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# Factors Affecting Voting Behavior in Indian Elections

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**ABSTRACT:** Now-a-days, unless you understand human behavior with subtlety, one cannot design election campaign strategy to influence voting behavior. From observations, it can be concluded that even seasoned politicians have failed several times in winning the hearts of the people in elections. Public pulse is still a puzzle. Nobody can guess the mind of the public. No single strategy is perfect to win elections. Many political pundits, despite decades of experience failed time and again to predict a winning formula. Perceptions of the public is very important. By analyzing past elections from India as well as around the world, it is understood that even economic performance and all other best social-indicators will not win elections. People want a leader, who seems to work for the welfare of the public. In India, people like giving freebies to them. The more populist the more probability of the party getting into power. No doubt, charisma of the leader, money spending capacity of the candidate, caste, religion, etc factors do play a key role in elections. India is a unique country, where the social fabric is multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-caste, multi-racial, and multi—lingual etc. So, their aspirations differ. Party promising to fulfil public desires, will win elections. Historically, Muslims and English men ruled parts of India for centuries. India was plundered, looted, exploited and squandered by the invaders. A significant percent of the Indian population, lives in poverty and lacks opportunities to explore and are illiterate and semi-literate. So, in this context, the present research paper analysis various factors that influence voting behavior in India.

**KEYWORDS:** Charisma, Money, Crisis, Decisive, Religion, Caste, Nationalism, Voting behaviour, Welfare schemes, Anti-incumbency, Anti-Corruption etc.

Researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 100 people from state of Telangana over phone and in-person. Observation and interpretation methods are used in writing this research paper. Researcher conducted interviews with politicians, academicians, students, farmers, private and government employees, people from unorganised sector, businessman and villagers on voting behaviour. Secondary literature like newspapers, magazines, research articles, dissertations, thesis and books etc were referred. Information is also analysed from interviews given by politicians and experts on YouTube.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Voting behaviour is defined as factors that influence the voters in casting their vote to the contesting candidate. The study of voting behaviour explains the factors that influence voter's preference in voting. It also evaluates voter's perceptions, statistics, electoral data etc. Voting behaviour probes individual psychological processes, motivation, perceptions and emotion. Voting behaviour studies psychology of millions of voters behaviour. Voting Behaviour is a study done: why people vote in elections and reasons for voting a particular party or candidate.

Election studies in India was pioneered by Rajani Kotari, of Centre for Studies on Developing Societies (CSDS). Political scientist, Sociologist, Anthropologists, Media personalities and Political parties studied voting behaviour of the public. Ashok Lahiri, Pranay Roy and David Butler wrote a book titled "Compendium on Indian Elections" in 1980s. In 1990s elections studies became popular. Organisations like Lokniti and CSDS are conducting National Election Surveys (NES) from time to time. Media organisations collaborate with Election survey organisations and conduct poll surveys before and after the polls. Opinion as well as exit polls are conducted throughout the election process as on today.

According to our constitution, India is a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic, and republic. So, people elect their representatives to all elected bodies, be it panchayat, municipalities, assembly and parliament. As per 61<sup>st</sup> amendment

act, 1988 to our constitution, age to vote in parliament and assembly was lowered from 21 to 18 years. Art 326 of constitution, gives guidelines to elections to Lok Sabha and Legislative assemblies. Elections in India are contested competitively for every five years. Election is the root of democracy. People elect representatives to rule them from panchayat to parliament. In a democracy, elected representatives make laws, formulate rules and regulations to govern as per the requirements of the society needs. Elected bodies have to fulfil aspirations of the public, otherwise, they may lose popularity and representatives may not get elected next time.

### **Theoretical models of voting behaviour**

Sociological, Psycho-social models and Rational choice theory studied voting behaviour. The Sociological model was put forth by Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet in 1944 in the book "The People's Choice" published by Applied Bureau of Social Research of Columbia University. This book discusses influence of social factors in voting. The Psychosocial model school is propounded by Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes in 1960 in the book "The American Voter". This book says that identification of the party plays critical role in voting behavior of voters. The third is Rational Choice theory. It is also known as economic model of voting. The chief proponent of this theory is Anthony Downs. He elaborates this theory in his book "An Economic Theory of Democracy" in 1957. He stresses on variables like information, rationality, uncertainty and choice.

### **Historical context**

During ancient days, India was rich and was having janapadas, where elected representatives ruled janapadas. Democracy has deep roots in our country from time immemorial. Invaders squandered, exploited, plundered and looted India for centuries. Majority of the people living in India practice Hindu religion. Hindus never invaded other country in its history. Because of invaders, it fell defensive and became insular. Unique social practices emerged out of it, like rigid caste system, traditions and customs. Social mobility has almost become inflexible in local social structure. Indian economy is dependent on agriculture. Before independence, industrialisation was at nascent stage. During medieval days too, India was prosperous and attracted invaders. Muslim rulers invaded India and conquered certain parts of it. They ruled for centuries. Later on, British came for business and took over India and ruled for centuries. Militarily, Western and Muslim invaders were more sophisticated than Indian counter-parts. Continuously, invasions took place for centuries. Therefore, progressive thoughts couldn't sink deep into rural India during this time. Politically, India before independence is divided into small principalities. Culturally, according to eminent sociologist Yogender Singh, Indian culture is different every one kilometer.

