

Odisha's Political Framework: The Politics of Freebies

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Abstract

The impact of freebies on democracy is a complex issue. On one hand, freebies can be seen as a way to promote equality and provide basic needs to the disadvantaged sections of society. However, freebies can also be used as a tool for political gain and can hurt democracy. When freebies are given without proper planning and budget, it can increase the burden on the government's finances and lead to economic instability. Moreover, it can create a culture of entitlement where people expect freebies rather than working for their livelihood. This can further lead to corruption and misuse of resources. On the other hand, when freebies are given with proper planning and budget, it can positively impact democracy by promoting social welfare and reducing poverty. It can also improve the standard of living of the disadvantaged sections of society and promote economic growth. In recent years, the Odisha government has implemented several welfare schemes and provided various freebies to its citizens, particularly those belonging to marginalised communities. These initiatives have aimed to improve the standard of living, promote social welfare, and reduce poverty in the state. However, some experts argue that implementing freebies can adversely affect the state's economy in the long run. While freebies can provide short-term benefits to the people, their economic impact must be carefully evaluated and balanced against the state's long-term developmental goals.

Keywords: *Freebies Politics, Short term benefit, Disadvantaged section, Social Welfare, Democracy*

Introduction

In contemporary politics, the exchange of election promises for freebies has evolved beyond a mere campaign strategy, becoming an entrenched culture that political parties embrace before and after elections. This phenomenon, known as "Freebies Politics," is particularly noteworthy in the vibrant political landscape of Odisha, where political parties strategically utilise the distribution of free goods, services, subsidies, and benefits to secure electoral support and consolidate power. This article seeks to unravel the

dynamics of "Freebies Politics" in Odisha, delving into the motivations driving such offerings, their impact on electoral outcomes, and the broader implications for governance and public policy in the state (Vashishtha, 2023).

The increasing significance of electoral strategies in shaping Odisha's political landscape has led to the prominence of "Freebies Politics." The state has witnessed a notable shift in campaigning strategies, with the allure of freebies and welfare schemes capturing the attention of both politicians and the

electorate. This strategy is centred around the strategic distribution of freebies to various sections of the population, aiming to gain an electoral advantage. This article aims to provide an objective analysis of the impact of "Freebies Politics" in Odisha, shedding light on its implications for democracy, governance, and overall development in the state. This article critically examines the rationale behind such policies, evaluates their effectiveness, and assesses the consequences of "Freebies Politics." It explores the underlying motivations behind its rise, considering factors such as growing electoral competition, socio-economic disparities, and the electorate's aspirations. The potential consequences, including their impact on governance, fiscal stability, and long-term development goals, are also explored. Through evidence-based analysis, the article assesses both short-term gains and long-term risks associated with "Freebies Politics," offering readers a balanced perspective on its benefits and drawbacks.

By using Odisha as a case study, the article contributes to a broader understanding of how such electoral strategies influence socio-political dynamics in Indian states. In conclusion, "Freebies Politics" has become a defining feature of political discourse in Odisha, transforming the democratic process and prompting crucial questions about the sustainability of such strategies. Through this comprehensive exploration, the article aims to equip readers with a deep understanding of this trend, encouraging critical thinking and informed discussions on the future of electoral politics in Odisha (Rajagopal, 2022).

A brief overview of Odisha's political landscape

Odisha's political landscape is characterised by a dynamic interplay of diverse factors that shape the state's governance and political dynamics. Situated on the eastern coast of India, Odisha boasts a rich cultural heritage and a history deeply intertwined with its political evolution. The state has witnessed a multi-party system, with major political players vying for power through competitive electoral processes. Bhubaneswar, the capital city, serves as the political nerve centre, reflecting the state's aspirations for development and progress. Odisha's political framework has been marked by the influence of regional parties, alongside the presence of national parties, contributing to a complex and competitive electoral environment. The state has faced unique challenges, including issues related to socioeconomic disparities, rural development, and natural calamities. Political leaders often grapple with the task of addressing these challenges while formulating policies that resonate with the population's diverse needs. Against this backdrop, the "Freebies Politics" concept has emerged as a notable phenomenon (Dinkar, 2023). Political parties strategically leverage the distribution of free goods, services, subsidies, and benefits to gain favour among the electorate. The socio-economic diversity of Odisha adds layers of complexity to this political landscape, with politicians adapting their strategies to address the varying needs of urban and rural constituencies.

