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Voting-What, Why, Process, Recent Reforms & Importance of Voting: An Overview

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ABSTRACT: Broadly speaking, election is the process by which the people of a community elect their representatives in a fair manner. Before the era of today's EVMs, different mediums were used to conduct elections. There are mentions of interesting methods for the selection of representatives in ancient times. In these, voting by speaking in the ear, secret voting and open voting were tried on different occasions. According to historical documents, the history of elections is very old. In the olden days colored things were used for secret ballot and then the result was decided by counting a color. In ancient Greece and Italy, there was a system of direct voting long ago. Many kings in ancient India also preferred to seek the consent of the public before taking their decisions on serious matters. But in most places, oral methods were used instead of ballot papers. Voting was also conducted in Athens by raising hands in the air.

KEYWORDS: Voting, Suffrage, Election.

I. INTRODUCTION

With the active participation of the voter, the democracy of that country remains strong and stable. India is the largest democratic country in the world. Here all voters whether they are poor or rich have equal rights. Suffrage, political suffrage, or simply suffrage is the right to vote in public, political elections. In some languages, and sometimes in English, the right to vote is called active suffrage, which is different from passive suffrage, which is the right to stand in elections. The combination of active and passive suffrage is sometimes called full suffrage.

Suffrage is often conceived in the context of the election of representatives. However, suffrage equally applies to referendums. In most democracies, eligible voters can vote in an election of representatives. Voting on issues by referendum may also be available. For example, in Switzerland it is allowed at all levels of government. In the United States, some states, such as California, Washington, and Wisconsin, have exercised their shared sovereignty to provide citizens with the opportunity to write, propose, and vote on referendums; Other states and the federal government have not. Referendums are rare in the United Kingdom. Eligible citizens are given the right to vote when they reach the age of voting. What constitutes an eligible citizen depends on the decision of the government. Resident non-citizens may vote in certain countries, which may be limited to citizens of closely linked countries (eg, Commonwealth citizens and EU citizens) or certain offices or questions.

The word suffrage comes from the Latin suffix, which initially meant "a voting-tablet", "a ballot", "a vote", or "the right to vote". In the 2nd century suffrage came to mean "political patronage, influence, interest, or support", and sometimes "popular acclaim" or "applause". By the 4th century the term was used to mean "an intercessor", asking a patron for his influence with the Almighty. Suffragium was used in the fifth and sixth centuries to refer to profiteering by buying influence or appointment to office, and eventually the term referred to bribery itself. William Smith rejected the connection of suffragium to sub + "hack" under "crash, oppressed, shout (approval) as" frangere related to "to break"; Eduard Wonder writes that the word may be related to the suffix, indicating the bone of the ankle or the bone of the knuckle. English suffrage regained the old meaning of the Latin suffix, "one vote" or "right to vote" in the 17th century.

Universal suffrage includes the right to vote without restrictions on account of gender, race, religion, social status, education level or wealth. It does not generally extend the right to vote to all residents of an area because distinctions are still often made regarding citizenship, age, and sometimes mental ability or criminal conviction.

II. ELECTIONS WORK

In order to be convinced to vote, you should also know how the elections work. India is a democracy with an asymmetric federal government. Officials are elected from the local levels to state levels and the federal level. We have two houses of Parliament:

1. **The Lok Sabha** – The lower house of the Indian Parliament is also known as the House of the People. Members of the Lok Sabha are elected through general elections. These elections take place every five years. There are two members of the Lok Sabha who will be nominated by the President of India. Currently the Lok Sabha has 545 members. Two members represent the Anglo-Indian community, while the other 543 are elected for five-year terms.
2. **The Rajya Sabha** – The upper house of the Indian Parliament is also known as the Council of States. The members are elected by the elected members of the State Legislative Assemblies, and the Electoral college of the Union Territories. Therefore, the members of the Rajya Sabha are indirectly elected by the people. The Rajya Sabha has 245 members out of which 233 members are elected for 6-year terms. One-third of the house retires every two years.
3. **Prime Minister** – The Prime Minister is elected by the elected members of the Lok Sabha. The Lok Sabha is the lower house of parliament in India.
4. **President** – The President of India is elected for a 5-year term by an electoral college which consists of members of the State Legislatures and Federal Legislatures.

III. PROCESS OF ELECTIONS

To conduct the elections and ensure smooth functioning, the Election Commission of India was formed. The Election commission takes care of everything related to an election which includes the superintendence, control and direction of the elections and the conduct of the elections. The following is a summary of the process of voting that you need to know.

- First need to be registered on the Electoral Roll which is a list of eligible voters. Then can apply voter id online as well as at the VRECs, at designated locations or through a Booth Level Officer.
- Second-Individual will be issued a Voter ID which you need to present at the polling booth.
- The responsibility lies on the citizen to be aware of who is standing for elections.
- It is also the responsibility of the citizen to find out where the polling booth is in their respective constituency.
- Then individual can vote on the Electronic Voting Machines.
- If a person speak only English, you should familiarise yourself with the symbols of the candidates, because the names of the candidates will be listed in alphabetical order in the respective state's language.
- All you have to do is press the blue button next to your desired candidate's name and symbol. You can also vote NOTA.
- You will receive a mark of ink on your finger that signifies that you voted.
- While it helps identify if you have already voted, it is also a proud symbol you can bear.