Literacy level before Indian independence was very minute. Education was accessible to only upper caste and rich people. Indian society was ridden with superstitions and world view was very narrow. Religion enveloped public thinking and way of life. Due to caste hierarchy, there was no equality in the society. Literacy among women was almost negligible. Educational facilities in rural India were almost not available. Scientific thinking in the society was absent. Political awareness slowly picked up due to freedom struggle. According to Arnold Toynbee, "Indian villagers were little contended nations". They were self-sufficient in every way. So interaction with outsiders was very less. Thinking in society did not develop.

During freedom struggle, people were more obsessed with their religion. Communal violence used to take place often. Religion and caste divided the society. India was partitioned based on religion. Deep scars of partition are seen to this day. Six decades of Congress rule left certain sections of the Indian society dissatisfied. That is the reason for BJP's rise to power.

At present, India has a population of 135 crores approximately. India is a predominantly rural in nature. Large percent of its population lives in villagers. Villagers are undeveloped. Social and economic inequality is apparent. India is way behind in the world in many socio-economic indicators. Development is not uniform. Due to drought and other reasons, rural distress still exists. In BIMARU states as on today social and economic indicators are still very low.

Since independence, various governments enacted several laws to empower common man. Few laws were successful in bringing social change in the society. Many laws failed in realising their purpose, because of poor implementation. In the past seven decades, India progressed in many fields. When comparing with few developing and developed countries, India should have done still better.



Is India a failed state? Eminent economist, Nobel laureate, Gunnar Myrdal in his book “Asian Drama” said, India runs like a “Functional anarchy”. All institutions have collapsed. No institution functions as per the ideals for which they are constituted. Politicians have bent all the institutions and broke them for their selfish gains. Average Indian mind is also corrupt. People think corruption is everywhere and anything can be done. It is partially true. Because, sometimes laws, rules and regulation do function. Laws differ in implementation for the poor and rich. Injustice done to poor can’t be easily redressed. Approaching judiciary is expensive and takes decades to get justice. It is beyond reach of common man. Many government institutions failed to live up to the expectations of the public. So, public trust private organisations than government institutions especially in education and health etc. Majority of population are obsessed with fulfilling their basic needs. Large population could be an important reason for this state of affairs. Resources are limited and public necessities are unlimited. And also, flawed public and populist policies are implemented by political parties to win over people’s heart. Instead of making people self-reliant by empowering through knowledge and skills, people are given free support from womb to tomb. In turn making public lazy. India has plenty of human resource. Indian human resource is not nurtured, managed or channeled scientifically. If human resource is trained scientifically, it can be used as an asset. Politicians bribe voters to win elections. If public mind set is changed, India can do wonders. Indian civil society is vibrant and dynamic. In crisis, it functions beyond expectations. It is proved many times. In this context, voting behaviour of an Indian has to be seen and analysed.

Registered parties with Election Commission and independent candidates contest elections. Political parties put forward their manifestos and take it into public to seek votes before elections. Public, media, experts and politicians discuss the election manifestos thread bare. There are several factors influencing voting behaviour in elections. In Indian elections, media or public or politicians set the agenda. Intensive discussions take place on the media platform, public meetings and society. Depending on the issues, politicians, subject experts and sometimes public also air their views. As a result, public opinion is formed. It will lead to informed decision in voting. Following factors influence voting behaviour in elections: They are:

**Charisma of the party chief and contesting candidate:** Pt Nehru, Smt Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and Narendra Modi etc are charismatic leaders. People look towards them as their saviours. Generally, charismatic leaders are visionaries, excellent communicators, have ability to influence public opinion and are also risk takers. They are capable of stirring emotions and touch people hearts. They are believed to work for the welfare of the public. They spread positive feeling’ in the society and understand human beings better. Charismatic leaders seem to be tough and result oriented.

**Caste:** It could be an important factor in voting. Political parties select candidates for contesting based on constituency’s population composition. Candidates are selected from large caste group in the constituency. People are identified based on caste in Indian society. Several political parties came into existence on the basis of caste. Samajwadi party, Bahujan Samaj Party and Rashtria Janata Dal are examples. These parties have been identified with Dalits and BCs and MBCs. Caste is a determining factor in rural areas than urban areas. Mandal commission has empowered OBC groups. Does people of same caste vote en bloc to contestants belonging to same caste? It has never been the case in post-independent India. So voting could be on caste or not. However, there are several instances where casteism didn’t play any role in elections. Few castes patronage certain political parties. They vote to those political parties in tandem.