The researcher in this paper aims to explore how the distribution of freebies has become a significant strategy in pursuing political power. By understanding the

historical and socio-economic context, readers will gain insights into the motivations driving "Freebies Politics" in Odisha and its implications for the state's governance and public policy.

Introduction to the concept of freebies in politics

In the ever-evolving landscape of political strategies, the concept of offering freebies has become a defining element in shaping electoral narratives. This phenomenon, now deeply embedded in the political fabric of Odisha, transcends conventional campaign promises, constituting a culture that resonates both before and after elections. Termed "Freebies Politics", signifies a strategic tool wielded by political parties to secure electoral favour and consolidate their influence within the state. This article aims to dissect and comprehend the intricate dynamics of "Freebies Politics" in Odisha, exploring the motivations that propel the distribution of complimentary goods, services, and benefits. As political entities compete for the attention and allegiance of the electorate, the systematic deployment of freebies has emerged as a noteworthy strategy, warranting an in-depth analysis of its impact on electoral outcomes, governance, and public policy in the unique political terrain of Odisha.

Significance of understanding the role of freebies in Odisha's politics

Understanding the role of freebies in Odisha's politics holds paramount significance, serving as a key focal point in unravelling the intricacies of the state's political framework. The strategic distribution of free goods, services, subsidies, and benefits has emerged as a defining feature, shaping electoral

strategies and influencing governance dynamics (Venkatesan, 2013).

- **Election Dynamics:** Examining the role of freebies provides insights into how political parties navigate electoral landscapes in Odisha. Understanding the motivations behind the distribution of freebies unveils the strategies employed to sway voter sentiments and secure electoral victories.
- **Voter Behavior and Aspirations:** Freebies often cater to the socio-economic needs and aspirations of the electorate. By delving into the politics of freebies, the article sheds light on how these offerings resonate with the people of Odisha, influencing their perceptions, preferences, and voting behaviour.
- **Governance Implications:** The article explores how the prevalence of freebies impacts governance in Odisha. Analysing the consequences of such strategies on policy-making, resource allocation, and overall governance provides a comprehensive understanding of the trade-offs involved in prioritising short-term electoral gains over long-term development goals.
- **Democratization of Benefits:** Understanding the distribution of freebies reveals the extent to which political parties aim to democratise benefits among different sections of the population. This knowledge is crucial for assessing the inclusivity of political strategies and their impact on social equity.

- **Economic and Fiscal Stability:** The article evaluates sustained freebie distribution's economic and fiscal implications. Assessing the sustainability of such practices is essential for gauging their impact on the state's financial stability and the long-term welfare of its citizens.
- **Public Awareness and Informed Citizenship:** By exploring the politics of freebies, the article contributes to public awareness and encourages informed citizenship. It empowers readers to critically evaluate the strategies employed by political parties, fostering a more discerning electorate.
- **Policy Discourse:** An in-depth analysis of freebies politics contributes to the broader policy discourse in Odisha. It prompts discussions on alternative governance models, emphasising the need for policies that balance electoral considerations with the imperative of sustained socio-economic development.

Understanding freebies' role in Odisha's politics is pivotal for unravelling the complexities of the state's political framework. By addressing the motivations, consequences, and implications of the politics of freebies, the article contributes to a nuanced understanding of how electoral strategies shape governance, democracy, and the overall socio-political landscape in Odisha.

Historical Context of Freebies in Odisha

The historical context of freebies in Odisha unveils a narrative marked by evolving political strategies and changing governance dynamics. Over the years, the

state has transformed how political parties engage with the electorate, with freebies becoming an integral part of their toolkit (Sharma, 2023). The roots of this phenomenon can be traced back to the historical socio-economic conditions prevalent in Odisha, characterised by pockets of poverty, disparities in development, and a diverse demographic landscape. As political leaders sought to address these challenges and connect with the masses, the concept of offering free goods, services, and benefits gained traction. The historical backdrop also includes instances where leaders, aspiring to gain popular support, initiated welfare programs to address the immediate needs and concerns of the population. The emergence of freebies in the political discourse of Odisha is not just a recent trend but reflects a historical trajectory where leaders, driven by the necessity to appeal to a diverse and often economically challenged population, incorporated such strategies into their political agendas. This historical context shapes the contemporary landscape, underscoring the enduring significance of freebies in Odisha's political narrative and emphasising their roots in addressing historical socio-economic challenges.

