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Democracy And Elections In India:

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Introduction:

"Election is the soul of democracy, that not only nourishes the faith of common person in the ideal of democracy but also protect the nation from the threat of authoritarian polities"(Ekka, 2018). Democracy and elections have close nexus and each depends upon the other to sustain, this is the reason why elections are called as the Heart of Democracy'. It is the means to express public will towards the politico administrative management. Elections make the democracy a living entity. Elections constitute the important aspect of keeping democracy alive. Elections are the political process where every individual has right to exercise their political power. Analyzing elections and democracy in India is not an easy task to carry out both effectively Every system has its own loopholes But changing circumstances forced the need for reforms in the effective functioning, In the following relationship between democracy and election, issues and challenges to the electoral politics can be seen in below description.

Elections and democracy in India:

Elections strengthen the roots of democracy and in turn it helps to know the pulse of people and their expectation towards political system. Democracy is necessarily a rule by the people. Effective functioning of democracy depends upon the rate of participation by its people in the decision making process. When freely the working of democracy and elections in India are analyzed there is somewhere are at the crossroad. Neither rulers nor ruled understood what exactly is the democracy, Looking at the working of democracy in India, we find no spirit of democracy and its principles. Truly democracy and political opportunities has become the asset of few Political opportunities are concentrated in the hands of few families and individuals If political opportunities are not devolved among all masses, then how can it be called the democracy?

Challenges to electoral politics:

Despite of effective norms still there are some loopholes and the elections in India are facing some challenges and are analyzed in the following:

Casteism: Caste is the important criteria in deciding the candidate and accordingly candidate is decided in the constituency Religion: Religion is playing very crucial role in deciding the political opportunities .Religious sentiments are used to gain political opportunities which are purely against the idea of secularism. The question here is we really secular in practice? Communal political violence is frequent in Indian political condition. Religion card is used at the maximum in political gain. Secular

society seems to have completely vanished. Money and Muscle Power: In India the process of Electioneering is really an expensive activity which requires huge men and material resources. Money and muscle power plays a very crucial role which is affecting the working of free and fair elections.

By observing the election Expenses statistics there is huge gap between the expenses incurred and legally allowed money to be spent. Elections in India has truly reserved for the haves. Today is not a instrument of public opinion rather its sold. Lack of financial transparency. Maintaining the financial transparency is the need of an hour in the elections The introduction of Electoral Bond' has made transparency even more suspicious. It keeps abstract the political funding by an individual/firm to the public.

Electoral reforms in india:

Since the introduction of elections in India various measures are taken to overcome the defects in the electoral system. The various committees are appointed to recommend the effective working of electoral system. Accordingly various formal and informal associations are also on a stand to clean the malpractice in the elections.

Jaya Prakash Narayan Committee (1974), Dinesh Goswami Committee(1990), Jeevan Reddy Committee, Tarkunde committee, Indrajeet Gupta Committee Report(1998), the Joint parliamentary Committee on amendment to Election Law(1971-72), produced several electoral reforms and were effective. Though these reforms have been implemented but there is lot to do and combat the corrupt practices TNSheshan stands as important figure in the cleaning of electoral defects. Apart from these the recent electoral reforms like bringing the political parties under the ambit of RTI Act which leads to maintain the transparency about the political parties. Secondly there is wide debate going on to conduct the simultaneous elections to parliament and assemblies much more debate is needed to make it more effective. It will also curtail election expenditure which is unnecessary. Thirdly on the regulation of print and electronic media and to set up the state owned broadcasting system. Fourth, in the year 2013 the Supreme Court had directed the election commission to provide the NOTA option.Fifth, Supreme court directed that the contesting candidates and concerned political parties are to publicize about the criminal antecedents of the candidates in the widely circulated newspapers on TV channels in the state concerned on at least three different dates before the polling date. Sixth, the landmark electoral reform by the state election commission of Maharashtra took giant step recently by giving an constructive idea to the NOTA button. If NOTA is the winner in any election in Maharashtra there will be a mandatory re poll.

Apart from these there are some proposed electoral reforms headed by A. P Shah committee which suggested wide range of reforms proposed some of which are in brief mentioned here: 1. The main focus of this committee is curbing of criminalization of politics and consequences and impact of candidates filling false affidavits; Election Finance- a. Commission does not consider system of complete state funding it encourages existing system of indirect-in-kind-subsidy system. b Regulating election finance of the candidate from the period of date of notification to date of declaration of results c. Political parties must maintain and submit the annual accounts audited by qualified chartered accountant; 3. The commission recommends that tenth schedule of the constitution, which vests the power to disqualify on the ground of defection with the President/Governor; 4. Committee recommended strengthening of election commission with respect to provide constitutional protection to all members in matters of removability and making appointment by selection committee consisted of Prime Minister, Leader of opposition, Chief Justice of India; 5. In order to curb practice of disclosure provisions should be made mandatory; 6. Restriction on government sponsored advertisement six month prior to the date of expiry of house;7.Restricton on number of seat from which a candidate

contest from two to one which lessens expenditure, time and effort; 8. Recommends that the candidates of political parties registered with Election Commission of India as candidate.

On the basis of above analysis, we can suggest few points related to electoral reforms. 1. Maintenance of financial transparency is must, as electoral bonds are introduced which keeps the public away from knowing the contribution of an individual or firm to political party. It is said that almost political funding is not the legitimate money. So there is need to revive this scheme. 2. Provision must be repealed to contest in two seats by a single candidate. If he/she wins in both than one constituency has to be vacated again conducting elections means it is wastage of resources which burdens the public purse. Similarly even if once elected to the assembly or parliament the elected member should compulsorily complete the term. 3. The CEC should not be at the mercy of executive/legislature it should have its own secretariat/ staff. 4. Measures to be initiated to curb the political corruption by maintaining the financial transparency. 5. Strict implementation in applying model code of conduct.

CONCLUSION:

Despite of several reforms from time to time but still there is lot to do. Free and fair elections are the foundations of healthy democracy. Elections shall instill the faith of public on the democracy. Its foremost duty to check 4Cs like Casteism, Corruption, Communalism, Crime. Hence it's the duty of every citizen to bring back the ideal condition in the electoral politics of India. The purity and sanctity of elections are to be protected at any cost as the future India depends on it. It is worth to mention here the quote of Theodore Roosevelt "Vote Is Like A Rifle: It Depends Upon The Character Of User"

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