THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION ON VOTING BEHAVIOUR: A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN KARNATAKA, KERALA & TAMIL NADU

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**Introduction:**

A democratic society relies upon voter decision to elect representatives and upon mass media communication networks to inform the electorate. The countries which were able to establish good tradition of party politics democracy was able to survive and gain greater strength. The Mass media of communication enable the state and its leaders to reach people even the remote corners of the country.

The importance of Mass communication in people’s perception of the world was pointed out Walter Lipmann in his book “Public Opinion”. The world that have to deal with politically he wrote, “is out of reach, out of, out of mind. It has to be explored, reported and imagined”. The press and other means of Mass Communication helps the individual make for himself truth worthy picture inside his head of the world and his reading.”

The implicit assumption of the propaganda researchers and their followers was that communication messages delivered by mass media could not only provide information to the public but could also change opinions.

In a democratic polity it is a pre-requisite to have a well-informed citizenry capable of taking up independent position on political questions of all the ingredients that constitute democracy, information is a key component. In the ideal democratic setting; information is essential in order to make essential critical decisions, such as choosing a government.

Elections go a long way in making democracy successful. They reflect political culture and people’s political behavior. They are an intellectual exercise that helps the people remain vigilant of the activities of government.

However the powerful medial concept was shaken by 1940 study of voters and voting behavior in Eric Count, Ohio. Instead of swaying voters and marshalling change, the press was seen as more of reinforcing influence. Scholars began to doubt influence of the media as change agents in communication.

The present study intends to explore “The impact of political communication on voting behaviors. A comparative study in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
**Significance of the study**

In developing democracies like India, media have to play a crucial role to facilitate the best political stability since we lack strong party system as in the case of Britain and America. Therefore media has to take the role of opposition with its political reporting. The main objective of political communication and political reporting is to get the right people for the right office. The present study will throw much light on the impact of political communication on voting, especially in two prominent media – press and electronic media in three states. The study will also help us to know the kind of political communication, and its objectivity and voters assessment of the political parties and its leaders and to know what extent the value based politics and its activities exists in these three southern states and to what extent these political parties and leaders give priorities to the development issue. And also the study will throw much light on the functioning of the newspapers and television channels in matters of objectivity in political news reporting and news treatment, especially the planting and slanting of news. It will also help us to know to what extent the politicians are manipulating the media for their vested interest.

In the affairs of the state these two forces, politicians and mass media are in constant touch with each others to fulfill their responsibility to the public. The present study is an attempt to probe the varied perceptions and political behavior of people belonging to different political parties and who subscribe to different political ideologies.

A natural conflict exists between the two, with the media serving as a watchdog over the government and politics. Skilled politicians use the media as a cover up for their fallacies in public life. Thus they manipulate the media to divert the attention of the people. The study will also reveal how a sizeable section of politicians in these three southern state are reaping political benefits by resorting to manipulative operations by splitting the nation into majority and minority groups. Further by probing the kind of political content in newspapers and television channels in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the study will also help us to check the accelerated activities of the divisive forces in the country by the unholy alliance of the media and the politicians in the trouble prone areas of these states.
The constructive political communication can help to solve some of the problems like economic crisis, political turmoil, social and ethnic unrest and the age-old injustice and exploitation. The present study may help us to have an objective political communication.

**Objectives of the study**

The main objectives of the study is to find out: -

1. To find out the impact and the role of media especially the newspapers and television channels on the voting behavior of the people in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

2. To find out the impact of political campaigns on voting behavior during elections in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

3. To find out the impact of socio-economic policies implemented by the contemporary governments and political parties during the tenure of five years on voting behavior of the people in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

4. To find out the impact of election manifesto on voting behavior of the people in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

5. To find out the objectivity of newspapers and television channels in matters of political news reporting and its impact on voters in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

6. To find out the views of the voters on the trend of the misuse of news columns for the purpose of personality cult than for development purposes.

7. To find out the impact of demographic factors on the various policies implemented in Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.