**Nationalism:** People over look under performance of the government like slow economic growth, unemployment, poor infrastructure, lack of health and educational facilities for nationalism. Voters having “Deshbakthi” would vote to a nationalist party. They have ultimate aim of protecting their country from evil forces and developing it. All over the world, nationalist political parties are present. In India BJP is a nationalist party. Voters believing in nationalism will vote nationalist parties. For a nationalist party country is paramount.

**Religion:** It is an important determinant for voters. Few political parties are functioning on religious lines. MIM and Indian Union Muslim League are examples. MIM wins all constituencies where Muslims are in majority in Hyderabad. But, elsewhere in several instances people voted against religious parties. BJP used rath yathras to evoke Hindu sentiment. Because of historical reasons too, religion influences voting behaviour in India. Minorities to a large extent vote based on religion or vote to secular parties. Generally, they are treated as vote banks.



**Language:** Political parties came into existence on language feeling. Bal Thackeray's Shiv Sena has become popular based on "Marathi Manush". He campaigned to form Maharashtra on linguistic lines. In India, States are re-organised based on language as per States Reorganisation Commission (SRC). Especially, southern states of India are formed based on language: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kannada, Tamil, Kerala. Other states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, West Bengal are also created based on language etc. Regional parties are identified with language of the state. When language sentiment is evoked, voters generally might prefer local party. In West Bengal assembly elections 2021, BJP tried to provide stiff opposition to ruling Trinamool Congress (TMC). TMC won with landslide victory. BJP improved its strength in assembly. One reason for BJP's debacle is, its leaders parachuted from other states and were speaking in Hindi. People of West Bengal didn't like it and voted TMC to power, because Bengalis take pride in their language. Late N.T. Rama Rao's Telugu Desam was also formed on Telugu language pride. AIDMK and DMK take pride in Tamil language.

**Financial support to voters:** Lot of money is spent during elections. Money or gifts are distributed to voters to influence them. Candidates and Political parties spending money has bright chances winning elections than candidates not spending any money. Money factor plays a critical role in elections in India. Literally, voters are bought in certain states by paying them few thousand rupees per vote.

**Sub-nationalism:** In north-east India, ethnic tribes, in Jammu and Kashmir secessionist and leftist groups in other states sometimes call for boycott of elections. Or sometimes these secessionist groups hold influence on voting behaviour also. Tribe hamlets and villagers under control of these groups vote to the party or candidate they decide. India is a diverse country. There are innumerable political parties representing sub-nationalism in several states. Local public may vote to these parties out of loyalty and sub-national feelings.

**Regionalism:** People sometimes may vote on the basis of regionalism. In India, regional political parties like Biju Janata Dal, TRS, AIADMK, DMK, Akali Dal and Shiva Sena are ruling states. These parties generally identify with regional aspirations. In India many states are ruled by regional parties. To some extent, it is visible that Indian electorate has become mature. Public in many states are preferring regional party to a national party. In recent elections, it is found that people are preferring regional party at state level and national party at the central level. Few decades ago, Congress used to rule states and national level, due to presence of deep roots the party has from freedom struggle. Now that Congress lost its popularity in the country and BJP is trying to get foot hold in several states.

**Government's performance:** Generally, ruling party is assessed on certain parameters about its performance. Welfare and development schemes, health, education, water facilities, electricity, employment, law and order, crisis handling, corruption, proper administration and government's care and concern for the people etc. Governments must resolve serious public issues swiftly to the satisfaction of the public. Governments must be proactive in providing basic requirements. People always expect government to provide facilities to the public. Governance of a state or country must be liked by the public. Government officials must be accessible to the public and work for their welfare. Voters vote to the government, if it satisfies the public aspirations. Good governance of a state or country by the ruling party is very important to win elections.

**Failure of the opposition as a viable alternative:** If the opposition is not strong and viable then voters would vote to a ruling party. In a democracy like India, strong opposition is essential. It is common in democracy not finding suitable and viable alternative in elections. Strong leaders are needed in a democracy to win trust of the people and provide opposition. Eternal vigilance is a price of democracy. Many a time, if ruling party doesn't satisfy than a weak opposition may be preferred. In recent presidential election (2020) in U.S, the incumbent Donald Trump lost election to Joe Biden.

**Illiteracy:** Generally, illiterate people are poor. Their world view will also be very limited. They easily come under the influence of money, liquor, gifts and other endorsements. Illiterates vote to people who takes care of them, as they don't have much thinking capacity. Illiteracy is curse to democracy. They may also come under the influence of opinion leaders of their religion or caste or region too. Illiterates can't make rational choices.

**Factionalism:** In certain parts of India, factionalism too influences voting behaviour. Factions support powerful parties either in power or oppositions. Factionists to survive seek help of political parties. Factionists too have huge following in certain area. Their writ runs in those areas. Public in tandem vote to a party, factionalist support.

