Voter Registration

1st March, 2005, ASCI

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“At the bottom of all the tributes paid to democracy is the little man, walking into the little booth, with a little pencil, making a little cross on a little bit of paper…..”

- Churchill
Macro Perspective of Indian Polity

- Disaggregate volatility
- Broadly reflective of public opinion
- Ruling parties and powerful candidates do lose
- Rejection/Negative vote pretty common
Micro Perspective of Indian Polity

- Money power dominant
- Criminalization rampant
- Voting irregularities frequent
- People take money to vote
- Caste and divisive impulses are prominent
How is Democracy Surviving?

- A system of compensatory errors (competing distortions neutralize each other)
- Strength of Election Commission
- Tradition of neutrality of officials
- Pre-Polling process scrupulously fair (nominations, ballot papers, appointment of polling officials, etc.)
- Post-polling process - completely non-partisan (transport, storage and counting of ballots, and declaration of results)
What is Wrong With Elections?

- Flawed electoral rolls
- Polling irregularities
- Unaccounted and illegitimate use of money power
- Rampant criminalization
- Autocratic political parties
Defective Electoral Rolls

- 1999 Sample Surveys: 15% errors in villages
  40% errors in towns.

- 2004 Sample Surveys: 5.25% errors in villages
  12.15% errors in towns.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>No. of Polling Stations</th>
<th>No. of Voters</th>
<th>Moved out of the area</th>
<th>Death</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of vote</th>
<th>Attained 18 years of age</th>
<th>Moved into the area</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of voters</th>
<th>Total number</th>
<th>% of voters registered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22297</td>
<td>1634</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>2306</td>
<td>10.34</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>592</td>
<td>1039</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3345</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>18102</td>
<td>4218</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>4702</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>653</td>
<td>2761</td>
<td>3414</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>8116</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural+Urban</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>40399</td>
<td>5852</td>
<td>761</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>7008</td>
<td>17.30</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>3353</td>
<td>4453</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>11461</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Election Watch – 2004 – Pre-Poll Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. of Constituencies</th>
<th>No. of Polling Stations</th>
<th>Total No. of Voters</th>
<th>Additions required</th>
<th>Deletions required</th>
<th>Total No. of Additions &amp; Deletions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RURAL</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>70848</td>
<td>1634 (2.3)</td>
<td>2086 (2.94)</td>
<td>3839 (3.43) no. 3720 As % of total Voters 5.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URBAN</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>41042</td>
<td>2205 (5.37)</td>
<td>2782 (6.77)</td>
<td>4868 (4.35) no. 4987 As % of total Voters 12.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>1,11,890</td>
<td>3839 (3.43)</td>
<td>4868 (4.35)</td>
<td>8707 As % of total Voters 7.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Simple Solution

- Post office as Nodal Agency for registration
  - Voters list on display
  - Sale of electoral rolls
  - Statutory forms supply and sale
  - Verification of applications
  - Registration / deletion / correction
  - Provision for appeal
Verification of Electoral Rolls
How to Access Voters’ Lists?

- Electoral rolls are available to all citizens
  - MROs offices
  - Municipal offices in twin cities
- They can be purchased for a price
  - 0 – 95ps / page
  - 1.35ps / a sheet of 2 pages
- Head of account
  - Districts : 0070 – 02 – 101
  - Hyderabad: 0033 – 03 – 101
How to Add or Delete Names

- Simple applications:
  - Form 6 : Addition
  - Form 7 : Objection to a name & deletion
  - Form 8B : Deletion
  - Form 8 : Corrections
  - Form 8A : Change of polling booth
- Form 6 – Voter should apply
- Form 7 & 8B – Any other voter can apply
Additions / Deletions / Changes

- Application in duplicate to MRO
  (Municipal Officials in Hyderabad)
- Receipt given to applicant – No fee
- Application published by MRO.
  (on Notice Board)
- 7 days notice for objections, if any
- Summary enquiry & decision
- Decision communicated to applicant
Recent Developments – Post Office as Nodal Agency

