

Money factor in voting politics essay



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The distribution or offering of money in elections by candidates and political parties during elections plays an important role in determining the voting-choice of the people. The predicament of irresponsible use of cash – acknowledged by political parties and individual candidates from businessman and other sources from time-to-time for furtherance of their election prospects has already acquire upsetting aspect of our electoral system. It has also been pointed out that political parties and their candidates have spent money far in excess of limit imposed by the Representation of Peoples’ Act, 1954.[1]Indeed, the former Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) of India, R. K. Trivedi, himself was embarrassed to testimony of the role of money-power in our elections as L. P. Singh (1987), writes:

This malady, I am afraid, during the last decade has assumed alarming proportions. The huge expenditure incurred by candidates and political parties has not relationship to the ceiling prescribed under the law. The candidates and their political parties look to big money-bags for their funds to contest elections, thereby adopting a formula which establishes the chances if winning in direct proportion to the money spent. That in course of time various decision-making levels, does not seem to bother them.[2]

In extreme forms, unconventional modes of electoral practices are manifest in the explicit acts of vote buying[3]which seeks to refute the liberty to articulate citizens’ electoral preferences. Since, persuasion alone occasionally generates an adequate amount of support, candidates or parties, on the other, on a regular basis, try to pay for or convince votes through money. As indicated in table 4. 1, the influence of ‘ money’ in

elections shapes the voting behaviour of 15. 83% of the respondent electorate in the constituency. The male voters are more influenced by ‘ money’ than the female counterpart. This is mainly because of two important reasons, i. e., due to conservative nature of women and the domination over females by male counterpart. Exchange of vote for money has turn out to be open-secret in every elections of the constituency. Generally speaking, the voters who accepted money are of two types: voters who did not claim but simply agreed while being paid; and those who claim either from the candidate directly or from any sources that advance them during the campaign period. The table 4. 6 indicates the response of the voters who accepted money from candidates in election.[4]

Table 4. 6

Voting Decision: Reasons for accepting money

The acceptance of money in exchange for ballot is highest, as indicated in Table 4. 2, among the mid-age group of 41-60 years than the older and younger voters. The younger voters, least influenced by money in deciding whom to vote for in an election, are more concerned with their prestige. However, reports suggest that, “ even young and enthusiastic voters either accepts or demands money for ballot in the constituency,”[5]but are hesitant to disclosed the same to the researcher. Educationally, as Table 4. 3 indicates, the ‘ illiterates’ voters of the sample electorate has the maximum impact of money on their vote-choice. Further, in the constituency, those who are well educated are least influenced by ‘ money’ as determinant of voting behaviour. That is, as educational qualifications of the people entitled to vote increases, the influence of money on voting behaviour decreases. As

regards the economic status of the voters and voting decision, as Table 4. 4 shows the ‘ low’ income voters has the highest influence than the those of ‘ average’ and ‘ high’ income voters. That is, with the increase in the economic status of the voters, the level of influence by money decreases.

Moreover, the data in Table 4. 6 shows that there are numerous reasons on the part of the voters who acknowledged ‘ money’ throughout election. The main justifying reason is the poverty of the people and they are easily induced by ‘ money’ in elections. As Robert G. Wirsing says:

...campaign period is the time when the market value of their support appears to rise and when the cleaver seller may turn the value of his vote or the votes of his followers to good advantage. The poor are wined and dined, wooed with gifts and bribed with cash ...[6]

In the constituency, one of the most important reason for the acceptance of money is due to the fact that majority of the sample respondents considers that no developmental work has been done by the elected representative. And sees the payment of money for votes as compensation for public money that politicians are assumed to have stolen.[7]This particular view holds key in the minds of the voters as 22. 73% of the total respondents agreed to it. On the other, a total of 18. 18% voters consider that elected representative served the interest of his near and dear ones, not for the constituency as a whole. This is to some extent correct for the reason that 15. 91% of the sample electorate views that they have nothing to ask to elected representative after the elections. It is also evident that even campaigner

either insisted or offer money to voters as disclosed by 13. 64% of the electorate.

