

# Role of Electoral Process in Indian Democracy



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## Abstract

Election is the backbone of democracy wherein people elect their political representatives and choose the composition of the government. Elections are a component of the electoral system, which embraces 'all those means whereby a person becomes a member of an elected assembly'. Holding fair and free elections on a state and national level is basic to upholding the principles of democratic set up in India. Elections enable every adult resident of the country to participate in the procedure of government formation. A free and fair election is a keystone of democracy. In India electronic voting machines (EVMs) were introduced with the purpose of reducing incidents of rigging and electoral fraud. Thus, free and fair elections are indispensable for the achievement of democracy. Free and Fair Election is a mandate given by our structure for a Parliamentary Democracy. India is the largest democracy in the world but we think that due to certain reasons, Democracy is not working properly. Elections in India, the world's second-most populous country after China, evoke descriptions like 'carnival' or 'spectacle' in part due to the overwhelming numbers that contribute in the process. Electoral candidates vie for votes by promising reforms, such as superior governance, greater socioeconomic fair play, and bolstered efforts at poverty alleviation. The word 'Democracy' coined in the preface can be realized if we have the content of fair, free and effective election process in our Indian system. Fair elections to the different legislative bodies in India can be guaranteeing the increase of a democratic polity.

**Keywords:** Elections, Democracy, Voting Technology, Political Responsiveness.

## Introduction

In democracy the public is most powerful entity. If the public do not make your choice in favour of dishonest, criminals and corrupt politicians who wish to pay for their votes by money or muscle powers, everything shall function nicely and the democracy will shine in the shady spectrum of hitherto corrupt and criminalised Indian political system. India is by far the largest democracy in the world with more than 800 million voters, and the conduct affair, free and fast elections is a very challenging and a daunting task. India has the distinction of being the biggest democracy of the world. The mass of Indian elections is overwhelming. Election is a compound exercise. It involves schedules rules and machinery. In Indian voting procedure, as also about their scrutiny, filing of nominations and the campaigns carried out by the parties and the candidates before real polling. It is a procedure in which the aspiring decision-maker is fully involved, with greater or lesser intensity over time.

Election is the most essential exercise of the people in a democracy and it is the responsibility of the Commission, the Government, political parties and the electorate to make the procedure a success. Elections are the most important and essential part of politics in a democratic system of governance. While politics is the skill and practice of dealing with political power, election is a procedure of legitimization of such power. Democracy can indeed purpose only upon this trust that elections are free and fair and not rigged and manipulated, that they are effective instruments of ascertaining popular will both in form and in reality and are not mere rituals calculated to generate illusion of difference to mass belief, it cannot live without fair and free elections. Since 1951-52, sixteen General Elections have been held to the Lok Sabha (LS) and more than 350 General Elections to the Vidhan Sabhas (VS) and the country is at the moment fully geared for the 17th country wide general elections to Lok Sabha (LS).

**Review of Literature**

The election at the present time are not being hold in ideal conditions because of the enormous amount of money required to be used up and huge muscle power needed for winning the elections. Whether and to what point they are conducted with integrity is the crux of the problem when evaluating the overall process of any election (Norris 2004). Because elections are widely held even by regimes that contain democracy and control their outcomes—sometimes referred to as 'competitive authoritarian regimes' (Levitsky and Way 2010). North (1990) defined institutions as rules of games or manmade constraints that shape social, economic and political interaction. Another closely related paper that studies the impact of electoral process on economic outcomes is by Ferraz and Finan (2011). In light of this argument the beginning of EVMs is a change in the existing political institutions that increases cost of electoral frauds legitimizing political power and men power.

**Election Commission of India**

In Indian constitution, article 324 provides for the setting up of Election Commission as an independent constitutional authority is ECI. Election Commission (EC) was formally constituted on January 25th, 1950, a day before India became a Sovereign Democratic Republic. The First Chief Election Commissioner, Shri Sukumar Sen, was appointed on March 21st, 1950. The Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners are given the equal salary and allowances as of a Judge of the Supreme Court. It is responsible for conducting elections to both the Houses of Parliament and State Legislatures and for the offices of President and Vice-President. Besides, it is also responsible for the groundwork revision, updating and maintenance of lists of voters. It delimits constituencies for election to the Parliament and the State Legislatures, fixes the election plan and settles election disputes. It performs many erstwhile functions related to elections. The primary function of the Election Commission is to conduct fair and free elections in India. The Constitution of India provides for an Election Commission of India which is accountable for superintendence direction and control of all elections.

**Electoral Process**

Elections in India are conducted according to the process laid down by law. Elections are a part of the electoral structure. Section 14 of the R.P. Act 1951 says that a general election shall be held for constituting a new Lok Sabha (LS) and State Legislative Assemblies on the ending of its duration or on its dissolution.

The following process is observed:

1. Notification for Election.
2. Filing of Nomination.
3. Security Deposit.
4. Scrutiny and Withdrawal.
5. Election Campaign.
6. Model Code of Conduct.
7. Scrutiny of Expenses.
8. Polling, Counting and Declaration of Result.

