



“A STUDY OF POLITICAL LITERACY OF THE VOTERS IN NASHIK DISTRICT, MAHARASHTRA”

Dr. Sanjay Dagu Pagar

Assistant Professor , Department of Geography ,
MVP Samaj's K.T.H.M.College, Nashik , Affiliated S.P.P. University, Pune .

ABSTRACT

Currently, out of 193 recognized countries (member states of the United Nations), 123 of them are democratic. India is the world's largest democracy by electorate was created after independence in 1947. The 1952 election was the first election held in India. Elections are the backbone of democracy. In 2014 Loksabha election, voter turnout was recorded the highest voter turnout and it was 66.4 percent. It means 43.6 percent people did not vote at all. These numbers are alarmingly high and it is not good sign for any democracy.

The aim of the paper is to determine the political literacy among the people of Nashik District of Maharashtra. The present study is based on the primary and secondary source of data. In study area the maximum voting was recorded in 1967 in Lok Sabha election, which was 65.79 %.but after that only one time it was recorded above the 60 % in 1971 (65.59). But after that it was always less than 58 %. It means at local and national level voting turnout is not too much satisfied.

Political literacy is also not satisfactory in the study region. At the time of interview 10 questions were asked to respondents to know that who is the Sarpanch, Tahsildar, District Collector, M.L.A., M.P, Chief Minister, Prime Minister and President of India, opposite leader of Loksabha and State Assembly. But only 13 % respondents able to right answered of all questions. Remaining all respondents don't know accurate name of many their reprehensive.

It is general observation that on Election Day, most of the people take rest at home or do their own works. Election Commission and Government must give adequate emphasis towards education and awareness campaigning for more people that stressed civic duties. Postal ballot, online voting, voting awareness, automatically voter registration facilities, polling stations security, use of EVS and VVPAT, issues the voting card to all voters etc. are the main measures for improve the election and voting awareness in people.

KEYWORDS: Political Literacy, EVS, VVPAT, Voter, Democracy and online voting.

1. INTRODUCTION:

In democratic countries, voting is the main instrument of citizens (voter) to interfere in the political power of their country. The ability to influence public policy comes from the voting right. (Reddy A K, 2014). Elections are the backbone of democracy. Voting is the most important aspect of participation as it gives citizens of India the right to choose their leaders who, in turn, are expected to represent their concerns and voices at appropriate levels in government. Voting is not only a right but also a responsibility. It is the duty of every citizen of the country to cast their right to vote. Democracy is important form of government. In India, every 5 years election held to choose government. India emerge as fully democratic



country. The word democracy means government by the people, in which the people choose their government by voting for it. U.S. president Abraham Lincoln explained the democracy as "Government of the people, by the people, for the people".

In a democratic country, people vote through election for the party and the politicians they want to represent them in the government at the national, regional and local level. The Gram Panchayat is the basic unit of local administration at the village level. In India, voting is a constitutional right given to all citizen, who is above 18 years of age. But many people don't implement their right of election. Every vote is valuable that can make a difference. In the local and the national elections, we elect our representatives, who then become an integral part of making laws, policies, and other important works in our country.

Voting is a constitutional right and we must use it to select good government. In democracy active participation of people is very important. The success of the Democratic Government becomes successful when the people take parts in the process of decision making on a large account Elections occupy a vital place in the democratic government. It is a means through which people express and enforce their political opinion and regulate political organization of the society. (Akhter & Sheikh 2014).

2. OBJECTIVES:

The main objectives of the present paper are as fallows.

- i) To determine the political literacy of the people's in the study region.
- ii) To find out the reasons of low turnout in election in the study region.
- iii) To suggest the remedies for increase the political literacy among the people in the study region.

3. STUDY AREA:

Nashik District is situated partly in the Tapi basin and partly upper Godavari basin. It lies between 19° 33` to 20° 53` north latitude and 73° 15` to 75° 16` east Longitude (Nashik Gazetteer,1983) Nashik is one of the major agriculturally and industrially developed district in the North Maharashtra. Total area of Nashik District is 15,530 Sq.k.m. In 2011, Nashik District had population 6107187 as per the 2011 census. Location of the study area is showed in Fig. No.1.

