



Socio-Economic and Digital Determinants of Political Participation: A Decadal Analysis of Anand Constituency

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Abstract

This work has an elaborate comparative study of political participation/voter behaviour of last three electoral cycles of Anand Vidhan Sabha constituency which has 112 constituencies. It looks at the role of changing socio-economic condition, demographic changes and political shifts in the political participation form and level of participation by voters. Utilizing mixed-method approach involving a combination of the statistical data, field surveys and electoral records, the research studies the differences in the voter turnout, performance of the political parties and changing strength of caste, class, gender and age in shaping electoral preferences. The thesis also provides a description of the increasing importance of digital campaigning, social media outreach and issues based mobilization in the development of modern political behaviour. Comparing trends among three elections some of the following trends can be observed: "A clear movement away from conventional patterns of identity-based voting to a more informed, performance based and participatory democratic culture can be observed in the paper." It foregrounds the current problems in local governance issues concerning the credibility of candidate and development agenda all became decisive features in voter choice of leaders in the political system. The results are a mark of growing political consciousness of youth and women in the group which is a manifestation of a transformation of India's democratic ethos. Ultimately, this study does contribute to understand the political behaviour, in a regional context, reflects the national democratic evolution, and useful insights in particular about its growing evolving dynamics of electoral participation, in semi-urban India.

Keywords: Political Participation, Voter Behaviour, Electoral Trends, Anand Vidhan Sabha, Democratic Transformation.

Introduction:

Political participation and voter behaviour lies at the heart of investigation of how systems based upon democracies work. In India which is the bigger democracy in the world, the electoral participation in

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the country represents not only the bearing of democratic institutions but also the development of the relationship between the citizen and the State. The 112 Anand Vidhan Sabha constituency, in Gujarat provides interesting case study to see these dynamics as it has all the essence of socio-economic diversity, political competitiveness and changing voter-base.

Over the last 3 election cycles, the constituency witnessed a lot of changes in terms of political engagement, guided by factors such as urbanization, education, digital media and party loyalties. This research aims to examine such transformations from a comparative perspective, focussing upon the extent to which voter behaviour and patterns of participation have changed in response to changing political, social and technological contexts.

Objectives Of the Study

- To examine the trends in voter turnout and participation in Anand Vidhan Sabha elections of the most recent three.
- To review the parameters which affect the behaviour of the voters socially, economically, and demographically.
- To examine the campaigns on political issues, leadership and party strategies on the outcome of elections; and
- To examine the role of new media and issue-based politics in the formation of voter preferences.
- To know new patterns of democratic involvement and what does this mean for the future elections.

Methodology

The research that is carried out is a mixed method with combination of both quantitative and qualitative data. Data about elections was collected from Election Commission of India (ECI) report for 2012, 2017 and 2022 Gujarat Legislative Assembly elections. Supplementary data was collected from the field surveys, interviews with local voters and from secondary sources such as academic journals, government publications and also the media reports.

Quantitative analysis paid attention to voter turnout, vote share and demographic participation and qualitative analysis explored perceptions of governance, leadership and political awareness. The comparison of the electoral cycles allowed to establish continuities and changes in the behaviour of the voters in three electoral cycles.

Important Historical & Political Background of Anand Constituency

One of the recognised Americas of milk, Anand holds a special significance in the political and economic scenario in Gujarat. The socio-economic profile of the constituency is characterised by the cooperative movements, agricultural prosperity and increasing urbanization. Historically Anand has also been a politically active region and participated in large numbers in the state and national elections.

The political scene in Anand has been dominated by two major political parties -- the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Indian National Congress (INC). However, the advent of regional and independent candidates has been a factor which sometimes have influenced the result of the elections. The electorate of the constituency depicts a mixture of both the rural voters and urban voters with the different compositions of castes and community playing the role in the political alignments.

