

etc. More importantly despite their social differences, both the two groups of women are equally facing the disadvantages associated with the nature of the informality of their work. All of them have been facing low wages compared to men, job insecurities, exhaustion due to long working hours, exploitative workplace and burden of carrying out reproductive and household care work. The present study clearly projected both common and different experiences of being an informal worker. Therefore, mere creating regulations for transforming informal economy to formal economy will not certainly help informal workers, rather their access to basic welfare facilities such as equal pay for equal work, secured work places, hygiene and sanitation facilities, health, nutrition and education should be considered as their rights and providing them their rights should be the prime duty of the state.

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POLITICAL FUNDING AND THE ELECTORATE: AN ANALYSIS OF THE INDIAN POLITICAL CONTEXT

Hasmin Ahmed
Dr. Borun Dey

Abstract

As said by American politician, Jesse Unruh “Money is the mother's milk of politics”, it is impossible to think of elections without financial resources in a country like India. The country from a one-party dominance till the 1960s to the formation of coalition governments and the increasing number of political parties with each election has intense the need for more finances in the election to attract the voters in their favour. This has resulted in a growing involvement of the business groups in the electoral politics of the country. There has been a 613 per cent rise in donations from the corporate sector to the political parties since 2004 and more recently with the introduction of the electoral bond scheme; the contributions to political parties have increased much more than before. Therefore, this paper moves forward with the objective to analyse the corporate funding to the political parties and has also focused on the impact of this growing involvement of the corporate on the electorate.

Keywords: Elections, Political Funding, Electorate, Corporate.

The 2019 Lok Sabha elections in the country is considered to be the costliest in the history of Indian elections with a total expenditure of Rs. 55,000 crores according to a Centre for Media Studies report with 35 percent spending on campaign or publicity. The report mentions that the election expenditure has gone up by around six times from 1998 to 2019 (Centre for Media Studies Report, 2019). The election expenditure includes advertisement and publicity, public meeting expenses, assistance to candidates, travel expenses and other miscellaneous expenses. One of the new kinds of expenses added in the recent years is the digital campaigning expenses. The political parties hire dedicated team of Public Relations (PR) firms that planned everything for them to add more innovation to the election campaigns since 2014

Indian General Elections to catch the attention of the voters in the new media platforms (Khan, 2019). But this has resulted in more cost to the expenditures during election. The estimated election expenditure has increased from Rs. 30,000 crores in 2014 General Elections to Rs. 55,000+ crores in 2019 General Elections in the country and social media was a major head of expenditure during 2019 elections (Centre for Media Studies Report, 2019). According to the data from the advertising transparency reports by Google and Facebook, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has spent 25 crores while Indian National Congress (INC) spent a total of 1.42 crore for advertisements on Facebook and Google. However, in the opinion of the experts these figures do not reflect the true spendings of the political parties. According to Ashish Bhasin, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at Dentsu Aegis Network - India and Greater South (media buying agency), huge amount has been incurred by the major political parties on social media specially to attract the first-time voters and it is likely to spend a total of Rs. 350-400 crores at 2019 General Elections in the country (Hindustan Times, 2019). The rising election costs can impact on the public policy as money allows wealthy individuals to influence on the electoral politics. This results in a policy that responds more to the interest of the rich thereby creating inequality in the country.

In this changing context question arises regarding the huge amount of funds received by the political parties and what implications these carry for the electorate in the country. This article moves forward with these questions.

Political Funding: Who Pays?

Financial resources are considered as an essential precondition for election contestation, however money in the political system complicates it and results in more inclination of the political actors for those who contribute to their party i.e., post-election there are manipulation of the public policies in their favour. In regard to the Indian political system, the role of money has been growing with each passing year, Kapur and Vaishnav (2018) in their book, 'Costs of Democracy: Political Finances in India' states certain inherent factors responsible for such changes in the country such as the growing size of the economy since the 1990s have likely 'independent effects' on the election spending, the electoral landscape becoming more competitive due to emergence of multi political parties after the end of one-party dominance in the country, organizational strength of the political parties have decreased and focused its shift to 'charismatic' leaders who often more dependent on private funds and also the increase competition to win local elections. In this situation question arises who funds the political parties to incur huge expenses

in the elections? Whether there is only individual funding or other organizations involved?

