

CHAPTER – I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

India is the largest democratic country in the world. Democracy is a government of the people. It must reflect the genius the people, their hopes, aspirations, conflicts and way of life. Fair elections, freedom of thought, expression, freedom of press and independency of judiciary are the main pillars on which the edifice of democracy stands. Elections are the corner stone of democracy. They lie at the heart of the democratic process. It is based on the popular will. In fact, democracy is based on the active and intelligent interest of the people in their national affairs. The voters come in the picture during an election because it is through elections that sovereignty of the people is institutionalized and realized. The process of election is shouldered by the responsible executive authorities. It is quite obvious that these independent authorities are no exceptions for the political influences and power politics.

According to the New Standard Encyclopedia Election, the act of choosing officials and representatives by voting. Elections provide the chief means by which people express their will and make it effective. Democracy cannot exist without free and frequent elections.

The founding fathers had envisioned a socio-economic revolution that aimed to achieve unity and integrity of the nation, socialism, secularism and the development of the democratic values, adult franchise, regular elections and accountability of political leadership by the Constitution of India which they drafted. They had great faith in democratic values. They evolved and developed democratic institutions and practices, but soon an erosion of these institutions and the decline of the political process began as a consequence of the excess of populist and confrontational politics that began in the last quarter of the sixties. Today the normal political process has been grossly distorted. The political legitimacy and morality of political leadership is always suspected by the people. There is gross decline of democratic commitment and erosion of ethical values. Growing corruption, criminalization, conviction, repression and intimidation have gravely perverted the growth and development of democratic

process'. Increasing violence at the polls is promoting the loss of public faith in participatory democracy; the forcible seizure of booths, the stuffing of ballot boxes, the burning of vehicles, the manhandling of election staff, the free use of guns by armed goondas and murders are becoming common features of the electoral system.

India is facing political, economic and social problems of an unparalleled magnitude.' The people of the country have by now experimented and experienced repetitive changes of political parties, including multiparty governments and each such experience has not been found satisfying the aspirations of the people. According to Shri N. A. Palkhivala "we should think of making some changes in our Constitutional law There are a number of changes in our Constitutional law which need to be effected to root out corruption and to prevent further degradation of our political life.. ... To my mind, the greatest danger facing India is that of disintegration³". Corrective measures in the form of Constitutional and Electoral Reforms have become imperative to face the situation. In such matters, generally, Governments are reactive and not pro-active.