

The background features a large, light grey watermark of the University of Jigjiga logo and name. The logo on the left consists of a stylized 'U' and 'J' intertwined. To the right, the text 'University of Jigjiga' is written in a large, sans-serif font, with 'THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY' in a smaller font below it.

**BLOCK 2**  
**DETERMINANTS OF VOTING**  
**BEHAVIOUR**

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## **BLOCK 2 INTRODUCTION**

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Election is a process which enables people to elect their representatives to the legislative bodies such as Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha or to the institutions of local governances. People belong to different social groups such as castes, classes, genders, tribes, ethnic or linguistic groups. The differences among them influence the voting behaviour in elections. This block discusses the determinants of voting behaviour of the electorates. The unit 4 deals with caste, class, gender and tribes, and unit 5 deals with ethnicity, religion, and language as determinants of voting behaviour.



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## UNIT 4 CASTE, CLASS, GENDER AND TRIBE\*

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### Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 What is Voting Behaviour?
- 4.3 Evolution of Studies of Voting Behaviour in India
- 4.4 Determinants of Voting Behaviour
  - 4.4.1 Caste
  - 4.4.2 Class
  - 4.4.3 Gender
  - 4.4.4 Tribes
- 4.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.6 References
- 4.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 4.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Define different determinants of voting behaviour;
- Underline the significance of voting behaviour in democracy
- Discuss how caste and class have been prominent in determining the voting behaviour;
- Explain the role of Gender and Tribe as determinants of voting behaviour.

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### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous units, you have read about political parties and party systems. Political parties are principal institutions through which people get representatives elected to run government. As politics has several dimensions ranging from institutions to elections, different scholars study elections through different ways. The most common way has been to conduct surveys to study the determinants of electoral behaviour. Indeed, elections studies form a significant aspect of studying democracy. People elect their representatives in elections by exercising their choice in favour of a candidate who may belong to a party or who may contest election without being members of a party or without the support of a party. Such candidates are known as independents. In cases where several candidates contest elections, the voters are expected to vote only one of them. There are several factors which determine the voting behaviour of voters in favour or against a candidate. Several factors determine voting behaviour in India such as caste, class, tribes, gender, religion, language and ethnicity. In this unit you will read about first four of them. And you will read about ethnicity, religion and language in unit 5.

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\* Dr. Divya Rani, Consultant, Faculty of Political Science, SOSS, IGNOU, New Delhi

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## 4.2 WHAT IS VOTING BEHAVIOUR?

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Voting behaviour defines the pattern of casting vote or the factors that influence people in casting vote. Its study explains what factors determine or influence voter's choice of voting. Study of voting behaviour does not confine to the observation of voting statistics, record and electoral data (shifts). It also covers psychological aspects such as voters' perception, emotion, etc. and their relation to political action and institutional patterns.

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## 4.3 EVOLUTION OF STUDIES OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN INDIA

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Study of voting behaviour forms a part of election studies. The subject to study elections is known as psephology. Its purpose is to analyse questions about the behaviour of voters during the elections. What is it that determines voting behaviour? Why do voters vote a candidate or prefer a party in the elections? Is it the economic factor such as employment, inflation, removal of poverty or non-economic factors? Is it quality of leader – strong, charismatic, etc? These are some of the questions which have been addressed in studies about the determinants of voting behaviour. In India, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, media houses and political parties have been involved in election studies. During post-Independence India, election studies started in the 1950s since the first general election of 1951-52. But systematic studies of elections began in the 1960s, with the initiative of Rajni Kothari, a scholar in the Centre for the Studies of Developing Societies (CSDS), New Delhi, and Myron Wiener, an American political scientist, who specialised in Indian politics. In the 1980s, Pranoy Roy, Davit Butler and Ashok Lahiri's book *A Compendium of Indian Elections*, gave a new momentum to election studies. But it was since the 1990s that election studies have become a regular feature of studies on electoral politics. The principal reason for this has been the increasing frequency of elections for state assemblies or Lok Sabha. The initiative to start election studies in India in the 1990s was again taken by a team of the scholar led by Yogendra Yadav from the CSDS. The team conduct the election studies under the banner of an organisation known as *Lokniti*. As members of the CSDS team, scholars from various universities in the country conducted election studies. The methods of doing the election studies mainly include surveys. These surveys are known as National Election Survey (NES). The scholars conduct survey before and after election to ascertain various aspects relating to elections. And the determinants of voting behaviour form an important aspect of NES studies. The findings of these studies have been published in several articles in academic journals, books and print media. Apart from the CSDS, several scholars and media groups, political parties engage in studying determinants of electoral behaviour.