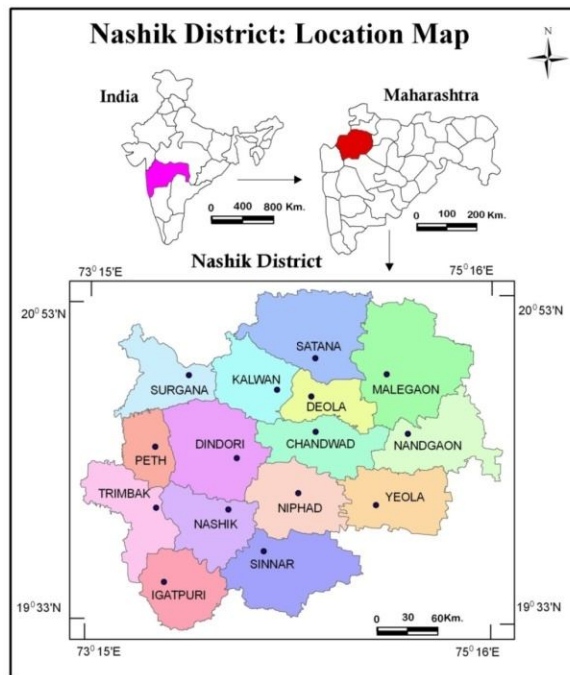


Fig. No.1

There are 15 tahsils included in the Nashik District. The district is a part of Deccan plateau of the Peninsular India and formed by basaltic rocks. The district is bounded by Dhule district in the north, Jalgaon to the east, Aurangabad districts in the south-east, Ahemadnager district in the south, and Thane and Palghar districts in the south- west and Dangs district of Gujarat state in the north-west.

Nashik Lok Sabha constituency comprises the six Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly) segments. It includes Sinnar (120), Nashik-East (123), Nashik –Central (124), Nashik –West (125), Deolali- (126) and Igatpuri (127). Dindori Lok Sabha constituency comprises the six Vidhan Sabha segments. They are Nandgaon (113), Kalwan (117), Chandwad (118), Yeola (119), Niphad (121) and Dindori (122). Remaining three Assembly segments from Nashik District are merged in Dhule Lok Sabha constituency. They are Malegaon–Central (114), Malegaon (115) and Baglan-Satana (116). There are 2 Municipal Corporations in Nashik District. It includes Nashik Municipal Corporation (1982) and Malegaon Municipal Corporation (2003). There are 15 Panchayat Samitis or block panchayats and 1950 Gram Panchayats in Nashik District. There are also six Nagar Panchayats which are located at Dindori, Kalwan, Niphad, Deola, Peth and Surgana. There are nine Municipal Councils which are located in small cities like Manmad, Yeola, Sinnar, Nandgaon, Igatpuri, Satana, Bhagur, Trimbak and Chandwad.

4. DATA AND METHODOLOGY:

The present study is based on the primary and secondary source of data. The primary data is collected through interviews of the voters from the study region with help of structural questionnaires. With this purpose we have collected information by interviewing 500 voters from the Nashik District. Voters turnout is measured as number of actual votes as a percentage of the total eligible voting population in an Indian state measured for a particular election. Whereas secondary data obtained from the website of Indian Election Commission, Socio-Economic Abstract of the Nashik district, District Census Handbook & District Gazetteers. Some of the simple mathematics and statistical tools like percentage, average etc have been used in the study. Data were processed and represented by using simple bar graph, pie chart and Choropleth maps with help of GIS software.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