**Review of related Literature**

After having reviewed a wide range of literature on the subject there is plausible reason to assume that instead of swaying voters and marshalling change the press was seen as more of reinforcing influence.
Voter behavior studies by John P Robinson were a significant one among media effect studies: Beginning with the Presidential election of 1968, the Robinson gathered data that demonstrated the strength of newspaper editorial endorsements in influencing voter behavior. In his article, Robinson reports his finding from five elections and concludes that even when the other factors are taken into accounts, voters choices are related to endorsements by newspapers to which they are exposed. Robinson make no wild claim about massive conversion as result of newspaper editorial endorsements but points up the significant impact they can have on a small segment of voters which can sometimes make the difference in a closed election.

Study after study reinforced the 1940 research and its results. Joseph Klapper who conducted media studies for two decades concluded that mass media does not ordinarily serve as a necessary as sufficient cause of audience effects, but rather functions between and among and through a nexus of mediating factors and influences.

The empirical documentation of voting patterns began to accumulate after the World War II, known as classic voting styles make a strong case for the impact of political communication on voting behavior. The first of this evidence came from the surveys of voters that have considered as the landmark in the empirical study of political behavior. Eric county 1940 (Lazeresfeld, Berelson and Gaudet, 1948) and Elmira, Newyork, 1948 (Berelson, Lazaresfeld and McPhee 1954). They had the opportunities to examine the various influences of on the political decision making of voters. Despite the role of newspapers which conveyed the news of publics and public affairs to the public, there are anxiously anticipated endorsements and well established place of communicators and news discussions forums on radio (Kobland 1999) the authors concluded that influence of mass media was slight. Four out of five voters made up their minds before presidential campaigns began (Katz 197). This further protected the individuals from external opinions, whether from media or associates.

People usually discussed politics with those similar in outlook and perspective and thus these experiences usually reinforce initial beliefs. Later research (Katz, Lazeresfeld, 1955) recorded that information from the media often was filtered through others. These opinion leaders usually shared same outlook and perceptive as
those with whom they converse. The result was that most of the information reaching the individual ordinarily had agreeable and reinforcing cast. Thus the importance of presidential election campaigns and the first televised presidential debates between Kennedy and Nixon in 1960 were all interpreted as having some role in political socialization and drawing the attention an interest of young persons to political events. But they were not seen as particularly representing phenomenon attributable largely to the mass media (Eston and Dennis, 1969, Hess and Torny, 1967) (Syndey Kraus, 1976)

**Television And Political Behavior**

The advent of television has revolutionized political communication by presenting the opinion leaders and politicians engaging debates in our drawing rooms. Television compensates ‘less of the real through the substitution of the reality with reality effects. For the public televised debates are perhaps the only opportunity to watch and judge the candidates in a face to face contest. In these events the usual media gatekeepers are bypassed and the voters are given a change to assess the issue, positions, personal qualities and programs of the candidates.

In the 1950 the influence of television on voting behavior become clear with the significant fill up it gave to the election campaign of Eisenhower in the US Presidential election. Later in the 1960 Kennedy won closely contested election against Nixon. Kennedy scored over Nixon in television debates due to his charismatic screen persona. The listeners of the same debate on radio taught that Nixon had come out on top. The eventual victory of Kennedy unveiled the hitherto untapped potential of television.

Mc Clure and Patterson (1973) who conducted a study on television coverage and voter behavior reveal that one-third of the voters reached their voting decision during the convention and one-third during the campaign. The findings of the election studies on 1972 conventions reveal that 50% of the Nixon supporters and almost 30% of the Mc Goven supporters listed as their time of decision the period immediately before, during or immediately after the conventions.
In relation to public opinion effects Lang & Lang (1981) argue that minimal effect conclusion is only one particular interpretation which has gained undue currency.

One reason for reluctance to accept the minimal effect conclusion was the arrival of television in the 1950s and 1960s as new media. Though there are many contributors for the newer theories of effect, it was Noelle Newmann (1973) who coined the slogan return to the concept of powerful mass media which serve to indentify this phase of research.

Research on media texts and audiences and on media organizations in late 1970s brought new approaches to the media effects known as social constructionists (Gamson and Modigliani 1989). Media having their most significant effects by constructing meanings. The last phase of media research established by Noelle-Newmann (1974) in her spiral of silence theory has two main thrusts.

The first media construct social formation and secondly people in audience construct their own view of social reality and their place in it, in interaction with the symbolic constructions offered by the media. The research allows both for the power of people to choose, with a terrain of continuous negotiation in between. It is a formulation of effect process well with mediation perspective.