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## 4.4 DETERMINANTS OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR

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There are various determinants of voting behaviour such as religion, caste, class, community, ethnicity, language, ideology, political wave etc. The political parties use these determinants to attract voters for winning the election. These determinants are used by all the representative of political parties to woo voters

irrespective of the inclination and ideologies. Voters also cast their votes because of these determinants. The following section will discuss Caste, Class, Gender and Tribe as variants of voting behaviour in India.

#### 4.4.1 Caste

Caste is among the most researched determinant in studies of voting behaviour. Although caste has been one of the most effective determinants of voting behaviour in elections in the post-Independent India, it has become more spectacular since the 1990s. The main reason for this has been the impact of Mandal Commission which was introduced by the VP Singh government giving reservation to the OBCs in the central government institution and rise of the parties such as the BSP, the SP and the RJD in north India. These parties have been identified with Dalits, OBCs or the peasant classes. Prior to their rise, the Congress party represented a coalition of various castes. Emergence of these parties underlined the significance of the marginalized castes playing decisive role in electoral politics. Their rise also increased competition among different castes. In election studies in India, caste has become parameter of assessing the level of democracy in India. Some scholars have argued that increasing participation of various castes, especially the low castes, Dalits and OBCs are indicative of democratic upsurge or a silent revolution in India. Politicisation of caste has made caste an agent of democratic aspiration for the weaker sections. Political parties take caste into consideration while formulating their manifestos, programmes and agendas. Caste also impacts in policy making. Parties consider the caste of candidate while nominating him/her to contest election. The candidates contesting elections in constituency generally belong to a limited number of castes, but the number of castes which vote are more than the number of castes of such candidates. In such cases, castes vote for candidates of other castes than theirs. Does it mean that significance of caste as a determinant gets diminished? It does not mean so because even in this case, voters vote for candidates of other castes. Generally, caste group decide to vote for a candidate who does not belong to their caste. In comparison to the urban areas, caste is more determining factor in elections in the rural areas. The caste factor not only affects the party formation but also the affiliation of particular caste with the national party. As Pushpendra mentions in an article, during 11<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha election (1996) the upper caste particularly in northern India deserted Congress party and chose to rally behind BJP. The rise of regional parties and backward castes, despite inter and intra-caste divisions and conflicts have found strong political representation in the form of different regional parties and vote support base. The parties which are identified with specific castes maintain their support base among the principal castes; for instance, the SP, JD (U), RJD are generally identified with the OBCs, the BSP with the Dalits or the BJP with the high castes. But on several occasions, a section of such castes support other parties than their usual choice. This happens because sometimes some sections of the castes get dissatisfied with their usual choice. For instance, in UP, in the 1990s, many OBCs had supported the BJP prompting some scholar to state that it was “mandalisation” of the BJP. Or in the first decade of this century, several high castes – Brahmins and Rajputs, supported the BSP and the SP. According to Shah, parties accommodate various castes in distributing party tickets. In elections during the 1950s, caste associations were able to maintain their unity and promoted their supporters to vote for their caste

fellows, irrespective of their party affiliation. Despite the trend among caste members to vote for a particular party, there is never *en bloc* caste voting. Despite adoption of democratic values which conceive of a society free from casteism, caste continues to characterise politics in India and voting factors of populace.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 1**

- Note:** i) Use the space below for your answer.  
ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) What is voting behaviour? What are the different variants of voting behaviour?

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2) Caste has been an important factor in determining voting pattern. Do you agree with this statement?