Trends In Voter Turn Out and Participation

Voter turnout is one of the indicators of a democratic participation. In the election of the year 2012, the Anand had a turnout of about 68% which rose to 72% in 2017 and somewhat came down to 70% in the year 2022 (Election Commission of India, 2022). The increase since 2012-2017 is an upward trend which reveals an increased level of political engagement, particularly on behalf of young and female voters.

Participation of the youth Gender transecting issues and strengthening youth participation:

Women participation has marked a steady rise from time to time, but this points to an overall trend of women in politics at the national level (Kumar, 2020). Youth voters, specifically 18-25 age group are having become a decisive group of voters, if not they raise profile issues such as unemployment, education and performance of governance over traditional identity-based factors.

Rural-Urban Divide:

The rural - urban divide is still present in voting Rural people are more likely to vote for agricultural policies with subsidies and development in the countryside while urban people are more likely to vote for infrastructure, job opportunities and efficiency of the government. However, the differences in rural and urban participation have got narrowed down due to the connectivity and awareness campaigns (Rao, 2019).

Determinants In the Voter Behaviour

Voter behaviour in Anand is determined by a complex of socio-economic, cultural and political factors. A number of determinants have been identified as being important influences and these are:

Socio-Economic Status:

Economic conditions have a major impact on the preferences of the voters. Middle class and educated electorate are increasingly inclining towards voting for parties according to their performance and economically weaker sections are voting for political parties which make a promise of welfare schemes (Singh, 2021).

Caste and the Dynamics of Community:

Caste an important but diminishing factor in determining how people vote While the traditional caste loyalties still continue to exist, particularly in rural areas, the younger voter base is more likely to vote on the basis of issues (Desai, 2020).

Leadership & Image of the Candidate:

The personal image, credence of the candidates is very important to determine the voters. Charismatic leadership and local accessibility are more critical than party affiliation when it comes to electoral success (Patel, 2022).

Media and Digital Influence:

The development of social media platforms has changed the face of political communication. Digital campaign and WhatsApp group and online debate are new ways have become very strong tool to engage people to cast votes and change their opinion (Chakraborty, 2021).

Comparative Analysis Between the Last 3 Elections

The two questions to be researched are the political participation and voter behaviour to determine how democracy works in the grassroots level. According to India, electoral politics is not the working of the democratic institutions at all but a revolution in the social-economic and cultural environment of the society. The constituency of Gujarat and Anand Vidhan Sabha would furnish a good opportunity in the study of such dynamics because the electorate, socio-economic development and competitiveness in politics are heterogeneous. The House of assembly elections of 2012, 2017 and the forthcoming 2022 elections have seen a tremendous shift of constituency as far as the voting turnouts are concerned both in the party lines and the shift in the behaviour components of local, regional and national orientations.

This comparative analysis will be focused at determining the trend of political involvement and voter turn up at the 112 Anand constituency in all these three elections. It compares the influence of demographic changes, political campaigns, appeal of the political leadership and social economic conditions on the electoral results. The significance of the playing of role by the political party,

influence of the caste and communal affiliation and the aspect of the performance of the governance by the voter preference are also displayed in the analysis.

Projecting the profile of the Anand Vidhan Sabha Constituency:

It is a semi-urban ward of the central Gujarat and the district of Anand which is called Milk Capital of India. It has historical, economic importance because of availability of Amul that is a cooperative movement leading to development of the region in socio-economic development. The electorate is composed of both urban and rural electorate with the agriculture, dairy and small sized industries being the fundamentals of the economic activity in the constituency.

The seat is a seat that has been contested on the political front with two leading adult contestants in the seat being the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Indian National Congress (INC). The electorate stronghold in his constituency is a cluster of breadth of urban-middle group citizens, farmers of the rural regions, co-operative labourers and natives and this is quite characteristic of what is generally perceived about the state of Gujarat, in general.

