

Lure of Money in Lieu of Votes

The Trend: 2007-2014

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It is obvious that relatively more voters from economically poor families are lured across all States. In some States it is more than twice among BPL voters than in all voters. Kerala seems to be an exception. As this CMS study confirms, money for votes is not limited to the rural voters but a national phenomena spread across rural - urban, among different age groups and irrespective of educational level of voters.

THAT money is paid to voters for their vote is known to those who are familiar with grass root polities of India. We now have data for the magnitude of this phenomena. When this data is viewed together with 2007 and 2008 pre-general election surveys, it is evident the trend has become of threatening proportion to the very fundamentals of democracy. India Corruption Study which CMS started in 2000 as annual series found certain linkage between bribes citizens pay in availing basic public services and the quid-pro-quo practice of voting.

The first ever-empirical study of CMS on "cash-for-vote" phenomena was in 2007 with 23000 BPL (below poverty line) families. The second round was in 2008 with a sample of 18000 voters from 19 States. CMS has also been tracking the trend in individual States where the practice is blatant, both in the context of Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. (**Table-1**)

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Baseline survey rounds of 2007 & 2008 (Table-1)

What percent of voters were distributed money-two rounds of surveys in 2007 and 2008

State	Percentage of Voters(2008)	Percentage of voters among BPL HH (2007)
Karnataka	47	73
Tamil Nadu	34	78
Madhya Pradesh	33	29
Andhra Pradesh	31	94
Bihar	23	31
Orissa	27	50
Delhi	25	24
Gujarat	24	32
Chattisgarh	22	73
Uttaranchal	20	33
Uttar Pradesh	18	32
Rajasthan	14	41
Maharashtra	13	32
Haryana	8	40
Jharkhand	7	21
Assam	4	56
Tripura	-	3
Himachal Pradesh	-	4
Kerala	13	8
West Bengal	4	18
National	22	37
Sample Size	18,000	23,000
Source : CMS		



Note-For-Vote

phenomena spread across rural-urban, among different age groups and irrespective of educational level of voters.

Prevalence of note-for-vote is more in three Southern States of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Among BPL voters, the percentage was higher – in 2007 it was 37 percent among BPL voters against 22 percent among all voters in 2008. In those three Southern States of AP, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, well over 70 percent of BPL voters were distributed money for their vote. Even in Chattisgarh, Haryana, Rajasthan, Assam and Orissa, much more than 40 percent of BPL voters were distributed money.

A much higher percentage of voters in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh acknowledged receiving cash as an inducement “in the last 10 years” than in Bihar or Uttar Pradesh. The amount involved in these northern States was much less than in the southern States. The 2009 Assembly-cum-Lok Sabha elections in Andhra Pradesh could well be the most “expensive” ever in India - nearly half the voters were given money.

Most parties are alike

A sensitivity analysis of responses brings out that money was distributed notwithstanding which party was in power and that all the key contending parties / candidates were involved in this practice.

On the eve of 2014 Lok Sabha poll, CMS conducted the survey in select States and constituencies *before* and *after* voting. The pre-poll survey on expectations or perceptions of voters about cash lure brings out two things. First, the expectations are much higher than their experience a few years ago and, second, the states in the North (UP and MP) are fast catching up with the states in the South on the extent of cash lure.

Local polls are more competitive?

Relatively more percent of voters were paid money for their vote in the case of Assembly election

In States like UP, Punjab and Bihar muscle power in elections is getting replaced with money power. The phenomena of note-for-vote had caught on in these states too. But even in these states, the percentage of voters distributed money (although higher than in 2009) was lower than the percentage who were expecting money in 2014 before their constituency went to poll.

than in the case of Lok Sabha election. The amount was even higher in the case of municipal and district panchayts as in the case of Andhra Pradesh in 2014.

Mother of corruption

An analysis of trends since 2007 in note-for-vote and citizen giving bribe for availing basic services indicate that voters end up paying a bribe of several times more the amount received for vote from a candidate once a few years. In turn, candidates, who lure voters with money, get busy making several times more of what was spent towards winning. That is why we have described this note-for-vote phenomena as “mother of all corruption” in the country. Election has become fountainhead of corruption in the country.

The best bet to counter the menace is voters themselves. They need to reject the very lure and realize the potential of vote for getting the government they deserve. Voters need to understand the linkage between note-for-vote and the “unofficial money” that they end up paying as bribe to get basic public services that they are entitled to get from the government. And, only then will we get more responsive representatives.

Last minute factors

It is known that a significant percent of voters make up their voting choice in the last phase closer to polling day. This percentage could be anywhere between 7 to 27 percent depending up on which election, who the contending parties, keenness of contests, profile of candidates in context, etc. So what is it that drives voters to



Voters on Polling Booth

ultimately either shift their voting intentions or make up their choice in the last minute?

