Desirable Electoral Reforms in the Indian Democracy

Manroop Singh Meena
Principal,
Government Girls' College,
Dholpur, Rajasthan

Abstract

India is a country based on diversity of culture and religions. The country is rich in natural resources, flora and fauna. It is equally rich in manpower that can be tested in every imaginable field. Both the Indian males and females with their multifaceted potential have their own identity. No field of life is there where the wonderful potential of the people of all the classes cannot be seen. The same applies to the field of politics where both the male and the female political leaders can be seen working together. However, the electoral procedure which witnesses a horrible discrimination based on the elite and the non-elite is in question. In order to be transparent it needs some reforms immediately so as to ensure that it is not confined only to a very few political family clans and only to the people rich in wealth and muscle power. The elections in India have ever since forced the thinkers to bring about reforms in them so as the country can have good governance, that is, a balanced governance in all respects. The elections in India are too expensive as the political leaders and contestants spend too much in the name of elections endeavouring to win the favour of the people so that they do not lose the seats. The reason is that for the expenses borne by the candidates or the political parties they belong to, there are no provisions of audit. It allows them to spend as much as. It allows them to get involved into various forms of corruption. In several European countries the Government bears such expenses in order to check the corrupt policies of the political parties, but here it is not so.

The paper based both on the secondary data and personal observation and perceptions, and though theoretical sounded in theoretical implications, reflects the author's own observations, thoughts and approach which enable him not only to mirror the working of the electoral system of India, but also to provide some valuable suggestions for its reform. It discusses the features of the existing electoral procedure, its weaknesses and suggestions that can provide it strength.

Keywords: Desirable, Electoral Reforms, Democracy, Political Party System In India, Audit, Franchise, Minimum Educational Standards, Financial Resources, Compulsory Retirement.

Introduction

The electoral system in India has several weaknesses of its own which must meet some effective solution. The weaknesses of the electoral system make one deduce that politics is in the hands of few dominant ones that have hold on it and all its institutions. As far as the common people are concerned, despite several strong claims that India is a democracy meant for the dominance of the people in the election system, they are no more than the spectators of a political show. The electoral system in India is rightly said to be defective. There are several factors that acclaim it to be corrupt. The prime factor is the nomination or election of the candidates of the same families. It not only makes some particular family line dominant but also detaches others from the electoral process. The history of political parties and elections in India clearly reveals that only a handful families have been the party makers and candidate producers. At all the levels of governance, only the members of those few families are seen acting as the office bearers in the political parties or as candidates. It seems as if there were very few others who are capable of representing the people at the various levels. By now there is no constitutional amendment that has ever tried to check this monopolistic practice in politics based on consanguinity. The Parliament, the State Assemblies and all the local government bodies are full of the members of the same family. The reason is that the senior members of such families promote the junior ones. Most of the candidates who contest elections come from the families of the political party office bearers. They enjoy the political throne either by nomination or by election.

Through the muscle and wealth power they succeed in enslaving the common man who failing to use his own conscience and intellect, finally supports them. For them, there is no age limit, and so they continue to be active in politics even when they are behind the bars and on death bed.

The electoral procedure and system has made the voters indifferent to the exercise of franchise. Many of them do not go to cast their votes simply they take it just the wastage of time on certain assumable representatives that are to be finally elected. The existing political party system which allows several big and small parties as well as caucus to contest elections is another factor that crumbles the electoral system. The worst thing about the political leaders and contestants that raises questions on the transparency of the electoral system in India is the political leaders' being rolling stones, that is, their shifting from one political party to another in their self interest.

Illiteracy of the political leaders and contestants is another factor that weakens the electoral system. Education is the core of a social system. The more literate the members in a society are, the better the social system is. However, for politics and politicians education seems to have no meaning. In fact, there is no fixed standard of education for the contestants. As a result, even the most illiterate get the opportunity of being the representatives of the people. Both the literate and the illiterate in the political arena are equal to be judged not on the basis of their educational standards but by their wealth and muscle power. The winning candidates are contented to believe that during the prescribed tenure nothing wrong is going to happen to them, and no one is going to dismiss them. To be honest and genuine and analytical, the contemporary political scene which is governed by the electoral system of the country is a scene of corruption, wealth and muscle power and bloodshed. It must be reformed in the public interest.

