

ELECTION STUDIES IN INDIA



By

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A PAPER PRESENTED IN THE SEMINAR
ON ADULT FRANCHISE HELD IN SRILANKA
FROM JULY 17 — 18, 1981.

Election Studies in India*

(1952 to 1971-72)

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Scholarly interest in the study of elections in India almost accompanied the first exercise of universal adult franchise by the people of the country in 1952. The attempts to study elections by the Indian academics had their precedent as also their stimulus in similar attempts made in the West, particularly in the United States. This point needs emphasis because, notwithstanding the difference in terms of refinement and sophistication of the studies made abroad and in India, there is a striking similarity in the objectives, design, methods and techniques of the two sets of studies. Again, in India also, as in the West, the effort has been, with some exceptions, not so much to study electoral politics as to probe into voting behaviour. Finally, both in the West and in our country, the behavioural persuasion has led to a far larger number of voting behaviour studies than to empirical probes in other political processes — the former at times even implying the neglect of the latter.

* I am happy to place in the hands of the Seminarists an Evaluation Report on the Elections and Voting Behaviour Studies conducted in India since the first general elections. I am grateful to the Indian Council of Social Science Research and particularly to Shri J.P.Naik for entrusting this study to me because it ultimately turned out to be a stimulating and educative exercise both for my colleagues who joined hands with me in this effort and for myself.

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Antecedents of Election Studies in India

The scholars of war-torn Western societies, very much afraid of Communist ideological advances, moved away in the early forties from evaluative theories in favour of causal theories, though the trend in nascent form can even be dated back to the works of Graham Wallas and Arthur Bentley. With a priori assumptions about the inherent goodness and rationality of human and strength of democracies being severely shaken in the wake of breakdown of democracy in Germany as a result of the rise of Nazism and fear of Communist advances, there started a quest for the study of political behaviour of citizens and performance of political systems to enable the scholars to infer conditions favourable for the maintenance of democracies. The new concern gave a fillip to the study of elections as they provided great opportunity for a probe into the dynamics of political behaviour of citizens, all the more because the elections are concerned with expression of popular choices about men and means of their governance. As people make and unmake governments, they have to be both responsive and responsible. The provision of universal suffrage was, therefore, treated as an earnest for democratization, orderly performance of the system and enhancement of social welfare. Not only the philosophical theorists of democracy¹ but also its behavioural analysts shared these premises.²

Overview of Trends

The theoretical concerns elaborated above, besides accounting for increased interest in election and voting behaviour studies, would also provide a philosophical backdrop to these academic efforts. One could also identify other factors which accelerated interest for studies in the field.

First, elections constitute the most exciting of all political events bringing political reality and even its subdued contours into sharp focus. Secondly, the voters who are objects of study here, both in individual and aggregative forms, are not only more clearly identifiable but they are also more easily amenable to empirical study than are the political elites, political parties, and the political system in their functional and behavioural dimensions. It should, therefore, not be surprising if studies of elections almost accompanied the advent of behaviourism which tended to transform the character and contents of political science in good measure. Since then a plethora of election studies have come up in the West.

We may now turn to have an overview of trends emerging from election studies in the context of substantive and methodological aspects.

From Simple to Complex Studies — It is just a truism to say that election studies have tended to move from simple to complex enquiries. The identification of this trend comprises several-fold implications, the more important of which are:³

First, the psephologists in this process have lately come to try their hands modestly at theory-building. The earlier studies used to be just descriptive in nature, concerned primarily with the presentation of factual data in quantified form.⁴ It was for this reason that researchers with a positivist orientation would criticize the studies for their meagre contribution to theory-building. Campbell, however, thinks that it was unavoidable "in the early stages of exploration of new areas of information. As we gain experience, we may expect that the development of theory and the collection of data may gradually achieve a relationship

more closely resembling symbiosis than has generally been true in the past".⁵ It is only when relevant data are accumulated and experience gained that ground is prepared for the formulation of theories about elections and voting behaviour which may serve as middle range theories in political science.

Secondly, the studies have tended to become more sophisticated than before in methodological terms also. Gradual perfection of various research methods and techniques, emphasis on multi-variate rather than uni-variate analysis, sharpening of statistical tools and measures and, finally, greater reliance of computer programming than manual handling of the idea — all these have led to refinement and sophistication of election studies from the methodological angle.

Thirdly, the studies have also got enriched in substantive foci, tending to cover newer dimensions from nomination to the poll verdict stage, drawing their implications and correlating them with the behaviour of political parties and performance of respective political systems. As the scope of election studies widened, campaign workers, political activists and candidates involved in the electoral battle also began to attract attention of psephologists, besides the voters.

