

A STUDY OF THE FACTORS WHICH INFLUENCE VOTERS TO CAST THEIR VOTES TO A PARTICULAR CANDIDATE

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ABSTRACT

This study has emerged out of field research carried out in the villages of Bhimtal Block in Nainital District of Uttarakhand. Though most of the primary data was collected at the chosen villages of the Block, many of the observations made in the course of the study relate to a wider whole. The relations with the wider whole can be verified by looking at the similarities with the neighboring villages. Rural communities are gradually getting themselves politicized and some newer nexus of local as well as regional leadership and power structure has emerged. Rural leadership and its implications have been highlighted in this study. It also analyses the basis on which people cast their vote.

Keywords: Leadership, Rural, Political, Vote, Candidate and Status.

INTRODUCTION

To understand leadership we must comprehend that the leadership equation in earlier times was different from today as it was the ability to attract and influence followers was accounted for on the individual basis of the leader's particular power base, charisma, and/or ability to transform the motivations and ideologies of large numbers of people. Leaders were seen to possess the capacity to establish followers by either getting them to submit through power and control or to idealize and identify with the leader and his avowed purpose.¹

Since this research is based on rural areas², it is essential to differentiate between the terms rural and urban. An Urban Unit (or Town) includes all places with a municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee, etc. (known as Statutory Town). All other places which satisfied the following criteria (known as Census Town): A minimum population of 5,000; at least 75 per cent of the male main workers engaged in non-agricultural pursuits; and a density of

population of at least 400 per sq. km. All areas which are not categorized as Urban area are considered as rural areas. Number of Rural Units (or Villages) in India according to 2011 Census are 6,40,867.

METHODOLOGY

There are thirteen districts in Uttarakhand. There are a total of eight blocks in Nainital district, out of which the focus of this study is on Bhimtal Block. The villages which have been looked at in this research are located in Bhimtal block of Nainital district which is situated in Kumaun region of Uttarakhand. I have used exploratory cum descriptive research design. Sampling has been used here and through simple random sampling gram sabhas were chosen which were looked at for the purpose of this research. Sampling is a process of selection of a limited number of items from a larger whole or universe of items. Hence, in Bhimtal Block, out of 60 gram panchayats, I have chosen ten percent of the total gram panchayats i.e, six gram panchayats. These 6 gram panchayats were chosen through simple random sampling by using lottery method. Chits of

these 60 gram panchayats were made and 6 chits were selected through lottery method. These are the gram panchayats which got selected: 1) Beluakhan, 2) Bhalyuti, 3) Chopra, 4) Gethia, 5) Jyoli and 6) Rausil.

The Panchayati Raj system has three tiers; the Zila Panchayat being at the top, followed by it is the Block Samiti in the middle and at the bottom is the Gram Panchayat. I have focused on the Gram Panchayat. 15 percent of the total households were taken among these gram sabhas. A total of 282 households were chosen out of 1895 households.

BASIS OF PEOPLE'S VOTE

The basis on which people vote are multi-fold. People consider various aspects on the basis of

which they vote. These may vary from people to people, candidate to candidate and may also vary from one election to another. It should be clear that in the whole organically inter-related three-tier structure of Panchayati Raj system, Village Panchayat or Gram Panchayat is at the lowest level and has been called first-tier in which Panchas and Sarpanchas are the elected leaders from the masses through secret ballots. The second-tier is at the block taluka level. Here, a constituted body called Panchayat Samiti of all Sarpanchas of the block area and one Chairman, has been allotted some important functions of planning and policy implementation. Then, at district level there is a Zila Parishad which functions as the link between the State departments and Panchayat Samitis³.

Table No. 1

Basis of people's vote

Serial no.	Basis of one's vote	Frequency	Percentage
1	Caliber for Development	114	40.43
2	Party	24	08.52
3	Caste	15	05.32
4	Religion	6	02.12
5	Personal Ties	123	43.61
Total		282	100.00

Source: Data collected by researcher

The above table shows the categorization of population on what basis do voters cast their vote. The selected population consists of 40.43 percent people who cast their vote on the basis of the caliber of the candidate. Whereas the total number of people who cast their vote on the basis of political party were 08.52 percent. The total percentage of people who cast their vote on the basis of the caste the candidate belonged to were 05.32 percent. While the ones who voted on the basis of religion of the candidate were 02.12 percent. Interestingly, 43.61 percent people voted on the basis of their personal ties with the candidate.

