



ELECTION PROCESS IN INDIA

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Introduction

India became an independent Nation on the 15th August 1947. It became a Republic on 26th January 1950 and the Constitution of India came into force. India is a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic republic with a parliamentary system of Government sustained by a well-developed electoral process. India is a federal polity with a Central Government, 28 State Governments, a National Capital Territory and 6 Union Territories. Ever since its independence till date, the country has achieved significant progress in various sectors such as agriculture, industry, power, science and technology, and services.

According to 2001 census, India's population is 1027 million. The estimated growth of population from 1991 to 2001 is at an annual rate of about 2 %. The installed power generating capacity (Utilities) as of April 2002 was 104,935.50 MW (e) with about 71% contributed by fossil thermal power. In order to meet the growing demand for electricity, significant electricity generation capacity addition is necessary for which various measures are being taken.

The state of Andhra Pradesh is one of the major states in India. In electoral process this state was playing very significant role to make national level to state level politics. According to Indian constitution has provided several political rights as well as the huge number of voting system. The Indian democracy based on the political parties to form a government and role the people. Indian has a independent electoral system like as Indian election commission. India is a Union of States, according to its Constitution, with state power distributed between a government at the Centre and the governments of the constituent States.¹ The consequence of the States lies not merely in their vast territory or population, but in their distinct social structure, well-developed languages, culture and history.

Elections in Andhra Pradesh state, India are conducted in accordance with the Constitution of India. The Assembly of Andhra Pradesh creates laws regarding the conduct of local body elections unilaterally while any changes by the state legislature to the conduct of state level elections need to be approved by the Parliament of India. In addition, the state legislature may be dismissed by the Parliament according to Article 356 of the Indian Constitution and President's rule may be imposed.

In 2009 Indian general election Andhra Pradesh sends 42 Members of Parliament to the Lok Sabha. In the Indian general election, 2009, the Indian National Congress won a majority of 33 seats with the Telugu Desam Party taking 6 seats and TRS and the AIMIM taking 2 and 1 seats respectively.



“During the last 50 years of its existence as a republic, States have come to occupy an increasingly important place in India’s political system. The political processes at the State level became significant after the breakdown of Congress dominance in the late 1960s. With the emergence of the State-based parties in the 1980s, there has been growing divergence in politics at the State and Central. Different party systems have taken shape in different States and the electoral outcomes have begun to differ from State to State in the last two decades, bringing a great deal of diversity among the States too (Manor, 1988). The emergence of coalition governments since 1989, in which the State parties became important partners, brought the State to centre stage. The onset of liberalization policies from the early 1990s further increased its prominence. National and international financial institutions and agencies, companies and industrial houses began to deal directly with the States, whose governments have assumed an active role in the development of infrastructure in the State, determining a host of policies in accordance with the priorities of the ruling party at State level.”²

Keeping with the national trend, majority of the people in Andhra Pradesh are also Hindus. They constitute 89% of the total population. Amongst the minorities Muslims are in majority, they constitute 8.2 per cent in the state which is less than national ratio i.e., 13.41. Christians form the next minority group in Andhra Pradesh, they constitute below 2 per cent which is also below the national average.

The Principles of Electoral System in India

India’s electorate emphasized political stability and governance coherence in the 15th national elections in 2009. Predictions of a fragmented electorate and party system emboldened small groups to envision obtaining power in third and fourth fronts emphasizing regional, caste, ideological, and personality considerations. Instead, the congress party gambled successfully on a minimum rather than a maximum winning coalition³. Opening at present, the largest exercise of the democratic franchise in history will take place, as Indian voters head to the polls to elect a new national Parliament. They have done this 14 times since India gained its independence in 1947. Each time India has voted, it has been the world’s largest exercise in electoral democracy. India’s growing population keeps breaking its own record.

