

## **Promoting Electoral Literacy in Schools through the NCERT Textbooks of Political Science**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Promoting electoral literacy in schools is a critical step towards empowering young citizens to actively participate in democratic processes. By including electoral literacy into the curriculum, the NCERT Political Science textbooks are essential to this effort. These textbooks give pupils a basic grasp of India's electoral system by highlighting the value of voting, the operation of democratic institutions, and the relevance of free and fair elections. Through captivating stories, case studies, pictures and exercises, subjects like voting procedures, the function of election administration bodies, and citizens' rights and obligations are covered. This method fosters democratic principles, critical thinking, and civic duty in addition to educating school students about the workings of the electoral process. The NCERT textbooks help students understand the importance of active engagement in governance by covering topics like inclusiveness, ethical voting, and the role of informed decision-making. Additionally, real-world activities like debates and simulated elections enhance theoretical education and offer practical experience. These textbooks contribute to a more inclusive and participatory democracy by preparing students to become informed, responsible voters through the early development of electoral literacy. In order to ensure ongoing participation in the election process and to reinforce democratic norms, this educational approach is crucial.

**Keywords:** Electoral Literacy, Voting Rights, Democratic Participation, Electoral Process, Informed Citizens, School Curriculum, Mock Elections, Civic Responsibility, Ethical Voting, Democratic Values, NCERT Textbooks, Political Science, Democracy, and Civic Education

### **What is Electoral Literacy**

Aiming to implement transformative changes to the Indian educational system, the Government of India introduced the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Developing democratic principles and civic responsibility in young generation is emphasized in the NEP 2020, and electoral literacy is essential to accomplishing this objective. In order to make sure that young citizens understand their rights and obligations in the political process as future voters, NEP 2020 promotes the inclusion of electoral literacy in the curriculum. The goal of the policy is to develop an informed voter that is aware of the electoral system, voting procedures, and the importance of free and fair elections by encouraging

electoral literacy. It aims to reinforce democratic ideals and guarantee that elections represent the true desire of the people by teaching young people the value of actively engaging in democracy (*National Education Policy, 2020*).

Electoral literacy refers to the knowledge, skills, and awareness necessary for citizens to participate meaningfully in electoral processes and democratic governance. It includes an understanding of the electoral system, voting procedures, political rights, and the responsibilities of citizens in a democracy. By fostering informed participation, electoral literacy strengthens the democratic process and ensures that elections reflect the genuine will of the people. A key aspect of this literacy is

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understanding how elections are conducted, the role of election management bodies, and the importance of free and fair elections. It also involves being aware of one's rights as a voter, such as the right to a secret ballot, the ability to contest elections, and the right to challenge irregularities in the voting process. This awareness ensures that citizens can engage actively and responsibly in the democratic process ("Decoding Electoral Literacy Understanding Its Essence and Importance" 2024).

Electoral literacy also emphasizes the importance of being an informed voter. Citizens should be able to critically evaluate candidates and political parties based on their policies, promises, and track records. This requires access to unbiased information, the ability to recognize misinformation, and the capacity to make independent decisions. Informed voting not only enhances the quality of representation but also holds politicians accountable for their actions and promises (Global Policy Centre for Governance, United Nations Development Programme, 2024). Another vital component of electoral literacy is fostering inclusivity in the democratic process. Efforts to promote electoral education often focus on marginalized groups, such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, and those in remote or disadvantaged communities. By addressing barriers to participation whether cultural, economic, or informational electoral literacy initiatives aim to ensure that every eligible citizen has the opportunity to vote and be represented ("Inclusive Electoral Processes" 2015).

Electoral literacy is especially significant in the context of rising concerns about misinformation and declining trust in democratic institutions. Misleading narratives, fake news, and disinformation campaigns can undermine elections and erode public confidence. Electoral literacy helps citizens identify and resist such influences, fostering resilience against attempts to manipulate public opinion or suppress voter participation (Sanchez, Gabriel R. and Keesha Middlemass, 2022). Moreover, electoral literacy is not limited to first-time voters or those new to democracy. It is an ongoing process that requires periodic reinforcement, especially as electoral systems evolve and new challenges emerge. Issues such as online voting, cybersecurity, and campaign finance transparency necessitate updated education to ensure that citizens remain informed and engaged.

## The Importance of Electoral Literacy for School Students

Electoral literacy is a critical component of civic education, enabling students to understand the democratic processes and their role within them. For school students, this knowledge is particularly significant as they represent the future electorate and leaders. Cultivating electoral literacy early helps inculcate values of participation, responsibility, and awareness, ensuring that democracy thrives in its true essence. By embedding this education in schools, societies can equip young minds with the tools they need to become informed and engaged citizens (Ministry of Education, 2023).

Electoral literacy strengthens an understanding of democracy and governance. Many students, while aware of the concept of elections, lack comprehensive knowledge of how electoral systems function. Teaching the fundamentals of voting, representation, and the mechanisms of governance enables them to grasp the importance of elections in shaping policies and leadership. Understanding their role as potential voters emphasizes their power in influencing the democratic process. It also explains complex processes such as voter registration, constituency demarcation, and the importance of free and fair elections ("Decoding Electoral Literacy Understanding Its Essence and Importance", 2024).

