



The Dynamics of Voting Behaviour in Indian Democracy

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Abstract: The term “voting behavior” encompasses a broad range of activities related to the electoral process, including reviewing voting records, collecting voting data, and calculating electoral shift. As a subfield of political behavior, it is typically considered or regarded as such. There is a whole subfield within political science and political sociology devoted to the study of voting behavior. This branch of study is called “psephology”. Psephology or voting behaviour study’ occupies a principal position in the political analysis. Because voting gives useful information on the interplay between individuals, society, and politics, such studies have grown in popularity among social scientists in the field of study. Voter’s behaviour can be observed, studied and explained as they exercise their political rights during elections. Political scientists have long placed a premium on studying voter behavior in the hopes of providing light on the “how” and “why” of public decision-making. Because voters’ choices and preferences are subjective, their voting behavior is hard to decipher. Because myth, ideology, individual personality, the campaign process, local concerns, and other aspects are all part of the topic, experts in political science, political sociology, and psychology are needed to analyze voting behavior. The single most critical component of election outcomes is voter behavior. It deduces the voters’ level of political awareness and reason. No two people’s voting habits are the same. It vary not just from one location to another, but also from one individual to another. The major constraints that limit its diversity are cultural, political, and socioeconomic ones. In addition, differences in gender (Sex), caste, class, religion, and other related categories impact voting behavior. Voters can have a better understanding of the many mechanisms of election and voting via studies conducted from a political-psychological perspective. All of these things participation in decision-making, exercising the franchise, voting, and selecting leaders are done to make voters happy. While exercising their right to vote, right-thinking citizens maintain a healthy sense of self-esteem. Choosing a public representative is, in any given sociopolitical context, essentially a process of weighing available alternatives. Here, voters have a variety of contenders from

whom to choose. The process of voting entails the selection of a particular set of policies by the government, as well as the opportunity for citizens to engage in a two-way flow of information and ideas between candidates and elected officials, which can foster either support for or opposition to the current constitutional order. Furthermore, voting also bears personal emotional weight. Among political theorists who are interested in the empirical support and practical application of their theories, research on voting behavior has a unique position. As a field of political science, voting behavior is considered to be amenable to rigorous theoretical development, quantitative measurement, and testing. Second, no other area of political science study has led to as many concrete findings as studies on voting behavior. Thirdly, we are at a very advanced level of theory development in the field of voting behavior research.

Keywords: Election, voting, rights, individual, democracy, politics, society, constitution, candidate, Ballot paper, EVM.

Introduction

The study of political behavior as it pertains to voting is known as electoral politics. Despite the fact that elections occur at set intervals, electoral politics begins well in advance of those dates. Consequently, electoral politics include not just the holding of elections but also patterns of party and leader voter mobilization. A measure of a democracy's success is the level of participation from different social groups and the degree to which elections are conducted in a free and fair manner. With a few exceptions, every adult in India who is 18 years old or older can vote for their representatives in the elections and run for office once they reach a certain age thanks to the universal adult franchise that was instituted after the Constitution was put into effect in 1950. During the general election that took place in 1951–1952, all adults in India were finally granted the right to vote. In the past, limited franchises were the norm in India rather than global ones. This meant that only extremely well-off, rent-paying, and academically-qualified members of society could vote and run for office. There are two main kinds of elections that individuals may take part in: direct and indirect. The people choose their representatives in direct elections. In indirect elections, voters choose their representatives at the state and national levels through representatives such as members of parliament (MPs) or municipal level councils (MLCs). The positions of president, vice president, and members of the Rajya Sabha are filled by indirect elections. The section delves into the topic of electoral politics in Indian states, specifically focusing on direct elections. In India, voters choose representatives to serve in the Lok Sabha, the Legislative Assemblies, and local government bodies like Panchayati Raj Institutions in rural regions and

municipalities in urban areas. From 1951 to 1971, all of India's legislative assemblies and the Lok Sabha were elected at the same time. They have been conducted independently since 1971. Indeed, during the 1990s, there has been a steady increase in the number of elections held in India to both the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies. Liberal constitutional democracies are characterized by their use of elections. In order to ensure that elections in India are both free and fair, the federal form of government established the Election Commission. State legislative assemblies and councils, as well as the Indian parliament, are elected in Part XV of the Indian constitution. Article 324 states that the federal and state elections in India are to be administered by the Election Commission of India. Elections to state legislatures are outlined under Article 170 of India's constitution.

Electoral politics, party structures, and leadership in India have all been the subject of much written about. Studying elections is called psephology. A general outline of electoral politics in India is given to us in the literature. After the Congress lost ground in India in the late 1960s, studying state politics became more popular, as you may be aware. By this point, parties at the state level had formed in a number of states. Notable figures with substantial followings in their home states were instrumental in establishing a few of them. A large number of these newly-elected leaders have previously served in Congress. As diverse socioeconomic groupings and their ambitions gain traction in different states, we see the emergence of regional level leaders and parties. Most of these dreams have to do with things like geography, social class, language, faith, culture, etc. Over the course of the 1990s, these political groups—also known as state or regional parties—came to play an increasingly important role in national politics. When it came time to formulate national policy, a few of these figures were essential. In this regard, Charan Singh's case stands out. After making a name for himself in politics and policymaking in his native Uttar Pradesh (UP) up until the 1960s, he went on to play a pivotal role in national policymaking (particularly under the Janata Party regime of 1977–1979) and in the affairs of northern Indian states like Haryana, Bihar, and UP. For a short time, he was also India's prime minister. Charan Singh and other Janata Party socialist leaders had a significant impact on agricultural policy and brought the issue of OBC reservation to the forefront inside central government institutions. In 1978, during the Janata Party rule of Prime Minister Morarji Desai, their efforts led to the creation of the Mandal Commission. During that time, this tendency was mirrored in a few states; for example, the Janata Party governments of UP and

Bihar implemented reservations for OBCs in state government posts. As of the 1990s, there were more state-level parties and leaders. Social justice and the role of religion have been important mobilization issues in electoral politics because to the emergence of the BJP and the BSP, both of which were founded by Kanshi Ram in the north. In addition, each Indian state is home to several political factions. One way to identify a party system is by looking at the number of them. Additionally, there are essentially two varieties of party systems in India: multiparty systems and two-party systems. They compete with one another in electoral politics. The scope of electoral politics in the United States extends much beyond individual states and their respective political parties. They include participation from national parties as well. Therefore, state and national parties both take part in state election campaigns, either as separate organizations or in coalitions with parties at the regional or national levels.

Research on Indian elections dates back to the 1960s. Studying elections in India has mostly involved three methods: survey research, fieldwork/ethnography, and “ecological” analysis. In India, survey-based election studies were pioneered by Rajni Kothari and Myron Weiner. The field of electoral studies has evolved since its infancy in the 1960s. Studying the 1984 Lok Sabha election by David Butler and Prannoy Roy brought election studies back into the spotlight after a roughly twenty-year hiatus (Singh 2021; Ch. 4). Scholars from several states studied politics. Since then, there have been ongoing efforts to understand politics. Elections, parties, leadership, and mobilization patterns were the main areas of study in these state-level analyses of politics. After the 1990s, election studies started to gain a lot of traction. The Centre for the Studies of Developing Societies (CSDS) is the preeminent institution in India responsible for studying elections. Furthermore, individual academics perform electoral research. Opinion surveys on voting trends are also included in the scope of study, in addition to election research. Research on elections and surveys of public opinion are distinct. In contrast, the former aims to connect the election process to wider social, economic, and political circumstances. The latter is limited to understanding how people feel about the way they voted in elections.

