



MY VOTE MATTERS

A QUARTERLY MAGAZINE OF THE ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA



▶ **LOK SABHA ELECTION
IN ACTION**

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& UTs**

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NO PLACE TOO REMOTE,
NO DUTY TOO TOUGH.

**EVERY VOTE MATTERS
AND WE WILL MAKE IT
COUNT. ”**

The Origins of Voter Helpline App



Dr. Kushal Pathak

Director ICT & CISO
ECI

15 million (1.5 crore) users used the Voter Helpline Mobile Application to search their names in the electoral roll.

The story behind its humble beginning

With 1,874,248 downloads and 25,000 user feedback, the application

has taken roots as a major tool for citizen empowerment. The seed for Voter Helpline was sown in the year 2016, when a new website for the Election Commission was envisaged.

In the process of designing the new website, the concept of Voter Helpline took its humble beginning. At that stage, the Project was code named as 'ECI Citizen App' and the initial objective was to display on the mobile app, the main ECI Website content.

During early days of the project, ECI Citizen App took a back

Voters Cobweb

For downloading the form, go visit the ECI main website, for learning about how to fill the form, go to SVEEP website, for filling up the form go to NVSP, for checking if your new voter ID is made, go to electoral search website and if your form is not delivered, go to Grievance Redressal portal to lodge a complaint.

seat, as it was caged by sheer limitation of its purpose and overshadowed by other giant applications.

But we often hold the key to our own cage. With each new application which was being rolled out successfully, it would

cross my mind often, if we could possibly bring them all together for the benefit of stakeholders. So, we thought it appropriate to focus on our primary stakeholder; the Voters.

The Challenge

We identified 5 core but disparate applications which perfectly made sense for all of us in ECI, but hardly made any sense to the voter. For us in the ECI every application was as important as the other and every application justified its independent existence. But in-turn we were sending our hapless voters to five different websites to do the transactions. I termed it as Voters' Cobweb.

First of course was the ECI Main Website, which contains gargantuan sized data starting from the year 1951. It had everything from History, Elections, Statistics, Photo Gallery, Current News, Press Release and what not. So why don't we provide this information in the hands of every citizen?

Second was the budding new website; ECI SVEEP Portal. When we designed this site, we realised the immense potential it had for Voter Education. States started posting pictures of their campaign, success stories and innovative ideas. So why don't we give wider access to the audience directly? And allow them to dip into such success stories and creative ideas!

Third was of course our Citizen Grievance Portal. It had existed for many years and had been very successful for redressing grievances. All States' Chief Electoral Officers, District Election Officers and Electoral Roll Officers are connected

and interwoven to receive and respond to grievances. So why don't we bring the functionality of lodging the complaints on the mobile? Why not provide facility for tracking the complaint and forward response of their grievance on their mobile?

Fourth was Electoral Search website. This has been a very successful website for searching one's name in the electoral roll. Why not provide option for electoral search from the mobile app? Why not give the option of downloading the Voter details directly on mobile? Why not link Contact details of the Booth Level Officer, Electoral Roll Officer, District Election Officer and Chief Electoral officers customised to voter area?

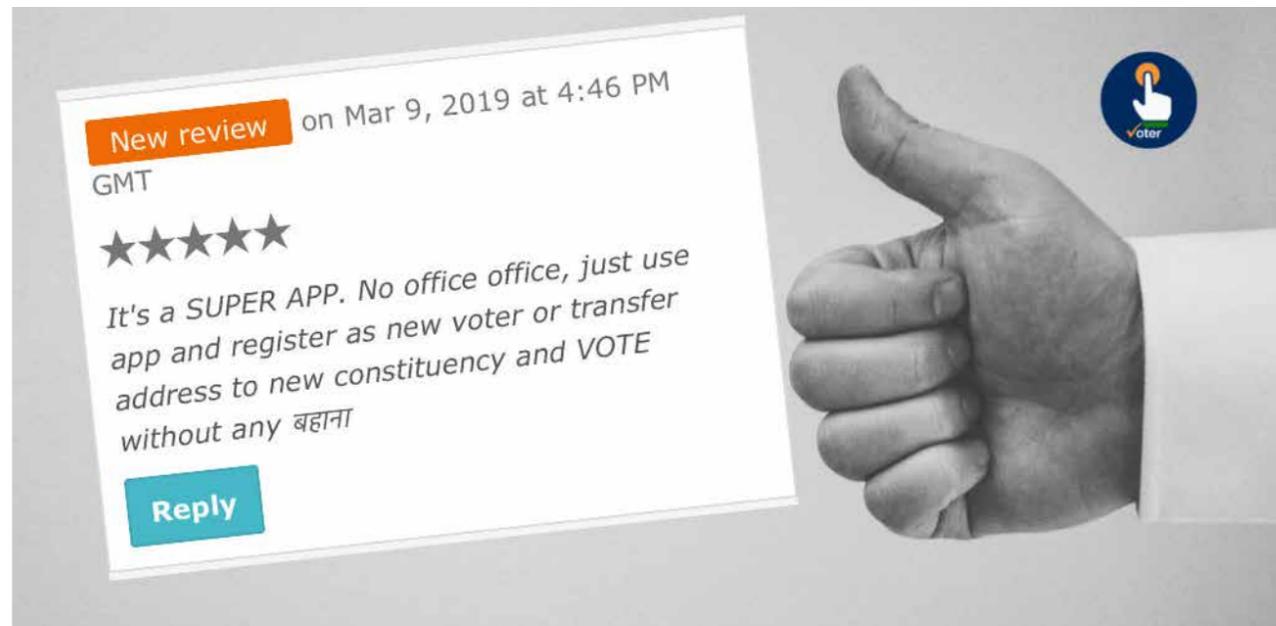
Fifth was the submission of Forms. www.nvsp.in has been in existence for many years providing facility for anybody to register online, request for transfer, request for change in details and request for duplicate EPIC Card. Why not provide all the forms in the mobile app? Why not provide option to upload the required documents directly from mobile gallery or by clicking a picture from mobile phone? Why not give option for form tracking? This long chain of questions got us to the drawing board.

