

## **Voting Behaviour in India and Its Determinants**

India is the largest Democracy in the World, Voting is one of the most commonly used terms in contemporary age of democratic politics. 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 voter. 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 Behaviour In India: Determinant:**

The behaviour of voter is influenced by several factors such as religion, caste, community, language, money, policy or ideology, purpose of the polls, extent of franchise, political wave etc. In India following main political and socio-economic factors which act as determinates of voting behaviours in our Democratic system;

- (1) **Charisma:** One important factor of voting behaviour is Charisma 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 role 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 and 2019 and also won many state assembly election in different states.
- (2) **Caste :** Caste continues to be a determinant of voting behaviours in India. It has deep roots in the society and constitutes an important basis of society at every level. Despite in our constitution have several provisions which prohibit action and discrimination on its basis, caste continues to be a determinant of political behaviours. 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, programmes 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 for planning an election strategy. despite Caste is the main language of voters belonging to rural India. 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 determinant of the voting behaviour has been undergoing a change, at least in the urban areas.

- (3) **Religion** : The establishment of a secular state in India – by guaranteeing right to freedom of religion and 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 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 role of religion as a determinant of voting behaviour. 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 voters very often vote on religious considerations.
- (4) **Language** : India is a multi-lingual state. Linguism also serves as factor in voting behavior. 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. Linguistic interests always influence voting behaviour in national and state level election.
- (5) **Money Factor** : India is a poor country with a large number of people living below poverty line. Money as such plays a vital role in determining voting behaviour of the people in India. A rich candidate or party has always better chances of winning the elections.
- (6) **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, AASU and AAGSP in Assam.

(7) **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 basic behavior of the people in a big way.. This has happened mainly because of a corresponding increase in the number of 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.

8. **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 role in determining the outcomes of elections.

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 behavior. 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. **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, 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.

**Conclusion:**

India's political system as a developing democratic political system is gradually training the Indian voters. However, the behaviour of a voter is influenced by several factors such as religion, caste, community, language, money, policy or ideology etc. 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.