



LOK SATTA
People Power

Elections and Democracy in India

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“At the bottom of all the tributes paid to democracy is the little man, walking into the little booth, with a little pencil, making a little cross on a little bit of paper.....”

- *Churchill*

Democracy – Myron Weiner's Four Conditions

- Competitive elections
- Political freedoms for all
- Peaceful transfer of power and no retribution
- Real power with elected governments

Macro Perspective of Indian Polity

- Disaggregate volatility
- Broadly reflective of public opinion
- Ruling parties and powerful candidates do lose
- Rejection/Negative vote pretty common

Nature of Our Democracy

Genuine

- Elections
- Liberty
- Change of governments
- Political contention
- Independent judiciary

Contd..

Nature of Our Democracy

Deep rooted

- 1977 verdict
- Peaceful transfer of power
- Dalit and OBC empowerment
- Balanced federalism
- Local governments taking root

Nature of Our Democracy

Stable

- Constitutional authorities
- Strong bureaucracy
- Tradition of neutrality of civil services
- Impressive administrative infrastructure
- Bipolarity in most states
- Stable conditions at the Union level
- Broad consensus on most policies

Free and Fair Elections

- Disaggregate volatility
- Broadly reflective of public opinion
- Ruling parties and powerful candidates do lose
- Rejection vote common
- Strength of Election Commission
- No state-sponsored rigging
- Neutrality of civil servants
- Compensatory errors even when there are defects

What is Wrong With Elections?

- Flawed electoral rolls
- Polling irregularities
- Unaccounted and illegitimate use of money power
- Rampant criminalization
- Autocratic political parties

Recent Political Reform Initiatives

- Disclosure of candidate details
- Political Funding Reform Law
- Changes in Rajya Sabha election
- Strong anti-defection provisions
- Limiting the size of the council of ministers
- Balanced Federalism
- Electronic voting machines
- Improvements in voter registration

Unfinished Agenda

- Systemic reform to remove wrong incentives in power (politics as business)
- Genuine empowerment of local governments based on subsidiarity principle
- Strengthening rule of law and ensuring accessible, affordable, efficient justice
- Effective instruments of accountability to check abuse of office
- Political education and institutional reforms to promote effective citizen-participation in governance

“Politics encircles us today like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out, no matter how much one tries”

- *Mahatma Gandhi*