

ELECTIONS IN INDIA.

Just as you voted in an election, the Indian people also vote in elections. In national elections, people vote to elect members of the Lok Sabha. In state elections, people vote to elect members of the Legislative Assembly.

CONSTITUENCIES.

For an election, the whole country is divided into parts. Each part is called a constituency. Usually several candidates stand for election from a constituency. The person who wins the election becomes the representative of the people of that constituency. Constituencies for a national election are bigger than for a state election. For example, Delhi has 7 constituencies for a national election but the same area has 70 constituencies for a state election.

POLITICAL PARTIES AND CANDIDATES.

A political party is a group of people who have the same ideas about how a government should work. There are many political parties in India. Each has an election symbol. Before an election, the parties select their candidates to stand for election for each constituency. The candidates ask the people to vote for them through speeches, advertisements, posters and so on. These help people decide which candidate they would like to vote for.

THE ELECTION COMMISSION.

The Election Commission is an organization that supervises each election and makes sure that elections are held in the right way. The Constitution has made it an independent organization-which means that it is not controlled by any government.

Before the election-A citizen of India, who is 18 years of age or older, has the right to vote. However, all citizens have to first register as voters with the Election Commission. Each registered voter is given a voter ID card. The Election Commission prepares an electoral roll that contains the names of all registered voters. The Election Commission announces the dates for the elections as well as the rules that parties and candidates must follow. It also announces the date on which the votes will be counted. It sets up several polling booths in each constituency where people go to vote.

On election day-The Election Commission makes arrangements so that people can vote freely, without being afraid. This is why there are many policemen on duty to make sure that everything remains peaceful. Polling booths have electronic voting machines (EVMs) that have the names and the election symbols of the candidates in that constituency. Voters press a button next to the symbol of their chosen candidate. People who cannot read can recognize the symbols and press the right button. Before a person votes, one finger is marked with an ink that cannot be rubbed off. Inside the polling booth, the EVM is hidden behind a screen. No one can see which candidate the voter has voted for. This is called a secret ballot.

DECLARATION OF RESULTS.

The Election Commission organizes the counting of votes and announces the results. The EVMs make it easy to count the votes, so the election result is usually declared quite quickly. The candidate who gets the most votes in a constituency is elected as the representative of the people of the constituency. After a few days, the new Lok Sabha or the new Legislative Assembly meets. The members are elected for 5 years. The party with the most members in the house chooses a leader who will be the Prime Minister or the Chief Minister. This party forms the government. The members of the other parties form the Opposition. It is their responsibility to ask the government questions about its policies.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VOTING.

Elected members face another election after 5 years. If they do not carry out the promises they made, they may not get re-elected. It is the responsibility of the public to be aware of how their elected representatives are carrying out their duties and to vote accordingly in the next election. This is what makes the people of a country powerful in a democracy. Many registered voters do not vote. One reason is that they think that their vote will not make a difference among many millions of votes. However, if enough people feel that something is important, for example protection of the environment-and they all vote for candidates who promise to protect it, their vote will definitely make a difference. Therefore, it is

the duty of citizens of voting age to make sure that they register their names with the Election Commission and to vote in every election. They must make their choice very carefully after thinking about each candidate and the promises made. A democratic system can only function well if the people participate in it fully. It is every citizen's duty to make sure that this happens.

SUMMARY.

- 1) The states, and the country, are divided into constituencies.
- 2) Political parties select candidates for each constituency.
- 3) The Election Commission supervises elections in India.
- 4) All Indian citizens of 18 years or above have the right to vote.
- 5) The political party that has the most winning candidates forms the government.
- 6) It is the civic duty of all eligible citizens to vote in elections.
- 7) The first election in independent India took place in 1951-52. Since then elections have been held regularly to elect governments to rule the country.