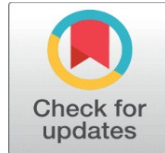


REVISION OF ELECTORAL ROLL AMID CACOPHONY AND CHEERS: A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Success of democracy presupposes fair electoral process which includes preparation of a genuine electoral roll of the voters, a task performed by the ECI in India. To raise concern against ills in the exercise of this task is a democratic duty of a stakeholder but the concern must be corroborated by substantial evidences. ECI is exhibiting its duties in adherence to article 324 and 326 and Statutory Act of 1950 and 1960 to prepare electoral list. A democratic and transparent functioning of the ECI in preparing the electoral rolls should be acclaimed. ECI embarks upon innovations and initiatives to avert grievances of stakeholders which certainly paves way for a sanguine democracy in India.

Keywords: Electoral Roll, Voter List, SIR, ECI, EVM, Electoral Process

1. INTRODUCTION

Visionary leadership of Indian constitution makers laid down “Part XV (Article 324 – 329) in the “Constitution of India” [Kashyap \(n.d.\)](#), with a view to realize a robust democracy. Elections are the wheels through which chariot of democracy runs smoothly and successfully. ECI, under article 324, is a high constitutional body, enshrined with the task of “superintending, directing and controlling the preparation of the electoral rolls and to conduct elections of the President, Vice President, Parliament and State Legislatures” [Siwach \(n.d.\)](#). Free and fair election is basic feature of the constitution, a task ECI has to exhibit.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This research paper aims to study dimensions and paradigms indulged in the preparation of the electoral rolls with a view to establish the credibility of the electoral process and rejuvenate the trust of the people in the democratic system.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND METHODOLOGY

The topic has evoked heated discourse in India after June 2025. The books on Indian Constitution written by D D Basu, publisher - LexisNexis, Subhash C Kashyap, publisher - National Book Trust India, on Indian Polity by A P Awasthi publisher - Laxmi Narayan Agra, J R Siwach, publisher - Sterling Pvt Ltd, Bare Act by LexisNexis enriched the understanding of constitutional and political dimension of the electoral process of India. Newspapers - The Hindu and Dainik Jagran threw light on the current developments in this regard. Website of ECI has been of immense significance in delving deep into insight of the topic. The method adopted for the study of the topic is inductive and observational, aiming at normative discourse.

Main Body:

1) Conceptual Elaboration: To prepare and to revise electoral roll for the elections of the House of the People and the State Assemblies is a constitutional obligation of the ECI. ECI is duty bound to incorporate eligible citizens of India as new voters, to delete the names of ineligible ones - as dead voters or fake voters or voters registered twice, and to edit the details of the existing voters. Up dation of electoral roll in fair and transparent way ensures purity of electoral democracy. The preparation of electoral rolls is a continuous process and is revised from time to time irrespective of there being elections or no elections. 18 years old Indian citizens are entitled to be enrolled as voter, and to cast only one vote. Moreover, a person can be registered as a voter only if he is ordinarily resident. "Flawed electoral rolls erode public trust and will ultimately undermine representative democracy". "The integrity of the electoral rolls hinges on the close working of the local level party organization with the ECI" [Kailash \(2025\)](#).

2) Related Acts:

"The Representation of the People Act 1950": [Election Commission of India. \(1950\)](#)

Section 15: Preparation of electoral rolls for every constituency under the superintendence, direction and control of ECI.

Section 16: Disqualification for registration in electoral rolls.

Section 16(1)(a): If a person is not a citizen of India, he shall be disqualified for being registered as voter.

Section 16 (2): The name of the person who is so disqualified, even if registered, shall be struck off from the electoral rolls.

Section 17: No person to be registered in more than one constituency.

Section 18: No person to be registered more than once in any constituency.

Section 20: lays down as qualification to be registered as a voter as - Who is ordinarily resident in the constituency.

Section 21: Preparation and Revision of electoral rolls.

Section: 21(2)(a)(i) before each general election to the House of the People or to the Legislative Assembly of a State.

Section 21 (3): The election commission may at any time direct a special revision of the electoral roll for any constituency or part of a constituency in such a manner as it may think fit.

Section 22: Correction of entries in the electoral rolls.

Section 23: Inclusion of names in the electoral rolls.

Section 24: If anyone is aggrieved by an order of inclusion or exclusion, he can prefer an appeal to the authority referred in the section.

Section 23(3): This section deals with the period when electoral rolls cannot be touched upon. No amendment transposition, deletion or inclusion shall be made after the last date of making the nominations for an election in that constituency.

“The Registration of Electors Rule 1960”: [Election Commission of India. \(1960\)](#)

Rule 8: ERO for preparing the electoral rolls, can ask for some information from the dwellers of a constituency which shall be furnished by the dwellers to the ERO.