There have been two major shifts in Indian political politics since the late 20th century. To begin with, a wider range of people cast ballots in the elections. Among these groups were disproportionately women, people of colour, Dalits, OBCs, and members of rural and indigenous communities. Voter turnout has increased

thanks to a more watchful election commission and heightened political awareness of the need of casting a ballot. Furthermore, there have been notable shifts in the demographics of state legislative assembly lawmakers. Representatives from the people tended to come from more affluent and well-connected backgrounds in the first few decades after independence. In the late 1980s, this pattern started to change, and parliament became considerably more diverse. The representation of non-Brahmins, Dalits, women, and other marginalized groups has grown significantly, complementing that of the upper castes.

There has been a sea change in Indian state elections during the last many decades. Some trends in electoral politics have changed, including: regional parties' alliances and fronts with national or state-level leaders; the growing influence of smaller parties headed by individuals from a single caste or small parties in the electoral politics of certain states like UP, Bihar, and Tamil Nadu; and the growing influence of money and crime. Furthermore, regional political parties and corporate groupings have been closely associated. To run for office, the former require financial backing from special interest organizations. As a kind of repayment, they promise to support the corporate interests of these groups if they take office (Baru 2021). Furthermore, in Indian political politics, criminality plays a role alongside money. Keep in mind that these aren't the only elements influencing electoral politics; as you'll see in the part that follows, there are other social, economic, cultural, political, etc. considerations (Vaishnav 2017).

Literature Review

In the last 20 years, there has been an explosion of research on electoral politics and political behavior in the developing countries. Refining models originally created to describe the politics of developed industrial nations is a defining feature of this body of work. A series of common wisdoms has developed that shape our knowledge of electoral dynamics in the developing world, however it would be foolish to claim that a coherent "consensus" has formed from this varied and extensive work. There are three bits of literary common sense that stick out.

To begin, programmatic politics based on tax-and-transfer programs is regarded as in stark contrast to the many kinds of "distributive politics" that are believed to control political politics in the developing world (Stokes et. al 2013). The current understanding of distributive politics is founded on the principle of *quid pro quo* contingent exchange, which states that leaders are elected by the people to provide

them with certain advantages, and that the people in turn get these benefits upon election. Because of the commitment issues with these kinds of discretionary swaps, parties often use local party brokers to keep an eye on voter compliance. There has been a lot of empirical attention on “vote-buying” during election seasons as the main type of distributive politics as it is commonly believed that the distribution of promised commodities occurs during elections (Stokes 2005; Nichter 2008).

Another portion of conventional knowledge is that, for many people in the developing world, especially in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, ethnicity is a major factor in how they act politically. Voters may have strong emotional links to political parties and politicians from their own ethnic group, according to several researchers (Horowitz 1985; Carlson 2015). But the idea that voters and parties may credibly back each other via ethnicity—and therefore solve the commitment concerns at the core of discretionary distributive politics—is perhaps even more consequential (Fearon 1999; Chandra 2004; Posner 2005).

Thirdly, when it comes to organizational strength, political parties in the developing countries are often said to be lacking. They aren’t well-organized enough to make a difference in people’s lives between elections, and they don’t have solid standards to govern the internal transfer of power and responsibility. As a result, the idea that people are more loyal to certain politicians than to political parties is perpetuated, making it even more difficult for partisan programmatic politics to emerge. The thinking goes that political parties amass resources to run for and win elections, but then they tend to vanish when the dust settles.

These three simplified truths of developing world politics have been inspired and validated by India, the most populous country in the world and the developing world with the longest-running democracy. One common perception is that India’s distributional politics are not programmatic. Many have argued that this nation best exemplifies the “patronage democracy” model.¹ Second, the ethnicized democracy of India has long been used as an example. Scholars have contended for decades that religious and caste-based ethnic characteristics shape the dynamics of daily politics (Chandra 2004). A more informal, although oversimplified, way of putting this reasoning is that Indians vote more for their caste than for themselves. Lastly, according to Kohli (1990), Manor (2005), and Krishna (2007), Indian political parties are generally characterized as having weak institutions, thin organizations, and an excessive emphasis on personal ideology. Parties in India seldom gain voters’ trust due to vague policy agendas, according to Keefer and Khemani (2004, 937).

“In reality, “politicians tend to only have credibility among the small percentage of voters they’ve built a rapport with via years of consistent engagement.”

In light of recent findings in India, this essay seeks to reconsider the claim that the country fits neatly inside the accepted knowledge on the three topics discussed above: political parties, ethnic voting, and distributive politics. As a result, we are compelled to reevaluate the fundamental assumptions of that conventional wisdom in relation to research on developing nations in general. Therefore, the focus of this paper is not on how comparative politics might shed light on India, but rather on what the subcontinent can teach us about rethinking our fundamental assumptions in the field.

A growing body of work on distributive politics in the last 20 years has attempted to describe the dynamics between politicians and voters, as well as the consequences of these dynamics for the distribution of various commodities and services given by the government. Political figures’ choices regarding the distribution of private benefits between elections, the allocation of local public goods or pork barrel projects, and the distribution of cash and other gifts during campaigns have all been studied by scholars (Dixit and Londregan 1996; Porto and Sanguinetti 2001; Wilkinson 2006; Arulampalam et al. 2009; Calvo and Murillo 2013; Wantchekon 2003; Brusco et al. 2004; Stokes 2005). Although there is a great deal of variation in studies that examine patronage, vote buying, and clientelism (for reviews, see Hicken 2011 and Golden and Min 2013), many of these studies do agree on certain fundamental assumptions regarding the nature of the relationship between politicians and their constituents. There are three parts to these assumptions. To begin, the practice of targeting transfers during elections is known as clientelism, which is characterized here as distribution based on a quid pro quo of electoral support. Second, political brokers are masters at differentiating between loyalists, detractors, and moderates. Third, patron-client connections are marked by a significant power imbalance, with the former clearly holding the upper hand. Here, we take a closer look at these presumptions and reconsider them in light of new data from India.

Detailed assessments of election strategies also fail to provide substantial evidence for the premise that politicians flood voters with giveaways and goodies in the hopes of swinging the election. According to research on election freebies, their influence is little, and politicians are fully cognizant of this fact (Björkman 2014; Chauchard 2020). It is possible that politicians are attempting to show voters their targeting preferences, build credibility for themselves in terms of future transfers,

signal electoral viability or personal credibility, or appear “glamorous” (Schneider and Sircar 2017; Auerbach and Thachil 2018; Björkman 2014; Muñoz 2014).

