

UNIT 2

Election, Political Parties and Pressure Groups

Learning Objectives

- Know about the electoral system in India.
- Know the different types of elections in India.
- Understands the meaning of political party.
- Know the functions of state party and national party.
- Understand the pressure groups in India.



Introduction

An election is a formal decision-making process by which a people chooses an individual to hold public office by voting.

2.1 Electoral System in India

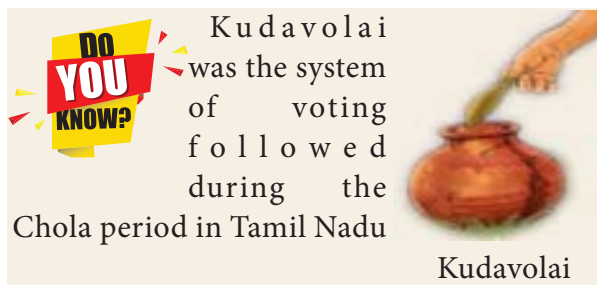
The electoral system in India has been adapted from the system followed in the United Kingdom. India is a socialist, secular, democratic republic and the largest democracy in the world. The modern India the constitution of India came into force on 26th January, 1950

Articles 324 to 329 in part XV of the Constitution make the following provisions with regard to the electoral system in our country.

- Article 324 of the Indian Constitution provides for an independent Election Commission in order to ensure free and fair elections in the country. At present, the commission consists of a Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners.
- The Parliament may make provision with respect to all matters relating to elections to the Parliament including

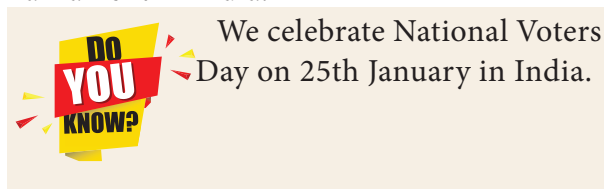
the preparation of electoral rolls, the delimitation of constituencies and all other matters necessary for securing their due constitution.

- The state legislatures can also make provisions with respect to all matters relating to elections to the state legislatures including the preparation of electoral rolls and all other matters necessary for securing their due constitution.



2.1.1 Election Process

At the national level, the head of government, the Prime Minister, is elected by members of the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Parliament in India.



In representative democracy like ours, elections are extremely important. Voting in elections are the best way to make your 'voice' heard.

2.1.2 Introduction of the NOTA Option

If the people in a democratic country are not willing to elect any candidate, they can vote for the option called NOTA (None Of The Above). Rule 49-O in the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, of India describes this procedure.



Voters Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)



Voters Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) is the way forward to enhance credibility and transparency of the election process. This system was first introduced in the 2014 General Election.



NOTA was first introduced in the General Elections held in 2014. India is the 14th country in the world to introduce NOTA.



Symbol used with NOTA option on electronic voting machines in India

2.1.3 Types of Elections in India

Elections are classified into two types: direct and indirect elections.

Direct Elections

People directly vote for the candidates in the fray and elect their representatives. The following are examples of direct elections in which people over the age of 18 years participate in the electoral process by casting their votes.

- (i) Lok Sabha elections, in which the Members of Parliament are elected.
- (ii) Elections to the state Legislative Assemblies, in which the Members of Legislative Assemblies are elected.
- (iii) Elections to the local governing bodies, i.e. such as village panchayat, town panchayat, municipalities, municipal corporation are conducted by the state election commission.

Merits

- (i) As the voters elect their representatives directly, direct elections are considered to be a more democratic method of election.



- (ii) It educates people regarding the government activities and helps in choosing the appropriate candidates. Also, it encourages people to play an active role in politics.
- (iii) It empowers people and makes the rulers accountable for their actions.

Demerits

- (i) Direct elections are very expensive.
- (ii) Illiterate voters sometimes get misguided by false propaganda and sometimes campaigning based on caste, religious and various other sectarian consideration pose serious challenges.

- (iii) Since conducting direct elections is a massive exercise, ensuring free and fair elections at every polling station is a major challenge to the Election Commission.
- (iv) There are instances of some political candidates influencing the voters through payments in the form of cash, goods or services.
- (v) Election campaigns sometimes results in violence, tension, law and order problems and affects the day-to-day life of people.

Indirect Elections

Voters elect their representatives, who, in turn, elect their representatives this method of election is followed for the election of president of India.

Merits

- (i) Indirect elections are less expensive.
- (ii) It is more suited to elections in large countries.

Demerits

- (i) If the number of voters is very small, there exists the possibility of corruption, bribery, horse trading and other unfair activities.
- (ii) It is less democratic because people do not have a direct opportunity to elect, but they instead do it through their representatives. So, this may not reflect the true will of the people.

2.2 Political Parties

Political parties are an essential part of democracy. Parties are the link between government and the people.

2.2.1 Meaning of Political Party

A political party is an organisation formed by a group of people with a certain ideology and agenda to contest elections and hold power in the government. A political party has three components: a leader, active members and the followers.



How is the President of India elected?

