ELECTIONS AND VOTING BEHAVIOUR: CHANGING DIMENSIONS IN INDIA

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Abstract

One of the most important features of our democratic framework is 'Election' which is held at a systematic period. The electoral system in any country should support and strengthen the empowerment of the people of the country to use the system to guarantee an equitable framework of economic and social justice.

India is a constitutional democracy with a parliamentary system of government and at the heart of the system is a commitment to hold regular, free and fair elections at all the three levels (National, State and Local level). Voting is one of the most commonly used terms in contemporary age of democratic politics as it shows a formal expression of an individual's choice for or against a certain candidate or political party during the elections. In a limited way, voting refers to the function of electing representatives by casting votes in elections. Frequent and highly competitive elections based on universal adult franchise have become the hallmark of Indian Democracy- the largest of the world. It is an acknowledged fact that contrary to the history of most modern representative democracies which began with the right to vote from exclusion to inclusion. India stands out as a triumphant democracy by providing non-discriminatory Right to Vote to every citizen of India from the very inception of its constitution.

In contradistinction to many of the countries in its neighbourhood and beyond, India has not resorted to coups or revolutions to change government but has done so through 'ballot' rather than 'bullet'. When some of the Western democracies are found suffering from 'democratic deficit'. Faith in democratic process finds manifestation in the exponentially increasing voter turnouts in the national, provincial and local level elections in the country.

The active political participation of the citizens of India during the elections, have succeeded in electing and rejecting governments legitimizing representative democratic system of the country. But this Indian story of elections and journey of voter participation has not been limited to numbers or statistics alone, qualitative changes are also being witnessed since the last decade of the 20th century, wiz post 73rd and 74th Amendments where after the electoral participation has been expanded to the 3rd tier - grass root level - of government along with reservation of seats for women. Thus electoral & participatory democracy has acquired a new connotations and the voting behavior of people is perceptibly affecting the Indian democratic system highlighting its strengths and also exposing its faultiness. Besides the traditional factors that have hitherto influenced voting behavior such as religion, caste, community, language, money, muscle power, ideology, political wave etc. There are other factors which have tremendously impacted voting behavior during the preceding decade. Apart from this, the role of Election Commission and a few electoral reforms have also augured far reaching changes in the electoral process and also party system in the country.

The constitutionally established autonomous multimember election commission of India in attempting to ensure 'free and fair elections' has become extremely vigilant even adopting an 'activist' role. The audio visual media is also playing a defining role in 'creating', 'demolishing' and 'affecting' public opinion.

This paper besides scrutinizing the overall political culture of the country has specifically focused on the critical issues pertaining to elections and changes being witnessed in the voting behaviour of the citizen in the country

1. INTRODUCTION

India is a constitutional democracy with a parliamentary system of government and at the heart of the system is a commitment to hold regular, free and fair elections at all the three levels (National, State and Local level). Voting is one of the most commonly used terms in contemporary age of democratic politics as it shows a formal expression of an individual's choice for or against a certain candidate or political party during the elections. In a limited way, voting refers to the function of electing representatives by casting votes in elections. Frequent and highly competitive elections based on universal adult franchise have become the hallmark of Indian Democracy- the largest of the world. It is an acknowledged fact that contrary to the history of most modern representative democracies which began with the right to vote from exclusion to inclusion , India stands out as a triumphant democracy by providing non-discriminatory Right to Vote to every citizen of India from the very inception of its constitution.In contradistinction to many of the countries in its neighbourhood and beyond, India has not resorted to coups or revolutions to change government but has done so through 'ballot' rather than 'bullet'.Before independence, The congress party remained in the forefront of the national movement. It is because of this reason that a line cannot he drawn between the history of national movement and the history of the Congress party. Therefore, in India, contrary to many consensual parliamentary democracies of Europe, one party majoritarian type governments formed at the national level for a better part of post independence era almost as if it was ordained in the Constitution. However, since the Ninth Lok - Sabha election in 1989, there has been a distinct changeover both in the nature of government formation and composition.

This paper besides scrutinizing the overall political culture of the country would specifically focus on the critical issues pertaining to elections and changes being witnessed in the voting behavior of the citizen in the country.

2. ELECTIONS IN INDIA: INCREMENTAL TRENDS

Since becoming independent from British rule ,India has practiced democracy , and over the past 70 years , has also adapted the concept to create a uniquely Indian model .Indian democracy has developed its own incremental trends, some of them can be briefly summarized as :

2.1 Rise of the Regional Parties:

Though after independence the congress party remained in power both in the center and the states for about 15 years, by the late 1960s regional and caste based parties had started to come to power in the states.

