



# STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY IN INDIA: THE ROLE OF ELECTORAL REFORMS

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**Abstract:** *India's voting system supports its democracy. It has changed a lot since 1947. The Election Commission and groups make ongoing updates. Major issues persist. Lawmakers must act. Crime in politics remains a key concern. Fixes require full reports on candidates' past crimes. They block those facing charges from running. These ideas stem from leaders like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. They aim to strengthen the election process.*

*This study reviews how election changes boost democracy's quality, trust, and openness in India. As the largest democracy, India deals with vote fraud, lost voter rights, hidden campaign funds, criminals in office, and fading trust in vote bodies. The work tests current fixes, such as conduct rules, EVMs, VVPATs, and reports on assets and crimes. It also checks debates on government election funds, one-time polls, stricter money rules, and controls on social media lies. From expert studies, government papers, and other nations' examples, the paper claims steady full reforms ensure clean, fair votes. Key results show strong changes build system trust, grow public input, lift faith in votes, and firm up India's democracy.*

**Keywords:** *Elected Representatives, Indian Constitution, Political Accountability, Corruption, Democratic Values, Electoral Malpractices, Criminalization, Election Reforms, Software, Voting Machine.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

India's democracy builds on Constitution rules that stress people's power, equal rights in politics, and leaders picked by voters. As the largest democracy, India runs massive elections often. This brings smooth power changes and wide voter turnout. Yet democracy's strength goes beyond election timing. It depends on fair, open, and open-to-all voting. For years, India's vote system has hit many issues. This range from rising campaign costs and crooks in politics to low voter drive, bad online media use, and weak admin setups. Such problems call for steady fixes to build system trust and strength.

Vote reforms in India seek to boost trust and smooth flow by closing gaps in fairness and checks. Tools like EVMs, a free-standing Election Commission, and conduct rules have improved steps. Still, fresh issues in campaign cash, party controls, vote tech, and voter smarts demand new steps. Tougher laws, clear cash trails, less cash and force in races, and more seats for left-out groups matter most. They shore up democracy's core. This study probes vote reforms' part in building India's democracy. It reviews past steps and fresh ideas. By checking current tools and new routes to clean votes, it shows how fixes spark people joining in, guard Constitution ideals, and lift faith in systems. Strong vote reforms prove vital. They keep India's democracy lively, just, and tough amid changing politics tests.

India broke free in 1947. Builders like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar created a firm vote setup. Chats kicked off in the 1930s at Round Table talks. Goals centered on Indian self-rule. Ambedkar sought split votes for Untouchables, same as other groups. Gandhi bucked the group prizes. These moments formed India's democracy. The nation sets a global mark with open elections. Pride swells from it. Still, vote steps need tweaks. India holds great promise. Select top leaders. Cap race



funds and spends. Such shifts yield pure, even votes. Reforms bridge old guides' efforts to now. They form democracy's roots.

**2. LEARNING FROM HISTORY FOR FUTURE ELECTORAL REFORMS IN INDIA:** Machiavelli's old advice fits India's election changes. As the biggest democracy, India draws from past events. It keeps shifting today. Human drives shape politics across time. They lead to similar results. India's election fixes matter to democracy. History offers deep lessons. The quote shows today's issues match old ones. Free elections began in 1947 under the Constitution and Election Commission. Laws like the Representation of the People Act keep growing. Past guides the path ahead. Reform efforts mix history and now. They follow cycles of human drives in politics. India learns from before. It heads to clear, open elections with more people involved. This matches dreams of lively democracy.

**3. FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS IN INDIA:** Free and Fair Elections in India, the world's top democracy, holds free elections since 1947. They happen on schedule. The Constitution sets rules. The Election Commission runs them. It oversees all steps. This covers Parliament, state votes, President, and Vice-President picks. Elections follow Constitution rules and Parliament laws. The 1950 Representation of the People Act handles voter lists. It updates rolls. It guides election runs. It settles disputes after votes.

**4. CRIMINALIZATION IN ELECTORAL SYSTEM:** Criminalization in Electoral System Crime in politics darkens elections. It questions leaders' honesty and rule quality. Many charged politicians use crooks to gain power. This breaks voter trust. Law Commission reports list politicians' backgrounds and charges. Low public knowledge limits their impact.

Section 8 of the People's Representation Act from 1951 bars candidates convicted in court from running in elections for six more years. Yet enforcement falls short. Money's big role in politics worsens this. It blocks strong checks on candidates' pasts and crimes.

Ayn Rand's quote fits here. Too many laws can make normal acts crimes. In 2003, after a Supreme Court ruling, India's Election Commission required candidates to file affidavits on assets and debts. A 2004 report by the Commission noted some candidates listed assets too low. This showed gaps and lies in reports.

