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“Changing Political Behaviour in India Since 2014”

Khushi Bidhuri

UG Scholar,
Amity Institute of Social Sciences,
Amity University,
Noida (Uttar Pradesh, India)

E-mail: Khushibidhuri670@gmail.com

Jyotika Tekchandani

Assistant Professor,
Amity Institute of Social Sciences,
Amity University,
Noida (Uttar Pradesh, India)

E-mail: jtekchandani@amity.edu

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ABSTRACT:

Since 2014, India has witnessed notable shifts in its political landscape, reshaping both governance and public engagement. The ascent of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) under Prime Minister Narendra Modi marked a departure from traditional politics, characterized by a blend of populist rhetoric, nationalist fervour, and technocratic governance. Modi's adept use of social platforms like Twitter and Facebook has bolstered his personal brand and enabled him to bypass traditional media channels. However, the period since 2014 has also seen challenges to democratic norms, including concerns over freedom of expression, press freedom, and dissent. Instances of censorship, online harassment, and attacks on journalists have raised questions about the state of democracy and civil liberties in India. Overall, the post-2014 era has witnessed a complex interplay of political, economic, and social forces, reshaped the country's democratic fabric, and influenced its trajectory on the global stage.

KEYWORDS: *Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), technocratic governance, freedom of expression, censorship, global stage.*

1.0 ELECTIONS IN INDIA:

Elections in India represent a vibrant celebration of democracy, embodying the collective voice and aspirations of its diverse populace. This essay provides an in-depth exploration of the electoral process in India, encompassing its historical evolution, constitutional framework, electoral system, major players, campaign dynamics, and the significance of elections in shaping the country's political landscape.

India's electoral journey traces its roots to the colonial era, with the introduction of limited franchise under British rule. The struggle for independence galvanized efforts to expand voting rights, culminating in universal adult suffrage upon India's independence in 1947. Since then, India

has conducted regular elections at the national, state, and local levels, solidifying its status as the world's largest democracy.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE:

1. To analyse the impact of religion on political engagement and voting patterns.
2. To explore the relationship between identity politics, including caste, religion, and ethnicity, and voting behaviour.
3. To assess the impact of leadership styles and rhetoric on political mobilization and support.
4. To assess the trends in elections since 2014

CONSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK:

The Constitution of India provides the legal framework for conducting elections, outlining the powers and responsibilities of the Election Commission of India (ECI), an autonomous constitutional body responsible for overseeing the electoral process. Key provisions include the establishment of a federal parliamentary system, proportional representation in the Lok Sabha (House of the People), and the representation of states in the Rajya Sabha (Council of States).

Election campaigns in India are characterized by intense competition, massive rallies, vibrant street processions, and extensive media coverage. Political parties deploy a range of strategies to mobilize voters, including door-to-door canvassing, public meetings, advertising, and social media outreach. Campaigns often focus on key issues such as economic development, social welfare, national security, and identity politics, seeking to resonate with diverse voter constituencies.

The voting process in India is conducted over multiple phases to accommodate the vast electorate and ensure free and fair elections. Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) are used to facilitate efficient and transparent voting, with voters casting their ballots at polling stations under the supervision of election officials. Special provisions are made to accommodate marginalized groups, including women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities, to ensure their participation in the electoral process.

Elections in India are more than just a mechanism for selecting representatives; they are a manifestation of democratic ideals and values. Elections provide citizens with the opportunity to exercise their fundamental right to vote, hold elected representatives accountable, and participate in the governance process. They serve as a barometer of public opinion, reflecting societal trends, aspirations, and grievances, and shaping the course of national and state policies. In conclusion, elections in India represent a kaleidoscope of democracy, reflecting the country's rich diversity, vibrant political culture, and commitment to democratic principles. As India continues to evolve and confront new challenges, elections will remain a cornerstone of its democratic fabric, empowering citizens to shape the nation's destiny through their votes and ensuring the vitality of its democratic institutions.

CURRENT TRENDS IN INDIAN ELECTIONS:

Current trends in Indian elections reflect a dynamic and evolving political landscape, shaped by a multitude of factors including changing voter demographics, emerging technologies, and evolving campaign strategies. Some of the prominent trends in Indian elections include:

1. **Social media and Digital Campaigning:** With the proliferation of smartphones and internet connectivity, social media platforms have become indispensable tools for political parties to reach voters directly. Parties utilize social media for targeted messaging, voter engagement, and real-time feedback. Digital campaigning has emerged as a key component of electoral strategies, particularly in urban and youth-centric constituencies.

2. **Regional Political Dynamics:** Regional parties continue to wield significant influence in Indian elections, especially in states where they hold strong support bases. Regional political dynamics play a crucial role in shaping electoral outcomes, as parties form alliances, negotiate seat-sharing agreements, and target specific regional issues to appeal to voters.