Deterministic in Orientation — While aggregate data analysis also looks for the determinants of voting preferences, the studies of voting behaviour are particularly attuned to do so. This is true of most of the available studies. The empirical studies express doubts about the capacity of individual voters to make independent and rational voting preferences.⁶ Instead voting preferences have been found to be an outcome of various cross-pressure working on an individual in a social milieu. Two major sets of variables

have been identified as determinants of voting behaviour. The studies undertaken by scholars of Columbia University entitled The People's Choice and Voting would lay emphasis on the impact of social and environmental factors on individual voting choices. However, the studies by the Michigan Survey Research Centre like The Voter Decides and The American Voter would link voting behaviour and party preference to psychological variables or to the subjective world of the individual voter - his interpretation of candidates, and issues associated with particular events. These points have been further developed by various scholars. For example, S.M.Lipset finds in prevailing social cleavages an explanation, not only of voting preferences, but also of the evolution of specific types of party systems. He treats elections as symbolizing the "democratic translation of class struggle".⁷

As against the deterministic role of social and socio-psychological variables, some studies have referred to the role of political variables, like party identification, political involvement and party organization. They have been particularly irked at the erosion of the autonomy of political science at the hands of those who treat political acts as just consequences of social processes. For example, attributing the widespread use of socio-economic indicators to their quantifiability, Sartori treats them as capable of producing "distal effects".⁸ He would like the sociologists to "realize that he cannot cover the whole way from the society to the polity by extrapolation, i.e. with crude projective techniques".⁹ He sums up by observing that, if parties are conditioned by social cleavages, the latter (cleavages) are in turn "picked out as a resource by elite decision, and thereby come to reflect the channelling imprint of a structured party system".¹⁰ The argument is made even

more powerfully by V.O.Key (Jr.). In his reinterpretation of Michigan SRC data, he refutes the contention that the voter pays no attention to issues or party programmes and is rather guided by emotive reactions. We reproduce below two rather lengthy citations from his, as they best express his viewpoint:

The perverse and unorthodox argument of this little book is that voters are not fools.... In the large the electorate behaves about as rationally and responsibly as we should expect, given the clarity of the alternatives presented to it and the character of the information available to it. In American presidential campaigns of recent decades the portrait that develops from the data is not one of an electorate strait-jacketed by social determinants or moved by sub-conscious urges triggered by devilishly skillful propagandists. It is rather one of an electorate moved by concern about central and relevant questions of public policy, of governmental performance, and of executive personality.¹¹

Key further observes:

It can scarcely be said that party switchers constitute a sector of the electorate significantly lower in political interest than the stand-patters... Instead, the switchers, who (in company with "new" voters) call, in turn, are persons whose peculiarity is not lack of interest but agreement on broad political issues with the stand-patters toward whom they shift... This should be regarded as at least a modicum of evidence for the view that those who switch do so to support governmental policies or outlooks with which they agree, not because of subtle psychological or sociological peculiarities.¹²

In measuring and comparing the impact of socio-economic and political variables and taking the position that the latter have more direct impact than the former, some rigorous analysis has also come from Nie, Powell and Previt¹³. According to them membership of political organizations exercises strongest impact on voting choices. Besides, there are other political variables like political information,

political efficacy, political attention, sense of duty among citizens and the like which also influence voting choices. Socio-economic variables are treated as only 'antecedent' or indirectly influential variables.

Recent thinking in the field indicates that various factors play their role in a conjunctional and cumulative fashion. Though socio-economic variables play an indirect role, they still shape political attitudes, determine sense of efficacy, provide spare time for political involvement and so on. Illustrating this, La Palombara points out that persons of lower strata are only passively, if at all, active.¹⁴ Hence they have little voice in governmental business. Schattschneider also holds that 40 per cent citizens are deliberately manipulated to remain non-voters.¹⁵ Apart from political scientists some psychologists and sociologists are also veering round to the primacy of political factors which sometimes articulate and at others transform the role of socio-economic factors. Simultaneously some complex models are also being built to explain how voting choices are determined.¹⁶ Altogether thus in the wake of interaction between socio-economic and political variables, the deterministic role of the two sets of variables is tending to get diffused.

Towards An Appraisal

While substantive empirical findings about voting behaviour have, by and large, remained unchallenged, the way in which the behavioural theorists have developed their logical premises has left ample room for questioning. The findings that voting preferences do not symbolize independent and rational choices of the voters and that they are closely related to socio-psychological experiences of individuals as articulated by interested parties, do not bear out their

ultimate expectations from the democratic creed and yet they would continue to swear by it. Thus J.F.S. Ross has been led to comment "..... it has been tacitly assumed at least by those who have pressed for the widening of the franchise, that once the man or woman had received the vote all would be well; he or she would know by instinct how to use it. These are the lamentably inadequate views, and there is much need for their reconsideration and revision".¹⁷

The policy implications of empirical studies have also been highly controversial. They have evoked conservative, radical and moderate reactions. The conservatives would like popular participation to be restricted as and when it imposes constraints on the institutionalization of political processes and thereby disturbs political equilibrium.¹⁸ The moderates, in spite of some of them having a progressive or leftist self-image, would be content with universal suffrage as they treat power as an institutionally potential political phenomenon.¹⁹ Radicals are obviously discontented with the existing power-structure as also the election system. According to them it has hardly been effective in making the ruling elites as accountable and responsive as they would like them to be. They would like the power-structure to be radically transformed so that the electors have effective voice in policy-decisions which have a bearing on them.²⁰ In brief, the thrust of their argument is that election choices should be real rather than nominal.