Criminal cases in politics continue. They hurt election trust and leaders' work. A new ADR report says 45% of candidates from big parties like Congress, BJP, and JD(S) in Karnataka polls faced charges. Worse, 30% had grave ones like rape or murder. Professor Sastry notes India stands alone. It lets those with crime records run and win.

Look at the US. No one with murder or rape charges gets a party ticket. They can't run. India differs. This harms our democracy. A system that accepts criminals lacks strength.

**5. SUPREME COURT GRANTS VOTERS POWER TO REJECT CANDIDATES:** In 2013, the Supreme Court case People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India gave voters the "None of the above" (NOTA) choice. The court said voters can reject all candidates. It saw dissent as key to elections. The ruling told the Election Commission to add a NOTA button on EVMs and papers. Voters now pick none if all seem unfit.

PUCL filed the case. It questioned elections and pushed for negative voting. The court agreed voters should show dissent. This forces parties to pick cleaner candidates. The decision boosted Indian democracy. It lets voters show anger and pushes clean polls.

**6. RIGHT TO RECALL:** Right to Recall lets voters remove elected leaders before term ends. Leaders of the Constitution thought of it. But India skipped it in the system. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar and others backed it. It would let people oust bad MLAs or MPs. Voters could complain to the Commission. This starts recall and new polls.

Talks blocked it. Fears of misuse, hard logistics, and democracy balance stopped it. Rules need safeguards against revenge or weak claims. India lacks it due to these issues. It needs a solid plan for fair use. The idea could boost accountability. But rollout stays tough.



**7. DOUBLE VOTE RIGHTS:** Dr. B.R. Ambedkar pushed double votes for Scheduled Castes and poor groups. Gandhi opposed it. The plan gave them two votes for better voice. Ambedkar saw it as key for their reps to guard rights. Gandhi feared splits and harm to unity. Now SC leaders win from full areas. At MLA or higher levels, they serve all voters. This limits focus on SC needs alone. Double votes could fix that with special reps. but foes see division risks. The gap sparks debate. It weighs strong voice for the weak against full unity. Setup stays hard. Fair reps must avoid rifts. Talks go on.

**8. STATE FUNDING OF ELECTIONS:** High election costs block candidates and parties short on cash. This hurts their chance to compete. Funds from many sources also spark fears. Elected leaders may favor big donors in their choices. State funding offers a fix. Governments give money or aid to parties and candidates. This cuts campaign money woes. Forms include cash grants, campaign tools, or expense refunds. The goal is fair play. It lets people from all backgrounds join elections. Less need for private cash means less donor sway over leaders.

In 1998, the Indrajit Gupta Committee pushed state funding. It aimed to help parties low on funds. Rules limited it to national and state parties with symbols. No independents. Funds went to short-term needs like gear. The economy allowed only partial aid then.

The Law Commission called it good if parties skip other donations. It stressed rules for parties. Like the committee, it saw partial help as the limit. The 2001 National Commission skipped state funding. Still, it agreed on party rules first. The 2008 Second Administrative Reforms Commission backed partial funding. It sought to stop illegal cash floods.

State funding needs care. Set clear rules for that get funds. Keep spending open. Stop waste. Taxpayer cash for politics stirs debate. It must boost fair elections. In 2010, the Election Commission let overseas Indians vote. They register by passport home address. By 2013, online voter roll apps started. Supreme Court added NOTA to EVMs. Voters can pick none. That year, VVPAT rolled out to check votes. Courts said jail inmates can run. Convicted MPs and MLAs lose seats at once. In 2014, Lok Sabha spend caps rose to Rs 70 lakh from 40. State seats hit Rs 28 lakh from 16. In 2015, EVMs showed candidate photos and symbols. No voter mix-ups. In 2017, donation rules changed. Firms no longer cap gifts at 7.5% of profits. Nor list party names.

**9. RIGGING THROUGH MUSCLE POWER AND INTIMIDATION:** Election tampering reaches past fake ballots or voter lists. Force and scares used in voting hit fair play hard. Muscle power means groups or people apply strength or threats. They push voters away from their free choice. Armed men show up near polls. Threats fly. Violence breaks out to sway votes. Scare moves start mild and grow bold. They target voters, staff, or rival runners. This kills free elections. Fear grips people. Choices shrink. These steps ruin vote trust. They crush freedom and pick-your-own rights. Fixes need strong voter guards. Hard law hits on scares. Safe spots let folks vote free of fear.

**10. RESTRICTIONS ON OPINION POLLS:** Rules on polls before votes stir big talks in election groups. Worry centers on polls twisting voter minds right before polls close. Polls out near vote day shift how people pick. They mold views. Folks might chase trends, not check plans or faces<sup>14</sup>. Bans or limits on polls just before elections spark fights. Some say hold back polls to block tricks on votes. Others push free talk and info flow. Talks hunt balance. Guard votes and fair play. Keep speech free. Let info reach all.