Overview of past political trends in Odisha

An exploration of the political landscape in Odisha necessitates a comprehensive understanding of its historical political trends. Over the decades, Odisha has experienced a dynamic interplay of political forces marked by shifts in power dynamics, party affiliations, and policy priorities. In the early years post-independence, the state witnessed the dominance of traditional political elites,

with a few political families holding sway over the electoral landscape. The emergence of regional political parties, such as the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), significantly altered the political fabric in the late 20th century, challenging the hegemony of national parties. The political trajectory of Odisha has also been influenced by regional identity, socio-economic disparities, and issues about agriculture and rural development. Historical trends reveal a nuanced evolution, where political movements, alliances, and electoral outcomes reflect the intricate socio-political dynamics of the state. Understanding these past political trends is crucial for contextualising the contemporary scenario, providing insights into the factors that have shaped Odisha's political framework and continue to influence the decision-making processes in the state (Aravinda, 2022).

Evolution of freebies in political discourse

The evolution of freebies in the political discourse of India is a multi-faceted journey that reflects the changing dynamics of electoral politics and the strategic manoeuvring by political parties to secure voter allegiance. Historically, election campaigns in India were primarily focused on ideological debates, policy considerations, and the track record of political candidates. However, over the years, a discernible shift occurred as political parties recognised the potential of populist measures, often in the form of freebies, to sway public opinion and win elections. The evolution can be traced back to the late 20th century when parties began incorporating promises of tangible benefits, subsidies, and welfare programs into their election manifestos. The appeal of freebies

lies in their direct and immediate impact on the lives of voters, promising instant gratification or relief from specific economic burdens. The trend gained momentum as political parties recognised that tangible, populist promises resonated strongly with diverse sections of the electorate, cutting across socio-economic strata. One notable aspect of this evolution is the competitive nature it has assumed, with political parties engaging in a 'populism race' to outdo each other in offering attractive freebies. These may range from the distribution of free laptops, bicycles, and household appliances to promises of farm loan waivers and subsidised food. The increasing prevalence of coalition politics further intensified this trend as parties sought to cater to different coalition partners' varied demands and expectations.

The advent of traditional and social media has played a crucial role in amplifying the impact of freebies in political discourse. Election promises and the distribution of freebies became headline-grabbing news, influencing public perception and creating a discourse where the electoral agenda often revolves around immediate material gains rather than long-term policy considerations (Bavadekar, 2022). While the strategic use of freebies undoubtedly helps political parties mobilise voter support, it has also led to debates on the sustainability of such practices. Critics argue that the focus on short-term, populist measures may undermine the formulation of sound, long-term policies essential for the nation's overall development. Moreover, concerns about fiscal responsibility and the financial burden on the state have been raised as the cost of implementing these freebies escalates. The

evolution of freebies in Indian political discourse reflects a strategic shift in how parties engage with the electorate. It underscores the intricate relationship between electoral politics, public perception, and the socio-economic aspirations of the Indian population. As the political landscape continues to evolve, the role of freebies in shaping electoral outcomes and governance policies remains a subject of ongoing scrutiny and debate.

Key moments that shaped the integration of freebies into political strategies

The integration of freebies into political strategies in India has been marked by key moments that have significantly shaped the landscape of electoral politics. One pivotal turning point can be traced back to the 2009 general elections, where the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, introduced a series of welfare programs and subsidies under the banner of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and the Right to Education Act. These initiatives aimed at providing employment opportunities and ensuring access to education for marginalised sections of the population, setting a precedent for the strategic use of welfare-driven policies in electoral campaigns.

Another noteworthy moment that contributed to the integration of freebies into political strategies was the implementation of farm loan waiver schemes by various state governments in the mid-2000s. The promise of alleviating the financial burden on farmers by waiving off agricultural loans emerged as a powerful electoral tool, garnering

widespread support from the agrarian community and influencing voting patterns. The emergence of regional political leaders who championed the cause of direct benefit transfers and populist measures further solidified the trend. Leaders like J. Jayalalithaa in Tamil Nadu and Mamata Banerjee in West Bengal strategically incorporated promises of freebies, ranging from subsidised food grains to distribution of essential goods, into their election manifestos, shaping the electoral discourse in their respective states (Singh. B. P., 2016).

