

WHY DO WE NEED ELECTIONS

to choose representatives.	CHOICES OF THE PEOPLE:
to find out if people like their representatives.	1. who will make laws for them
to make representatives rule as per wishes of the people	2. party whose policies will guide the government and law making.
	3. who will form the government and take major decisions.

WHY RULE OF THE PEOPLE IS NOT POSSIBLE

people cant sit together everyday, take decisions and have the time and knowledge for all matters.

note

people can choose their representatives at regular intervals and change them if they wish to do so, this is called an election.

VOTERS LIST

In a democratic election, the list of those who are eligible to vote and who are not is prepared much before the election and given to everyone. This list is officially called the Electoral Roll and is commonly known as the voter's list.

All citizens aged 18 years and above can vote in an election. Every citizen has the right to vote, regardless of his or her caste, religion or gender. Some criminals with unsound mind can be denied the right to vote in rare situations.

EPIC (election, photo identity card) are cards issued by the government to everyone on the voters list so that on one can vote for them.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Free and open discussion about who is a better representative, which party will make a better government or what is a good policy is discussed during an election campaign.

campaigns are held for 2 week long periods between the announcement of the final list of candidates and the date of polling.

During this period the candidates contact their voters, political leaders address election meetings and political parties mobilise their supporters. This is also a period when TV and newspapers are full of election related stories and debates.

During campaigns, political parties try to focus public attention on some big issues.

ELECTION LAW:

- ~ cannot bribe or threaten voters.
- ~ cannot appeal to them in the name of caste or religion.
- ~ use government resources for election campaign.

~ spend more than 25 lakh in a constituency for lok sabha elections or 10 lakh in an assembly election.

MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT

- ~ cannot use any place of worship for election propaganda.
- ~ use government vehicles, aircrafts and officials for elections.
- ~ once elections are announced ministers cannot lay foundation stones of any projects, take any big policy decision or make any promises of providing public facilities.

HOW ARE ELECTIONS DEMOCRATIC

- ~ free and fair
- ~ one vote one value
- ~ real choice of parties
- ~ regular intervals
- ~ candidates can contest elections
- ~ candidate preferred by people should get elected.

IS IT GOOD TO HAVE POLITICAL COMPETITION

MERITS

1. If they fail to keep their promises/satisfy voters, they will lose votes.
2. competition allows leaders to get rewarded.
3. political comp. motivates parties to do better and keep each other in check.
4. regular electoral election allows parties to bring out issues that people want to be brought out so their popularity and chances of victory increases.

DEMERITS

1. disunity, factionalism.
2. to beat other parties, some parties use dirty tricks such as bribery.
3. competition could hinder/stall long term policies by pressure.
4. good people do not bring dragged into unhealthy competition.

at the constituency level, competition takes the form of competitions between several candidates.



NOMINATION OF CANDIDATES

There are no restrictions on anyone to contest an election.

Anyone who can be a voter can become a candidate in elections.

Minimum age to be a candidate is 25yrs.

There are restrictions on criminals but those apply in very extreme cases.

Parties nominate their candidates who get the party symbol and support. Parties nomination is often called party ticket.

Every person who wishes to contest elections has to fill a nomination form and give some money as a security deposit.

Every candidate has to make legal declaration and give full details of criminal cases, details of assets and liabilities, educational qualifications of the candidate.

POLLING

The final stage of an election is the day when the voters cast or 'poll' their vote. That day is usually called the election day.

Once the voter goes inside the booth, the election officials identify her, put a mark on her finger and allow her to cast her vote. An agent of each candidate is allowed to sit inside the polling booth and ensure that the voting takes place in a fair way.

Nowadays electronic voting machines (EVM) are used to record votes. The machine shows the names of the candidates and the party symbols.

All that the voter has to do is to press the button against the name of the candidate she wants to give her vote.

-----COUNTING-----

POLLING (cont)

Once the polling is over, all the EVMs are sealed and taken to a secure place. On a fixed date, all the EVMs from a constituency are opened and the votes secured by each candidate are counted.

The agents of all candidates are present there to ensure that the counting is done properly.

The candidate who secures the highest number of votes from a constituency is declared elected.

acceptance of election outcome

Outcome of indian elections speaks for itself.

1. the ruling party routinely lose elections at both national and state level.

2. In the US, sitting elected representative rarely loses an election. In India about half of MLA and MPs lose elections.

3. Candidates who are known to have spent a lot of money on 'buying votes' and those with known criminal connections often lose elections.

4. The electoral outcomes are usually accepted as 'people's verdict' by the defeated party.

SYSTEM OF ELECTIONS

Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections are held regularly after every five years.

elections are held in all the constituencies at the same time, either within a few days or on the same day. This is called a **general election**.

Sometimes election is held for only one constituency because of a vacancy, caused by death or resignation of a member. This is called a **by-election**.

In our country we follow an area based system of representation.

the country is divided into different areas for purposes of elections.

SYSTEM OF ELECTIONS (cont)

These areas of are electoral constituencies.

The representative elected from each constituency is called a member of parliament or MP.

Each constituency has equally rough amount of population because every vote has one value.

Each state is divided into a specific number of assembly constituencies and the elected representative from these is called a member of legislative assembly or an MLA.

Each village or town is divided into several ward that are like constituencies.

RESERVED CONSTITUENCIES

Certain weaker sections may not stand a good chance to get elected in the Lok Sabha or the state legislative assemblies because they may not have the required resources, education and contacts to contest and win elections against those who are influential, powerful and resourceful.

If that happens then the parliament will lose a voice of a significant section of our population because india is very diverse.

Therefore the constitution thought of a special system of reserved constituencies for the weaker sections.

Some constituencies are reserved for scheduled castes(84 seats in lok sabha) and scheduled tribes(47 seats in lok sabha).

In many states, seats in rural and urban local bodies are now reserved for other backward classes(OBC).

1/3rd of seats are reserved in rural and urban local bodies for woman candidates.



What makes indian elections democratic?

independent election commission:

1. Declaration of poll results
2. Location of the polling and counting stations
3. Security arrangements in and around of polling stations
4. Implementing and overseeing Model Code of Conduct
5. Maintenance and security of EVMs
6. Recognises the national, state and regional status of political parties

Popular participation

Another way to check the quality of the election process is to see whether people participate in it with enthusiasm.

If the election process is not free and fair then people will not continue to participate in the elections.

1. people's participation is usually measured by voter turnout figures.(turnout indicates the per cent of eligible voters who actually cast their vote)
2. In india the poor, illeterate and underprivileged people vote in larger proportion as compared to the rich and privileged sections.
3. Common people in India attach a lot of importance to elections because they feel that through elections they can bring pressure on political parties to adopt policies and programmes favourable to them. They also feel that their vote matters.
4. The interest of voters in election-related activities has been increasing during the years.

challenges of free and fair elections.

1. Candidates and parties with a lot of money may not be sure of their victory but they do enjoy a big and unfair advantage over smaller parties and independants.
2. Candidates with criminal connections have been able to push others out of the electoral race and to secure a 'ticket' from major parties.
3. some families tend to dominate political parties; tickets are distributed to relatives from these families.
4. very often elections offer little choice to ordinary citizens, for both the major parties are quite similar to eachother both in policies and practice.
5. Smaller parties and independent candidates suffer a huge disadvantage compared to bigger parties.