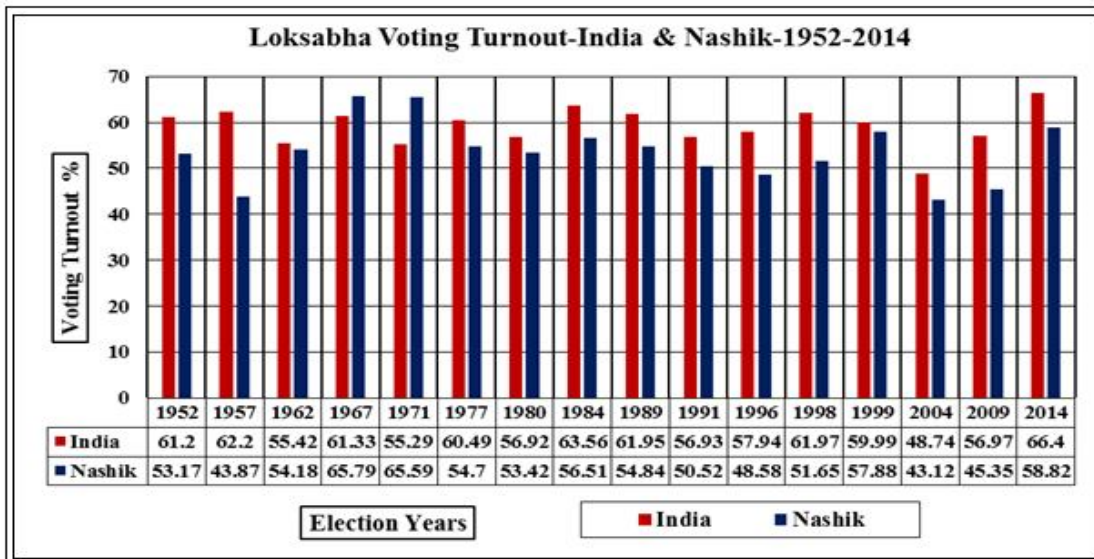
The constitution of India provided a parliamentary system of Government both at the centre as well as in the state. Though the constitution vests all the executive power of the centre and states in the Presidents and the Governors respectively, in reality they act merely as constitutional rules and the real power is exercised by the council of ministers (**S.K.Khanna, 1998**). Concept of public participation was first operational in ancient Greece where democracy as a form of government originated. Since then the importance of people's participation in administration has been universally accepted. However since late 1960s, the term citizen participation has been acquiring growing popularity (**Avasrhi & Maheshwari, 2009**). Today, the participation of people in democracy became very vital. It is essential for the survival of a democracy. Table No.1 shows the voting turnout of last election in some countries where voting turnout in election was more than 90 %. Most of the European countries have voting average in election more than 75 %. But in India it was only 58 %, which is very less as compare to international level.

Table No.1: Voting Percentage in National Lower House Election

Sr.No	Name of Country	Voting (%)	Year of Election
1	Vietnam	99.3	2016
2	Rwanda	98.8	2013
3	Laos	97.9	2016
4	Singapore	93.6	2015
5	Ethiopia	93.2	2015
6	Malta	92.1	2017
7	Turkmenistan	91.3	2013
8	Luxembourg	91.2	2013
9	Australia	91.0	2016
10	Cuba	90.9	2013
11	Ecuador	90.8	2009
12	India	58.0	2014

Source: <https://www.usnews.com>

In India the maximum voting was recorded in 8th General Election in 2014 (66.4 %), In study area the maximum voting was recorded in 1967 in Lok Sabha election, which was 65.79 %.but after that only one time it was recorded above the 60 % in 1971 (65.59).But after that it was always less than 58 %.It means at local and national level voting turnout is not too much satisfied. In Nashik District also voting turnout is not too good. Like national level it was also less than 60 % in Lok Sabha. Since 1971 it is always less than 60 %. Graph No.2 reveals that only in 1967 and 1971 voting percentage of Nashik Loksabha was more than national election otherwise every time it was less than national average by 5 to 8 percentage.



Graph No.1

Table No.2 shows the turnout in Maharashtra Assembly of Nashik District of the year 2009 and 2014. It is observed that the voters in rural areas are more aware about their constitutional right of voting. Because in rural areas turnout is more than urban areas of Nashik and Malegaon City. In 2014. The highest voting was recorded in Niphad, Kalwan, Dindori and Chandwad assembly constituency.