The 2011 assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh marked a significant moment in integrating freebies, with parties making ambitious promises of distributing laptops, tablets, and unemployment allowances. This election highlighted the effectiveness of such promises in capturing the attention of the youth demographic and reflected the growing importance of technology-oriented freebies in political strategies. In recent years, the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and demonetisation also shaped the narrative around freebies. Opposition parties seized upon the perceived hardships caused by these economic policies to bolster their promises of financial relief and subsidies, further emphasising the role of freebies as a response to economic challenges faced by the common citizen.

These key moments collectively underscore the evolution of freebies as an integral component of political strategies in India. The success of these promises in mobilising voter support and shaping electoral outcomes has established a paradigm where political parties view the strategic distribution of tangible benefits as a potent tool to connect with the electorate and secure electoral victories.

Types of Freebies in Odisha

In the dynamic political landscape of Odisha, a diverse array of freebies takes centre stage as political parties employ a strategic mix of incentives to garner voter support. These freebies encompass a broad spectrum, including welfare programs, economic incentives, infrastructure development projects, and targeted subsidies. Welfare initiatives often involve the distribution of free goods and services, such as educational materials, healthcare provisions, and housing benefits, aimed at addressing the immediate needs of the populace. Economic incentives may include promises of farm loan waivers, financial assistance to specific sectors, and subsidies to alleviate economic burdens on targeted demographics. Infrastructure development projects, ranging from the construction of roads to the establishment of community facilities, also find prominence in the freebies portfolio, promising long-term improvements in the quality of life. The strategic distribution of these freebies reflects the parties' nuanced understanding of the diverse needs of the electorate, fostering a multifaceted approach to political campaigning in Odisha.

Welfare programs and social initiatives

Welfare programs and social initiatives form a significant component of the freebies category in Odisha's political landscape. Political parties in the state often leverage these offerings as a means to address immediate social concerns and win the support of diverse segments of the population. Welfare programs may include distributing free educational materials, scholarships, and financial aid to economically disadvantaged students,

aiming to enhance access to education and alleviate financial burdens on families (Mateen, 2022).

Healthcare-related freebies are also common, with promises of free or subsidised medical services, medicines, and healthcare facilities to ensure better health outcomes for citizens. Additionally, housing benefits and assistance for constructing homes for the economically weaker sections are frequently featured in political manifestos, emphasising the parties' commitment to improving living conditions.

Social initiatives encompass a range of activities aimed at fostering community development and inclusivity. This may involve the establishment of community centers, cultural institutions, and recreational facilities, to enhance the overall quality of life for residents. Moreover, promises of financial aid to vulnerable groups, such as the elderly, widows, and differently-abled individuals, underscore the social welfare dimension of these freebies.

The strategic inclusion of welfare programs and social initiatives in the freebies category reflects the parties' recognition of the pressing social challenges faced by the people of Odisha (Chakrabarti & Bandyopadhyay, 2020). By addressing these issues through targeted offerings, political parties seek to establish a direct and positive impact on the lives of citizens, thereby building goodwill and securing electoral support. However, the effectiveness and sustainability of such programs remain subject to scrutiny, with ongoing discussions on their long-term implications for governance and socio-

economic development in the state (Nivedita, 2022).

Economic incentives and subsidies

Economic incentives and subsidies constitute a significant facet of the freebies category in Odisha's political landscape. Political parties often leverage these offerings as strategic tools to address economic challenges faced by various sections of the population, to garner support and goodwill. Some key components of economic incentives and subsidies in Odisha include.

- **Farm Loan Waivers:** Political manifestos frequently include promises of waiving off agricultural loans to relieve farmers burdened by debt. This initiative is designed to alleviate financial stress within the agricultural community, which forms a substantial portion of Odisha's population.
- **Financial Assistance for Livelihood Enhancement:** Parties may pledge financial aid and support programs targeting specific economic sectors or communities. This can include subsidies for entrepreneurship, self-employment schemes, and initiatives to boost livelihood opportunities, particularly in rural areas.
- **Subsidised Housing Programs:** Free or subsidised housing schemes are often introduced to address housing challenges economically weaker sections face. These initiatives aim to provide affordable housing options and improve living conditions for those in need.
- **Employment Generation Programs:** Promises of job creation

and employment generation initiatives are common economic incentives. Political parties may pledge to boost economic activities, attract industries, and create a conducive environment for job opportunities to flourish.

