



# VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN RURAL INDIA- CURRENT TRENDS

**Dr. D.Menaka Thammaiah,**

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Government First Grade College, HSRLayout,  
Bangalore

## **Abstract**

This article examines contemporary voting behaviour in rural India. While traditional determinants of electoral behaviour—such as caste, religion, local leadership, and community networks remain important, new dynamics—economic suffering, welfare policy performance, and the expanding importance of media and digital communication—are altering rural electoral behaviour. This article discusses how rural voters are becoming more issue-oriented (jobs, welfare, infrastructure) while remaining influenced by social identity; how local governance and benefit distribution affect turnout and choice; and how media and information flows (including digital) are playing an increasingly important role.

Key words- Voting behaviour, rural voters, traditional determinants of electoral behaviour.

## **I) Introduction**

The term Voting has become a household term in a democratic system. It is a means through which every adult citizen expresses their approval or disapproval for the government decisions, policies and programmes of various political parties and qualities of the candidates who are engaged in the struggle to become the representative of the people.

Voting behaviour involves an analysis of individual's perception, emotion and motivation and its impact on election. In the words of Plano and Riggs, "Voting Behaviours is a field of study concerned with the ways in which people tend to vote in public election and the reasons why they vote as they do." It involves a study of political behaviour of individuals in the context of voting in elections.

In a democratic system election is a process through which people express their opinion about personalities and issues through voting. The study of electoral behaviour involves empirical investigation as it takes politics very close to the discipline of sociology with the result a new discipline with the name political sociology or sociological politics has emerged. Though man is considered as a rational creature in philosophical term but the empirical studies of the electoral behavior displays the fact that the behavior of man is influenced by many irrational forces. The role of political parties and pressure groups in invoking the religious and communal factors, influence of money or charismatic personality of a leader and a host of other irrational forces have their definite influence on the minds of the voters.

Voters behaviour is influenced by several factors such as religion, caste, community, language, money, policy or the ideology of the political parties. Political parties use these variables to achieve their purpose of emerging successful in the war of votes. In Indian democratic system following are the main political and socio-economic factors which act as determinates of voting behaviours-

1.1) Charisma: One of the important factor that determines voting behavior is Charisma. It is an exceptional quality of a leader which acts as a source of attraction and reverence for the people in large numbers. Huge attendance at the meetings addressed by great personalities like Nehru, Indira, Vajpayee, Modi and their response to the appeals issued by such great figures stands as a concrete evidences of the role of charisma in the electoral behavior of our people. The slogans like 'Garibi Hatao', 'Indira means India, India means Indira', 'Har Har Modi Ghar Ghar Modi' and so on has worked miracles in the various elections.

1.2) Caste: Caste continues to be a major determinant of voting behaviours in India. Caste has deep roots in the Indian society and constitutes an important determinant of voting behaviour particularly in rural India. The political parties in India always keep the caste factor in mind, while formulating their policies, programmes and election strategies. Caste plays an important role in the selection of candidates for contesting an election from a constituency. Votes are demanded in the name of caste. The role of caste as a determinant of voting behavior has been analysed by several scholars and they have come out with the conclusion, as Morris Jones writes, "Politics is more important to caste and caste is more important to politics than before."

1.3) Religion: India`s secularistic character, has not been successful in preventing the role of religion as determinant of political behavior in general and voting behavior in particular. Presence of many political parties and neo political groups are closely linked with particular religion, for example, Muslim League, Akali Dal, Hindu Maha Sabha, Shiv Sena and so on have been one of the reasons behind the continued role of religion as a determinant of voting behavior. The selection of candidates is done on the basis of a religious majority in a particular constituency.

1.4) Language: India is a multi-linguist state. The reorganization of states on basis of languages fully reflects the importance of language as a factor of politics in India. People have emotional attachment with their languages and easily get influenced whenever any political leaders addresses them in local language during mass rallies. Linguistic interests always influence voting behaviour.