IV. RECENT ADDITIONAL REFORMS

1. **Scientific Approach:** Voting is not a homogeneous entity. All the people who vote or not vote, don't have a same reason. ECI has developed a scientific base to research on voting behaviour of people. E.g. in Jharkhand, two elections back, when certain people didn't vote, a survey was conducted to find the reason.
2. **Addition of 'NOTA'** option has further enabled the people to realise importance of their vote in elections. By choosing NOTA, voters have right to not to choose any nominated candidate.
3. **National Voters' Day:** To ensure that new voter or the 18+ who gets registered, finds a way to understand that 'voting is an important responsibility, and at certain point of time, s/he has to go to vote.
4. ECI is continuously taking care to ensure the **access to polling station to Divyangs**, people in far-off places and for distant remote placed voters.
5. **Model Polling Booths** have been developed to facilitate women, children and old people.

6. **Systematic Voter's Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP):** To fill the gaps in the areas where people do not participate, fail to participate or don't come and join enthusiastically. The program is basically, to educate voters and to ensure their effective participation in elections.
7. **Ensuring flexibility in Indian Election System:** Whenever people or political parties have a complaint regarding anything, ECI always have a solution for that. Recently, when transparency in EVMs was in question, ECI introduced VVPAT machines.
8. **For decriminalization of Indian Elections,** ECI and the Court has ensured together that the candidates declare their criminal record and any cases, pending or not.

V. IMPORTANCE OF VOTING

1. Abraham Lincoln's idea and philosophy of Democracy i.e. Democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people, can be translated to reality only through voting.
2. Sense of Pride-The voting right is generally associated by the people with some sense of pride generally among the first-time voters or young voters. This is seen from the latest trends for showcasing their fulfilment of responsibility through sharing images of the inked finger on different platforms of social media. This is in the truest form a way of honouring our forefathers that have made many sacrifices and also strived very hard in attaining our nation's freedom.
3. Sense of Empowerment: Through voting, people have a sense of 'ownership of government'.
4. To make government more responsible and accountable: Indian voters have brought revolutionary changes, in that regard, through voting e.g. in 1967, when Congress Government was not working as per the aspirations of the people, people brought the Congress Government to very thin majority at the center and almost half of the State Governments were given to non-congress parties.
5. By voting, people can decide the direction of change and development.
6. To express oneself i.e. Voting helps people in expressing their thoughts on a country, local constituency or about a candidate through the ballot box.

IMPORTANCE OF ONE VOTE

Another point to note is that there may be many people who generally think that one vote doesn't matter. But we often forget that every single vote can make a big difference. In some cases, it has been observed that one vote can make a big difference between a capable and strong leader and a weak leader.

Various theories have been propounded regarding the importance of voting in modern democracies and its system. As a result of these principles, as a social method of conflict resolution in times of need; Governance as a way of gaining favour with power; as a means of reconciling social conflict; As a method of obtaining the right decision in the right circumstances, as a system of exposure to social needs and dissatisfaction; And voting has been recognized as a way of protecting minorities from the system of depriving them of state benefits. Recently, due attention has been paid to the problem of the extent to which those who have the right to vote suffer to participate in the exercise of this right. According to the discovery made in this subject, the maximum number of people participates in the voting in those democratic countries where the system of "compulsory voting" has been adopted. The principle of compulsory voting was first implemented with extension in the canton of St.Gallen, Switzerland, for which in 1835, this canton made a provision of fine by legislation for those who did not participate in the elections of the district council without reason. This system has been successful in making the Swiss citizens feel the responsibility of the franchise. At the same time, as a result of this arrangement, the workload of political organizations to bring voters out of the house to participate in the voting has also been lightened. Similarly, Bavaria adopted the system of compulsory voting in 1881 AD, Bulgaria in 1882 AD and Belgium in 1893 AD. According to Bavaria's system, if more than one-third of the total numbers of voters do not take part in the vote, the absentee voters will have to bear the full cost of re-election. Belgium prescribed three punishments for absentee voters at its discretion - fines, public censure, and suffrage kidnapping. In opposition to compulsory voting, it is generally said that this system does not leave any room for the conscientious objector, however, the character of the non-voters is not as important as the consideration of whether the vote is obtained. What tools are used for If in a country by unfair means for the fulfilment of specific objectives and interests, only sincere political organizations inspire voters to participate in voting, and in this way collect their votes in their favour, then surely the arrangement of election and voting It would be more preferable to entrust it to the government so that this work can be done with more responsibility.

VI. CONCLUSION

Voting is a method of decision making or expressing one's opinion by which a group (such as people gathered in a constituency or a meeting) is able to take a decision after discussion and debate. Through the system of voting, a member of a class or society expresses his decision on any motion or desire to choose his representative in the Parliament or Legislative Assembly of the state or in the election of any officer. From this point of view, this system is used in all elections and in all parliamentary or direct legislation. In totalitarian government, a person can be asked to express his opinion on the decisions already taken by the dictator, but the different ways of the dictator to impose his decisions make this type of voting confined only to the formal method.

Our country, India can be considered as one of the largest democracies around the world. This notion of the famous saying 'Government of the people, by the people and for the people' holds true only when the whole country participates in the process of elections. In any democracy, all citizens need to come together to help decide the future of themselves and their country. This right to vote empowers the citizens of India to exercise their choice and decide together who will lead the country and bear the burden of responsibilities that come with power. But it has always been observed that voters shy away from voting during the process of election. Many voters do not perform this responsibility properly, thereby not understanding the gravity of the power given to them by the Constitution. This is especially true in the case of urban populations where Election Day is considered another holiday. Since voting is not compulsory, people prefer to relax rather than participate in elections.

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