Introducing electoral literacy at the school level helps combat voter apathy and misinformation. In a digital age where misinformation spreads rapidly, it is essential for young individuals to discern credible information from propaganda. By educating students about the significance of factual accuracy and critical thinking, schools can empower them to make informed choices as voters. This education also addresses apathy by emphasizing the consequences of abstaining from voting, demonstrating how civic disengagement can lead to governance that does not reflect the people's will (Ministry of Education, 2023).

Electoral literacy is the promotion of inclusivity and equality. Schools provide a platform to educate students about the importance of participation by all sections of society, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. Lessons in electoral literacy can highlight historical struggles for voting rights, such as the suffragette movement or the civil rights movement, inspiring students to appreciate and uphold the values of equality and representation. This understanding fosters an environment where diversity is respected, and everyone

feels encouraged to participate in the democratic process (*Election Commission of India, 2012*).

Furthermore, electoral literacy nurtures leadership and decision-making skills. Through mock elections, debates, and discussions, students can simulate the electoral process and experience first-hand the responsibilities of leadership and the impact of collective decision-making. These activities not only enhance their understanding of governance but also instil confidence and critical thinking. Students learn to evaluate candidates, policies, and manifestos, enabling them to make informed decisions rather than being swayed by populism or rhetoric (*Election Commission of India, 2012*).

The integration of electoral literacy into school curricula also serves as a means of societal transformation. A generation of well-informed voters can significantly influence the quality of political discourse and leadership. When students understand their rights and responsibilities as voters, they are more likely to challenge corrupt practices, demand accountability, and advocate for policies that benefit society. This creates a ripple effect, gradually fostering a more transparent and responsive political environment (*Handrabura, n.d.*). Moreover, electoral literacy can inspire lifelong civic engagement. Beyond voting, understanding the electoral process encourages students to actively participate in other aspects of democracy, such as public debates, policy-making discussions, and community initiatives. It instils a sense of civic duty and responsibility, motivating them to contribute positively to their communities and the nation at large. Such engagement is crucial for maintaining the health of a democracy, as it ensures that governance remains a collaborative effort between leaders and citizens (*Bennion and Michelson 2023*).

### Electoral Literacy Clubs

Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs) are innovative initiatives by the Election Commission of India (ECI) aimed at enhancing electoral literacy among citizens, especially young and first-time voters. ELCs operate in schools, colleges, and rural communities. In schools, membership includes students from Classes IX to XII, typically aged between 14 and 17 years. ELCs provide a platform for individuals to learn about the electoral process, voting procedures, and the significance of active participation in democracy. By fostering electoral knowledge and engagement, ELCs empower citizens to

make informed decisions and contribute meaningfully to the democratic process ("Electoral Literacy Clubs - Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation," n.d.).

Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs) aim to create informed voters who actively and responsibly participate in elections, fostering democratic values and civic responsibility. ELCs educate participants about voting importance, electoral processes, and voter rights through engaging activities like quizzes, debates, and mock elections. Through targeted programs, ELCs cater to diverse groups, including school and college students, rural communities, and marginalized populations, ensuring no one is left behind in the democratic process. By promoting ethical voting practices and awareness of free and fair elections, ELCs strengthen democracy. Participants gain practical knowledge, critical thinking, and decision-making skills, empowering them to contribute effectively to the democratic process and fostering a culture of active and responsible citizenship ("Electoral Literacy Club," n.d.).



**Electoral Literacy Club**  
RESOURCE GUIDE  
for Class XI



Source: ("Electoral Literacy Clubs: Resource Guide for ELC in Class IX," n.d.)

ELCs serve as platforms for fostering a culture of participation and inclusivity. They emphasize the importance of equality and encourage discussions about the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy. These clubs also promote awareness about social issues

like gender equality, inclusivity, and accessibility in the electoral process. For instance, students learn about the measures taken to ensure that marginalized groups, such as women, differently-abled individuals, and minorities, can exercise their voting rights without barriers. This holistic approach ensures that students develop a comprehensive understanding of the democratic process and its broader implications (*"Electoral Literacy Clubs: Resource Guide for ELC in Class IX,"* n.d.).

In addition to practical learning, ELCs align with the broader goals of education by integrating electoral literacy into the school curriculum. This ensures that students receive a structured and consistent exposure to democratic principles throughout their schooling years. Teachers and educators play a crucial role in guiding and mentoring students in these clubs. They are trained by the ECI to facilitate ELC activities effectively, ensuring that students not only learn about the mechanics of voting but also internalize the values of democracy, equality, and justice (*"Electoral Literacy Club Resource Guide for College, Election Commission of India,"* 2018). Electoral Literacy Clubs (ELCs) create a ripple effect of awareness as students share their knowledge with families and communities, bridging generational gaps in understanding voting's importance. By engaging students in interactive activities, ELCs foster informed, responsible, and active citizens. These clubs empower youth to value their rights, inspiring meaningful contributions to democracy and building a stronger, inclusive, and participatory future.

