

Electoral Reforms in India – Challenges

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ABSTRACT

India is the largest democracy in the world where people enjoy free and fair elections. Election system is the life and soul of the democratic system of India because it is through elections; the people elect their representatives, form and change their government, exercise control on policies and programme of the government. To protect the core values of democracy in this dynamic scenario, it is imperative to have a free and fair electoral process with greater citizen participation. But a defect in corrupt practices overshadows the moonlight of our election process. Today, the problem of electoral reforms arises in connection with the growing decline of electoral policies, and there is an urgent need to strengthen the electoral system of our country so that the true potential of the democratic system can be realized. Although politics is the art and practice of dealing with political power, elections are a process of legitimizing this power. In fact, democracy can function only with this belief that elections are free and fair, and not rigged and manipulated by them, which are effective tools for determining the will of the people, both in reality and in form, and are not simple rituals designed for to create the illusion of differences in popular opinion. It cannot survive without free and fair elections. The confidence of citizens in the electoral system is extremely important to strengthen the democracy. This article attempts to highlight the challenges of electoral system and also suggests some corrective measures for the Indian electoral system.

Key Words : Democracy, Elections, Corrupt, Electoral system, Political party and election commission

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important features of our democratic structure is the “election” held over a systematic period of time. The electoral system is an official decision-making process when a citizen chooses a candidate for a public position. The goal of electoral reform is to introduce a free and fair electoral system to accompany impartial elections. Elections are the foundation of our democratic system, which gives the right to elect our representatives, and it is expected that this management system will ensure the well-being of the masses. Political parties are indispensable in parliamentary democracy, and elections in India have a long history; has an electoral system at three levels; central, state and local elections promoted

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by our federal structure.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this paper is to understand the challenges of electoral process and highlight action taken by government. This paper is descriptive and analytical in nature. The data used in it is collected from secondary resources.

Challenges of Electoral system of India:

Indian democracy faces many problems and challenges in holding free and fair elections, mentioned below:

Misuse of Government Machinery:

Though the use of government machinery has been prohibited in election according to election laws, yet the reality is contrary to it. During election government machinery becomes propaganda machinery of the ruling party. Ruling party used official machinery for advertising their achievements to get votes of the people. It is usually noted that the government improperly uses the official mechanism during the election campaign to promote the electoral prospects of its party candidates. Misuse of official machinery in this way offers an unfair advantage to the ruling party during the elections, which leads to the abuse of state funds to further the prospects of party candidates.

Criminalisation of Politics:

Democracy and violence are opposite to one another, but in India the use of violent means to promote political interest is increasing day by day. Till today, so many politicians have fell victim to a communal world are members of legislative bodies and some of them are even holding the offices of ministers. During the election period, newspapers are often full of information on the number of criminals in the field, sponsored by all parties. They are able to succeed in the political arena due to their financial influence. Political parties tap criminals for the fund, in turn, provide them with political support and protection. According to rough estimates, in any state election, 20 percent of candidates come from the criminal past: mafia bandits and other influential gangsters have shown that they can transform their muscle strength into votes often at gunpoint. Voters from many parts of the country are forced to vote for the local powerful person. Tickets were issued to candidates with a criminal record, even the National Party. All these repeatedly reported cases show that democracy in India was largely failed because the electoral system was misused. Our policy was corrupt because of the corrupt person entering in politics. The criminalization of politics has become widespread. Politicians hired criminals to help them win the election by hijacking booths. Today, these same criminals began to enter the state parliament and legislature.

Muscle Power:

Violence, pre-election harassment, post-election intimidation, victimisation, and capturing the booth, are mainly products of muscle strength. They are common in many parts of the country, such as Bihar, Western Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, etc., and this cancer is spreading

slowly to the south, as in Andhra Pradesh. The criminalisation of politics and the politicisation of criminals are similar to the two sides of the same coin and bear the primary responsibility for the manifestation of muscle strength in elections. Using violence; criminals can succeed in elections for their parties

Money Power:

The politics in India is also not free from the influence of money power. In India, the rich people have their strong hold on politics. During elections they help the political parties with money and after the elections they encash the benefits also. Elections are a costly affair in any democratic politics that plays a critical role in India. The power of money plays a devastating role in the electoral system, which seriously affects the work of periodic elections. This leads to total corruption and contributes mainly to the creation of a black money economy that currently runs our country. A potential candidate in each constituency must spend millions of rupees on transportation, advertising, and other important elements of the campaign. In recent years, election spending has exceeded any limit because of the desire of each political party to spend more in the struggle than its rivals. Elections in Indian politics are becoming more and more expensive, and the gap between legally incurred and incurred expenses is widening over the years. Observers are looking at a system that requires unbelievably high costs collected by political parties and their candidates through questionable means. This seems to continue today, with more terrible consequences of the excess of black money in the corridors of political parties, despite the liberalization of the economy caused by the country's political system. Elections in India are so far from ordinary people, only these people can participate in the elections as candidates who have a lot of money because today voting is not a means of public opinion.

Non-Serious Candidates in Political Parties:

In recent years, the number of candidates for elections has increased steadily. The number of candidates increased due to the participation of independent candidates. They contest elections non-seriously and lose their deposits. Non-serious candidates are widely criticized by serious candidates, either because they reduce a significant part of the votes of competing candidates, or to divide the votes into castes, or for additional physical strength at the polling station and in counting centres. The multiplicity of candidates causes inconvenience to election authorities in the management of elections. The voters are also handicapped in identifying the candidates of their own choice. This affects the sanctity of elections. This onslaught of non-seriousness has to be halted.

Wide gap between the seats won and the votes polled:

It is often seen that in India there is a wide gap between seats won by different political parties and votes polled. It means that political parties do not secure as many percent of seats as much percentage of votes they secure.

Change in the boundaries of the constituencies to suit the interest of ruling parties:

Under the electoral process in India, a provision has been made of changing the boundaries of the constituencies. But it is generally seen that the ruling party does so to promote its own

interests and harm the interests of the opposition parties, the constituencies having committed voters of the opposition parties are joined with other constituencies.

Non-use of vote by voters:

Under the Indian electoral system it is optional for the voters to cast or not to cast his or her vote and many voters do not cast their votes.

Casteism:

Many political parties in India strongly support certain caste groups, which leads to a struggle between political parties to conquer various caste groups in their favour by offering them offers. Political parties determine policies and programs, as well as nominating candidates for elections for caste reasons at all levels. Thus, candidates are not selected in terms of achievements, skills, and merits, but in caste, creed and community applications. Ultimately, caste becomes a decisive factor in the selection of candidates.

Communalism:

The policy of communism and religious fundamentalism since independence has led to several separate movements in various states and regions of the country. Community polarization posed a threat to the Indian political spirit of pluralism, parliamentarians, and federalism. Despite accepting the principle of secularism as a constitutional belief, the spirit of tolerance needed for secular society seems to have completely disappeared from the politics of the body in India. The dynamics of national and state policies over the past decade indicate confrontation and conflicts between the so-called secularist and the communist. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to rely on caste and religious sentiment, as well as on-field candidates in elections based on caste views, and on caste equations and community conditions. Despite the fact that a comprehensive constitutional amendment (80th amendment bill) and the Law on People's Representation (1993) were introduced in order to separate politics from communism, casteism, and linguism, etc., the minority government could not get through parliament.

Lack of Moral Values in Politics:

Very sharp erosion occurred in the ideological orientation of political parties. Party dynamics in India led to the emergence of useless politics, which in many respects contradicted the ideals of the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, who proposed dissolving the Party of Congress after gaining independence and involving its members in the service of people. While Gandhi taught us tremendous self-denial, self-sacrifice and service to the people, these inspiring values, democratic norms, and institutions have been systematically destroyed in the last years of the work of the Constitution. During this process, both politicians and political parties have lost confidence in themselves, the highest value that should connect them with the masses. Due to the degeneration of the leadership of the party, they were involved in the struggle for power for personal purposes. Monetary and muscular forces are the main evils that pollute the process and motivate participants to resort to bad practices in elections. This leads to a decline in moral values in the arena of electoral politics. A game

can be fair only if the players are honest and true to their spirit. There seems to be a character crisis among politicians, as the system does not encourage an honest leader. Due to the decline in moral standards, both among the public and among leaders, the criminalization of politics and the politicization of criminals has become the norm. Because of the degeneration of the leadership of the party, they entered the struggle for power for personal goals.