- Post office
  - Display of electoral rolls
  - Receiving of applications
  - Ascertaining residential address

- Modalities
  - Designated officer in all delivery offices
  - Forms supplied
  - Forms received only from the citizen or family member
  - No bulk applications
  - Checking report by Post Office (address)
What More Needs to be Done

- Permanent mechanism at Post Offices
  - Display and Sale of Electoral Rolls
  - Voter registration on application at Post Offices
  - Assist EC in revision of electoral rolls on permanent basis
  - Access, transparency and appeal to check abuses
  - Mass communication campaign for public education
Revenue Possibilities

- Sale of voters list for each polling station
- Sale of slips containing – serial number, name, address, and other details of voters
  - standard price: Re 1 for every slip
  - commission for postal employees: 0.50 ps for every slip.
  - Expected benefit for postal department: Rs 50-100 crores per annum
- Sale of forms pertaining to:
  - Inclusion, deletion, correction of particulars, etc., (forms 6, 7, 8, 8A and 8B)
  - Price of forms: Re.1 for 2 copies
  - The bulk printing cost will not exceed 10ps
Revenue Possibilities

- Post office can act as the authority for:
  - Addition, deletion, or correction of names
  - Fee: Rs. 2 per case
- Assist political parties in distribution of voter slips – for a fee / advertising possibilities
- Revision of electoral rolls – Post office can collect Re 1 for every name verified
What Needs to be Done

- Amendment of electoral registration rules
- Launch a programme in all delivery Post Offices with EC’s approval
- Launch massive campaign on television to educate voters.
Benefits of Post Office as Nodal Agency

- Access and transparency in voter registration
- While revision of rolls continues as now, the burden of ensuring accuracy shifts to the community
- Abuses can be checked by access, transparency, and appeal
- Postal department can earn decent revenues
- Public satisfaction and credibility of electoral process will improve significantly
Other Polling Irregularities

- Bogus voting rampant
- Personation of voters is the commonest method.
- EVMs cannot prevent false voting
- Voter identity card is a vast improvement, but not a safeguard against collusion or coercion.
- In certain pockets, non-Indians registered as voters
### Post Poll Survey – Andhra Pradesh – 1999

1999 Assembly and Parliamentary Polls, Hyderabad, AP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assembly Constituency Polling Booth No., No. of voters</th>
<th>No. of votes polled</th>
<th>No. who reported that they actually ‘voted’</th>
<th>No. not voted or doubtful cases</th>
<th>Percentage of doubtful and ‘not voted’ votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Residing in the area but not voted</td>
<td>Left the area but residing within the city</td>
<td>Left the city/country etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>207/173</td>
<td>1143</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>483</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>207/176</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209/93</td>
<td>725</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209/75</td>
<td>989</td>
<td>495</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>210/426</td>
<td>893</td>
<td>476</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4706</td>
<td>2483</td>
<td>1945</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Election Watch 2004 – Post-Poll Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>No. of Constituencies</th>
<th>No. of polling Stations</th>
<th>Votes Polled</th>
<th>Bogus Votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RURAL</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18069</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URBAN</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8894</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL:</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>26963</td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bogus Votes No. as % of votes polled:
- RURAL: 169 (0.9%)
- URBAN: 168 (1.9%)
- TOTAL: 337 (1.2%)
## West Bengal – 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complaints type</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of voter complaints</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No name specified</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>13.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No part number</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Vote already cast</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>37.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Long queue of voters / very slow vote</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Bombs thrown / fight broke out</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Others</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>53.56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>519</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Can be Done

- 100% voter identity cards
- Amend rules to ensure mandatory repoll if tendered votes exceed 1% of votes polled. (Tendered vote is proof of false voting)
- Wide publicity to tendered vote
- Citizen ID cards wherever illegal immigrants are in large numbers
“Politics encircles us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries”

- Mahatma Gandhi