The idea that voters in India are merely objects of focused advertising is, at least in part, called into doubt by studies conducted there (Stokes 2005; Nichter 2008). It has long been believed that in India, ethnicity plays a significant role in shaping political choices. This is particularly true during state and national elections, when voters rely on heuristics like ethnicity due to a lack of knowledge about candidates (Chandra 2004). Voters in India have a lot of say in political processes, according to recent studies (Auerbach 2017; Dasgupta 2017), and they usually do it through grassroots organizing and associational activities. Indian voters can avoid unresponsive politicians and authorities under the country’s multi-tiered federal democracy (Bussell 2019) and spread their claims around more broadly (Kruks-Wisner 2018). Citizens who are “blocked” from accessing public services due to a lack of connections to local patronage networks—which can be organized along partisan lines—often petition higher-level politicians, who may respond to their complaints in order to grow their personal following, as Bussell’s research shows. Another way of looking at it is that voters may still get help at the state or federal level, regardless of whether their representatives at the local level are being politically biased or not. Research that views patron-client networks as top-down institutions is called into question by the fact that low-income voters have a significant role in their formation (Auerbach and Thachil 2018; Calvo and Murillo 2013).

These results have led scholars in the field of Indian politics to shift their focus from studying one-off instances of “vote-buying” to more everyday, and perhaps more important, forms of distributive politics that govern the provision of public services (Bussell 2012; Thachil 2014; Auerbach 2016; Bohlken 2017; Bussell 2019; Dasgupta 2017; Schneider forthcoming). Roads, water taps, sewers, and lighting are among services that are being studied here. The allocation of these facilities is political and often involves networks of middlemen. The capacity of politicians and brokers to exclude non-supporters is undermined by their high spillover. It appears that politicians are focusing on specific areas or groups instead than individuals. This is an area where more current study approaches the issues raised and results found in a previous generation of Latin American studies more closely (Ray 1969; Gay 1994). It is more difficult to selectively withdraw these allocations than campaign handouts, so they may involve less clientelistic calculations than election-time spending, but they are still provided through everyday allocations (Schneider and Sircar 2017; Chhibber and Jensenius 2018; Bussell 2019).

To better comprehend how ethnic identities are politically active and continuously transformed in a constantly changing social and political environment, it is instructive to look at the political metamorphosis of caste-based interests during the early years of India's democracy. The Indian experience sheds light on the comparative study of status-based systems and their adaptations and fresh significance, much like other instances of old régimes. "Politics has affected caste as much as caste affects politics," says Yadav (1999, 2398). This is related to Researchers in India have attempted to both hypothesise and evaluate the micro-foundations of these ethnic voting trends. Chandra (2004) connects ethnic voting in India to the country's "patronage democracy," which is in keeping with clientelism literature. Instead of voting for politicians whose policies they approve, under these systems they back the parties that will patronize them the most. Therefore, class is less successful than stable and evident ethnic identities in organizing such clientelistic transactions. This means that people tend to support political parties whose leadership is most heavily represented by members of their own ethnic group. The psychological advantages of descriptive representation, which are a driving force behind ethnic voting, particularly among low-status groups, have been more prominently highlighted in other reports (Pai 2002).

There can be no doubt about the significant contributions made by this extensive body of research. They provide a detailed account of a significant aspect of India's government. Although each of these studies provides a detailed account of ethnic voting in India, taken together they paint the country as a democracy where ethnic politics are mostly mechanical. "The familiar and accepted institution of caste" was the means by which early writers portrayed the spread of political democracy to rural Indian communities (Rudolph and Rudolph 1960, 9). In subsequent writings, the role of ethnicity in shaping voter choices and democratic deepening processes is emphasized (Jaffrelot 2003; Chandra 2004). 10 This caste supports X, this caste, Y, and so the election went. Many observers continue to characterize Indian politics as "the moving about of blocks on a chess board," as Herring (2013, 137) points out. So, ethnic voting is both a historical and contemporary feature of India's democratic system.

Emerging Approaches

New theoretical and methodological techniques to researching political behavior have been offered by recent studies of Indian politics, which complicate such

findings. Research has shown that political elites of all shades do not exhibit any signs of ethnic preference, casting doubt on the long-held belief that ethnicity plays a pivotal role in politicians' decision-making processes. Bussell (2019) uses a shadowing approach in conjunction with experimental surveys to demonstrate that prominent politicians invest a significant amount of time in serving their constituents, regardless of their community's ethnicity. By using the randomization of caste-based quotas, Dunning and Nilekani (2013) investigate three big Indian states and find very limited evidence of ethnic prejudice among village council presidents. No indication of SC-politicians (elected under SC quotas) working more for the interests of SCs in their legislative activity or constituency service is found by Jensenius (2017) using a state assembly constituency-level matching approach. As a matter of fact, research has shown that local brokers often do not use ethnicity as a basis for their clientele. By integrating data from observation, a choice experiment, and anthropological observation, Auerbach and Thachil (forthcoming) find that the informal slum leaders they research do not use customers' common caste or religion as a criterion for providing aid. Similarly, Sircar and Chauchard (2018) demonstrate that rural "influencers" in the northern Indian state of Bihar refrain from showing bias towards their own ethnic group through the use of "lab-in-field" activities.

As was observed in early research on postcolonial Indian politics, each of these examples highlights the incentives that political operatives encounter to build support outside ethnic boundaries. However, newer research contradicts the idea that multi-ethnic coalitions are established by just bringing together local caste-based blocs. Rather, they show how politicians are driven to build multi-ethnic personal support networks even in the most impoverished communities, thanks to the combination of high levels of ethnic diversity and political rivalry. When it comes to the tactics employed, the various categories have distinct consequences. The cultivation of a wide personal reputation that is inclusive to all, as opposed to a confined one that solely transmits support for, is an important strategy for building support at the local level with many ethnicities.

In contrast to the stereotype of homogeneous ethnic vote banks, researchers who have looked at the political leanings of various religious or caste groups have discovered significant variation in actual preferences within groupings throughout different states and eras. For instance, indigenous Adivasi (tribal) people and the oppressed lower-caste Dalit people have different voting preferences, as discussed in Thachil (2014). The contemporary dominant Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata

Party (BJP) in India has a long history of being associated with affluent upper caste Hindus, yet he investigates the personal factors that explain why Dalit and Adivasi people support this party, which seems paradoxical. How the BJP's movement affiliates recruit the impoverished using private welfare programs is detailed by him in this passage. Despite the BJP's pro-market and anti-redistribution position, Suryanarayan (2019) wonders why impoverished upper-caste members support the party. She concludes that the BJP's 1989 contentious announcement to apply affirmative action to lower castes garnered support, especially in state electoral seats where upper-caste parties had hitherto had more social sway. Also, research by Heath, Vernier, and Kumar (2015) on the voting habits of Muslims—long believed to constitute one of the most homogeneous ethnic vote banks in India—reveals that Muslims only back co-ethnic candidates with a genuine shot at winning. Voter models in low-income democracies should, according to them, place a significantly stronger emphasis on winnability.

