

# DEMOCRACY, FRANCHISE, & ELECTIONS

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# Contemporary Indian politics?

- One nation, One vote?
- Proportional voting versus Single Member District Plurality (SMDP)?
- Parliamentary versus Presidential System?
- Is Democracy the will or the majority or a process of forging consensus or a mechanism to protect rights of individuals and groups?
- Democracy with Adjectives?

# In next 60-90 mins?

- India's democratic journey: why did it choose certain paths and what does that mean for the country and its people?
- The challenge Indian democracy faced since its foundation and how it negotiated – some hits and misses
- Three Pillars : Accommodation, Electoral Process, Participation & Representation
- Ongoing debate on “Global Democracy Deficit”

# PART 1: ACCOMMODATION

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# Exceptional democracy?

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- No other developing nation (except Costa Rica) has had such a successful run as a democracy since World War II
- Exception to classical democracy theory which says poor nations can't survive as democracies
- Fissiparous tendencies and the dangerous decade

# Challenges at the foundation?

- A poor and illiterate population
- Diversities in language, religion, caste, ethnicity
- Highly unequal and stratified society
- An extremely weak state capacity
- Negligible industrial base
- Twin objectives of state building and nation building

# India's accommodative democracy

- The imperatives of integrating diverse sections of society, especially ethnic and linguistic minorities
- India as a state-nation instead of a nation-state?
- Constitutional safeguards and political concessions
- Historical Consensus & Consociationalism
- Congress system, the opposition as parties of pressure

# Affirmative action and social democracy

- Nehru and the Objective Resolution
- BR Ambedkar had warned that the constitution gave India political democracy, but not social or economic democracy
- India provided lower castes with the largest affirmative action program in the world
- Religious minorities?
- Failure of Land Reforms? Mixed Economic System?



# The birth of linguistic states

- The 1950s saw language riots
- The demands for linguistic states and Nehruvian hesitance
- The States Reorganisation Act, 1956
- The formation of linguistic states in stages
- Backwardness as a criteria for state formation?

# PART 2: ELECTORAL PROCESS

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# Elections and Universal franchise

- Was 1947 a decisive break from the colonial past or a continuation of past institutional arrangements?
- •In the thirty years before Independence, there had been a slow and incremental development of representative institutions in India.
- Universal franchise expanded Indian electorate from 10% of the population to 100% of the population
- A revolutionary step that reimagined the social contract between the state and the citizen
- Abolition of separate electorates and universal citizenship

# The challenges to free and fair election

- The autonomy of the Election Commission and interference of the government of the day.
- Electoral Reforms such as postal ballots, Electronic Voting Machine and VVPAT
- Is Model Code of Conduct sufficient as deterrence?

# India's Political Class

- Upper caste over-represented
- Under-representation of lower caste, women and religious minorities
- Increasing presence of political families, wealth, criminalisation?
- High Electoral turnover?