The huge amount of election expenditure is met through the political funds from the voluntary donations that consist of both individual and organizations. The political funding in the Indian political context has changed since its first election and this growing funding can be attributed to recent developments – the electoral bond scheme introduced through the Finance Act, 2017 that allows anyone to donate to the political parties maintaining confidentiality of their identity. A citizen of India or a body incorporated in India will be eligible to purchase electoral bond within a ten-day time period in each quarter to donate to political parties that would be issued or purchased in any value, in multiples from Rs. 1000 to Rs. 1,00,00,000 from specified branches of State Bank of India and must redeem such bonds by the political parties within a period of 15 days. The most striking feature is that it will not mention the name of the payee but the purchaser should have to fulfil all the Know Your Customer (KYC) norms and to make payment from a bank account (Press Information Bureau, 2018).

The electoral bond scheme faced a lot of criticism regarding the issue of transparency. The Finance Act, 2017 diluted several provisions that were previously active to make political funding a transparent affair. The Finance Act, 2017 nullifies the safeguard mentioned in the Section 29 (C) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 that mandates – “The treasurer of a political party or any other person authorised by the political party in this behalf shall, in each financial year, prepare a report in respect of the following, namely:

- (a) The contribution in excess of twenty thousand rupees received by such political party from any person in that financial year;
- (b) The contribution in excess of twenty thousand rupees received by such political party from companies other than Government companies in that financial year.”

The Finance Act, 2017 also deleted the Section 182 of the Companies Act, 2013 that mandate a company, other than a government company that has been in existence for less than three financial years may contribute any amount directly or indirectly to any political party however, the aggregate of the amount which may be so contributed by the company in any financial year shall not exceed 7.5 per cent of its average net profits during the three

immediately preceding financial years. This provision was removed by the Finance Act, 2017 that resulted in companies to donate as much as they want without any sort of restraint. The Act further modified sub-section 3 of the Section 182 of the Companies Act, 2013 that mandate, “Every company shall disclose in its profit and loss account any amount or amounts contributed by it to any political party during the financial year to which that account relates, giving particulars of the total amount contributed and the name of the party to which such amount has been contributed.” However, after the amendment, the companies only required to disclose the total amount donated by its profit and loss accounts.

The Government of India defend its decision by arguing that the electoral bond scheme achieve two purpose – to prevent the victimization of donor by political parties and secondly, check inflow of black money through cash donations as only individuals or companies with a verified KYC account can purchase electoral bonds. But the Election Commission of India (ECI) made objection to the electoral bond scheme and made it clear that it will violate provisions of the Reserve Bank of India Act (1934), Representation of Peoples Act (1951), Income Tax Act(1961), Foreign Contributions

Regulation Act (2010) and Companies Act (2013). In this regard, former Chief Election Commissioner S.Y. Qureshi remarked that any reform is a good reform but electoral bond scheme is destructive. The companies paid crores of rupees and no one will know who has given money to whom and this is not transparency. He further said, “Now, a company can exist to run political parties; 100 per cent profits will go there. This is crony capitalism. Capitalists will run the country: as probably they have been for years and now, more legalised.” (The Hindu, 2018).

Amidst such criticism, according to an Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) report, total 18,299 electoral bonds worth Rs 9856.72 crore have been sold in twenty phases between March 2018 to April 2022 in the country. In the months of March and April 2019 i.e., the period of general elections, 36.74 per cent of the total value of electoral bonds was purchased. The report further points that Rs 9201 crore i.e., 93.34 per cent of the total value of bonds purchased were in the denomination of Rs 1 crore indicating that these bonds are being purchased by corporate rather than individuals. The analysis of the ADR reports on donations received from corporate and individuals by national political parties from Financial Year (FY) 2014-15 to 2019-20found an increase from Rs. 621.6 crore to Rs. 996.445 crore.

The recent developments have increased the flow of corporate funds into the political system. This politicians-business nexus resulted in social, economic and political unaccountability and also resulted in concentration of power and elite domination. The analysis of corporate share in political funding to national political parties shows the increasing number of contributions. The Table 1 shows the corporate share in funding to major national political parties from FY 2017-18 to FY 2020-21.

