



Mains Practice Question

Q. What are Election manifestos? Explain the significance and challenges of election manifestos in Indian democracy?

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Approach

- Describe Election Manifesto.
- Explain the significance of Election Manifestos.
- Describe the challenges associated with election manifestos.

Answer

Introduction:

- An Election Manifesto is a formal statement by a political party, in which they state their aims and policies which they commit to achieve if and when they are voted to power.
- Election manifestos function as signaling devices for understanding the priorities of a political party.

Body

Significance of Election Manifestos

- **Information:** Election manifestos are source of authentic information regarding the policies of political parties. They carry higher substance than vague commitments made in political rallies.
- **Choice:** Election Manifestos represent choices available before the electorates. Available choices can be discerned through the more factual goals given in manifestos in comparison to abstract ideological position of political parties and rhetoric of election rallies.
- **Competition:** Election manifestos underline the competitive nature of electoral politics. Election manifestos highlight that aspirations and expectations of citizens are critical basis of electoral exercises, which are given concrete shape in form of manifestos.
- **Instrument for mass mobilization:** Manifestos are important tool for mass mobilization. Political parties publicize their manifestos in a bid to shore up electoral support in their favor.
- **Source of debate and discussion:** Election manifestos generate debates and discussion on issues which are considered important for elections.

Challenges of Election Manifestos in India

- **Problem of implementation:** Despite formal mention in manifestos the political parties usually are reluctant to implement their pre poll promises stated in manifestos e.g. right to health has been mentioned in manifestos of leading political parties however the budget allocated to health remain very low making it impossible to implement the commitment in manifestos.
- **Generic promises:** Manifestos are filled with generic commitments e.g. like 'good governance'; however they are not accompanied by specific dimensions of good governance. Long term

commitments are emphasized at the cost of short term specific actions.

- **Promises of freebies:** Election manifestos promising freebies harm the free and fair electoral process. Freebies enhance the influence of money in electoral process.
- **Lack of accountability:** When they come to power, political parties refuse to implement their pre poll electoral promises stated in manifestos and there is no way they can be held accountable.
- **Electorally insignificant:** Manifestos in Indian electoral process have failed to achieve prominence due to several reasons like lack of existence of their awareness in voters, importance of other factors like caste, religion and ethnicity in voting behavior, lack of emphasis on factual debate in elections by political parties by emphasizing emotive issues of identity.
- **Diversity:** Election manifestos in India are difficult to draw for national parties due to enormous diversity in population having their own aspirations. Regional parties are more suited to understand the regional priorities and face lesser challenges in coming up with election manifestos to address the regional aspirations.

Conclusion:

- Election manifestos are significant document in electoral process. The Election commission and political parties should raise awareness among people regarding their utility in elections. As awareness will increase regarding manifestos political parties will face greater accountability with respect to implementation of promises in manifestos.

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