

DELIBERATIONS ON POLICY MAKING VIS-A-VIS ELECTION MANIFESTO

30 August 2020

ABSTRACT

This event was conducted in a three-tier structure by Vimarsh to deliberate on the agenda “*Policy Making vis-a-vis Election Manifesto: Fake promises as an instrument to win Elections*”. The discussion encapsulated topics such as Electoral reforms in India, Right to Recall, Independence of Election Commission of India, Money and Muscle Power in Election and binding Manifesto.

OBJECTIVE

This event aimed for healthy discussion and constructive criticism on the provided topics that would lead us towards reasonable solution. This was achieved through combined action and mutual discussion of all our participants.

INTRODUCTION

The contemporary elections are filled with cluster of loopholes such as fake promises, use of money and muscle power, booth capturing, EVM hacking which are contagious to the Indian democracy. Code of Conduct can only be seen in papers. This demands discussion among the youth to reach out the white light at the end of the tunnel.

PHASE-1 (VIMARSH)

Phase one began with the introduction of the agenda with the participants approach. The phase started with the first speaker Miss Khushi Agrawal. She began with a question “Why are we a democratic nation?”. And further came up with her view stating - During the colonial era, arbitrary power was dominant and we had merely any elective representative. This history leads to the need and thereby the adoption of democracy in India.

Next issue raised by her was Independence of election commission. And came up with idea that Political affiliation into affairs of Election Commission needs to be addressed. The process of appointment of Chief Election Commissioner and the other Election Commissioners must be reformed.

Further she added her concern how Fake promises are a result of non-binding manifesto. The manifestos need to be made binding on the parties to resolve this long-lasting issue. And delayed release of manifesto or its partial release provides but a vague plan of action before the general public. To overcome this issue, early release of complete manifesto needs to be ensured. Any party failing these conditions should be disqualified from contesting elections.

She enunciated that Illiteracy among citizen restrains them from understanding the ultimate goals projected through the manifesto. And suggested a way to tackle this issues that a committee should be instituted to make people aware of the manifesto and past record of the party. Lastly, she added that These political parties focus more on achieving selfish gains, and not on common good, though money and muscle power. A good example-the 2019 elections lead to riots and forced voting in West Bengal.

Our second participant, was Mr. Sudhanshu Upadhyay. According to him Indian democracy is a mixture and is unique, hence it can't be compared to other democracies across the globe. He further added that Mere criticism of policies is easy because criticism is based on curiosity rather, we should focus on the positives for a change. Beside this he talked about Election Commission being independent as the appointment is done by the President and once a Chief Election Commissioner is appointed, he can't be removed till an impeachment process, similar to that of a Supreme Court judge, is carried out. And to support his views on party manifesto he cited the example of Chhattisgarh Janta Congress manifesto which was a kind of affidavit allowing a lawsuit to be filed in case of non-fulfilment of promises mentioned therein. All the parties must adopt this process. According to him party should

consider including DPSPs in their manifestos and should provide with an environment to People which promotes political awareness.

Our third participant, Mr. Shreyas Mishra started with a quote “*Kyo Kyo chhoti chhoti baaton par chopal bithai jaati hai ,kyo humse apne hi ghar me har baat chhupai jaati hai, kuch log humari basti par petrol chidak kar baithe hai hai,bas itana baaki hai dekho kab aag lagayi jaati hai,wo apni marzi par har baar angutha mera lete hai , har baar tabahi se pehle ye rasm nibhai jaati hai*”

He further added that India being the biggest democracy in the world believes in the principle of universal adult franchise. After 1952 our country, unlike any other, provided equal right to men and women to cast vote. On top of that he mentioned most of the parties project false promises through their manifesto and influence people to vote them. Voting system is pivotal for the formation of nation. There is barely any other country having such diverse electoral system as India does.

Developed countries such as UK or USA took hundreds of years to vest right to vote on women. By contrast, every time 14.3 lakh Indian women participate in the election process. However, despite of being the largest democracy in the world, we have the highest rate of criminalization in politics.

In one hand promises are made in order to provide better livelihood to the poor on the other hand the unrestrained infringement of rights of the minorities are committed. Election manifesto is an instrument to provide people with complete grounds on which they are demand the vote which has nowadays turned into a list of fake promises. The money and muscle power has nullified laws and order inside out

He emphasised on the fact that Poor are becoming poorer and rich are turning richer due to selfish and dirty politics. According to him citizens too have some responsibility to make people aware about their rights and the fraudulent behaviour of the politicians.

He concluded by saying “*Ki Kasie pahuchayege samanta ka adhikar har ek ke pass?? Na mandir banana se na, Masjid bachane se, na Swami Vivekanand ke apman se, na kisi neta ke gungaan se, na fees badhane se, na muft padhane se, na shree ram ke jaykaro se, na allahu akbar ke naaro se, na ethihaas ke gungaan se, na mahapurusho ke apman se, to fir kaise pochega samanta ka adhikar har varg tak, ye tabhi sambhav hai mitro jab is desh ka*

har nagrik, neta apne man me humare samvidhan ki pehle line basa le, HUM BHARAT KE LOG we the people of India”.