Table No.2: Nashik District: Assembly Constituency Voting Turnout-2009 and 2014

Sr.No.	Assembly Constituency	2014	2009	Average of 2009 & 2014
1	Nandgaon	67.19	63.78	65.48
2	Malegaon Central	67.71	62.78	65.24
3	Malegaon Outer	65.00	61.42	63.21
4	Satana	62.00	51.38	56.69
5	Kalwan-Surgana	68.00	69.71	68.85
6	Chandwad-Deola	71.58	66.73	69.15
7	Yeola	70.77	64.78	67.77
8	Sinnar	70.00	64.04	67.02
9	Niphad	74.00	69.71	71.85
10	Dindori-Peth	73.00	64.63	68.81
11	Nashik East	52.00	48.49	50.24
12	Nashik Central	55.00	46.51	50.75
13	Nashik West	56.00	49.71	52.85
14	Igatpuri-Trambak	62.00	60.2	61.1
15	Deolali	55.00	53.49	54.24
District		64.61	59.37	61.9

Source: Sakal Newspaper Nashik, Dated 16/10/2014

In all these places it was more than 70 %. In other hand in urban areas of Nashik city it was very hardly 50 to 56 %, In 2009 the voting percentage was in these assembly less than 50 %, but during same periods it was more than 61 % in rural area, where voters enthusiastically took part in the voting process.

In ZP election also tribal areas have actively participated in voting as compared to other areas of the Nashik district. Only Nandgaon tahsil have shows less voting. Otherwise Peth, Surgana, Dindori, Trambak and Kalwan have recorded turnout in ZP election more than 70 %. Figure No.2 shows the voting percentage of Z.P. elections of each tahsils of Nashik District.

In the study area participation of people in Gram Panchayat observed 85.2 %, whereas it was 37.6 % in Panchayat Samiti. In Zilha Parishad election 37.6 % voter were participated in voting. In the state assembly election 58.4 % voters were actively participated, whereas 62.4 % voters voted in Lok Sabha election. In Graduate Constituency only 7.2 % voters among interviewed people were participated. Most of graduate voters still not registered their name in the voting list. Graph No.1 shows the comparative voting percentage of Loksabha election in India and Nashik District since 1952.

Table No.3 Nashik District: Z.P. Voting Turnout-2009 and 2014

Sr.No	Name of Tahasil	2012	2017	Average of 2014 & 2017
1	Satana	65.3	62.7	64.00
2	Malegaon	59.12	65.53	62.33
3	Deola	64.28	67.33	65.81
4	Kalwan	71.13	72.33	71.73
5	Surgana	80.0	69.66	74.83
6	Peth	73.71	76.57	75.14
7	Dindori	72.71	73.81	73.26
8	Chandwad	64.9	68.00	66.45
9	Nandgaon	52.58	63.42	58.00
10	Yeola	65.37	72.5	68.94
11	Niphad	58.48	70.16	64.32
12	Nashik	60.9	70.31	65.61
13	Trambak	67.49	73.33	70.41
14	Igatpuri	69.71	69.82	69.77
15	Sinner	61.14	68.25	64.70
District		62.2	69.00	65.60

Source: Deshdoot Newspaper (Nashik) Dated 22/02/2017

Many educated and graduate voter also not go to voting at the time of election. They use the election holiday for parting, traveling and picnic purpose. Everybody wants the system to be changed but no one is interested in making any efforts.

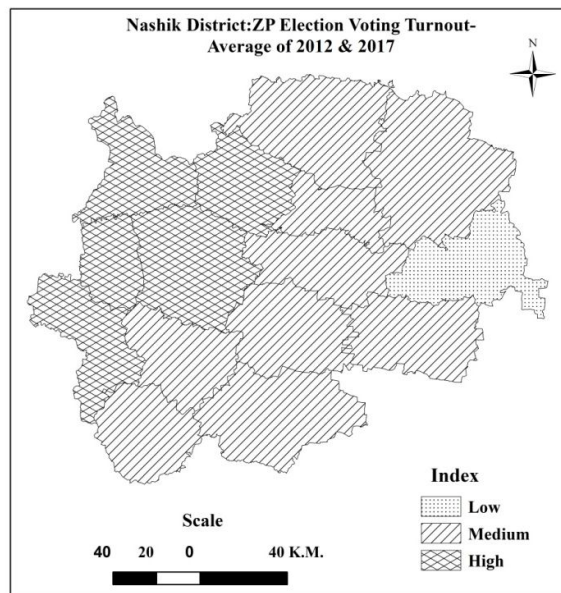


Figure No.2

Table No.4 Nashik District: Participation in last election

Sr.No.	Participation in Election	Percentage
1	Gram Panchayat	85.2
2	Panchayat Samiti	37.6
3	Zilla Parishad	37.6
4	State Assembly	58.4
5	Lok Sabha	62.4
6	Graduate Constituency	7.2