It is not our purpose to attempt a detailed critique of these schools of thought. One cannot, however, help pointing out that they are at best concerned with problems of the commonweal at a highly abstract level. More often than not, they would not like normative concerns about the betterment of the human lot to get into and vitiate their scientific enquiries. It is contended here that induction of normative

issues as part and parcel of a scientific enquiry and posing of right questions through it may not necessarily compromise the scientific character of an enquiry. For example, if an effort is made to relate voting behaviour to such normative issues as performance and legitimacy of a political system, the enquiry with the substantive focus can still retain its scientific character. We are, therefore, not inclined to take the position, which McClosky and others like him have taken, that ".... as intellectuals and students of politics, we are disposed both by training and sensibility to take political ideas seriously and to assign central importance to them in the operation of the state If the viability of a democracy were to depend upon the satisfaction of these intellectuals' activities, the prognosis would be very grim indeed".²¹ The intellectual also can have, and, in fact, should have a stake in the performance of the system and judging its legitimacy on that basis. He is best suited to do so as he can command a wide variety of information, bring to bear on objective and also a total perspective on the study of the political phenomenon, which the voters cannot always do.

Objectives of Study

Considered against this background it is proposed to evaluate the studies of Indian elections both from substantive and methodological angles, highlighting their strong and weak points, and, ultimately, evolving a perspective for future studies in the light of this discussion. We agree that any empirical reality needs to be studied systematically, but the methodological concerns should not make us ignore substantive issues in the name of scientism. As stated earlier also, we do not postulate any dichotomy between the two.

The issue of proper configuration of substantive issues and methodological tools and techniques has been intriguing the social scientists in general and psephologists in particular. The countries of the Third World including India are no exception. The attempts made in India at times do not go beyond tailor-made models. This is natural also, as the attempts heavily draw upon the experiences gained through researches in foreign countries. As there is a great difference between the levels of economic development and socio-cultural milieu of the countries of the Third World and the Western countries, the substantive concerns and problems of the two sets of countries are also different. Lack of trained research staff and almost non-realization on the part of research funding organizations of the need for considerable in-service training before a project is actually launched further widens the hiatus.

Even at the risk of digression, it will be worthwhile to recall here that with the advent of behaviourism there arose a controversy in regard to the place of values in social research. Of late, however, a consensus appears to emerge that values cannot be wished away, though it is still an unresolved issue to what extent their ingress can co-exist with the rigours of a scientific enquiry. Democratism has been treated as a value-premise in a number of studies conducted both in Western countries and India. It may also be added **here** that democratism has been interpreted both in terms of goals of a polity and the means used by it to realize them. We shall see, as we move along with our survey, how democratism as a value-premise has been built into election studies in India and with what results. Further, contribution to the building up of a general theory of politics capable of explaining political processes has been another objective of

behavioural enquiries into electoral processes. One has to evolve a number of middle range theories about elections in general and voting behaviour in particular before this objective can be realized. Some progress has been made in that direction in the West in terms of identifying the correlates of the voting act, specification of influences on voting preferences and spelling out the implications of voting behaviour for the larger political system, enabling scholars to make predictions about political stability, equilibrium and shifts and directions of political change. These attempts, however, do not go very far. Still they throw valuable light on the performance of the Western political systems and the extent and limits of their democratic character. The attempts in our country in this regard have been quite feeble and are, in fact, just at an elementary stage. We have yet to evolve suitable indices for operationalizing such concepts as political participation, political articulation, efficacy, normal vote, deviant vote, non-voting and the like in the specific Indian context before making any worthwhile effort even to come up with middle range theories.

All this needs what C. Wright Mills has called sociological imagination. Without proper testing of relevance and genuineness of the indices and correlating them with the trends ascertainable in the political processes in a given milieu we cannot develop heuristically useful concepts and socially meaningful theories. Some questions would illustrate the point. Is non-voting to be taken as sole or even a major index of political apathy? Does lack of faith in the voting act reflect adversely on the responsiveness of government to popular wishes or just indicate political cynicism? Can awareness of certain election issues enumerated in a structured question by the investigators be taken to symbolize issue voting? While a respondent may say that he voted for a party

for its stand on certain issues, he may, in fact, be abiding just by the decision of his community or union or some other group to which he belongs. Pitfalls like these can be guarded against only with the help of penetrating observational reports. Otherwise social scientists would help develop only pseudo-theories with misleading implications.²²

The Scope of the Study

We have concerned ourselves in this survey only with post-independence election studies. We are examining them election-wise to find out the pattern of change in qualitative and quantitative terms. The survey is illustrative rather than exhaustive. Secondly, the studies selected by us are those which have been exclusively devoted to elections in general and voting behaviour in particular. One may find cases of aggregate data analysis in works on state politics or party system in India and in such other related studies. We have not taken note of these efforts as treatment of elections and voting behaviour is just incidental in these studies which are also usually based on secondary data. We, however, do not deny the importance of these references as they do provide at times unconventional interpretations. Even at the risk of repetition we would like to emphasize that we have treated each general election as a unit by itself for our survey and as such our coverage is election-wise and not built around types and themes of election and voting behaviour studies. We have done so even in the case of 1952 and 1957 elections, though, scholarly studies in their case are quite few and far between.