- **Subsidies on Essential Commodities:** Some political manifestos may include commitments to subsidize essential commodities like food items, fuel, and other necessities. This is intended to cushion the impact of inflation and rising costs on the general population.
- **Financial Assistance for Education:** While education-related incentives often fall under welfare programs, financial assistance or subsidies for education, especially for higher education or skill development, can also be considered economic incentives.

The inclusion of economic incentives and subsidies in the freebies category reflects an acknowledgement by political parties of the economic disparities and challenges faced by various segments of the population in Odisha. These promises are strategically designed to appeal to voters' economic aspirations and concerns, particularly in a state where agriculture plays a crucial role in the economy and where there may be pockets of socio-economic disparities. However, the long-term sustainability and impact of such economic incentives remain subjects of ongoing debate and analysis within the broader context of governance and fiscal responsibility.

Political Strategies and Freebies

Political strategies and the distribution of freebies have become intertwined elements in the contemporary political landscape, and in the context of Odisha, these strategies play a crucial role in shaping electoral dynamics and influencing voter behaviour (Argus News, 2023). Examining the relationship between political strategies and freebies reveals several key aspects:

- **Electorate Mobilization:** Political parties strategically use freebies as a tool to mobilise the electorate. By promising tangible benefits such as welfare programs, economic incentives, or infrastructure projects, parties seek to capture the attention and support of diverse voter segments.
- **Vote Bank Consolidation:** Freebies are often targeted towards specific demographic groups or communities, allowing political parties to consolidate their vote banks. By tailoring promises to the needs and aspirations of different sections of the population, parties aim to secure a more loyal and committed voter base.
- **Competitive Populism:** The political landscape in Odisha, like many other states, often witnesses a competitive race among political parties to outdo each other in offering attractive freebies. This competitive populism creates an environment where parties continually escalate their promises to gain a perceived edge over their rivals.
- **Perception Management:** The distribution of freebies is a potent tool for shaping public perception.

Political parties use these promises to project an image of responsiveness to the needs of the people and a commitment to improving their quality of life. This perception management is crucial in influencing voter attitudes.

- **Strategic Timing:** The announcement of freebies is often strategically timed to coincide with election cycles. Parties strategically unveil promises during campaigns to maximise their impact on voter sentiment, creating a narrative that resonates with the electorate during the elections.
- **Addressing Immediate Concerns:** Freebies are designed to address immediate concerns of the electorate, providing solutions to pressing issues such as unemployment, economic hardships, or lack of basic amenities. This approach seeks to establish a direct and immediate connection with voters.
- **Balancing Urban and Rural Priorities:** Political strategies involving freebies often attempt to strike a balance between the priorities of urban and rural constituencies. The promises may include both urban development projects and rural welfare initiatives to appeal to a broad spectrum of voters.

While political strategies involving freebies can yield short-term electoral gains, they also raise questions about the long-term sustainability and impact on governance. Critics argue that overreliance on freebies may lead to fiscal challenges, detracting from the formulation of sound, long-term

policies essential for sustainable development. Understanding the intricate dynamics between political strategies and the distribution of freebies provides valuable insights into the evolving nature of democratic politics in Odisha and its implications for governance and public policy (Loiwa, 2019).