From the above discussion, one may infer that the influence of ‘ money’ throughout election period cannot be denied. Van de Walle has suggested that, in Nigeria, voters take vote buying offers as signals of their patron’s wealth and capability of winning elections features of leader with which they wish to be associated.[8]But, more importantly, the underprivileged voters are expected to be ill-treated because of their restricted earnings, making them vulnerable to materials inducements, including the offers of basic commodities or meek amount of cash. For their part, citizens with little education may be unconscious of the political privileges they enjoy and as a result have a weak defense in opposition to such coercion. Moreover, ‘ money’ influence may have been more widespread than the figures cited. Experience from Argentina suggests that some people are understandably reluctant to admit that they had been approached with a forbidden offer, especially if they had subsequently entered an agreement and complied with the terms.[9]

In fine, the use of ‘ money power’ to win election by candidates and political parties alike makes the mockery of representative democracy and affects the basic philosophy of democracy and universal franchise. The views of the poor are subdued and the preferences of the rich are enlarged on key issues. ‘ Money for votes’ play as a means and the “ rich” candidates distributed money among the poor voters; and done some instantaneous development work in the constituencies. This tricky design provides space for maneuvering for those who have either the official backing or have too much

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money to contest the election. However, voters' conformity to the requests of money giver in elections may provide least resistance but it is morally and lawfully fraught. Above all, lopsided elections abridged the institutionalization of political responsibility.

The influence of Elites:

The word ' elites' typically denotes the attributes or distinctiveness of certain individual that determine how far he will accomplish; thus, those with the suitable quality will in due course reach the top and find themselves in the place of power vis-a-vis others in the structure or in society at large.

Although the definition of elite varies somewhat across the social science literature, we take a relatively broad view. Rather than taking into account the elite to be the rulers over the ruled,[10]we define them as those with the capacity to influence national political outcomes or policy.[11]As Eldersveld (1989) define ' elite' largely to comprise those “ who hold important positions, who have influential roles and who exercise important functions in the polity”[12]Such positions and status, along with wealth, education, and other advantages, provide the elite with political resources[13]and, thus, have the capacity to directly or indirectly influence the activities of the state. [14]

Although elites have an important role in highly developed democracies, [15]their political influence may be even greater where social inequality exists.[16]In liberal democratic countries, political leaders are entrenched in, and their efficiency appreciably depends upon elites – insignificant groups of position holders in societies having the capability to affect political outcomes on a regular basis and to a large extent.[17]

The local elites in the constituency like village money-lender, tall income government employees, intellectuals, and also entrepreneur play a big role in determining the voting choice of 12. 95% sample voters as indicated by the statistics in Table 4. 1. Those elites determined the vote-choice of 4. 32% male and 8. 63% female of the constituency. That is, female voters have an edge over male voters. There are scores of people who are straightforwardly or in some way reliant upon these groups of people for their everyday requirements and consequently they become their patrons. As a result, local elites pre-determined their clients' vote-choice. Table 4. 7 displays the different factors of influence to the electorate all through elections.[18]

Table 4. 7

Voting-Decision: Factors influencing by local elites

The influence of elites' in the constituency as evident from Table 4. 2, gradually increases with the increase in the age-group and decline thereafter. It is highest in the age-group of 41-60 years and lowest in the above 61 years category. The female are more influenced than male. Educationally, its influence decreases, as apparent from Table 4. 3, with the increase in the level of education of both the sex. It has the highest impact among the ' illiterates' and least influenced to the ' above graduates' respondents. Economically, as indicated in Table 4. 4, its influence also decreases with the increase in the rise in its status. Researchers point to the growing income gap,[19]stating that the elite control the political process and those of lower socio-economic status have no role to play in electoral process.

From the data in Table 4. 7, it is absolutely clear that the most important influence to the voters is the distribution or offering of money by elites which accounted for 27. 78% respondents. They even mislead people for the ulterior motives (19. 44%) during election by making alluring promises or commitments (16. 66%); and also creating the spirit of groupism (11. 11%) among the electorate in the constituency. Moreover, they provide information of the candidates' performance during his stay in office (13. 89%) by educating the people on socio-political issues (5. 56%) faced in the constituency. This is, perhaps, a good indication of their involvement in participatory democracy and will lead to the furtherance of the democratic politics.

