at the time was how would the people respond to this opportunity. Many were skeptical about such an electorate being able to exercise its right to vote in a politically nature and responsible manner. But in

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contemporary age of democratic politics in India, voting is one of the most commonly used terms. That is why voting behavior is an practice of democratic System. In democratic Systems, and their number is quite large and ever 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. An empirical study of the determinants of electoral behaviour displays the astounding fact that the behaviour 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.

Democratic System and Voting:

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. These quality of peoples comes from practices of democracy System. However, in, broad terms, as Richard Rose and Harve Massavir point out, voting covers as many as six important functions:- 1. It involves individual's choice of governors or major governmental policies; 2. It permits individuals to participate in a reciprocal and continuing exchange of influence with office-holders and candidates; 3. It contributes to the development or maintenance of an individual's allegiance to the existing constitutional regime; 4. It contributes to the development or maintenance of a voter's disaffection from existing constitutional regime; 5. It has emotional significance for individuals; and 6. For some individuals 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 practice of democratic System, contemporary political research and theory.

Voting Behaviour

Voting is a form of personal empowerment that gives us the opportunity to voice our opinion on issues that matter our family and our community. Voting behavior is one of the most practice of democratic system. Samuel S. Eldersveld in his article, "Theory and Method in Voting Behaviour Research" writes: 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 behaviour 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 election. In the words of Piano and Riggs, "Voting Behaviours is a field of study concerned with the ways in which people tend to vote in public election and the reasons why they vote as they do." The term voting behaviour has recently been expended in meaning and is taken as one major and broad area of study subsumed within the broader designation of political behavior. It involves a study of human political behaviour.

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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. Election is the most important element of practice of democratic Systems. Election refer 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 express 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 survey. Voting for right or left depends upon a person's life experiences. Man is a rational creature in the philosophical sense of term; he is not so rational in the realms of his economic and political behaviour. study of the voting behavior displays the astounding behavior of man is influenced by several irrational elements of political parties and pressure groups in invoking ; and communal

factors, influence of money or charismatic of a leader and a host of other irrational forces have its influence on the minds of the voters.

Voting Behaviour In India: Determinants :

The behaviour of voter is influenced by several practices such as religion, caste, community, language, money, policy or ideology, purpose of the polls, political wave of democracy etc. The political parties and groups which are main parts of democratic System 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 own part to play whereby the voters are influenced by a slogan like "Garibi Hatao", 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 rôle of all these factors can be examined in the study of Indian electoral behaviour. There are several factors responsible for voting Behaviour in India.

(1) Charisma

Charisma is "Power legitimized on the basis of a leader's exceptional personal qualities or the demonstration of extraordinary insight and accomplishment, which inspire loyalty and obedience from followers" (Kendal, Diana...Sociology in our time..2nd ed.2000 Nelson, 438-439) one important factor of voting behavior in democratic system. It means exceptional quality of a factor and override 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 rôle 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 evidences of the rôle of charisma in the electoral behaviour of our people. The slogan of „Garibi Hatao worked miracles in the election of 1971; the personality of Mrs. Gandhi after India's miraculous victory in the Bangladesh War had the same marvelous 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 of V.P. Singh in the elections of 1989. Personality of Modi, BJP won election of 2014. That is why, it is said: "Where the group factors are weak or cancel out, this charisma may be the major." According to Max Weber, the methods of succession are: search, revelation, designation by original leader, designation by qualified staff, hereditary charisma, and office charisma. These are the various ways in which an individual and a society can contrive to maintain the unique energy and nature of charisma in their leadership.

(2) Caste

Caste in Indian society refers to a social group where membership is largely decided by the birth. Caste continues to be a determinant of voting behaviours in India. It has deep roots in the 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 a determinant of political behaviours. Politicization 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, programmes and election strategies always keep in mind the caste factor. Votes are demanded in the name of caste. Jat Ki Vot Jat Ko, Brahmin votes vs. Jat votes or Jat votes vs. Ahrar votes etc., are commonly used principles for planning an election strategy. Despite the adoption of democratic values which conceive of a society free from casteism, caste continues to characterize 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

polities. 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.

