

Preface

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The stability of Indian democracy is an “exceptional” phenomena among South Asian Countries. One of the most significant factors giving resilience and robustness to Indian democracy is the flexibility of democratic institutions. The most important mechanism endorsing the flexibility to Indian democracy is the well-established election system. It is through the election system that both the short-term and long-term political changes resulting from short-term political crisis or long-term socio-economic evolution are reflected in the central political decision-making process. Analysis of India’s election data will show various interesting aspects of the mass political behaviours in relation to important factors including the long-term socio-economic development.

The election studies are highly elaborated in the developed countries, especially in U.S.A., the most important reason for which is the rich accumulation of the election data, both the survey-based individual data and aggregate data. India might be a rare country among the developing countries in the sense that it can prepare nearly a complete set of the aggregate election data since Independence in 1947 in terms of both Parliament as well as State Legislative Assemblies. India is a very attractive country for scholars studying the problems of democracy and election in developing countries.

This book is the product of one-year project, “Election and Party Politics in India’s Democracy,” conducted in the 2002 financial year in the Institute of Developing Economies (IDE-JETRO). This book is based on the previous studies by the author on the elections of the Lower House of Parliament, namely, Lok Sabha. However, this is not a collection of the past studies, because, for one thing, the data set, which covers main States for the period from 1957 to 1999 elections, is revised. And the approach to the analysis is more systematic than before.

The analysis of participatory aspect of elections is the main focus of this book. It will be shown that the electoral participation is closely linked to the socio-economic environmental structures, as well as political motivation. The electoral participation, that is, voter turnout, can be understood as a

phenomenon which is quite different from party selection in voting behaviours. It has not been fully emphasised so far that the participatory aspect of voting behaviour is quite different from that of party choice. The long-term aggregate data set in India will show such aspect clearly.

I want to state a few words of gratitude to all the persons and organisations whom I am indebted to while writing this book. First of all, I have to appreciate the cooperation of the Election Commission of India, since it provided important materials on the Indian election. In particular, the materials concerning three delimitations of electoral constituencies were essential in my study, without which my study could not have been completed. Another important material was the agricultural panel data set which Professor G. S. Bhalla and Dr. Gurmail Singh worked out with great efforts. All the researchers studying Indian agriculture can easily understand the enormous difficulty of collecting necessary agricultural data for various regions. I have to express my gratitude also to the IDE for having permitted this research project.

Finally, it has to be mentioned that any views or opinions expressed in this book are those of the author and not the IDE. I hope this study will contribute to the further understanding of the relation between election and socio-economic change in developing countries.

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