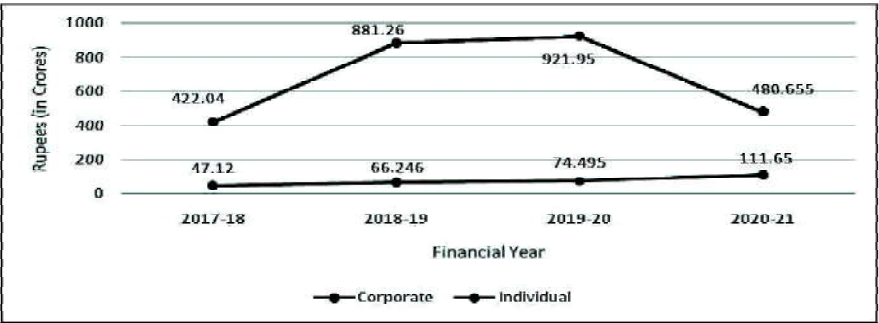
Table 1: Corporate share in funding to major national political parties from FY 2017-18 to FY 2020-21

Financial Year	Corporate Funding
2017-18	422.04 crore
2018-19	881.26 crore
2020-21	480.655 crore

Source: Association for Democratic Reforms Report

The FY years 2018-19 and FY 2019-20 shows an increase amount of funding and it can be attributed to the 2019 General Elections in the country that resulted in huge contributions from the business sector. The amount of corporate funding is much higher than individual contribution in the above-mentioned financial years. The Figure 1 shows a comparison of the corporate funding and individual contributions to the national political parties between FY 2017-18 to FY 2020-21.

Figure 1: Comparison of Corporate and Individual Funding to the National Political Parties between FY 2017-18 to FY 2020-21

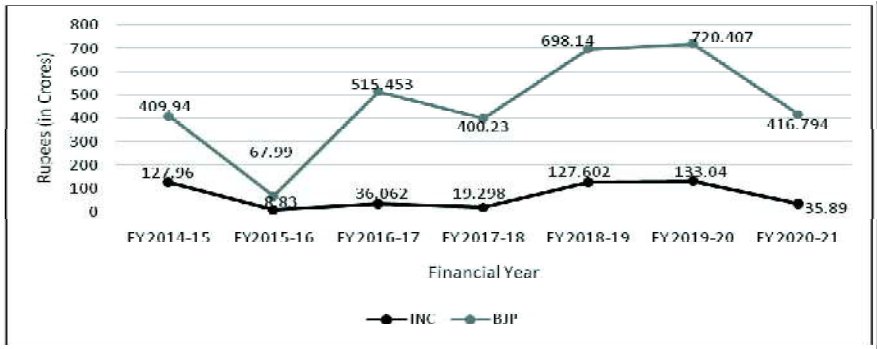


Source: Association for Democratic Reforms Report

The corporate sector maintained good relations with the government as they need permissions from time to time such as environment clearance to set up new plants and therefore, they cannot alienate the party in power or the party that is likely to come in power because they do not want to find themselves in vulnerable position (Gupta, 2018). This results in the corporate willing to fund the election for any particular political party or candidate who is willing to give them an advantage in the market place through government permit, sanctions or any such related matters (Kumar, 2022). There are reports that suggest that up to 90 per cent of the donations are received from the business sector such as Satya Electoral Trusts, A. V. Patil Foundation etc. According to an Association for Democratic Reforms report on election funding, corporate funds accounted for 91 per cent of the total contributions of political parties in FY 2019-20.

However, reports suggest that the corporates have created a funding gap between the political parties. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has so far received the highest amount of funds from the corporate sector. The party collected 95 per cent of their donations in 2018 through electoral bonds. The audit and income tax reports of the party suggest that it received Rs. 210 crores through electoral bonds of the total Rs. 222 crores donated in 2018 while the Indian National Congress (INC) received only Rs.5 crores during the same period (The Print, 2019). The Figure 2 shows the graphical representation of the funds received from the corporate sector by BJP and INC from FY 2014-15 to FY 2020-21.

Figure 2: Comparison of funds received from the corporate sector to BJP and INC from FY 2014-15 to FY 2020-21



Source: Association for Democratic Reforms Report

The funds to both the parties show increasing during the period of elections such as in FY 2014-15, FY 2018-19 and FY 2019-20; however, the funds received by BJP is comparatively much higher than INC in all the years. The BJP has been occupying a key position in tapping corporate donations and it is even during the time when the INC was in power in the centre. In the years 2005-2012, INC received Rs. 172 crores while the BJP received Rs. 192 crores. But this gap has increased since 2013 as the business sector donated Rs. 1621 crore to BJP while INC received only Rs.235 crore till 2019 (The Print, 2019).