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**4.4.2 Class**

Class is reflected in economic issues such as employment or employment allowance, price rise, land reforms, subsidies, removal of poverty (*garibi hatao*), loan waiver, etc. These issues have been the focus of campaign in several elections. Indeed, it was slogan of *garibi hatao* given by the Congress in the 1971 Lok Sabha elections in which the party won handsomely. It is generally acknowledged that this slogan was the main factor that determined the voting behaviour in favour of the Congress. The class-based issues were among the principal issues of political mobilization in elections during the 1950s-1960s. Land reforms and welfare schemes of the Congress were among other issues that won the Congress support of voters in the elections during the 1950s-1960s. In West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura economic policies of the left parties determined voters' behaviour in of these parties in several elections. In the 1960s, socialist parties along with other opposition parties had mobilized people on economic issues. This resulted in the defeat of the Congress in eight states in 1967 elections and formation of the non-Congress governments. During the 1970s, the parties such as Bharatiya Kranti Dal, Bharatiya Lok Dal or Lok Dal founded led by Charan Singh in north India, especially in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar articulated the class issues of the rich and middle farmers. These farmers mostly belonged to middle castes such

as Jats, Yadav, Kurmis. Thus, these parties represented farming communities both as castes and classes. Their voting behaviour in support of the Charan Singh-led parties was determined both by class and caste factors at the same time. However, as you have read above, many regional parties are based on caste and have voter support of that particular caste. They do not give priority to class. In cities such as Delhi, class-related issues such as concessions in electricity and water bills have determined electorates behaviour in favour of AamAdami Party in 2020 assembly election. In 1998 assembly election the voters voted against the BJP because of lack availability of onions and hike in their price.

#### 4.4.3 Gender

Though Gender is a broader concept, when we discuss gender in relation to voting behaviour it is mainly refers to women's role in voting. Since the 1990s, the participation in voting in elections of the marginalized sections or plebeians, including women, has increased. Voting is a device which enable women's empowerment in terms of making choice of their representatives. The significance of women's role in voting is highlighted by the fact that many regional parties include issues concerning women in their agenda. These issues range from domestic economy, sexual violence, dignity to reservation for women in legislatures and social oppression. However, there are differences among political parties on reservation for women in legislatures. Several parties have included issues about women's welfare in their manifestos and programmes. For example, in 2015 assembly election in Bihar, Nitish Kumar launched anti-liquor policy for welfare for women, especially for those belonging to the marginalised and backward classes. Nitish Kumar regime's Cycle Yojna which enabled girl student to travel to schools influenced voting behaviour of several voters in an assembly election in Bihar. Modi government policies such as *BetiPadhaoBetiBachao* and *Jan DhanYojna* determined women's voting behaviour in several elections held in India since 2014. Rainuka Dagar's study (2015) on 2014 Lok Sabha elections shows the gender became a point of reference across three broad issues, i.e, governance, development, and secularism which formed part of the campaign. Women issues were lobbied across all three fronts as a point of reference. Women's safety, inclusive growth model and economic, social and physical security were the essence of the broad issues. Indeed, this election saw the increase in number of women's participation. These issues determined the voting behaviour to a considerable extent. Even though other factors such as caste, class, religion and language impact the choice, women are becoming more aware of their rights and welfare schemes. It is important to understand that though the women's participation in political activities is increasing, there are few women leaders in political power than the men. Women are more active and assertive in present times irrespective of their education, class or caste. The best example of this assertiveness can be seen in local governance where women are participating in a huge number.

#### 4.4.4 Tribes

Tribes are different from castes or classes. While castes denote the positions of persons in social hierarchy among Hindus, Muslims or Sikhs, tribes can be identified by some other characteristics. Most important among these characteristics are their closeness to nature, dependence of economy on forests,