Psephological Studies: An Overview

The rationale of psephological studies lies in their promise for theory-building. The long-term objective informing these studies is to work out a theory of election politics which as a middle range theory may ultimately contribute to the construction of meta or general theory of politics in a country. The promise has remained unfulfilled even in the U.S.A., let alone India, where it has not even been seriously pursued so far. Indian scholars, by an large, are still in the initial stages of data collection, description and analysis of various election activities, psychic make-up of voters, and the influences working on them. They are not as yet in a position to integrate their findings and generalize on their basis for purposes of theory-building.

The psephologists in India are in a way pre-empted in their efforts towards theory-building on account of several reasons, the more important of which may be identified here:

(i) With some notable exceptions, a sort of ad hocism seems to characterize the efforts at election and voting behaviour studies conducted in the country so far. The result is that there are very few studies which can be said to have been systematically planned and adroitly executed with a built-in potential for comparability and generalization ultimately leading to theory-building. There have been cases of repetition without any conscious efforts at replication.

(ii) Again with some notable exceptions, the psephologists in India have not always been conscious of the need for a theoretical framework informing their enquiries and as such, more often than not, they have not planned to relate their data to any theory. Data are thus collected in a sort of

theoretical vacuum. It should not be surprising if the effort to superimpose a theoretical framework later on the data does not yield the desired results.

(iii) There has hardly been any significant effort to relate psephological enquiries to politics during the inter-election years at the macro-level in general and micro-level of study in particular. In fact, elections have not been treated as linkage knots on the continuum of politics. Similarly, neither have they been viewed as responses to the outcomes of the political systems nor as inputs into it by way of a feedback, particularly in terms of legitimization of authority and political recruitment. They have been treated almost as isolated political phenomena, as if they have neither any contextual moorings nor any relation with any consequences for the nature, performance, and dynamics of the political system.

(iv) Similarly, the studies of voting behaviour have been divorced not merely from politics at macro and micro levels and from systemic performance and dynamics but also from the pull and swing of election politics itself, as if voting behaviour is to be determined only by psycho-social and not also by political variables.

(v) Finally, psephological studies in India have been largely imitative of Western models in terms of theoretical frameworks (to whatever extent they have been used), methods, and techniques. There is absolutely no harm in drawing upon the efforts and experiences of co-workers in the field, all the more because theoretical frameworks, methods, and techniques at a certain level of development tend to become universal. Still the theoretical frameworks, methods, and techniques need to be examined from the point of their

suitability to the Indian milieu, particularly with a view to finding out if they need any modification or blending in the changed context. This is all the more necessary if the concepts are to have contextual bearing in their operationalization. This has not always happened.

Altogether, the lacunae of psephological studies at substantive, theoretical, and methodological levels are, however, the bye-product of the weak grounding of Indian political scientists, generally speaking, in analytical political theory and the use of research methods and techniques. They should, therefore, not be treated as germane or peculiar to psephological studies.

The observations made so far should not be taken to imply that psephological studies have not made any headway in the country. On the contrary, the present survey brings out in unequivocal terms that psephological studies have registered steady, though incremental, improvements in both quality and scope. The 1962 election studies, for example, deserve to be treated as a major landmark in the annals of psephological studies in India, when macro-level enquiries were supplemented by micro-level probes, general studies by aggregate data analyses, and descriptive accounts by theoretically oriented analytical studies. It is also a landmark in terms of diversification of the scope of studies. These were no more confined to collection of facts and data about election activities from secondary sources but came to include probes into nomination process, campaign strategy and voting behaviour. The efforts of psephologists to study the 1967 elections not merely carried forward the process of diversification of studies, but also marked distinct improvement in terms of all-India coverage, potential for comparability,

theoretical inputs, and methodological rigour and sophistication. The studies of the 1971 and 1972 elections do not seem to have contributed to the tempo of progress in any significant manner, except for the use of class as an analytical category in some enquiries. There is, however, no reversal of the progress either.

Similarly, it will be wrong to conclude that election studies have not yielded academic dividends. Though psephological studies have yet to go a long way in terms of diversification of scope, linkages with political context and political system, theoretical inputs and methodological rigour, yet they have already proved their academic potential by offering significant insights into the political processes of the country. These insights particularly relate to coalitional character of competing groups, role of opinion leaders and vote-banks, erosion of sub-system's autonomy, pattern of politicization, voter's susceptibility to efforts at political mobilization, determinants of voting behaviour, and so on. In fact, efforts can be made to evolve a theory of election politics in India by weaving together the findings of various studies.