In this context question arises what implications this involvement of the corporates in the electoral politics has on the electorate.

Impact on the Electorate

The media has an important role to play in ‘stopping the private interests from subverting public good through the purchase of controls and favors’ (Gupta, 2019, p. 419). The role of media as a criticiser has even more expanded due to the advent of the new media platforms that provides a forum to the public to share their opinions on the policy issues as well as decisions of the political parties in general and government in particular. The electorate who was once not active and cannot share their views due to limited participation and one-way communication in the traditional media has in the present scenario made active involvement in the politics of the country due to the interactivity feature of the new media that allows two-way communication and sometimes, multi way communication possible through user-generated content production and dissemination.

In the traditional media the criticisms to the political parties are countered through the corporates as mentioned in the ‘Propaganda Model’ⁱ. The corporates through their ownership as well as a source of revenue to the media houses controlled the production and dissemination of the news and information and the media houses also do not upset them. The corporates act as a defence mechanism against the criticism towards the political party that they supported or in other words, they have invested their funds for the election. Krishna Kaushik (2016) mentioned that five Indian media houses namely, News24, Network18, India TV, News Nation and NDTV are indebted to industrialist Mukesh Ambani, Mahendra Nahata and Abhey Oswaland it is predicted that due to the large investments these corporates may have control over 20 to 70 per cent of their news content. This scenario

remains more or less same even in case of the new media as the ownership and other factors still remains dominant. The basic idea of the model that economic and political elites has an iron hand in the production and dissemination of news and information remains unchanged and also the traditional media under the ownership of corporate also has their control and dominance in the new media platforms. But as the electorate in the new media age can produce user-generated content and the political parties face more criticism than before therefore they resort to other means to counter the criticisms towards them.

The political parties use ‘flaks’ⁱⁱ against the media houses that highlighted their shortcomings through the corporate bodies that funds the party as they are the shareholders as well as source of revenue of the media houses. The use of ‘flaks’ in the new media is done through the pages and groups that support any particular political party as every political party besides their official pages or channels have a number of unofficial pages created by their supporters in their name that spreads contents that are not true but are posted only to show the bright side of the political party. In other words, false news and information are circulated to avoid criticism and also to divert the attention of the electorate from core issues to other things. The Ministry of Law and Justice in response to a question in Lok Sabha on July 2019 regarding the list of complaints against false news on social media during the 17th Lok Sabha Elections answered that a total of 46 cases were reported to Facebook, 97 cases to Twitter and 11 cases to YouTube and directed the respective social media platforms to remove the false information (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2019).

According to a study, ‘Political hazard: misinformation in the 2019 Indian general election campaign,’ the misinformation during 2019 General Elections do not reached people only through WhatsApp forward messages but also through legitimate political entities. The study examined 1014 fact-checked stories from March 10, 2019 to May 23, 2019 and found that BJP and INC were responsible for majority of the fake information posts. In this regard, two fake news that were widely circulated by BJP and INC against each other during 2019 General Elections can be cited here. The INC was targeted that its main leader, Sonia Gandhi is richer than the Queen of Great Britain. This story was shared widely during the time of election campaign including by a spokesman of the BJP. Another such false news was regarding Prime Minister Narendra Modi. A video was circulated and shared by the

INC supporters where Narendra Modi said that ‘he had not studied beyond high school.’ But the video was just a part of an old interview where he makes it clear that his higher education qualifications were attained through external exams after leaving formal schooling. However, this video is still in circulation in the new media platforms (BBC News, 2019). During the time of election false information sometimes spread only to mislead the voters. A photo of a fake or prosthetic finger lying on a table has been circulated with the claim that they will be used to cast multiple votes in the 2019 elections. Even the Tripura INC has accused the BJP of importing fake indelible ink and prosthetic finger to cast fake votes in the 2019 elections and report the incidence to the Chief Electoral Officer (The Indian Express, 2019). However, it was found that the image was from Japan and was in circulation since 2017. Election Commission of India reported about 145 post related to voter misinformation during 2019 elections to social media platforms to take action (Election Commission of India, 2019).