Objectives of the Study

1. To keep an eye on the election scenario in India
2. To observe the attitude of shifting, educational standards, wealth and muscle power of the candidates and their supporters
3. To be familiar with the electoral procedure in India
4. To learn about the political party system in the governance
5. To make a bent of mind on the good governance
6. To peep into the structure of the various political parties on the contemporary political scene in India
7. To make perusal of the membership of the family members or blood relatives in the parties
8. To find out the existence of political party system in India
9. To be familiar with the background of the leaders who represent the people
10. To brood over the various standards set by the electoral board for the candidates and that they have in practice
11. To explore the reasons that help even the unsuitable political leaders survive successfully in politics
12. To find out the impact of the incompetent representatives
13. To learn what reforms are needed in the contemporary electoral system
14. To provide suggestions for the reform
15. To interpret the causal-effect relationship of the issue

Review of Literature

Mary Stegmaier, Michael S. Lewis-Beck (2013) under the title Economic Voting voting is an act of political behavior that has been explained in a number of ways. A sociological approach may see the voter as driven by class connections. A psychological approach may view voters as susceptible to appeals to authority. A historical approach may count on voters acting pretty much the way people in the district always have. An institutional approach might pay special attention to the political barriers to voting at all. A geographic approach may see the voter appreciating the special eco-systems in which voters find themselves. A communications approach may focus on voter links to media and how they are swayed. A social psychological approach may stress that political groups, especially political parties, are key attractors for voters. Finally, an issues-based approach may stress the idea of a reasoning voter, who weighs the pluses and minuses of candidate platforms before voting. Thus, there are many, and varied, approaches to the study of voting behavior. Of those mentioned, economic voting comes closest to the issues approach, although it differs in that it emphasizes one issue—the economy. What holds economic voting theory together is the notion that voters pick candidates on the basis of their economic influence. In particular, incumbents who have presided over economic prosperity are rewarded at the polls, while those who are deemed responsible for decline are punished.

Niraj Kumar (2014) in his Ph. D. Thesis entitled 'Role of Indian Media: Covering General Elections' observe the faith of the public in the democratic values in the following words- Allegations of caste politics, communal politics, partisan politics, criminalization of politics and money and muscle power in politics- despite of all this the basic faith in democracy has sustained in all sections of the society. Faith in democracy is inherent in the voters of Indian democracy. It should be noted that in last General Election in 2014 and in many states Assemblies Elections during last few years the voter turnout has increased in comparison to last one and many of states have recorded all time turnout. The recently concluded General Elections recorded the all time voter turnout of more than 66 percent after independence in any Loksabha Election.

Maurice Rene Dunaiski (March 24, 2015) in the Ph. D. Thesis entitled 'Institutions and Electoral Violence' observes that politically motivated violence and large-scale human rights abuses are a common

feature of electoral contests in the developing world. The study demonstrates that institutional factors such as the electoral system, decentralization, the separation of powers, and state capacity all have an important impact on the likelihood of electoral violence. The findings indicate that, all else being equal, centralized states with majoritarian electoral systems, semi-parliamentary regimes and weak state capacity are most at risk of experiencing electoral violence.

Milan Vaishnav (June 23, 2015) in Understanding the Indian Voter surveys that the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP's) historic victory in India's 2014 general election prompted declarations of a watershed in the behavior of the Indian voter. Upon closer inspection, the reality is more nuanced. On some parameters, such as voting based on economic and ethnic considerations, there were indeed discernible changes. However, the empirical evidence suggests these shifts were well under way before 2014. In other areas, namely, support for regional parties, dynastic politicians, and candidates associated with criminal activity, contemporary voters demonstrated much greater continuity with the past.

Timothy D. Sisk (2017) in Elections, Electoral Systems and Party Systems discusses the various ways in which electoral systems and political party dynamics can be evaluated. The provides resources for understanding the complex effects of electoral systems on party systems and the implications for the role of elections in democracy. It discusses why elections matter to democracy, the essential functions that they serve, and the variety of electoral systems and their typical effects on election dynamics, as well as the implications of elections for political parties and the quality of representation.

Hypothesis

Research Questions

1. What are the characteristics of the Indian electoral system?
2. What political party system is in existence?
3. Which political party system is better, two-party system or multi-party system?
4. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the two party system?
5. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the multi-party system?
6. Is the contemporary electoral system and process in India satisfactory?
7. If yes, how?
8. If no, why not?
9. Is the clan-political dominance responsible for crumbling the Indian electoral system and process?
10. What are some popular political clans and families in India that have been dominant for generations?
11. Who bears the expenses of the elections in India, the candidates, the party concerned or the government?
12. Is the audit of the expenses made on the elections mandatory?
13. How is the common man liable to bear such expenses ultimately?

14. Is the franchise exercised by every citizen of India?
15. If no, why?
16. What is the negative impact of the non-participation of all the citizens in the electoral process?
17. Is there any fixed age of retirement of the political party office bearers and contestants?
18. Are there training provisions for the raw political winners?
19. What reforms are needed in the electoral process?
20. What will be the effect of the reformed electoral process?

