

Hand Out :3

Class 9

Civics

Chapter 3 - Electoral Politics

What Makes Election in India Democratic?

1) Independent Election Commission

In India, elections are conducted by the Election Commission (EC).

The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) is appointed by the President of India.

Election Commission is independent and has a wide-range of powers which are:

1. EC takes decisions on every aspect of conduct and control of elections from the announcement of elections to the declaration of results.
2. It implements the Code of Conduct and punishes any candidate or party that violates it.
3. During the election period, the EC can order the government to follow some guidelines, to prevent the use and misuse of governmental power to enhance its chances to win elections, or to transfer some government officials.
4. When on election duty, government officers work under the control of the EC and not the government.

2) Popular Participation

The quality of the election process can also be checked by seeing the participation of people.

People's participation in the election is measured by voter **turnout figures**.

Turnout indicates the per cent of eligible voters who actually cast their vote.

1. In India, the poor, illiterate and underprivileged people vote in larger proportion as compared to the rich and privileged sections.
2. Common people in India feel that through elections they can bring pressure on political parties to adopt policies and programmes favourable to them.
3. The interest of voters in election related activities has been increasing over the years.

3) Acceptance of Election Outcome

One final test of the free and fairness of the election is the outcome of the election.

1. The ruling parties routinely lose elections in India both at the national and state level.
2. In the US, an incumbent or 'sitting' elected representative rarely loses an election.

In India, about half of the sitting MPs or MLAs 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. Barring very few disputed elections, the electoral outcomes are usually accepted as 'people's verdict' by the defeated party.

Challenges to Free and Fair Elections

Elections in India are basically free and fair. Sometimes this may not be true for every constituency.

There are many limitations and challenges to Indian elections. These include:

1. Candidates and parties with a lot of money enjoy a big and unfair advantage over smaller parties.
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. Tickets are distributed to relatives from their families.
4. Elections offer little choice to ordinary citizens as major parties are quite similar to each other, both in policies and practice.
5. Smaller parties and independent candidates suffer a huge disadvantage compared to bigger parties.