Our 4th participant, Mr. Sarang Pardhi in his introduction mentioned the term “Communal Polarization” and stated that these are the malpractices that political party cherishes and has strongly rooted within. He said that castes are used as vote banks by promising to provide reservation and development. According to him. In a country like India a manifesto play as a pillar of votes that’s why it should be brought forward clearly.

In addition to the same, he mentioned that in 2019 BJP had a 10 paged bulky manifesto and that makes it hard to understand that’s why manifestos should be short, precise and clear. On top of that, he added that the EVMs are barely used in any developed country because it’s very easy to hack it. Lastly, he discussed about the use of • Money and Muscle power and said Most of the political parties have criminal connections and at times criminals themselves fight elections.

Our 5th speaker Miss Darshana jain was of the view that election Manifesto is an important part of political process. In India nobody really goes through an election manifesto. The challenge however is when promises go unfulfilled. And that people should not easily believe in what politicians say and adopt a critical viewpoint for them so that they are not easily deceived.

She also quoted the words of CJI “Manifestos have become a mere piece of paper and political parties need to be held accountable for them”. For by this Number of parties promised to introduce women reservation Bill but no significant efforts were made for the same.

She concluded by quoting the words of our honourable prime minister Mr. Narendra Modi ***“Neta main dum chahiye, neetion main neeti chahiye, aur niyat saaf honi chahiye, vaade karne se baat banti nai hai, irade nek hone chahiye.”***

Our sixth and the last speaker was Miss Nidhi Singh pointed out that there are 3 major loopholes in Indian Politics-Money, Muscle and Criminalisation of Politics. She emphasized on the fact that money and alcohol distribution reach its peak during elections. These are the biggest instruments to win. Leader takes out big rallies. In 2019 India surpassed America in terms of money showering during elections.

Booth capturing in tribal areas are a common problem and well explained through “Newton” movie. In 2019 U.P. and West-Bengal had the most number of cases registered against booth capturing. Then, in Amethi district of U.P., a 90 years old lady was forced to vote. She pointed out that criminal-content in politics went beyond 26% in the 2019 elections. She suggested, in the end, that Electoral Commission needs to better ensure free and fare elections.



PHASE-2 (VAAD-VIVAAD)

Phased two was conducted with the purpose to motivate constructive criticisms which would help the participants in developing their own perspectives.

This was initiated with a question by **Shreyas to Sarang**-“**How do you think EVM are not safe or could be hacked because these are stationed in random places also are sent before 6 months of conducting any election in addition to that the government conducted an event with a condition that whoever will hack the EVM gets 1 crore rupees. No one won the competition**”?

Sarang replied- “EVM can be hacked easily through formation of an identical display as shown in documentaries and are hacked the moment these are stationed.” Khushi added- “EVMs can’t be easily hacked, even cyber experts support the same and one of the developers of the EVM himself couldn’t hack it. It can’t be hacked although it can be tampered by officials. Solution to this problem is that Officials who are involved in transport and installation must not be politically affiliated and need to be under proper surveillance through CCTV cameras.

However, Paper Ballot are suggested to be a solution to these issues but isn’t an efficient replacement of EVM. EVM aids us to prevent time consumed for counting of votes.”

Shreyas to Khushi-“**How can we ensure that officials are not politically affiliated?**”

Khushi answered- “A committee need to be instituted to monitor the past record of the officers as to ensure they are not politically motivated and that can be easily done through interviewing that particular official and his family members. Also, these officials are bribed easily and that need to be taken care of.

Also, we our peer group needs to aware people as to what is mentioned in the manifesto? Also, about the past record of the party they decide the vote for so that people can draw right decision. Celebrities are paid heavily to endorse political parties. They entice their fan base to vote for the parties they support which would destroy the basic principle of democracy.”

Khushi to Sudhanshu- In response to Sudhanshu’s mention in Phase 1 point 2- “Everything has its positive side but unless we look into the problems we can’t come up with solution and this platform to draw solutions not to see positives.” Khushi questioned Sudhanshu’s claim of fairness of ECs and their political motivations.

Shreyas to Darshana- “How to stop popular belief in Manifestos and what are the alternatives to manifesto?”

Darshana answered- “politicians need to be of high moral standards and not say something beyond their capacity. They shall be required to submit an affidavit which makes the promises binding.”

Khushi added- “People need to be confronted with “what is a manifesto?” Because there are a huge mass of people who are unknown to these promises. Rather the manifestos need to be binding. People shall be made aware of a party’s resources. This can be used to judge its possible capabilities and ascertain whether certain promise can be practically fulfilled or not.”

