

Role of Religion in Indian Politics

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Abstract— *India is the largest democratic country in the world, in the last fifty years it has travelled and been influenced by multiple social and economic changes. Its independence from Britain in 1947, the partition creating Pakistan and the Pakistan/ Indian debate over Kashmir have been fundamental political movements within these years. As Y.B. Damle states, “Politics is concerned with goal-attainment and politics is the art of possibility” the political process cannot function without structural features. As a country with multiple religions, a secular state, the political process has been molded around not only ethnicity and caste but religion has proved to be a major factor. India has long been known as a very spiritual, religious area of the world. Religion is a way of life, an integral part of Indian tradition, permeating every aspect of life, from chores to food to education and politics.*

I. INTRODUCTION

India is the largest democratic country in the world, in the last fifty years it has travelled and been influenced by multiple social and economic changes. Its independence from Britain in 1947, the partition creating Pakistan and the Pakistan/ Indian debate over Kashmir have been fundamental political movements within these years. As Y.B. Damle states, “Politics is concerned with goal-attainment and politics is the art of possibility” the political process cannot function without structural features. As a country with multiple religions, a secular state, the political process has been molded around not only ethnicity and caste but religion has proved to be a major factor. India has long been known as a very spiritual, religious area of the world. Religion is a way of life, an integral part of Indian tradition, permeating every aspect of life, from chores to food to education and politics.

II. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

- I. Individuals who give importance to religion are more likely to believe that politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office
- II. Individuals who do not give importance to religion are more likely to agree that Religious leaders should not influence how people vote in elections
- III. Religious people are more likely to agree that it would be better for India if more people with strong religious beliefs hold public office
- IV. Those individuals who do not give importance to religion are more likely to agree on the statement that religious leaders should not influence government decisions.

III. Existing Explanations

It is most important because religion is one of the most significant social institution in India it is nurturing the people’s views and aspirations. Religion always matters for power which rules the society. Religious places are used for political propaganda and the religious sentiments of the people are excited in order to gain political control of the State. This emergence of religion-political party has threatened the secular character of India. It is feared that if it succeeds there is a possibility that many other political parties with caste and religion as the basis may come up.

- It involves everyone/some in the society
- It requires for everyone for well-being
- It gives what is politically essential to citizenry

Main Independent Variable (IV)

Religion (V9)

Main Dependent Variable (DV)

- I. Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office (V194)
- II. Religious leaders should not influence how people vote in elections (V195)

- III. It would be better for India if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office (V196)
- IV. Religious leaders should not influence government decisions. (V197)

Rearrange and recoding the all Variables:

Religion (Independent Variables)

Religion is important in individual’s life and expressed level of importance in to 4 types; such as 1. Very important, 2. Rather important, 3. Not very important and 4. Not at all important.

Rearranged the values or labels as: 1. Not at all important, 2. Not very important, 3. rather important, and 4. Very important.

Recoded the values or labels as: (recV9) (on the basis of level of important) into two: 1 – Not important, 2 – Important

- Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office (V194) (Dependent VARIABLE)

People’s level agreeing on above statement mentioned as 1. Strongly agree, 2. Agree, 3. Neither agrees nor disagree, 4. Disagree, 5. Strongly disagree.

Rearranged the values or labels as: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. neither agree nor disagree, 4. Agree, 5. strongly agree.

Recoded the values or labels as: (recV194) (on the basis of level of agree) into three: 1 – disagree, 2 – Neither, 3. Agree.

- Religious leaders should not influence how people vote in elections (V195) (DEPENDENT VARIABLE)

People’s level agreeing on above statement mentioned as 1. Strongly agree, 2. Agree, 3. Neither agrees nor disagree, 4. Disagree, 5. Strongly disagree.

Rearranged the values or labels as: 1. strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. neither agree nor disagree, 4. Agree, 5. strongly agree.

Recoded the values or labels as: (recV195) (on the basis of level of agree) into three: 1 – disagree, 2 – Neither, 3. Agree.

- It would be better for India if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office (V196) (DEPENDENT VARIABLE)

People’s level agreeing on above statement mentioned

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- Religious leaders should not influence government decisions.(V197) (DEPENDENT VARIABLE)

People’s level agreeing on above statement mentioned as 1. Strongly agree, 2. Agree, 3. Neither agrees nor disagree, 4. Disagree, 5. Strongly disagree.