Rule 10: Publication of roll in draft – as soon as the roll for a constituency is ready, the ERO will publish it in draft at his office and other places in the constituency.

Rule 12: Every claim for the inclusion of a name in the roll or every objection to an entry therein shall be lodged within a period of 30 days from the date of publication of the roll.

Rule 20(3)b: One can under oath lodge the complaints and objections if any.

Rule 23: Provision of appeal against the decisions of ERO for inclusion and exclusion of names in the electoral roll.

Rule 25: (1) The roll for every constituency shall be revised either intensively or summarily or partly intensively and partly summarily as the election commission may direct.

The provisions of these two Acts nourish the democratic spirit and cherish the value of transparency. ECI is well empowered to revise the electoral rolls. In the light of these provisions, opposition to the SIR in Bihar is baseless and biased.

Moot Points:

1) Allegations:

In most of the States, revision of electoral rolls was undertaken between 2002-2004. Hence, SIR of the electoral roll was started by ECI in Bihar in June 2025 which faced vehement opposition from many stakeholders so much so that Supreme Court also intervened and ruled in its favour. Allegation levelled was – SIR aimed at deleting the names of poor and marginalised voters from voter list but when Supreme Court asked political parties to assist ECI in adding the names of such voters, interestingly, applications for adding the names in the voter list was insignificant in comparison to the names given for deletion from the voter list.

Regarding SIR drive in Bihar, ECI clarified that existing voters whose name appear in the previously revised voter list, need not produce any document while new aspiring voters need to fill up a form and produce one document out of 11 documents (PAN, DL, Passport etc.). “Aspiring voters born before July 1, 1987, will submit their birth certificate, born between July 1, 1987 – December 2, 2004, will produce document of their parent’s birth certificate or citizenship document, born after December 2, 2004 will have to prove that one their parent is Indian citizen and the other is not illegal migrant” [Dainik \(2025\)](#).

Supreme Court directed ECI in August 2025 to incorporate Adhaar as 12th document as proof of identity to be enrolled as voter. But Court clarified that Adhaar is not a proof of citizenship and that ECI can examine the authenticity of Adhaar of an applicant. “Adhaar number or the Authentication thereof shall not, by itself, confer any right of, or be a proof of, citizenship or domicile in respect of the Adhaar Number holder” [Rajagopalan \(2025\)](#). It also allowed to file applications and objections for inclusion and exclusion respectively in online mode in the voter list. Thus, a major demand of the opponents to accept Adhaar as a proof of citizenship fell flat.

Again, in mid-August 2025, some criticisms emerged on tempering of voters list especially in “Bangalore Central Parliamentary Constituency - Mahadevapura Assembly segment [Dainik \(2025\)](#)” that voters were enrolled with same address in large number, in some cases fathers name was xyz and house no as 0. ECI falsified these allegations and asked to produce affidavits and details of disclosure because when such a grave complaint surfaces about irregularities in voters list, ECI examines the same to fix the guilty person.

Narrative against SIR in Bihar and of Mahadevapura were blown up to show that electoral rolls were deliberately designed in an erratic way to benefit ruling dispensation at the centre and also to establish an alignment between ECI and some political parties. Such a malign move might tarnish the credibility of the ECI and cause trust deficit for the high constitutional body. Ultimately, allegations of “Vote Theft” cropped up to undermine the formation of the government at the centre. “In the electoral process more than 1 crore personnels are engaged. Is it possible steal vote under such a scenario” [Kumar \(2025\)](#)?

Undeterred by fake narratives, in the mid-September 2025, ECI has asked State CEO, s to launch drive of SIR in the entire country. State Election Machinery has been asked to gear up for training of BLO and appointment of BLA by political parties. Meanwhile in mid. Sept. 2025 Supreme Court rejected petitions praying to stay nationwide SIR and ruled SIR to be a constitutional process.

2) Defence:

The ECI upgrades its functioning (its flagship program SVEEP) and takes new initiatives to redress the grievances (as induction of VVPAT). SIR of electoral list at pan India basis, is move in the same direction.

SIR drive aims to weed out foreign illegal migrants from electoral rolls, by checking their place of birth. Illegal infiltration across the border, is a major sanctity challenge for Indian polls. Not only in border states but even in Delhi such elements have succeeded in being enrolled as voters. In some constituencies, they affect the result of the elections also due to their high numerical strength.