**Research Design:**

With a view to objective listed above on the study ‘impact of political communication on voting behavior: A comparitive study in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the researcher has taken two prominent media – newspaper and television in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu for the purpose of the study. With the most important objective in mind the researcher has studied the content of prominent newspapers and television channels of Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu over a period of 18 (between 2007 – 2009) months to know the different manifestations of political communication in these three states. Thus the researcher was able to indentify the important political issues, policies and political personalities and the very drift of politics and political communication figured in both newspapers and television channels in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu. After a detailed scanning of the newspapers and television channels the researcher has prepared a detailed
questionnaire of three different sets meant for Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu. With the questionnaire consisting of political content of newspaper and television channels in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu, the researcher has conducted a survey among the voters of these three states to study the impact of political communication on voting behavior. It also covered questions meant to illicit personal and demographic information. The questionnaire consisted of both open ended and closed questions. In the case of Karnataka and Kerala a random sample of 385 voters each selected for the purpose of the study, whereas in the case of Tamilnadu a random sample of 380 voters belonging to various socio-economic, political and religious background were selected for the purpose of the study.

Thus the data obtained from the field survey have been analysed statistically on the following lines.

1. Tabular presentations according to relevant characteristics.

2. Chi-Square test for independence

Chi-Square

\[
X^2 = \frac{\sum(O - E)^2}{E}
\]

d.f

and interpretation is done on the basis of critical \(X^2\) - values at 5% level of significance.

Findings:

A brief account of the findings is presented here.

1. The study on the impact of political communication on voting behavior: A comparative study in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu has revealed that mass media especially the political communication through newspapers and television do have an impact on voting behavior in these three states. Almost 89% of the voters belonging to various districts of Karnataka with varying socio-political, economic and religious and educational background stated that political communication through mass media in Karnataka had influenced their voting
behavior of the voters. Whereas 11.55% of the voters in Karnataka has rejected the media impact on voting behavior.

But in the case of Kerala 82.6% of the voters stated that media has considerable impact on the voting behavior of the people of Kerala. But at the same time 17.4% of the voters in Kerala rejected the impact the media impact on voting behavior. Compared to Karnataka the rating of the media impact in Kerala is less. The rejection rate of the media impact of Kerala can be attributed to the political consciousness and due to the influence of cadre party like CPM.

In the case of Tamilnadu, the rating of the media impact is less with that of Karnataka and Kerala. Only 79.21% of the voters in Tamilnadu stated the media impact on their voting behavior. The rejection rate of the media impact is greater in Tamilnadu with that of Karnataka and Kerala. It may be due to cultural factors like intimacy of ‘Annan’ and due to the positive image of Tamil leaders.

2. The study also focused on the variations of the media impact in the case of electronic media and print media on voting behavior. In the case of newspapers the highest rating figured with Kerala with 68.83%. The second highest rating of the newspaper impact figured with Karnataka and the third position figured with Tamilnadu. The highest rating of the newspaper impact on voting in Kerala can be due to the popularity of newspaper reading and due to the highest literacy.

But in the case of televisions, the highest impact on voting behavior figured with voters in Karnataka. Almost the same percentage (71%) voters in Kerala rated the television impact on voting. Tamilnadu figured in the bottom line in matters of television impact on voting with 64% of the voters rating. The rejection rate of television impact on voting behavior is much more in Tamilnadu than that of Karnataka and Kerala. Since the political culture of Tamilnadu is extension of film culture which means film has influenced a lot in the life of individuals in Tamil society. In other words role played by television channels in Karnataka and Kerala is performed by the Tamil films rather than television channels in Tamilnadu.

3. The study also focus on the impact of political campaign strategies on voting behavior in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu as the study has revealed that, out
of the eleven categories of campaign strategies depicted in the list of political campaigns, political rallies, meetings, jathas and campaign speeches gained the highest rating in Karnataka compared with other strategies. At the same time in Kerala the highest rating of impact on voting figured with house to house campaign. In the case of Tamilnadu the highest rating of impact of election strategies on voting behavior figured with the campaign strategy of political discussions and debates through television channels.