**Determinants of Voting Behaviour**

minerals and other natural resources, relative social equality among the members of a tribe, relative freedom of women in comparison to non-tribals. Tribes belong to different religions such as Islam, Christianity, Buddhism or animism. There are special provisions in the Constitution of India - fifth and sixth schedule in Indian Constitution for the governance of tribal-dominated areas. These provisions are meant to protect tribal identities, culture, customs and economic interests. Many regions of India are inhabited by various tribes such as states in northeast India – Assam, Meghalaya, Arunchal Pradesh, Tripura, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Sikkim, and in other regions Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, etc. Tribes often complain that they have become “internal colonies” of the outsiders who exploit their economy and culture. On several occasions, this has resulted in ethnic violence. Political parties, students’ organisations and other civil society organisations mobilize tribes on these issues. During every election the political parties, especially regional parties espousing the cause of the tribal community, campaign on the issues related to tribes’ cultural identities, economy and political autonomy. Specifically, the most common determinants of voting behaviour of tribes are protection of their cultural identity, sustenance and protection of natural resources such as forest, minerals and other natural resources, the influx of outsiders which often leads to erosion of their cultural identity and exploitation of resource, regional development, political autonomy ensured through the V and VI Schedules. These issues generally work as the determinant of tribes’ voting behaviour.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 2**

**Note:** i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) Is Gender becoming a major concern for political parties for winning election? Answer this question with an example?

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2) What are the important factors that impact voting behaviour of tribes?

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## 4.5 LET US SUM UP

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Election is an important process of any democratic country. This is true about India also. Since 1951-52, several elections have been held India both at national and state levels. As people belong to different castes, religions, languages, genders, they cannot remain unaffected by these factors. In elections also these factors act determinants of voting behaviour. But these factors become more effective when they are linked with the economic and other needs of people. Several elections studies in Indian have shown how multiple factors work as determinants of voting behaviour.

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## 4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Voting behaviour defines the pattern of casting vote or the factors that influence people in casting vote. It is not only about the observation of voting statistics, record and electoral data (shifts) but also about psychological factors such as perception, emotion etc. Caste, Class, Gender, Tribes, Language, and Religion are important determinants of voting behaviour in India.
- 2) Caste has been an important factor in determining voting pattern in India. Since the first General election, caste has been playing a significant role in influencing voters. Regional parties, especially in north India have support base among castes. In many assembly elections political leadership derives its support from the related castes

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) In contemporary Indian politics, gender is becoming a major concern and women votes are principal determinants of election results. In assembly elections, Nitish kumar, Chief Minister of Bihar, won previous election by introducing many welfare policies for women in state.
- 2) Preservation of forest, natural resources, and protection of tribal culture, tradition and identity are principal determinants of voting behaviour of tribes.  
voting pattern

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## UNIT 5 ETHNICITY, RELIGION AND LANGUAGE\*

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### Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Determinants of Voting Behavior
  - 5.2.1 Ethnicity
  - 5.2.2 Religion
    - (a) The Role of Social Media
  - 5.2.3 Language
- 5.3 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.4 References
- 5.5 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

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### 5.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the role of ethnicity in determining voting behaviour
- Define the importance of religion in electoral politics
- Explain the politics of language in electoral politics

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous unit, you have studied the meaning of voting behaviour and evolution of the way to study voting behavior. You have also studied some important factors that determine voting behaviour such as caste, class, gender and tribe. There is no uniformity in voting behaviour or a common pattern in India. In this unit, you read about ethnicity, language and religion as the determinants of voting behaviour. You will also read how media contributes to the increase in role of religion and encourage populism as a determinant of voting behaviour.

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### 5.2 DETERMINANTS OF VOTING BEHAVIOUR

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In this section you will read the role of ethnicity, religion, and language in determining voting behaviour in India.

#### 5.2.1 Ethnicity

What is ethnicity? In literature, ethnicity is used in two ways: One, as an identity formed on the basis of multiple markers such as caste, tribe, religion, language, culture, etc.; and two, as an identity formed on the basis of a single marker. You have read about the role of single markers such as caste, class, gender and tribe in unit 4. And you will read in this unit about the role of single markers such as