Political Situation of the Three Past Elections (2012, 2017, 2022)

2012 Election:

In the year 2012, the election of assembly in Gujarat was dominated by the Chief Minister Narendra Modi who wanted to serve a third term in the office. The campaign being undertaken by BJP was under development, governance and economic development of Gujarat. Jayant Patel (Boskey), BJP candidate, has come out triumphant in Anand, where he was playing in good mood of being a pro-incumbency candidate as well as the popularity of the leadership of Modi. This was not in the Favor of the candidate of Congress because he was a local force yet he could not overcome the narrative of the BJP of Vibrant Gujarat.

2017 Election:

Gujarat politics was historic in terms of the 2017 election. The BJP was forced to deal with the mounting anti-incumbency sentiment especially by the Patidar and the rural communities, around the unemployment situation, agrarian crisis, the effects of demonetization and the Goods and Services Tax (GST). The Congress administration through Rahul Gandhi leadership, has tried to capitalise on this sentiment, and enter into alliances with regional leaders such as Hardik Patel. It was too close elsewhere in Anand where BJP held on to its seat albeit with a lesser margin. Voters increased and this was translated to more political participation and polarization.

2022 Election:

In 2022 election, another dimension was thrown in the shape of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) who was also attempting to break the spirit of the BJP-Congress duopoly that had prevailed in the past. This has been done by the BJP that was stumbling under the leadership of the Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel who was making the stability, development and the welfare schemes as his issues. The Congress was finding it very difficult to retain its inner strength and AAP scooped a section of the urban and the young population voters. The BJP came out as the winner once again in Anand after registering its vote with high standard as it was scaled by bringing together booth level, welfare outreach, and just the image of the Prime Minister, Modi.

Voter Turnout and Political Participation Terms:

Voter turnout is one of the indicators of political contribution and democracy. The trend of attendance in the past three consecutive elections in Anand is a continuity and change at the same time.

2012: The state percentage is average, and the percentage was estimated to be 70 percent of the cast votes.

2017: The turnout was also higher by approximately 74, and this is a sign of increased political mobilization especially the youth and the rural population of the voters.

2022: The number drop was slight, to approximately 71 percent, demonstrating that voters got fatigued to vote and blocked the partisan ballot.

The increase of 2017 can be explained by the more intense political competition and mobilization with the help of the matter, and the fall of 2022 to the level of the stabilized voter preferences and decreased volatility.

The shift in the gender participation is also there. The female voter turnout has been growing in a linear flux that has reduced the gender inequality that is directly correlated with the voter turnout. The women voters have since made a willed constituency especially in the rural modalities where the women welfare programmes that focus on the empowerment of the women, their health and education were the determinants of the voting patterns.

The other trend of interest has been the connotation of the youth. The 2017 and 2022 elections were characterized by the first-time voter turnout and this is done through online campaigning and the social media. Their demands have however split into those who are weak under the firmness of change presented the AAP and those who are the vulnerable development and stability that BJP presents.

Voter Behaviour and Determinants of Electoral Choice:

Issues based factoring, caste and community attachment, perception of the leaders, and cumulative weight in the party identifications have been the variables that have influenced the voter behaviour in Anand.

a. Party Identification: The politics of the party are identified and their appreciation.

The elements that help the BJP to overpower Anand are the network in an organization, and the ability of the network to maintain the same message and charismatic influence of the leadership. Unquestionable and transformational leader represented by Narendra Modi, has won the goodwill of the electorate. The Congress could not outline a viable alternative leadership on the local and national level irrespective of historic base.

b. The American Community is influenced by offensive behaviour against the minority races through caste:

Anand portrays caste as very significant yet a minor element of his electoral politics. It comprises of a combination of Patidar, Kshatriya, Dalits and OBCs which form the constituency. A section of its solidified backup to the Congress, even in 2017, was momentarily altered by the Patidar agitation also; the BJP was able to regain its footing by pacifying the community by a selective approach and representation. The wing which was collaborative and was spearheaded by the Patidar leadership has also contributed to the indefatigable infiltration of BJP.

c. Issue-Based Voting:

The factors which influence voter behaviour have included the economies, job opportunities, development of agricultural and various infrastructure. The Gujarat Model of Development had been instrumental in the success of BJP in the case of 2012. Any loss of support would take place in the short term in 2017 due to the complaints related to GST and rural distress. The BJP has been able to gain the popularity of lower and middle-income voters again in the welfare programme schemes like Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana and PM-Kisan in 2022.

d. Campaign Strategies

Media Intervention:

Political communication has changed in regard to digital media and social platforms due to popularity. BJP has also had a profitable campaign, which is enhanced by information and identification of the presence of electorate with the help of micro-targeting, mobilization is facilitated by WhatsApp groups, and BJP can be deemed as a rival. The conventional ways of campaigning adopted by the Congress have failed to reach the young voters. The other type of campaigning by 2022 entry of AAP

was based on the other model of governance and service delivery to the people but this was not much experienced at Anand.

Electoral Results Comparison

The comparison data concerned can be referred to some major tendencies:

The BJP has been riding on its consistent performances though electoral votes were volatile depending on the change of political temperaments, that of 2017 was the most competitive one as it was anti-incumbency and polarization election issues. BJP was making gains in the 2022 election with the assistance of the welfare politics and the organizational power.

Definition Defection of the vote by the Congress is a sign of the loss of representation on the ground and poor performance of the AAP is an indication that the constituency remains to be a polarized one.

Social-Economic and Demographic Forces:

Their socio-economic profile that has been characterised by high literacy, prosperity which is reliant on cooperation and urbanization has been the determinant of their political behaviour. Educated voters are more interested in governance and development as opposed to identity politics. This body of cooperation, especially of Amul model group has introduced the feeling of community involvement and trust on the institutions ability to manage the nation and this is also within the BJP message of efficiency and development.

Rural voters are however also sensitive towards the agricultural policy, irrigation problem and the dairy product price as well. The BJP has succeeded in dispelling these fears by way of schemes of special purpose and these schemes have assisted the party to stick to the support it had secured in the rural regions. In their turn, urban voters have been influenced in the form of infrastructure growth, job offer and law and order stability.

This is a shift in the nature of Political Participation:

Joined politics Anand has undertaken another form of participation beyond voting. The citizenry is becoming active and participative via social media and internal systems of governance, and even using issue-based movements. Through digital literacy, there has been evolution of increased awareness in the political front even though there is the misinformation being propagated. Voter education, voter mobilisation has been practised by the youth organisations and the civil society organisations and this has increased the number of voters and informed voting.

There has been increased participation also in female voters who have not only emerged as voters but also as political players. This has been facilitated by the fact that they are also represented in the local

administrations and have access to the institutions of cooperation thus making politics more receptive to them.

Rivalrous Student and New Applied Fashion:

The comparative analysis of all the last three elections shows that there are several new tendencies:

Stability by Adaptation: BJP has tied its stability on its flexibility to accommodate the demands of the electorate without changing its ideological stand.

Distortion of the Traditional Opposition: The lack of ability on the part of the congress to provide the local leadership and inefficiency of the organizational arrangement has lowered its competitiveness.

Issues-Based politics: The voters have grown sensitive on such issues as opposed to the ideological appeals, in the face of governance performance, welfare provision and economic policies.

Digital Transformation: Digital campaigning has contributed to the digital transformation of the interactions of people involved in political movements especially the youth and any urban population.

Gender and Youth Empowerment: The rise of women and youth voters' population is the characteristics of the democratic process transformation towards the more engaging and facing one.

The above fact of change of the nature of democracy in Gujarat is witnessed by the comparative analysis done based on the political participation and the election attendance in the last three elections in Anand Vidhan Sabha. The BJP has been dominant in the respect of electoral; behind the facade of the electoral is an esoteric network of developmental discourses, social-economic idealism and identity politics. Stability and change and change Finding continuity and change: Stability and governance and change in that of growing concern with accountability, inclusiveness and making issue decisions Stability and governance and change Findings: The electoral behaviour in Anand may be typified by permanence and change of concern in stability and governance and change, Findings: The electoral behaviour in Anand may be typified by permanence and change of concern in which the growth of concern involves accountability, inclusiveness and making issue decisions.

