

Elections on the Net: Let's Bring Politics to Internet!

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In 1952 India had her first general elections based on universal adult suffrage. Two things at that first election determined the DNA of the election system of India: a) elections were based on universal adult suffrage, an understanding quite uncommon at that time across the world that all adults irrespective of caste, colour, creed, education and wealth, were competent and enlightened enough to choose their representative. It was actually a very bold idea at that time; b) the elections were to be conducted not by a government body but by a constitutional body called the election commission. As we now know, both these concepts had a revolutionary impact in establishing and maintaining India as a democracy for the last 60 years!

The first Chief Election Commissioner of India was a self-effacing bureaucrat Sukumar Sen of the Indian Civil Service. He served between 1950 and 1958 overseeing the first two general elections. Interestingly, he

also served as the first election commissioner of Nepal and Sudan! [I got this information from the Wiki]. He was so self-effacing that he has hardly left behind any papers to enable historians assess his remarkable contribution to the election process in India. As the first Election Commissioner, he also determined the DNA of the Election Commission. While the successive Election Commissioners have not necessarily followed Sen's streak of self-effacement, they have unequivocally maintained the election commission as an independent statutory body, over the years making it one of the most efficient, effective, unbiased and progressive bodies not only in India but the world over.

If you were a senior citizen, who has participated in many elections over the years, you would not help wonder at the progress that the election process has made over the years in terms of shortening queues, better booth management, safer voting environment, ease of casting vote and

above all else introduction and use of high technology in the election process.

Election Commission and Technology Usage

It is quite a pleasant surprise to know how tech-savvy the working of the election commission is. Electronic voting machines are the most visible gadgets on the tech side. But the whole process of listing, weeding and maintaining voters' lists and issuing voters' identity cards is an enormous task given the size of the electorate and the constant stream of newly eligible voters in each successive election. Of course, it would be fair to assume that there was perhaps no alternative before

hand to carry out their functions as long as they have produced the desired results: conducting the elections more efficiently.

Bringing in 'Internet Voting'

Given the history and DNA of the election commission and the imperative need to make more and more use of technology - especially since the size of the electorate is growing, there is demand for more fair and efficient elections, there is need to bring more and more new groups into the election process; I think it is time that the Commission takes the next logical step and seriously considers the concept of 'internet voting'. This simply



the Commission but to embrace technology fully and efficiently given the enormity of the task and the streamlined nature of the commission. In the last 8-10 years, the Commission has therefore by design or default or by a judicious mixture of both, has chosen some of the most IT savvy civil servants to head its IT function who fortunately have been given a free

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