(3) Less consciousness about Parliamentary Democracy

Parliamentary democracy in India , as a political idea , is still exposed to hazard arising from the attitudes of certain political parties and criticisms from others . Most of the voters of India have no idea about parliamentary democracy. They don't know what rights have been written for their protection. That is why little consciousness or no consciousness about parliamentary democracy^ is the important factors responsible for voting Behaviour in India.

(4) Religion

The establishment of a secular state in India - by guaranteeing right to freedom of religion to every one, treating every religion equal and non - recognition of any religion as a state religion - has not been successful in preventing the rôle of religion as determinant 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 rôle of religion as a determinant of voting behaviour. Religious pluralism of the Indian society is a major feature of the environment of 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 others religious communities. Use of religious places for political ends is also a standard practice, particularly during elections. The religionisation of social-political issues is again resorted to by political parties and other groups. The voters very often vote on religious considerations.

(5) Language

India is a multi-lingual state. Linguism also surveys as factor in voting behaviour. The organization of states on linguistic basis fully reflects 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 behaviour.

(6) Money Factor

India is a poor country with a large number of people living below poverty line. Money as such plays a vital rôle in determining 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, the Congress[I] lost power in 1989.

(7) 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, Jharkha 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.

(8) Performance of the Party in Power

Each Political party contests elections on the basis of an election manifesto, and after coming into power, it is expected to fulfil the promises made there in. Good or bad performance of the ruling party, just on the basis of the election promises

made and promises actually fulfilled influence the basis behavior of the people in a big way. We experienced it in 1989 in India, when the Congress (I), which got a thumping majority in 1984 election could not win even a simple majority in the very next election held in 1989 mainly because of its failure to perform successfully. In 1989, the Congress Party and in 1991 the Janata Dal failed to win because of their failures to exercise power and maintain their political stabilities. This has happened mainly because of a corresponding increase in the number of „floating voter or „switchers who are mostly young men and women from educated upper middle class, and are ready to shift their support from one party to another on the basis of their performance. Voting Behaviour in India and Its Determinants DOI: 10.9790/0837-201042225 www.iosrjournals.org 25 | Page

(9) Mass literacy

Mass literacy has been another factor of 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 other such factor. The votes of the illiterate constitute a big proportion of the votes polled and hence it plays a big rôle in determining the outcomes of elections. However, despite this feature, the common sense and maturity born out of experience of the past has also been playing a big rôle in influence the voters mind and actions. In 1977 they united to defeat the forces authoritarianism and 1980, they again to defeat the this united non performers.

(10) 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 is free from factionalism. It is at work, as Rajani Kothari points out, at all level of the congress. It has adversely affected the strength of the congress is a political party with 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.

(11) 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 behavior. Apart from his parties loyalty or opinion on various issue and problem, 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. 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, hand bills, processions and propaganda, is made to win votes, particularly the floating votes. 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. Prolonged campaigning plays a rôle in influencing the choice of the voters. A party which 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.

Conclusion

Voting behavior is the practices or expression of democratic System in which elections are happening partly time to time and election is formal decision-making process and it has been the usual mechanism by which modern representative democracy has operated since the 17th century. Although elections were used as early in history ancient Greece and ancient Rome, and throughout the mediaval period to select rulers such as the Holy Roman Emperor and the people. 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 or religion or personality dominated struggle for power is very slowly but gradually taking shape. Elections occupy a prominent place in the democratic government. It is a means through which people express and enforce their political opinion and regulate political organization of the society. However the behaviour of a voter is influenced by

several factors such as religion, caste, community, language, money, policy or ideology, purpose of the poils, extent of 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 determinants 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. 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 any way undermine the popular will expressed through elections. By election, voters tend to have stronger social connections, leading to a greater quality of life and longevity. Voters should have the satisfaction of knowing that they have expressed their opinions.

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