### **Electoral Literacy in the NCERT Textbook of Political Science**

Electoral Literacy is a crucial component of civic education, fostering informed and responsible citizens. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) textbooks of Political Science integrate electoral literacy to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for participating in democratic processes. These Textbooks such as ***Democratic Politics-I: Textbook in Political Science for Class IX;*** ***Democratic Politics-II: Textbook in Political Science for Class X;*** and ***Indian Constitution at Work-Textbook in Political Science for Class XI*** emphasize the significance of free and fair elections, the role of Election Commission, and the responsibilities of voters. These textbooks introduced foundational concepts of democracy. Students learn about the election process,

types of elections, and the importance of voting. By incorporating illustrations, activities, discussions, and real-life examples, NCERT textbooks of Political Science encourage critical thinking about electoral practices. They aim to nurture a sense of responsibility among students, preparing them to actively and ethically participate in India's democratic processes.

### ***Democratic Politics-I: Textbook in Political Science for Class IX***

Elections are the backbone of any democracy, providing a mechanism for people to choose their representatives and hold them accountable. Therefore, Chapter 3, *Electoral Politics*, introduces students to the essence of elections, emphasizing their role in ensuring the functioning of a democratic government. The whole Chapter is divided into three main headings and several subheadings to discuss all the aspects of the electoral process. This chapter sets the stage by explaining how elections enable citizens to participate directly in governance, ensuring accountability and transparency. This chapter explains how elections work, why they are important, and the challenges they face in a democracy. Using practical examples and illustrations, it shows how elections ensure accountability and representation in India.

The chapter begins the first heading, *Why Elections?* which is divided into several sub-headings by exploring the necessity of elections in a democracy. Elections are a fundamental part of any democracy and are held regularly across more than a hundred countries worldwide to select representatives. Interestingly, elections also occur in countries that are not democratic. Elections allow people to voice their opinions and choose leaders who represent their interests. Elections provide a solution by enabling people to select their representatives at regular intervals and replace them if needed. This mechanism is essential for maintaining a representative democracy. Elections ensure that power remains in the hands of the people and prevent its concentration within a single entity (*Democratic Politics -I: Textbook in Political Science for Class IX* 2024, 35–36).

During elections, voters make several key choices:

- “They can choose who will make laws for them.
- They can choose who will form the government and take major decisions.
- They can choose the party whose policies will guide the government and law making”

(*Democratic Politics -I: Textbook in Political*

Science for Class IX 2024, 36).

The chapter further emphasizes under the sub-heading, *What Makes an election democratic?* Elections can be conducted in various ways, and while all democratic countries hold elections, many non-democratic countries also organize some form of elections. The key question is how to differentiate democratic elections from others. In some countries, elections are held but cannot genuinely be called democratic. To distinguish democratic systems from non-democratic ones, several criteria are considered:

- Everyone should have one vote and every vote should have equal value.
- Parties and candidates should be free to contest elections and should offer some real choice to the voters.
- Elections must be held regularly after every few years.
- The candidate preferred by the majority should win.
- Elections should be conducted in a free and fair manner where people can choose as they really wish (*Democratic Politics -I: Textbook in Political Science for Class IX*, 2024, 36–37).

These may seem like straightforward and simple conditions, yet many countries fail to meet them.

The chapter also examines the competitive nature of elections, highlighting both its benefits and challenges under the sub-heading, *Is it good to have political competition?* Because the Elections are centered on political competition, primarily between parties and candidates. Without competition, elections would lose their purpose. However, electoral competition has drawbacks. It can create divisions, foster “party-politics,” and lead to unhealthy tactics like allegations and dirty tricks. Some argue this pressure undermines long-term policymaking and discourages capable individuals from entering politics. Despite these issues, India’s Constitution makers chose free competition as the best method to select leaders. In an ideal world, leaders would prioritize serving people without political rivalry. But in reality, most leaders aim to advance their careers and stay in power. While some genuinely wish to serve, they may lack knowledge or align poorly with public needs. To address this, a system was designed to reward leaders who serve the people and punish those who fail, which are reflected in blow cartoon illustrations (*Democratic Politics -I: Textbook in Political Science for Class IX* 2024, 37).



Source: (*Democratic Politics -I: Textbook in Political Science for Class IX*, 2024, 37)

Electoral competition achieves this by making leaders accountable to voters. If leaders address public concerns, they gain popularity and improve their chances in future elections. Conversely, failing to deliver results in electoral losses. Like market competition forces businesses to prioritize customers, electoral competition pushes political leaders to focus on public welfare. While it has flaws, this system ultimately ensures leaders serve the people’s interests (*Democratic Politics -I: Textbook in Political Science for Class IX* 2024, 37–38).

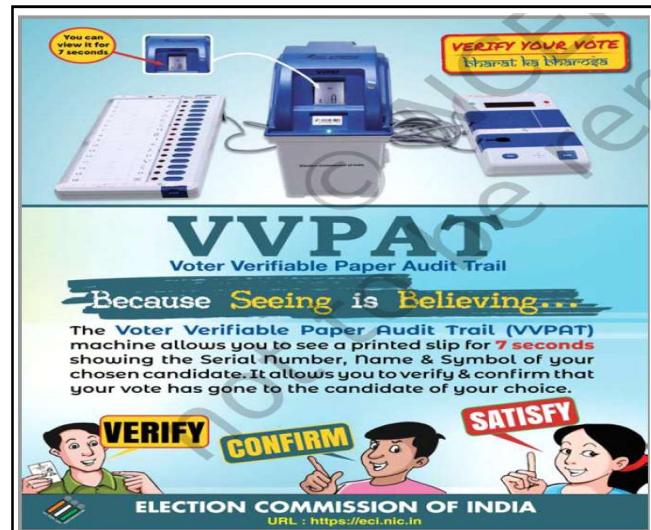
The second main heading of this chapter, *what is our System of Elections?* addresses the legislative structure of India and the representation of weaker sections in constituencies. Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections are conducted every five years, marking the completion of the elected representatives’ term, a process known as the general election. If a seat becomes vacant due to resignation or death, by-elections are held for the specific constituency. India follows an area-based representation system, dividing the country into electoral constituencies. Each constituency elects one representative. For the Lok Sabha, there are 543 constituencies, and the elected representatives are known as Members of Parliament (MPs). Similarly, state elections feature Assembly constituencies, where the representatives are called Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). To uphold the principle of equal value for every vote, constituencies are designed to have approximately equal populations. This system extends to Panchayat and Municipal elections, where villages or towns are divided into wards, each electing one member. Constituencies often symbolize “seats” in their respective assemblies. The Constitution grants every citizen the right to vote and stand for elections. However, the framers of