INFLUENCE OF FINANCIAL STATUS OF THE CANDIDATE MATTER WHILE VOTING

While asking the interviewees whether the financial status of the candidate matters. The ones who felt that it matters were the ones gave reasons that it is an essential aspect of elections because money is important for contesting elections. While some people felt that if the candidate is financially stable then he/she can help them in times of need by giving them financial aid.

Serial no.	Influence of financial status of the candidate in voting	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	31	10.99
2	No	124	43.98
3	Partially	78	27.66
4	Cannot say	49	17.37
Total		282	100.00

Source: Data collected by researcher

The above table represents whether financial status of the candidate matters while casting their votes. 10.99 percent of the people responded with a yes, 43.98 percent people said no, 27.66 percent people said that it partially mattered and 17.37 percent people could not say anything on the question.

INFLUENCE OF VOTES ON THE BASIS OF THE PREVIOUS PORTFOLIO HELD BY A CANDIDATE

When this question was posed to the interviewees, they gave various opinions and the ones who felt that the previous portfolio of the person matters while voting because that provides a basis for the voters to either vote for them or to not vote for them. If the voters feel that the leader could fulfill their expectations, they vote for the candidate else they vote for some other person and give them a chance.

Table No. 2

Influence of votes on the basis of the previous portfolio held by a candidate

Serial no.	Influence of votes by previous portfolio	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	81	28.73
2	No	90	31.92
3	Partially	86	30.49
4	Cannot say	25	08.86
Total		282	100.00

Source: Data collected by researcher

The table above represents whether the previous portfolio held by the candidate influence the votes. 28.73 percent of the people responded with a yes, 31.92 percent people said no, 30.49 percent people said that it partially mattered and 08.86 percent people could not say anything on the question.

INFLUENCE OF EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE CANDIDATE WHILE VOTING

The patterns of leadership as well as the basis of leadership are changing. Though educational qualification is not a criteria for politics, educational status of the candidate is considered by a chunk of voters.

Table 3
Influence of educational status of the candidate while voting

Serial no.	Does the educational status of the candidate matter?	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	88	31.21
2	No	70	24.84
3	Partially	56	19.86
4	Cannot say	73	25.89
Total		282	100.00

Source: Data collected by researcher

The table above represents whether the educational status the candidate matters while voting. 31.21 percent of the people responded with a yes, 24.84 percent people said no, 19.86 percent people said that it partially mattered and 25.89 percent people could not say anything on the question.

BASIS ON WHICH VOTERS VOTE FOR A CANDIDATE

Table No. 4

Basis on which voters vote for a candidate

Serial no.	What makes voters vote for a candidate?	Frequency	Percentage
1	Chances of winning	92	32.62
2	Belonging to the desired party	23	08.15
3	Helpful to you	109	38.66
4	Helpful to others	58	20.57
Total		282	100.00

Source: Data collected by researcher

The above table represents what makes the voters vote for a candidate. 32.62 percent of the people considered it the chances of winning, 08.15 percent people considered the party of the candidate, 38.66 percent people considered the helpful nature towards them. 20.57 percent people considered the helpful nature towards others.

DO YOU TAKE MONEY, LIQUOR, ETC. FOR VOTES?

Political parties are a feature of the parliamentary system of government, which has been adopted in India. Parties tend to give structure not only to regional conflicts, but also to struggles for power which are more local in nature. It must not be assumed, however, that conflicts between parties at the regional and national levels are of the same kind as those at the local level.

During elections as there are various instances of money, liquor and others distributed to get votes. As much as the candidates are accused of distributing money, liquor etc. for votes, the voters are equally accused for taking these favors in return for votes. While speaking with the villagers some people remarked that they take money but according to their choice and discretion.

Table No. 5**Do you take money, liquor, etc. for votes**

Serial no.	Do you take money, liquor for votes?	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	4	01.43
2	No	277	27.30
3	Sometimes	1	00.37
Total		282	100.00

Source: Data collected by researcher

The above table consists of voters taking money, liquor for votes. 01.43 percent people said yes, 27.30 percent people said no. 00.37 percent people said they sometimes took the above mentioned for votes.

DO OTHER VOTERS TAKE MONEY, LIQUOR FOR VOTES?

Interestingly, while majority of the people denied that they took money etc. for votes, they without hesitation told that other voters take money to vote.

