

3. Election and Representation

Direct democracy

Direct democracy is the democratic process in which citizens are directly involved in the activities of government. The city-states of ancient Greece and the gram sabhas of the panchayath system in India are examples of direct democracy. Direct democracy is not practical in modern nations with large territories and huge populations.

Indirect democracy

In an indirect democracy, decisions are made and governed by the people's representatives. Adult voters of the country elect representatives through the electoral process.

Election System in India

First Past the Post System (FPTP System)

Representatives of the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assembly of India are elected through the FPTP system. The FPTP system is also known as **plurality system**.

Features of the FPTP system

- Country is divided into smaller constituencies.
- Every elects one representative.
- Voters votes for a candidate.
- A Party may get more seats than votes tin the legislature.
- Majority of votes is not needed to win the election.

Proportional Representation

The Rajya Sabha MPs, the President and the Vice President are elected through a system of proportional representation.

Single Transferable Vote system

Members of the Rajya Sabha are elected through a Single Transferable Vote system, a variant of the proportional representation system. To win the Rajya Sabha elections, each candidate must get a certain number of votes. Each voter must record his or her preference for the candidates on the ballot paper. If required number of representatives cannot be elected after the first preference votes have been counted, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated from the contest and the votes received by him are transferred to the second preferred candidate on those ballot papers. This process continues until a fixed number of delegates are elected.

Features of the Proportional Representation system

- Divides the country into a single constituency or a few large constituencies.
- More than one representative may be elected from one constituency.
- Voters votes for the party.
- Every party gets seats in the legislature in proportion to the percentage of votes that it gets.
- Candidates who wins the elections gets majority of votes.

Reasons for adopting FPTP system in India

1. The FPTP system is simple enough to be understood even by the common people of the country.
2. Voters cast their votes to the candidates. So that the personality of the candidate also can be analysed during election.
3. The FPTP system is consistent with parliamentary democracy as it ensures the stability of governments.
4. Different sections of the society work together to win the elections in FPTP system. It strengthen unity in the society.

Reservation of constituencies

The reservation in election is provided to ensure the representation of the backward sections of the Indian society in the Parliament and state legislative assemblies. During colonial period, British government had introduced 'separate electorates'.

In this system, members of a particular community was elected by the voters who belonged to that community. However, the framers of the Indian Constitution, who believed that this practice would lead to racial segregation, implemented the concept of reservation of constituencies in independent India. In the reserved constituencies, only a person belonging to a particular caste can be a candidate. But voters from all castes in that constituency vote in the election. At present, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are reserved in Parliament and in the State Legislative Assemblies.

Delimitation Commission

The Delimitation Commission is appointed by the President. The delimitation of constituencies and the determination of reserved constituencies are done by the Delimitation Commission. Constituencies with more Scheduled Tribes will be reserved for Scheduled Tribes. When deciding the Scheduled Caste constituencies, the Commission will take care to allot these constituencies in different parts of the State with higher proportion of Scheduled Caste population.

Free and Fair Elections

Universal Franchise

Adult suffrage refers to the right to vote for all adult citizens of a country. Until 1989, voting rights in India were restricted to those over 21 years of age. But the 61st Amendment to the Constitution lowered the age limit to 18 years. Universal suffrage is based on the ideas of equality and non-discrimination.

The Right to Contest

All citizens over a certain age have the right to contest elections. The age limit for contesting to Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies is 25 years and the age limit for the Rajya Sabha is 30 years.

Independent Election Commission

An Election Commission has been set up to conduct free and fair elections. Sukumar Sen was India's first Election Commissioner. The Election

Commission, which was a single member commission until 1989, is now a three-member committee.

Functions of the Election Commission

- Prepare and up-to-date voters' list.
- Determine the election schedule.
- Develop a model code of conduct.
- Postpone the election in case of emergency.
- Take necessary precautions in problematic areas.
- Cancel the election in a particular polling booth or constituency. -
- Order re – poll where irregularities have taken place during election time.
- Order recount if dispute arises.
- Accord recognition to political parties and allots symbols to political parties.

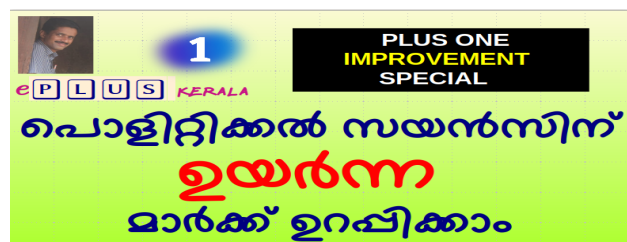
Electoral Reforms

India has one of the best electoral systems in the world. But the Indian electoral system is also not perfect. Below are some suggestions that can be taken to improve the Indian electoral system.

1. Change the electoral system in India to proportional representation.
2. Implement women reservation.
3. Strict provisions to control the role of money in elections.
4. Bar candidates with criminal background.
5. Complete ban on caste and religious appeals in the election campaigns.
6. Make laws to ensure the functioning of political parties is transparent and democratic. .

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