



THE ELECTION COMMISSION'S ROLE IN INDIA'S ELECTORAL REFORMS

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Abstract: *India is the world's largest democratic and republican country. Elections are vital in any democratic and republican government, and they are also the essence of democracy. People in a democracy have the right to be ruled by a government of their choosing. This has been one of the most hotly debated electoral changes in India. Because of the rise in the number of minor and regional parties, multi-cornered elections have become the norm rather than the exception in India. Free and fair elections are essential for democracy's success. The Election Commission is established by the Constitution to ensure free and fair elections. The Election Commission of India was constituted on January 25, 1950. The Commission's secretariat, which has 300 employees, is based in New Delhi. This is a body with a distinct personality that is free of political constraints and executive control.*

Key Words: *Democratic, free and fair elections, Electoral Reforms.*

INTRODUCTION

The Election Commission has been attempting to conduct elections fairly and impartially at regular intervals in accordance with the values of India's constitution, and has taken various innovative steps in this regard in recent years. Notable among these are a scheme for political parties to use state-owned electronic media for broadcast/telecast, a check on criminalization of politics, computerised electoral rolls, providing electors with Identity Cards, simplifying the procedure for maintaining accounts and filling the same by candidates, and a variety of measures to ensure strict compliance with the Model Code of Conduct, providing a level playing field to contestants during elections, and appointing election observers.

ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA (ECI)

The Election Commission of India is a permanent constitutional body that was founded on January 25, 1950, in compliance with the constitution. Dr.B.R.Ambedkar stated the Election Commission of India's goals as follows: "Our nation is huge, comprising of many races, dialects, cultures, faiths, classifications, and so on." As a result, the Election Commission, comprised of the Chief Election Commissioner for all of India, is essential to prevent injustice from occurring to mixed populations. This central body works with, is independent of local influences, and has jurisdiction over the whole electoral system in the country.

The State Election Commission is led by the Chief Election Commissioner, who is selected by the Governor of that specific State. According to Articles 243K and 243ZA of the Indian Constitution, the State Election Commission is vested with the powers to conduct free and fair elections to Local Bodies, as well as superintendence, direction, and control over the preparation of electoral rolls for the conduct of all elections to Panchayat Raj and Municipal bodies at regular intervals (Local Bodies).

The Indian electoral system is roughly split into two parts: direct election based on geographical seats and proportional representation via a single transferable vote. The first method is used to elect members of the Lok Sabha, State Assemblies, and Union Territories' assemblies. The second election was held on the basis of proportional representation, with a single transferable vote for the President and Vice-President of India, Rajya Sabha members, and Legislative Council members.

The following are the key flaws of India's voting system:

1. Money Power: Electioneering is an expensive event in any democratic government, but it is especially important in India. Money power plays a damaging role in our electoral system, substantially undermining the functioning of periodic elections. It leads to all-around corruption and primarily contributes to the formation of the black money economy that currently governs our nation. A potential candidate in each constituency must spend millions of dollars on transportation, publicity, and other election-related expenses. Election costs have risen beyond any reasonable limitations in recent years, owing to each political party's drive to spend more than their opponents.

2. Muscle Power: Violence, pre-election intimidation, post-election victimisation, most riggings of any kind, quiet and violent booth capturing are all fruits of muscle power. These are common in various

sections of the nation, including Bihar, Western Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra, and this malignant illness is steadily expanding to the south, including Andhra Pradesh. Criminalization of politics and politicalization of criminals are two sides of the same coin that are primarily responsible for the manifestation of muscular power at elections. Criminals are able to win electoral victory for their patrons by utilising violence.

3. Misuse of Government Machinery: It is commonly said that the government in power during an election uses official machinery to advance the electoral prospects of its party candidates. Misuse of official machinery takes various forms, such as the publication of advertisements at the expense of the government and the public exchequer highlighting their accomplishments, disbursements from discretionary funds at the ministers' disposal, use of government vehicles for canvassing, and so on. The above-mentioned abuse of official machinery offers the ruling party an unfair edge during elections. This results in the misappropriation of public monies to further the political careers of candidates from a single political party.

4. Criminalization of Politics: During election season, newspapers are frequently full with information on the amount of criminals in each party's field. The criminals' motivation for entering politics is to obtain influence and guarantee that cases against them are dismissed or not pursued. Because of their financial clout, they are able to build a name for themselves in politics. Political parties solicit funds from criminals in exchange for political privilege and protection. Mafia dons and other prominent criminals have demonstrated that they can turn their brute strength into votes, often at gunpoint.

