

**Deepening Democracy for Viksit Bharat 2047:  
The Case of Bihar’s Special Intensive Revision  
and the Future of Electoral Inclusion**

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**ABSTRACT:**

As India approaches the centenary of its independence in 2047, the realization of a Viksit Bharat is contingent upon the deepening of democratic processes through comprehensive electoral reforms. This paper examines the pivotal role of electoral inclusion in strengthening democracy, with a specific focus on Bihar’s Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise as a representative case study. Bihar’s diverse demographic and socio-political complexities provide a critical context for assessing efforts aimed at enhancing the accuracy and inclusivity of electoral rolls. The SIR initiative sought to systematically update voter lists, addressing issues of exclusion and inaccuracies to ensure universal suffrage. Through a detailed analysis of the implementation, achievements, and challenges of the SIR, this study elucidates the significance of meticulous electoral management in fostering greater voter participation and safeguarding electoral integrity. Looking forward, the paper underscores the necessity of sustained reforms—including the integration of technology and expanded voter education—to promote inclusive and transparent electoral practices across India. Bihar’s experience offers valuable insights into the future trajectory of electoral reforms necessary for consolidating democracy and achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047

**KEYWORDS:**

Electoral reforms, Voter inclusion, Special Intensive Revision, Bihar, Democratic deepening.

**Introduction**

India’s democratic journey is one of the most expansive and complex in the world, marked by its commitment to universal adult suffrage and periodic elections. As the nation approaches the significant milestone of its centenary of independence in 2047, the ambition to transform India into a Viksit Bharat (Developed India) brings renewed focus on strength-

ening the democratic fabric. A robust democracy is not merely defined by the existence of elections, but by the meaningful participation of its citizens in these processes. Electoral inclusion the assurance that every eligible voter is registered, informed, and able to exercise their franchise without impediments is fundamental to this endeavour.

Despite considerable progress, India continues to face persistent challenges related to electoral participation, accuracy of voter rolls, and equitable access to the electoral process. These issues are often magnified in states like Bihar, where socioeconomic diversity, literacy levels, and political dynamics complicate electoral management. Historically, Bihar has encountered problems such as duplicate entries in electoral rolls, exclusion of eligible voters, and logistical hurdles during elections, which undermine the principle of universal suffrage and the legitimacy of democratic outcomes.

In response, the Election Commission of India, in collaboration with state authorities, implemented the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar. This targeted intervention sought to overhaul the voter registration system by verifying and updating electoral rolls comprehensively. The exercise aimed to enhance the inclusiveness and transparency of elections by ensuring that voter lists accurately reflected the eligible population.

This paper examines the SIR initiative as a critical case study to understand the broader challenges and opportunities in deepening democracy through electoral reforms. It explores the implementation process, achievements, and limitations of the revision, while situating Bihar's experience within the national discourse on electoral inclusion. Furthermore, it discusses future directions for electoral reforms, emphasizing technological integration, voter education, and policy innovations necessary for advancing India's democratic aspirations in the lead-up to 2047.

### **Evaluation of Bihar's Special Intensive Revision**

Bihar's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls stands out as a landmark initiative aimed at enhancing the accuracy, transparency, and inclusiveness of the democratic process within the state. Conducted in 2025 by the Election Commission of India (ECI), this focused exercise sought to comprehensively update voter lists, a task that had gained urgency due to the presence of numerous outdated, duplicate, and invalid

entries that compromised electoral integrity.

The SIR process in Bihar resulted in the removal of over 56 lakh names from the electoral rolls, encompassing deceased individuals, duplicates, and voters who had migrated permanently. This massive clean-up not only helped to tighten electoral accuracy but also addressed long-standing concerns about inflated voter lists, which have historically posed challenges for free and fair elections. Importantly, the revision ensured that eligible voters, particularly from marginalized sections such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and economically disadvantaged groups, were registered appropriately, thereby strengthening electoral inclusion.

The success of this initiative hinged on extensive fieldwork involving approximately one lakh Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and thousands of volunteers who conducted door-to-door verification and engaged with local communities to encourage voter participation. The effort was complemented by digitization efforts where nearly 91% of voter verification forms were processed electronically, enhancing efficiency and reducing errors.

Despite these achievements, the exercise was not without challenges. Bihar's varied geography, including remote and inaccessible areas, made comprehensive coverage difficult. Some long-term residents faced scrutiny regarding their citizenship status, especially in border districts, raising sensitive questions about voter eligibility and inclusion. Additionally, the digital submission process highlighted the persistent digital divide, limiting participation among some rural populations with inadequate internet access.

Political sensitivities around the timing and execution of the SIR also emerged, with concerns that the revision could influence voter turnout and election outcomes. These issues underscore the complexity of implementing electoral reforms in a socio-politically diverse state like Bihar.