Additional recent study provides evidence of performance-based voting, often known as economic voting, which lends credence to scholars who are questioning traditional ethnic voting models in India. Governments in India function better when the economy is doing well, according to studies of both self-reported satisfaction with the state and of more “objective” metrics of economic success (Verma 2012; Gupta and Panagariya 2014, Vaishnav and Swanson 2015). Economic voting tendencies are identified by Jensenius and Suryanarayan (2020) in cases where the incumbent seeks for reelection under the same party banner. Additionally, they discover that economic voting is reduced in India when parties introduce new candidates, frequently with the incumbent candidate vying against their former party. This is because it becomes less evident to voters who should be rewarded or punished for the economy's condition.

According to Cole et al. (2012), when the government of India fails to adequately respond to an exogenous weather emergency, the people of the state punish the governing coalition even more severely. This research does not prove, however, that race does not have a role in Indian politics. Nonetheless, their findings clearly point to the necessity of seeing ethnicity not as the indisputable fundamental basis of political conduct in India, but as one of several elements impacting it. Indeed, non-ethnic measures of efficacy are frequently just as important, if not more so, than ethnicity, according to new research that directly compares the two. While ethnicity does influence voters' assessments of hypothetical candidates, other factors such as

information about performance in office, knowledge about their criminal records, and overall party evaluation also play a role (Chauchard, 2016; experimental data from Uttar Pradesh, commonly seen as an ethnic voting bastion in India). On a more micro level, Auerbach and Thachil (2018) present experimental evidence that low-income urban slum dwellers, who are stereotyped as prototypical ethnic voters, prioritize efficacy indicators over shared ethnicity when choosing informal slum leaders to advocate on their behalf in town distributive politics. Even days after casting their ballots, many voters in the northern Indian state of Bihar still don't know the caste of the candidates they supported, according to Vaishnav (2017a). This is one of the most shocking findings from the study.

It is oversimplifying things to think of voter preferences as being either ethnically and clientelistically driven or programmatically and class-based. Spatial models that assumed a universality of a Western-style left-right programmatic axis were appropriately challenged by ethnic politics models. But it's possible that they were too eager to write off class altogether in their criticisms, failing to see that class politics isn't limited to old-fashioned ideas about taxes and transfers. When it comes to economic policy, such as targeted subsidies, agricultural pricing, and many others, class may influence voter choices and political mobilization tactics. Similar to the "ethnopolitism" seen in other regions of the globe, class and ethnic politics may converge under such strategic endeavors (Madrid 2012). Ethnic voting is higher in areas with significant inter-group economic gaps, according to Huber and Suryanarayan (2016), who utilize group-wise ethnic voting trends for castes and subcastes in the Indian states. That is to say, contrary to popular belief, ethnic voting is heavily influenced by social status. Similar intersectional insights are gleaned from modern research on older eras of Indian politics. The amount to which caste groups mobilized during British colonial authority is influenced by members' levels of education, according to Lee (2019). This mobilization is assessed by petitions for name changes filed to the colonial authorities.

Lastly, future research can shed light on the contexts in which ideology is relevant, such as when building multi-ethnic coalitions, in contrast to theories of ethnic clientelism that have long stressed India's absence of ideological and programmatic politics. According to Chhibber and Verma (2018), caste-based ideological divisions in Indian politics have emerged from people's perceptions of the state's role and function. They prove that groups' support for or opposition to more state-led patronage or redistribution is correlated with varied choices among

group members and with the economic strength of groupings in various states. In a promising development away from stereotypes of Indian voters robotically forming caste-based vote banks, we can see people of different ethnicities banding together in ideological opposition to an opposing coalition that included members of their own co-ethnicities.

Constitution and Law in relation to Political Parties

In a representational parliamentary democracy, political parties are an inherent element of the electoral process. A two-party system based on ideological and programmatic orientation is the key prerequisite for the Westminster model to succeed. It was during India's fight for independence that the country's political parties first emerged and flourished. The primary goal of the liberation fighters and Constitutional framers of India was to create a unified country and society that valued and respected variety and plurality without sacrificing either. They reasoned that after India gained its independence, a robust party structure with an ideological orientation would emerge, which would help with things like social cohesion, nation building, and democracy's foundation. This, however, did not transpire. In the years after independence, we have struggled mightily due to our inability to establish a functional political party system predicated on a fair and generally agreed upon national agenda for politics and economics.

It was assumed that there were already active, well-organized political parties even though the Constitution did not include them until the 52nd amendment in 1985. The ability to freely associate was the only fundamental right protected by the Constitution. Political parties in India must be registered with the Election Commission under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. A person's disqualification from membership of either the House of Parliament or of the Legislative Assembly or Legislative Council of a State on the basis of defection from his political party is the only reason why political parties are mentioned in the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution, which was added by the Constitution (52nd Amendment) Act, 1985. The creation, registration, operation, or regulation of political parties are not subject to any legislation at this time, with that one exception.

In compliance with the regulations outlined in the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968, the Election Commission recognizes political parties as either national or state parties. Allotting symbols is the sole and restricted function of this. The number of parties recognized as national parties has fluctuated between

fourteen and four throughout the years, thanks to the ongoing process of reviewing their standing in relation to their electoral results. After gaining independence, the party system underwent a dramatic shift, moving from a dominating one-party structure to a complex multi-party system characterized by rising fragmentation, factionalism, and regionalism as well as the desire to form alliances in pursuit of power. The ‘hung’ Houses that followed the most recent national elections were the result of this shift. The rise of coalition politics is another major shift that has an impact on the traditional party structure. The political mobilization of voters along ascriptive identity lines, especially those pertaining to religion and caste, has been on the rise in recent years. The disintegration of political parties has largely occurred along the lines of casteism, communalism, and personality dominance. Throughout history, political parties have skillfully used these feelings to garner voter support. In light of these changes, it is important to assess how the various political parties in India are functioning and how they fit into the larger framework of the country’s constitution and politics.

Our discussion will center on political parties, which are fundamental to free elections. As is typical with parties in the developing world, Indian parties have been seen as weak. Here, we argue that, while Indian political parties may not measure up to the standards set by conventional comparative politics metrics, there is much evidence from studies conducted on the country that shows how well they do at the two most important jobs of political parties: campaigning and bringing the public closer to the government. We may bring what we know about Indian parties into larger conversations about party strength by viewing them as networks instead of vertically integrated institutions. This helps to reconcile these contradictory portrayals in India and elsewhere.

Institutions and infrastructure are the two main components of party organization in comparative politics. From the most junior members of a party’s executive branch all the way up to the most senior, institutionalized activists, the rules and regulations that govern a political party outline the roles and responsibilities of each individual and how they interact with one another. Meanwhile, a party’s “brick and mortar” presence—its offices, full-time staff, solid elite membership, and financial assets—is what we call party infrastructure. When all of the following are present—a large physical presence, enough full-time (paid) staff, a stable cadre of candidates and leaders, and ample coffers—and when the party’s rules are clearly defined and consistently enforced, the party is strong. It is also often tied to civil

society based affiliates, such as churches and labor unions. When party resources are few and the norms for distributing power are open to change or nonexistent, on the other hand, party organizations are weak. We call this way of looking at parties as organizations the “parties-as-organizations approach.” According to Williamson (1971), a strong party will behave like a vertically integrated firm, which is a hierarchically structured organization that can make “in house” all the inputs it needs to succeed.

