



In a democracy, people do not govern directly. They govern through the elected representatives. Electoral politics is all about understanding election of representatives, need of elections and how to make election democratic. It also involves examining the role of the election commission in ensuring free and fair elections.

**Elections:** The mechanism or procedure by which people choose their representatives at regular intervals is called election. If people are not satisfied with the working of the government then they can change the government in the next term of elections.

**Procedure of Elections:** The procedure of election can be understood by the real example of Haryana Assembly elections. It will show how candidates standing in election become representatives and how power can be removed from their hands.

**Assembly Election in Haryana:**

- **Formation of New Party 'Lok Dal':** Haryana had been ruled by Congress party since 1982. At that time, Chaudhary Devi Lal was an opposition leader. He led movement called Nyaya Yudh (struggle for justice) and formed new party 'Lok Dal'.
- **Election Campaign of Devi Lal:** In election campaign of 1987 Assembly election, Devi Lal promised voters that if his party win, he would give loans to farmers and businessmen.
- **Voters' favoured Lok Dal:** As people were unhappy with existing government. Attracted by Devi Lal's promise. They voted in favour of Lok Dal and its partners won 76 out of 90 seats.
- **Results Announced Lok Dal won 60 seats** that's why it had clear majority in the Assembly. The party with the clear majority is invited by the governor to form the government. Congress got only 5 seats. As the election result was announced, existing Chief Minister of Congress resigned
- **Devi Lal became Chief Minister:** The newly elected Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) of Lok Dal chose Devi Lal as their leader. The Governor invited Devi Lal to be the new Chief Minister. After three days of election result, he took oath. Then his government issued a government order to give loans to small farmers, agricultural labourers and small businessmen.
- **Congress again forms Government** Lok Dal ruled the state for 4 years. In 1991 election, party did not win people's support. This time congress won the election and formed the government.

**Need of Elections:** Elections are needed to elect representatives. In the absence of election, all the people have to sit together everyday and take all the decisions. But this is not possible in any large community. Nor it is possible for everyone to have the time and knowledge to take decisions on all matters. Therefore, in most democracies, people rule through their representatives. The elections are needed for any representative democracy because

- They solve problem of assessing people on the basis of education, knowledge or experience.
- They help in analysing that the people like their representatives or not.





- They ensure that the representatives rule as per the wishes of the people and make sure that those who are not working for the people do not remain their representatives.

In an election, the voters make many choices like

- They can choose who will make laws for them.
- They can choose who will form the government and take major decisions.
- They can choose the party whose policies will guide the government and law making.

**What Makes an Election Democratic:** Elections are held in all democratic countries and also in most of non-democratic countries in many ways. But there is a simple list of the minimum conditions which make an election democratic like

1. Everyone should have the right to choose representative. It means everyone has one vote and every vote has equal value.
2. Political parties and candidates should be free to contest elections and offer some real choices to the voters.
3. The choices should be offered at regular intervals. For that elections must be held regularly after a certain period.
4. The candidates preferred by the people only, should get elected.
5. Elections are conducted in a free and fair manner where people choose those representatives whom they really wish.

**Political Competition:** Elections are all about competition. Without competition, elections would become meaningless. Political competition takes place when different political parties compete to gain the confidence and ultimately the vote of the voters. They make promises and give incentives to motivate the voters. This electoral competition has many demerits like

1. It creates a sense of disunity and factionalism (Groupism) and party-politics in every locality.
2. Different political parties and candidates often use dirty tricks like booth capturing to win elections.
3. The pressure to win electoral fights does not allow to form useful long term policies.
4. The competition leads to the idea of being dragged into unhealthy competition. That's why good people do not enter and participate in the political competition.

The electoral competition also has some merits like

1. Regular electoral competition provides incentives to political parties and leaders. If they can satisfy the voters with their work, they will be able to win again.
2. If a political party is motivated only by desire to be in power, even then it will be forced to serve the people.
3. It reveals the real motive of political parties.
4. It gives choices to voters to choose among the best.

**System of elections in India:** In India, Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha (Assembly) elections are held regularly after every five years. After five years, the term of all the elected representatives comes to an end. Elections are held in all constituencies at the same time, either on the same day or within a few days. This is known as General Election. Sometimes election is held only for one constituency





to fill the vacancy caused by death or resignation of a member. This is known as by-election.

**Electoral Constituencies:** In India, an area based system of representation is followed where the country is divided into different areas for purpose of elections. These are called Electoral Constituencies. Every voter who lives in an area elect one representative. For Lok Sabha election, India is divided into 543 constituencies. The representative elected from each constituency is called Member of Parliament or an MP. One of the features of a democratic election is that every vote has equal value. For Vidhan Sabha election, each state is divided into a specific number of assembly constituencies and the elected representative of each assembly constituency is called the Member of Legislative Assembly or an MLA. Each parliamentary constituency has within it several assembly constituencies. The same principle applies for Panchayat and Municipal elections. Each village or town is divided into different wards that are like constituencies. Each ward elects one member of the village or the Urban local body. Sometimes these constituencies are counted as 'seats' and each constituency represents one seat in the assembly.

**Reserved Constituencies:** The Constitution makers were worried that in an open electoral competition, certain weaker section may not stand a good chance to get elected to the Lok Sabha and the state Legislative Assemblies. If that happens, our Parliament and Assemblies would be deprived of the voice of a significant section of our population. That would make our democracy less representative and less democratic.

**Reservation for SC and ST:** The makers of our Constitution thought of a special system of reserved constituencies for the weaker sections. Some constituencies are reserved for people who belong to the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). In a SC reserved constituency, only someone who belongs to the Scheduled Castes can stand for election. Similarly, only those belonging to the Scheduled Tribes can contest an election from a constituency reserved for ST.

**Reservation in Lok Sabha/ District/Local Level:** A few seats in Lok Sabha are reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). This number is in proportion to their share in the total population. In the year 2012, 84 seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes and 47 for the Scheduled Tribes (in Lok Sabha). Thus, the reserved seats for SC and ST do not take away the legitimate share of any other social group. This system of reservation was extended later to other weaker sections at the district and local level. In many states, seats in rural (Panchayat) and urban (municipalities and corporations) local bodies are now reserved for Other Backward Classes (OBC) as well. However, the proportion of seats reserved varies from state to state. Similarly, one-third of the seats are reserved in rural and urban local bodies for women candidates.

**Voters' list:** When the constituencies are decided, the next step is to decide who can and who cannot vote. In a democratic election, the list of those who are eligible to vote is prepared much before the election and given to everyone. This list is officially called the Electoral Roll and is commonly known as the Voters' List. This is an important step as it is linked to the first condition of a democratic election i.e. everyone should get an equal opportunity to choose representatives. All the citizens are human beings with their own needs and views, That is why all

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of them deserve to have an equal say in decisions that affect them. Therefore everyone is given the right to vote. The right to vote, falls under Universal Adult Franchise. It means all the citizens aged 18 years and above can vote in an election regardless of his or her caste, religion or gender.

**Maintaining of Voters' List:** It is the responsibility of the government to get the names of all the eligible voters put on the voters' list. As new persons attain voting age, names are added to the voters' list, names of those who move out of a place or those who are dead are deleted. A complete revision of the list takes place every five years. This is done to ensure that it remains up to date. **Note:** Some criminals and persons with unsound mind can be denied the right to vote, but only in rare situations.