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\* Dr. Divya Rani, Consultant, Faculty of Political Science, SOSS, IGNOU, New Delhi

religion and language as well as about ethnicity based on multiple markers in determining voting behaviour. Ethnicity is not only visible in voting pattern but also in the formation of political parties. According to Chandra (2000), the Bahujan Samaj Party in north India is an ethnic party. Formation of Bahujan Samaj Party was an outcome of ethnic movement where Dalit and marginalized sections were the main supporters of the movement. They became a strong vote base after the formation of party. Chandra defines ethnic party as one that overtly represents itself as a champion of the cause of an ethnic group. She explains how the BSP as an ethnic party thrives on the support of Dalits as an ethnic group to the exclusion of other ethnic groups. The central aim of BSP as an ethnic party, according to Chandra, is to give effective representation to Dalits as an ethnic group. An ethnic party has three key features: i) it mobilizes group defined on the basis of ascriptive characteristics, i.e., caste; ii) it resorts to mobilizing ethnic 'insider' groups by excluding ethnic 'outsiders'; iii) and, it champions the cause of an ethnic group. About the internal organizational structure of ethnic parties Chandra argues that parties with centralized rule of intra-party advancement find it difficult to accommodate new ethnic groups, whereas parties with competitive rules are better able to do so. The assumption here is that the 'success of political parties in attracting the support of voters from any ethnic group or caste depends directly upon their ability to incorporate office-seeking elites from that category.

The most suitable example of ethnicity on the bases of multiple factors that determine voting behaviour can be found in northeast India and other tribe-inhabited parts of India. Northeast Indian states present most important examples of ethnicity based electoral politics and voting behaviour. In these areas there are broadly two types of ethnic groups: one, those who have been residing from time immemorial; and two, those who migrated to these areas over period of time for various reasons – for employment, trade or cultivation. The bases of formation of identities are – culture (language, dress, food, folklores, etc.), history, economy, real or perceived sense of discrimination and exploitation. Different ethnic groups are formed on the bases of differences in these markers. During political competition or political conflict, these markers become symbols of political mobilization. In concrete terms, ethnic markers are expressed through indicators such as migration, citizenship, protection of identities and culture and protection of land. Mobilization on these issues takes place not for demanding regional autonomy, self-determination, protection of economic and cultural rights, but also during the elections these issues either singly or jointly determine voting behaviour to considerable extent. Victory of regional parties which derive support from different ethnic groups in these areas is indication of the fact the ethnicity formed on multiple markers works as determinant of voting behaviour.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 1**

- Note:** i) Use the space below for your answer.  
ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) Write a note on the role of ethnicity in determining voting behaviour.  
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## 5.2.2 Religion

India is a secular nation that guarantees the right to freedom of religion to everyone and treats all religions equally. To appeal in the name of religion to get political support is legally prohibited in India. Since religion forms an important part of peoples' lives, in practice separating religion from politics becomes impossible. Religion not only affects political behaviour of people, but also religious symbols are used by political parties and leaders to muster political support. Importance of relationship between religion and politics has been underlined by some political scientists. Shakir (2019) argues that religion is more pervasive in India than in the west. Bhambhri and Verma (1972) argue that religion and politics interact in a developing society in more than one way. There are political parties that represent interests of various religious communities. And religious considerations, also play an important role in political mobilization and sometimes impacts government's decision-making process. In India, different political parties have mobilized people on religious symbols to get political support. Parties also often select candidates to contest elections on consideration of religious identities. And people often vote in elections on religious considerations. Thus, religion works as a determinant in voting behaviour in India. There are few political parties in India that use religious symbols for political mobilization; for example the BJP, the Shiv Sena, Shiromani Akali Dal, and MIM (Majlis Itehdul Muslimeen).

Political parties, leaders and organizations mix religious issues with non-religious issues of people. Mobilization by them shapes the role of religion as a determinant of voting behaviour. But mobilization on religious lines alone does not always get translated into electoral behaviour in mechanical way. Such mobilization becomes effective when religious demands of a community get mixed up with non-religious issues – economic needs, governance issues, removal of corruption, cultural issues, etc., and become common issues of a religious community. The electorates feel that a party or candidate of their choice in elections, not only will protect their religion but also economic and cultural interests and provide better governance. In religious mobilization, a religious community is seen to be suffering due to favour given to another community. In competitive politics the former and the latter become rivals. In a situation marked by religious polarization, different religious communities tend to vote for rival political leaders or parties.