4. Further the study also focused on the impact of various policy decision and its implementation by various political parties on voting behavior in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu. In matters of eleven policy decision of various political parties and its implementation of the same and its impact on voting behavior of the Karnataka voters, BJP has gained the maximum mandate of voters for the implementation of the police policy, employment, agriculture, health, financial and taxation policy. Whereas Congress has gained the maximum mandate of the voters for education, reservation, multi-religious and trade policies. Whereas the disinvestment policy is concerned the Karnataka voters rejected all political parties.

In the case of Kerala eleven policy decisions of various political parties considered for the study especially its implementation in the state and its impact on political decision making LDF has gained the maximum mandate of Kerala voters for the eleven policy decisions and its implementation and the highest cumulative score compared to the other political parties in Kerala for its successful implementation in the state.

Another interesting outcome of the study is, out of the eleven policy decisions considered for the purpose of the study in Kerala, LDF has gained maximum mandate for agricultural policy, education and employment policies of LDF and very less for multi-religious policies and alarming percentages of voters have stated that none of the political parties of Kerala are sincere to the successful implementation of these policies.

In the case of Tamilnadu with regard to the impact of policy decision and its implementation on voting behavior of the voters, DMK has gained the highest rating for policy decisions and its implementation in Tamilnadu.
Out of the eleven policy decision listed in the study DMK has gained the highest mandate for education policy, reservation policy, financial policy, taxation policy and multi – religious policy, trade policy, employment policy, disinvestment policy and health policy. Whereas AIADMK has gained the highest mandate for police policy out of the eleven policy listed in the study. DMK’s education policy secured the maximum mandate of the tamil voters.

5. Another endeavor of the study was to find out the impact and merit of election manifesto on voting behavior. In the case of Karnataka, BJP has scored the highest mandate for the election manifesto compared to the other political parties. But BJP is minority when we consider, the combined mandate secured by political parties like Congress I, JD S and others. 27% of Karnataka voters considered that no political party in Karnataka has declared a meaningful election manifesto. In other word a total of 64.5% of the voters in Karnataka rejected the election manifesto of the present ruling party and 70% of the women voters stated that none of the political parties have presented meaningful election manifesto.

In the case of Kerala, majority of voters (45.71%) stated that comparatively LDF has declared a meaningful election manifesto. Whereas in the case of Tamilnadu majority of voters (41.84%) preferred the election manifesto of DMK compared to the other five political parties of Tamilnadu. The impact of election manifesto is almost similar on voting both Kerala and Tamilnadu. But in Karnataka it has lesser impact compared to Kerala and Tamilnadu. In Tamilnadu the higher mandate for election manifesto may be due to the development programmes launched mainly for the downtrodden. Election manifesto is considered to be the blueprint for the would be government and the promises to the people of the agenda of things, they would be implementing once they are voted to power. But the lack of the impact of manifesto shows the popularity of unscientific election campaign in Indian politics.

6. As stated in the objective, one of the endeavor of the study was to find out the objectivity in political news reporting of newspapers and television channels and its impact on voting behavior in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu. In matters of objectivity to prominent popular dailies like The Hindu and The Times of India seems to be more popular among Karnataka voters in matters of objectivity in
political news reporting. Out of the 22 newspapers of Karnataka both in English and Kannada, Vijaya Karnataka is the second most preferred newspaper of Karnataka in matters of objectivity in political news reporting. The third position figured with the Kannada newspaper Prajavani and Deccan Herald in the fourth position. Whereas Udayavani figured in the eighth position in matters of objectivity. Losing of credibility of Deccan Herald need concern which had high standard of journalism set by eminent journalist like Pothan Joseph.

In Kerala The Hindu seems to be the highest rated English newspaper in matters of objectivity in political news reporting and Mathrubhumi has gained the highest rate in among all other English and Malayalam newspapers in matters of objective political news reporting. Manorama figured in the second position and Deshabhimani, the voice of the Communist Party figured in the third position in matters of objectivity. Indian Express and Deepika figured in the fourth position. Madhyamam, Chandrika, Mangalam and Kerala Kaumudi figured in the bottomline in matters of objectivity. The major outcome of the study in matters of objectivity in political news reporting, 65% of the voters belonging to various socio-political, economic and religious background donot have faith in Kerala newspapers.