On a broader scale, Bihar's experience with the SIR offers valuable lessons for the future of electoral reforms in India. It highlights the critical need for continuous and localized voter list maintenance combined with technological integration and robust voter education campaigns. As India charts its course toward 2047 and the goal of becoming a Viksit Bharat, such reforms are indispensable to deepening democratic participa-

tion and ensuring that electoral processes are truly inclusive, transparent, and reflective of the nation's diverse population.

### **Challenges and Lessons Learned**

While Bihar's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) made significant strides in cleaning up the electoral rolls and enhancing voter inclusion, the process also revealed critical challenges that must be addressed to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of such reforms.

One of the foremost challenges was logistical complexity. Bihar's vast and varied geography comprising remote rural areas, flood-prone regions, and densely populated urban centres posed considerable difficulties for Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and volunteers tasked with door-to-door verification. Reaching every household required intensive coordination, resources, and time, underscoring the need for better infrastructural support in future exercises.

The digital divide emerged as a key barrier. Although approximately 91% of enumeration forms were digitized, limited internet access and low digital literacy in many rural areas restricted the ability of some voters to participate fully in the verification process. This highlights the importance of supplementing technology-driven reforms with offline, community-based outreach to bridge accessibility gaps.

Another challenge was the socio-political sensitivity surrounding voter verification. In border districts and areas with historical migration, questions about citizenship and eligibility stirred anxieties and sometimes led to resistance from local populations. Political contestations further complicated the environment, with parties expressing concerns about potential disenfranchisement or manipulation of voter lists. These dynamics emphasize the necessity for transparency, clear communication, and legal safeguards to build public trust.

Despite these hurdles, several lessons emerge from Bihar's experience. First, large-scale electoral reforms require a multi-stakeholder approach involving election authorities, political parties, civil society, and citizens to foster cooperation and legitimacy. Second, continuous voter education and awareness campaigns are essential to inform citizens about their rights and the procedures involved in voter registration and verification. Third, integrating technology with human oversight ensures both efficiency and inclusiveness, especially in areas with infrastructural chal-

lenges.

### **Strategic Recommendations for Electoral Reform**

The experience of Bihar's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) offers critical insights for shaping electoral policies that can strengthen democratic inclusion and transparency across India, especially as the nation aspires to become a Viksit Bharat by 2047. Several key policy implications emerge from this case study.

First, regular and systematic updating of electoral rolls should be institutionalized as a continuous process rather than a sporadic exercise before elections. This would ensure that voter lists remain accurate and reflective of demographic changes, reducing the risk of disenfranchisement and electoral fraud. Enhanced resource allocation, including technological infrastructure and trained personnel, is essential to sustain such ongoing revisions.

Second, the integration of technology must be both innovative and inclusive. While digital tools like biometric verification, online voter registration portals, and real-time data management can improve accuracy and efficiency, policymakers must address the digital divide to prevent exclusion. Hybrid models that combine digital platforms with offline, community-based verification and assistance can bridge this gap effectively.

Third, fostering greater voter awareness and education is imperative. Policy frameworks should mandate comprehensive outreach programs that educate citizens on their electoral rights, the revision process, and the importance of participation. Partnerships with local NGOs, media, and community leaders can amplify these efforts, build trust and encourage active engagement.

Fourth, transparency and legal safeguards need strengthening to address concerns related to citizenship verification and political interference. Clear guidelines and grievance redressal mechanisms can protect vulnerable populations from wrongful exclusion and ensure fairness in the electoral process.

Finally, the Bihar case underscores the importance of tailoring reforms to local socio-political contexts. Policymakers must recognize and accommodate regional diversity in language, culture, and socio-economic conditions to design more effective, context-sensitive reforms.

## Conclusion

Bihar's Special Intensive Revision exemplifies a crucial step toward deepening democracy and advancing electoral reforms in India. By meticulously updating voter rolls and striving for greater inclusivity, the exercise has enhanced the integrity and transparency of the electoral process within a complex socio-political landscape. The initiative's successes, alongside its challenges, underscore the multifaceted nature of electoral reforms—requiring technological innovation, administrative diligence, and active citizen engagement.

As India moves toward the milestone of 2047, the vision of a Viksit Bharat hinges on strengthening democratic institutions and ensuring that every eligible voter can participate meaningfully. Bihar's experience offers valuable lessons for the country at large: continuous revision of electoral rolls, bridging the digital divide, safeguarding voter rights, and contextualizing reforms to local realities are essential to this mission.

In the words of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, "Democracy is not merely a form of government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience." Upholding this ideal requires persistent efforts to make the electoral process truly inclusive and representative.

Ultimately, the journey toward deepening democracy is ongoing and dynamic. Bihar's Special Intensive Revision is not merely an isolated event but a foundation upon which future reforms can build. By embracing strategic, inclusive, and adaptive electoral policies, India can uphold the democratic ideal of political equality and foster an electoral environment that truly represents the diversity and aspirations of its people.

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