Based on field surveys on the subject over the years, the factors that influence or contribute "last minute" choice are;

1. Local pressures,
2. Lure of money,
3. Effective campaigns,
4. Coverage in news media,
5. Manifesto offers.

About 70 percent of those who change or make up their voting choice in the last minute are influenced by anyone or a combination of these five factors. In this process, lure of money is a more likely factor, not always acknowledged and often goes by group dynamics. Temptation or lure of money may not be a sufficient factor but is a likely common factor in this process. For example in Jharkhand, Haryana, Maharashtra (2014) this "lure of money" alone works out to one-third of decision changes in the last minute.

That is how the percentage of voters who view money as a factor has substantially increased in 2014 as compared to 2008. Some examples are given here.

Is corruption a concern on poll eve?

Many respondents surveyed in 2014 recall lure for their vote than the percentage who acknowledge corruption as an issue bothering them in the context of elections. On probing further, a much higher percentage of voters concede that corruption influences or matters in determining voting preference closer to the polling day. Increase in corruption, including in basic

public services involving citizens, is no guarantee that voter would be concerned about corruption as an issue and resist or reject lure of money and gifts at the time of elections. *The study brings out that voter does not make a link between taking lures from candidates during election times to the compulsions of giving bribe in availing government services in the subsequent months/ years.* Both the loser and the winner in the election tend to recover or make up what has been spent in fighting the election, while the winner ends up making several times more.

Increasing Expectations

A much higher percentage of voters expect that money will be paid in the poll ahead than the percent received in the previous election. On interviewing a few weeks before the Assembly poll in early 2014, a higher percentage than those who

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Experienced bribe, yet corruption do not bother?2008/2014 (Table-2)

Percent of voters

State	Percent of voters who paid bribe while availing public services in the previous one year	Consider corruption as an important poll issue 2008/2014	Know personally someone who was paid/received in the neighborhood	Consider money as last minute factor that influences voting 2008/2014
AP	24	2	28	13
Assam	11	15	15	0
Bihar	14	6	38	19
Chattisgarh	23	3	31	10
Delhi	35	8	6	6
Gujarat	22	3	29	12
Haryana	21	4	13	9
HP	13	12	13	2
Jharkhand	40	6	68	9
Karnataka	22	27	19	15
Kerala	30	4	9	5
MP	38	22	32	8
Maharashtra	29	12	12	10
Orissa	14	5	18	0
Rajasthan	9	24	7	6
Tamil Nadu	29	2	18	7
UP	12	22	9	2
Uttarakhand	28	11	26	0
West Bengal	12	2	4	0

For some States which were not covered in 2013 – 2014, 2008 findings are given

acknowledged such a practice previously, expected money in this election in 2014. (In some of these States in some constituencies before and after the election interviews were held with some voters to facilitate a comparison of expectations and actual experience).

Are voters any more sensitive about corruption?

There is no evidence of that. Citizens generally and even specifically in the context of elections, do not connect their having to pay bribe to avail basic public services to that of corruption

as an issue of concern even at the time of elections.

Although a much higher percentage of voters paid bribe in availing one or other public services in the previous one year, much less percentage of voters consider corruption as an electoral issue. Even in States where the extent of note-for-vote as well as percent who paid bribe in availing a Government service is very high, the percentage of voters who consider corruption as an electoral issue is low. That is perhaps why only an insignificant percentage of voters admit that money distribution in the last minute influences poll

outcome. This is perhaps because the percentage of voters who were distributed money for their vote in the earlier election was high. Even though a significant percentage across States paid bribe in the last one year in availing public services, not as many consider corruption as an electoral issue. How else can corruption be addressed by citizens? That election to legislatures is an opportunity to get “better people” represent them is not realized or is conveniently ignored. The linkage between the two experiences is not being realized as could be seen from the table here. (Table-2)

Expectations and Experience: Some Examples of 2014 Lok Sabha (Table-3)

Percent of voters

State	2008 Experience percent of voters who acknowledge money was distributed	2014 Expectation percent voters who expect that money's going to be distributed before the poll	2014 Experience percent who recalled after poll experience or knowing a neighborhood distribution
Andhra Pradesh	53	70	75
Uttar Pradesh	20	65	26
Madhya Pradesh	29	52	30
Punjab	15	30	20
Delhi	20	30	8
Maharashtra	22	43	-

Money influences where undecided is more

Money's role as a last minute factor is acknowledged by a high percentage of voters but not many (do not) consider it as an influencing factor for the outcome of the poll. The tendency in responding to enquiry on **influence of money** is either exaggeration or it is a downplaying of its influence (depending on affiliations of respondents and whether they are "beneficiary" of note-for-vote or not).

The expectations of voters that they will be covered and with a higher amount (than before) could be seen across the States. Apart from local competitiveness of political parties, these perceptions are determined by coverage of news media, particularly poll surveys in news media.