In 2009 elections in India the electorate includes 714⁴ million voters, an increase of 43 million over the previous general election in 2004. Votes will be cast in 828,804 polling stations scattered throughout the country for over 5,000 candidates from seven national political parties and several regional parties. The process involves four million electoral officials and 6.1 million police and civilian personnel. The numbers involved are so huge that the elections will be staggered over five phases, ending only on May 13, with electoral and security personnel being moved from state to state as polling is concluded in each place. Despite the phased voting, the counting takes place nationwide immediately after the last phase, and the results



of the elections everywhere will be announced on May 16. A new Parliament will be convened on June 2 to elect a national government to succeed the outgoing administration of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

India's elections, conducted by the autonomous Election Commission of India, are an extraordinary event, and not just because of their sheer scale. It takes the felling of a sizeable forest to furnish enough paper for 714 million ballots, and every election has at least one story of officers battling through snow or jungle, or travelling by elephant and camel, to ensure that the democratic wishes of remote constituents are duly recorded.

The humankind has entered the new millennium. And only a few months back, the world saw the biggest democratic exercise, ever held on this planet, when India went to polls in 2009, of constituting the 15th House of the People, the lower House of Indian Parliament. The gigantic nature of the exercise can be well imagined from the fact that more than 714 millions of adult Indian citizens, both men and women participated in the above electoral exercise. They voted at nearly more than one million polling stations, located throughout the length and breadth of the country - many in the high mountain ranges of the Himalayas, in the vast desert of Rajasthan and in the tiny Islands of Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep, deep into the Bay Bengal and the Arabian Sea. These polling stations were manned by nearly 5 million polling personnel, apart from nearly one million civil police forces, which were deployed for maintenance of general law and order, and for providing security to electors, polling personnel and polling materials, at polling stations and counting centers.

Millions and millions of voters, who participated in these elections have once again shown unflinching faith in democracy, which our country adopted as the system of governance when it achieved independence 50 years ago. Successive general elections to the house of the People and to the Assemblies, held over the period of the last five decades, have demonstrated to the entire world, not only the political maturity of the Indian People, but also that democracy has taken firm roots and flourished in our country. India has been rightly described by our Supreme Court as an "Oasis of Democracy".

Free and fair elections form the bedrock of democracy. And to ensure that elections in India are free and fair, where all political parties and candidates have a level-playing field and the voters can vote in secrecy without fear and according to their free will, the constitution makers have entrusted the task of conducting elections to Parliament, the Legislature of every State and to the Offices of President and Vice-President of India, to the Election Commission of India. The elections to local bodies are, however, the responsibility of local election commissioners of the States concerned. How free and fair are elections in India can be well gauged by the fact that a sitting Chief Minister of a state, which went to the polls recently, lost the election. So did a former Prime Minister of India who recently demitted office.



The Election Commission of India can, justifiably, take pride in having discharged its constitutional duty and obligation of conducting free and fair elections in the country, which has earned for India a commendable reputation in the international community as one of the most stable democracies in the world.

Indian is a Democratic Republic with Westminster type of parliamentary system of government. At the heart of the system lies a commitment to hold regular, free and fair elections. These elections determine the composition of the Governments, both at the Centre and in the States, the membership of the two Houses of Parliament and of the State and Union Territory Legislatures and the Presidency and Vice-Presidency of India.

Elections are conducted according to the constitutional provisions, supplemented by laws made by parliament. The major laws are the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952, which also deals with all aspects of conduct of elections to the highest elective offices in India, including settlement of all doubts and disputes relating thereto; the Representation of the People Act, 1950, which mainly deals with the preparation and revision of electoral rolls of Parliamentary and Assembly elections; and the Representation of the People Act, 1951, which deals, in detail, with all aspects of conduct of elections to parliament and state legislatures and post election disputes. The Supreme Court of India has held that where the enacted laws are silent to make insufficient provision to deal with a given situation in the conduct of elections, the Election Commission has the residuary powers under the Constitution to act in an appropriate manner.

Independence Constitutional Body

Election Commission of India is a permanent Constitutional Body. The Election Commission was established in accordance with the Constitution on 25th January 1950. Originally; the Commission had only a Chief Election Commissioner. From 1st October, 1993, the Election Commission is a three-member body, consisting of the Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners.

The President appoints the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners. Their service conditions are regulated by the Election Commission (conditions of service of Election commissioners and Transaction of Business) Act, 1991. They have tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier. They enjoy the same status and service conditions as are enjoyed by the Judges of the Supreme Court of India. The Chief Election Commissioner can be removed from office only through impeachment by Parliament.

