India got its freedom through a long struggle. With this freedom,   
India achieved Universal Suffrage, which means that every citizen   
above the age of 18 is allowed to vote. The vision of our freedom   
fighters thus got embarked in the right to vote. Voting is the agent of   
change and is a Constitutional right of citizens over 18 years of age in   
India. It offers every citizen a medium of expr ession and the process   
of voting allows every citizen to have a say in what should constitute   
the matters of importance by voting for the candidate he or she   
deems fit for the purpose. Though the outcome of elections is hardly   
ever predictable; yet if citi zens don’t cast their vote then they are   
giving up on the chance of getting heard.   
In a populous democracy like India, a voter might think that a vote   
doesn’t matter but when this thought prevails over the nation; then   
citizens might miss out from helping the best candidate win the   
election. Both as a right and responsibility, voting lays the foundation   
of the Indian democracy. Citizens need to be careful about their   
power of casting a vote in order to strengthen the existence of the   
democratic Republic.   
Voting is a sort of honour granted to the citizens by the founding   
fathers of the Constitution of India. Citizens demonstrate their respect   
for the history of the country through exercising their right to vote. By   
not casting their vote, the citizens in a wa y improve the chances of   
the unsuitable ones winning the polls. And as a whole, the voter has   
to suffer through poor governance at the end.   
Being the most essential element of the electoral system, the right to   
vote is universal and equal and gives to the citizens the freedom to   
choose among various candidates or political parties in elections. As   
every vote counts, so the responsibility lies on every individual to vote   
responsibly. The voters in India have also been offered the provision   
to exercise their vote even if they aren ’t happy with any of the   
candidates. Known as NOTA - ‘None of the Above ’ is an important   
vote to cast for those who aren ’t satisfied by any of the standing   
parties.   
Electoral Malpractices   
As the signpost of democracy, elections at regu lar intervals make the   
most significant features of a democratic polity. These act as a   
medium of reflection of the attitudes, values and beliefs of the people   
towards their political environment. Acting as the central democratic   
procedure for selecting an d controlling leaders, elections also   
symbolize the sovereignty of the people and provide legitimacy to the   
authority of the government.   
But the electoral system in India has been restricted by many   
obstacles and dampening factors, that encourage the anti -social   
elements to jump into the electoral battle. Electoral malpractice, also known as electoral fraud, electoral   
manipulation or electoral rigging is the interference with the process   
of election in an illegal manner. It can be done either by increasing   
the share of the vote of the favoured candidate or by depressing the   
share of the vote of the rival candidate.   
Electoral malpractice can be in the form of use of money power or   
muscle power or even manipulation through media. Right from the   
distribution of tickets by the political parties, the use of money power   
begins. Those candidates who can contribute maximum money to the   
party corpus and have fat bank balance to purchase votes, are given   
importance and this way the personal qualities of the prospective   
candidates get ignored by most political parties.   
Clubs and organizations are given handsome donations and crowds   
are rented for party meetings, mad shows, rallies and campaigns.   
Public morality thus gets ignored this way by political parties in their   
struggle to capture power.   
One of the biggest challenges in elections remains the use of muscle   
power that dictates the selection of candidates and party, forcing   
people against voting freely. Widespread use of muscle power can be   
seen in the form of heavy mo netary demands to candidates, imposing   
ban on filing nominations, ban on election campaigns and even   
forcing people whom to vote for or not to vote.   
Besides these, the deteriorating law and order is often capitalized by   
many candidates to their advantage t o win elections. The free   
employment of muscle power has erupted election related violence at   
several places during the polls. Political ethics have been forgotten by   
most of the political parties who openly take support from banned   
armed groups.   
Media has also contributed to the electoral malpractices in spite of   
playing a neutral role in a democratic society. Whereas in a   
democratic election, the media reporting and publication of political   
views including the projection of party and candidates ’ images im pact   
the voting pattern directly, media plays a crucial role in the same.   
Favoritism and misquoting have become the recent trend of the   
media. Media persons are often found indulged in publication of   
misleading news and views.   
Other malpractices include fr eebies, booth capturing, proxy voting,   
unfair means of election conducting, hate speeches against the   
contesting parties and vote bank politics to name a few.   
Electoral Reforms   
The Election Commission has expressed its concern and anxiety   
many a time for r emoving obstacles in the way of free and fair polls. A   
number of recommendations have thus been made and the   
government has been repeatedly reminded about the necessity of changing the existing laws so that the electoral malpractices are   
checked.   
Electoral reforms include following aspects:   
• Freeing the election process from muscle and money power   
• Transparency about the background of the candidates   
• Prohibiting the nexus between business and politics   
• Upholding the secrecy of voters   
• Fair registration and recognition of the political parties without any   
kind of influence   
• Solution of delisting of illiterate voters   
• Non -partisan role of media   
• Applying model code of conduct efficiently   
• Expediting and rationalizing the electoral processes   
India alre ady has laws to check electoral malpractices in the form of   
the Representation of the People Act, 1951, Election Code of   
Conduct and so on.   
Political party funding reform has been enacted through various   
changes to the Company Laws, through Money Bills, th e Income Tax   
Laws, through Supreme Court orders and so on.   
Anti -Defection Law   
Passed in 1985, through the 52 nd Amendment to the Constitution, this   
law intends to combat the evil of political defections by elected   
politicians for the lure of office.   
SC in 2 002 has directed all contesting candidates to furnish all   
personal information, including the criminal record at the time of filing   
nomination papers.   
State funding of political parties by means of a National Electoral   
Fund or on the basis of the number of votes obtained is a valid   
proposal. Capping the expenditure of political parties and giving the   
Election Commission of India the powers to deregister unruly political   
parties are few of the proposed reforms. Revisiting the Information   
Technology Act is al so another requisite for strengthening the social   
media regulations and inclusion of the proportional representation   
system along with depoliticization of constitutional appointments by   
appointing of the Commissioners through a broad -based collegium   
makes sense.