



LOK SATTA
People Power

**Foundation for
Democratic Reforms**

**Elections and Voters' Interest :
The Indian Experience**

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Indian Elections and Voters

Year	Elective Seats	Candidates	Electorate	Vote Turnout	Polling Stations
1952	489	1,864	173,213,635	62.2%	196,084
1957	494	1,591	193,652,069	62.2%	220,244
1962	494	1,985	216,372,215	55.0%	238,244
1967	520	2,369	249,372,215	61.3%	267,555
1971	518	2,784	274,094,493	55.3%	342,944
1977	542	2,439	321,174,327	60.5%	358,208
1980	542	4,620	355,590,700	56.9%	434,442
1984	542	5,481	399,816,294	64.0%	505,751
1989	543	6,160	498,906,429	62.0%	579,810
1991	543	8,699	514,126,380	61.0%	594,797
1996	543	13,952	592,572,288	57.9%	767,462
1998	543	4,750	605,884,103	62.0%	773,462
1999	543	4,648	619,536,847	59.9%	774,651
2004	543	5,435	671,524,575	57.7%	687,407

Macro Perspective of Indian Elections

- Stable system of free-and-fair elections
- Broadly reflective of public opinion
- Genuine and deep-rooted democracy

Micro Perspective

- Money power
- Criminalization
- Voting irregularities, Registration and voting difficulties
- People take money to vote
- Caste and divisive impulses

Rectification of Electoral Rolls

- Lok Satta took up detailed field survey of voter registration defects
- Survey during 1999 elections: 56 rural and urban polling station (approx. 56,000 voters)

Errors: 15% errors in rural areas and 44.8% in urban areas

Rectification of Electoral Rolls (2004)

- Sample drawn from 110 rural and urban polling stations
- Population of more than 1,00,000

Survey Area	No. of Constituencies	No. of Polling Stations	Total No. of Voters	Errors of Commission	Errors of Omission	Total No. of Errors-Omission and Commission	
						No	As % of total Voters
RURAL	34	68	68110	1496(2.2)	1996(3.0)	3492	5.1
URBAN	21	39	38915	2099(5.4)	2782(7.1)	4881	12.5
TOTAL	55	107	107025	3595(3.3)	4778(4.5)	8373	7.8

Results: (i) Post office as Nodal Agency for voters' lists (2004)

(ii) Nationwide Citizens-EC-Civil Society initiative for improving voters' lists (2005)

Enhancing Voters' Interest: Process Improvements

Election Watch : Campaign against Criminalization

- **1999 Election Watch - Post-nomination**

No significant impact on the voting behavior as local factors play a major role

- **2004 Election Watch – Pre-nomination**

Aim: To restrain political parties from nominating persons with criminal background

Impact:

Total potential candidates with criminal record : 51

Out of the 51 potential candidates, only 29 were nominated

Out of 29, only 11 candidates were elected

No new entrants with criminal background

Election watch activities were taken up by the civil society in AP, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Delhi, etc.

Decentralization is an imperative. Local issues play large role in shaping voters' interest towards polling.

National -level elections – 55% voting

State-level elections – 60-65 %

Local government elections – goes up to 70%

Enhancing Voters' Interest – Systemic Improvements

Need to eliminate representational distortions - move away from the 'winner-takes-all' model

Current FPTP electoral formula leads to wastage of votes – depresses voter turnout

Voters' actual choices are not accurately represented in legislatures.

Present system does not give scattered minorities, women, deprived sections adequate representation

Systemic Improvements for enhancing Voters' Interest

Vote and Public Good must be linked

Honesty, Integrity and Political Survival must be made compatible

Elections must help bridge social divide and give representation to scattered minorities

Genuinely democratic functioning of political parties

- Free and transparent membership**
- Democratic choice of leadership**
- Transparency in resources and utilization**
- Democratic and fair choice of candidates**

Greater stake for citizens in parties

The Voter – Democratic Politics connection

Internal emergency (1975 - 77) - Indian democracy has matured

Abuse of Art. 356 – Balanced Federalism, Supreme Court ruling

Palace coups to oust legitimate governments.

Eg. AP, Gujarat. Direct election to heads of governments

Contentious transfer of power. Eg. Jagadambika Pal (Feb '98)

Ayaram- gayaram culture – Anti-defection Law (2003)

Bribery for voting in legislature - JMM Case

Judicial Intervention – Goa, Jharkhand, UP

The purpose of a government is to make it easy for
people to do good and difficult to do evil.

William Gladstone