In India, religion became a regular determinant of voting behaviour since the 1980s. Prior to this, it had become effective in the 1960s. It was also a time when country faced economic crisis which was reflected in draught, food crisis and general resentment against the Congress. Apart from the mobilization by the VHP and Jana Sangha on ban on cow slaughter, the non-Congress parties – the socialists, the communists also mobilized people on draught and food crisis. This was reflected in victory of the non-Congress parties and defeat of the Congress in several states in 1967 and 1969 assembly elections. In Jana Sangh's victory, religion was an important determinant of voting behaviour. However, religion was not the only factor: it operated along with economic issues. In elections which took place before 1967, religion played minor role in determining voting behaviour. It was an era of Congress dominance during which issues such as nation-building, legacy of national movement, caste, and caste-based patronage were main determinants.

In the wake of the Janata Party (1977-1980) government at the centre, the Congress after getting new nomenclature as the Congress (I) in 1980 sought to use religious symbols to get political gains. It devised new strategy after losing support of people, especially Muslims' to the Janata Party in 1977 Lok Sabha election because of excesses done during emergency. The Congress also suffered set back in 1985-86 by-elections. It sought to strengthen its position by attempting to strike a balance between Hindus and Muslims. In order to get Hindus' support, the Congress allowed the VHP to lay foundation stone (*Shilanyas*) of the proposed site of Ram Temple at Ayodhya. It was a response to the main demand of the VHP to remove the lock from Babri Masjid as a move to construct Ram Temple in the place of the mosque. Assassination of Indira Gandhi led to temporary suspension of the movement. The Congress government also unlocked the temple in February 1986 for *darshan* of Ram Temple. The gates were opened by court order. For getting Muslims' support the Congress government introduced the Muslim Women's (Protection of Rights and Divorce Bill) in 1985. The purpose of the bill was to neutralize the impact of Shah Bano case. The Shah Banu case was about the verdict of Supreme Court relating to a Muslim woman named Shah Bano. Shah Bano approached the Supreme Court against the decision of her husband who had divorced her. The Supreme Court gave ruling in 1985 in her favour stating that she should be paid for maintenance. Wary of losing support among Muslims, the Congress government introduced the bill denying the divorced women benefits given by the court order. This incensed a vocal section of Muslim community which pressured the government to pass a legislation denying the Muslim women benefits which were granted by the court. The decision of the government annoyed feminists and other democratic sections of the society. It also provided an issue to the BJP to attack the Congress for appeasing the minorities. It was viewed an attempt of the Congress to garner Muslim support in elections. At the same time, to get Hindus' support, Rajiv Gandhi got opened the lock of temple at Ayodhya. This led to competitive politics between the Congress and the BJP to mobilize communities in the name of religion. Since then, the BJP has grown from a two-MP party in 1984 Lok Sabha election to a party with absolute majority of 303 in the 2019 Lok Sabha election. It has also formed governments in several states on its own or with its allies. The growth of the BJP over three decades is an indication of religion becoming an important determinant in electoral behaviour. But, as mentioned earlier, religion does not operate alone. It becomes effective when religious issues of community get linked to its other issues in political mobilization. There is no single factor that caused spectacular victory of the BJP: apart from governance, basic needs, campaign style, leadership patterns, lack of credible, promise to provide jobs, bring back black money, ideology/nationalism, etc. also mattered. In order to get support of religious communities, political parties explain these issues in terms of religious communities, predominantly, BJP of Hindus and some opposition of non-Hindus.

### **Regional Variations**

Election studies show that patterns of mobilization on religious symbols have regional variations. This variation in turn is reflected in religion as a determinant of voting behaviour. But, as mentioned earlier, religious symbols become effective when they get linked with economic or cultural problems of respective religious communities. Some instances of regional variations of effectiveness of religious symbols in elections are given here. The impact of symbol of Hindu religion in

