



The Impact Of Special Intensive Revision In Indian Politics: A Study

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Abstract:

Elections are the foundation of democracy in India, and accurate voter rolls are essential for conducting free and fair elections. But to address this issue, the Election Commission of India carries out a process that is called Special Intensive Revision. This process updates electoral rolls by adding eligible voters, removing the names of deceased or relocated individuals, and correcting inaccurate information. Therefore, SIR is not only a technical exercise but also a political process that can influence representation and political power in India. Further, this study analyzes the role and impact of SIR in Indian politics. It examines the historical development of electoral roll revision, the legal framework supporting it, and the operational steps used during the revision process. The study also explores the political implications of SIR, including its effects on marginalized communities, women voters, and youth participation. In addition, it highlights how voter roll revisions may shape electoral outcomes and party strategies. Furthermore, this research uses an analytical method and relies on secondary sources such as books, academic articles, journals, government reports, and online materials and analyse of case studies from Bihar, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh illustrate how SIR has influenced voter registration patterns and political debates. The study also identifies key challenges, including allegations of selective voter deletion, controversies related to Aadhaar linkage, and the exclusion of migrant workers from the electoral process. Lastly this study suggests reforms to make the revision process more transparent, inclusive, and effective in the future.

Keywords: Special Intensive Revision, Free and Fair Elections, representation, Aadhaar linkage, migrant workers etc.

Introduction:

Every democracy works through elections, just like in India. Voter rolls are used to run smooth elections, and if they are mistaken, they might take away the right to vote from many people. Election Commission of India can use SIR to solve this issue. Before the elections, it cleans the voter lists by adding missing names, removing names of people who have died or moved elsewhere, and pushing for accurate data (Gyan, n.d.). Because of this, this study provides excellent detail on Special Intensive Revision in Indian Politics. It examines its past, the laws that support it, how it works, its political effects, problems, and its future. According to the Election Commission of India, there are more than 969 million registered voters in 2024. So, SIR, which refers to a systematic process of updating and

verifying the electoral rolls, isn't just about running an election. It is a political act that directly affects, who gains and losses power in Indian politics.

Objectives:

The main objectives of this article are:

- i. To highlight the impact of the SIR of Indian Politics.
- ii. To find out the present situation of SIR through various aspects.
- iii. To analyze major problems faced during the SIR in various states.

Implication:

- a) This Article helps us to understand the present real picture of SIR's work.
- b) The present study helps us to find out the problems and issues of the SIR process.
- c) This study helps us to understand the different strategies ECI uses to conduct the revision of the electoral roll.

Methods and Data Collection:

This study has used an analytical method to look at how SIR affects Indian politics. This article got its information from a number of different secondary sources, such as books, eBooks, research papers, articles, journals, newspapers, and the web or Google search engine.

An Overview of Special Intensive Revision in India:

The largest democracy in the world is India. The nation had 968.8 million registered voters for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, making it extremely difficult for the Commission to maintain a voter roll. In these situations, the Election Commission requires SIR because individuals who relocate from one city to another and discover their previous names on the electoral rolls are never added as new voters. To address these issues, SIR was developed. SIR is a targeted, time-limited initiative run by the Election Commission to clean up voter rolls in specific regions or the entire nation. Political parties closely monitor the process whenever the Commission updates the voter rolls (Election Commission in the Final Stage of Election Preparations, 2025). Political parties closely monitor the addition of new communities and express concern over the potential removal of their supporters. Additionally, they advocate for modifications that could advance their personal goals. To comprehend SIR's true impact on Indian democracy, this article examines it from both administrative and political perspectives.

Historical Overview of Voter Roll Revision in India:

According to Article 326 of the Constitution, all adults have the freedom to cast a vote in a ballot. Every person over the age of 18 has the freedom to cast a vote. But this right doesn't mean much if it's not put into practice correctly. It was deemed a popular act in 1950; setting up the legal system for voter lists (Admin, 2025). Section 21 of this law gives the ECI the authority to make and update these rolls. The ECI made various changes to the electoral rolls (Client Challenge, n.d.). Summary revision adds new voters to the existing rolls and takes off the names of people who aren't eligible. People can apply all year long because of continuous revisions. Intensive revision means that officials go to people's homes to check and update every entry.

The first major intensive revision occurred in the 1960s, when the ECI found that voter registration was not conducted in the newly constituted states. Because of this, the Green Revolution in the 1970s brought many migrant workers into cities, which made it harder for the ECI to register voters. After 1990, the rise of competitive coalition politics made it essential for political parties to have accurate voter rolls.