1.5) Money Factor: India being a poor country has a large number of people living below poverty line. Money as such plays a vital role in determining voting behavior of the people in India. Despite of many electoral reforms the Election Commission has been unable to compel the political parties to keep its expenditures on campaigning within the legal limits.

1.6) Mass literacy: Mass literacy has been another determinate factor of voting behaviours in India. It is because of this weakness of the people that political parties, are in a position to exploit the sentiments of the people in the name of caste, religion, region and other such factor. The votes of the illiterate constitute a big proportion of the votes polled and hence it plays a big role in determining the outcomes of elections.

1.7) Election campaigns: Each political party launches a vigorous election campaign in the form of mass meetings, street meetings, personal contacts, posters, speeches by film stars, TV and Radio broadcasts, newspaper advertisement, hand bills, processions and propaganda to win votes. A party which is in a position to create an impression through its election campaign that it has a chance of winning the election.

## II) Key determinants shaping rural electoral choices in recent times

In India, rural areas still account for about 65% of the population, making rural voters an essential part of the electoral process. Historically, rural politics in India was largely shaped by agricultural concerns, land reforms, caste-based politics, and local issues. While these factors remain relevant, the influence of rural voters has evolved significantly in recent years. With the increasing importance of issues like rural employment, healthcare, education, infrastructure, and social welfare schemes, rural voters are more politically engaged than ever before. Some of the key issues influencing rural votes in recent times are-

### 2.1) Economic Challenges

Voting decisions are increasingly influenced by economic issues. Demonetization, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) reform, and the government's response to the COVID-19 outbreak resulted in a large loss of jobs, particularly for young people. The underfunding of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment

Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and the stagnation of actual wages made rural hardship even worse. Between 2019 and 2024, the Congress and its allies gained ground in rural areas as a result of these problems, which led to a drop in support for the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

## 2.2) Agrarian Issues

Agrarian issues, including low crop prices, high input costs, and insufficient minimum support prices (MSPs), had a major influence on rural voters. Farmer discontent was high because the government was unwilling to increase MSPs and instead opted to subsidize growing input costs. The 2024 elections were a reflection of this dissatisfaction, as the opposition parties used rural issues as a platform to promise improved MSPs, more subsidies, and extensive agricultural reforms.

## 2.3) Caste Dynamics and New Alliances

In Indian politics, caste is still a major role, particularly in rural areas. Nonetheless, there is a noticeable change in the way caste relations affect rural politics in the twenty-first century. Voting blocs based on caste have been less stable in recent years, and new, more goal-oriented political coalitions are forming.

Caste-based parties have been playing a predominant role in rural areas, especially in states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Tamil Nadu. But in recent times these parties have begun to unite in coalitions that cut over caste lines. This illustrates a more practical approach to politics, where social welfare, employment, and economic growth are prioritized over strict caste allegiance. For example, in states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, political parties have begun to form coalitions based on social justice and regional development with an increasing focus on uniting voters from various caste groups to create a broad-based support system.

In rural areas, caste-based politics is now being shaped by economic interests. Focus of the political parties is gradually shifting from social divisions to addressing issues of poverty, unemployment, and access to basic services like healthcare and education.

## 2.4) The Role of Technology and Social Media

One of the biggest shifts in the twenty-first century in Indian rural politics is the emergence of social media and technology. Even distant rural areas are becoming more connected to the digital world due to the rapid increase in mobile phone and internet penetration. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp are enabling the younger people in rural India in particular become more politically conscious.

Voters in remote areas now have a platform to express their concerns, call for responsibility, and participate in political discourse thanks to social media. Political leaders and parties are now adjusting their campaigns to interact with rural voters via these online channels after realizing the influence of social media in rural communities. Parties now use social media to engage voters with customized messaging and real-time updates in addition to more conventional campaigning techniques like rallies and door-to-door visits. Rural politics is becoming more involved and responsive as a result of this digital revolution, which is also changing how political campaigns are conducted.

