PRE-ELECTION AWARENESS OF VOTERS IN INDIA

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Abstract

The present paper examines the role of voters before an election. It analyses the awareness and participation of voters before an election and what will they do to make them active partners in the democratic system of India. In this paper, right of vote, media coverage, political interest and political discussion have an impact on voters. Whether voter's political awareness influences their participation in electoral activities. The results indicate that a majority of the voters need more awareness about politics. Their level of political awareness is accounted for by their level of interest in politics, pattern of media use and frequency of political discussion. The result also reports a limited impact of political awareness on voter's participation in electoral activities.

Keywords: Democracy, 'Change makers', Right to Vote, suffrage, voter's awareness observer.

Indian voters have a long history of electing politicians; Voting is the most vital aspect of participation as it gives citizens of India the right to choose their leaders who are expected to represent their concerns and voices at appropriate levels in government. Election awareness campaigns informed citizens about their rights and duties as voters and provided them with relevant information. The campaign encouraged voters to consider a candidate's honesty, accessibility, and commitment toward development. A few important issues were discussed during the awareness campaigns as citizens had never before been a part of such activities. Topics were discussed such as the duties of voters in elections, their right to vote as adult citizens of India, do's and don'ts in elections, code of conduct (Aachar Sanhita) for elections, and the process of elections. People were keen to know more about their duties and rights as voters. Apart from the marches, voting is a highly powerful tool to get the reform that we desire in the country. Our country has also seen the spirit of wanting a reform discourage a government that is not working. The voting percentage has increased dramatically in recent years and people just like being the "Change Makers." Is it not exciting that from the age of 18 an individual will select the country leader?

Elections are conducted in India at the state and central level for State Assembly and Lok Sabha. Both elections are held under the Universal Adult Franchise. Elections are conducted in India every five years.

A few questions need to be answered:

Who can participate in an election?

Ans: He/she must be a resident of India and is 18 years old, and has enrolled as an elector in the electoral roll that currently refers to the constituency in which he/she usually stays.

Who cannot vote?

Ans: Unwise voters, as specified by a competent court or those temporarily ineligible to vote under any statute concerning fraudulent practices and other election offenses, cannot vote.

Why should we vote?

Ans: We have to vote because this is our sacred right, our democratic privileges are a pillar of our constitution and provide an avenue for decision-making on the direction of the country and the future of the people, it gives us absolute power to shape our country's future and every vote is counted.

Right to vote

Article 326 of the Constitution states that elections shall be rendered based on adult suffrage, i.e., a citizen not less than 21 years of age, for the House of the People and legislative assembly of each State. Most of the countries were found to have defined the voting age for 18 years. In India we have considered 18 years of age for elections to the local authorities. The young people of today are educated and informed, and a drop in voting age will offer the country's unrepresented young people the chance to broaden their sentiments and help them become part of the democratic process. Today's young people are politically aware. It is also recommended that the voting age be lowered from 21 to 18 years.

India is founded based on elections as a democratic republic. Our Legislatures, as well as Parliament, are of the people, by the people, and for the people. Voting is a freedom we can have as a constitution. We take this as a matter of course, but the constitution has allowed us to select how we want and to make the transition.

Voting makes a difference: Of course, in the electoral phase per citizen's vote is counted. Where two parties are relatively equal, a single vote may be a game-changer element and a deciding factor. We've seen how an MP will determine the government's collapse by voting in the past. Much as an actual citizen will affirm the victory/failure of an aspiring MP or MLA with a single vote. We must cast our vote if we wished to see an improvement. Voting affects access

to schooling, fundamental jobs, treatment and childcare, tax reform, highways, and transport, etc. Let our voices be heard and share our opinions. It offers us not just the power to select the best representative however, it enables everyone to become an integral part of the decision-making phase which affects our routine life. When we cast a vote, we have a voice to share our opinions on the matters involved.

A privileged and essential right that every person should practice, whatever his age, expertise, or experience, is one of the major processes for deciding the smooth functioning of a community. Elected officials make important decisions on the crucial topics that impact our lives from wellness to nutrition, school policy to employment, from roads to taxation. Thus, voting is influential in a nation's growth. The right to vote offers us the power to select the most appropriate leaders for the nation to rule.