A stakeholder can lodge complaint against a faulty electoral roll, with evidences and an affidavit before ECI, and even before the Supreme Court which is the guardian of the constitution. As per law, within 45 days a petition can be filed in High Court if any other electoral complaint surfaces. The campaign against SIR seems to be a replica of the campaign against EVM, launched few years ago. Even then apex court ruled in favour of continuance of the EVM. ECI has also maintained that - If someone's name is excluded from the electoral roll, ERO will issue Speaking Order – explaining the reason for name deletion, evidence, facts and applicable laws. Before finalizing the electoral rolls, ECI invites objections from political parties and general public for adding or against deleting the names of voters in the voters list. People and parties have right to challenge inclusion of names they think are ineligible in the electoral rolls. Similarly, people who think they are eligible but have

been left out can seek inclusion. This is a democratic and participatory and transparent way in preparing the voters list.

For being enrolled as voter, contesting elections, and becoming legislators, citizenship of India is a prerequisite. A reading of “article 326 and 84” [Basu \(2023\)](#) is crystal in this regard. So, the protest of SIR, as being a move to verify citizenship, goes contrary to the constitutional provisions.

In schedule 7 of the Indian Constitution, “Union List Item No. 72, Election to Parliament, to the Legislatures of the States, and to the office of President and Vice President, the Election Commission. On these subjects’ parliament is empowered to enact laws” [The Constitution of India \(Bare Act\). \(2023\)](#). Laws enacted by parliament in 1950 and 1960 provide for revision of electoral rolls explicitly. But “State Legislatures (Kerala) are passing resolutions to criticise this move of ECI” [The Hindu. \(2025\)](#). Such a resolution, when apex court has validated SIR, is peculiar. Paradoxically, on the one hand some political parties and academicians complain against faulty voter list but an attempt to purify the same, receives unwelcome gestures at immense scale.

In August 2025, “four officials of the State Election office of West Bengal have been put under suspension by the Election Commission for their failure in supervising election related work – wrongful addition in electoral rolls” [The Hindu. \(2025\)](#).

On the charges of deletion of some 6018 voters name from electoral rolls by forging form 7 (September 2025 in Aland Assembly constituency Karnataka), ECI clarified that “no deletion of any voter can be done online by any member of public. In 2023 certain unsuccessful attempts were made for deletion of electors in the Aland Assembly constituency and an FIR was filed by the authority of EC itself to investigate the matter” [The Hindu. \(2025\)](#). Out of 6018 only 24 genuine applications were entertained to delete names from voter list, rest 5994 fake applications were rejected. ECI shared details such as name, MN, reference no, EPIC No, IP address etc. with state CID in 2023 to investigate the matter. “Local leaders and officials, working under State Governments, perform the task of electoral rolls revision, not ECI. There is no constituency in the country where some sort of anomaly does not occur in voters list” [Dainik \(2025\)](#). But this cannot be made a pretext to curse the entire system.

On September 30, 2025 ECI released the final electoral roll for Bihar “with nearly 7.42 crore names, on the basis of which upcoming Assembly elections would be conducted. The final figure comes after month long SIR of the rolls, which saw large scale deletions, new additions and many corrections. Prior to SIR, on June 24, 2025, the state had 7.89 crore voters. When the draft list was released on August 1, 2025, after SIR, there were 7.24 crore names with 65 lakh names removed. On the final list, 21.53 lakh names were added and 3.66 lakh removed” [The Hindu. \(2025\)](#). Its digital and physical copies were shared with all political parties with full details of deletion, addition and corrections. Even the draft voter list was also submitted to 12 political parties, and were asked to verify the same through their BLA,s. A fair electoral will boost up people’s trust in the electoral system and could contribute in raising the voting percentage as well as fake names are deleted and real voters are added now.

Challenges Ahead: ECI faces twin challenges - lacking its own electoral machinery and to tackle the highest number of voters in the world.

“Sometimes the state officials who prepare these electoral rolls on behalf of the election commission, adopt partisan attitude because of the pressure of the state government” [Siwach \(n.d.\)](#). So, on the basis of the same, to question the very

functioning of the ECI is imprudent. In a mammoth exercise of SIR, some unintended human errors is not a deliberate design. Some ingenuine name might be added, some genuine names might be skipped and some names might be registered twice. Earlier, neither the level of awakening among the people was so high nor was media and medium of communications so fast. So minor mistakes were concealed unlike today.

Transformative Measures: Many measures have been adopted by the ECI to streamline the electoral process to ensure positive transformations and transparency. These include - linking of death registration data with voter list, regular interactions with political parties, VVPAT counting in case of mismatch between form 17C and EVM data. In Bihar, ECI published the data of 65 lakh excluded voters along with reason of exclusion, from electoral list under SIR, on the direction of Supreme Court, issued on 1 August 2025.