Examination of how political parties use freebies to garner support

The utilization of freebies as a strategic tool for garnering support forms a crucial aspect of political campaigning in Odisha, reflecting the intricate dynamics of electoral politics. Examining how political parties deploy freebies reveals several strategies employed to secure support from the electorate:

- **Targeted Demographic Appeals:** Political parties carefully identify specific demographic groups or communities that are likely to be swayed by particular freebies. Whether it is promising agricultural subsidies to farmers, educational benefits for students, or healthcare initiatives for vulnerable populations, parties tailor their offerings to resonate with the needs and aspirations of different voter segments.
- **Addressing Socio-Economic Disparities:** Freebies are often positioned as solutions to socio-economic challenges faced by certain sections of the population. By addressing immediate concerns such as poverty, unemployment, or lack of access to essential services, political parties aim to establish a sense of empathy and alignment with the struggles faced by voters.
- **Strategic Geographical Targeting:** Parties strategically choose regions or constituencies where the distribution of specific freebies is likely to have the most significant impact. This geographical targeting is based on an understanding of localized issues and aspirations, allowing parties to tailor promises to the unique needs of different areas.
- **Creating a Perception of Empowerment:** Political parties frame the distribution of freebies as an empowerment tool, positioning themselves as agents of positive change. By portraying these offerings as a means to enhance the well-being and economic prospects of citizens, parties seek to create a perception of effective governance and responsiveness.
- **Timing of Announcements:** The timing of freebie announcements is crucial for maximising their impact. Parties strategically unveil promises during election campaigns or in the lead-up to significant events, ensuring that these pledges are fresh in voters' minds when making electoral decisions.
- **Competitive Populism:** There is often a competitive race among political parties to outdo each other in offering more attractive and extensive freebies. This competitive populism creates an environment where parties continually escalate their promises to gain a perceived advantage over their rivals, contributing to the prominence of freebies in political discourse.
- **Communication and Public Relations:** Effective

communication of freebies and their potential benefits is essential. Political parties invest in public relations campaigns, rallies, and media outreach to ensure that their promises are widely disseminated, contributing to a positive narrative that resonates with voters.

- **Incorporating Local Issues:** Parties recognise the importance of incorporating local issues into their freebie promises. By addressing region-specific challenges and concerns, they demonstrate an understanding of the intricacies of local governance and increase their appeal to voters at the grassroots level.

Understanding how political parties use freebies to garner support involves analysing the strategic alignment of these offerings with the diverse needs and expectations of the electorate (Mishra, 2022). While such promises can effectively mobilise support during elections, the long-term consequences and sustainability of these strategies remain subjects of ongoing scrutiny and debate (Sahoo et al., 2023).

Critique of potential drawbacks and challenges in relying on freebies

While the distribution of freebies can be an effective short-term strategy to gain political support, it comes with its own set of potential drawbacks and challenges. A critical analysis of these aspects is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the implications of relying on freebies in the political landscape:

- **Financial Sustainability:** Freebies often strain state finances, potentially leading to budgetary imbalances and fiscal deficits.

Ensuring the financial sustainability of freebie-driven policies is crucial, as excessive promises may compromise the government's ability to invest in long-term development projects.

- **Dependency and Entitlement Culture:** Frequent distribution of freebies may foster a culture of dependency, where citizens come to expect continuous handouts from the government. Breaking away from an entitlement culture becomes challenging, and it may hinder the development of self-reliance and individual responsibility.
- **Distorted Policy Priorities:** An overemphasis on freebies may lead to a distortion of policy priorities, with short-term electoral gains taking precedence over long-term development goals. Striking a balance between populist measures and sustainable policy initiatives becomes challenging for policymakers.
- **Unequal Distribution:** There is a risk of unequal distribution, where certain sections of the population benefit more from freebies than others. Ensuring that freebies reach the intended beneficiaries and do not contribute to social inequalities requires effective implementation and monitoring mechanisms.
- **Impact on Productivity and Work Ethic:** A consistent reliance on freebies may reduce incentives for hard work and productivity, as individuals may perceive that they can obtain benefits without significant personal effort. Balancing social welfare with the

promotion of a strong work ethic becomes crucial to maintaining economic dynamism.

- **Risk of Populist Policies:** Political parties may engage in a populist race, making increasingly extravagant promises without considering their long-term impact. Encouraging political discourse focusing on sustainable policies rather than short-term populist measures becomes challenging in a competitive political environment.
- **Potential for Corruption:** The distribution of freebies may be susceptible to corruption, with the risk of leakages and diversion of resources. Establishing transparent mechanisms for the fair distribution of freebies and preventing corruption requires robust governance structures.
- **Neglect of Essential Services:** Excessive focus on freebies may divert attention and resources from essential services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure development. Striking a balance between meeting immediate needs and investing in long-term social and economic development is complex.