3. **Youth Mobilization and Participation:** India's youthful demographic profile has led to increased political mobilization among the youth. Young voters are actively engaged in political activism, advocacy, and electoral campaigns. Political parties are increasingly focusing on youth-centric policies and outreach strategies to harness this demographic dividend.

4. **Identity Politics:** Identity-based mobilization, including caste, religion, and regional identities, remains a prominent feature of Indian elections. Political parties often appeal to specific identity groups to consolidate their support base and win elections. Identity politics influences voting patterns, electoral alliances, and policy priorities.

5. **Economic Issues and Governance:** Economic policies, job creation, and governance remain key electoral issues in India. Voters evaluate political parties and leaders based on their economic performance, welfare schemes, and development initiatives. Parties are increasingly emphasizing economic growth, infrastructure development, and social welfare programs in their election campaigns.

4.0 IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP STYLES:

Leadership styles play a crucial role in shaping electoral outcomes in India, influencing voter perceptions, mobilization strategies, and campaign dynamics. Different leadership styles can evoke varying responses from the electorate, ultimately impacting the success or failure of political parties in elections. Charismatic leadership, exemplified by leaders like Narendra Modi, has been particularly influential in Indian elections. Charismatic leaders possess strong communication skills, a compelling vision, and an ability to connect with voters on an emotional level. They inspire loyalty and enthusiasm among supporters, mobilizing them to actively participate in electoral campaigns. Modi's charismatic leadership during the 2014 and 2019 general elections played a pivotal role in

galvanizing public support for the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), contributing to the party's electoral victories. Similarly, transformational leadership, which focuses on inspiring and empowering followers to achieve common goals, can have a significant impact on electoral outcomes. Transformational leaders articulate a compelling vision for the future, instill confidence and optimism, and mobilize support through inclusive and participatory decision-making processes. Their ability to inspire trust and confidence can sway undecided voters and broaden the party's appeal across diverse demographic groups. In contrast, autocratic or authoritarian leadership styles may polarize the electorate and alienate potential supporters. Leaders perceived as dictatorial or unresponsive to public concerns risk facing backlash from voters, undermining the party's electoral prospects. Leadership styles that prioritize inclusivity, transparency, and responsiveness to public needs are more likely to resonate with voters and enhance a party's electoral prospects in India's diverse and dynamic political landscape.

5.0 CHALLENGES:

Indian elections face several challenges that impact the integrity, inclusivity, and fairness of the electoral process. One major challenge is electoral violence and intimidation, particularly in regions marked by political polarization, communal tensions, and organized crime. Incidents of booth capturing, voter coercion and violence against candidates and voters undermine the sanctity of elections and erode public trust. Another challenge is the influence of money power and electoral corruption. Rampant spending on election campaigns, illicit financing, and vote-buying practices distorts electoral outcomes and undermine the principle of equal opportunity. Regulatory reforms, transparency measures, and stringent enforcement of electoral laws are necessary to curb the influence of money in politics. Additionally, issues such as voter registration discrepancies, inadequate electoral infrastructure, and logistical constraints pose challenges to voter access and participation, disenfranchising marginalized communities and exacerbating electoral disparities. Strengthening voter registration mechanisms, enhancing electoral infrastructure, and implementing measures to ensure free and fair elections are essential for upholding the integrity and credibility of Indian elections.

CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, Indian elections represent a vibrant yet complex exercise in democracy, characterized by diverse challenges, dynamic electoral dynamics, and the enduring resilience of democratic principles. Despite facing numerous hurdles, including electoral violence, money power, and logistical constraints, Indian elections remain a testament to the country's commitment to democratic governance and the exercise of popular sovereignty. The evolution of Indian elections since independence has been marked by significant milestones, including the expansion of voting rights, the introduction of electronic voting machines (EVMs), and the rise of identity-based politics.

These developments reflect the changing aspirations, demographics, and socio-political dynamics of Indian society. Moreover, Indian elections serve as a barometer of public sentiment, reflecting the aspirations, grievances, and priorities of a diverse electorate spanning urban and rural areas, across socio-economic strata. The electoral process provides an opportunity for citizens to hold elected representatives accountable, shape policy agendas, and participate in nation-building. Looking ahead, addressing the challenges facing Indian elections, including electoral violence, corruption, and voter disenfranchisement, will be imperative for strengthening the integrity and credibility of the electoral process. Moreover, fostering inclusive electoral practices, promoting transparency, and upholding democratic values are essential for ensuring that elections remain a true expression of the will of the people and a cornerstone of India's democratic fabric. Ultimately, Indian elections are more than just a political exercise; they are a celebration of democracy, diversity, and the collective aspirations of a nation marching towards a more inclusive and equitable future.

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