It is exposed in the analysis because it has only gotten worse through the years that citizens were becoming participatory, demanding and making knowledge savvy. The future nature of politics in the constituency will be shared by the ability of the parties to resolve several issues that arise including employment among young people, suffering in the rural areas and technological government. The Indian democracy is in development, participation and political awareness culminating in the

formation of the lines of electoral behaviour to shape the electoral behaviour and which is a broader way the Indian democracy is developing in the Anand constituency.

Role Of Women and Oppressed People

Women's politic participation as a voter has also been as active participant in local governance endearment has played a significant role in Anand. Increased literacy, Self-help groups and reservation policies have led to women having more meaning role in Politics (Joshi, 2020). Similarly, feasibility of marginalized communities such as target welfare programs and grass rooted mobilization has been brought into the limelight.

Effects Of Technology and Social Media

The digital revolution has changed the nature of being involved in politics in Anand. Platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp have become part of the process of political communication (and opinion formation) including voter outreach. The growth in the number of people with digital literacy and access to smart phones has contributed to some real time political engagement with voters especially the younger voters (Reddy, 2021).

However, with the introduction of digital media, challenges have also been introduced, such as the spread of misinformation and polarization. The results of this study show that although there are benefits that come with digital platforms that protect participation there is also an increased need for media literacy and regulation.

Issue Based, And Perfection Oriented Voting

Very significant trend in the three elections is from an identity based to an issue-based vote. Voters more and more vote for candidates on grounds of performances of governance, development programmes and transparency. Issues like employment, education, health care and infrastructural have overturned the caste or religious affiliations (Verma, 2022).

This transformation speaks to democratization of political consciousness in general in which citizens demand from their representative's accountability and real results.

Comparative Rhythms and New Trends

From results of comparative analysis, it is evident that there are not many patterns that emerge:

Rising Political Awareness- The increase in political literacy caused by the increase in education as well as the media.

Youth Mobilization Young people as voters are more assertive and informed as well as participatory.

Gender Inclusion The participation of women keeps on increasing, changing the electoral priority.

Digital Engagement: Politics has been all about technology.

Decline of Identity Politics Issue based and performing politics increasing.

These patterns saw there a gradual but steady transformation towards more participatory and accountable democratic culture in Anand.

Problems Of the Democratic Participation

In spite of good tendencies yet rest various difficulties:

Voter Apathy: Consists of the group of population which is not interested in participating in the electoral process due to disillusionment with the political processes.

Misinformation: The distribution of inaccurate news through digital platforms does not contribute to the concept of informed decision-making.

Economic Inequality: Socio-economic inequalities are a still a hindrance in the equal participation.

Gender Barriers: There are still a lot of barriers for women to participate in the political aspects with full engagement in some of the fields, as a result of the patriarchy.

To deal with these challenges, it is important to implement sustained civic learning efforts, institutional reforms and inclusive policy measures.

Discussion

The result of Anand is suggestive of more of national patterns of democratic evolution of India. The focus on governance, transparency and accountability is an indication of a maturing electorate. The reaction between the traditional structure of politics and modern-day digital influences has been taken on board to argue for the hybrid nature of the modern Indian Democracy.

Comparatively, the experience of Anand can be seen as being consistent with other developments around the world with technology, education and civic engagement shaping political participation (Norris, 2019). The constituency is like the microcosmic representation of the transformation of democracy in India - continuity with change.

Conclusion

In the comparative analysis between the last three elections of Anand Vidhan Sabha, there is an active and changing pattern on political participation and voter behaviour. The electorate has transformed from traditional electorates form that identified queuing to more rational performance-based decision making. Factors such as education, digital connectivity and civic awareness have played a great role in this transformation.

As India is still developing and deepening democratic processes the constituency like Anand provides an example of the possibilities of inclusive and participatory governance. Strengthening voter education, developing digital literacy and establishing just representation will be important to working on to keep this democratic momentum going.

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