

# Need for Political Socialization of Voters in India

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Efforts are being made for the last two decades for reforming the electoral system in India. This is being done because the electoral process has been polluted by criminalization of politics. It is also being controlled by the money and muscle power. There have also been many instances of booth capturing and other irregularities in the electoral history of India.

Various suggestions have been made from time to time for electoral reforms. For example, Anti-defection Act has been enacted. Re-polling is often ordered by the Election Commission in the cases of electoral violence and booth capturing. It has also been suggested that the system of First Past the Post be replaced by Proportional Representation System. So that a party does not get majority of seats by polling minority of votes. It is also being suggested that it should be made obligatory for a candidate to get majority of votes for winning the election. In case no candidate is able to do so, the voters should be asked to vote for the second time for one of those two candidates who got the first and second position in the first voting.

Besides, the Election Commission has now started using EVMs for checking malpractices in the electoral process. But some parties have begun to allege that these EVMs are programmed to ensure the victory of the party in power. The Election Commission has also been making serious efforts for the education of voters. It has been organizing functions on the Voter's Day. Declamation contests are being held and Mock Parliaments are being organized in schools and colleges for educating the voters.

The Election Commission has also given an option of NOTA to the voters. In case, a voter feels that none of the candidate is fit to be elected, he/she can exercise this power and reject all the candidates. But there has been no case of rejection of candidates by majority of voters. Hence this provision has remained a force so far. The Supreme Court has also given a judgment that if a candidate tries to mobilize electoral support by using caste or religion, his/her election should be set aside and he/she should be disqualified from contesting elections for a specific period. But the experience shows that all these efforts have so far proved futile.

Hence it has been argued in my paper that the only way out is the political socialization of voters.<sup>1</sup> In this context, it may be submitted that political socialization is the process through which fundamental values of a political system are internalized in the voters.<sup>2</sup>

It is essential, therefore to elaborate the concept of political socialization. "Political Socialization is the process by which an individual is acquainted with the political system. It determines his/her perceptions of politics and influences his/her reaction to political phenomenon. The process is impacted by the local, economic and cultural environment of society in which an individual lives. It is also shaped by the interactions of experiences and personality of an individual. Political socialization may also be described as the process by which political cultures and their orientations towards political subjects are framed. It may also be deemed as the leading process by which norms and behaviour acceptable to political system are transmitted. On a broad sense, political socialization refers to the way society transmits its political culture from generation. It is the process through which the human beings attains his/her own personality."<sup>3</sup>

In the Indian context, these values have been enshrined in the Preamble of Indian Constitution. These are the values on which a broad consensus had been reached during the struggle for the liberation of India from the British Imperialism. These values are : Democracy, Secularism and Socialism. These also include : Equality, Liberty, Fraternity and Dignity of Individual.<sup>4</sup> The social, economic and political justice are also the inalienable parts of these values.<sup>5</sup>

But unfortunately, the Indian citizens have not been able to imbibe these values. This has happened because the agents of political socialization have not played their part in an effective and honest manner. The education system has failed to impart these values among the students. The courses in the schools, colleges and universities do not lay focus on these. The teachers are not able to impart them to the students. The parents also fail to do so. Other agents of political socialization like the interest groups, pressure groups, political parties and the media (including the print, electronics and the social media) have so far not been able to play the needed role for inculcating these values in society. In other words, the problems that are plaguing the electoral system in India have mainly to be ascribed to the failure on the front of political socialization.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, serious, systematic and sustained efforts will have to be made for ensuring the right type of political socialization to voters. The family, the peer groups and the friends can play a significant role in this context. The elementary, the secondary, higher secondary, the college and the university education should give primacy to the impartation fundamental values of political system among the students. The teachers will also have to play a pro-active role in this context. They will have to become organic intellectuals or public intellectuals. They will also have to become academicians as activists. The civil society will also have to play a pro-active role in the context.

In sum, all the progressive forces will have to join hands for launching a mass movement and a continuous struggle to ensure proper socialization of the voters. Otherwise, the electoral reforms will remain cosmetic exercises and the Indian election system will be never reformed. Instead, it will further decline. So much so that the very future of democracy will be in grave danger. And, all the achievements of those who had fought for the Independence of India will be lost as a result of this failure on the front of political socialization.<sup>7</sup>

### References

1. For the concept of Political Socialization, refer to the Introductory chapter in P.D. Sharma, **Legislative Elite in India, A study in Political Socialization**, Vishal Publications, Kurukshetra, 1984.
2. These observations are based on my discussion with Prof. Ranbir Singh, former Dean Social sciences, Kurukshetra University at his residence in Karnal on January 26, 2017.
3. Refer to Sukhvinder Singh, **Social & Political Study of Students in India with special reference to Haryana**, Epitome Books, Delhi, 2012, pp 6-10.
4. Refer to Preamble in **Constitution of India**, Government of India, New Delhi, 2016.
5. For the news of Ambedkar see 'Ambedkar' in V.P. Verma, **Modern Indian Political Thought**, Luxmi Narain Publishers, Agra, 1999, pp 516-536.
6. For a comparative analysis of the levels of political socialization of the students of Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra and Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, refer to Sukhvinder Singh, *op.cit.*, pp 74-156.
7. These observations are also based on my discussion with Professor Ranbir Singh at Karnal on January 26, 2017.