2.2 Coalition Politics:

By the early 1960s another visible trend had manifested itself in the Indian electoral politics - the politics of Coalitions. This was brought on by the regional parties making in roads into national politics through the election of their representatives into central parliament. As a result truly national parties could not get the majority to claim power and had to rely on these representatives to form government.Coalition governments having so many disadvantages like , expansion of the influence of the regional parties translated to the decrease in the share of votes for the national parties ; second , with a number of regional parties being represented at the center, the issues of national interest started to get skewed by the superimposition of regional or state interests ; third, the formation of government became a political 'circus' where progress as a nation became a low priority over the politics of convenience and opportunism.

2.3 Need for Stronger National Parties:

Over the years during this coalition phase of democratic evolution, gradually the Indian voting public attained enough maturity to understand the need to have a strong central government as now the regional parties have lost credibility with the public because their biased priorities have been viewed as not being in consonance with the overall national interests. [1]

2.4 The Transformational 2014 Elections:

- 2014 voting pattern is indicative of the voter impatience with coalition politics that has delayed the implementation of national developmental policies.

- The 2014 election introduced another trend in electoral politics. These elections moved towards being more presidential and the dynamics changed with one individual being projected as the prime ministerial candidate.

- The other noticeable change was that the 2014 elections brought out truly national issues at the strategic level. This was a welcome change in direction and contributed to the BJP winning a ruling majority.

- The congress led UPA coalition government, which was in power since 2004, faced issues of corruption, lack of good governance, the economic growth had slowed, inflation was high and there was a perception of policy paralysis within the government. Moreover Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh wasblamed for his failure to prevent corruption, scandals and further, Congress's practice of having two power centers - a party president and a prime minister – made the latter look ineffectual.

- Yet another trend that was noticed in 2014 elections was the steady increase in the number of political parties and the number of candidates in successive elections. Due to this trend the 2014 elections became fiercely competitive but on the positive side of the equation, almost all sections of population are represented in the Parliament.

- The 2014 elections has been so different in its results to the previous ones. The results of 2014 national elections brought the electoral political evolution full circle and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won 282 of the 543 seats in the Lok Sabha achieving a single- party majority for the first time in three decades

Although most of the trends that have been analysed have positive impacts on the development of democracy, there are some ills that have the potential to impact and slow its forward march.

3. CHALLENGES TO ELECTION SYSTEM

Elections at regular interval are an important feature of democracy. Elections ensure that the will of the people is reflected in the formulation of public policies and decisions. Free and fair elections are vital for the success of democracy. But many factors pose serious challenges to the election system in India. Some of them are as follows:

3.1 Illiteracy

– The problem of widespread illiteracy causes ignorance and prevents adequate understanding of various democratic practices and processes. Despite of several developmental steps including opening of schools and colleges across the country still illiteracy is a major problem. With illiterate population democracy based on adult franchise cannot serve the people properly.

3.2 Corruption

– Widespread and increasing corruption is responsible for the rapid fall in moral value and distortion of the Indian polity. **Sumantra Bose** has observed that "the culture of corruption is deeply intertwined with the ways in which power is won, exercised and retained in India's democracy." [2] In Indian elections, money has acquired a vital place. In spite of adopting several measures, the Election Commission has been unable to compel the political parties to keep its expenditures on campaigning within the legal limit. The other side of the equation is that the financial scams that have involved politicians have neither been questioned nor investigated fully .The common people view this as a travesty but are unable to do anything about it adding to their frustration regarding the politics, governance and democratic processes.

However, the voting public does take corruption in high places into account when the electoral cycle comes around and   punish the wrong doers at the ballot box.

3.3 Criminalization of Politics

– The criminalization of politics and the readily visible nexus between politicians and criminals is another aspect that diminishes the status and stature of parliament. Over the years, many criminals have been elected to parliament and the political class has not initiated any constitutional amendments to remedy this lacuna.

3.4 Communalization

– Communalising the society was one of the primary methods used by the British to keep the Indian society divided and now the political parties of India are the main culprits in continuing to cater to communal identities in their efforts to create vote banks. In a subtle manner this has created a situation wherein loyalty to one's own religion and community has replaced the loyalty to the nation in a broad way. [3]

3.5 Evading code of Conduct

– Code of Conduct is a broad guideline for the political parties and contesting candidates. But at the time of election the political party in power misuses official machinery to further electoral prospects of its candidates, this has been a common complaint. In different ways the misuse of official machinery takes place, for example, utilization of government transport like helicopter, cars, jeeps for personal use, issuing of advertisements at the cost of public exchequer, misuse of official mass media for partisan coverage of political news and publicity regarding their achievements during election period etc.

