

ELECTORAL REFORMS IN INDIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract:

India is the largest democracy in the world. Election is the key feature of the democratic society. India being one of the democratic countries has adopted Parliamentary democracy in post 1947 era after partition and freedom from Britishers. The core ideas of the Indian constitution are bedrock of Indian democracy believes in the people and their Political and Fundamental rights. It is in this context this Research paper studies the Importance of Elections in representatives and Parliamentary democracy. It studies the Importance of Electoral Reforms in India and Issues and Challenges related to it. As free and fair Elections are fundamental basis for success of any democracy. Thus various committees were formed and laws have been passed over the period of time for the mechanism of free and fair elections and Electoral reforms in India. India stands as a model for many Emerging democracies around the world. Free and fair elections are the hallmark of a well functioning democracy. While we are justifiably Proud of our democracy. There are a number of areas which need to be strengthened for us to realize the true potential of a well functioning democracy. Electoral reforms in India are the need of the hour and the Government of India as well as Election Commission will have to make Positive changes in it.

Keywords:

Elections, Democracy, Political Party, Election Commission, Electoral reforms, Fundamental Rights, Model Code of Conduct

Introduction:

The Election Commission of India is a permanent and an independent body established by the Constitution of India directly to ensure free and fair Election in the country. One of the most Important features of

our democratic framework is 'Elections' which are held at a systematic period of time. The purpose of electoral reforms is to introduce free and fair electoral system for accompanying impartial elections. Election are the backbone of our democratic system that confers the right to elect our representatives and such a system of governance is expected to ensure the welfare of the common citizens. Political parties are indispensable in parliamentary democracy. Article 324 of the Constitution provides that the power of superintendence, direction and control of election to parliament, state legislatures, the office of President of India and the office of Vice-President of India shall be vested in the election commission.

India has the distinction of being the largest democracy of the world and Election form the integral part of it. Democracy can function only upon this faith that elections are free and fair and not manipulated. They are effective instruments of asserting popular will. The elections are not being held in an ideal condition because of the enormous amount of money required to be spent and large muscle power needed for winning the elections. There is no denial to this fact that the electorate is not only vast in India but also quite diverse that reflects in plurality of caste, religion, language, region, etc. of its social variety. The Indian political system when we measure the success stories of Indian democracy have over all emerged positive over the decades but that does not mean there are no loopholes in the system over all. Many committees have been formed to carry out electoral reforms but their recommendations have not been implemented properly, Former Chief Election Commissioner T.N. Seshan did a lot of good work regarding Electoral reforms during his tenure. Some of the key reforms are explained below.

1. Prohibiting liquor distribution during election and more importantly for 2 to 3 days before the date of election.
2. Misuse of government machinery T.N. Seshan prohibited the use of governmental cars and people who work for the government etc. Should not be used by the ruling party to conduct political campaigns.
3. To curb electoral fraud and voter influence the Election Commission recommended that the 'Model Code of Conduct' for all political parties in effective period.
4. Boot capturing, Lowering of voting Age, Prohibition of Arms, Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), Elector's photo Identity card (EPIC), Listing of Names of candidates, Prohibition of the sale of Liquor, Restrictions Imposed on Exit polls, Voting through postal Ballot, Increase in security Deposit, Introduced NOTA Option on EVMs as well as VVPAT machine for transforming Electoral process.

Electoral Reforms in India:

The preamble of Indian constitution aims to provide 'Political Justice' to the people of India without any differences. However, when the criminal elements are becoming a part of the legislature, then securing any form of justice, is a hollow promise of the governments. All recent committees on politics and electoral reform have observed the criminalization in Indian political system almost unanimously. Criminalization of politics has many forms, but perhaps the most alarming among them is the significant number of elected representatives with criminal charges pending against them. The topic of electoral reforms has been taken up by numerous government committees in the recent past, including but not limited to

1. Tarkunde Committee, 1974
2. Dinesh Goswami Committee, 1990
3. Vohra Committee on the Nexus between Crime & Politics, 1993
4. Indrajit Gupta Committee on state funding of Elections, 1998

5. Election Commission of India Report on proposed Electoral Reforms, 2004

All these committees and report in detail talked about the electoral reforms in India, and based on the recommendations made by the above Committees and Commissions, various reforms have been introduced in our electoral system, election machinery and election process.

Indian Electoral Politics: Issues & Challenges

There are numerous issues in the Indian electoral process which directly or indirectly influence the electoral politics.

1. Money and muscle power
2. Casteism
3. Communalism
4. Lack of moral values
5. Misuse of Government Machinery

The some important recommendations of these committees that they put forth in front of Election Commission of India to tackle the growing obstacles of conducting elections, First and foremost the report suggest that the money power in elections must be controlled and eliminated once for all because it set bad priority in democracy. There must be financial transparency in political parties so that the money that comes from other sources cannot be used harm the democracy. The practice of misuse of caste and religion for electoral gains must be avoided. The use of religion, caste, community, tribe and any other form of group identity for electoral gain or for gathering political support should be banded for the large good of society. Caste system in Indian political system is deeply rooted. Almost every Politician doing work only for making money and thinking only for themselves. There is lack of ideology and morality in the mind of Politicians. They are doing only such things which is beneficial for them, that is why electoral reforms are the need of the hour to strengthen Indian democracy. There is a need to make transparent and strong laws regarding electoral reforms. The highest Supreme court of India has also given directions or guidelines regarding electoral reforms.

Research Methodology

The study work mostly used a review technique to address the Electoral Reforms in India : Issues and Challenges. The primary source of data used to conduct the study was Secondary data. This study has assessed a number of Publications, including books, Websites, Magazines, journals, research paper and newspapers.

Conclusion :

The Election Commission has brought a number of creditable electoral reforms to strengthen democracy and improve the fairness of elections but still corrupt and criminal practices have taken place in the elections at several places. Political parties should be neat and clean in this matter. The main problem is not lack of laws, but lack of strict implementation of these all laws and regulations. In order to eradicate these unfair practices in election, there is a need to strengthen the hands of Election Commission and institutional powers to achieve the objectives as enshrined in the constitutions

and reported by the different committees from time to time it must be the endeavours of all the stakeholders including Government at national and state level, election commission of India, law commission etc. to implement such proposals on electoral reforms on which consensus emerges, from time to time so that the people of India can cherish the real meaning of democracy.

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