**Public perception of the candidate and also party:** People should have a positive view on the candidate or party, otherwise voters don't vote. Perception or image management is very important. To build public image, political parties must use public relations expertise. All good deeds done in public interest must be shared with the public. Many parties and candidates are using social media to share their good work. So that a positive perception is built. Parties or political candidates must always maintain transparency with regard to their personal life or work they do. In politics, opposition party or candidates try to pull down the other candidate or party. To nurture positive image, politicians have to cultivate media relations. Established party candidates or registered party candidates are elected then independent candidates. In panchayat, M.L.C and other elections lower than assembly, people generally prefer ruling party at the state level. Public will have many common problems in their lives. They don't know where to go and whom to approach sometimes. Political parties must proactively get into public and find their issues and resolve them. This gesture would attract voters towards them.

**Election campaigning:** If election campaign is planned and executed, so that it reaches voters in a convincing manner, then there is a possibility of getting votes. Well-orchestrated political campaigns create buzz in the constituency about the contesting candidate. Election campaigns can determine outcome of the elections. Poor election campaigns will not support contesting candidates. Interpersonal and group election campaigns will generally yield good results. Social media election campaigns also influence voters. Multimedia campaigns inform, educate and motivate young voters. Attractive slogans and songs have to be composed to run thunderbolt election campaigns. Public must be made to believe that party or candidate will win elections. Campaign must be run by people with strong network and familiar with public. Local leaders have to be used for campaign. As people feel, local leaders can be approached in times of need. Campaign should be designed and implemented in local language or dialect. Local culture, traditions and customs must be used. It is an art. Election campaign must be well co-ordinated. People campaigning must be taken care of very well. They have to provide with vehicles, campaign material, financial support and other support needed. Campaigners must be encouraged to promote the contesting candidates in elections among the voters profusely. So that candidates name props up while voting.

**Resolution of certain specific area issues:** Sometimes issues pertaining to specific area are resolved, public may become loyal and vote for the party. Leh was separated from Jammu and Kashmir and union territory was created. It was a long pending demand. If water resources are provided, factories are started and employment is created, separate districts are created, hospitals are built, roads are laid etc generally people vote the candidate or party provided. In every election we come across news that villagers or certain areas in a city or town are boycotting elections or not allowing politicians to campaign, as the administration or elected representatives didn't solve their pending issues. Old assurances given by politicians, if not fulfilled may not be able to get votes.

**Bandwagon effect:** The undecided voters to the last minute sometimes get under the influence of exit polls or opinion polls. Election Commission of India has banned exit polls during various phases of elections. Depending on exit polls too voters might get influenced and vote to a particular party or candidate. Opinion polls also might influence voting behaviour. Because, these polls create buzz that particular party or candidate is winning. Voters believe that and might vote under the influence of media publicity. Impartiality is lost due to exit polls or opinion polls.

**Policies of the party:** Policies enacted must facilitate development and improve ease of life. Policies must also address complex issues facing by the state or country. If long pending issues are resolved through appropriate policies, then public would appreciate for eg: Present NDA government resolved Kashmir and Babri Masjid issues. MNREGA, Right to Information Act, Right to Education etc are enacted UPA government. These policies are widely appreciated by many. Initially in 1991, liberalisation and privatisation policy of economy was adopted by Congress government. Because of which, present level of development took place. Several state governments implement public friendly policies. Those governments get re-elected subsequent terms. If the government policies are against aspirations of the public, then that government will be thrown out. Every public policy initiated must look like taken in the public interest. BJP government in Gujrat, Naveen Patnaikin Orissa and Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal have been getting re-elected continuously several times.

**Welfare and development programmes:** All the governments at central and state are providing innumerable programmes for weaker sections of the society. In Tamilnadu, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, several welfare and development schemes are implemented to fulfil basic necessities of weaker sections of the society. Significant section of the population is covered through these schemes. It is difficult for opposition to dislodge these parties ruling these

states as their schemes are popular. Now-a-days, political parties are competing intensely to provide populist schemes to the public. Public vote to the party providing more populist schemes to the public.

**Visible development work and perception that good work is done:** Development work must be visible and it must also build perception that good work is done. Public should feel that there is change in policies or infrastructure and life has become easy. Infrastructure development impresses public a lot. Dams, school buildings, water tanks, roads, public amenities, government offices and housing etc will impress public a lot.

**Familiarity and accessibility of the candidate:** This particular characteristic will bring voters to the party or candidate. Because, familiarity and accessibility of the candidate draws public towards them. Unknown candidate is usually not preferred. Accessibility builds confidence among the public, as they can approach the candidate in hour of need. If the public feel the contesting candidate is responsive, then he will be preferred.

**Weakness and wants of the public has to be assessed:** Political parties have to assess weaknesses of the public to formulate manifestos to motivate them to vote. Several political parties design their manifestos depending on the requirements and wants of the public. Political party must assure the public during elections that it would fulfil promises made in the manifesto. Thorough research has to be carried out to know requirements and aspirations of the public.

**Leader should be assuring and trust worthy:** Credible leaders are followed. Followers would go to any extent to support trust worthy leaders. Trust worthy leaders win election after election. Present Chief Minister of Orissa, Naveen Patnaik is ruling the state for the past two decades, though it is said that he can't speak fluent Oriya. In Madhya Pradesh, Shivraj Singh Chauhan won three times consecutively. In Gujarat, Narendra Modi too won assembly elections three time consecutively.