From the above analysis one may come to the point that the influence of local elites in the electoral politics of Oinam assembly constituency has its negative and positive aspects as well. Elites and leaders are essential elements of collective and individual life in any given socio-political structure. Many local dominant citizens take devoted attention and are directly involved in the elections taking part in the elections process. These trends, nevertheless, are not perpetual; the elites and privileged, like empires, may well rise up and fall down as well.

Candidates' Image in voting:

Scholars have long acknowledged the significance of candidates' personality in voting choice. The qualities of candidates are one factor which invokes the consideration of the electorate in every stages of the electioneering development. Charismatic leaders have a " special magnetic quality that fills followers with awe and adoration." [20] McAllister argues the substance of

influential showing that “ public perceptions of leaders, if not decisive, have a modest but significance influence on the vote.”[21]As John L. Sullivan, John H. Aldrich, et. al., points out:

Voters’ assessments of the candidates’ competencies and personal qualities affect how they feel about each candidate; whether, for instance they feel pride or shame when thinking about a particular candidate, or of more generalized feelings of liking or disliking.[22]

In the constituency, the influence of candidates’ personality or charisma shapes the voting behaviour, as indicated in Table 4. 1, of 10. 32% of the sample electorate. The female voters put more emphasis on personality trait of the candidate in fray while voting than the male voters. Table 4. 8 displays the various reasons for voting a particular candidate in elections of the constituency.[23]

Table 4. 8

Voting-Decision: Factors influencing candidates’ personality

From Table 4. 2 it is observed that candidates image in the election had the highest impact in the age group of 25-40 years and 18-24 years than other age-group. The female voters are more influenced than the male voters except the older voter, i. e., 61 years and above are equally to both the sex. Educationally, as Table 4. 3 indicates the ‘ illiterate’ voters have an edge over those of literate voters on the candidates’ trait in exercising their political franchise. And, economically, as Table 4. 4 suggests, the ‘ average’ income voters has highest influence than ‘ low’ and ‘ high’ income voters in

the constituency. Those ‘ high’ income male voters are not even bothered about the candidates’ image in election of the constituency.

From the statistics in Table 4. 8, it is apparent that family insistence to vote for a particular candidate in elections has the impact of 35. 48% respondent voters, in which the female (19. 35%) had an edge over male (16. 13%) voters. Educational and economic status of the candidates, in fray influenced the vote-choice of 16. 13% and 9. 68% of the sample voters. The contesting candidates’ contribution to the constituency; and his accessibility by the general electorate had an impact equally to 12. 90% of the respondents voting decision. While 6. 45% voters voted those candidate simply because of their locality supporting that candidate; and that 3. 23% voters voted as candidate being from their locality.

It is quite clear from the above analysis that the influence of candidates’ image in shaping the voting decision of the electorate cannot be overlooked. Voters definitely want a representative that they can trust, and convince the public that they believe in what they are saying and will deliver on their promises. As personality dominates in most areas of life, one cannot deny that candidate that appeals to us most based on personality characteristics may not be the candidate that best represents our interests. Therefore, one may argue that voters are not appropriately weighting performance-based information on candidates contesting the elections when undertaking one of democracy’s most important civic duties.

Political party and voting decision:

Political parties occupy a central place in democratic politics, as they, in the midst of other things, provide a link between the citizens and the state. It is through parties that citizens have opportunity to influence the effort of governmental elites. Voting for a political party in an election is seen as an important determinant of voting behaviour of the people entitled to vote. This is no exception to the constituency under study as 10. 79% of the sample voters exercise their political franchise on the basis of partisanship as apparent in the data from Table 4. 1.

In the constituency, voting for political parties in elections are much higher of the males compared to female voters, as the former are more exposed to party identification which “ is a psychological attachment toward a political party that tends to influence a person’s decisions on social, economic and political issues.”[24]In elections between candidates of competing parties, one expects partisanship to influence ballot choice as many voters affirm their partisan identities by casting ballots for the candidates who share their party labels.[25]Therefore, “ elections are frequently identified in the public mind with the main issues discussed or the campaign strategies attempted by the parties.”[26]Table 4. 9 indicates the reasons for voting a particular political party in elections of the constituency.[27]

Voting for a political party in the elections of the constituency gradually increases with the increased in the age group and decline thereafter. It is highest between the age-group of 41-60 years, however the male are more committed to than the female as indicated in figures of Table 4. 2. The female voters are equally influenced as the male in the early stages of

electioneering period, by parties, but as one grows older its commitment significantly declined.