the Constitution recognized that weaker sections of society might face challenges in competing in open elections due to limited resources, education, and networks. This could lead to dominance by influential individuals, leaving marginalized groups underrepresented in Parliament and State Assemblies, thereby weakening democracy. To address this, the Constitution introduced reserved constituencies for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) (*Democratic Politics -I: Textbook in Political Science for Class IX*, 2024, 38-40). In these constituencies, only candidates from the SC or ST communities are eligible to contest elections. This topic has been thoroughly explored in Chapter 3: "Election and Representation" of the Class XI Political Science textbook, *Indian Constitution at Work*.

The chapter also highlights the election process in India, which serves as the cornerstone of its democratic system, enabling citizens to choose their representatives across various levels of government. To uphold the integrity of its democracy, India follows a comprehensive election process, meticulously outlined in the chapter. The key stages include the announcement of election dates, filing of nominations, campaigning, voting, and counting of votes. These elections are conducted under the supervision of the Election Commission of India (ECI), an autonomous constitutional body. The process is guided by principles of universal adult suffrage, ensuring that every citizen aged 18 and above has the right to vote, regardless of caste, religion, or gender. Elections in India are held for the Lok Sabha (House of the People), State Legislative Assemblies, and local governing bodies such as Panchayats and Municipalities (*Gill, n.d.*).

The process begins with the announcement of the election schedule by the ECI, followed by the nomination of candidates from political parties or as independents. After scrutiny and withdrawal of nominations, the final list of candidates is published. Voting is conducted through Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and the Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) in a phased manner to ensure free and fair elections. The VVPAT is a critical component of modern electronic voting systems, designed to enhance transparency, accuracy, and voter confidence in the electoral process. By providing a verifiable paper trail, it reinforces the reliability of the voting system and ensures the integrity of election results. Voters cast their ballots in secret to maintain privacy and impartiality. Once voting concludes, EVMs are sealed and later opened for counting of votes. The candidate with the majority of

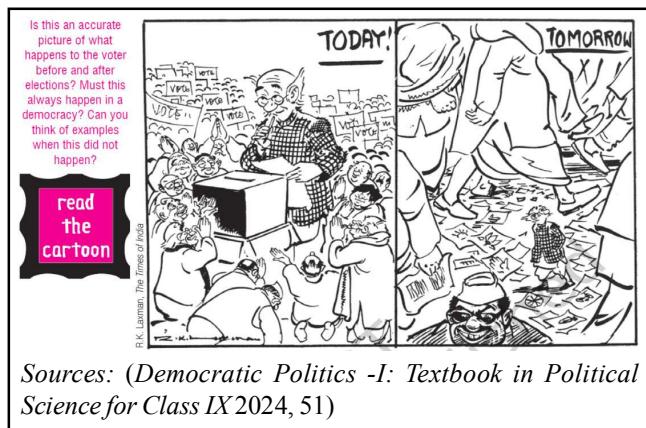
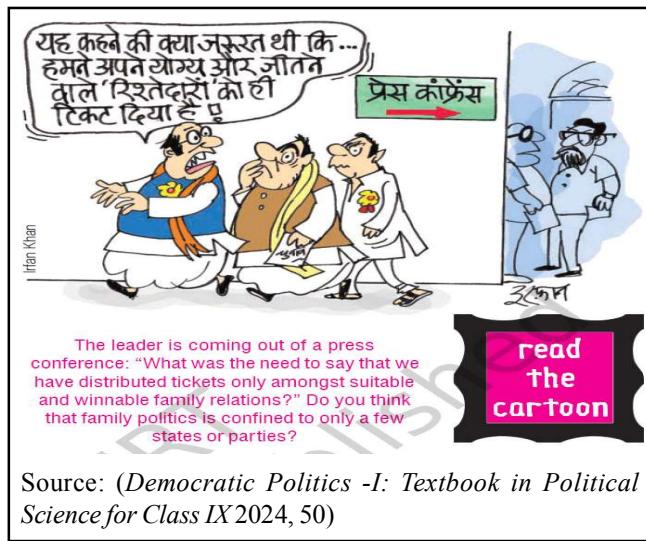
votes is declared the winner under the *First Past the Post* (FPTP) system. The process ensures transparency, accountability, and active participation of citizens, reinforcing India's status as the world's largest democracy (*Democratic Politics -I: Textbook in Political Science for Class IX* 2024, 40-45).