T. N. Seshan, who served as CEC from 1990 to 1996, changed the ECI from a passive body into a strong guardian of electoral integrity. He launched systematic, intensive revisions, acted firmly against fake voters, and introduced voter identity cards with a photo through the Electors Photo Identity Card programme. His tenure showed that the quality of voter rolls directly affects election results and that cleaning these rolls can change political fortunes. After 2000, the idea of SIR became more organized and structured. The ECI started issuing clear guidelines, fixed timelines, and evaluation measures for these drives. It also focused on states where the quality of voter rolls was poor and made them priority areas for revision.

How Special Intensive Revision Works:

The Special Intensive Revision follows a well-defined, systematic process. It engages a number of government departments, organizations and political parties at different stages of implementation. The Commission does not operate in isolation, and instead, it adopts a multi-stakeholder approach to broaden outreach and strengthen transparency and accountability in the revision process.

Phases of Planning:

The Commission announces SIR for a specific state or district. It sets a qualifying date, usually January 1 of the revision year. Anyone who turns 18 by this date can register. Then the ECI prepares a draft voter list, freezes it, and begins the verification process.

1. First Phase: Field Verification:

Booth Level Officers (BLOs) are usually government employees, such as school teachers or revenue officials, who go door to door in their assigned polling stations. They carry a printed copy of the electoral roll for their polling booth (Laaa-Admin, 2026). During this process, BLOs go to every home in their assigned area or polling station and verify whether the person or voter is still alive. If the voter is still alive or present here, then whoever in your family isn't on the voter registration list. In this case, government officials fill Form VI for additions, Form VII for deletions and Form VIII for corrections of voters. These forms generate the formal process of amending the list (Reporter & Reporter, 2025).

2. Second Phase: Public Campaigns to raise awareness:

The ECI runs enormous initiatives to raise awareness among the general public through newspapers, radio, television, and social media. The Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation program sends volunteers, public figures, college students, and self-help groups into communities to share information and encourage voting. The Commission also conducts special outreach drives. These focus on women, young voters, persons with disabilities, and migrant workers to ensure that they receive clear information and equal access to the electoral process.

3. Third Phase: Claims and Objections Period:

After officials publish the draft electoral roll, the 30-day mandatory claims and objections period begins. At this time, any citizen may file a claim to be added, object to the removal of someone or request a correction to the list. Political parties take an active role during this period. The Commission appoints Booth Level Agents who monitor and report discrepancies.

4. Fourth Phase: Finalization and Publication:

After going through all the claims and objections, the ECI publishes the final electoral roll. The final roll is the official list of voters for the next election. The Model Code of Conduct must be lifted before any more changes can be made. The Commission can make an exception to this rule.

Political Impact of Special Intensive Revision in India:

There is no political vacuum during Special Intensive Revision. Every revision drive makes some people win, and some people lose, usually without meaning to. To see why the process is so controversial, you need to understand how it affects politics.

1. Impact on Marginalized Communities:

SIR has always helped people from underrepresented groups get on the voter rolls. Dalits, Adivasis, and other backward classes often lived in areas that previous revisions overlooked, such as remote villages, forest areas, or slums in cities. SIR's door-to-door approach was the first time these communities had ever seen it. The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) and other regional parties with Dalit or Adivasi voters are political parties. The expansion of voter rolls through SIR sometimes made the advantages of parties that typically attract upper-caste voters in cities less clear.

2. Urban vs. Rural Dynamics:

Urban voter rolls in India suffer from a specific problem, such as ghost voters. People who moved from cities to other states or died remain on the rolls for years. Urban voter rolls in Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru historically had 15–25% phantom entries (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2019). SIR drives in urban areas; remove these ghost voters, which can shift constituency outcomes dramatically. The other side of rural voter rolls faces the opposite problem: valid voters, including young people, women who have married and moved in from other villages, and seasonal workers, who are often absent during the season. In rural areas, SIR drives swell voter numbers, which benefits parties with stronger rural voter bases.

3. Women Voter Registration:

In SIR, the impact of politics has been on women's voter registration. For the last few decades, India has had a persistent gender gap in voter registration. According to the ECI's own data, in 2010, there were 920 registered women voters for every 1,000 registered men. By 2024, after multiple SIR drives specifically targeting women's enrollment, this ratio improved to 948 women per 1,000 men (ECI Annual Report, 2024). This is not solely a matter of numbers. Women voters in India tend to have distinct political preferences in some states. Studies from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan show that women voters prioritize welfare schemes, local infrastructure, and healthcare over caste calculations more than men do (Shastri & Kumar,

2021). Parties that understand this difference actively lobby for SIR in areas with strong female populations.

