CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Elections are the means by which the people in a society make political choices by voting for competing candidates or parties. Free and fair elections are as such sine qua non for any democratic political set up based on the will of the people. It is the people's act of voting with absolute independency and conscience that decides the success or failure of the governments. Voting is a common way and most accessible means of political participation for an individual in a democratic system while involvement in politics may vary from person to person depending on their capacity, availability of time, level of interest and resources, etc. A section of people may also have unconcern attitude to politics or elections due to disappointment, resentment, ignorance or disregard to political parties or candidates. Studies on voting behaviour involves the analysis of individual psychological processes (perception, emotion and motivation) and their relation to political actions, as well as institutional patterns, such as the communication process and the impact on elections.

behaviour can be regarded as (a) a mode of legitimizing democratic rule \(^3\) (b) instancing participation in the political process involving community \(^4\) (c) instancing act of decision making \(^5\) (d) a role-action involving definite political orientation imbedded in a particular type of political culture \(^6\) or (e) a direct relation of individual citizen to the formal government. \(^7\)

In a democratic system, voting behaviour is the central point of all the political exercises. Voting behaviour encompasses the attitude of the electorate towards voting, participation in voting, voting decisions and formulations and participation in other forms of electoral activities. In the study of voting behaviour, these factors have to be seen in regard to the individual voter's bio-social background and influences acting

---

6 G.A. Almond, Comparative Political System in H. Eulan et al. (Edn), Political Behaviour, Gleucoe 1956, Ibid, p.p.135
on his personality attributes. The factors are to be analysed in relation to one another and also by making parallel comparisons. Some of the significant works in the area may be reviewed for clarity in constructing the hypotheses of the present case study of voting behaviour. The studies on voting behaviour were started in the USA and Britain in early forties. In the USA, there were two schools of studies-Columbia model and Machigan model. The scholars of the Columbia University conducted studies that laid emphasis on the impact of social and environmental factors on the individual choice which were highlighted in their book ‘The People’s choice’. The Political Man’ of Seymour Martin Lipset laid emphasis on identifying sociological variables as bases of political behaviour. The other school, for instance, the Machigan Survey Research Centre in their studies namely ‘The voter Decides’ and ‘The American Voter’ analyses voting behavior and party preferences in relation to psychological variables or the subjective world of the individual voter-his interpretation of candidates, issues associated with particular events.

In India, work on voting behaviour began in 1960s. The "Indian Voting Behaviour" which carried the case studies of voting behaviour in eleven constituencies (seven urban and four rural constituencies) jointly edited by Myron Weiner and Rajni Kothari was significant and broke new ground in the study of voting behaviour in India. Rajni Kothari and Tarun Sheth in their work entitled 'Extents and Limits of Community voting' which was included in the same volume, was noteworthy and in it, they highlighted the influencing role of ethnic loyalties and party organizations in voting behaviour even though some sections of the communities voted en bloc. V.M. Sirsikar further found out that the caste and religious sentiments (Brahmins or non-Brahmins) and party loyalties were important factor on voting choice in Poona constituency. In a study in Punjab, Baldev Nayar concluded that the behaviour of voters was influenced by various factors such as loyalties to religion, caste, factions, kinsmen and political party. Whereas, in a study

---

12 Kothari Rajni and Sheth, Tarun, Extents and Limits of Community Voting: The Case of Baroda East in Weiner Myron and Kothari Rajni op. cit, p.p. 13-34
13 Sirsikar, V.M., Party Loyalties versus Community Pulls: Poona Constituency, op. cit, p.p.35-45
14 Baldev Nayar, Religion and Caste in the Punjab: Sidhawan Bet Constituency, op. cit,p.82-140
in Gujarat, it was pointed out that caste loyalties had more weight than party affiliation of voters or activists.\footnote{Kothari Rajni and Shah Ghanashyam, Caste Orientation of Political Factions, op. cit, p.p. 141-161} The work of Paul Brass in Kanpur constituency noted that the voters tended to divert loyalties from Congress party as a result of candidate’s attack on the past performance in administration.\footnote{Sirsikar, V.M., Political Behaviour in India: A Case Study of the 1962 General Elections, Bombay, Manaktalas, 1965, pp.55-67} In a study in rural constituency in Andhra Pradesh, it was found out that voting in a village was mainly determined by the local issues and conflicts peculiar to the village cutting across the larger issues of the constituency. As regards, political consciousness impinging upon the electoral process, the findings of Sirsikar in a three wave study of the Poona constituency showed that over 33 % of the voters were unaware about political issues, about 25 % responded ignorant of the candidates and as to what elections of legislature were being held. However, it was pointed out that electoral process was influenced by certain factors like instructions of the family head, castiest influence, means of manipulation, majority fears, and charismatic leadership of Nehru.\footnote{Sirsikar, V.M., Political Behaviour in India: A Case Study of the 1962 General Elections, Bombay, Manaktalas, 1965, pp.55-67} The one wave pre-election study of the 1962 elections in Rajasthan conducted by Iqbal Narain and C.P. Bhambhri in various constituencies (urban and rural) revealed that the voters had a much higher level of awareness about political events like
elections and the contesting different political parties and candidates.\textsuperscript{17} Interestingly, involvement of popular leaders in the election enhanced interest among the voters and broke up the caste and community lines as observed by Aloo Dastur when the Sindhi community to which Kripalani belonged was equally divided in the 1962 General Elections in North Bombay constituency.\textsuperscript{18}