Source: ("Election Commission of India," n.d.; *Democratic Politics -I: Textbook in Political Science for Class IX* 2024, 45)

Despite its robust framework, India's electoral system faces several challenges, which are discussed in detail in the chapter under the last main heading, *What Makes Elections in India Democratic?* It addresses issues such as the influence of money and muscle power, the criminalization of politics, and the marginalization of certain communities. The chapter also examines voter apathy, where eligible citizens choose not to vote, and the lack of transparency in party funding. Additionally, some families tend to dominate political parties, with tickets often being distributed to relatives within these families. As a result, elections sometimes offer little choice to ordinary citizens, as both major parties may be quite similar to each other in terms of policies and practices. Smaller parties and independent candidates face a huge disadvantage compared to larger parties, further limiting the diversity of choices available to voters (*Democratic Politics -I: Textbook in Political Science for Class IX* 2024, 50-51). These challenges are not exclusive to India; they are also present in many well-established democracies. Such underlying issues raise concerns for those who support democracy. As a result,

citizens, social activists, and organizations have been advocating for reforms in the electoral system.



Finally, this chapter emphasizes that elections are not just about casting votes; they are a means to uphold the principles of equality, liberty, and justice. Through free and fair elections, citizens can hold their leaders accountable, ensuring that governance reflects the will of the majority.

### ***Democratic Politics-II: Textbook in Political Science for Class X***

In Chapter 5: “Outcomes of Democracy” of the *Democratic Politics-II: Textbook in Political Science for Class X*, casting a vote is highlighted as both a fundamental right and responsibility of citizens in a democracy. This same image is also featured on the last page of *Politics in India Since Independence: Textbook in Political Science for Class XII*.



Sources: (*Democratic Politics -I: Textbook in Political Science for Class IX* 2024; *Politics in India Since Independence: Textbook in Political Science for Class XII* 2024, 159)

According to the Election Commission of India, casting a vote is a straightforward process but requires careful adherence to rules and guidelines to ensure the integrity of elections. To begin with, voters must be registered in the electoral rolls. Citizens who are 18 years or older and meet other eligibility criteria, such as being an Indian citizen, can register as voters by filling out the appropriate forms at their local Electoral Registration Office or online. Once registered, voters receive an Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC), which serves as an important identification during elections (“*Election Commission of India*,” n.d.).

On election day, voters visit their designated polling stations, where they are required to present their EPIC or another valid photo ID as proof of identity. The polling station will have a list of registered voters, and once their name is verified, they will be given a ballot paper or directed to an Electronic Voting Machine (EVM). In the case of EVMs, voters select their chosen candidate by pressing the button next to their name or symbol. After casting their vote, the voter’s finger is marked with indelible ink to prevent multiple voting. Voting is confidential, ensuring that no one knows how a person has voted. It is crucial that voters follow these steps to ensure a smooth, fair, and lawful voting process (“*How to Vote*” 2019).

## Indian Constitution at Work: Textbook in Political Science for Class XI

Elections and representation are fundamental pillars of democracy, ensuring that governance reflects the will and interests of the people. Elections provide citizens with the opportunity to choose their leaders and hold them accountable, thereby legitimizing political authority. They serve as a mechanism for peaceful power transitions and a safeguard against autocracy by enabling regular and fair competition among candidates and parties (Wright, 1971). Representation, on the other hand, bridges the gap between the government and the governed. Through elected representatives, diverse voices, interests, and perspectives are brought into decision-making processes, promoting inclusivity and equity. In a representative democracy, leaders are expected to act in the best interest of their constituents while adhering to democratic principles such as transparency, accountability, and rule of law. Effective representation also fosters trust between citizens and institutions, strengthening social cohesion and political stability (Park, 1952).

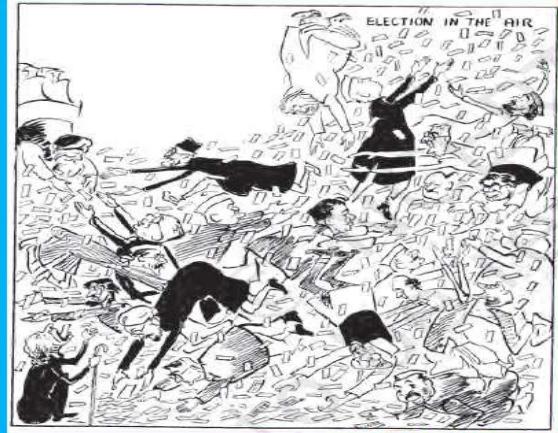
Therefore Chapter 3, "Election and Representation," in the NCERT textbook *Indian Constitution at Work* explores the electoral process and the significance of representation in India's democratic framework. It delves into how elections form the cornerstone of democracy, enabling citizens to choose their representatives. The whole Chapter is divided into several headings to discuss all the aspects of the Election and Representation in democratic process. The chapter explains the importance of free and fair elections in ensuring that governance reflects the will of the people. It highlights the role of the Election Commission of India, an independent constitutional body responsible for conducting elections impartially. The chapter discusses the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system used for elections in India, where the candidate with the most votes in a constituency wins. It compares this system with proportional representation, emphasizing the strengths and limitations of each. Additionally, the concept of reserved constituencies for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) is explained as a measure to ensure social justice and inclusivity. By examining these aspects, the chapter provides students with a comprehensive understanding of how elections uphold the principles of democracy and representation in India.