The reviewers will, therefore, like to recommend without any reservation on their part that psephological studies deserve encouragement but with a modified perspective so as to make up for the lacunae identified elsewhere in this concluding chapter.

We may preface the delineation of modified perspective which may orient the psephological studies with an overview of the trends emerging from the present survey. We will like to identify the achievements and limitations of psephological studies by way of recapitulation as follows:

Substantive Dimension

Broadly speaking the psephological studies conducted so far can be grouped as follows:

- (i) Macro/Micro-level generic studies
- (ii) Macro-level aggregate data studies
- (iii) Voting behaviour studies; and
- (iv) Specific foci studies.

As far as macro/micro-level generic studies are concerned, they have usually been based on secondary sources, particularly the newspapers, though supplemented sometimes by personal interviews. They have been quite comprehensive in their scope. The studies would sometimes relate to the country as a whole and sometimes to a state. They would generally cover electoral alliances pattern, nomination process, campaign strategies, nature of poll verdict, and the like. There has usually been no effort to take an integrated view of the various facets of election politics and interpret the meaning of elections for the polity against the integrated perspective. Worse still, sometimes efforts are made to offer conjectural interpretations of voting behaviour and poll verdict without making any serious attempt at collecting of facts and hard data. Such exercises can become dangerously misleading. Further, the authors/editors of these studies would collect whatever information that came handy to them and no theoretical perspective would usually orient their effort. It should, therefore, not be surprising if, more often than not, there is no uniformity, let alone a sense of built-in homogeneity, in the data that they would collect. There are, however, some exceptions to this general tenor which have been identified in the survey. We may also add that, in spite of these limitations, the generic studies have great archival importance as source books for future reserachers.

Turning to macro-level aggregate data studies, they are few and far between, and that also mostly by foreign writers. In spite of their limited number, they have proved their academic potential in terms of providing a generalized overview of election politics and voting pattern in the country. The insights thus obtained, besides being meaningful in themselves, can also serve as reliable bases for generating hypotheses for future studies. But these studies also suffer from certain limitations, the more important of which may be identified here. First, it has not usually been possible to relate aggregate data studies to the socio-economic and political context. Thus, the conclusions emerging from these analyses may not reflect the concrete realities of the situation. Secondly, it is also possible that the scholars undertaking these studies may not always make the right choice of variables with which they would like to relate their data and identify and interpret the trends. For example, it may not be enough just to correlate the data with the demographic variables because, more often than not, political variables tend to serve as important intervening variables, if not independent variables.

It is, however, the voting behaviour studies which perhaps have been most numerous and in regard to which gradual improvement in substantive foci and methodological rigour has been most obvious, though they are still to go a long way. They have also thrown light on determinants of voting behaviour in good measure. They have also provided opportunities for face-to-face contact with the voter and as such a possibility of probing into his psyche to the utmost possible extent. In the process they have complemented and even at the times corrected macro-level generalization. In spite of all this, the voting behaviour studies also suffer

from several limitations. First, they have almost exclusively been confined to studying the behaviour of general voters; the behaviour of elites, minority groups, backward classes, and non-voters has, by and large, remained unstudied. Secondly, though they have been concerned with both macro (national) and micro (state/constituency) levels, they have been, by and large, repetitive and full of commonplace generalizations without any potential for comparability.

There has already been any effort to dovetail the analysis at macro- and micro-levels and identify and interpret the relationship between the two. For example, the role of caste may seem limited at the macro-level but it may be of strategic importance at the micro-level and it may also happen that even macro-level leaders may be trying to mobilize voters at micro-level by placating caste sentiments. The result is that they have not helped the process of theory-building as they could have done if they were planned systematically and with an eye on the the ultimate objective of theory-building. Thirdly, no effort has been made to interpret voting behaviour studies in the context of socio-economic and political milieu on the one hand, and pull and swing of election politics on the other. It has also been rather rare to link up voting behaviour to the performance of the political system or to treat it as an input into the political system in terms of its legitimacy, dynamics and capabilities. It should, therefore, not be surprising if voting behaviour studies do not always succeed in explaining the pattern of relationship among political elites, groups, and individuals in terms of voter mobilization. The studies thus leave several questions unanswered, the more important of which are:

- (i) How are political actors, groups, and individuals interlinked with each other?

- (ii) What is the mechanism that one political group devises to influence the decisions or behaviour pattern of individuals in other political groups?
- (iii) What role do socio-economic factors play in strengthening the links among political actors, groups, and individuals.