While freebies can be powerful tools in electoral politics, carefully considering their potential drawbacks and challenges is imperative. A balanced approach that combines short-term relief with a commitment to long-term sustainable development is crucial for fostering a healthy and resilient political and economic environment (Nivedita, 2022).

The Future of Freebies in Odisha's Politics

Predicting the future of freebies in Odisha's politics involves considering various factors, including evolving political strategies, economic conditions, public expectations, and governance priorities (Tunir Ghosal et al., 2023). While the landscape is subject to change, several potential scenarios can be envisaged:

- **Continued Significance in Electoral Strategies:** Given the historical prevalence of freebies in Odisha's political discourse, it is likely that political parties will continue to incorporate these promises into their electoral strategies. The allure of immediate benefits for voters remains a powerful tool during elections.
- **Shifts in Policy Emphasis:** There may be a gradual shift in the types of freebies offered, reflecting changes in socio-economic priorities and emerging challenges. For instance, a growing emphasis on digital infrastructure or healthcare-related freebies may align with changing needs.
- **Integration with Development Initiatives:** Future political narratives may see an integration of freebies with broader development initiatives. Political parties aim to showcase a balanced approach, coupling immediate relief measures with sustainable policies that address long-term challenges.
- **Emphasis on Transparent Governance:** With increasing awareness among the electorate, there might be a demand for greater transparency in implementing freebies. Political parties could face pressure to ensure fair and

corruption-free distribution, enhancing public trust in governance.

- **Balancing Social Welfare and Fiscal Responsibility:** As Odisha aims for sustained economic development, political leaders may need to strike a delicate balance between fulfilling social welfare commitments and maintaining fiscal responsibility. Ensuring that freebies do not compromise the state's financial stability will be a key consideration.
- **Diversification of Freebies:** Political parties might diversify their offerings to appeal to a broader range of voters. This could include a mix of economic incentives, social welfare programs, and infrastructure development projects tailored to meet the specific needs of different demographic groups.
- **Public Awareness and Education:** There may be a growing emphasis on public awareness and education regarding the implications of freebies. An informed electorate may become more discerning, demanding a clearer understanding of how these promises align with overall governance and development goals.
- **Adaptation to Global Trends:** Odisha's political landscape might also be influenced by global trends, such as the increasing focus on sustainability, technology-driven governance, and innovative solutions. Freebies could align with these trends, reflecting a forward-looking approach.
- **Influence of External Factors:** External factors, including

economic conditions, geopolitical shifts, and public sentiments, can significantly influence the future of freebies. Global events and national policies may shape the political discourse in Odisha.

- **Policy Debates and Reforms:** The future may witness intensified policy debates on the effectiveness and sustainability of freebies. Calls for reforms and evidence-based policymaking influence how political parties approach the inclusion of freebies in their agendas.

The future of freebies in Odisha's politics is uncertain, it is likely that these promises will continue to play a role in shaping electoral narratives. The key challenge for political leaders will be to adapt to changing circumstances, address the evolving needs of the electorate, and strike a balance between immediate relief measures and long-term sustainable development.

Speculation on the continued role of freebies in political strategies

As Odisha's political landscape evolves, the allure of freebies in electoral campaigns is expected to persist. Political parties may continue to leverage promises of economic incentives, social welfare programs, and infrastructure projects to secure voter allegiance. However, the nature of these freebies could undergo transformations, aligning with shifting socio-economic priorities and emerging challenges (Patro, 2022). The speculation involves considering how political narratives may integrate freebies with broader development agendas, ensuring a balance between short-term relief measures

and long-term sustainable policies. Factors such as public awareness, demands for transparent governance, and the global context may influence the trajectory of freebies, shaping their role in future political strategies. The ongoing debate on the efficacy and implications of these promises is likely to contribute to the nuanced evolution of freebies within the intricate dynamics of Odisha's political discourse.