Source: Field Survey 2018

Political literacy is also not satisfactory in the study region. At the time of interview 10 questions were asked to know that who is Sarpanch, Tahsildar, District Collector, M.L.A., M.P, Chief Minister, Prime Minister and President of India. But only 13 % respondents able to right answered of all questions. Remaining all respondents don't know accurate name of their reprehensive. Most of them are aware about Sarpanch, Chief Minister and Prime minister. But most of respondents did not aware about the name of opposite leader of Loksabha and State assembly. Table No.5 indicates the percentage of right answers of respondents.

Table No.5 Nashik District: Awareness of Voter-2018

Sr.No.	Election	Voting (%)
1	Sarpanch	88.4
2	Panchayat Samiti	47.2
3	Zilla Parishad	49.2
4	Tahsildar	16.4
5	Collector	20.8
6	M.L.P	42.4
7	M.P	50.4
8	Chief Minister	83.2
9	Prime Minister	89.2
10	President of India	30.4
11	Opposite Leader of Assembly	20.8
12	Opposite Leader of Loksabha	12.8

Source: Field Survey 2018

At the time of interview, we asked people that which point did they preferred when they vote to a representative. Most of the people preferred to points candidate's quality (27.6 %), Discipline of party (18.8 %) local problems (18.0 %), manifesto (16.4 %) and political party (14.4). But 4.8 per cent of the respondents

said that they were influenced by family tradition, father, mother and their friends thought. The percentage of the voters preferred points are shown in Figure No.3.

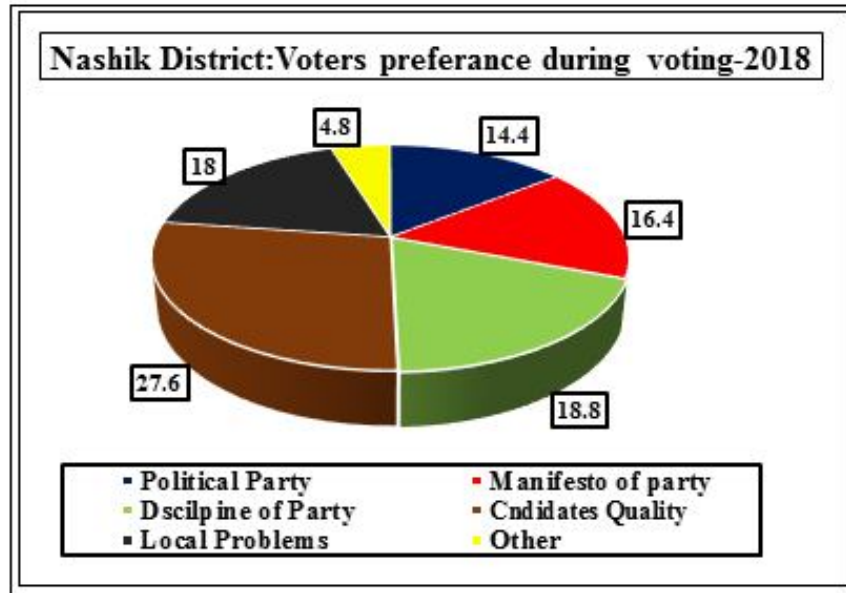


Figure No.3.

Election Commission of India has been doing good as far as voting awareness is concerned .The voter ID (Seshan Card)card was introduced in 1993 during the tenure of the former Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan. The Election Commission of India also set the campaign expenses limit per candidate. In 2011, VVPAT (Voter-verified paper audit trail) System was used in by-election in Jammu and Kashmir, Kerala, Meghalaya, Delhi and Rajasthan. Now it will be use in 2019 election. The NOTA (None of the above) option had been included in the Indian electoral system in 2013 to give voters an option to abstain from voting.

There are many reasons for low voting turnout in India. Many people neglect to vote elections because they believe that all political parties are corrupt and whoever comes to power will continue with the same process of corruption and selfish government. But it is not proper solution. The important reason is the phenomenon of internal migration. Most of youth usually in the age group of 20-35 years is almost always on the move due to job and education purpose. They not able to reach at their polling center on Election Day due to the long distance and problem of holiday. It is general observation that on Election Day, most of the people take rest at home or do their own works. Many people not registered their name for voting. People not too much serious about their voting right and they don't know the value of voting.