In this situation the one that is most effected are the electorate. For most of the electorate just like traditional media, the new media is also a source of news and information. The electorate depend on it for keeping themselves update on political issues and events. However, the menace of false news and information threatens their access to objective and authentic information and may have an impact on the electorate’s political perceptions and decisions. In this regard the political decision that is of utmost concern is voting. The fake news tends to spread and remain within a group which has the same ideological view specially in the political context and because of this they do not access the different information that resulted in the creation of an artificial perception of consensus about any particular issue or topic (Ottonicar, 2020). The spread of false information is more during the time of elections when the political parties tried to create a threat mechanism in the minds of the voter against the other parties. Forrest and Marks (1999) states that the effects of media on the voters are larger among highly stable voters and highly volatile voters where the former paid close attention to media’s coverage of political news because of their interest in politics and decided their vote before the election campaigns while the later used media as a source of political information to help take a voting decision. In both the cases media plays an important role and in the present context where new media has made access to news and information easier and faster therefore it can be assumed to have an impact on the voting decisions of the electorate.

Another important aspect is that the electorate from all walks of life irrespective of their age use the medium for news and information and not everyone is equally technologically strong to differentiate between what is a filtered content and what is authentic. Here, the education of an individual plays a significant role as it gives the ability to identify the false information as Maddalena and Gili (2020: 9) mentioned that the most vulnerable to manipulate with false news and information are those with “the fewest intellectual resources, a low level of education and a low self-esteem”(p. 90). But it should be also mentioned that high levels of education do not mean that an individual have sufficient technical knowledge. Even people with high levels of education cannot differentiate what is false and what is authentic in the absence of technical know-how because individuals use technology but do not know about how technology works. The advantage of this situation is taken by the political actors to spread their party agenda to attract the voters and also to deviate them from the issues such as unemployment, health, education, corporate involvement in politics etc. and even if any individual or group criticize the political parties than they faced flaks from their party members.

Therefore, although it cannot be concluded that the corporates have a direct impact on the electorate through their funding to the political parties but from the discussion it can be derive that they have an indirect impact on the electorate that can have an effect on the electorate’s political perceptions and decisions.

Concluding Remarks

The corporates are one of the most important sources of political funding and the political parties will always be wanted to maintain a good relation with them and vice-versa as both the corporate and the political parties moves towards the same goal of capturing power while the former in the economic field and later in the political. But both cannot move forward without support from each other. In this situation the issue of concern is the electorate as this corporate-politician nexus will impact on the public policy making and indirectly on the electorate’s decisions and perceptions. Therefore, the need is to check to some extent the corporates involvement in the politics as total elimination of them is not possible in the present scenario but steps for transparency in their contributions to the political parties together with limited funding should be adopted.

End-notes:

- i. According to the propaganda model the news content before presented to the audience goes through five news filters that comprise, ownership of the media firms, advertisement, source of news information, flaks and ideology. The propaganda model reflects the ability of the government bodies and dominant business entities to influence the news content so as to maintain their power and profit in the society.
- ii. Herman and Chomsky (2008) define flaks as “negative responses to a media statement or program” (p.24). The flaks may be in form of letters, telephonic calls, petitions, lawsuits etc. Flaks can be organized centrally or locally or may consist of independent actions of individuals. They can be costly to the media houses if produced on a large scale or can also be problematic if produced by an individual or group with considerable resources.

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BORDER FROM HUMAN SECURITY PERSPECTIVE: A CONCEPTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Indrakshi Phukan

Abstract

In simple sense, borders are the lines that separate two different entities whether it is country, state, province, city or town. For a nation-state borders are the symbol of state sovereignty. But most often, the people residing along the borders are not considered as a citizen of a particular nation-state. Even they are deprived of the basic facilities which are being enjoyed by the mainstream people. A nation-state views border through the lens of national security putting less importance on borderland people. The notable thing is that the borderland people perceive the concept of security which is not similar with the kind of security the nation-state perceives. Their lives are not only associated with the issues of national security, but also with the issues of human security. In this context this article makes an attempt to provide a conceptual analysis of border from human security perspective.

Key Words: border, borderland, borderland people, national security, human security.

Introduction

The territory of every modern nation-state is demarcated by a border. In that sense, border signifies an area of geographical boundary separating sovereign states, federal states as well as internal administrative units. Since the emergence of modern state system, mapping of borders became an important business of the states (Michel Baud and Willem Van Schendel, 1997) through which states established a world-wide system of clear-cut territorial jurisdiction to have their legal and political sovereignty. The literature on border has reflected that the term border, which is considered as the symbol of state sovereignty, can be viewed from different perspectives. If some scholars have defined border as political construction, some others