It was mammoth task as always is the case, when we work on integration. Stitching them all together was a delicate and arduous task for my handpicked core team of engineers. They built, they dismantled, structured again but they never stopped.

The first cut

When the Voter Helpline App





was presented before the Commission, it was instantly approved for launch but with a caveat for pre-trials and feedbacks before we launched for wider public. The app received huge positive response and more than 99% people liked Voter Helpline App during an anonymous survey.

That momentous day was 8th February 2019, when the app



was formally launched. The application came live with 5 disparate technologies into one: Main website, SVEEP website, Electoral Search Website, nvsp forms, and complaint website.

What is in a name? It says a lot

Instantly, we had forms pouring in, complaints getting resolved, voters getting aware about EVM, downloading the latest ECI news and most importantly searching their name on the electoral roll. As we go into print almost 3,11,003 forms have been submitted through the mobile app alone, and we haven't heard the last word on the app's success yet!

A word about the name. Yes, it was supposed to be 'ECI Citizen App', but it took its shape as 'Voter Helpline', when Hon'ble Commission directed to setup '1950' as universal call centre number and to launch Voter Verification and Identification, (VVIP) Programme. When '1950' was named as 'Voter Helpline',

the ECI Citizen App became 'Voter Helpline App'.

Raising the bar

The app was so convenient and easy, that people started using it during their morning tea time! As we integrated the telephone numbers of all the Booth Level Officers, users of the app started calling them using the app.

But the journey of integration had just began. While we were cementing our endeavour, a new application took shape, the 'New Suvidha' application. New Suvidha application is another integrated application bringing convenience and ease of operations for our Returning officers. Online processing of Candidate Applications, Candidate Permissions, Candidate Affidavit management, Poll day turnout, Counting and Results, the New Suvidha has everything rolled into one.

New Suvidha provides for the inclusive process of decision making, management and reporting, based

on the connectivity and interdependencies between a range of factors that affect Election Commission of India's ability to create value over time.

We realised that many a times the name of the candidates are entered by Returning Officer, sometimes with error. During the time of Result display, we had to make tremendous efforts to get the names in order for results display. In one of the Video Conferencing with District Officials, this important point was hitting the wall. Out of sheer frustration I muttered 'We will make the candidate name public'. There it struck a chord!

We made this as the next mission. We integrated Candidate Profile and affidavit into the Voter Helpline Mobile App so that voters can see and read about their candidates. The app user can see the list of candidates along with the photographs, search for a candidate, filter based upon phases of elections, type of elections (Parliamentary, Assembly, Bye-election etc.), State wise, Parliamentary Constituency wise and also Assembly Constituency wise.

“New Suvidha provides for the inclusive process of decision making, management and reporting.”

Not only that, a candidates' application status (Applied, Accepted, Rejected, Withdrawn, Final Contesting) can be easily tracked on a real-time basis. As if this was not enough, we just added yet another feature of seeing the name of the contesting candidate as per the Form 7A sequence, that is like seeing the names of the candidates as per the names printed on EVM Machine.

The developments will not stop here. The Voter Helpline App will continue to improve, till its usage becomes ubiquitous in the nation. We are actively striving to develop and build in, yet another powerful feature into the app; and that is the display of results on a real time basis from within the app. This will provide common man to use smart phone to know the results for the first time. They can filter

the candidate winning and trail positions, see constituency wise, state wise and nation wise results from the app and all this in REAL TIME, and will be most authentic.

As mobile app penetration goes on increasing, that day is not far when Voter Helpline App will provide Voter Wallet facility to keep a digital copy of Voter card and use it even for entry into the polling booth. It's a challenge that keeps us on the toes.

“We often hold the key to our own cage.”



READY TO VOTE IN THE LOK SABHA ELECTION 2019?



WHO SAYS WE CAN'T AIM HIGH?

Dr. Arunima Sinha
Padma Shri, Everest Climber



On election day, every booth will have some special arrangements for persons with disabilities so that voting is easy for all.

Come forward. Cast your vote

My Vote Matters



Ramp &
Wheel chair



EVM with
Braille



Sign
Language



Special
Volunteers



Transport
Facility



Voter
Helpline

NO VOTER
TO BE LEFT
BEHIND



Election Commission of India

<https://eci.gov.in/> | www.nvsp.in

Helpline 1950

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GET IT ON
Google Play



DOWNLOAD
PwD APP

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