electoral politics is more effective in north and west India, and in Karnataka in south India. In Hosangabad, Nizamabad and Mahbub Nagar districts of Telengana, a large number of Muslims tend to vote for the candidates of MIM (Majlis Ihteedul Muslimeen) party while the Hindus prefer to support its rival parties. In Punjab, religious symbols of Sikhism play a determining role in politics. Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) addresses religious, cultural, and economic issues, especially farmers' issues, and federalism such as water disputes with neighboring states or getting Chandigarh as state capital of Punjab. Its support base predominantly lies in Sikhs community within rural areas of Punjab. While symbols associated with Sikhism have been a determinant factor mostly in the villages, religious symbols associated with Hindus have been more effective in urban areas of Punjab. Two political parties with support base in two different religions – Siromoni Akali Dal (SAD) predominantly among Sikhs in the villages and the BJP predominantly among Hindus in the cities have been enduring allies in Indian politics. In Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena mobilizes support on issues and symbols associated with Marathi and Hindu identities underlying the significance of religion as a determinant of voting behaviour along with the regional identity.

**a) The role social media**

The social media plays a crucial role in mobilizing masses for electoral politics. It not only encourages religion-based mobilization but also populism. In contemporary electoral politics, it has been used as a tool to attract or manipulate populace's perceptions towards party and party leaders. During 2014 and 2019 General elections, social media has played a significant role in campaigning of political parties and leaders and has also impacted voting behaviour of people. Usage of smart phone and internet has provided a new platform for political parties to reach out to masses. The advantage of this medium is that it is accessible without any constraint of region, ethnicity or religion. The important user of social media is youth and its target is to mobilize young middle-class voters as young middle-class voters are not follower of traditional factors of voting pattern. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube have made this new method of communication accessible to different sections of the society, and has given opportunity to political leaders to popularize their ideology and mobilize public opinion. As Shah (2015) mentions Modi launched digital India 272 plus mission in 2014, referring to the number of seats he needed for a majority in Parliament. In election campaign, the BJP used this medium to connect and spread Modi's messages like 'corruption free India', 'development' and efficient management.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 2**

**Note:** i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) Although India is a secular county, religion still plays an important role in determing voting behaviour. Comment on this statement.

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### 5.2.3 Language

There are many languages in India and every region can be identified with specific language and dialects. Language constitutes an important aspect of politics in India. It has been basis of formation of regional identity, politics of reorganization of states and identity conflicts in different parts of India. Language also works as determinant of voting behaviour. But generally, language alone does not determine voting behaviour. It does so in alliance with other factors: when language is seen as the basis of favour or discrimination of communities, regions or ethnic groups. In comparison to other factors such as caste, religion, it becomes more effective in electoral politics in certain situations. Language has been most effective determinant in Tamil Nadu reflected in agitation against what was seen as imposition of Hindi; in the northeast, especially in the 1960s – there was conflict on Assamese and Bengali languages. This led to demand for creation of separate state resulting in creation of Meghalaya in 1972. After Assam Accord, Bodo language became an important determinant in politics of Bodo-dominated areas.

In UP, language often becomes part of politics based on religions, Hindi becomes symbol of Hindu identity and Urdu of Muslim identity. The demand for recognition of Urdu evokes opposition from some Hindus. In the 1950s-1960s the Hindi-Urdu dichotomy was basis of communal dispute. There has been dispute on language, Urdu being second official language in the state (UP). From the 1950s, the Congress government and other parties (socialists, communists, Jana Sangha) in UP had been opposed to making Urdu as second official language but sought to promote Hindi. The socialist launched movement in UP and Bihar for making Hindi compulsory and removal of English as an official language in the 1960s. In 1953, the state government made Hindi as sole medium for answering in High School Examinations from 1953 onwards. State government suspended aid to Urdu-medium schools. But Nehru demanded parity between Urdu and Hindi. From 1961-1971, official patronage was given to Hindi in UP. The third official language of UP was Sanskrit, not Urdu, the other two being Hindi and English. The demand was raised by Urdu speakers in the 1970s to give importance to Urdu: the central government appointed Gujral Committee to address problem faced by Urdu speakers. The Committee recommended three-language formula to give more space to Urdu: Indira Gandhi feared backlash in UP, and the Janata Party considered it appeasement of Muslims. This resulted in shelving of making Urdu as a third official language. In the phase of Congress's rise after emergency in 1980, it sought to strike a balance between Hindus and Muslims. In UP, the Congress manifesto promised to make Urdu as second official language in the state: it met with opposition from BJP, Lok Dal and some Congress members. However, some allowances were made in favour of Urdu. Urdu granted status of second language in 1982 but not official language. Muslim legislators lobbied with the government to push through legislation. In 1984, the government promulgated a legislation to make Urdu second official language in 1984 in the state: it was struck down by the court. In 1989, N.D Tiwari passed legislation making Urdu second official language – provoking communal riot in Badaun. The Ordinance was finally implemented in 1994 by Mulayam Singh government. Urdu was given second official language status. Bihar government presented opposite picture: in 1989, it supported Urdu through official notification (For details, Hasan 1998: pp. 176-89).