Khushi’s take on prevention from fake promises- “To set democracy free from the claws of fake promise the Manifesto need to be binding and also party must project a plan of action as to how they are planning to achieve the goals they have mentioned in the manifesto.”

Shreyas to Everyone- “Political party take unfair benefit of the ephemeral structure through providing benefits for a short tenure i.e. till they rule”

Khushi’s objection-“Policies should provide skills to people because permanent solution would turn citizens lazy. People should be provided with the tools required to achieve their wants and desires. Also, the act of executive need to be filtered as to bring out proper implementation of any policy.”

Shreyas to Everyone- “Why today’s youth is not interested in politics?”

Aryan’s answer “It’s purely subjective and dependent what I think is that now a day student politics has touched the peak, which also means youth is turning responsible and are participating in politics”

Shiwang to Everyone- “Right to recall shall be adopted or not?”

Khushi’s response “Yes must adopt this because one a party wins election its works actively for a very short term and with passage of time slows down to promote public welfare at that instance, we all should have this power to terminate the individual from power and conduct re-election.” Solves the problem raised by Shreyas.

Ayushmita to Everyone- “How to wipe-out this idea of one vote doesn’t matter from the minds of people”

Khushi answered- “People need to be aware on the value of voting and must be shown with documentaries the evil consequences of not casting votes.”

Shreyas added-“Well known people of demarcated areas must reach out rural belts to make people aware of the benefits they get after casting the right vote also voting must be digitalised so that a person residing in a remote area may also cast vote(Postal Voting system) without incurring any extra losses(transport).” There are multiple other factors than lack of awareness for a low voter turnout

Shiwang to Everyone-“What according to you is a practical solution to make people aware of the issue? Because barely anyone will be interested to watch hour-long documentaries.”

Sarang replied- “What we have seen during the lockdown is that government broadcasted a lot of advertisements regarding washing hands for 20 seconds etc. the same can be done as to make people aware of their voting rights and to make them realise of their value of voting”

Khushi added-“Not each and every household in a village have television in order to address that schools must construct groups of student which will proliferate awareness among people also NGOs and Human Right associations may form groups, which will reach out these remote areas”.

Shiwang supporting the view of Sarang- “Even if after a period of time these repetitive advertisements started irritating people for otherwise it worked well. In response to Khushi, Shiwang said- “These programmes must equally target people with resources as well because these people have outreach and they themselves can make the people with scar recourses aware of the rights”

Aryan to Everyone- “How the problem of Voting for Individual gain can be resolved considering the 100% population aware of the scene?”

Khushi answered- “Firstly we should see the manifesto not in terms of any one privilege provided therein but as whole what the complete documents aims to achieve? i.e. Development of all also the parties need to realise this sense of social welfare”

Shiwang added- “100% population can never made aware of the scene and Socratic idea of democracy or ‘Epistocracy’ can be adopted; question is how far it satisfies the basic principles of democracy?”

Shreyas to Everyone- “Why parliaments provide women a mere reservation 14%?”

Khushi answered- “The social stigma such as gender discrimination and patriarchy are the reasons behind this fact. There is no solution to this except changing the popular stereotype and people who are very much inclined towards radical regionalism can hardly accept women standing at a popular limelight so we need to have social cleansing to resolve it.”

Shreyas rebutted-“Where does this gender discrimination come from and how it can be addressed?”

Khushi answered-“Women from the early childhood need to be taught to fight for the equal position again the fact is that we have a bulk of legislation dealing with this but popular mindset need to be changed” To that Shreyas added “Women need to be given with 33% of reservation even in the parliament.”

The final question was raised by Shreyas-“Why people choose to vote for representative with money and muscle power?”

Shiwang answered- “We need to establish a certain level of qualification to stand for elections and Public Administration need to be taught since early schooling. As a result of this people will elect knowledge over money and muscle power”. Aryan added “It’s purely subjective and dependent upon what the voters like, Khushi presenting the solution said “These are extreme situations because these people are abridging others right to life and these people must be disqualified to stand in an election”.

Aryan rebutted it saying “How to stop this criminalisation in politics?” Khushi answered “Election Commission of India need to institute a committee to deal with it and to disable such people entering into politics and that would be of nature of preventive detention which won’t take away any of his fundamental right”. With this answer Phase 2 came to an end and all the speakers were told to submit their plan of action they have evolved through the enriching discussion.

PHASE-3

Phase 3 of the session aimed to drive all participants towards the solutions to all the issues raised in Phase 2. For this the individual plans of action were collected and compiled, which presented many diverse solutions. To better filter the complete draft in terms of reasoning and practicality a final discussion took place between speakers to short list the most feasible solutions. This phase finally ended with a combined, conclusive and concrete plan of action. The same can be found on our website. This plan of action was the outcome of the whole session.

Report by:

Muskan Jain and Mansi Singh

VIMARSH