3.6 Money

– The elections in India are becoming increasingly expensive. Huge amounts are collected through illegal means by political parties and their candidates. Recent years experienced competitions between the political parties to spend more than their rival parties which have led to soaring of expenses beyond any limit.

3.7 Regional Parties

– The rise of the regional parties in Indian coincided with the decline in the influence of national parties. The strength of the regional parties is normally derived from an area or a community harbouring a sense of being deprived and not getting a fair deal from the policies of the central Government. This emotive state is exploited by regional leaders who convert it into vote banks. On the whole the emergence of regional parties and the influence that they bring to bear on national politics has been harmful to the overall progress of the nation.

3.8 Caste

– Caste plays an important role in Indian society and this is very much visible during elections. A common phenomenon very prevalent in India is that people vote for those candidates who belong to their own caste and sometimes different castes join hands to build alliances. During elections an important role is played by the local caste leaders in organizing and mobilizing support, forming favourable alliances and impelling voters to support a particular candidate or political party by offering them incentives. [4] Such local leaders act as vote banks and also play an important role in getting people of their area to vote in favour of a particular candidate or political party. [5]

4. VOTING BEHAVIOUR IN INDIA: DETERMINANTS

The active political participation of the citizens of India during the elections, have succeeded in electing and rejecting governments legitimizing representative democratic system of the country. But this Indian story of elections and journey of voter participation has not been limited to numbers or statistics alone, qualitative changes are also being witnessed since the last decade of the 20th century, viz post 73rd and 74th Amendments whereafter the electoral participation has been expanded to the 3rd tier - grass root level - of government along with reservation of seats for women. Thus electoral & participatory democracy has acquired a new connotations and the voting behavior of people is perceptibly affecting the Indian democratic system highlighting its strengths and also exposing its faultiness.

Besides the traditional factors that have hitherto influenced voting behavior such as charisma, religion, caste, community, language, money, muscle power, ideology, political wave etc. There are other factors which have tremendously impacted voting behavior during the preceding decade. This paper highlighted some traditional and a few newly observed trends in the behavior of Indian voters.   .

4.1 Charisma:

One important factor of voting behavior is Charisma. It means exceptional quality of a leader that becomes a source of attraction and reverence for the people in large numbers. Huge attendance at the meetings addressed by towering personalities like Nehru, Indira, Vajpayee, Modi and a sudden change in the mind of the voters in response to the appeals issued by such great figures may be counted as the concrete evidences of the role of charisma in the electoral behavior of our people . The slogans like 'GaribiHatao', 'Indira means India, India means Indira' , 'Har Har Modi GharGharModi'etc.workedmiracles in the various

elections.

4.2 Caste

- Caste continues to be a major determinant of voting behaviours in India . It has deep roots in the society and constitutes an important basis of social relations at all levels. Despite the adoption of several provisions which prohibit action and discrimination on its basis, caste continues to be a determinant of political behaviors.The role of caste as a determinant of voting behavior has been analysed by several scholars and they have come out with the conclusion, as **Morris Jones** writes, "Politics is more important to caste and caste is more important to politics than before." [6]

The decision to implement Mandal Commission recommendations for reservation of jobs for other Backward Classes (castes) made this determinant more important topolitical parties. Although caste is the main language of voters belonging to rural India, it must be stated that the role of caste as determinant of voting behavior has been undergoing a change in the urban areas .Issue based political struggle is gradually taking its shape in the Indian polity.

4.3 Religion

- India being a Secular state guarantees Right to Freedom of Religion to everyone , treating every religion equal and non-recognition of any religion as a state religion , has not been successful in preventing the role of religion as determinant of political behavior in general and voting behavior in particular . Presence of many political parties and neo political groups that are closely linked with particular religion , for example , Muslim League , Akali Dal , Hindu Maha Sabha , Shiv Sena etc.have been one of the reasons behind the continued role of religion as a determinant of voting behavior. [7] The selection of candidates is done with an eye upon the presence of a religious majority in a particular constituency. Use of religious places for political ends is also a standard practice seen particularly during elections.