The answer to these and other related questions which have both a vertical and a horizontal dimension cannot usually be provided by voting behaviour studies on account of their divorce from socio-economic and political contexts, on the one hand, and the dynamics of election politics on the other. Altogether, thus, it will perhaps be advisable to treat voting behaviour studies as an important but a limited input into broad-based efforts at the study of election politics, which should, in fact, provide a framework for the study of voting behaviour itself.

Finally, the studies with special foci have only been few. They have covered such topics as nomination process, campaign strategy and styles, Muslim voters, scheduled caste voters, and the like. The studies covering these foci, however, are too few to provide any generalized insights. In fact, there is a need for covering these topics on a larger scale by way of a national study as also through case studies. There are also a number of topics in the category of special foci which have not been tapped at all as separate themes of studies. One could refer here to such topics as study of tribals, women, and elite voters as also that of non-voters. Similarly, independent studies of such topics as (a) mass media and elections; (b) electoral alliances and elections; (c) pressure groups and elections; (d) vocabulary of political mobilization; (e) delimitation of constituencies and elections; (f) defections and voting behaviour; (g) study of defeated candidates and the like are yet to be undertaken.

Theoretical Dimension

A look at the research design of election and voting behaviour studies clearly brings out that, more often than not, there is hardly any effort to orient the study with a theoretical framework. The result is that a research project is launched without any clarity about the concepts around which the data are to be collected. This naturally raises problems later if at the stage of analysis and report writing, as it seems to have happened quite often, an effort is made to superimpose concepts on the data already collected and then relate the latter to the former. Quite often the consequence is that data are somehow interpreted to suit the demands of the concepts, even when there is no correlation between the two. As a natural corollary to the lack of theoretical orientation, quite a few election and voting behaviour studies have just remained data-collection exercises without any potential for theory-building. There are, however, some exceptions to this trend where we find the use of such concepts as party identification, political participation, political efficacy, and the like which are then inferentially related to such theoretical constructs as political development, political modernization, secularization, nation-building, etc. Here also, the exercise has tended to be more imitative of foreign models than soil-oriented efforts and as such the conclusions do not always square with the existing political realities. By way of example, one could refer to the application of the two-culture theory to the Indian voting behaviour. It is thus obvious that, if elections and voting behaviour studies are to be academically meaningful, they have to fulfil two pre-conditions. First, serious thought has got to be given to theoretical/conceptual concerns which need to be built into the research design itself. Secondly, the

theoretical/conceptual framework should be so operationalized as to take note of the Indian reality. We may also add here that efforts at theoretical orientation should also take note of Marxist-Lenninist framework and, more particularly, of class as an analytical category. It is not being argued that the Marxist-Lenninist framework or class as an analytical category would necessarily yield better results if applied to voting behaviour and election studies than the analytical framework associated with Western liberal theory. It may or may not be so. Still there is hardly any justification for the total apathy of the political scientists to the use of this framework or analytical category. One may add even at the risk of digression that class is after all not exclusively a Marxist analytical category which is sometimes mistakenly believed to be so.

Methodological Dimension

The election and voting behaviour studies have also been quite weak in methodological dimension. Generally speaking, one could say that a number of studies have been based on impressionistic observations and sketchy newspaper reports. Even where there is methodological input, one finds that faithful adherence to one or a combination of methods is hardly there, let alone the question of introducing innovations in methods and techniques so as to make them suitable to indigenous requirements.

Specifically speaking, one finds that survey research method has been most popular with the psephologists. They are useful in so far as they can be subjected to statistical manipulation rather easily and since they have already been used in the context of elections and voting behaviour studies

in good measure, the psephologists can draw upon the existing models and experience with advantage. It is also heartening to note that the Indian scholars have not merely succeeded in putting these methods to proper use in good measure but have also tended to refine them as they have moved from one study to another. The more popular among the survey research methods have been the questionnaire and panel techniques. The basic limitation of survey research methods, however, has been that researchers using them rely almost exclusively on the perception of the respondents who quite often give out not what they feel or believe but what they should feel or believe rationally. This danger is all the more in regard to elite respondents. There is also the problem of establishing rapport with the respondents which is intimately related to the issue of training of investigators in regard to which also the studies surveyed in the volume have been weak. Finally, the survey research method, though useful in themselves to a considerable extent, still need to be supplemented by other methods, particularly the observational method. The Indian scholars using the survey research method have, however, yet to consider the issue of supplementing these methods with other methods so that their efforts at understanding the empirical reality do not remain one-sided. One may also mention in passing that the task of questionnaire construction also has not always got the attention that it deserves. Consequently, questions will not always relate to the concepts being used in the study, and sometimes they have been unnecessarily loaded.

One may also add that there has also been limited use of anthropological method (including case study method) which has, however, yielded good results in terms of indepth insights that the anthropological studies have provided into the otherwise complex and intriguing network of political processes and relationships. One at times, however, finds that in some

studies these methods have been used only superficially and this again has been due to the lack of proper training. Still one has a feeling that if greater reliance is placed by political scientists on anthropological method than what they have done so far, it will yield academic dividends. It may be added here that anthropological methods can be used not merely exclusively but combined with the survey research method. The exclusive and combined use of these methods will be particularly useful in regard to studies pertaining to such topics as raising and operation of campaign organizations, multiple pressures on the voters, linkage network, and election politics and so on.