A Pre-Election Voter Awareness Campaign seeks to increase consciousness amongst the public: the significance as either electors or as candidates of their involvement in the election process; the participation modes; the process for eligibility for the vote and for casting their votes actually; how to determine the candidate's polling value. A Pre-Election Voting Campaign aims to establish and especially promote an atmosphere for a free and fair electoral process, the participation of the oppressed categories including minorities, women, ethnic groups in particular groups, and the poor.

Election Commission's Efforts to Initiate Awareness for Voters: The Election Commission of India is laid down in Article 324. It notes that the superintendency, administration, and supervision of parliament and state legislature's elections, the office of the Vice President and President of India will be conferred in the Election Commission. The Election Commission of India has unveiled its "Voter Education Channel," one of the most recent attempts to persuade electors to participate in the election process and provide details regarding the polling process. The channel has a collection of video clips of famous people from every corner of life that inspire the constituents to take up go for the most important right of an Indian citizen that of the vote. The channel also provides video clips of state election officers' speeches demanding that electors practice their franchise. These videos are more commonly accessible on YouTube. Some of this channel's video clips often include insights on the method of utilizing and the operation of the EVM ('Electronic Voting Machine'). It contains even video links advising the electors about the procedure for the NOTA option.

NOTA: Although if the nominees are not pleased, the Indian government has made provision for the vote to be cast by electors. NOTA represents "None of the Above" and this is a significant vote for those who are dissatisfied with the parties who stand. Voting NOTA specifies that none of the nominees are sufficiently good. NOTA votes are counted, if the bulk of votes is NOTA, the group would come to power by the next majority.

The Supreme Court of India stated on 27 September 2013 that a 'none of the above' vote must be registered at elections, and directed the Election Commission that a button should be installed in the EVMs and noted that it would improve interest in the voting.

As in other election symbols, the Indian Election Commission has adopted the "None of the Above" symbol choice to make it simpler for electors to use its NOTA option. In the last panel of all EVMs and in the other of the voting papers against 'None of the Above (NOTA)' in every election to have taken place, this sign would appear. The key aim of the alternative 'NOTA' is to encourage voters who are not ready to vote for either one of the representatives, without breaching the confidentiality of their choice, to not vote for any nominees. Registered electors who wanted to exclude all nominees for a constituency had traditionally been granted the opportunity to fill out Form 49-O at a voting stand but this violated the confidentiality of the vote.

EVMs: The day is eventually when electors cast their vote in electoral stands for their choice of leader. Previously, people used ballot paper to cast their votes, but now, they have used EVMs (Electronic Voting Machines) by just clicking on a party icon button. The ballots are counted later and the winner secures the election with the bulk of the votes.

Banners and Signs: For a variety of factors, a bold sign displaying the polling sites to the electorate is valuable. They are not just beneficial for electors searching voting booths, but also give a reminder to voters about the election days and a gentle drive for potential voters to go to voting booths. Get innovative! Signs may include various details such as voting places, dates, activities and it can be any size, type, or color.

Local access services are inexpensive and affordable to virtually all in a society, which is why it is a perfect way of encouraging elections. One way to notify communities about the forthcoming elections is to conduct polling series on local channels. Such programs include voting of PSAs, backgrounds, biographies of important members, and more. Effective programming will create enthusiasm in elections and improve involvement in society. The local government is investing in local programs already.

Multi-Language Materials: In India, electors have a variety of languages. Hindi and English are not the first languages for many electors. Election documents in double or multilingual languages, like posters, application forms, and ballots aim to reduce polling issues for electors. Multi-language voting programs are mandated by the federal government for some districts, but can also be implemented by city orders or state legislation.

Media Awareness: Voter education and practices, resources, and methods for sensitization (public interaction) are primarily based on the state in which the event is conducted, the rise and availability of multifarious social networking, and modern networking devices are regarded in particular. Present knowledge in every Indian state's languages. A regular transmission of radio and TV programming concentrating on political material and public information could be portrayed in the media before and during the election. The following measures must be followed: For young people establishing an information distribution server by SMS, on timelines, etc. Distribution of promotional materials of election which contain awareness messages for the Voters. In these topics, elections and youth, and elections and women, etc. may be

included. The media can improve concern regarding vote confidentiality, details on different opposing parties/applicants, and voting procedures.