The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies conducted a National Sample Study of the 1967 elections on electoral behaviour with reference to 'regularity and change in the Indian Political System' by identifying indicators i.e. voting trends, party identification and issue-orientation (both subjective and objective). It adopted stratified random sampling to draw national samples. They considered political variables independent of socio-economic and demographic factors in political choice. They could develop a typology of 'Political stratification' of the Indian electorate, for examining the implications of secular identities for political development of voters and for drawing the socio-economic map of

\textsuperscript{17} S.P. Verma and C.P. Bhambri, Political Consciousness in India, Meerut, Menakshi, 1967, p.121
\textsuperscript{18} Aloo Dastur, Menon Vs. Kripalani: North Bombay Elections, 1962, Bombay, University of Bombay, 1967
different parties and partisan groups\textsuperscript{19} on the basis of the data and findings of their study. In a three-wave study in three Parliamentary constituencies in Bombay, Aloo Dastur found a high level of political consciousness among the electorate, who were illiterates, backwards and scheduled caste with regard to their voting rights. The election campaign and political propaganda did not readily influence the voters.\textsuperscript{20} Again, in the study of voting patterns in Bombay, women voters were observed to be more party oriented and more participative in voting than men, they expressed dissatisfaction in the economic programmes and views of changing the government.\textsuperscript{21} However, in case of Punjab and Haryana, voting choice of the electorate particularly the women and illiterates were driven by the personal and religious considerations.\textsuperscript{22} The study of three constituencies of Gujarat conducted by D.N. Pathak concluded that certain sections of voters such as educated, higher caste, young persons and men took voting decisions early but less educated, low caste, old persons and women decided

\textsuperscript{19} Sheth, D.L., Citizens and Parties: Aspects of Competitive Politics in India, New Delhi, Allied Publishers, 1975
\textsuperscript{21} Dastur, Aloo and others, Voting Patterns in Bombay, Bombay, University of Bombay, 1967.
their voting choice late. Voting decisions were influenced by three main factors i.e. candidates, party and multiple pressures. He also observed a tendency of non-voting among the educated persons and found out that the voters in Gujarat had a higher degree of exposure and political awareness, large acceptance of party system and electoral system. A study conducted by B.R. Purohit in five constituencies of Madhya Pradesh revealed that non-voting was 27.5 per cent in rural areas, 16 per cent in rural reserved constituencies and 9.35 per cent in the urban areas. He concluded that while the election campaign gave a negligible impact on the voting behaviour, the voting choice was determined by either by the merits of candidates or party considerations, and in the rural areas, voting behaviour was influenced by caste, religion and kinship factors. S.P. Varma, in his study of voting behaviour in Rajasthan in the 4th General Elections, observed that the rural voters were more candidate-oriented than party-oriented in comparison to urban voters. V. M. Sirsikar worked on 1967 elections in Pune.