This chapter begins by addressing the question of why representation is essential in a large democracy?

under the section titled "Election and Democracy." In a vast democratic setup, it is impractical for all citizens to participate directly in every decision-making process. To address this, people elect representatives to act on their behalf, making elections a crucial component of the democratic system (*Indian Constitution at Work: Textbook in Political Science for Class XI*, 2024, 52). Elections are a key symbol of democracy, distinguishing between direct and indirect forms. In direct democracy, citizens participate in daily decision-making, as seen in ancient Greece or local bodies like gram sabhas. However, this isn't feasible for large populations. Instead, rule by the people means governance through elected representatives. Citizens choose these representatives via elections, who then govern and make decisions on their behalf. While citizens have limited direct involvement in policymaking, their indirect role through representatives is crucial. Thus, the process of electing representatives becomes essential in ensuring a functioning democratic system (*Indian Constitution at Work: Textbook in Political Science for Class XI* 2024, 52–53).

Shankar, Copyright: Children's Book Trust.

**READ A CARTOON**



17 February 1957

They say elections are carnival of democracy. But this cartoon depicts chaos instead. Is this true of elections always? Is it good for democracy?

Source: (*Indian Constitution at Work: Textbook in Political Science for Class XI*, 2024, 52)

In the second heading, *Election System in India*, this chapter further discusses about election system. India's election system is a democratic process governed by the Election Commission of India. It follows a parliamentary system with universal adult suffrage. Elections are

conducted at three levels: Lok Sabha (national), State Assemblies, and local bodies. The system uses first-past-the-post voting, ensuring free, fair, and transparent electoral practices. The First Past the Post (FPTP) system is a simple and widely used electoral system, especially for legislative elections. Under FPTP, voters cast their ballot for a single candidate in their constituency. In this system whoever has more votes than all other candidates, is declared elected. The winning candidate need not secure a majority of the votes. This system is straightforward and easy to understand, making it accessible for voters and administrators alike (*Indian Constitution at Work: Textbook in Political Science for Class XI* 2024, 56).

This chapter also highlights the electoral process in Israel, which follows a distinct system called *Proportional Representation (PR)*. In Israel, after votes are counted, each party receives parliamentary seats proportional to its vote share. Parties fill these seats by selecting candidates from a preference list announced before the election. The PR system ensures that a party's seat share matches its vote percentage. There are two main types of PR systems. In some countries, like Israel and the Netherlands, the entire nation acts as one constituency, and seats are distributed based on national vote shares. In others, such as Argentina and Portugal, the country is divided into multi-member constituencies, with parties listing candidates based on the number of seats available. In both types, voters choose parties rather than individuals, and seats are allocated accordingly. India uses a limited and complex PR variation for indirect elections, such as for the President, Vice President, Rajya Sabha, and Vidhan Parishads (*Indian Constitution at Work: Textbook in Political Science for Class XI* 2024, 57–58).

This chapter further explores the reason *why India adopted the FPTP System*. The popularity of FPTP system lies in its simplicity. It is easy for voters to understand, as they choose a specific candidate or party. This system allows voters to prioritize the party, candidate, or a balance of both. Unlike the Proportional Representation system, where voters choose parties and representatives are selected from party lists, FPTP ensures a direct link between voters and their representatives, making them accountable to a specific locality ("First-Past-the-Post: A Rogue's Practice?" 2018). FPTP supports stable governments by often giving the largest party or coalition more seats than their vote

share. This stability is crucial for a parliamentary system, which requires the executive to have a legislative majority. Additionally, FPTP encourages social groups to collaborate at the local level, avoiding fragmentation into community-specific parties, which could disrupt governance in a diverse country like India. In India, FPTP has enabled large parties to win clear majorities and discouraged caste- or community-based politics. While FPTP often leads to two-party systems, India's experience has been unique. Initially marked by one-party dominance and smaller parties, post-1989 India has seen multiparty coalitions flourish. This development has allowed smaller and newer parties to participate in elections despite the FPTP framework (*Indian Constitution at Work: Textbook in Political Science for Class XI* 2024, 60–63).

Shankar, Copyright: Children's Book Trust.

**READ A CARTOON**



29 May 1949

These members of the ruling party are trying to listen to the 'tiny' opposition! Was this the effect of our electoral system?

Source: (*Indian Constitution at Work: Textbook in Political Science for Class XI* 2024, 61)

This chapter further highlights the importance of reservation for marginalized sections, particularly under the provision for *Reserved Constituencies*. In the FPTP electoral system, the candidate securing the highest number of votes in a constituency is declared the winner. However, this often disadvantages smaller social groups, especially in the Indian context, where caste-based discrimination has a long history. In such a system, dominant social groups and castes may consistently win, leaving marginalized groups underrepresented. Recognizing this challenge, the framers of the Indian Constitution sought to ensure fair representation for oppressed social groups. This issue was discussed even before independence when the British introduced "separate electorates," allowing only members of a specific community to vote for their representative.

However, during the Constituent Assembly debates, many members felt this approach was unsuitable for India. Instead, the system of reserved constituencies was adopted, where all voters in a constituency can participate, but only candidates from the designated community or social group can contest for the reserved seat (*Indian Constitution at Work: Textbook in Political Science for Class XI* 2024, 63–64).