4.4 Language

- India is a multi lingual state. Linguism also serves as important factor in voting behavior. The organization of states on linguistic basis fully reflects the importance of language as a factor of politics in India. Since people have emotional attachment with their languages, they easily get influenced whenever there comes up any issue relating to language. Political leaders often try to influence people by addressing them in local language during mass rallies. Linguistic interests always influence voting behavior.

4.5 Money Factor

- The role of money can not be ignored in the study of voting behavior. India being a developing country has a large number of people living below poverty line still crores of rupees arespent in elections and so money as such plays a vital role in determining voting behavior of the people in India. Despite of many restrictions, the Election Commission has been unable to compel the political parties to keep its expenditures on campaigning within the legal limits. But this factor becomes secondary during a wave election or when other key issues are involved.

4.6 Performance of The Party in Power

- Each political party contests elections on the basis of an election manifesto , and after coming into power , it is expected to fulfill the promises made their in . Good or bad performance of the ruling party, just on the basis of the election promises made and promises actually fulfilled influence the basic behavior of the people in a big way. It has been experienced many times that the ruling party which got thumping majority in a election could not win even a simple majority in the very next election. This has happened mainly because of a corresponding increase in the number of ' floating voters ' or ' switchers ' who are mostly young men and women from educated upper middle class , and are ready to shift their support fromone party to another on the basis of their performance. [8]

4.7 Mass Illiteracy

- Mass illiteracy has been another factor of voting behaviour in India. It is because of this weakness of the people that political parties, communal groups and militant outfits exploit the sentiments of the people in the name of caste, religion, region and other such factor . The votes of the illiterates constitute a big proportion of the votes polled and hence they play a big role in determining the outcomes of elections. However, despite this feature, the common sense and maturity born outof the experience of the past has also been playing a big role in influencing the voter's minds and actions. In 1997, they united to defeat the forces of

authoritarianism and in1980, they again united to defeat the disunited non – performers. [9]

4.8 Election Campaign

- Each party launches a vigorous campaign for influencing the voters in its favour. Use of such means as , mass rallies , street meetings, personal contacts, posters, poster war, speeches by film stars, T.V and radio broadcasts, News Paper advertisements, hand bills, processions and propaganda , is made to win votes, particularly the floating votes during the election campaigns. The election campaigns are designed to make a voter believe that his interest can be best served by the party/the candidate of the party contesting from his constituency. Thus acts as an important determinant of voting behavior. [10]

Apart from above mentioned traditional factors that have determined the behavior of Indian voters, some new factors have also emerged during the last decade. These factors can be studied under three heads, viz., Emotional factors, Prime Minister Candidate, and Medi.

5. EMOTIONAL FACTORS AFFECTING VOTER'S BEHAVIOR

5.1 Anger

- Generating an emotion of anger among the voters regarding a political party can help in generating votes for the other political party. This factor was clearly experienced in 16th Lok Sabha Election where the anti - incumbency factor towards INC (Indian National Congress) was so dominant that it was clearly visible in the voter's behavior. As a result BJP in its campaign, understood and channelized this anger in tapping more votes for their party.

5.2 Anxiety

- Voters who face anxiety during the elections vote for those candidates who manage to bring forth the effective manifesto of policies and promises. After giving a second chance in 2009to Congress led UPA to serve the nation, the voters felt agitated and anxious towards INC's lack of offering any development or even hope of doing so. Thus in 2014 Lok Sabha Election this automatically shifted the votes to the party that gave a hope along with confidence of delivering the more efficient development model to the entire country.

5.3 Insecurity

- According to Psychology experts, it has also been found that insecurity among voters regarding their future as well as safety and security of their life can play a pivotal role in determining their behavior. Due to various scandals , scams , incidents of social insecurity , women centric issues which were registered during the second tenure of Congress led UPA government developed the sense of insecurity among the people and thus the voting graph completely shifted towards a party that are ready to offer everything that a voter demanded.

6. OTHER INFLUENCING FACTORS:

• PRIME MINISTERIAL CANDIDATE

Jawahar Lal Nehru, Indira Gandhi , Rajiv Gandhi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Narendra Modi are a few prime ministerial candidates who gained maximum popularity and so succeeded in affecting the voters behavior in their favor during respective elections . During his second tenure as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was blamed for his failure to prevent corruption , scandals etc. Thus the most drastic change observed in 2014 Lok Sabha Election was that instead of being party - specific , the elections became person - specific . The rising popularity of Narendra Modi as a decisive leader overshadowed anti-incumbency factor related to the UPA - ll Government and the result was BJP's win as the biggest single party since 1984 election and also the party achieved best-ever vote and seat share since its formation in 1980.