**11. VICTIMIZATION OF OFFICERS DRAFTED FOR ELECTION DUTIES:** Punish of state workers on vote jobs worries many. These staff handles key tasks. They build voter lists. They watch vote flow. Yet many face shame or harsh hits from bosses after. Vote board notes revenge steps post-job. Bosses hit back with scolds, moves, or punishments seen as mean. Fix needs team work to shield them. Rules must block wild revenge after vote work. Safe guards keep them free from push-back. This holds vote trust and lone work. Special rules can block bad fallout after duties<sup>15</sup>.

**12. ISSUES AND CHALLENGES BEFORE THE ELECTION COMMISSION:** India's vote setup works well but fights big flaws. Vote board battles hard spots for clean votes. Hidden cash plagues races. Parties grab funds from firms. Cash sways voters. No tracks mean bribes, scares, and cheats run free. Past votes saw booze handouts in poor spots. Cash for news or votes too. "Vote for note" shows cash rules. Votes trade for bills<sup>16</sup>. Vote fights rise too. They hide in



small towns with no push-back. Parties pick runners for caste pull or cash stacks. Voters stick to groups. Campaigns milk that. New rules press now. Track hidden cash tight. Make fund flows clear. Stop illegal voter pulls. Full fixes mean clean races, no sway or dirt.

- **The Election Infrastructure:** Vote board guards India vote setup with key steps. This covers EVMs, voter files, vote code, and tech gear.
- **EVM Trust:** EVMs work well but face doubts from some parties. Two state firms build them. They make defense gear like war tech and radars<sup>17</sup>. Machines stand alone. No net links. Tech pros and defense pros checked code<sup>18</sup>. Hack fears lack proof. Paper trails in VVPATs kill more doubt.
- **Cyber Safety Steps:** In 2017, vote board named a top cyber guard. He runs drills. He checks safety rules in offices. Workshops hit six cities. Staff learns safe net habits<sup>19</sup>. Skip fake emails that snag networks.

**13. DESIGNATING ELECTION INFRASTRUCTURE AS CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE:** Labeling election systems as critical infrastructure marks a key change in government. Elections now act as major national assets. They need protection, backup plans, and oversight rules. Cyber risks, global conflicts, and digital growth make this essential. Safe systems protect trust in democracy, steady politics, and faith from the public.

- **Reasons for Critical Infrastructure Status** Election systems include voter lists, voting machines, count tools, ballot storage, networks, and polling sites. Risks hit hard now: hacks, false info spreads, vendor flaws, and direct attacks. This status lets states: set firm security rules; team up agencies against threats; require risk checks and backup plans; and keep elections running in tough times.
- **Cyber Defense as Key Factor** Elections depends on digital tools. Flaws in code, links, or data storage can alter votes or halt counts. The label allows expert cyber aid, ties to security teams, hack detectors, and quick fix plans.
- **Group and Legal Effects** It brings: legal shields from national laws; top spot in security funds and plans; strict rules for election staff and sellers; regular info swaps between government and companies.
- **Gains for Public Faith and Strong Democracy** This step boosts trust. It shows the government sees elections as make-or-break. In floods, riots, or hacks, safeguards cut downtime and honor votes.
- **Global View** Many free nations use or plan this label. They treat election breaks as security dangers, not just slip-ups. It fits ideas on mixed wars and info guards. The Election Commission will mark its systems as critical under the Information Technology Act 2000. This builds firm links with security units. It grants access to cyber warnings from the National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre. That group falls under the National Technical Research Organization.

**14. CONCLUSION:** India's electoral changes show a steady path shaped by past events and current needs. The push for fair, clean elections faces hurdles. It calls for fresh fixes. Strong democracy needs quick action in key spots. One big issue is black money's hold on polls. Tough rules must track hidden cash flows. Campaign funds need full openness. Candidates' pasts require close checks. Politics also sees too much crime. Voters need full facts on candidates' records. Rules must bar those with charges. This guards election honesty. The NOTA choice marks real progress. It boosts voter power and checks leaders. Such steps for openness and less sway should grow into wider changes.

Elections need even ground. Cut ties to private cash via state funds. Balance aid with strict rules. This stops abuse and spreads funds fair. Election staff faces risks. Block threats and bully tactics. Protect them. Let voters choose free from fear. This keeps polls pure. Full reforms build true fair elections. Balance voter power, democracy rules, and equal shots for all. Strong laws, clear rules, and sharp watch fix these issues. India then runs polls that match people's real choice.

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