In Tamilnadu The Hindu has gained the highest rating in matters of political news reporting. Out of the eleven newspapers considered for the purpose of the study, Dinamalar emerged as second most credible newspaper. In the rating scale Dina Thanthi figured the third position and Dinakaran in the fourth position. Dinamani and Indian Express figured in the fifth and sixth position.

Notable outcome of the study is 10% of the Tamil voters do not have faith in none of the newspapers in matters of objectivity. Times of India, Malai Malar, Tuglak figured in the bottom line.

In the case of Karnataka television channels considered for the purpose of the study of objective political news reporting, TV9 emerged as the most objective television channels in matters of political news reporting. NDTV figured in the second and CNN-IBN has the third, ETV has the fourth and Udaya figured the fifth policy out of the fifteen popular channels of Karnataka selected for the purpose of the study. The least preferred television channels in matters of
objective political news reporting is Headlines Today, Suvarna, DD channels and Aaj Tak.

In Kerala, out of the twelve channels which considered for the purpose of the study Asianet emerged as the most objective channel in matters of political news reporting and Indiavision as the second most objective and Kairali and DD Malayalam figured in the third and fourth position in matters of objectivity in political news reporting. But 13.77% of voters in Kerala do not have faith in none of the television channels. Manorama channel figured in the fifth position since channel was at its embryonic stage at the time of the study. CNN-IBN, BBC and NDTV happen to be the least preferred channels in Kerala.

In Tamilnadu Sun TV has secured the highest rating of objectivity of political news reporting. Out of the eleven popular television channels figured in the study, NDTV has secured the second highest rating of objectivity of political news reporting in Tamilnadu. The third position figured with Jaya TV, DD Tamil and Makkal TV secured the fourth and fifth position on the rating scale in matters of objectivity of political news reporting. Raj TV and Star Vijay figured in the sixth and seventh position. Headlines Today and BBC figured only in the bottom line. Since Kalaignar was in its infancy during the time of research it figured in the eighth position in matters of objectivity in political news reporting.

7. With respect to the objective of the newspapers trend to misuse the news columns for the purpose of personality cult than for development purpose, majority of the voters in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu stated that newspapers in those three southern states by and large misuse their news columns for the purpose of personality cult than for the promotion of development programmes. Majority of the highly educated group of voters in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu felt that newspapers by and large misuse their news columns for the personality cult than for development purposes. Compared to Karnataka and Tamilnadu higher percentages of voters in Kerala felt the misuse of news columns for the purpose of personality cult than for development purposes.

8. Another endeavor of the study was to find out the demographic factors on the impact of political communication on voting behavior in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu. Like the socio-political, cultural and ideological differences, the
study has revealed that there are differences in matters of the impact of political communication and its different manifestations especially the dissemination of news and its impact on voters, the priorities of policies of political parties and government and its implementation. Priorities of development program and its implementation, differences also could be observed in matters of adoption of election campaign strategies in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu. Differences also could be observed on the impact of newspapers and television channels and in the objectivity of political news reporting, both in the print and electronic media and its impact on voting behavior. The study also indicated the differences between the male and female voters with that of the less educated voters. The differences were also indicated in matters of the popularity of the media and political leadership preferred by the voters.

Highest rating of the media impact figured with the Karnataka voters. Compared to Karnataka media impact in Kerala is less. The rejection rate of the media impact is higher in Kerala. But in Tamilnadu the media impact is less compared to that of Karnataka and Kerala. Film media has greatly influenced the Tamil culture and politics. Compared to Karnataka slightly greater percentage of voters of Kerala have rated the newspapers impact on voting behavior.

It is evident from the study that the election campaign strategy on voting is not uniform in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu. Different campaign strategy has different impact on voting behavior of the voters in those three states. When political rallies, meetings, jathas and campaigns speeches has maximum impact on voting behavior on Karnataka, House to House campaign has maximum impact on voting behavior in Kerala. Whereas discussion and debate through television channels have the maximum impact on the voters in Tamilnadu. Party newspapers have almost equal impact on voting in both Karnataka and Kerala. Election Manifesto have almost similar impact in Kerala and Tamilnadu. But in Karnataka, Election Manifesto has lesser impact. Street plays as campaign strategy has more impact on the voters of Karnataka than Kerala and Tamilnadu.