Methodology & Steps

The research being qualitative in nature uses the qualitative data collected through the various sources. The author's observation and his casual interaction with his fellow beings are in the centre of the thought. The contents of the secondary data helped him formulate hypothesis, while his own knowledge and understanding of the contemporary political trends helped him weave the contents found suitable in the secondary data into the actually produced and shaped thought. The author working on the principles and theoretical implications, succeeded in arriving at the concluding findings through the steps like- selection of the topic to be elaborated, expansion of his own imagination and thought, selection of the sources of the secondary data, analysis of the contents found suitable in the related literature, weaving the findings of the observation and casual debates and talks into the contents of the secondary data selected from the books, journals, magazines, newspapers, delivered speeches of the leaders, internet sites and editorial articles.

Findings

1. The Indian electoral system is passing through hard times as the common man does not have faith in its transparency and its fair working.
2. The Indian electoral system resemblance the class system in the capitalist system. As in the capitalist system, in the electoral system, the division of the Indian citizens is between the elites with a long political background who hold the machinery of governance, and the common people who keep dancing like puppets under the dominant group's wealth and muscle power.
3. In the Indian electoral system, there is no provision of audit of electoral expenses. The public representatives misuse this weakness and waste too much financial resources in the name of elections. In order to check this tendency of the political leaders, political parties and contestants, there must be a compulsory audit of the electoral expenses
4. The Indian electoral system allows the political clan and family sub system which allows the generations in the same family to be the party office bearers and contestants, and the several members of the same family as MPs and MLAs.
5. There must be a complete ban on the nomination of members on the basis of the blood relations or

consanguinity in the Parliament, legislative assemblies and all the local bodies.

6. At a time there must be only one member in the Parliament or in the Legislative Assemblies as it is there in Switzerland

7. As in the USA the electoral expenses are borne by the Government, in India too, the electoral expenses should be borne and met by the Government of India

8. Through a rigid policy, the use of wealth and power in order to get the favour of the voters must be checked

9. At the age of 65, the statesmen must be allowed compulsory retirement from the politics, and the new faces should be introduced in order to ensure activism to the people

10. As in the USA, the office bearers, such as, the President, the Prime Minister, the Chief Ministers must be elected for more than 10 years in the entire political career. This step will help the people elect new and promising political leaders who can represent them successfully at the various levels of governance.

11. The exercise of franchise must be mandatory for every citizen of India, failing which he must be punished in order to ensure that every citizen of India has exercised his franchise

12. As in U.K. and USA, in India too, there must be only two-party political system in order to avoid the chaotic situation at the time of elections, and in order that the voters do not get confused which party to be promoted and which of the multi parties to be left behind. There must be a ban on the multiparty system.

13. The move from one political party to another seeking personal benefit must be banned and punishable with a heavy penalty.

14. In order that only the educated, sincere and sensible political leaders can represent the public, there must be the determination of minimum educational standards. For it, only graduates must be allowed to contest elections. It will link all the people in all the castes to education

15. Practically, the winning candidates are not imparted training of how to represent and manage. There must be a compulsory training and workshop for at least 15 days for all the winning candidates, and they must be made familiar with their rights, duties and liabilities

16. The voters must be allowed to recall the winning leader in case he fails to perform his duties

17. As in Japan, there must be a speedy trial and judicial action against the public representatives who are found involved in any type of corruption

18. There must be a committee of the electoral reforms which must submit its report quarterly so that the latest updates can be publicized.

Conclusion

The Indian Electoral system and process being defective and full of weaknesses needs reforms in order to ensure uniformity and right to equality. In order to be judicious, first it needs to be free from the curse of consanguinity which allows the members of the same family or family line to be party office bearers and candidates; secondly, in order to avoid the chaotic political situation in the country it should replace the multy-party system by the two-party system; thirdly, in order to check the wealth and muscle power of the candidates, there must be some solid constitutional amendment that may ensure the equal participation of the common man in the process of elections: in order to check the wastage of money during elections, the government should be made liable to bear the expenses; the people with criminal background should be prevented from holding any office in any political party, and from contesting elections at any level; the political leaders and contestants involved in any form of corruption must be debarred from the party for the whole life; the age of retirement for the party office bearers and contestants must be fixed as it is in case of the government employees; new faces from among the common men irrespective of religion and caste must be promoted.

The electoral process can claim itself to be transparent and fair only in case these reforms are introduced. The families like the Nehru-Gandhi family in the Congress, the Mulayam Singh Yadav family in Samajvadi Party, the Farookh Abdulla family in J & K, the Karunanidhi family in Tamil Nadu, the Prakash Singh Badal family in Punjab etc. must be checked if others are to be promoted on the basis of right to equality. The multi-political party system which is prevailing at present is not good from any angle as it makes the situation all chaotic disturbing the peace of the nation during elections. It must be replaced by the two-party system so as to confirm that either the candidate from A or the candidate from B party is going to win and represent the people. The clan political dominance has crumbled the electoral process which needs to be abolished. The burden of the expenses finally falls on the common people, particularly on the service class who have to bear them through the payment of various income and service taxes.

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