**Reference group:** Sometimes group of people compare with reference group to assess their choices. In elections, voters vote by comparing with others. Psychologically, people want to associate with winning party or candidate.

**To prevent somebody from getting elected:** If voters don't like somebody than they will vote to a non-controversial candidate. Survey has to be conducted to find out views of the public to ascertain the acceptability of the candidate. Otherwise, disliked candidate is bound to lose election.

**Fellowships and scholarships to the students:** People like providing fellowships and scholarships to the students. In Telangana, fees reimbursement is provided to people coming from weaker sections of the society. Free residential schools are made available to religious minorities and weaker sections of the society. In Andhra Pradesh, government deposits some amount into parents of school going children. Fellowships are also provided to pursue PhD abroad to students coming from weaker sections in few states. Scholarships are paid for preparing competitive examinations and getting trained in some skill to get employed. NDA government is also providing fellowships to minority and weaker sections of the society to pursue PhD in universities. Aspirants are trained for competitive examinations in many states.

**Government's money should reach maximum number of people:** If the government provides financial support to poorer sections of the society: single women, unemployed youth, old age pensions, financial support to farmers, weavers, toddy tappers, beedi workers, pregnant women, marriage gift from the government to newly married minority and weaker sections of the society, DWACRA members, medical reimbursement for poorer sections of the society, Free housing to weaker sections, free land distribution, handsome hike to government employees, social security schemes to public and farmers especially as they are committing suicides etc. Public might support to that government, which supports them financially.

**Alcoholic drinks:** In India from panchayat to parliament elections, liquor must flow freely. Strong bond is formed during alcohol drinks among public. Lot of money is spent on liquor. Generally, alcohol is freely distributed among voters. It is assumed that alcohol brings votes to the party or candidate. In India without alcohol, elections can't be won.

**Ideology:** In certain states, we can observe ideology dominating political discourse. In Kerala, leftist party LDF usually dominates political discourse. In cow belt in northern India, Hindutva ideology dictates political discourse. In certain

states, secular parties are preferred. It all depends on the composition of the people: religions and castes etc. People with strong ideology generally vote to their party close to their ideology. People with strong ideology usually don't change their loyalty.

**Influence of media:** Media is a powerful instrument to influence public. Especially, during elections, media organisations work actively. Sometimes media organisations take sides and promote political parties or candidates. Media through its reporting and debates could influence voters. Impressions are created on the minds of the voters. Media houses are owned by political parties. Each party promotes its agenda and criticizes the opposing parties. Public, reading and watching media platforms can get an idea on political parties' agenda. Media houses are divided into leftist, rightist and left of centre. Goebbels made propaganda using media in Nazi government. He says, if a message is propagated time and again several times repeatedly among public, then they will trust it even it is false.

**Opinion leaders:** In rural and tribal India, opinion leaders influence voters. Illiterate, semi-illiterate, caste and religious groups can come under the influence of opinion leaders. Political parties use opinion leaders to pursue voters to vote a particular candidate. Religious leaders, educated people, caste leaders, employees etc act as opinion leaders. Role of opinion leaders can't be underestimated in Indian elections.

**Taking up public issues and try to improve their lives:** Parties should be able to connect with the people. So parties or their leaders must take up public issues and improve their lives. Political parties fighting for public cause are preferred. Leaders standing for public cause are identified with the public and generally voted to power.

**Gender:** Giving concessions and implementing welfare schemes to women would definitely can influence their voting behaviour. Aam Admi Party gave free bus rides in Delhi for women. This might have influenced their voting behaviour. Similarly, TDP in Andhra Pradesh and TRS in Telangana implemented welfare and development schemes meant for women. These schemes would have created vote bank for women for respective political parties. Nitish Kumar's Cycle Yojana, Modi's Beti bacho beti padao and Jan dan yojana. Women are given reservations in Education, Employment, Panchayats and Nagar Palikas. Now-a-days women's participation in elections has increased. Various political parties have given importance to women's physical and social security, economic inclusive growth, empowerment, employment, health, malnutrition, female infanticide etc. Women's issues are given primary importance in political parties and election manifestos. Women are given reservations in Panchayats and Nagarpalikas in many states. Women may vote to a party, which gives more tickets in any elections.

**Sentiments:** Political leaders use sentiment of religion, caste, geography, language, country etc to woo public to give their vote. Leaders through their oratory stir emotions of the public towards them. Leaders like Mamata Banerjee uses Bengali sentiment and K.Chandrashekar Rao uses Telangana sentiment to follow them. Asaduddin Owaisi uses religious sentiment. Mayawati and Akhilesh Yadav uses caste sentiment in elections.

**Leaders political acumen:** Wise and proactive political leaders are followed by the voters. Not so smart leaders are not liked or followed. Shrewd leaders generally solve issues of the public. They take of their followers very well. They rise to position and power very fast. Public follow intelligent leaders. As they build strong base among the public with their political skill.