In several democratic societies, elections are virtually the only way to enable voters and citizens to take part and hold political parties, the incumbent governments and nominees are responsible for their promises and performance. Because, typically, there are no legislative or statutory reasons to track or compel law makers to execute election commitments, usually, elections are the only ways for voters depending on their reputation and results, to honor or prosecute politicians. But free, fair, and peaceful polls are far from standard around the world, particularly in transitional and emerging democracies. There are critical issues in several regions with lack of election accountability and obligation, the usage of money, and or intimidation for the intention of influencing or threatening citizens and criminalizing politics. While the participatory government encourages several various modes of democratic engagement, free and fair elections are a central aspect of democracy and good governance. The resources in this category are intended to encourage election and government transparency and to enable citizens to engage actively and to make more informed choices.

Pre-Election Voter Awareness Campaigns are designed to aware people about elections: the significance of their involvement as electors or as nominees in election processes; several participation modes; the process for eligibility for the vote and for casting their votes actually; how to determine the candidate's polling value.

Increasing political understanding allows citizens to make intelligent choices and offers the framework for further public engagement in the democracy for the long term. To assist nominees as well as political parties to express the felt desires of constituencies and communities, while leading to more informed forums and plans. It leads to greater political transparency, responsibility, integrity, and public faith in governance. It also leads to supporting vulnerable and oppressed communities. It promotes the involvement of citizen who is concerned about public causes. It contributes to reducing the scope for unequal or unethical voting procedures.

But the democratic mechanism in India still has many challenges. Political Criminalization, Casteism, Power of money and Politicization of Criminals, government machinery exploitation, Non-serious Independent nominees, Communalism, Lack of Moral Values in Politics are among the most influential.

Paid news is any news or report in any form (electronic or print media) for a price in cash or kind. A problem such as Paid News disrupting the level playing field and circumvents the election spending limits. This poses an obstacle for the Election Commission of India (ECI) to hold fair, free, and clear elections in a smooth run-off.

Vote-buying: There has been a significant problem with the rising of illegal voting spending, which just allows the wealthy eligible to become an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), or an MP (Member of Parliament), over a highly-qualified public figure.

Suggestions...

The right to vote granted by the Indian Constitution must be upheld. The young people look forward to practicing their voting privileges at the age of 18. The sensation of becoming a responsible person after voting is overflowing with pride. To stay relevant, constitutional structures must respond to social change. When democracy was taken, Universal Voting was a commitment to the subversion by democratic access to economic power systems. The Internet has taken it all to our fingertips. It is time to inform yourself now if you have no knowledge of how things are working, who are your candidates, or whom they serve. Ask family and friends, read up, contact the hotlines, and watching the news. Today, being an informed elector is simpler than ever. We have to analyze the manifesto of the nominee and his or her history while thinking about the nation, present, and future of our next generations. If he/she is sitting MP so we can review its function and the work of its group and we can settle on that basis. If we want to vote depending upon the work of political parties, review the parties' last promises and verify that both parties have delivered on their promises, and evaluate their work.

Indian Democracy would be improved if all parties concerned, including the media, start taking responsibility seriously and commit to improving democratic structures such as the electoral system.

Efforts by the Election Commission to generate mass awareness are often not adequate for grassroots efforts, which typically demand community meetings, focused voting awareness drives, and rallies at the village level by district administration. Therefore, the lack of information persists.

Voters must allow to speak about the problems relevant to growth and to vote along the lines of development instead of caste.

The Election Commission of India agreed to try out the concept of recruiting “Voters’ Awareness Observers” its role would be to see among the electorate the degree of knowledge and inspiration. The primary goal behind these observers is to make sure that the electors are enough inspired to vote.

These observers are specifically assigned to travel across the states, communicate with electors and determine their knowledge of voting dates and the venue of the polling station in their constituencies. The research also explores whether electors are aware of electoral registration, EVM use, the identification card of voters, ethical voting, and paid news syndrome. They would also verify whether the forthcoming polling has been publicized enough. The observers aim to ensure that the involvement of electors during elections is improved by analyzing the effect of campaigns on electoral perception. Elections reforms will improve the participation of the political process by getting more voters into the voting process, reducing the prevalent corruption, and improving India's democracy. There needs to construct a governance system and efficient policy finance oversight, and bold changes to break the vicious circle of corruption and

deterioration of the standard of democratic politics. It is important to fill gaps in existing legislation to improve accountability and transparency across the whole governance machinery.

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