Parliamentary constituency and found out that regional and parochial considerations continued to guide the voters. In a comparison between elite and common voters with regard to their electoral behaviour, the elite strata was found to have tendency towards authoritarianism than the common voters. Another study of 1967 elections carried out by D.L. Sheth, revealed that nearly half of the voters i.e. 49 per cent took their own voting decisions, about 26 per cent decided under the influence of the head or elders in the family, and 20 per cent after joint discussions of their families. In the study of 1969 mid-term elections, Sheth also noted that 39 per cent of voters chose votes on the basis of party identifications. In his further studies by drawing data from the survey of 1967 elections conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, he concluded that the voting choice of the Indian voters were determined by partisan attitudes and political variables rather than the socio-economic variables, and also denied that the voters were free-floating voters. Bashiruddin Ahmad noted that 21 per cent of the electorates were ‘apathetics’, 20 per cent as peripherals (those who involved in political processes marginally), 30 per cent as mere ‘spectators’ (who

only cheer, transmit messages of advice and encouragement, and voted for those who had won a particular battle in a given period), over 17 per cent as 'auxillaries' (who were much more involved in the electoral system psychologically and behaviourally), and 12 per cent as' politists' who joined the fray and political combat with auxiliary support. However, auxiliaries and politists shaped and influence political outcomes. 28

In a case study of West Bengal in the 1972 elections, Bangendu and Mera Gangully found a 94 per cent swing of electorate in favour of Congress, and only a 6 per cent moving from Congress to the Left. 29 R.C. Prasad, in his book 'The Mature Electorate' pointed out that after the 1967 elections, political maturity of the Indian voters were intensely reflected in public utterances and newspapers, elections caused to politically mobilize the rural people to a great extent and induced the ordinary citizens to participate in the democratic process in a most concrete and trenchant form. Political maturity of rural people was due to conversation, an important fact of rural life. 30 Igbal Narain and others, in a

28 Ahmad, Bashiruddin, Political Stratification of the Electorate', Ibid., p.p. 21-37.
29 Bengendu and Gangully, Mera, Voting behaviour in a Changing Society: West Bengal-A Case Study, Delhi, Sterling, 1975
30 Prasad, R.C., The Mature Electorate, Delhi, Ashis, 1975, p.p. 3-10
study of rural elites, noted that the Panchayati Raj leaders’ support to candidates because of caste, contributed to only a 4.6 per cent of votes, although the Panchayati Raj leaders remained as reserved vote-banks. The study of women voting behaviour, conducted by N.G.S. Kini, revealed that 60 per cent of the women took their own voting decisions on the advice of their husbands.

C.P. Bhambru and P.S. Varma conducted study of voting behavior of Muslims in Jaipur. They were of the view that the Muslims which form the largest minority community in India suffered from a feeling of insecurity and they had propensity to vote for Congress. Paul Brass observed that Muslims voted for their protection and thus their voting behaviour had been regionalized and localized. On the basis of the various studies on Muslim voting behaviour, it was observed that the Muslims showed fickled as they voted differently in every election. They

31 Iqbal Narain and others, The Rural Elite and Elections, Delhi, National, 1976
voted overwhelmingly for Congress until 1962, distracted from Congress in 1967, voted again largely in favour of Congress in 1971 and their votes swung to Janata in 1977. The tribal voters, unlike scheduled caste and Muslim voters in 1980 returned to the Congress fold in overwhelming number, at the state level.

In U.P., in her study of Political awareness among the lower class women during the 1977 elections, Zoya Hasan noted that the voting behaviour under the influence of caste, community and kinship which are conventional theories were erroneous. In the prevailing repressive system, the conventional factors played only a marginal role on voting as seen in the 1977 elections.\textsuperscript{35} Rajni Kothari pointed out that in 1977 election ‘there seems to have been another fundamental change in the country’s political culture. This consists in a major overhaul at the base of the politics arising from a massive rise in consciousness of their rights as citizens, the power that they posses as voters, the value of number as against status and as consequence of then we found power which is the direct result of electoral politics, the possibility of transcending status boundaries and

challenging age-old hegemony and culture'. Ajit Roy in his study of voters of West Bengal during 1977 elections revealed that the elections caused a considerably high level of consciousness and political motivation among the general voters. Pravin N. Sheth noted that electorate were highly aware and cognizant of the issues in elections as revealed by the analysis of the national samples taken by the Centre for Study of Developing Societies. On the basis of the data collected from Gujarat 80 per cent of the samples expressed opinion on the government's role in the economy and 84 per cent on political facts. The action of voting was based on this judgement about the rightness to wrongness of issues and government actions. In her 'Incentives to the Electorate' survey of political patronage in 1977 Lok Sabha elections, Ranjana pointed out that 'most of the voters take pre-election' offers with a pinch of salt as they know these are airy castles which will vanish after the elections'. She noted that there was clean sweep by Janata party in the very state where relief were granted by the erstwhile

38 Sheth, Pravin N., Indian Electoral Behaviour: Patterns of Continuity and Change, Virendra Grover (Edn), op. cit. p.125
ruling party. 39