**Less controversial:** Controversial candidates are not preferred in politics. People show contempt for such kind of people. Image of the contesting candidate is very important. It should be clean and public friendly. Controversies around a candidate would make his political career complex.

**Staying far away from scams and corruption charges:** Governments were pulled down due to scams and corruption charges. As far as possible scams and corruption must be avoided. Public don't like corruption charges. Parties or candidates lose reputation and may lose elections because of scams and corruption charges.

**People friendly administration:** Administration must be people friendly. It has to provide quick flawless services to the common man. Administration must go to people rather people going to offices. During former chief minister of Andhra Pradesh Chandra Babu Naidu, there was "Prajalavadakupalana". Every six months an important issue used to be taken and public were asked to approach administration to get their grievance redressed. Any government, whose administration is supportive to public will be appreciated and may be voted back to power. Y.S.Jagan Mohan Reddy's



“Grama Sachvalayam” is providing people friendly administration and public are happy with the arrangement in Andhra Pradesh. It is said, Aravind Kejriwal’s administration too is public friendly in New Delhi. That is the reason for his re-election. It is a rare scene in Indian politics to see Chief Minister of State on the roads inquiring people about administration and seeking their feedback on policies.

**Handling crisis and problem solving:** Tough leader is always adored and respected than a meek leader. People look up to leaders, who stand by them in times of crises. Weak people face many problems or atrocities on them in their lives. Many a time, they succumb to atrocities. Because, they are helpless. In such kind of situations, if parties or leaders come to their aid and support them, then public would be loyal and vote them in elections.

**Basic infrastructure:** Water, sanitation, roads, uninterrupted electricity, food security, employment are the basic necessary infrastructure every government must try to provide. If any government or elected leader provides basic amenities, people may show their loyalty to the contesting candidate. If basic amenities are not provided, public may not vote the government or political party.

**Simplicity of the leader:** Leaders with simplicity are liked by the common man. Leaders looking rich and exuberant are disliked by voters. Voters like compassionate, helping, connecting, empathetic and sympathetic leaders. Simplicity makes people approachable. Approachable leaders are usually preferred as they hear and may provide resolution to their problems. Simplicity makes people identifiable with common man.

**Connecting with the public emotionally:** If people in any type of distress are taken care of emotionally, leaders can connect to the public. If the leaders stand by people during personal losses, natural calamity, and accidental losses etc then voters would show gratitude to the leaders. Good leaders are seen with public in tragedies.

**Seat distribution to the right candidate:** Seat distribution is critical for winning elections. Popular and winnable candidates have to be selected to contest elections. Research or Survey has to be carried out to decide upon a candidate. In selecting candidates, objectivity has to be followed. Any type of favouritism or influence has to be shunned. In many elections in India, seasoned politicians too make mistakes and lose elections. Seat distribution to a right candidate is critical in all elections. Right party and wrong candidate would lose elections. Wrong party and right candidate may win elections.

**Strong and decisive leader handling crisis:** People revere strong and decisive leaders. Because those leaders would take risk and protect the country and its people from aggressors. In few Indian states, strong and decisive leaders brought law and order into control from lawlessness. During war with Pakistan in 1971, Mrs Indira Gandhi was appreciated for her decisive role in dividing Bangladesh from Pakistan. People would like and adore a leader, who handles crisis with equanimity in public interest. Leaders with grit, confidence, vision and public interest are voted in elections. Present U.P C.M Yogi Adityanath controlled crime and criminal lords.

**Identifying the leader as one among them:** Leaders have to be identified with public. Young and old should be able to relate him. Leaders through their activities, must be able to go into people. He should be visible in the constituency. Then public would see him as their leader. Once public accepts him, then they will remain loyal to him. Leaders like late C.M. Y.S Rajashekar Reddy are remembered and revered to this day, because he took care of his followers in every way. Because, he is related with public.

**Current events:** Current critical situations may also effect voting behaviour of the public. COVID-19 management is appreciated by public of Kerala. They voted back to power LDF government in 2021 assembly elections. Similarly, adverse events may pull the ruling government. Favourable incidents may prefer sitting candidate or ruling government. Doklam stand-off with China and surgical strikes were favourable to NDA government in 2019 elections. COVID—19 management may also impact election outcome in several states and at national level. National and International incidents may also impact election outcomes.

**Padayatra (State tour):** Touring constituency or state would help in connecting and understanding with people. Y.S. Rajashekar Reddy toured undivided Andhra Pradesh in 2004 before assembly elections. Congress won assembly elections in 2004. Similarly, his son Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy toured separated Andhra Pradesh and won 2019 assembly elections. Touring the state will take the leader close to the public.

**Selfless service to the public:** People like leaders, who only works for welfare and development of common man. We come across many leaders winning their constituencies continuously over long period of time due to selfless service. In 2019 parliamentary elections, Pratap Chandra Sarangi got elected as M.P from Orissa. He defeated wealthy and powerful politicians in the election. Because, he is a selfless leader working for public cause. He is a minister in present Narendra Modi government.