• ROLE OF MEDIA

Media plays an important role in politics as it influences public opinion and helps define and take up the issues. Media has been one of the important determinants of voting behavior since 1950s. but its role has remarkably increased during the last two Lok Sabha elections and off course during various state elections. The media was used at its best in the 16th Lok Sabha Election. On the one hand, BJP led by Narendra Modi Managed to conceptualize his political campaign through social media and immediately captured the youth of India. On the other hand Indian National Congress led by Rahul Gandhi was found to be wanting on this count.

In the past or even in the present, no other political party has managed to use the social media to engage a

large population of youth, a section which lacks interest in the politics of the country. Modi cleverly cultivated even social media (Facebook, Twitter, Whatsapp etc.) as a propaganda tool to touch the hearts of youth.

- SOCIAL ENGINEERING

One more new trend has been observed during the 16th Lok Sabha election which affected the behavior of the voter to a large extent. There was a less relevant Hindu – Muslim division because huge number of young voters influenced the votes and this population does not consider sectarian impulse as a primary factor during voting. As a result BJP gained (2014 Lok Sabha election) by getting support of diverse social groups. The **CSDS** post election survey showed that 54% of votes from upper castes, 34% from other backward castes (OBCs), 24% of the Scheduled Casts (SCs), 38% of the Scheduled Tribes (STs) and 8% of Muslims voted for the BJP .Stressing this point, **Suri and Palshikar** (2014) state that BJP's success was made possible, among other factors, due to its electoral strategy of reinventing Social Engineering.

7. ELECTORAL REFORMS

After examining the various critical issues pertaining to elections and changes being witnessed in the voting behavior of the citizen in the country, it was observed that the election commission can play important sole in maintaining the democratic system of governance by ensuring free and fair elections. [11]

Although the election commission of India has been working hard over the years to maintain the democratic aura of the nation and so suggested some important electoral reforms for conducting free and fair elections. These reforms can be classified as :

7.1 Reforms pre- 2000

- **Lowering of Voting Age** - The Constitution (61[st]Amendment) Act. 1988 reduced the voting age from 21 years to 18 years for the LokSabha (house of the people) and State Assembly elections. This has given the youth of the country an opportunity to participate and express their feeling in political processes.

- **Electronic Voting Machine** - Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in place of ballot papers were first used in 1998 during the State elections of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Delhi. EVMs have been widely used in the sixteen LokSabha Elections in 2014 as they are-fool proof, efficient and eco-friendly (limited use of papers).

- **Increase in Security Deposits and Number of Proposers** - The amount of security deposit which a candidate needs to deposit at an election to the LokSabha or a State Legislative Assembly has been enhanced to check the multiplicity of non-serious candidates.

 The amended law further provides that the nomination of a candidate in a Parliamentary or Assembly constituency should be subscribed by 10 electors of the constituency as prospers.

- **Restriction on Contesting Election from More than Two Constituencies**- A candidate is eligible to contest election from not more than two Assembly or parliamentary constituencies at a general election or at the bye-elections which are held simultaneously.

- **Prohibition on sale of Liquor** - No liquor or other intoxicants shall be sold or given or distributed at any shop, eating place, or any other place, whether private or public, within a polling area during the period of 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for the conclusion of poll. The violation of this rule is punished with imprisonment up to 6 months or fine up to Rs 2000 or both.

- **The effective campaigning period** – The effective campaigning period has been reduced. The gap between the last date for withdrawal of nomination and the polling date has been reduced from 20days to 14 days.

7.2 Reforms Since 2000

- **Restriction on exit polls** – Exit poll is an opinion survey regarding how electors have voted etc. Thus conducting exist polls and publishing results of exit polls during the election to the LokSabha and State Legislative Assemblies during the period notified by the Election Commission shall be punishable with imprisonment up to 2 years and with fine or both.

- **Ceiling on election expenditure** – Ceiling on election expenditure for a LokSabha seat has been increased to 40 lakhs in bigger states and it varies between 16 to 40 lakhs in other states and union territories. Similarly ceiling on election expenditure has been increased in assembly elections to 16 lakhs

in bigger states and it varies between 8 to 16 lakhs in other states and union territories.

- **Computerized Data Base** - Creation of a fully computerized database of electors, comprehensive photo electoral roll; de-duplication technologies to eliminate bogus and duplicate entries.