Election Commission of India also launched a drive to promote Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs) in schools and colleges in the city. These clubs, supervised by a teacher who is trained (Master Trainer) by election officers at the district level. Many local bodies and Social Club across the country also works tirelessly to raise awareness among youngsters.

For improve the voting percentage in India, some measures will be useful. In India, voting through a postal ballot is only for Central Govt employees posted outside and army officers and those are participated in election on duty. If such facility can be extended to private employees, defiantly voting turnout will be increase. Online voting also useful to increase the voting percentage. The main problem with online voting is security about vote. Due to hackers, it may be possible there will be cheating in voting but in future due to technology it may be possible. In Estonia online voting is allowed since 2005. Transport service from home to polling station also helps for increase the voting turnout. Some people are working in urban areas and their

voting is in rural areas or it is away from their working place. Therefore due to travelling expenditure they avoid to go at election place. Today at some places this service is given unofficially by local party supporters. But if Election commission of India, allow such facilities to the voters with help of state and central governments S.T.Buses and Railway services, it will help to increases the voting turnout. Automatically Voter Registration facilities are available in countries like France and Sweden. As soon as a citizen turns 18, he is automatically registered for voting. Same system can be implemented possible in India. To make Saturday for voting for all elections, voter can reached their home at weekend and again joined their duty after holiday of one day (Sunday). There are 22 countries in the world, where voting is compulsory. Therefore in India ECI also try at local level. But it was not success Gujarat is the first state of India that make voting compulsory in local election (polls) in 2014. The Gujarat high court stayed the law's implementation after a lawyer filed a Public Interest Litigation, citing the violation of Article 19 (1) (A) of the Constitution. Most found that the law was not only impractical and impossible to implement in a country like India, but also unconstitutional.

The Government must give adequate emphasis to education and awareness campaigning for more people that stressed civic duties. A candidate must have of good qualification, who should properly solve the local problems. Politicians and Government should have transference in their work. There should be provision to issue the certificate to the voter, that certificate will be asked at the time of Government job opportunities and benefited the Government schemes.

6. CONCLUSION:

1. At National level participation of people in voting is decreased after 1984 in India. At local level participation of people in Gram Panchayat election is a maximum as compared to other elections in the study area.
2. It has been observed that the participation of most respondents in graduate constituency is very low 7.2 %) in the study area.
3. Political literacy is also not satisfactory in the study region. Most of the people knew their Sarpanch, Chief Minister and Prime Minister, but they do not knew their other representative.
4. At the time of election, mostly the voters preferred candidate's quality (27.6 %) for voting in the study area.
5. In ZP election also tribal areas have actively participated in voting as compared to other areas of the Nashik district
6. It is general observation that on Election Day, most of the people take rest at home or do their own works. Many people not registered their name for voting. People not too much serious about their voting right and they don't know the value of voting.
7. Election Commission of India has been doing well as far as voting awareness is concerned .The voter ID (Seshan Card), Use of EVM and VVPAT (Voter-verified paper audit trail) System, Use of NOTA, awareness program and launched a drive to promote Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs) in schools and colleges in the city are the major decision in this regards taken by ECI to improve the election system and voting turnout.

8. REFERENCES:

1. Akhter & Sheikh (2014), "Determinants of Voting Behavior in India: Theoretical Perspective", 'Public Policy and Administration Research', Vol.4, No.8, 2014, PP.104-109.
2. S.K.Khanna (1998), "Crisis of Indian Democracy", Commonwealth Publishers, Delhi, Pp.69 to 129.
3. Avasrhi Amreshwar & Maheshwari Shriram (2009), "Public Administration", Educational Publisher, Agra, Pp.639-645.
4. Reddy A.K. (2014), "Electoral trends and performance of political parties in 2014 assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh", 'International Journal of Applied Research', Issue 2016; 2(8), Pp.153-156.



Dr. Sanjay Dagu Pagar

Assistant Professor , Department of Geography , MVP Samaj's K.T.H.M.College, Nashik ,
Affiliated S.P.P. University, Pune .