As a result of technological advancements rural governance is now more transparent. Rural residents can now report problems like corruption or inefficiency, monitor the progress of social programs, and access government services online. A more dynamic political environment is being created as a result of rural politics becoming more knowledgeable and responsible.

**2.5) Policy Initiatives for Women Empowerment-**The participation of rural women in Self-Help Groups (SHGs) has empowered them both economically and politically. They now exercise their vote more independently, often favoring state/regional parties that delivers them local benefits like microloans, education.

Women's participation in the electoral process has seen a significant rise, driven by empowerment initiatives and targeted welfare schemes. Their voting decisions are also influenced by programs like the Ladki Behna Yojana in Madhya Pradesh and the Ladki Bahina Yojana in Maharashtra which provide financial aid to women. In Himachal Pradesh, these initiatives led to a historic milestone where more women voted than men for the first time in the state's Vidhan Sabha history.

### III) Conclusion

Voting behaviour in rural India is evolving. While traditional determinants like caste, community, local networks, and identity continue to exert influence, newer forces — economic reality, welfare delivery, local governance performance, information flows and young voters' aspirations — are reshaping the electoral politics of rural India. The result is a more dynamic, fluid rural electorate: one that may hold onto identity loyalties in some contexts, but in many others judges candidates and parties on immediate deliverables, governance record, and perceived capacity to address pressing issues. Parties, candidates, civil society must rethink engagement strategies. Effective outreach in rural India today requires credible delivery of welfare, infrastructure and services; transparent local governance; and a communication strategy that recognises the growing importance of media and information access.

### References-

- 1) Hazarika, Biraj.( 2015). Voting Behaviour in India and Its Determinants, IOSR Journal of Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS), Volume 20, Issue 10, Ver. IV (Oct. 2015), PP 22-25 e-ISSN: 2279-0837, p-ISSN: 2279-0845. [www.iosrjournals.org](http://www.iosrjournals.org).
- 2) Iyer, Akshay. (2024). 2024 Indian General Elections: Exploring Key Issues and the Evolving Political Landscape. LegalOnus Law Journal (LLJ), November 8, 2024, ISSN: 3048-8338 [www.legalonus.com](http://www.legalonus.com).
- 3) Lok Sabha Elections 2024: Rural vote fall cost Narendra Modi a decisive election win( 09<sup>th</sup> June 2024)<https://www.deccanherald.com/elections/india/lok-sabha-elections-2024-rural-vote-fall-cost-narendra-modi-a-decisive-election-win-3058834>.
- 4) Meena, Rathur & Niketan, Bhawani. (2018). Election and Voting Behaviour: Changing Dimension in India, Proceedings of SOCIOINT 2018- 5th International Conference on Education, Social Sciences and Humanities, 2-4 July 2018- Dubai, U.A.E. ISBN: 978-605-82433-3-0  
[https://www.ocerints.org/socioint18\\_e-publication/abstracts/papers/111.pdf](https://www.ocerints.org/socioint18_e-publication/abstracts/papers/111.pdf).
- 5) Mohanty, Aishwarya. (10<sup>th</sup> May 2024). I want to decide my vote for myself: how women are shaping India's political landscape. <https://www.theguardian.com>
- 6) Ramachandran, V.K. (2024). Elections 2024 and Rural India, Review of Agrarian Studies vol. 14, no. 1. <https://www.ras.org.in/> DOI: <https://doi.org/10.25003/RAS.14.01.0001>
- 7) Saini, Manish. (8<sup>th</sup> November,2024). Politechnicas Insights on Women Voters Shaping Indian Elections. [Outlook India](#)
- 8) Verma, Nishant.(May 6, 2025).Changing Dynamics of Indian Rural Politics in the 21st Century News Flash(Blog) <https://nishantverma.in/changing-dynamics-of-indian-rural-politics-in-the-21st-century/> ( Accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025)