- **Declaration** - Declaring of criminal antecedents, assets etc by the candidates and declaring false information in the affidavit is now an electoral offence punishable with imprisonment up to 6 months or fine or both etc.

- **Awareness Creation** – To encourage more young voters to take part in the electoral process, the Government of India has decided to celebrate January 25th of every year as ' National Voters Day'. It started from January 25, 2011 to mark Commission's foundation day.

Apart from various electoral reforms that have been implemented by the Election Commission of India, a few more measures have been suggested to improvise and strengthen the existing electoral practices in India. A few of the proposals related to electoral reforms in India are:

- **Nota** - NOTA or 'None of the Above' has been provided as an option to the voters of India in most elections. Through the usage of NOTA, a citizen can choose not to vote for any candidates who are contesting the elections. However, NOTA in India does not guarantee dismissal of the winning candidate. Therefore, it's only a method to give a negative feedback.

- **Totaliser** - Totaliser is a proposed mechanism in the voting machines in India to hide the booth-wise voting patterns. A totaliser allows the votes cast in about 14 polling booths to be counted together. At present, the votes are tallied booth by booth.

- **Simultaneous Election** - 'One Nation One Election' is the latest topic of debate among the parties, Government, Supreme Court and the Election Commission. This reform is suggested so as to minimize the unlimited expenditure of money, misuse of man power and government machinery.

- **Transparency in funding of political parties** - The necessity for transparency in financial accounts of political parties and political donations has been in discussion.

- **Candidates to contest from a single seat** - Currently, candidates are allowed to contest elections simultaneously from two seats. If a candidate wins from both the seats, a by-election happens. This requires additional expenditure, resources and participation of many. A by-election that happens this way is also an indication of a lack of respect towards the citizens of that constituency. There has thus been suggestions of allowing candidates to contest only from a single seat.

- **Paidnewsand prediction polls** - The government is also considering a proposal to punish media outlets found guilty of publishing paid news by suspending their publication for 45 to 90 days.On the basis of the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Information Technology, a provision to check paid news has been proposed in the draft Press and Registration of Books and Publication Bill, 2015.

It has also been suggested that the result of any prediction polls should not be published during the elections.

It is expected that the suggested electoral reforms will contribute to better participation of the citizens in electoral practices, reduce corruption and strengthen democracy in India.

8. CONCLUSION

In a mature democracy, elections are contested on issues of national importance and challenges that people face on a daily basis, underpinned by the requirements to ensure the economic stability and prosperity of the nation. In Indian context, both these factors are only of peripheral interest and the elections are almost always contested on narrow and sectarian issues. Although political awareness is improving in India, the middle class remains strangely apathetic to the electoral process, not considering voting as a priority civic duty. There is a visible trend towards cynicism regarding the political process, with a thought that nothing will change. Since the middle class also form the most educated segment of society, this attitude can completely distort the election results and create far-reaching impact on the political process.

But on the positive side of the equation various studies show that the voting behavior of the people has undergone a tremendous change. It is observed: Given the level of literacy in India, political consciousness is remarkably high. Since independence, levels of political awareness and participation have risen among all segments of the population. Political awareness is increasing even among the rural poor and illiterate

populations. Though majority of Indian voters are found to be illiterate and ignorant, they are politically more alert than the educated persons. They play an active role in voting. It has also been observed that during the preceding decade the political participation of young people and women has increased by a remarkable figure. As a result a clear difference could be seen between the past elections and the 2014 Lok Sabha Election where there was a societal behavior shift. The graph took a deep shift from traditional community boundaries like religion and caste, to the more transparent factors such as economic status and geo-location. Another crucial difference was a less relevant Hindu-Muslim division because huge number of young voters influenced the votes and this population does not consider sectarian impulse as a primary factor during voting .Thus it can be concluded that the process of emergence of an issue based political struggle in place of a caste or religion or personality dominated struggle for power is very slowly but gradually taking shape. It is therefore imperative that the use of such determinants like, caste, religion, community, money etc.should be avoided and elections should be conducted in a very free and fair manner.

Though the Election Commission of India is working hard over the years and has conducted a number of creditable electoral reforms to strengthen democracy and improve the fairness of elections. But it is not such easy task as sincere and genuine efforts are required by all side, especially the political parties.

Concluding with a fact that it is because of the citizen's faith in the democratic processes, interest in elections and active participation in voting, India continues to be the largest democracy in the world with 70 years of history.

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