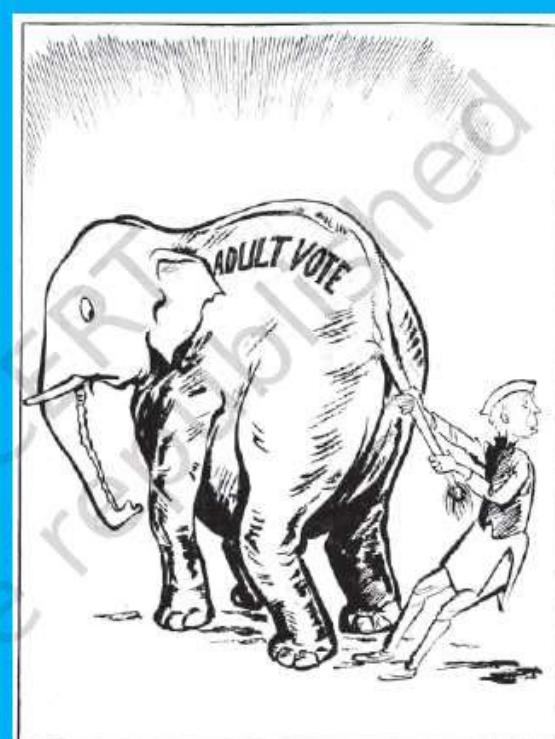
Therefore, the Constitution of India, through Articles 330 and 332, provides for the representation of SCs and STs in Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies, ensuring their political inclusion and empowerment. Article 330 mandates the “reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the House of the People (Lok Sabha)” to ensure their adequate representation (“*The Constitution of India, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India*” 2024, 189). In the same line, Article 332 provides for the “reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in the Legislative Assemblies of the States” to ensure their political representation and participation in governance (“*The Constitution of India, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India*” 2024, 190). Another significant provision for representation is found in Article 243D and Article 243T, which mandate the reservation of seats for SCs, STs, and women in local bodies, such as Panchayats and Municipalities (“*The Constitution of India, Ministry of Law and Justice, Government of India*” 2024, 121 & 129). These provisions reflect India’s commitment to social justice and equality by addressing the historical marginalization and underrepresentation of these communities, ensuring a proportionate allocation of seats in accordance with their population in each state.

To promote gender equality and representation in electoral politics, Indian Parliament passed the Women’s Reservation Bill, or ‘*Nari Shakti Vandana Adhiniyam*,’ in 2023. This historic legislation reserves 33% of seats for women in the Lok Sabha (the lower house of Parliament) and state legislative assemblies, addressing gender disparity in political representation and empowering women in governance (“*Women Reservation Bill 2023 (The Constitution One Hundred and Sixth Amendment Act, 2023)*”).

This chapter highlights the importance of free and fair elections, universal adult franchise, and the right to contest as pillars of democracy. A robust election system ensures impartiality, transparency, and the legitimate

expression of voters’ aspirations. Universal adult franchise grants all adult citizens the right to vote, a principle rooted in equality and non-discrimination. In India, this right was guaranteed by the Constitution, initially for citizens above 21 years of age, later reduced to 18 through a 1989 amendment. Despite debates over extending voting rights irrespective of education, the framers firmly believed in the equal worth of all adults in shaping society. Similarly, the right to contest elections is available to all citizens, with eligibility starting at 25 years for Lok Sabha or Assembly elections. While certain legal disqualifications exist, there are no restrictions based on income, education, class, or gender, ensuring inclusivity in India’s electoral system (*Indian Constitution at Work: Textbook in Political Science for Class XI* 2024, 65–67).

READ A CARTOON



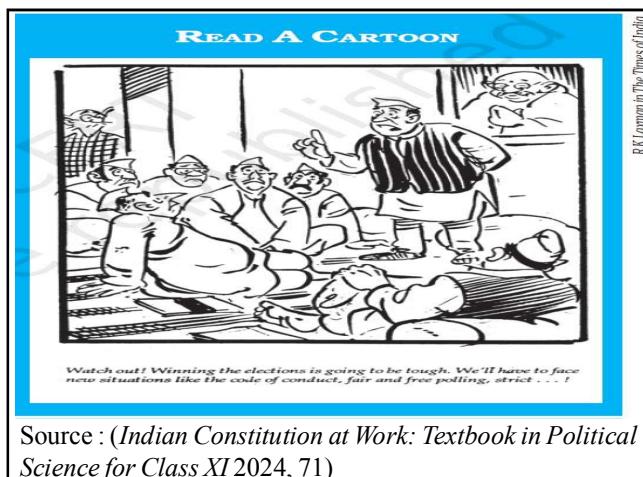
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Why is universal adult franchise compared to an elephant? Is it unmanageable? Or is it like the story in which everyone describes the elephant only by its parts?