Accomplishing the demand of some parties, ECI has decided “to complete the counting of postal ballots before final round of counting in the EVM” [Dainik \(2025\)](#). This rule will be inducted in forthcoming Assembly elections of Bihar. In fact, counting of votes includes enumerating postal ballots, electronically transmitted postal ballots and vote count in EVM and VVPAT. ECI clarified that “In view of the initiatives for home voting for persons with disabilities and elderly citizens above 85, the number of postal ballots has substantially increased” [The Hindu. \(2025\)](#).

“ECI has launched a new e-sign feature on its ECI Net portal and app that requires those seeking to register as voters or applying for deletion and corrections, to verify their identity using their Adhaar linked phone numbers” [The Hindu \(2025\)](#).

Now when an applicant has filled form 6 for addition as voter, or 7 for deletion from voter list or 8 for corrections in voters’ detail, she/he will be taken to portal of CDAC, where applicant has to submit Adhaar number then OTP will be generated and sent to MN linked with Adhaar. This is Adhaar based authentication to verify the applicant. Thereafter one would be redirected at ECI Net portal to submit form. This measure will contain fake and fraud endeavours to add or delete voters in the electoral rolls.

To foster the participation of political parties and obtain error free electoral rolls, the ECI brought the concept of BLA, to be appointed by the parties to coordinate with BLO in preparing the voter list. To qualify as BLA, one must be enrolled in the same electoral roll where he is appointed as BLA. Being grassroot level functionaries, BLO and BLA can together contribute in electoral roll up dation. A BLA can submit only 10 applications a day.

ECI clarified that digital copies of the voter lists are also available, a voter or a party can download and check the sanctity of the voter list of 36 states and UT,s through the link <https://voters.eci.gov.in/download-eroll>

In another noble move, ECI has revised clause 49B of the Conduct of Elections Rule 1961. “Henceforth photographs of the candidates will be printed in colour on the EVM ballot paper. Candidates face will occupy $\frac{3}{4}$ of the photo space for better visibility. The serial no of candidates/NOTA printed in international form of Indian numerals. The font size will be 30 and in bold for clarity” [The Hindu. \(2025\)](#). This measure will enhance visibility, readability and clarity of ballot papers. This is going to benefit every contestant and to ensure fair and equal play amongst the candidates.

ECI in such a large and diverse country with active and regular printing press, 247 presences of social and electronic media, multiple political parties, independent judiciary, awakened citizenry, cannot favour a particular political establishment.

Some minor unintentional aberrations should not be exaggerated to tarnish the credibility of the ECI. A machinery of 1 crore personnels from diverse background, who act for ECI, cannot be assumed to be manipulated in poll preparation, voting or counting.

Some suggestive steps such as door-to-door verification of voters by BLO though time consuming, revival of local units by parties even in the presence of professional consultants, would be beneficial. In appointing the Chief and other Election Commissioners of the ECI, presently in the selection committee, comprises Prime minister, a union minister nominated by him and the leader of opposition/single largest party in the House of the People. A reformative step - is to replace the union minister nominated by the Prime Minister with the Chief Justice of India which will reflect its balanced composition against a biased one.

4. CONCLUSION

Republic of India is engaged in the task of nation building, fair elections being one of them. Electoral system of the country is continuously evolving, by learning, unlearning and relearning from the emerging scenarios and challenges by trying to incorporate views of various stakeholders. ECI has to play a pivotal role in the preparation of flawless electoral roll in which political parties through BLAs, officials of the State Govt. and voters are supposed to contribute meaningfully. Paradigm goal to be set - No eligible citizen is left out of electoral roll simultaneously no ineligible one should be incorporated in it. Democracy is sustained and survived by the trust of the people in elections and the electoral process. In case of deviation, a complainant can knock the doors of the court with substantial evidences if his legitimate concerns remain unattended at the level of ECI. But mud slugging at a constitutional body – ECI, weakens democracy and deteriorates its credibility by germinating suspicion among the public.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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ABBREVIATIONS

- BLO – Booth Level Officer
- BLA – Booth Level Agent
- CEO – Chief Election Officer
- CDAC - Centre for the Development of Advanced Computing
- CID – Central Investigation Department
- DL – Driving Licence
- EPIC – Election Photo Identity Card
- ECI – Election Commission of India
- ERO - Electoral Registration Officer
- EVM – Electronic Voting Machine
- IP – Internet Protocol
- MN – Mobile Number
- NOTA – None Of The Above
- OTP – One Time Password
- PAN – Permanent Account Number
- SIR – Special Intensive Revision
- SVEEP – Systematic Voters Education and Electoral Participation
- SDM – Sub District Magistrate
- VVPAT – Voters Verifiable Paper Audit Trail
- ECI Net – one stop platform of ECI integrating over 40 mobile and website applications of the ECI