# PART 3: PARTICIPATION & REPRESENTATION

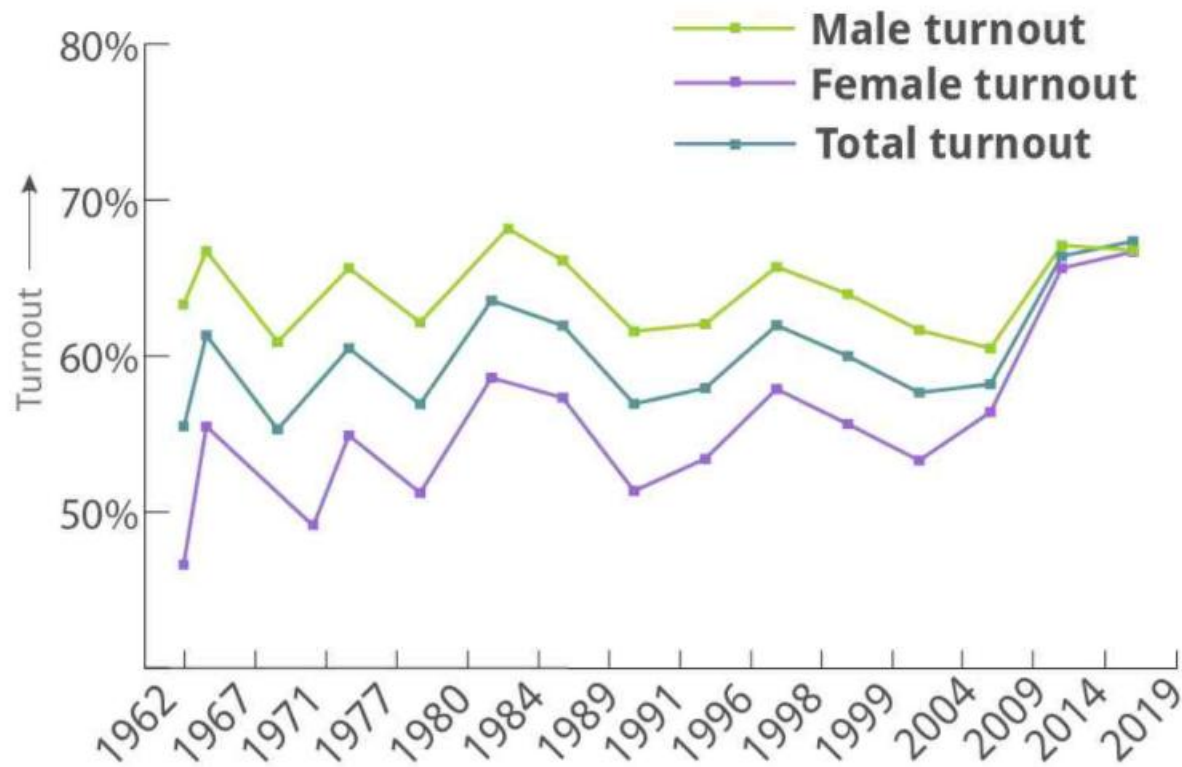
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# Turnout

- The turnout in the 2019 - the highest ever at 67.1
- Turnout in LS elections has gradually but steadily increased from the first election in 1951 where it was 45.67%
- Increase in turnout among the marginalised – women, lower castes, Muslims?
- Turnout in national elections Vs state Vs local bodies?
- Missing voters – women, poor, minorities, migrants

# The march of women voters

**Gender-wise participation in general elections, 1962-2019**





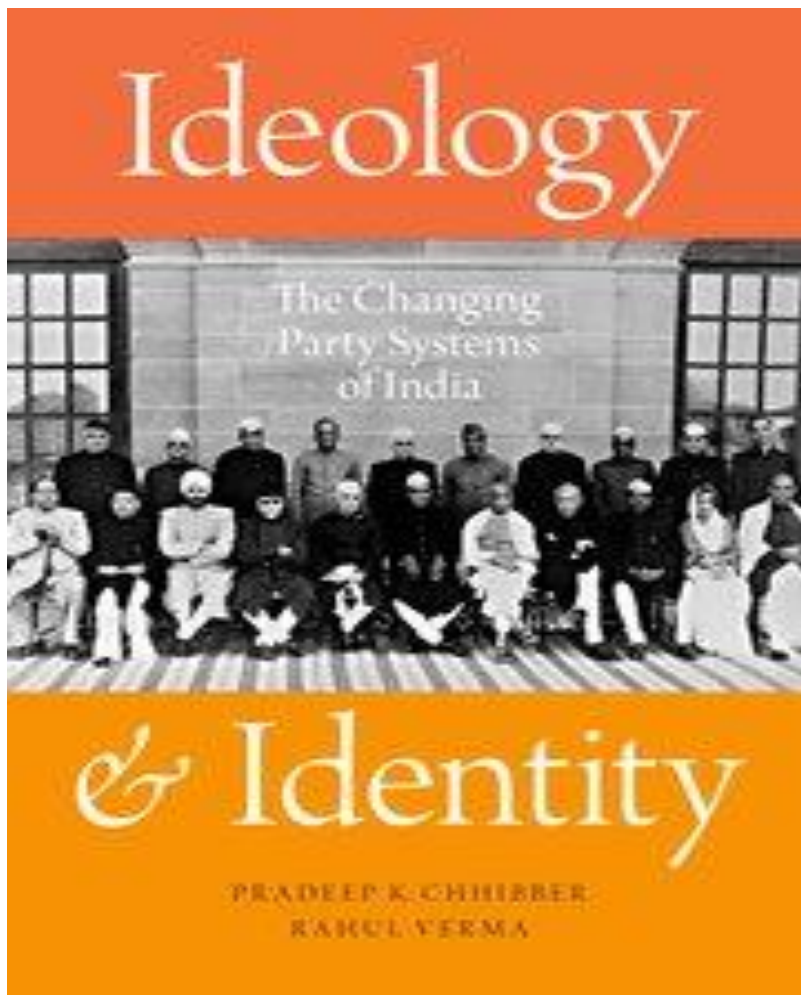
# How Indians Vote?