According to Lupu and Riedl (2013), political parties in developing countries are often depicted in the literature as vague groups that lack strong organizational foundations. Institutionalization of party systems, a notion similar to organizational strength but distinct from it, has been the subject of much academic work (Mainwaring and Scully 1995). The characteristics of a well-institutionalized party system include: consistent patterns of party competition over time; deep social roots of the parties; strong voter attachments to the parties; legitimacy of the parties among political elites; and the fact that parties are more than just vehicles for individual leaders; they possess an organizational life of their own.

A lack of ideological links between parties and voters, together with high levels of electoral instability and personalism, is what usually characterizes party systems in the developing world as poorly institutionalized, according to scholarship on the subject (Mainwaring and Torcal 2006). For example, according to Riedl (2014, 215), a pattern that is seen throughout sub-Saharan Africa, is characterized by “low levels of party system institutionalization” characterized by volatility and incoherence. This pattern follows “exhilarating and transformative democratic transitions” in countries like Mali, Malawi, and Benin, as well as Kuenzi and Lambright (2001). Hicken states that parties “can be set up, merged with others, split, resurrected, regurgitated, reconstituted, renamed, repackaged, recycled or flushed down the toilet anytime” (156) while reviewing the current party system in the Philippines (2009, 156). After communism fell, Latin America and post-communist Europe were similarly characterized (Samuels 1999; Van Cott 2007; Calvo and Murillo 2013; Novaes 2018).

The somewhat established party systems in Taiwan (Hicken and Kuhonta 2011) and Ghana (Riedl 2014) are two obvious exceptions to this rule. Moreover, certain parties could be well-established, even while entire party systems are not (Randall and Svåsand 2002, Chhibber et al. 2014). A number of countries, like Singapore and Malaysia (Slater 2010) or Indonesia and Tanzania (Smith 2005), have

dominant political parties with exceptional organizational strength, and Brazil's PT (Partido dos Trabalhadores, or "Workers' Party") has long been deemed more institutionalized than the majority of Brazilian parties (Samuels 1999). While it is true that powerful parties sometimes emerge in developing-world situations, these outliers do not disprove the overall premise that parties in the Global South are often weak.

Judged by standard metrics employed in comparative politics, most Indian political parties are undoubtedly weak (Kohli 1990; Chhibber et al. 2014; Nellis 2016; Ziegfeld 2016). Written codes rarely structure a party's internal workings: most Indian parties are highly centralized and run autocratically by a single leader or family and their close associates. Local branches and frontal wings, like women's units and youth groups, exist on paper but often do little in practice. Outside ruling cliques, titular officeholders within the party tend to wield minimal authority—a point brought out forcefully in Chandra's (2004) analysis of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), Wyatt's (2009) description of party "entrepreneurs" in Tamil Nadu, and Hansen's (2001) ethnography of the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. Transparent rules for candidate selection and intra-party promotions are either altogether absent or widely flouted. Instead, the party's day-to-day functioning depends on the whims of the leader of the moment. In terms of infrastructure, too, Indian parties appear hollow. District- and block-level party offices either do not exist or are shuttered outside of election time—something that Manor (2005) has found to be true even for the purportedly better-organized BJP. Parties have few permanent, paid staff members, and party switching among politicians and activists is frequent (Kashyap 1970; Kamath 1985). Descriptions of a number of major parties emphasize the extent to which they are loosely organized collections of local notables or regional factions (Erdman 1967; Fickett 1976; Fickett 1993). Data on party membership are widely believed to be inflated or exaggerated (Chhibber 1999).

Naturally, not every party can be accurately described in this way at all times. Despite having all the hallmarks of traditionally powerful parties for decades (Kohli 1987; Heller 2000), the main communist parties in India have remained confined to a tiny geographic region. This includes well-developed organizations, clear lines of authority, full-time workers, and extensive party offices. Although the BJP's organizational strength can be exaggerated (Manor, 2005) and the party's recognition as a truly pan-Indian entity is a recent development, the party's historical links to the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a Hindu revivalist group, have given it a degree

of organizational presence (Andersen and Damle 1987, Graham 1990). Notably, in the decades immediately after independence, the Indian National Congress—the country’s former ruling party—had a robust national structure and well developed internal institutions (Weiner 1967). But the leadership of the Congress party gutted the party’s structure beginning in the 1960s and continuing during Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s lengthy reign (Kohli 1990). So, while it’s true that not every political party in India is equally weak and that some have changed throughout the years, the overall trend is that Indian parties have never adhered to Western notions of a “strong” party. However, several stylized facts about India’s parties contradict this notion of pervasive organizational inadequacy. Political parties in India swiftly gather substantial financial and personnel resources when the election season approaches. Strong campaigns are launched by parties, necessitating large numbers of volunteers and canvassers, as well as substantial coordination on the ground (Banerjee 2014; Verma and Sardesai 2014; Jha 2017; Palshikar et al. 2017). Parties spend a lot of money on both good and bad campaigning, including rallies, processions, and less savory measures like cash giveaways on election night (Björkman 2014; Chauchard 2017). The scope and efficacy of these efforts were attested to by 61% of respondents in the 2014 Indian National Election Study, who claimed that a campaign member had visited their residence to request their vote.

Parties continue to resolve disputes between voters and the government even after elections have ended. According to Chopra (1996), Auerbach (2016), Jensenius (2017), Kruks-Wisner (2018), and Bussell (2019), voters rely on their elected officials and the parties they belong to for help in navigating the federal, state, or local bureaucracy and obtaining public goods for their communities. Partisan channels are often used for distributive politics (Dunning and Nilekani 2013). Shortly said, many Indian parties do what they should: they run election campaigns and connect voters to the state, even though they are weak by traditional standards.

Weak by conventional standards, yet frequently incredibly effective as electoral engines and as citizen-state intermediaries—how can we bring these apparently conflicting depictions of Indian parties together? We argue that a parties-as-networks approach is more appropriate for understanding India’s political parties than the prevailing parties-as-organizations paradigm. Indian political parties often use informal social networks to carry out essential party activities instead of official, institutional organizations. Consequently, a party’s strength or weakness is directly proportional to the robustness of the social network behind it. An vast

group of linked members equipped with substantial physical, financial, and human assets is the foundation of any powerful party-as-network, according to this view. A weak party-as-network relies on a tiny group of activists; its members often operate independently and contribute little to the overall cause. Despite lacking legal structures and party-owned assets, many Indian parties are able to be just as effective in campaigning and responding to citizens through their informal, social-network foundation.

Think about how various kinds of strong parties—strong parties as organizations and strong parties as networks—campaign and link citizens to the state to illustrate the difference between the two. When parties stick to more conventional methods of organizing, they run their campaigns out of their permanent locations. Local branches manage fellow party workers and allocate party cash in coordination with campaign efforts, as instructed by party leaders. During the time between elections, citizens who want their demands addressed by the state can approach titled party members, such as elected representatives, members of the local branch, or leaders of the relevant cell or wing. These individuals will either use party resources to address the concerns or communicate them to someone higher up the party hierarchy. According to Auyero (2000) and Calvo and Murillo (2004), conventional party machines establish strong ties with citizens and facilitate their access to the state through a network of brokers who are dedicated to the party's ideology.