4. Youth Voter Enrollment

India has one of the world's youngest populations. Every year, a million new voters turn 18, potentially eligible voters who need to be added to the voter list. In this instance, SIR efforts that focus on colleges, polytechnics, and vocational training institutes can greatly boost the number of young people who enroll. Youth voters tend to be less loyal to traditional party affiliations and more susceptible to new messaging, social media campaigns, and inspirational promises (Gensler, 2015).

Case Studies of SIR Implementations:

1. Bihar:

Before the last assembly elections in Bihar in 2025, the state ran a large-scale SIR (Statewide Initiative for Registration) to encourage more people to register to vote. Political analysts said the RJD, which draws strong support from the Yadav and Mahadalit groups, benefited from these new members. Some people thought that the new voters almost changed the outcome of the election because the BJP and JDU only won by 15 seats out of 243 (Kumar, 2021). Although it's not clear if SIR had a direct impact on the result, the numbers were close enough to warrant an inquiry.

2. Delhi:

In 2025, the ECI presented the case of ghost voting in the electoral roll in Delhi. Before the 2020 assembly elections in Delhi, the commission removed a targeted voter who was a ghost voter. During the process commission has removed ghost voters from the electoral rolls. The Commission argues that people who had moved away, died or were never genuinely registered at the listed addresses. But the Aam Aadmi Party loudly complained that the deletions targeted voters in slum areas. The BJP countered that the deletions were legitimate and necessary.

3. Uttar Pradesh:

Uttar Pradesh is India's most politically significant state with 80 Lok Sabha seats, underwent a massive SIR in 2021 ahead of the 2022 assembly elections. The commission added 37.9 lakh new voters, many of whom are out of state and have large Muslim populations. During the process, the Samajwadi Party specifically set up camps in these areas to ensure all voter bases were enrolled. The BJP deployed its own booth-level machinery to counter. Ultimately, the BJP won the UP Assembly Election with a reduced majority (Yadav & Palshikar, 2022).

The Controversy and Political Allegations:

The SIR process generates controversy and Political Allegations because the commission touches the most sensitive area of democracy, and that is voting. Therefore, most of the political parties have allegations against the commission.

1. Allegations of Selective Deletion:

Most opposition parties and leaders frequently allege that BLOs deleted the names of voters who belonged to their communities, while being lenient toward government-aligned communities. These allegations are serious because BLOs are government employees, and government employees sometimes face pressure from local political representatives or leaders.

Therefore, ECI has tried to address this issue by requiring dual verification for any deletion. The ERO must approve each deletion after a notice is issued to the voter and a waiting period passes (ECI Guidelines, 2023).

2. The Aadhaar Link Controversy:

The ECI was given permission to link Aadhaar numbers with voter IDs to make duplicate voter rolls. Opposition parties argued that the de-duplication process would delete legitimate voters, particularly those with names that exist in multiple states due to migration. The ECI clarified that linkage was voluntary and would not result in the deletion of voters who declined to link. The controversy highlighted how SIR, even when well-intentioned, can become a political flashpoint.

3. AI and Data Analytics:

The ECI has begun using AI-powered analytics to identify anomalies in voter rolls, duplicate names, mismatched addresses and unusual registration spikes. These tools compare voter roll data with census data, UIDAI records and postal service data to flag discrepancies for human verification. According to opposition leaders or political parties, it is totally useless because AI does not map any errors or language.

4. Exclusion of Migrant Worker

India has millions of internal migrant workers who move from their home states to other states or cities for employment. These migrant workers face a cruel dilemma because they are registered at their home village but live and work hundreds of kilometres away. They cannot vote at their place of work without re-registering, and re-registering means losing their home constituency vote. Therefore, SIR is ineffective in addressing this systemic issue and ensures that migrant workers who want to re-register at their current residence.

Major Suggestions:

- a) At first, the Commission and the Political Leader were aware that the common people should participate in the SIR process freely.
- b) To solve the issue of migrant workers' voting registration.
- c) To Support or include the regional language in mapping the electoral roll.
- d) Avoid the AI in the SIR process.

Conclusion:

SIR is one of India's most powerful electoral roll revisions, yet it is one of the least discussed political processes. SIR has decided who appears on the voter lists, which communities gain a political voice or power, and ultimately, which parties gain the opportunity. This study shows how SIR affects marginalized groups, women, young people, and migrants. It draws on real cases from Bihar, Delhi, and Uttar Pradesh to show how revising voter rolls can change election results. The article also highlights real problems with BLO performance, migrant exclusion, and voter apathy that weaken SIR's impact. Finally, this article lays out a set of practical reforms to make SIR stronger and fairer for the future.

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