- Indians don't cast vote, but vote their caste
- Identities – caste, region, religion
- patronage democracy – vote in exchange of goodies
- Ideological foundations

# India's different Party systems

- A party system is used as a shorthand to describe the dynamics of political competition and principles underlying it.
- First party system: Congress dominance (1952 to 1967)
- Second Party system: Growing opposition at state level (1967 to 1989)
- Third Party system: The era of coalition politics (1989 to 2014)
- Fourth Party system: BJP dominance (2014 onwards)

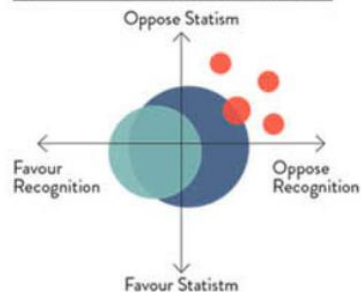
# Ideology and Party System Change



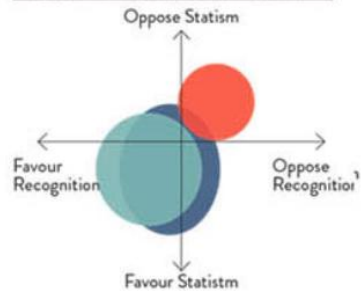
**FIGURE 1**  
**THE FOUR PARTY SYSTEMS OF INDIA**

- BJP / RIGHT-WING PARTIES
- CONGRESS ● REGIONAL PARTIES

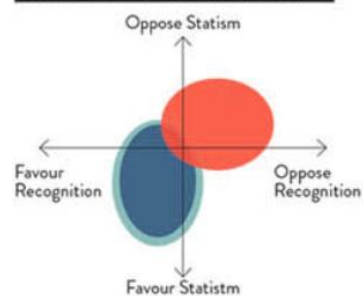
**FIRST PARTY SYSTEM (1952-1966)**



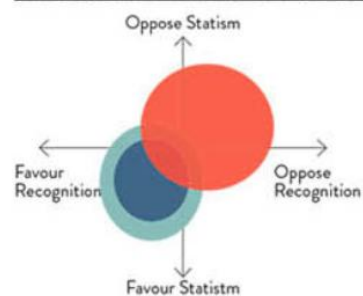
**SECOND PARTY SYSTEM (1967-1988)**



**THIRD PARTY SYSTEM (1989-2013)**



**FOURTH PARTY SYSTEM (2014-PRESENT)**



1. The X-axis represents Politics of Recognition and Y-axis represents Politics of Statism. 2. These circles are just indicative and do not accurately represent a party's vote share. 3. Regional Parties include the Left parties and various state parties.

# DEMOCRATISATION

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# Democracy: A goal?

- Democracy is based on limited government and division of powers as originally described by John Locke and Montesquieu respectively
- Independent institutions such as free press and judiciary constrain the power of the state and protect the sphere of rights of the citizens
- Democracy also depends on an effective civil society: a body of engaged, informed and autonomous citizens which can hold the government accountable
- Dahl's polyarchy: economic society, political society, the rule of law, efficient administration, and civil society.