In matters of the policy decisions and its implementation of political parties and its impact on voting behavior in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilandu, BJP has gained the maximum mandate for employment, agriculture, health and taxation
policies. Whereas Congress gained maximum mandate for education, reservation, multi-religious and trade policies.

In Kerala LDF has gained the maximum mandate for Education policy, Police, Reservation, employment, agriculture and health policies. An alarming percentages of voters in Kerala have rejected the Health, Trade and Financial policies of all political parties.

In Tamilnadu the study has indicated the highest rating of DMK in matters of policy decision and its implementation and its impact on voting. But AIADMK has gained the highest rating for police policy. The successful implementation of various policies and welfare programme for the weaker sections can be the reason for the massive mandate for DMK by Tamil people. Kalaignar has always titled his development programs in favor of the weaker section in the society so as to get social justice for them.

Another endeavor of the study was to find out the impact of socio-political, economic and religious issues on voting behavior of the people in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu. Out of the 22 contemporary issues of Karnataka which considered for the purpose of the study, majority of the Karnataka voters lost their faith in political parties and political leaders in Karnataka since they are unable to solve most of their basic problems like Cauvery water dispute, educational policies, liquor policies and many other issues which affected the development and destiny of people of Karnataka. With regard to seven issues like Cauvery water dispute, loosing of Fab City to Hyderabad, implementation of rules regarding the wearing helmet as compulsory and the liquor policy of Karnataka and Declaration of Belgaum as second capital of Karnataka, majority of the voters of Karnataka preferred to abstain from voting and stated that they will not vote for none of the political parties in Karnataka.

Out of the three major political parties like JD (S), Congress and BJP, JD (S) has gained the highest mandate of Karnataka voters for speedy rehabilitation effort in flood hit villages of Bakalgot and Gulbarga, Congress for their stand on the issue on Communal violence in Mangalore, BJP has gained the highest mandate for the religious issues like Baba Buddadatha Shrine. Analysis on the crucial issues of Karnataka and its tackling various political parties, JD (S) seems to have genuine
interest for the development for Karnataka and well being. It is evident from the priorities of development and their sincerity in tackling some of the basic problems of the rural people.

In the case of Kerala, out of the 22 socio-political, economic and religious issues considered for the purpose of the study on the impact of political communication on voting behavior, farmer’s suicide had the highest impact on the voting behavior on the people and great majority of the electorates in Kerala prefer to vote for LDF than other political parties in Kerala. Out of the 22 socio-political issues considered misuse of Tsunami fund gained the second highest impact on voting behavior. The other prominent issues figured in the minds of Keralites were professional college bill, education policy of political parties, distribution of drinking water and flood relief operations.

In the case of socio-economic political issues considered and its impact on voting in Tamilnadu, a great majority of voters prefer to vote for DMK than other political parties in Tamilnadu. Out of the 15 contemporary socio-political issues considered, the highest percentages of voting behavior figured with the issue of violence and arson on Dinakaran newspaper and Sun TV, Backward class commission’s report and abolishing of common entrance test. The voters who preferred to vote for AIADMK, highest percentages of the voters figured with the socio-political issues like Naxalite attack, Cauvery water dispute and protest against disinvestment of Neyveli Lignite Company.

With regard to the misuse of news columns for the purpose of personality cult, majority of the votes in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu stated that newspapers by and large misuse their news columns for the personality cult than for promotion of development programmes. Compared to Karnataka and Tamilnadu, higher percentages of voters in Kerala felt the misuse of news columns for the purpose of the personality cult. Another notable feature emerged from the study is majority of the highly educated group of voters in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu felt that newspapers by and large misuse their news columns for personality cult than development purposes.
**Conclusion:**

Since the main attempt of the study was to find out the impact of political communication on voting behavior in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu, it is found that mass media especially the political communication through newspapers and television channels do have impact on voting behavior of the people in Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu.

The highest rating of media impact figured with Karnataka, (88%); it can be attributed to the scientific use of media by the Karnataka politicians for the political propaganda or it may due to credibility of the media and the belief system of the people of Karnataka which further needs scientific studies.