Table 4. 9

Voting decision: Factors influencing political party

Educationally, the more formal years of education mean the more allegiance to political party as the degree of consideration of party-voting increases with the rise in educational level of the electors. In the constituency, the ‘below matriculation’ respondents voters are least influenced while the ‘above graduates’ has the maximum influenced by political parties as the determinant of voting, as apparent from Table 4. 3. On the basis of economic status of the sample electorate, as indicated in Table 4. 4, voting pattern of the respondent electorate with reference to political party increases with the rise in the income level of the electorate of both the sex. Those high and average income earners are more unwavering, far more than the low or poor income groups, and hence, are able to choose whom to vote in an election.

Moreover, in the constituency, voting-choice of 30. 00% of the respondent voters is influenced by the basic ideology of political parties as evident from data in Table 4. 9. This is perhaps because voting preferences may be affected by what Andrew Leigh term “innate ideological attachment,”[28]not linked to voter’s consideration on his family or locality. Also, stable and long term identification with a political party offers “an information short cut or default value, a substitute for more complete information about parties and candidates.”[29]The relationship between party identification and vote choice of the electorate remains one of the most robust and enduring findings in political science.[30]In the constituency, more than 23. 33% (See <https://assignbuster.com/money-factor-in-voting-politics-essay/>

Table 4. 9) of the self identified partisan voters voted for their party's candidates. When asked whether they would vote for a candidate who is not anticipated to win an election, a respondent replied, " whether good or bad, right or wrong, I stand by my party! ... on no account in my life have I ever considered being linked with a party other than the Indian National Congress." [31] Further, 20. 33% of the respondent voters voted to political party simply because their family members are traditional supporter of that party. Another 13. 33% voted for party on the pretext that the party has good leadership. Some 6. 67% respondents voters views that their decision to vote for a party because their desire candidates is contesting on that party ticket; and equally influenced to those respondents who says they are supporting the party as their locality supports that party.

From the above discussion, it is observed that a political party does have a role to play in influencing the vote-choice of the electorate in the constituency. For individual voters, however, motives might differ considerably. They would normally support the candidate of their most ideal party if the contestant has a possibility to win the mandate of the people. Surprisingly enough, there is hardly any empirical research done on the different motives individual vote splitting. Citizens must be given the liberty without undue influence to cast their vote in favour of any political party as it is their independent opinion to decide which party they consider eligible for coming to power and taking that into account they have full right to exercise their political franchise.

Election campaign:

Political science research once characterized campaign as “ resonance and vehemence suggestive of nothing,” but a resurgence of recent research has offer compelling evidence that campaign can shape voting behaviour of the electorate and election outcomes.[32]An election campaign must be understood to be a process that “ generates a product, the election outcome, and like any other process, one cannot expect to understand the process by analyzing only the product.”[33]As such, it is a well thought-out effort which seeks to influence a range of issues and to create a long-lasting notion of the same with the electorate. In a campaign the issues are articulated by party leaders, and they are the stuff in terms of which a democratic political campaign is rationalized, in both senses.[34]The length and strenuousness of the campaign serves to involve the public, inform it on public issues, and increase its active participation in politics.[35]

Election campaigning in the constituency determines the voting behaviour of 12. 69% of the sample electorate as evident from Table 4. 1. The males are greater than females in shaping their voting choice, as the former are more exposed to campaigning than the latter. Table 4. 10 represents the various factor of influence to the respondent voters while campaigning.[36]

In the constituency, the young and mid-age group voters paid more attention to election campaign in deciding for whom to vote during elections as Table 4. 2 indicates. It is also evident that male voters’ exposures to ‘ election campaign’ decreases with the increase in the age-group while the female voters, however remain constant between of 18-24 and 25-40 years groups. Similarly, educational wise, as Table 4. 3 shows – the ‘ illiterates’ voters has

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the highest impact on their vote-choice, and decreases with the rise in the level of educational status of both the sex. The well educated voters in the constituency are least influenced by election campaign organized by candidates or parties or its supporters during electioneering process. Likewise, on economic status of the voters, as indicated in Table 4. 4, the level of influence by ‘ election campaigns’ decreases with the rise in the level of economic status. That is economically well-off electorates, in the constituency, are undeterred by campaigning, as it influenced the low and average income groups.

