

Indian Constitution at Work



Textbook in Political Science for Class XI



ELECTION AND REPRESENTATION

This chapter is divided
into two parts.

The chapter is based on
the new/ latest syllabus.



ELECTIONS AND DEMOCRACY

- There is necessity of representation in a large democracy. All citizens cannot take direct part in making every decision. Therefore, representatives are elected by the people. This is how elections become important.
- Elections have today become the most visible symbol of the democratic process.
- A direct democracy is one where the citizens directly participate in the day-to-day decision making and in the running of the government. The ancient city states in Greece were considered examples of direct democracy. But this kind of direct democracy cannot be practiced when a decision has to be taken by lakhs and crores of people.
- In such an arrangement citizens choose their representatives, who in turn are actively involved in governing and administering the country.
- The citizens have a limited role in taking major decisions and in running the administration.
- Citizens are involved only indirectly through their elected representatives. The method followed to choose these representatives is referred to as an election.



ELECTION SYSTEM IN INDIA



- The constitution of a democratic country lays down some basic rules about elections.
- The details are usually left to be worked out by laws passed by the legislatures.
- These basic rules are usually about: Who is eligible to vote? Who is eligible to contest? Who is to supervise elections? How do the voters choose their representatives? How are the votes to be counted and representatives elected?

There are different methods or the system of elections. In a democratic election, people vote and their preference decides who will win the contest. But there can be very different ways in which people make their choices and very different ways in which their preferences can be counted. Thus, different democracies have their own way of electing.

There are two types of election system:

Comparison of FPTP and PR System of Election

FPTP

- The country is divided into small geographical units called constituencies or districts.
- Every constituency elects one representative.
- Voter votes for a candidate.
- A party may get more seats than votes in the Legislature.
- Candidate who wins the election may not get majority (50%+1) votes
- Examples: U.K., India

PR

- Large geographical areas are demarcated as constituencies. The entire country may be a single constituency.
- More than one representative may be elected from one constituency.
- Voter votes for the party.
- Every party gets seats in the legislature in proportion to the percentage of votes that it gets.
- Candidate who wins the elections gets majority of votes
- Examples: Israel, Netherlands



HOW DOES PR WORK IN RAJYA SABHA ELECTIONS

The Constitution prescribes a third and complex variation of the PR system-The Single Transferable Vote system (STV) for the election of President, Vice President, and for the election to the Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Parishads.

The members are elected by the respective State legislative assemblies. The voters are the MLAs in that State. Every voter is required to rank candidates according to her or his preference. To be declared the winner, a candidate must secure a minimum quota of votes, which is determined by a formula:

$$\left\{ \frac{\text{Total votes polled}}{\text{Total number of candidates to be elected}+1} \right\} +1$$

WHY DID INDIA ADOPT THE FPTP SYSTEM



- The entire election system is extremely simple to understand even for common voters unlike PR system which is a complex one.
- The FPTP system offers voters a choice not simply between parties but specific candidates. In other electoral systems, especially PR systems, voters are often asked to choose a party and the representatives are elected on the basis of party lists.
- In Constituency based system like the FPTP, the voters know who their own representative is and can hold him or her accountable.
- PR system may not produce a clear majority because seats in the legislature would be divided on the basis of share of votes whereas FPTP system produces a clear majority.
- This system makes it possible for parliamentary government to function smoothly and effectively by facilitating the formation of a stable government.
- Finally, the FPTP system encourages voters from different social groups to come together to win an election in a locality. In a diverse country like India, a PR system would encourage each community to form its own nation-wide party.
- The FPTP system has proved to be simple and familiar to ordinary voters. It has helped larger parties to win clear majorities at the centre and the state level. The system has also discouraged political parties that get all their votes only from one caste or community.

RESERVATION OF CONSTITUENCIES



‘Separate Electorates’

During British Government for electing a representative from a particular community, only those voters would be eligible who belong to that community.

‘Reserved Constituencies’

All voters in a constituency are eligible to vote but the candidates must belong to only a particular community or social section for which the seat is reserved.



DELIMITATION COMMISSION

- The Delimitation Commission is appointed by the President of India
- It works in collaboration with the Election Commission of India.
- It is appointed for the purpose of drawing up the boundaries of constituencies all over the country.
- A quota of constituencies to be reserved in each state is fixed depending on the proportion of SC or ST in that state.
- It picks constituencies that have higher proportion of Scheduled Caste population. But it also spreads these constituencies in different regions of the state as Scheduled Caste population is generally spread evenly throughout the country.



FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

- ❖ **Universal Franchise and Right to Contest-** Every person above the age of maturity (18years and above in India) is entitled to vote in elections irrespective of caste, creed, colour, race, religion, language etc.
- ❖ It ensures participation of the people in the governance.
- ❖ All citizens have the right to stand for election and become the representative of the people. However, there are different minimum age requirements for contesting elections. For example, in order to stand for Lok Sabha or Assembly election, a candidate must be at least 25 years old.
- ❖ The person should not have undergone imprisonment for two or more years, should be citizen of India and should not be of unsound mind.



CHALLENGES TO FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

- Use of money and muscle power by the candidates has become dominant.
- Voters do not have much interest in elections.
- Misuse of public funds and facilities.
- Candidates less than the majority of votes become victorious.



ELECTION COMMISSION

- Article 324 of the Indian Constitution provides for an independent Election Commission for the 'superintendence, direction and control of the electoral roll and the conduct of elections' in India.
- To assist the Election Commission of India there is a Chief Electoral Officer in every state. The Election Commission is not responsible for the conduct of local body elections.
- The State Election Commissioners work independently of the Election Commission of India and each has its own sphere of operation.
- In 1993, the Commission became multi-member body: A Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners.
- The Chief Election Commissioner and two election Commissioners are appointed by the President of India on the advice of the Council of Ministers.
- They are appointed for a six year term or continue till the age of 65, whichever is earlier. The CEC can be removed before the expiry of the term, by the President if both houses of Parliament make such a recommendation with a special majority.



FUNCTIONS OF ELECTION COMMISSION

The Election Commission of India has a wide range of functions. They are:

- It supervises the preparation of up-to-date voters list.
- It also determines the timing of elections and prepares the election schedule.
- The Commission also implements a model code of conduct for parties and candidates to hold free and fair elections.
- The EC accords recognition to political parties and allot symbols to each of them.

ELECTORAL REFORMS


- Our system of elections should be changed from FPTP to some variant of the PR system.
- There should be stricter provisions to control the role of money in electoral politics.
- There should be complete ban on the use of caste and religious appeals in the campaign.
- There should be a law to regulate the functioning of political parties and to ensure that they function in a transparent and democratic manner
- There should be a special provision to ensure that at least one third women are elected to the parliament and assemblies.
- Candidates with any criminal case should be barred from contesting elections, even if their appeal is pending before a court.

Apart from legal reforms, there are two other ways of ensuring that elections reflect the expectations and democratic aspirations of the people. One is, of course, that people themselves have to be made more vigilant, more actively involved in political activities.

Various political institutions and voluntary organizations can be developed which are active in functioning as watchdog for ensuring free and fair elections.

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THANKS FOR WATCHING!