Note-for-vote is no longer a casual affair. It is a conscious option of voter and deliberate and vitiating intervention of candidates. For example, in UP more than half of voters were expecting money before voting, but after the polling, only around 26 percent acknowledged note-for-vote. Of course, this is higher than the voters who acknowledged

the trend in 2009. Also, the amount per vote was more than before (but much less than what was distributed in Southern States in 2014 Lok Sabha poll). (Table-3)

In States like UP, Punjab and Bihar muscle power in elections is getting replaced with money power. The phenomena of note-for-vote had caught on in these states too. But even in these states, the percentage of voters distributed money (although higher than in 2009) was lower than the percentage who were expecting money in 2014 before their constituency went to poll.

While in states where note-for-vote had already peaked, the 2014 percentage of voters did not go beyond 85 percent, though the amount involved had gone up. These states are Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. What was distributed had gone up from Rs.2000 to 5000 at high end and Rs.500 to 1500 at lower end.

Trend in a few pockets indicate that if note-for-vote was not vogue, poll violence would have been witnessed as was in the case in UP in the earlier years. The evidence in AP is convincing (in a dozen seats). For, wherever a party could not deliver or distribute money to voters



Corruption during Election

on or before the polling day (for whatever reason), there were instances of clashes between the workers of two key contending parties and in fact that continued for next few days after the polling day.

Perception of voters, expecting more money than before at the time of earlier election, were much higher apparently because of two cues from news media. As never before, news media repeatedly reported that some or certain candidates are crorepati or and big industrialists. Second, never before news channels hyped bundles of currency notes confiscated on way for disbursement to voters. Both these trends in media coverage have increased expectations or voter demand. Thus, instead of a demotivating coverage of any such trend, coverage of channels had helped demand creation (unintentionally though). A phenomena of exaggeration of what "other candidate" is giving has added to the demand factor. Some local news channels even gave (as part of their news reports) how much was being paid to voters as a scroll.

Despite intensity of the phenomena and the way it was covered by news media, the malice did not receive serious larger attention. Political parties and leaders accused each other and as often but not condemned the very practice of note-for-vote. Its implications and linkage to overall corruption in the country was not even referred by any of the political leaders. As if it is all a concern of the Election Commission.

Over the years, it is so obvious from these CMS tracking studies that a major reason for higher and higher poll expenditure is this note-for-vote. But, worse is what it meant to accountability of elected representatives on the one hand and

prevalence of corruption on the other. At this rate, how can Indian democracy assure Good Governance to its citizens?

When the candidates of leading parties are local, compulsions for taking to note-for-vote are minimal. But when the fight between some candidates is much beyond the particular election, like between two families or factions with old rivalries, the lure of cash is likely to be even more than the previous election.

Where and when political parties are active at grass roots and with active cadres, not just on the eve of an election, the compulsions to take to note-for-vote are less.

Is note-for-vote candidate driven (supply) or voter driven (demand)? It is difficult to conclude. Both exist in parallel.

The trend of decline of political parties and rise of individuals, has given push to note-for-vote phenomena. As an article of South Asia Politics (May 2009) "Decline in Representative Character of Governments and elected Representatives", indicated, the number of individuals who matter in elections has gone up recently.

The increase in poll expenditure should be of particular concern as a high percentage of those who contested in 2009 in Lok Sabha poll showed an expenditure substantially less than what the ceiling was at that time. According to an ADR analysis, on an average in 2009, candidates as per their own reports filed with Election Commission, spent less than Rs. 15 lacs against a ceiling of Rs 40 lacs then. And yet, the EC on recommendation of political parties increased the ceiling to Rs.70 lacs in 2014.

This 2014 poll also confirms that proportion of expenditure by

individual candidates has gone up significantly to around 40 percent of total poll expenditure. This meant decline of political parties in poll process further and rise of individuals. It needs to be seen in the coming years what change will come in the funding by Corporates to political parties. Corporates could now contribute formally five to seven percent of profits under the new Corporate Act 2014.

Overall, about half of what candidate spend is as note-for-vote and all of it is unaccounted or black money.

Media coverage of lures!

News media not only promotes and increases the incidence, it compels other candidates too to give or offer money in a competitive way and make the practice as an essential part of contest. With one-third or more of news media in the country slipping into control of corporates and political leaders, can we expect to curb the phenomena of paid news on the eve of elections? "Quid pro coverage or reporting" has now acquired threatening proportion in driving public opinion trends and priorities of the day.

Taking money in lieu of vote during poll time amounts to taking bribe (some voters do not view it as bribe otherwise). Both taking as well as giving is illegal and punishable. This needs to be reiterated by the media as often as possible. In fact, political parties themselves need to take on this malice critically and publicly. Leaders should encourage voters to complain about givers as well as takers of money in lieu of vote.

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