Alternatively, these tasks are carried out in a very different manner by parties whose power is derived from informal social networks. Large, preexisting networks, such as groups of voters bound together by geography or familial ties and frequently aligned with locally based brokers or intermediaries (often informally elected by their communities), mobilize physical, financial, and human capital during election campaigns for these parties. Election expenses are typically funded by personal wealth (Vaishnav 2017b), members' houses double as *de facto* campaign headquarters, and acquaintances, friends, and family members participate in canvassing and other campaign activities. Although these "movable" assets are crucial to the election campaign, they are not party-exclusive resources; rather, they are assets that network members choose to employ (Chauchard and Sircar 2018). Any member has the option to sell her followers or money to another faction if she so wants.

In the time between elections, when citizens seek advantages from the state, a robust party-as-network may also effectively fight for their demands. In seeking assistance, citizens sometimes choose a party member based on their social closeness

rather than their official position within the party. In order to fulfill citizen needs, party members utilize all of the social links at their disposal, not only the party hierarchy, and transfer community requests upward through their parties (Auerbach 2016; Bussell 2019). As they make their way through the Kafkaesque bureaucracies that are common in many developing nations, individuals might see responsiveness from the powerful party-as-network in at least three critical ways.

Because people are more comfortable approaching a friend or acquaintance than an unknown party official, social networks provide low-cost information transmission to parties on citizens' needs. Secondly, party activists are able to take use of a wide variety of connections needed to extract products from an inefficient bureaucracy through dense networks that consist of numerous members. Third, party network leaders are likely to be very accountable since members may put social pressure on those in close social proximity to them (Auerbach 2016).

Naturally, not every gathering has robust networks. There are a variety of network configurations, including those with few members, members with weak connections, or members with low levels of physical, financial, or human resources. It seems to reason that networks lacking in any of these areas would be less equipped to handle public requests to the state or run successful election campaigns. Many democracies, where parties have not followed the highly organized mass party paths of Western Europe, seem to be embracing this alternative conception of party strength that draws on social networks (Duverger 1954). There are powerful networks inside many parties that give the impression of being weak due to their unsteady infrastructure, poorly implemented regulations, or both. These networks may organize massive election campaigns and effectively channel the demands of the people.

Future research might benefit from considering these points. One thing that stands out is that powerful parties-as-networks don't always mean that developing country political party systems are still in their early stages and prone to instability (Mainwaring and Torcal 2006). Despite the fact that India's political climate is notoriously unpredictable (Heath, 2005), a surprising amount of structure and order may be concealed by the country's many flitting political parties and, occasionally, candidates who are only loosely affiliated with one another (Jenselius and Suryanarayan, 2017). As for the second, studies should look at how different groups build and maintain their networks. How do the various parties' social networks and retention efforts work? Some mechanisms may be far more successful at securing

and maintaining loyalty to the brand, including selective material rewards, ethnicity, ideology, and the strength of leadership. In addition, the overall strategies adopted by a party may depend on the broader party system. For example, parties operating in competitive environments markedly differ in their behavior when compared to monopolistic scenarios. In competitive systems, parties are more likely to attract members and support.

The Impact of Political Campaigns on Electoral Behavior needs to give more priority to the effects of political campaigning. Given the nexus of political networks, what does this tell us about political campaigning, voter contacting, and voter persuasion—especially in the context of social media campaigning? What political behaviors do the campaigning networks reach? To what extent do campaigners persuade voters and simply zap the act of turning out? One may consider the new Indian electoral behavior research as a corrective to geopolitics. Of more value, it reshapes the more comprehensive comparative politics discourse. The Indian experience reveals that there is far more complexity or variety on each of these than is commonly recognized, even while theories of patronage politics, identity-based voting, and organizationally weak parties do capture essential characteristics of politics in emerging cultures.

Recent studies have shown that brokers and politicians in India have significant challenges when it comes to distributive politics. The secret ballot and the country's enormous and diverse population make it very difficult for them to keep tabs on voters. The assumption that politicians and voters may actually engage in a contractual quid pro quo is cast into doubt by these limits. Furthermore, unlike the traditional partisan middlemen seen in Latin American party machine situations, many of the brokers met in the Indian context are actually rather different. Vertical political links are more dynamic than what is usually shown in analysis of distributive politics due to the participants' comparatively weak and unstable party relationships. According to recent studies, several urban communities and rural areas in India serve as competitive brokerage settings. The problem-solving skills of the various intermediaries are on display as they vie fiercely for the local audience along party lines. The existence of high-level intermediaries, importantly, competitive local brokerage structures, and significant voter agency, render conventional, rigid clientelism models less analytically useful in the Indian context.

Updating posts on social media about one's activities is more than just an obsession; it is part of a geopolitics of knowledge. A knowledge system is believed to

have emerged globally because of the Internet and social media though in reality, it is unevenly distributed with a significant part of the world excluded. The knowledge system is structured in a way, and relies on Internet-enabled devices, that it is empire-like in its capacity to extract and exploit from peripheral regions of the world. Consequently, a social media user in the 'Global North' is always a primary content creator, while users in the 'Global South' are secondary content consumers. Other group factors, such as economic or social status, also influence the degree to which ethnicity becomes a prominent factor in voting behavior. It seems that other factors, including the economy, take precedence over ethnicity in some elections. This might be a result of the typical retrospective economic voting paradigm that is common in developed industrial democracies. Constituency service, another pillar of politics in mature democracies, is emphasized as an activity that politicians value and that people reward when voting.

Lastly, new research confirms what previous evaluations have shown: that Indian political parties have poor formal organizational bases. On the other hand, they raise doubts about the usefulness of using these formal features, which are important for studying party systems in the West, as indicators of how strong political organizations are in underdeveloped nations. For instance, recent research implies that other ways of looking at party strength, such seeing them as based on social networks, are underappreciated in favor of traditional measures like legislative discipline or physical presence. The success of Indian political parties is frequently dependent on informal networks; as a result, many of the party's essential tasks are carried out by individuals who are not employed full-time by the party. Based on this, it seems that studying the social networks linked to parties in India (and other emerging democracies) would be a better bet. According to these network analyses, Indian political parties are more effective and well-established in society than they appear when evaluated using Western criteria.

In our opinion, both the study of India and comparative politics as a whole will benefit from the results and theories presented in the previous pages. These results not only call into question the overuse of India as an example in comparative politics, but they also point to promising new avenues for research in the field.