The procedure of election officially begins when on the recommendation of Election Commission (EC), the President in case of Lok Sabha (LS) and the Governor in case of State Assembly issue announcement for the election. A person who intends to challenge an election is required to file the nomination paper in a prescribed form indicating his name, age, postal address and serial number in the electoral rolls. Every candidate has to take an oath or make affirmation. These papers are then submitted to the Returning Officer (RO) designated by the Election Commission. Every candidate has to make a safety deposit at the time of filing nomination. The security deposit is forfeited if the candidate fails to get at least 1/6 of the total valid votes polled. All nomination papers received by the Returning Officer are scrutinised on the day fixed by the Election Commission. Campaigning is the procedure by which a candidate tries to convince the voters to vote for him rather than others. The total free time is fixed by the Election Commission which is allotted to all the Indian political parties. Campaigning stops 48 hours before the day of polling. A number of operation techniques are involved in the election process. During the campaign period the political parties and the contesting candidates are expected to abide by a model code of conduct evolved by the Election Commission of India (ECI) on the basis of the consensus among Indian political parties. Though the Election Commission provides free right of entry for a limited time to all the recognised National and State parties for their campaign, this does not mean that political parties do not expend anything on their elections campaign. Every candidate is required to file an explanation of his election expenses within 45 days of declaration of results. In order to conduct polling, a large number of polling booths are set up in each constituency. Each booth is placed under the charge of a Presiding Officer (PO) with the Polling Officers to help the process. After the polling is over, ballot boxes are sealed in the being there of agents of the candidates.

**Electronic Voting Machines in India**

The Election Commission (EC) has started using tamper evidence electronic voting machines (EVM) to ensure free and fair elections. Each machine has the names and symbols of the candidates in a constituency. Introduction of the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) in India was part of Election Commission of India's (ECI) objective to reinforce the democratic electoral process. The ECI used the voting machines for the first time, as an experimental measure, in the 1982 Parur Assembly (Kerala) poll in the state of Kerala. The machine is simple to operate, and with this the use of ballot paper and ballot boxes is done away with. When the machine is used, the counting of votes becomes more suitable and faster. In 2004 General Elections EVMs were used all over the country for Lok Sabha elections. The sealed ballot boxes or EVMs are shifted in rigid security to the counting centre. Counting takes place under the supervision of the Returning Officer (RO) and in the presence of candidates and their agents.

**Electoral Process and Indian Democracy**

India has the feature of being the largest democracy of the world. Elections are the most imperative and integral part of politics in a democratic system of governance. The size of Indian elections is overwhelming. The people choose who will represent them in parliament, and who will head the government at the national and local levels. They do so by choosing between competing parties in free, regular and fair elections. In a democracy it is extremely imperative to conduct free and fair elections to establish the legitimacy of political leaders. Government is based on the consent of the governed. In a democracy, the people are sovereign—they are the maximum form of political authority. In particular its objective was to minimize incidences of human error, reduce instances of rigging and manipulation, prevent abuse of government power in polls.

The people choose who will represent them in parliament, and who will head the government at the national and local levels. They do so by choosing between competing parties in regular, free and fair elections. Government is based on the permission of the governed. While politics is the art and practice of dealing with political power, election is a procedure of legitimization of such power. Democracy can indeed function only upon this trust that elections are free and fair and not rigged and manipulated, that they are effective instruments of ascertaining the will both in reality and in form and are not mere rituals calculated to generate illusion of difference to mass view, it cannot survive without free and fair elections. In a democracy, the people are sovereign—they are the highest form of political authority. Power flows from the public to the leaders of government, who hold power only temporarily. The election at present are not being held in ideal conditions because of the enormous amount of money required to be used up and large muscle power needed for winning the elections. The ideal conditions require that an honest, and upright person who is public spirited and wants to provide the people, should be able to contest and get elected as people's representatives. However, in fact, such a human being as previously mentioned has no chance of either contesting or in any case winning the election.

**Issues in Electoral Politics of India**

Free and fair Election process is a base of healthy democracy. The major defects which come in the pathway of electoral system in India are:

1. Money Power.
2. Criminalization of Politics.
3. Misuse of Government Machinery.
4. Muscle Power.
5. Booth capturing.
6. Independent candidates.
7. Poll violence.

Maintaining the sanctity of electoral procedure requires a multi-pronged approach, including removing illegal elements and moneybags in politics, disposing poll petitions, introducing internal democracy and financial transparency in the functioning of the political parties. Sanctity and clarity

of Elections must be protected at any cost, as the future of India depends on it.

**Conclusion**

India being a diverse and biggest democracy in the world there are lessons to be learned by policy makers from the successful implementation of electoral reforms for similar countries. In democracy the public is the most powerful body. Elections to elect members of the Lok Sabha (LS), Rajya Sabha (RS), State Legislative Assemblies (Vidhan Sabhas) Legislative Councils (Vidhan Parishad) and of President and Vice-President of India. The people decide who will represent them in parliament, and who will head the government at the national and local levels. Elections are also held for local bodies such as municipalities, municipal corporations and Panchayati Raj institutions. Election is a composite exercise. These elections are held on the foundation of universal adult franchise, which means all Indians of 18 years of age and above have the right to vote, irrespective of their caste, colour, religion, sex or place of birth. The Democratic future of India depends upon the political environment, and to protect it free and fair election process is inevitable.

Election is a soul of Democracy. It is a procedure in which the aspiring decision-maker is fully involved, with greater or lesser intensity over time. Election is the most imperative exercise of the people in a democracy and it is the responsibility of the Government, the Commission, political parties and the electorate to make the procedure a success. Weak electoral system is a biggest danger not only to the national integration but also to the Democratic Consolidation of India.

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