M.L. Goel in his ‘Social Bases of Party Support and Political Participation in India’ observed that there was much likelihood of voting by the people who preferred Congress party. The opposition supporters were found to be more active on the measures of participation-taking interest in politics, attending public meetings, discussing politics and trying to influence decisions. 40 S.K. Chaube, in his study of the Sixth Lok Sabha elections in the north east India, noted that the existing diversities are related to the changing political map and the evolution of the party system. He observed that ‘factions, personal influence and intense ethnic consciousness are but natural consequences of the insular politics that originates at such diverse levels of development. What is significant is that their articulations are specifically tied with the concrete issues of scarcity that is characteristics of underdevelopment’ 41

The study conducted by Sulochana Bawai in Mawkhar constituency in Meghalaya observed that the behaviour of voters was

41 Chaube, S.K., Electoral Politics in North-East India, University Press, Madras, 1985, p.7-9
influenced by personal contacts. Rudolph and Rudolph pointed out, in their study of 1980 elections in India, that there were inclination among the minorities of the country to vote en bloc. Such minorities included the scheduled castes, Muslims, scheduled tribes and Christians like American blacks and Spanish speakers. A study conducted by Pradeep Chibber and others in the 1991 elections revealed that the electorate of the country, particularly in the rural areas put more weight on their day-to-day economic problems and the solutions to the problems than the abstract goals and ideals promised by the political elites as far as the voting decisions are concerned. M.S. Dhani, in his micro-study of three Assembly constituencies in 1977, attempted to study the voting behaviour of weaker sections which included low caste and low income groups through post poll

interview of voters. He observed that socio-economic status (SES) had significant influence on the voting behaviour of the weaker sections, with the exception of Balmiki caste who voted in favour of the Janata party candidate in Jullundar constituency despite their low SES. The study thus indicated the increasing role of individual’s choice on voting behaviour amongst the weaker sections. Richard Sisson and William Vanderbok, in an effort of mapping the Indian Electorate based on seven general elections from 1952 onwards discovered a pattern of regionalization in party support among the electorate and a pronounced electoral support to party candidates with declining trend of support to independent candidates at the state level and above. 46

In India, most of the scholars have attempted to work in the area of voting behaviour with focus on infrastructural variables like caste, community, language, religion, charismatic personalities of the candidates, role of money, factionalism, large swing of votes in favour of Indian National Congress in what it termed 'sympathy vote' after the assassination sympathy wave, etc. while others have concentrating on

essentially political variables like party ideology, party organizations, party membership, etc. Exit poll survey began in 1991 by the Marketing and Research Group-India Today. The exit poll pointed out hefty swing to Congress(I) party caused by sympathy vote after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi.\textsuperscript{47} In 1996 parliamentary elections, the ICSSR-CSDS-'India Today' carried out exit poll survey and brought to light certain features of growing involvement of poor and underprivileged in elections, and so on.\textsuperscript{48}

The study of voting behaviour is of recent efforts in the context of Manipur, although some studies have been done in relation to electoral politics, political participation, social and political change, etc. In a study on electoral politics in Manipur, R.P. Singh concluded that the voters in the urban areas were not politically much involved and were not well aware of the ideologies and programmes of the political parties. However, they remained well acquainted with the candidates and the judgement of the voters was driven by the personal merits and image of the contestants. He also observed some aggravation of regionalism and sectarianism in politics.\textsuperscript{49} S.K. Chaube found out that religious and primordial ties,

\textsuperscript{47} India Today, July 15, 1991.
\textsuperscript{48} The Maturing of a Democracy’, India Today, August 31, 1996, pp. 36-53.
personalities of the candidates and party ideologies were the main factors which influence the choice of the voters in Manipur.\textsuperscript{50} In the hills of the state, besides, ethnicity, promise for government jobs, personalities did influence the voters.\textsuperscript{51} S. Sanatomba Singh, in his case study of Thanga Assembly constituency, noted that the voters were influenced more by non-political factors i.e. influence of the kinship (40.15 per cent), pre-election private promises (22.91 per cent), influence of the out-migrant kins. The political parties and issues-local, regional or national were not considered while making voting choice by the voters.\textsuperscript{52} In the analysis of the electoral politics in Manipur, O. Kulabidhu pointed out that in Manipur, elections were influenced by factors like party organizations, personalities, and influences of the candidates, party ideologies and to some extent wealth. He further observed that the urban voters preferred the candidates of national parties and had a broader and wider perspective and locality factors play an important role in both the hills and the valley.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50} Chaube, S.K., op. cit., p.103.