This chapter also examines the Role of the *Independent Election Commission* in conducting free and fair elections. Efforts in India to ensure free and fair

elections are anchored in the establishment of the Election Commission of India (ECI), an independent body under Article 324 of the Constitution. The ECI oversees elections to Parliament, state legislatures, and the offices of the President and Vice-President. It operates with the support of Chief Electoral Officers in each state but does not handle local body elections, which fall under State Election Commissions. Initially, the ECI was a single-member body but became multi-member in 1993 to enhance accountability (*Indian Constitution at Work: Textbook in Political Science for Class XI* 2024, 67–68). The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners, appointed by the President, have equal powers. While this process has raised concerns about political influence, their tenure and removal are safeguarded to ensure independence. The ECI's key functions include preparing error-free voter lists, scheduling elections, implementing the Model Code of Conduct, and ensuring impartiality in polling. It can postpone or cancel elections if fairness is compromised, recognize political parties, and allot symbols. During elections, the ECI exercises control over administrative officers to maintain neutrality. Since 1951–52, the Election Commission has conducted numerous elections, overcoming challenges like militancy, violence, and political crises, ensuring fairness through measures like postponing polls when necessary (*Indian Constitution at Work: Textbook in Political Science for Class XI* 2024, 69–70).



Source : (*Indian Constitution at Work: Textbook in Political Science for Class XI* 2024, 71)

This chapter discusses *electoral reforms*, emphasizing that no system is flawless. A democratic society must continually strive to improve mechanisms that ensure elections are as free and fair as possible. In

India, the adoption of adult suffrage, the freedom to contest elections, and the establishment of an independent Election Commission have been significant steps toward achieving this goal. However, over the past 72 years, various experiences have highlighted the need for reforms in the electoral system. The Election Commission, political parties, independent organizations, and many scholars have proposed numerous suggestions for improving elections, including amendments to some constitutional provisions discussed in this chapter:

- “Our system of elections should be changed from the FPTP to some variant of the PR system. This would ensure that parties get seats, as far as possible, in proportion to the votes they get.
- There should be stricter provisions to control the role of money in electoral politics. The elections expenses should be paid by the government out of a special fund.
- Candidates with any criminal case should be barred from contesting elections, even if their appeal is pending before a court.
- There should be complete ban on the use of caste and religious appeals in the campaign.
- There should be a law to regulate the functioning of political parties and to ensure that they function in a transparent and democratic manner” (*Indian Constitution at Work: Textbook in Political Science for Class XI* 2024, 72–73).

These suggestions are not universally agreed upon. Laws alone cannot ensure free and fair elections; candidates, parties, and participants must embrace



Source: (*Indian Constitution at Work: Textbook in Political Science for Class XI* 2024, 73)

democratic competition. People must remain vigilant, but political institutions and voluntary organizations are also essential for monitoring and ensuring the integrity of election.

### Conclusion

Promoting electoral literacy in schools is an essential step toward building an informed, responsible, and active citizenry, and the role of NCERT textbooks in Political Science is critical in this process. These textbooks, particularly in the context of political science education, play a vital role in imparting foundational knowledge about democracy, governance, and the electoral process. The integration of electoral literacy into the NCERT curriculum helps shape young minds to understand their rights and responsibilities as future voters, thus contributing to the overall strength and sustainability of democratic institutions.

NCERT textbooks on Political Science, such as those in *Democratic Politics II* for Class X, effectively introduce students to the core principles of democracy, the structure of governance, and the functioning of the electoral system. These textbooks outline key concepts like the significance of free and fair elections, the role of political parties and candidates, the concept of universal suffrage, and the mechanisms of voting. By presenting these topics in a clear and engaging manner, the NCERT textbooks aim to spark curiosity and awareness among students about the democratic processes that shape our country's future.

The emphasis on electoral literacy in the curriculum empowers students by equipping them with knowledge about the electoral system, voting procedures, and their rights as voters. It ensures that they are not just passive recipients of information but active participants in the democratic process. One of the most significant aspects of the Political Science textbooks is their ability to contextualize electoral processes in the real world, enabling students to understand the impact of their votes and the importance of an informed electorate in shaping the direction of the nation. As students learn about these processes, they also become more critical of the political system, which helps them make informed choices when they become eligible to vote.

Moreover, the inclusion of electoral literacy in NCERT textbooks is vital for promoting democratic values like equality, justice, and inclusion. These textbooks encourage students to think about the significance of

electoral participation, not just as a right but as a responsibility. They highlight how voting is a powerful tool for citizens to influence policy decisions, advocate for social justice, and strengthen the democratic fabric of the nation. Through discussions on topics such as gender representation, minority rights, and the need for inclusive voting, students become aware of the social dimensions of the electoral process and are encouraged to promote a fair and just electoral environment.

The integration of electoral literacy within NCERT textbooks also aligns with the broader goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes the need to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for informed and active participation in a democracy. NEP 2020 envisions a holistic approach to education, where students are not only prepared academically but are also trained to become responsible citizens who understand their role in upholding democratic ideals. Electoral literacy plays a pivotal role in achieving this vision by providing students with a practical understanding of how they can actively engage in and contribute to democratic governance.

In conclusion, promoting electoral literacy in schools through the NCERT textbooks of political science is a fundamental step in shaping informed, responsible, and active future voters. These textbooks lay the foundation for students to understand the electoral system, their rights as voters, and their roles in promoting democratic values. By ensuring that students are well-equipped to engage with the electoral process, the curriculum not only strengthens democracy but also empowers the next generation to take part in building a more inclusive, just, and participatory society. The integration of electoral literacy in education paves the way for a more informed electorate, contributing to the continued growth and success of democratic systems worldwide.

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