Finally, we may like to add a word on the use of statistical analysis techniques which have been employed in the context of aggregate data analysis. They alone can help in ascertaining generalized trends over time in regard to election politics and voting behaviour. There have already been some useful exercises of this type at both macro and micro levels which have already been identified. Besides the limitation of this technique, to which a reference has already been made in the discussion of aggregate data analysis studies in this chapter, one may like to add that the use of these techniques has yielded limited results at the hands of political scientists so far because they have only undertaken uni-variate (and not multi-variate) analysis. Similarly, the reliance on factor analysis and regression techniques also has almost been negligible.

Organizational Dimension

Finally, we would like to turn to the organizational dimension. One serious limitation of election and voting behaviour studies in organizational terms had been that they

had to be handled by ad hoc units hurriedly set up on the eve of elections with temporary staff which is usually ill-equipped for the task, as the trained people could not be easily attracted to serve in temporary organizations on none-too-attractive pay-scales. The attempts at training neither have been serious, nor have they gone very far even where an effort to train the staff has been seriously made. It has also been noticed that elections and voting behaviour studies are sometimes entrusted to scholars whose specialization is in sub-fields other than Indian government and politics and as such they do not always succeed in bringing to bear a perspective of Indian politics on their analyses of elections and voting behaviour. Finally, the project directors do not seem to have succeeded in anticipating the requirements of a research project in terms of both human and financial resources and as such would feel handicapped later in completing the project in time.

Towards a Modified Perspective

The general tenor of the modified perspective that should orient the election politics and voting behaviour studies in the future is all through being indicated in our summing-up. Still it will be worthwhile to sort out the main ideas on the subject by way of consolidated recommendations for what they are worth:

1. The studies of election politics and voting behaviour should be consciously related to the socio-economic and political contexts on the one hand, and to the political system on the other. Then alone will these studies bring out the pattern of mutual interaction between socio-economic and political context and election politics and voting behaviour. Again, then alone will it be possible to interpret how and to what extent elections and voting behaviour are a response to the performance and behaviour of the political system as also what is the impact of the former on the latter.

2. Voting behaviour studies should be conducted within the framework of election politics, particularly of the area where they are located.
3. Efforts should be made to cover those foci of study which have either drawn scarce attention or have not been touched at all. Some themes of study of this type have already been identified in this chapter.
4. It should be ensured that a clear-cut theoretical/conceptual framework orients election and voting behaviour studies as a built-in component of the research design itself. While operationalizing the concepts, attempts should be made to relate them to the Indian context. If possible, experimentation with certain indigenous concepts should also be made.
5. As far as methods of study are concerned, two aspects deserve attention. As no single method can be exclusively relied upon, the psephologists should seriously consider the issue of blending two or more methods; the choice of methods to be combined will naturally depend on the topic of study. However, the use of anthropological case study and content analysis techniques, both singly and in combination, deserve greater attention than what has been given to them so far. Secondly, whatever methods are employed, they should not be used in a slipshod manner. Every effort should be made to follow them as faithfully as possible and to refine them to the maximum possible extent. Efforts at experimentation with innovative methods could also be made. For example, the technique of group discussion to elicit responses could be combined with individual interviews which has perhaps not been done so far.
6. Efforts should also be made to identify a few centres for the establishment of election study units on a permanent basis where human and material resources adequate to the task should be built up on a long-term basis. These units could, in fact, adopt a district for the study of continuing politics as part of which they may study not merely state and national elections but also bye-elections and local elections, the study of which have been woefully neglected so far.
7. It is also necessary that the personnel to be employed in the research units should be well paid so that technically qualified people get drawn to the unit, who alone can deliver the goods.

8. There is great potential for building up a theory of election politics in India on the basis of available literature which should be exploited.

Altogether, thus, there is a great need for continued election and voting behaviour studies, but with a modified perspective, the broad contours of which have been identified here, more by way of illustration than in terms of their exhaustive coverage.

FOOT NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. An observation of James Bryce, reproduced below, offers the best summing up of the contention of the philosophical theorists in this regard:

"Every man is the best judge of his own interest, and, therefore, best knows what sort of government and what laws will promote that interest.

Two men are presumably better able than one to judge what is for the common good. Three men are wiser still, and so on

Individual men may have selfish aims, possibly injurious to the community, but these will be restrained by the other members of the community whose personal aims will be different....

As every man has some interest in the well-being of the community, a part, at least, of his own personal interest being bound up with it, every man will have a motive for bearing his share in its government and he will seek to bear it, so far as his personal motives do not collide therewith.

Inequality, by arousing jealousy and envy, provokes discontent.

Hence, equality in political rights while it benefits the community by opening to talent the opportunities of rendering good service, tends also to peace and good order.