The Commission transacts its business by holding regular meeting and also by circulation of papers. Quite often, matters which brook no delay, particularly at the time of elections when the election machinery in the field looks to the commission for immediate solution of a problem cropping up there, have to be decided by the Commission by mutual consultation and informal discussions, over the phone itself, sometimes by long distance calls if any Commissioner happens to be away on tour.



The decisions so taken are, however, formally recorded thereafter, so that nothing goes amiss from the records of the Commission. All Election Commissioners have equal say in the decision making of the Commission. The Commission, from time to time, delegates some of its executive functions to its officers in its Secretariat.

The Commission has separate Secretariat at New Delhi, consisting of about 300 officials, in a hierarchical set up. Two Deputy Election Commissioners who are the senior most officers in the Secretariat assist the Commission. They are generally appointed from the national civil service of the country, and are selected and appointed by the Commission with tenure. Directors, principal Secretaries, and secretaries, Under Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries support the Deputy Election Commissioners in turn. There is functional and territorial distribution of work in the Commission. The work is organized in Divisions, Branches and Sections; each of the last mentioned units is under the charge of a Section Officer. The main functional divisions are planning, Judicial, Administration, Information System, Media and Secretariat Co-ordination. The territorial work is distributed among separate units responsible for different Zones into which the 25 constituent States and 7 Union Territories of the country are grouped for convenience of management.

Head of the Nation Elected by both the Houses

The parliament of the Indian Union consists of the President of India, the Lok Sabha (House of the People) and the Rajya Sabha (council of States). The President is the Head of State, and he appoints the Prime Minister, who runs the government, according to the political composition of the Lok Sabha. Although the government is headed by a Prime Minister, the Cabinet is the central decision making body of the government. Members of more than one party can make up a coalition government, and they can govern as long as they have the confidence of a majority of the members of the Lok Sabha. The Lok Sabha along with the Rajya Sabha is the main legislative bodies.

The President of India is elected by an electoral college consisting of the elected members of the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas (State Legislative Assemblies) and serves for a period of 5 years (although he can stand for re-election). A formula is prescribed under the Constitution to allocate votes to each member of the Electoral College, so that there is an equal proportion between the population of each State and the number of votes which each Assembly members from that state can cast, and there is also parity between states and national assembly (Parliament) members. The vice-President is elected by a direct vote of all members elected and nominated, of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. If no candidate at a Presidential or Vice Presidential election straight away receives a majority of votes, there is a system by which losing candidates are excluded from the contest and votes for them transferred to other candidates until one gains a majority.



Foot Notes

1. In this paper the word 'State' denotes a constituent province of the Indian Union and the word 'state' is used in its juridical sense.
2. K.C.Suri "Democratic process and electoral politics in Andhra Pradesh, India" Working Paper 180, 2002.
3. For an analysis of the discourses in the 2004 election, see K. Srinivasulu, "Political Articulation and Policy Discourse in Elections, Andhra Pradesh, 2004," Economic and Political Weekly, Vol.XXXIX, No. 34, August 21, 2004.
4. see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_India

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2. AP Online, Index.html" (PDF).Andhra Pradesh official website. Retrieved 16 January 2011.
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4. State Domestic Product of India 2010-11 | State-Wise GDP 2010 | District GDP of India | State-wise Population 2011 | VMW Analytic Services". Unidow.com. Retrieved 2011-10-08.
5. Rough rice production in India, by state, 1961–2006". International Rice Research Institute. May 2008. Retrieved 25 August 2009.
6. Know Hyderabad: History". Pan India Network. 2010. Retrieved 5 October 2010.
7. Andhra Pradesh Geography". Maharashtraweb.com. Retrieved 15 August 2010.
8. Ibid-2
9. Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation (27 May 2010)."APTDC – Andhra Pradesh Tourism Development Corporation". Tourism.inap.com. Retrieved 15 August 2010.
10. The caste title 'Reddi' comes from the Telugu word 'redu' or 'rat', which means 'ruler'. During the medieval period they were described as the enterprising class of warriors and military chiefs. In the modern period, most of the *paligars* (chiefs of largeterritories until the early 19th century) in Rayalaseema and *jagirdars*, *muktedars* and *deshmukhs* (feudatory chiefs) of Telengana regions came from the Reddi community.