**Anti-incumbency:** Generally, anti-incumbency factor works against ruling government. People gets dissatisfied with the policies and decisions taken by the government, so they would like a change in the government. Overcoming anti-incumbency is a tough task for the ruling party in power. Ruling government should always put tab on the pulse of the people and implement policies to satisfy them.

**Inner party squabbling:** In 2017 U.P elections, Samajwadi party was kicked out of power due to inner party squabbling. In Indian history many governments lost power due to inner party fights. Inner party fighting will send wrong signals to the voters. Fractions are bad in politics. There is a possibility of voters preferring a strong united party. Because, public expects a stable government to rule them.

**Prices of essential items:** Sometimes prices of essential commodities also influence voters. Some time back onions brought down government in Delhi. Because, price hike pinches pockets of common man. So they show their anger by voting out ruling government. As a result, ruling governments have to see that price of essential commodities does not rise. Petrol price hike also impacts common man. It also might sometime create adverse effect on election outcome.

**Economic performance:** Economic performance does influence choice of electing a party or candidate in elections. Growing economy is preferred by voters because, there would be increase in employment opportunities, development and welfare activities, business activities etc. GDP should increase, inflation should be less and fiscal deficit should be within limit. Then only economy is concluded as performing better. Annual growth rate of economy should also be reasonable. Sometimes, economic performance also might not help in elections. During 2004 national elections, Prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee lost elections despite economy doing well.

**Flawed public policies or inconsistent public policies:** When public policies are designed by the government, they should be flawless and consistent as far as possible. Because, they would impact the lives of the public. We come across many public policies which look faulty. Public policies should not discriminate or favour few and leave many out of the benefit. It creates envy and jealousy and may lead to disfavours the party. In India, governments are biggest litigants in various courts. Reason is flawed designing of public policies. Many policies are arbitrary and discriminatory.

**Discrimination and inequality:** A leader should not discriminate among the people based on caste or religion or geography or some other parameter. He should look everybody equally. Discrimination in any way will lose popularity with people.

**Appeasement:** Appeasing a caste or religion may bring votes to a party or a candidate. In India, caste or religious people are appeased with free boons to them. Usually, people benefited from appeasement remain loyal to the leader or party who has bestowed on them. Appeasement sometimes brings votes and sometimes may not. Religious, caste and linguist groups are treated as vote banks and are appeased by giving benefits to them. Sometimes other caste or religious people may feel jealous or envy with people benefitting from appeasement.

**Behaviour of the candidate:** A politician has to be patient. Impulsive behaviour will not be liked by the voters. A politician has to behave maturely. Pains and wants must not be exhibited in the public domain. Trials and tribulations of politics must be kept to heart and not reveal in public domain and not look weak. A leader should look compassionate, caring, concerned and helpful towards people. A calm and cool politician is preferred than a haughty politician.

**Electoral Alliance:** Electoral alliance among different parties to face a formidable party in elections may be preferred by the voters, if they are dissatisfied with the ruling party. Sometimes, electoral alliance is voted to power. It all depends on; what priorities they stand for? If electoral alliance looks trivial then people may not vote to it. In 2015

Bihar legislative assembly elections, six parties formed Mahagathbandhan and won election defeating BJP led alliance. In 2018 assembly elections, PrajaKutami was formed in Telangana against ruling TRS party. PrajaKutami consisted of Congress, TDP, Communist Party and Telangana Jana Samiti. Electoral alliance could not win the confidence of the public and lost elections.

**Expectations of the voters:** If the expectations of the voters are high, and if leader doesn't raise to the expectations of the people, they wouldn't vote. If people have low expectations on the leader and if he outperforms their expectations, people will support him. Expectations of the voters also plays key role in voting behaviour.

**Good intentions and sincere efforts:** Public always appreciate good intentions and sincere efforts of a leader rather than carelessness. People like trying and failing but would not like negligence of the leader. Leaders should always communicate their good intentions and share their efforts with the public. So that leader's intentions and efforts are followed.

**Credibility of the contesting candidate is important:** Challenger in the elections must be a trusted leader. Even if the contesting candidate is not so well known or powerful, he may be voted to power based on the credibility of the leader. If voters dislike some popular leader, then challenger of the powerful leader is voted in elections even the leader is novice in politics. Mamata Banerjee won over veteran communist leader Somnath Chatterjee in Jadavpur parliamentary constituency in 1984, Kamaraj Nadar lost to Srinivasan, a university student in Virudunagar, in Tamilnadu and Indira Gandhi lost to Raj Narain in Rai Bareilly in 1977 etc.

**Red tape and bureaucratic control:** Bureaucratic performance also impact the voting behaviour. If government officers don't respond in time, people may get dejected. Government offices must be responsive to public demands. If they neglect them people will have negative opinion on the government. Public grievances have to be resolved in time. Otherwise, people will show their unhappiness in elections. If public are unable to get their work in time, then public will show their dislike. Welfare schemes have to be implemented in time. Transparency and accountability should be there in administration.