Table 4. 10

Voting decision: Factors influencing election campaign

The statistics in Table 4. 10, it is known that among the various campaigns employed by candidates and parties, personal contact with the candidates in fray has the highest influences of 37. 04% of the sample voters, while door-to-door canvassing influences 18. 53% voters. Campaigning through publicity and organizing public meetings on elections had a modest influence of 14. 81% and 11. 11% respectively.

In fine, electoral campaign is a podium to strike the main political issues as well as position and proposition of the different political parties to deal with these issues. In addition, the virtues of campaign effects can only be found in correlation with long-established socio-economic issues. As V. O. Key long ago documented, “ the perception of behavior of the electorate ... condition, if they did not fix, the types of appeals politicians employ as they seek popular support.”[37]However, key player of the campaign have to struggle

with the lack of interest, trust and consideration from the citizens towards political life and institutions.

Issues importance in voting:

The highlighting on an issue based voting has, of late, assumed an important predicator of voting behaviour across liberal democracies. Voters are seen as moving in the direction of a more decisive posture, deciding issues on their merits and consequently acting more judiciously than formally. In their study of voting behaviour, Nie, Verba, and Petrocik (1972), found that following 1960, as V. D. Opfer, quotes, “ the role of party declined as a guide to the vote. And, as party has declined in importance, the role of issues appears to have risen.”[38]

Issues, local or national, in any election are an important predicator of voting behaviour of the electorate. Issues importance measures “ the extent to which attitudes manifest the qualities of durability and impactfulness.”[39] Research has found that issues deemed important by respondents are more likely to be stable, resistant to change, and more likely to influence behaviour of voters.[40] ‘ Issues’ in election shapes the voting behaviour of 11. 90% of the sample electorate in the constituency (Table 4. 1). The female voters’ accounts for 5. 03% of the sample voters saying the issues have its own importance in electoral behaviour thereby shaping the voting act, and are much higher than the male voters (3. 60%) as indicated in Table 4. 2. Now, Table 4. 11 displays the main issues indicated by the respondent electorate.[41]

Table 4. 11

Voting decision: Main issues influencing the electorate

From Table 4. 2, it is known that ‘ issues’ in election has the highest impact in the age-group of 41-60 years and lowest in the age-group of 61-above. That is, the mid-age group voters are more influenced by issues in election than the younger and older voters. Also, in the constituency, as apparent from Table 4. 3, voter with high educational qualifications are not bothered about ‘ issues’ in election while the ‘ below matriculations’ has has highest impact in deciding their voting-choice. The ‘ illiterates’ and ‘ below graduates’ of the constituency are equally influence to those ‘ issues’ in election. Further the data in Table 4. 4 predicts that the ‘ average’ economic status voters are more determined by issues in election as their voting choice than those of ‘ high’ and ‘ low’ economic status voters.

Now, among the issues cited by the sample respondents as their determining factor of influence, as Table 4. 11 indicates, 29. 17% of the respondents view that roads, safe drinking water, and better electricity as their main issues in elections. On the other, the state being affected by insurgency activities, 20. 83% of the respondents opine that a political solution to such problem will at best serve the interest of the state and hence determining their voting choice. Educational development, better irrigational projects for agricultural activities, tackling unemployment and the repeal of Armed Forces’ Special Power Act, 1958 (AFSPA), have almost equal influence among the voters in the constituency.

From the above analysis, it is apparent that no single issues were cited by the respondents as most important. That not only 11. 90% of the respondent <https://assignbuster.com/money-factor-in-voting-politics-essay/>

voters had issues concerns in elections in the Oinam assembly constituency and whether issues opinions are malicious or not is not easy to conclude. Voters are heterogeneous in their use of issues in the voting booth. Some voters may consider some issues more seriously than others in their voting decisions. Some issue