The President of India is elected by the members of an electoral college consisting of

1. The elected members of both Houses of Parliament
2. The elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of all the states and Union territories in India

NOTE: The members nominated to either House of Parliament or the Legislative Assemblies of states are not eligible to be included in the electoral college.

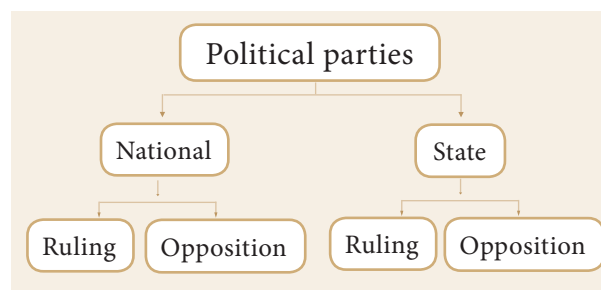
2.2.2 Types of a Party System

There are three types of party system in the world namely.

- i. Single-party system in which one ruling party exists and no opposition is permitted. China, Cuba, the former USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) are the examples for the single-party system.
- ii. Two-party system in which only two major parties exist, for example, USA, UK.
- iii. Multi-party system in which there are more than two political parties, for example, India, Sri Lanka, France and Italy.

2.2.3 Types of Political Parties

Political parties in India are classified according to their area of influence into two main types: (1) national and (2) state parties.



National Parties

A party which is recognised as a state party in at least four states is recognised as a national party. Every party in the country has to register with the Election Commission while the Commission treats all the parties equally. It offers some special facilities to state and national parties. These parties are given a unique symbol. Only the official candidate of the party can use that election symbol. In 2017, there were seven recognised national parties.

State Parties

Other than the seven national parties, most of the major parties of the country are classified by the Election Commission as 'state parties'. These are commonly referred to as regional parties. A party is recognised as a state party by the Election Commission of India based on certain percentage of votes secured or a certain number of seats won in the Assembly or Lok Sabha elections.

Recognition to the Parties

For getting recognition as 'national party', a party has to fulfill any one of the following criteria:

- i. At least 6% votes in at least four states and members to the Lok Sabha.
- ii. In the election of Lok Sabha, at least 2% members from at least three states are elected to Lok Sabha.
- iii. Recognition as a state party at least four states.

Functions of Political Parties

- Parties contest elections. In most democracies, elections are fought mainly among the candidates put up by political parties.
- Parties put forward their policies and programmes before the electorate to consider and choose.
- Parties play a decisive role in making laws for a country. Formally, laws are debated and passed in the legislature.

- Parties form and run the governments.
- Those parties that lose in the elections play the role of the Opposition to the party or a group of coalition parties in power, by voicing different views and criticising the government for its failures or wrong policies.
- Parties shape public opinion. They raise and highlight issues of importance.
- Parties function as the useful link between people and the government machinery.

2.2.4 Role of Opposition Parties in a Democracy

In a democracy, there may be a two-party system like in the USA or a multi-party system like in India and France. The ruling party may have received the mandate of the majority people and the Opposition party represented the remaining people. The Leader of the Opposition party occupied a prominent place in all democratic forms of the government. He enjoys the rank of a Cabinet Minister. He opposes the wrong policies of the ruling party, which affects the general public. As the Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee questions the functioning of the government departments and examines the public money used for the well-being of the people. Similarly, he plays an important role to select the Chairman and members of the Central Vigilance Commission, Chairperson and members of the Information Commission. The Opposition Parties reflect genuine demands and concern of the people to play a constructive role in a democracy.

2.3 Pressure Groups

The term 'pressure group' originated in the USA. A pressure group is a group of people who are organised actively for promoting and defending their common interest. It is so called as it attempts to bring a change in the public policy by exerting pressure on the government.

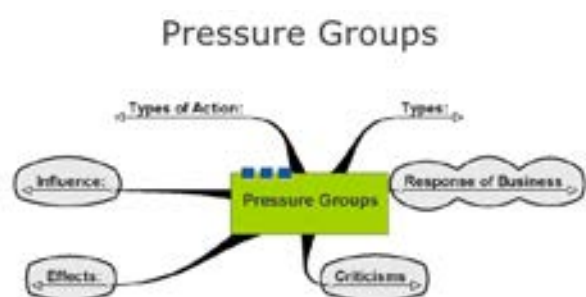
The pressure groups are also called 'interest groups' or vested groups. They are different from

the political parties in that they neither contest elections nor try to capture political power.



2.3.1 Pressure Groups in India

A large number of pressure groups exist in India. But, they are not developed to the same extent as in the USA or the Western countries like Britain, France, Germany and so on.



The pressure groups in India can be broadly classified into the following categories:

1. Business groups
2. Trade unions
3. Agrarian groups
4. Professional associations
5. Student organisations
6. Religious organisations
7. Tribal organisations
8. Linguistic groups
9. Ideology-based groups
10. Environmental protection groups



Functions of Pressure Groups in India

Pressure groups are the interest groups that work to secure certain interest by influencing the public policy. They are non-aligned with any political party and work as an indirect

yet powerful group to influence the policy decisions. Pressure groups carry out a range of functions including representation, political participation, education, policy formulation and policy implementation.