Recommendations for a balanced and sustainable approach to governance

A balanced and sustainable approach to governance in the realm of freebies politics in Odisha necessitates carefully integrating immediate relief measures with a focus on long-term development goals. Policymakers should prioritise the formulation of well-defined policies that address the genuine needs of the population while ensuring fiscal responsibility. Rather than relying solely on short-term populist measures, there should be a commitment to investing in essential services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure. Transparency in implementing freebies is paramount to building public trust, and efforts should be directed towards creating robust monitoring mechanisms to prevent corruption and ensure the equitable distribution of benefits (Singh. B. P., 2016). Public awareness campaigns could also play a crucial role in educating the electorate about the trade-offs involved in freebies politics, fostering a more informed and discerning citizenry. A sustainable governance approach entails balancing immediate socio-economic needs and fostering a conducive environment for long-term growth and development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Odisha's political landscape, characterised by the intricate dance of promises and policies within the framework of freebies politics, reflects the evolving dynamics of governance and public sentiment. The phenomenon of Freebies Politics has become a defining feature, offering a lens through which we can comprehend the nuanced interplay between political strategies and public expectations. As political parties strategically deploy promises of welfare programs, economic incentives, and infrastructure development, the state undergoes transformations that extend beyond electoral cycles. While these initiatives can provide immediate relief and resonate with voter aspirations, a critical examination reveals potential drawbacks, including fiscal strain and challenges to long-term development. For Odisha's political framework to thrive sustainably, there is a pressing need for a balanced approach that embraces short-term relief measures without losing sight of the imperative to invest in robust governance, transparent implementation, and the fundamental pillars of socio-economic development. As the state navigates the future, the judicious intertwining of political acumen with a commitment to the welfare of the people will shape the trajectory of Odisha's politics, raising crucial questions about the nature of governance, accountability, and the enduring pursuit of a prosperous and equitable society.

This comprehensive exploration of Odisha's political landscape and the role of freebies in politics unveils a nuanced understanding of the historical context, types, and impacts of such initiatives. The overview of past political trends in Odisha

traces the evolution of freebies in discourse, highlighting key moments shaping their integration into political strategies. Delving into the types of freebies, including welfare programs, economic incentives, and infrastructure projects, the analysis discerns their differential impact on diverse population segments. The examination of political strategies showcases how parties strategically employ freebies to garner support, accompanied by case studies illustrating successful implementations and critical critiques of associated challenges (Mishra, 2022). The study also evaluates public perception through surveys, considering the effectiveness of freebies in gaining voter trust and addressing potential controversies. Case studies further illuminate instances where freebies played pivotal roles, offering lessons for future considerations. Speculating on the future role of freebies, potential shifts in public sentiment, and concluding with recommendations for balanced and sustainable governance, this examination provides a holistic and insightful overview of Odisha's political framework and the politics of freebies.

The analysis underscores the enduring impact of freebies in shaping Odisha's political framework, revealing a symbiotic relationship between political strategies and public expectations. Historical insights trace the evolution of freebies, showcasing their integration into the fabric of political discourse. Types of freebies, spanning welfare programs, economic incentives, and infrastructure projects, highlight their multifaceted impact on diverse population segments. As evidenced by case studies, political strategies exemplify freebies' persistent allure as potent tools for garnering support

and influencing voter behaviour. Critiques acknowledge potential drawbacks, emphasising the delicate balance required for sustainable governance. Public perception studies reflect the resonance of freebies in shaping trust and controversies. Including case studies offers tangible instances where freebies have left an indelible mark on the political landscape, providing valuable lessons for future considerations. Speculation on the future role of freebies and potential shifts in public sentiment acknowledges their lasting influence, concluding with recommendations for a balanced governance approach. In essence, the enduring impact of freebies emerges as a defining force in moulding Odisha's political dynamics, reflecting the intricate interplay between political choices, public responses, and the evolving nature of democratic governance.

In contemplating the future trajectory of political dynamics in Odisha from the perspective of freebies politics, it becomes evident that the role of these populist strategies will continue to wield substantial influence. The enduring appeal of immediate benefits and targeted promises in electoral campaigns suggests that freebies will remain integral to political discourse. However, the evolving landscape demands a nuanced approach. As Odisha aspires for sustained development, political leaders must balance meeting immediate socio-economic needs and fostering a conducive environment for long-term growth. The trajectory will likely witness an increased emphasis on transparency, accountability, and a more informed electorate that critically evaluates the impact of freebies on governance. The state's political future, is shaped by the

judicious integration of populist measures with a commitment to sustainable policies, holds the potential to redefine the dynamics

between political strategies, public expectations, and the overarching goals of democratic governance.

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