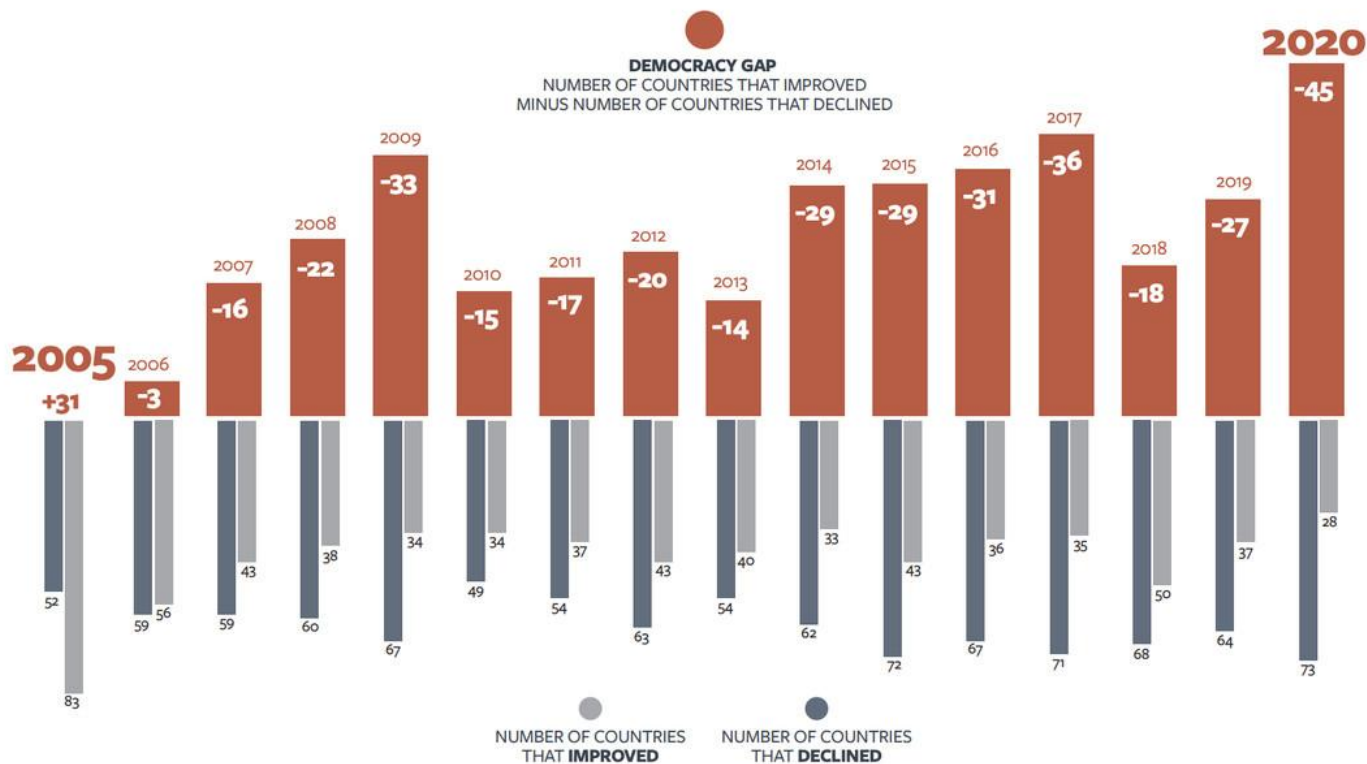
# Waves of Democracy

- Three waves of democracy- Samuel Huntington
- Global democracy has progressed as a series of three waves and reverse waves.
- Is global democracy in recession?
- Is India part of this supposed democratic recession?

# Democracy Deficit

## A GROWING DEMOCRACY GAP: 15 YEARS OF DECLINE

Countries with aggregate score declines in *Freedom in the World* have outnumbered those with gains every year for the past 15 years.



# Democratisation in India

- Democracy is a goal to be achieved, and often exists in some state of imperfection
- Modern representative democracies emerged in the 18th century, but they only became inclusive in the 19th and 20th centuries
- In India, the processes of democratisation have progressively brought hitherto marginalised sections into the mainstream of democratic structures
- The democratic upsurge of the 80s and 90s (Yadav)
- Procedural Democracy versus substantive democracy



THANK YOU !!

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