

Lure of Money in Delhi Elections: The Kejriwal Effect

As the campaign for Delhi elections come to an end today, the focus now is on the general practice of luring voters- by hook or crook. This general trend of luring voters by cash and gifts across Lok Sabha and assembly elections is being tracked by CMS since 2007.

Interestingly, the CMS studies in Delhi have found “Kejriwal Effect” in drastic reduction of the reported (experience and recall) of payment of money during 2014 Lok Sabha elections. The table below shows that hardly 8% in Delhi acknowledged that money was distributed around against less than 20 percent in 2009 and about 30 percent who were expecting it prior to 2014 poll. Voters attributed this decline to AAP cadres and volunteers reaching their door steps. (Lure of Money in Lieu of Votes in Lok Sabha and Assembly Elections: the 2007-2014 Trend, CMS Transparency, October 2014)

Expectations and Experience with Note-for-Vote			
<i>(Percent of voters)</i>			
State	2009 Experience percent of voters who acknowledge money was distributed	2014 Expectation percent voters who expect that money 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

Source: CMS Transparency Studies

Note-for-vote and freebies have become the modus operandi of poll times in the country. Freebies are what parties and candidates formally offer free if they come to power. Consumable, households, durables and the like, going beyond welfare and equity concerns. This is besides the sops announced by party in power, like reducing fuel prices.

The lure of cash which individual candidates informally distribute on poll eve is another important means of getting voters to vote for a particular candidate or party. This phenomena has become alarming and all across. Until recently, this practice was threatening proportion in a couple of States in the South. In 2014, it caught on the States in the North where muscle power has been replaced with money power in elections to the extent of vitiating the very process. As seen in the above table, even in states like UP, Punjab and Bihar, 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. Despite initiatives by the EC, the expectation of voters for such lure are multiplying from election to election.

In this light, this finding of “Kejriwal effect” in Delhi elections is significant. As most polls are predicting a neck to neck win of AAP and BJP with majority, it would be interesting to study how the lure of votes is used for the Delhi Assembly Elections on February 7, 2015.

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