Voting Behaviour Study in India

In a political system marked by varied social, economic, geographical, and cultural make-up, research on voting behavior takes center stage. It is not a new practice

to study voting behavior in India. Research on voting behavior in India dates back to the same time when the theoretical foundations of election research were being laid in the West, namely in the states of Michigan and Columbia in the USA. Rajni Kothari was an early trailblazer in this area of research among first-generation Indian academics. The purpose of his research was to analyze electoral politics and draw attention to its effects on the overall functioning of the political system. A growing number of researchers began to focus on the topic in the 1970s and beyond. Sociologists and political scientists started to favor studies that included statistical analysis of Lok Sabha and state assembly election data. Studies conducted by Elkins in 1975, for example, sought to analyze data from the State Assembly Elections in four Southern states between 1952 and 1967. The importance of the state's political climate, literacy rate, and the growth of regional communication in explaining the number of candidates and the turnout was demonstrated in the study. Biplob Dasgupta and Morris Jones conducted an additional research that looked at the connections between socioeconomic data and election results for state assemblies from 1952 to 1967 in an effort to uncover the economic and social foundations of elections. With the exception of voter turnout, the study does not appear to have succeeded in establishing a substantial association between socioeconomic and electoral statistics. From 1957 to 1999, Kondo examined the Lok Sabha elections using a multivariate approach. A variety of socioeconomic characteristics, including literacy, urbanization, and agricultural development, were correlated with voter participation in his study. He used election results and statistics on socioeconomic indicators in his research. The geographical limits of the two data categories were altered to be compatible with one another by adjusting the two sets of variables by proportionate distribution. Voter participation, party affiliation, and other characteristics, including socioeconomic status, are all linked in these research. "Ecological studies" is the umbrella term for these kinds of investigations.

When it comes to Indian elections, no other social science study compares to the National Election Study (NES). In order to construct an evidence-based knowledge of voters, NES analyze their political behavior based on their opinions and attitudes. It is sponsored by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS) and aims to collect data through systematic survey research. In 1965, during the Kerala Assembly election, the CSDS tried its first survey-based research of Indian elections. It wasn't until 1967 that major research of voter behavior

started. The CSDS uses a systematic research design to conduct studies across the whole country of India based on surveys of electorates. Every major election in the nation has been surveyed by it, and it uses those results to publish insightful essays and studies. The CSDS conducted a number of surveys and research that shed light on various facts and helped us understand how people see politics. On a regular basis, the “Lokniti” Programme within CSDS that focuses on this area keeps tabs on how well India’s democracy is functioning. Lokniti, a CSDS program, offers elective behavior research as one of its focuses. Starting in 1967, the CSDS has been conducting time-series national election studies. Starting in 1996, it has been actively studying elections in India on a regular basis. Through the collection of a wealth of data on voters’ opinions and attitudes toward socioeconomic and political issues, the goal of CSDS is to advance scientific understanding in order to inspire voters and gain a meaningful comprehension of elections. However, there is a substantial area of empirical research devoted to comprehending the intricate political behavior of voters.

Indian voters’ changing habits reveal something about the country’s democratic foundations and the character of its population. For a complete picture of India’s political climate, it’s not enough to know how people vote; knowing why they vote is just as important. The bigger picture of India’s political, social, and economic climate may be better understood by studying voting behavior. In India, the voting behaviors are characterized by:

- Understanding voter demographics.

- Analyzing patterns across regions and communities.

- Examining the influence of societal and technological changes.

Historical Evolution of Voting Behaviour in India

Voting patterns among Indian citizens have evolved throughout the decades after independence.

Post-Independence Period

- In the early years, voters were largely influenced by the charisma of leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru.

- The desire for a cohesive and consistent India following partition was evident in voting patterns.

The Green Revolution and Economic Changes

Farmers chose rural policies and economic prosperity during the Green Revolution.

Liberalisation during the 1990s placed economic reform in the national spotlight, impacting voting trends within India.

Rise of Regionalism

- (i) The political climate of the nation was starting to shift as a result of devolution of authority to the states and the establishment of new states.
- (ii) Another factor that led to the establishment of state-level political parties was the concept of constituencies, which served as a political boundary for each state.

Modern Trends

- (i) In recent years, the influence of social media on Indian voters' decisions has grown substantially.
- (ii) Digital campaigns, topic-based discussions, and social media platforms fuel the interest of young electorate.

Factors Influencing Voting Behaviour in India

Voting behavior in India is defined by a multitude of factors. The interconnectedness of these matters is dictated by the sociopolitical climate.

Sociological Factors

- (i) **Caste and Community:** Electoral choices are still made based on caste. Yet, each political party has to win over a caste group, and then deal with the competition to win over other caste groups.
- (ii) **A religious nature:** Religious campaigns shape people's voting choices in India. House of worship blood determines community voting decisions.
- (iii) **Regional Considerations:** Voting decisions are greatly influenced by regional aspects like language and water conflicts, as well as cultural pride.

Psychological Factors

- (i) **Party Loyalty:** Certain segments of the electorate also show intense attachment to specific political parties, which seems to be driven by family or community sentiment.

- (ii) Leadership Attraction: No matter what political philosophy a party has, influences a voters behavior.
- (iii) Emotional Appeals: Negative emotions like anger and fear, along with the feeling of hope, are frequently utilized across the world during political campaigns trying to convince the public.

Economic Factors

- (i) Poverty and Welfare: Negative emotions like anger and fear, along with the feeling of hope, are frequently utilized across the world during political campaigns trying to convince the public.
- (ii) Unemployment and Inflation: Economic issues do influence the Indian elections. Voters choose the political parties which promise to provide jobs and control inflation.

Media Influence

- (i) Traditional news outlets, including newspapers, radio, and television, continue to play an important role.
- (ii) Social media is quickly becoming a determining factor in voting behavior among younger and urban voters in India.

Effects of Social Media in Voting Behaviour in India

Voter participation in Indian politics has been radically altered by the rise of social media. Social media has an impact on voting behavior in India that is noticeable across all age groups, but especially among the younger generation.

Political Awareness

- (i) Platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook have made political information more accessible to everyone.
- (ii) Campaigns, manifestos, and debates influence how voters see the candidates because they have such easy access to information.

Propaganda and Misinformation

- (i) There has been a significant impact on voting behavior in India due to the proliferation of misinformation operations and fake news made possible by social media platforms.

- (ii) Disinformation has produced voting trends and influences results in a disparate manner.

Mobilization of Youth

Social media is a powerful tool for mobilizing young voters.

Hashtags, online polls, and viral content engage younger generations in political discussions.

Real-Time Engagement

- (i) People may now interact with political parties and candidates in real time.
- (ii) This kind of interaction strengthens trust and encourages voter participation, which helps ascertain India's voting behavior.

Determinants of Voting Behaviour in India

Research on determinants of voting behavior in India highlights the psyche of the voters and their choice making process.

Family and Social Networks

- (i) Individual voting decisions are usually guided by family opinions, especially in rural regions.
- (ii) Social networks reinforce voter preferences and form mass voting behavior.

Local and National Issues

Water scarcity, infrastructure, and education are problems people care about more than things that are important at a national level.

Then again, things like economic growth and security are national matters that do matter.

Political Campaigns

- (i) When political campaigns successfully address issues that matter to voters, these issues also tend to dictate how people in India vote.
- (ii) Nothing beats the effectiveness of roadshows, rallies and doorknocking.

Cultural and Traditional Beliefs

Voting behavior is significantly influenced by cultural factors, customs, and history.

Influence of village headmen seems much stronger in rural parts of India.