To sum up, government by the whole people best secures the two main objects of all governments — justice and happiness, justice because no man or class or group will be strong enough to wrong others; happiness, because each man, judging best what is for his own good, will have every chance of pursuing it. The principles of liberty and equality are justified by the results they yield."

Quoted in Robert E. Lane, Political Life, New York. The Free Press, 1959, pp. 31-32.

2. The trend is evident in the writings of various scholars like Robert Dahl, Polsby, Lazarsfield, S.M. Lipset, V.O. Key, Angus Campbell, Philip E. Converse, etc., who have been associated with election studies or have used them for purposes of theory-building.

3. For details in this regard one may refer to: (1) Herbert McClosky, Political Enquiry: The Nature and Uses of Survey Research, London, Macmillan, 1969; (2) Various contributions in Edward Dreyer and Walter Rosenbaum (eds.), Political Opinion and Electoral Behaviour, Belmont, California, Wadsworth, 1970; and (3) Peter H. Rossi, "Four Landmarks in Voting Research" in Eugene Burdick and Arthur J. Brodbeck (eds.), American Voting Behaviour, Glencoe, Illinois, the Free Press, 1959.
4. This is true of studies conducted around or before the Second World War, including the prominent ones, like: Stuart A. Rice, Quantitative Methods in Politics, New York, Knoff, 1928; and, P.F. Lazarsfield, et al., The People's Choice, New York, Columbia University Press, 1948.
5. Angus Campbell, "Recent Development in Survey Studies of Political Behaviour" in Austin Ranney (ed.), Essays on the Behavioural Study of Politics, Urbana University of Illinois Press, 1962.
6. Summing up the argument of these works, V.O. Key (Jr.) brings out, though in a mood of refutation, that these theories draw "not a portrait of citizens moving to consider decision as they play their solemn role of making and unmaking governments. The older tradition from practical politics may regard the voter as an erratic and irrational fellow susceptible to manipulation by skilled humbugs... Nor does a heroic conception of voter emerge from the new analysis of electoral behaviour. They ... (treat) voting not as a civic decision but as an almost purely deterministic act". The Responsible Electorates, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1966, pp. 4-5.
7. S.M. Lipset, Political Man, New Delhi, Arnold-Heinmann, India, 1973; and S. M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan (eds.), Party Systems and Voter Alignments, New York, The Free Press, 1967; See particularly the introduction by the editors.
8. G. Sartori, "From the Sociology of Politics to Political Sociology" in S.M. Lipset (ed.), Politics and the Social Sciences, New Delhi, Wiley Eastern, 1972, p.92.
9. n. 8, p. 93.
10. n. 8.

11. n. 6, pp. 7-8.
12. n. 6, p. 104.
13. "Social Structure and Political Participation: Developmental Relationships - II" American Political Science Review, 63(3), September, 1969, pp. 808-32.
14. La Palombara, Politics Within Nations, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice Hall, 1974, p. 456.
15. E.E. Schattschneider, The Semi-Sovereign People, New York, Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1960.
16. One can refer by way of example to M. Brewster Smith, "Personality in Politics: A Conceptual Map with Application to the Problem of Political Rationality" in Oliver Garcean (ed.), Political Research and Political Theory, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1968.
17. Quoted in Robert E. Lane, n. 1, pp. 36-37. Similar views has been expressed in other studies also. See, for example, T.W. Adorno, et. al., The Authoritarian Personality, New York, Harper, 1930; David Riesman, The Lonely Crowd, New Haven, 1950; and Robert A. Dahl, Democracy in the United States: Promise and Performance, Chicago, Rand McNally, 1972.
18. Samuel P. Huntington, "Political Development and Decay" in World Politics, 17(3) April, 1965. See also his Political Order in Changing Societies, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1969.
19. One may refer to the works of Dahl and Lipset in this regard.
20. There have been few notable election studies by the radicals. But they have contributed critiques of studies with conservative or moderate orientation. See for example, Dusky Lee Smith, "The Sunshine Boys: Toward a Sociology of Happiness" in Colfare and Jack Roach (eds.), Radical Sociology, New York, Basic Books, 1971, pp.28-44.
21. Herbert McClosky, "Consensus and Ideology," American Politics, in Dreyer and Rosenbaum, n. 3, p. 262.

22. For example, a number of surveys, relying on questionnaire technique, bring out that agreement on democratic norms is greater among the politically active and aware than among the voters in general. Such findings lead them to draw the 'logical' conclusion that the rulers, or the 'political stratum' as Dahl would call it, have a right "to create a seemingly uncoerced nation-wide consensus" by socializing the individuals into prevailing political culture, which, as understood by these scholars, can only be elite culture. Socialization of individuals into such a culture would mean not only the physical but mental enslavement of the people to the power-elite. See for details, R.A.Dahl, Who Governs?, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1961 and Hubert McClosky, op.cit., 237-263.