### Check Your Progress Exercise 3

**Note:** i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with the model answer given at the end of this unit.

1) In which states language has been an important factor of voting pattern in India?

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### 5.3 LET US SUM UP

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There are various factors that determine voting pattern in India. There are single and multiple markers that determine the behaviour of electoral politics i.e. religion, language, ethnicity, caste, class and gender. All the variables are interlinked and there is no uniformity in the dominance of these factors. Ethnicity or multiple markers jointly, has dominance in North East politics. Scholar such as Kanchan Chandra considers the BSP as an ethnic party and underlines the role of ethnicity in electoral support to this party. Religion is another factor that plays a major role in electoral politics and in influencing the voting pattern. There are many political parties and leaders who garner their vote in the name of religion. On some occasions, language also played decisive role in politics in several states impacting voting behaviour in many states especially in , UP, Assam Tamil Nadu. In the past some years, social media, has become decisive in determining voting behaviour, especially with reference to religion.

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## 5.5 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) Ethnicity is used in two ways: One, as an identity formed on the basis of multiple markers such as caste, tribe, religion, language, culture, etc.; and two, as an identity formed on the basis of a single marker. Ethnicity is not only visible in voting pattern but also in the formation of political parties. The most suitable example of ethnicity formed on the bases of multiple factors that determine voting behaviour can be found in northeast India and other tribe-inhabited parts of India. Northeast Indian states present most important examples of ethnicity based electoral politics and voting behaviour. Different ethnic groups are formed on the bases of differences in these markers (culture, history, economy and perceived sense of discrimination and exploitation). During political competition or political conflict, these markers become symbols of political mobilization.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 2

- 1) Religion is an important factor that determines voting pattern in India. Religion forms an important part of peoples' lives because in practice separating religion from politics is generally impossible. Religion not only affects political behaviour of people, but religious symbols also are used by political parties and leaders to muster political support. There are some religious political parties in India such as the BJP, the Shiv Sena, Shiromani Akali Dal, and MIM (Majlis Ihtedul Muslimeen) that use religious symbols in political mobilization. However, religious symbols become effective when they are linked with non-religious issues. In India, religion became a regular determinant of voting behaviour since the 1980s. After Janata Party (1977-1980), the Congress (I) in 1980 sought to use religious symbols to get political gains. It devised new strategy after losing support of people,

especially Muslims to the Janata Party in 1977 Lok Sabha election because of excesses done during emergency. In Punjab, religious symbols of Sikhism play a determinant role in politics of Punjab. Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) addresses the religious, cultural, and economic issues, especially farmers' issues, and federalism such as water disputes with neighboring states or getting Chandigarh as state capital of Punjab.

### Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- 1) Language constitutes an important aspect of politics in India. It has been basis of formation of regional identity, politics of reorganization of states and identity conflicts in different parts of India. Language also works as determinant of voting behaviour. But generally, language alone does not determine voting behaviour. It does so in alliance with other factors: when language is seen as the basis of favour or discrimination of communities, regions or ethnic groups. In comparison to other factors such as caste, religion, it becomes more effective in electoral politics in certain situations. Language has been most effective determinant in Tamil Nadu reflected in agitation against what was seen as imposition of Hindi; in the northeast, especially in the 1960s – there was conflict on Assamese and Bengali languages. In UP, language often becomes part of politics based on religions, Hindi becomes symbol of Hindu identity and Urdu of Muslim identity.

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