Measuring Voting Behaviour in India

It is necessary to examine several data sources and patterns in order to comprehend voting behavior in India.

Opinion Polls

Surveys conducted before elections record the public sentiment.

These surveys reveal the important details pertaining to the reasons behind the decisions made by the voters.

Exit Polls

Exit polls investigate voter preferences after they have cast their votes.

Political analysts utilize this information to predict elections and identify trends.

Big Data Analytics

Political groups and researchers examine and utilize data analytics to track and examine voting patterns in India.

Analyses of social media provide information on sentiments and levels of voter engagement.

Field Surveys

- (i) Field surveys are done in both urban and rural areas to ascertain major voter issues and inclinations within a certain demographic.
- (ii) The surveys are done keeping demographic-specific data in order to recognize particular trends.

Importance of Voting Behaviour in India

Every election in India evokes interest in the decision-making process of the electorate. Understanding voting behavior helps explain the rationale behind voters' choices and the results of elections.

- (i) **Strengthens Democracy:** The measure of participation in exercises of democracy can be seen in voting behaviour over time. Voting behavior indices reveal a society's level of democracy. Voters' selections reveal the exercise's level of openness. We need more efficient democratic processes. More transparency and receptivity to public feedback characterize the new leadership.

- (ii) **Assists in Policy Formulation:** The study of voting behaviour translates into the people's needs. The research assists the government in the preparation of the policies. The leadership is best placed to know the people's desires. This improves the quality of governance which is more responsive to the people. This will ensure that the policies deal with the prevailing national and regional challenges.
- (iii) **Reflects Social and Economic trends:** Social voting behaviour exposes social and economic condition. The issues of poverty, unemployment and social position deeply affect elections, which need to be addressed by leaders. The research concerned should stimulate action to meet these challenges. It also provides evidence of changes in voters priorities during a given cycle.
- (iv) **Helps Shape Election Tactics:** Election campaign frameworks of political parties better through the research. The research allows parties to fix the right issues that touches the voters. The election campaign guarantees the promise made will meet the people's needs. This builds the trust between voters and politicians.
- (v) **Empowers Citizens:** Voter behavior research shows how meaningful a vote may be. It is designed to enlighten the people and demonstrate the magnitude of a vote. This encourages people to get involved and helps citizens see why voting in a democracy is so important.
- (vi) **Shows the Impact of Technology:** Voting behavior demonstrates the influence technology has on elections. Voter opinions are swayed by social media and online campaigns. Studying this phenomenon helps communication between the electorate and the people in power. It also makes sure technology is used responsibly during elections.

Challenges in Understanding Voting Behaviour in India

Several different factors influence voter behavior in India such as caste, religion, economy, and the influence of the media which creates complications. Complexity and ambiguity in analysis are further driven by political loyalty, regional variations, and changes in voter behavior.

1. Diversity in Voter Base

- I. One cannot generalize voting behaviours in India due to its diversity.
Regional and cultural differences create unique voting patterns.
Influence of Money and Power
Money and muscle power distort voting behaviour.
Many voters are influenced by short-term benefits rather than long-term policies.
2. Role of Misinformation
Social media makes spreading the misinformation more easier.
Voting behaviour in India is influenced by the prevalence of false news, which further confuses the public.
3. Social influences include caste, religion, language, and region which impacts voting patterns, political alliances and party selections.
4. Economic Factors: Voting choices, especially those made by poorer and marginalized groups, are predominantly driven by income, employment, and economic policies.
5. Political Consciousness: Political awareness, defined by education and media exposure, and, to a certain extent, policy comprehension, impacts voter turnout and decisions.
6. Party and Candidate Appeal: Voter perception and election choices are influenced by a leader's charisma, a party's prior performance, and the promised party agenda.
7. Social Media's Impact: Online campaigns, disinformation, and targeted political ads shape people's political views and how they vote.

Conclusion

Research on Indian voting patterns is an important stepping stone toward a more democratic India. Technological, psychological, social, and economic variables all have an effect on India's democracy. The most recent development in technology, which is the final of these variables, has changed the way people vote thanks to social media. If we look at the factors that influence voting in India and the methods used to measure it, we may learn a lot about the democratic building block that is voting behavior in India. To participate in a liberal democracy, the most basic way is to cast a ballot. Each adult citizen has the opportunity to voice his or her

opinion on a variety of issues, including governmental actions, party platforms, and the qualifications of the candidates running for public office, through the voting process. The elements that influence both people's eligibility to vote and their actual voting behavior make up the voting pattern. A phrase "voting behaviour" has been around for a while, according to Samuel S. Eldersveld's Theory and Method in Voting conduct Research page. However, term has recently been employed to characterize other fields of research and forms of political occurrences that were either not anticipated or deemed unimportant in the past. He made the observation that modern voting practices involve more than just tallying votes, compiling statistics, and analyzing electoral trends (Eldersveld, 1972:267). Associating one's voting behavior with political acumen implies one's psychological activities, such as perception, emotion, and motivation. Voting is a complicated process, and most people base their choices on personal beliefs, the opinions of friends and family, or the advice of political figures (Sikri, 1989:108). As Gordon Marshall put it, "the study of voting behaviour invariably focuses on the determinants of why people tend to vote in public elections as they do and how they arrive at the decisions they make." Voting behavior is the study of how a person's views, feelings, and motives, as well as institutional frameworks like communication with voters and election laws and procedures, impact voting behavior, according to Stephen L. Wasby. N.G.S. Kini describes voting behaviour as the varying functions of voting in democracy. It helps to strengthen democracy by showing that government power comes from the people's consent and ensures their participation in politics. Simultaneously, it is a vote-making process during which the voters select between the candidates, parties or policies. At the same time, it reflects a person's political orientation (their beliefs and preferences) and serves as a link between individuals and the political system, connecting citizens directly to government institutions and their functioning. Voting behaviour is a study of the voters thinking process, the way they make choices and vote as an individual or as a group. It examines the factors that make people vote in a particular manner, including their social background, political awareness, family and friends influence or issues, which are important to them. The patterns can enable us to understand the role that the citizens are playing in the election process and the way they can impact the outcome of the elections. Elections are an important aspect of democracy. They are the process through which people elect their representatives to legislative bodies through whom they participate in decision-making. The conduct of free and fair elections is an indication of a healthy

democracy. In India, there exists provision for a universal adult franchise, which means that every adult who is 18 years of old and above has right to vote. Psephology, the study of elections, has been the focus of investigations. The field of electoral studies in India has evolved considerably since its inception in the 1960s. Election studies have grown in popularity during the 1990s, and they involve a number of organizations, persons, and institutions. Dalits, tribals, women, the impoverished, and other historically oppressed groups have become increasingly active in political politics in recent years. Because of this, some academics claim that the country's level of democratization has grown. Despite the fact that political parties frequently bring up a wide range of topics that affect the general public, only a select few really take center stage during election campaigns. Economic (jobs, inflation, development, education, health), social (religious), cultural (religious), political (representation), or justice (social) concerns are some major categories into which these issues fall. However, the concerns that are prioritized change from one election to another. Furthermore, election outcomes do not necessarily represent the influence of issues on elections.

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