**Personal safety and security:** Law and order must be under control. People must feel safe. Criminal incidents must be resolved professionally at the earliest. Public would not like security lapses. Public involved in crime must be apprehended and punished. If government doesn't respond properly then it will impact public perception on the government.

**Non-economic factors also affect the election outcome:** Government must always exhibit concern and caring for the public welfare. It should look strong and decisive. It should look working and kicking than looking dormant. Always activities must be seen to the public then public would feel that government is functioning.

**Place of birth of the candidate:** Voters sometimes out of affection, vote on the basis of place of birth of the candidate. People may own the contesting candidate as they may be familiar with the candidate.

**Economic class of the voters:** Economic issues like price rice, land reforms, employment allowances, employment, loan wavier, subsidies, removal of poverty etc all come under class issues. Sometimes concessions in electricity bills and water bills etc determine voting behaviour. In recent assembly elections in Delhi, these issues benefited Aam Admi Party(AAP). Middle class and weaker section people supported these benefits. Rich people may have different preferences than middle class and weaker section public.

**Political marketing or Political communication:** Inter-personal and group communication is more effective in elections. Opinion leaders can pursue voters to vote a particular party or candidate. Multiple channels must be used to reach targeted voters. Political content must be able to be identifiable with the voters. Political communication's language must be of targeted community. Themes must reflect local culture, problems and aspirations etc. of the targeted community. They should get convinced to vote a particular candidate. Political communication of leaders and parties must remind voters to vote them. It must be continuing till the last hour of election campaign. Symbols, language, culture, traditions and customs etc must be from targeted community. Governments have to incessantly communicate its flagship welfare and development programmes to the public either through advertisements or public relations. Government's achievements should also be communicated to the public through multimedia campaigns



continuously. Government's promotional budget should be significant so as to promote its government activities. People should be continuously reminded.

**Tribes:** Important Tribal issues will determine voting behavior of the tribes. Generally, they want to protect their cultural identity and also their resources like minerals, forests and other precious natural resources from exploitation from outsiders. Tribal people are innocent and easily gullible. They don't want outsiders to erode their cultural identity. Constitution has given political autonomy to bring regional development as per V and VI schedules. Reservations were also given to Scheduled Tribes in education and employment. Other issues pertaining to them must be resolved to their satisfaction. Campaigning leaders in the elections should be chosen from their tribes by the political parties. Because, their leaders understand their problems better.

**Muscle power:** In Indian elections, muscle power is used to influence voters to vote to a particular party or candidate. In slums and rural India, muscle power is used. Poor and illiterate people get easily influenced by muscle power. In backward regions of India, muscle power is visible in elections. Because of Elections Commission of India and media, role of muscle power has come down.

**Social media and its role in elections:** Internet data availability at cheaper rates have enabled common man to buy smart phones and use it for several purposes. In a book, "Cell Phone Nation" the author Robin Jeffery has illustrated, how cell phones have brought socio-economic revolution in marginalised sections of the Indian society. Skilled, semi-skilled, illiterate and semi-literate are able to use smart phones with effortless ease. They are able to use software apps for different purposes. Youtube, Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Telegram and Twitter are few social media apps used in election campaigns. Several studies from around the world have concluded that there is an influence of social media in voting behaviour of voters. Almost all parties have social media cells to put their point of view or manage election campaigns. Young netizens can be influenced by social media election campaigns.

**Geographic, Psychographic and Demographic factors:** Place, attitude, preferences, values, age, gender, income, education, race, ethnicity and marital status determine voting behavior. Young voters may have their own preferences and old age voters may have their own preferences. Generally, gender, income of an individual, educational background and marital status will influence voting behavior.

**Election sweep:** Sometimes there may be complete sweep to a particular in elections. People may prefer one party against another party. Voters in large numbers may vote one particular party and it will win with landslide victory. TMC in 2021 elections, swept West Bengal elections. In 2017 U.P elections, BJP swept with landslide victory. Many voting factors influence election sweeps.

**Middle class voters:** Majority of the Indian population are from middle class. So far, no political party targeted middle class with welfare and development schemes. If any party assures to implement welfare schemes for middle class voters, that party would stand chance of attracting voters. Because, middle class public has grievance that no political party takes care of them. As their lives have become tough to lead with limited financial means.

### III. CONCLUSION

In a democracy like India, elections are held every five years to elect their representatives. Elected representatives are policy makers. Our constitution has given adult franchise to vote in an election. Voters vote based on certain parameters. Voting behavior has to be studied to design election campaign effectively. Public pulse has to be researched to analyze their wants and preferences, so that election campaign messages reach the voters perfectly. Election campaign strategist has to subtly study voter psyche. An election strategist should keep all the above determinants while design an election campaign and writing an election manifesto. All over the world several voting behavior studies are being undertaken, since several decades. However, nobody is able to predict correctly, why public vote the way they vote. Because, so far politicians who spent whole life are unable to predict a formula for winning an election all over the world.





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