Examples for Pressure Groups

1. Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)
2. All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC)
3. All India Kisan Sabha
4. Indian Medical Association (IMA)
5. All India Students Federation (AISF)
6. All India Sikh Students Federation
7. Young Badaga Association
8. Tamil Sangam
9. Tamil Nadu Vivasayigal Sangam
10. Narmada Bachao Andolan

Political Participation

Pressure groups can be called the informal face of politics. They exert influence precisely by mobilising popular support through activities such as petitions, marches, demonstrations and other forms of political protest. Such forms of political participation have been particularly attractive to young people.

Education

Many pressure groups devote significant resources by carrying out research, maintaining websites, commenting on government policy and using high-profile academics, scientists and even celebrities to get their views across, with an emphasis to cultivate expert authority.

Policy Formulation

Though the pressure groups themselves are not policy-makers, yet it does not prevent many of them from participating in the policy-making process. Many pressure groups are vital sources of information

and render advice to the government and therefore they are regularly consulted in the process of policy formulation.

2.4 Mobilisation and People's Participation

2.4.1 Mobilisation

Mobilising people towards socially productive activities that lead to the overall betterment of people's lives is essential. Sometimes earthquakes, tsunami, floods and other such natural disasters on a massive scale occur and people's immediate mobilisation for evacuation and emergency relief becomes most essential.

2.4.2 Democratic Participation

Democracy can succeed only when smaller local groups and, in fact, every citizen can take action that supports the tax and revenue collection systems, observance of national norms in environmental protection, cleanliness, health and hygiene, sanitary drives and immunisation programmes like pulse polio.

However, we must keep in mind that there is no better form of government than Democratic government. To create a better society and nation, the people of India along with the union and state governments should come together to fight against the miseries of human life.

Recap

- The Prime Minister is elected by members of the Lok Sabha.
- There are two types of elections: direct and indirect elections.
- A political party has three components: a leader, active members and the followers.
- Political parties in India are classified into two types: (1) National Parties (2) State Parties.
- In 2017, there were seven recognised national parties.
- The term 'pressure group' originated in the USA.
- A large number of pressure groups exist in India.



EXERCISE



I. Choose the correct answer

1. India has adapted the electoral system followed in the
(a) USA (b) United Kingdom
(c) Canada (d) Russia
2. The Election Commission of India is a / an
(a) Independent body
(b) Statutory body
(c) Private body
(d) Public corporation
3. Which Article of the Constitution provides for an Election Commission?
(a) Article 280 (b) Article 315
(c) Article 324 (d) Article 325
4. Which part of the constitution of India says about the election commission?
(a) Part III (b) Part XV
(c) Part XX (d) Part XXII
5. Who accords recognition to various political parties as national or regional parties?
(a) The President
(b) The Election Commission
(c) The Parliament
(d) The President in consultation with the Election Commission
6. **Assertion (A):** Indian Constitution provides for an independent Election Commission
Reason (R): To ensure free and fair elections in the country.
(a) Both (A) and (R) are true and (R) explains (A)
(b) Both (A) and (R) are true and (R) does not explain (A)
(c) (A) is correct and (R) is false
(d) (A) is false and (R) is true



7. NOTA was introduced in the year

- (a) 2012 (b) 2013
(c) 2014 (d) 2015

8. The term pressure groups originated in _____.

- (a) USA (b) UK
(c) USSR (d) India

9. **Assertion (A):** A large number of pressure groups exist in India.

Reason (R): Pressure Groups are not developed in India to the same extent as in the USA

- (a) Both (A) and (R) are true and (R) explains (A)
(b) Both (A) and (R) are true and (R) does not explain (A)
(c) (A) is correct and (R) is false
(d) (A) is false and (R) is true

II. Fill in the blanks

1. The Election Commission of India is a body of _____ members.
2. National Voters day has been celebrated on _____.
3. In India _____ party system is followed.
4. In 2017, there were _____ recognised national parties.
5. Narmada Bachao Andolan is a _____.

III. Match the following

- | | | |
|------------------------|---|-----------------|
| 1. National party | - | a. Trade unions |
| 2. Single-party system | - | b. USA |
| 3. Two-party system | - | c. China |
| 4. Pressure groups | - | d. Seven |

IV. Give short answers

1. Explain the electoral system in India.
2. Give the meaning of a political party.
3. Distinguish between two-party system and the multi-party system.
4. What is a pressure group?

V. Answer in detail

1. Discuss merits and demerits of direct elections?
2. What are the functions of political parties?
3. What are the function of Pressure groups in India?

VI. Project and Activity

1. Compare the policies, programmes and achievements of a national party and a state party.

VII. HOTS

1. "Elections are considered essential for any representative democracy". Why?
2. What is the principle of universal adult franchise? What is its importance?
3. Discuss merits and demerits of democracy.
4. Discuss the multi-party system.

VIII. Life Skill

1. Conduct a mock poll in your classroom.