Table No. 6**Do other voters take money, liquor for votes?**

Serial no.	Do other voters take money, liquor for votes?	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	79	28.02
2	No	64	22.69
3	Maybe	82	29.08
4	Cannot say	57	20.21
Total		282	100.00

Source: Data collected by researcher

The above table consists tabulation of whether other voters take distributing money, liquor for votes. 28.02 percent candidates said yes to this question. Whereas, 22.69 percent people said a no. On the other hand, 29.08 percent people responded as maybe and 20.21 percent went with maybe as their answer.

DOES THE SOCIAL STATUS OF A CANDIDATE CHANGE AFTER BEING ELECTED?

Very often the social status of the candidate changes. Also, it is anticipated to change as one starts to behave like a leader after winning an election.

Table No. 7**Does the Social status of a candidate change after being elected**

Serial no.	Social status of a candidate changes	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	108	38.29
2	No	42	14.89
3	Partially	62	21.99
4	Cannot say	70	24.83
Total		282	100.00

Source: Data collected by researcher

The above table consists tabulation of whether the social status of a candidate change after being elected. To this, 38.29 percent candidates said yes. Whereas, 14.89 percent people said a no. On the other hand, 21.99 percent people responded with partially as their answer and 24.83 percent went with cannot say as their response.

DOES THE ECONOMIC STATUS OF A CANDIDATE CHANGE AFTER BEING ELECTED?

The economic status of the candidate is also anticipated to change after winning an election. It is seen that in many instances it does change after being elected.

Table No. 8**Change in economic status after being elected**

Serial no.	Economic status of a candidate changes	Frequency	Percentage
1	Yes	97	34.39
2	No	43	15.25
3	Partially	98	34.76
4	Cannot say	44	15.60
Total		282	100.00

Source: Data collected by researcher

The above table consists tabulation of whether the economic status of a candidate change after being elected. To this, 34.39 percent candidates said yes. Whereas, 15.25 percent people said a no. On the other hand, 34.76 percent people responded with partially as their answer and 15.60 percent went with cannot say as their response.

ON WHAT BASIS SHOULD A CANDIDATE BE VOTED?

There are various factors on which a candidate is voted as well as there are factors on which they should be voted. This is like expectation and the

reality. The traditional image of a political leader as a person endowed with moral qualities was given considerable continuity in contemporary Indian politics by Gandhi. He ceaselessly emphasized that a leader should be one who is willing to sacrifice his interests for the benefit of the community. According to T.K.Oomen,⁴ the image of the political leader as a person with moral qualities is rooted in Indian tradition. The preservation of Varnashrama Dharma was one of the primary duties of ancient Indian monarchs. The ideal king is one who accepts the interpretation of Dharma given by the pundits of his court and enforces it ruthlessly and impartially by means of coercion (danda.).

Table No. 9**Basis on which a candidate is voted**

Serial no.	On what basis should a candidate be voted?	Frequency	Percentage
1	Education	26	09.22
2	Development	114	40.43
3	Party	4	01.43
4	Behaviour	78	27.65
5	All of the above	60	21.27
Total		282	100.00

Source: Data collected by researcher

The above table reflects the tabulation of the basis on which the voter votes for a candidate. 09.22 percent respondents felt that they vote for the candidate on the basis of his/her educational qualification. On the other hand, 40.43 percent chose development as their basis while voting for a candidate. 01.43 percent people chose party as the deciding factor while voting. The behavior of the candidate was the basis of voting for 27.65 percent voters. While 21.27 percent felt that all of the above factors were a deciding factor while they casted their vote.

CONCLUSION

Panchayati Raj is the present form of local self-government in India at the rural level. Thus, Panchayati Raj is a species which belongs to the wider genus of local government in a nation-state.⁵ There are various underlying factors on which the voters vote. This study shows the factors which influence the voters to cast their votes to a particular candidate. These mani-fold factors range from caliber for development, party affiliation, caste, religion and personal ties. However religion and caste played a minor role in villages. Personal ties of the people with the candidate and the candidate's caliber for development largely influence votes. Financial status of the candidate was not a deciding factor while voting and the previous portfolio held by the candidate was a partial deciding factor.

Educational qualification of the candidate is becoming significant while voting. Voters are voting for the candidate helpful to them along with other factors. Voters responded by saying that they do not take money, liquor or other incentives for votes, whereas they felt other voters do take them before elections. The social status as well as the economic status of the candidate does change after being elected. Most voters in the villages felt that votes should be casted on the basis of development and the behavior or conduct of the candidate. Rural leadership and its implications have been looked at in this study. It scrutinizes the basis on which people cast their vote. It also looks at what the village residents perceive of the Panchayats.

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