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Analysis from the Crosstabs

Politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office

		Level of responses			Total
		disagree	neither	agree	
Importance of Religion	Not Important	88	73	135	296
		29.7%	24.7%	45.6%	100.0%
	Important	340	257	585	1182
		28.8%	21.7%	49.5%	100.0%
	Total	428	330	720	1478
		29.0%	22.3%	48.7%	100.0%

Source: 2005-2006 WORLD VALUES SURVEY

The above table explains about the importance of religion in contemporary politics by using crosstab of two variables of either giving importance to religion or not. In fact, the religion has its significance in politics as examined in above table that those who said that ‘politicians who do not believe in God are unfit for public office’ the response among the people disagree (29.7%) and neutral (24.7%) is very close to each other, but those who agreed that religion is not

importance seem to be very significant (46.6%). Despite the above statement, only 28.8% people disagreed, 21.7% people are neutral and 49.5% people have agreed that religion has been playing very dominant role in contemporary politics, in other words, only 135 out of 720 people said that religion is not importance. Altogether, religion has important role in the operasanalisation of political system.

Religious leaders should not influence how people vote in elections

		Level of responses			Total
		disagree	neither	agree	
Priority of Religion	Not Important	59	65	174	298
		19.8%	21.8%	58.4%	100.0%
	Important	177	191	806	1174
		15.1%	16.3%	68.7%	100.0%
	Total	236	256	980	1472
		16.0%	17.4%	66.6%	100.0%

Source: 2005-2006 WORLD VALUES SURVEY

The above crosstab signifies the relationship between individuals who give importance and not importance to religion and simultaneously is their perception towards religious leaders influencing voting behavior. Around 19.8 per cent of our responses are the ones for whom religion is not important yet they disagree with the statement religious leaders should not influence how people vote in elections. On the other hand around 68.7 per cent of our respondents opine that religion is important to them yet they do not want religious leaders influencing their decision to vote in elections. This informs that whether for an individual religion is important or not important majority of them agree to the statement that religious leaders should not influence how people vote in elections.

It would be better for if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office

		Level of responses			Total
		disagree	neither	agree	

Importance of Religion	Not Important	93	85	98	276
		33.7%	30.8%	35.5%	100.0%
	Important	363	322	434	1119
		32.4%	28.8%	38.8%	100.0%
	Total	456	407	532	1395
		32.7%	29.2%	38.1%	100.0%

Source: 2005-2006 WORLD VALUES SURVEY

The above table describes the relationship between individuals for whom religion is important or not important in relation to agreement or disagreement over the statement that it would be better for if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office. Around 33.7 % of our respondents who do not give importance to religion disagree with this statement. Similarly 38.8 percent of our respondents for whom religion is important agree with the above mentioned statement. This signifies that majority of our respondents feel that more people with strong religious beliefs should hold public office

Religious leaders should not influence government decisions

		Level of responses			Total
		disagree	neither	agree	
Priority of Religion	Not Important	72	70	145	287
		25.1%	24.4%	50.5%	100.0%
	Important	179	175	762	1116
		16.0%	15.7%	68.3%	100.0%
	Total	251	245	907	1403
		17.9%	17.5%	64.6%	100.0%

Source: 2005-2006 WORLD VALUES SURVEY

A very diversified conclusions can be drawn from the above table that the level of response among the disagreed people regarding the issue that 'religious leaders should not influence government decisions' is more than 50% i.e., 50.5%, despite the fact that the level of response between disagreed and neutral people seem to be almost same. However, those

people who believe that 'religious leaders should not influence government decisions' are also same as the disagreed and neutrals' responses is almost close to each other, whereas 68.3% respondents who have the opinion that 'religious leaders should not influence government decisions' have accepted that religion has very importance in political affairs.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

1. Religion has very important role in the operationalisation of political power.
2. Religiosity in Indian politics has been dynamics and influencing across the geographical regions.
3. Those who believe in the statement that 'It would be better if more people with strong religious beliefs held public office' are not given importance.
4. Most of the people believe that religion should not influence the political affairs.

CONCLUSION

It is known fact that in the Indian political system, religion has been playing an effective role. As of my knowledge, if religious forces are allowed to become powerful, than there will be disintegration of the nation and sovereignty of the state will be in danger. There are a large number of religions, castes and sub-castes in India, and unfortunately some of them are opposed to one another as far as their practices are concerned. Under such circumstances, there is no possibility of keeping them together, if once there is fragmentation. So if we want to consolidate democracy, strengthen for effective foundation to it and ensure for working in a successful manner and it is necessary to notice that the people should keep away religion from politics.