5. Non-Serious Candidates in Political Parties: The number of candidates in elections has steadily increased in recent years. The involvement of Independents has increased the number of candidates. They run for office lightly and lose their deposits. Non-serious candidates are generally sponsored by serious candidates in order to steal a significant amount of competitor candidates' votes, divide votes along caste lines, or have more physical force at voting stations and counting centres. The large number of candidates complicates election management for election officials. Voters are also hampered in identifying their preferred candidates. This has an impact on the integrity of elections. This bombardment of irrelevance must be stopped.

6. Political defections: Political defections are also a serious concern, particularly at the state level. Elected from one party with a specific philosophy that is supported by the public, but after elections,

they switch from one party to another. It should not be permitted to represent even a third of the party. The party will be permitted after resignation, term completion, or merger. At the moment, the Speaker has the capacity to dismiss political defections, but in many situations, the Speaker makes decisions based on the guidelines of the party to which he belongs, thus this jurisdiction should be retained by the Election Commission of India.

7. Paid Information: Paid news is the most recent severe concern in the Indian election system. "Any news or analysis appears in any media, either print or electronic, for a fee in cash or kind as payment," according to the Press Council of India. Because it is difficult to scrutinise in practise, the system will be reinforced.

8. Castism: Although there are few instances in India where a political party is completely linked with any one caste group, there are instances where certain castes provide considerable support to specific political parties. Thus, while political parties compete among themselves to win different caste groups in their favour by making offers to them, caste groups also try to pressurise parties to select their members for candidacy in elections. If the caste group is dominant and the political party is important, this interaction is amplified.

9. Communalism: Since India's formation as a "secular" state, the politics of communalism and religious fundamentalism have resulted in a variety of distinct movements in various states and areas of the nation. Communal polarisation, or multipolarization, has put the Indian "political culture of pluralism, parliamentarianism, and federalism" at jeopardy. Despite the establishment of the "concept of "Secularism" as a constitutional ideology, which ironically permits communal parties to compete, the tendency toward communalism and fundamentalism in Indian politics is expanding. The spirit of tolerance required for a "secular" society appears to have departed from India's body politics.

10. Lack of Moral Values in Politics: The ideological orientation of political parties has deteriorated dramatically. Party dynamics in India have resulted in the formation of valueless politics, which runs counter to the principles of the nation's founder, Mahatma Gandhi, who urged that the Congress party be abolished after independence and its members devote themselves to the service of the people. While Gandhi taught us incredible selflessness, self sacrifice, and devotion to the people, such inspiring principles, democratic norms and institutions have been deliberately eroded throughout the past years of the Constitution's operation. Every major participant appears to be playing a no holds barred game in

the moral chase of power politics. The Gandhian value of the spirit of devotion to the nation has all but vanished from modern politics.

THE ELECTION COMMISSION'S ROLE IN ELECTORAL REFORMS

1. The Election Commission must rely on personnel from the Central and State Governments. The administrative staff's dual obligation, to the government for regular administration and to the EC for election administration, is detrimental to the Commission's impartiality and efficiency. Along with it comes the issue of disciplinary control of election personnel, which frequently leads to conflict between the government and the BC. Now that elections are no longer a one-time event, it is preferable for the BC to have a permanent electoral administration with proper disciplinary supervision over the workforce.
2. An efficient Electoral Commission is now required to conduct free and fair elections. Democracy and brave elections are inextricably linked. To prevent unfair practises in elections, such as rigging, and to secure the survival of democracy, the following measures or means should be used.
3. A democratic system is built on periodic elections. For a fair electoral system, every prospective candidate must have unrestricted freedom to run for office and conduct his election campaign in his own way, as long as he stays within the law.
4. The preparation of electoral rolls by the EC is to be overseen at the village level, and certifications from officials who create electoral rolls stating that the electoral rolls have been properly amended are to be obtained. They exclude such people and lawfully disenfranchised citizens, and no names should be included.
5. Accountability will be established for the purposeful removal of voters' names from electoral records.
6. Every voter must be completely free to vote as she wishes, without fear of repercussions, and without being unduly swayed by anybody by inappropriate methods, inducement, or pressure of any type.
7. The anonymity of voters' preferences for any candidate should be preserved. At every point, the electoral apparatus must be honest and unbiased.

CONCLUSION

The public is the most powerful entity in a democracy. If the public does not vote for criminals, dishonest and corrupt politicians who desire to buy votes with money or physical power, things will run smoothly and democracy will shine in the dark spectrum of a previously corrupt and criminalised political system. So, while the EC is working hard in this area, it will fail unless all political parties and people accept responsibility. Finally, there should be a suitable system that is completely functioning and ready to deal with any triviality.

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