Actions taken by government:

Reports from various Security Councils and various formal and informal group discussions in various forums, as well as individuals categorically pointed to shortcomings in the electoral system, some of them risked making useful suggestions, but problems were still not resolved. as always critical and difficult. Joint Parliamentary Committee on Amendments to the Election Law (1971-72), Report of the Goswami Committee of 1990, Bill on the Constitution of 1994 and Bill on National Representation (Second Amendment), 1994 (approved by Parliament), the recommendations of the Electoral Commission in 1998 and the report of the 1998 Indrajit Gupta Committee, etc., prepared a comprehensive set of recommendations for reforming the electoral system. Some reforms have been implemented, but “much needs to be done. Currently, the whole country expresses serious concern about the antisocial and criminal elements entering the arena. Former CEC, Mr. Lyngdoh was also in such a terrible situation that he could not find a suitable remedy against bad election practices. This results in a clean system but encourages voters not to vote for criminals. Mr. T.S. Krishna Murthy, N.Gopalaswami, and Navin B. Chawla, the State Customs Committee, also faced the same problem. In a letter of proposal, the CEC, T. S. Krishna Murthy proposed to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh a series of poll reforms so that anyone charged at least six months before elections should be barred from contesting elections. In the recent past, the EC has taken a number of new initiatives, such as using state-owned electronic media for telecast by political parties, checking: criminalizing politics, providing cars for voter identification, simplifying the process of registering political parties and requiring regular organizational elections, various strict measures in accordance with the Model Code of Conduct to ensure equal conditions for competitors during elections and so on. In India, the EC has established a set of guidelines, known as the Model Code of Conduct that must be followed by political parties and candidates prior to elections. These guidelines are designed to ensure that the ruling party, at both the national and state levels, does not abuse its official position to gain an unfair election advantage. It is widely believed that there is something wrong with the elections in India. Given the central role of elections in restoring the legitimacy of a democratic political system and its vital role in the constitution of the political community, it is hoped that distortions that adversely affect the holding of free and fair elections will be immediately monitored and eliminated if nothing else. Then at least amend the law governing the conduct of elections. Now it is time to provide some strict rules and laws in our constitution to prevent these antisocial evils from the legislature and parliament.

Suggestions:

- The election commission must have independent personnel in order to ensure efficiency and impartiality in the election process.
- The EC, which is an autonomous constitutional body, should not work under pressure

from the executive and legislative bodies.

- Political corruption must be stopped by financing real candidates through political parties whose accounts must be checked. A candidate involved in corruption must be disqualified.
- In order to have real democracy, the registration and recognition of political parties must be fair and without any influence and pressure.
- The media should play a non-partisan role in elections and as a guarantee of democracy.
- Each voter must be absolutely free to vote, without fear of consequences and without exerting excessive influence on anyone.
- The election costs of each candidate in an election are set by the Indian Election Commission and must be closely monitored during election campaigns so that corruption and election violence can be eradicated.
- Strictly respect the model's code of conduct and punish those who violate it. Judicial authorities should take immediate action if any irregularities are discovered during the election.
- NOTA option on electronic voting machines; "None of the above" should always exist on electronic voting machines to protect the identity and rights of voters.
- The Indian Electoral Commission is invited to bind the UIDAI card (Aadhar) by certifying the biometric characteristics of voters during a vote and making it compulsory for the vote; this will prevent false and proxy voting.
- VVPAT Voters verifiable audit trail is a voter feedback method. It is an independent control printing press connected to electronic voting machines. This system will bring greater transparency and restore voter confidence.

Conclusion:

The election commission carried out a series of credible electoral reforms to strengthen democracy and improve electoral justice, but corruption and criminal practices have taken place in elections in various places. Sincere efforts are required from all sides; especially political parties should be neat and clean in this matter. The main problem is not the absence of laws, but the lack of strict enforcement of these laws. To eradicate this unfair practice in elections, it is necessary to strengthen the hands of the Election Commission and give them more legal and institutional authority. Recent simultaneous electoral debates should be promoted in a positive direction and some practical steps are needed to ensure that parliamentary elections and state assemblies can be held simultaneously. This is an idea in which all political leaders should consider this reform and work out a common consensus.

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