

BACKGROUND NOTE FOR THE T.N. SESHAN CHAIR ON ELECTORAL STUDIES

Election Commission of India – A constitutional organ

- The Commission is an authority created by the Constitution¹. The framers of the Indian Constitution had analysed the experience of Elections in the British India, other successful democracies and also nascent democracies. Provisions were accordingly made in the Constitution to ensure that the party in power at any time might not be placed in a position to influence the conduct of elections in a manner which would go to favour its own interest².
- The success of parliamentary Government largely depends upon systematic organisation of political parties and fair elections to legislative bodies. Elections can be free, fair and transparent only if they are held without any interference from the Govt. of the day. The Constitution has laid down special provisions with a view to securing fair and free elections to the legislative bodies.
- The framers of the Indian constitution had adopted the best practices from the successful democracies. It is evident from the debates of the Constituent Assembly. “If the object of this House is that all matters relating to elections should be outside the control of the Executive Government of the day, it is absolutely necessary that the new machinery which we are setting up, namely, the Election Commission should be irremovable by the Executive by a mere fiat. We have, therefore, given the Chief Election Commissioner the same status so far as removability is concerned as we have given to the Judge of the Supreme Court.”³

Election Commission of India- As a Role Model

- India is the largest democracy in the world. It is since independence that its election process to various legislative bodies is keenly watched by all the countries.
- During last over 68 years, the Election Commission of India has been in a unique position to demonstrate its capabilities for conducting successful elections in a timely manner.

1. Saliq Ali Vs Election Commission AIR1972 SC-187

2. Narrative and Statistical Report, 1951, Sukumar Sen, Election Commission of India, Page 3

3. Vol. VII P 905-7

- Independence of the ECI, its capacities and ever increasing capability in meeting emerging challenges, has immensely contributed to our Electoral democracy and its continuous strengthening. Innovative initiatives and pioneer concepts, particularly, the methodology for meeting the emerging challenges, are being adopted by nascent democracies and are also being appreciated by the successful democracies, across the globe.

Establishment of India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM)

- Realising the imperative need for specifically designed professional competencies and in order to keep the Election Managers abreast of the latest developments and smart practices throughout the globe, India International Institute of Democracy and Election Management (IIIDEM) was established on Jun17, 2011 as the training and resource wing of Election Commission of India. The institute was conceived to train, prepare and equip election officials and other stakeholders for delivery of free, fair, credible and error- free elections cutting across boundaries and ethnicities⁴.
- As a part of expansion and development, new centres of national, international training and e- learning were created and IIIDEM office shifted into a new and sprawling campus at Dwarka, New Delhi which consists of an Institutional block, provisioned with a Hostel facility of over 90 rooms and a 450 seater Auditorium⁵. Training in professional skills and in ethical values, on democracy and election management is an emerging phenomenon globally and there are very few examples of institutions which cater to this growing necessity of the democratic world. IIIDEM aptly fills this gap and aims to fully sensitize, motivate, prepare and mobilize the machinery as well as the as the stakeholders of the international democratic community and helping them overcome crucial shortcomings and challenges of election management ⁶.

Strategic Plan

- The Election Commission of India after studying and reviewing the best practices in other countries including Canada, Australia, USA and New Zealand etc. devised its ‘Strategic Plan 2025’⁷. It is with a view to put its best foot forward to address the ensuing challenges and also to usher in an era of electoral governance to be adopted and replicated world over. Process will further strengthen the fundamentals of global democracy.

4. IIIDEM Strategic Plan 2017, Page 7

5. IIIDEM International Brochure, 2019

6. IIIDEM Strategic Plan, Page

7. Available at <http://www.elections.ca/content.aspx?section=abo&document=index&lang=e>
http://www.aec.gov.au/about_aec/Publications/Corporate_Publications/index.htm
http://www.fec.gov/pages/strategic_plan/FECStrategicPlan2014-2019.pdf
http://www.elections.org.nz/sites/default/files/bulkupload/documents/electoral_commission_soi_2014-2021.pdf

- The IIIDEM strives to be an Institution of Excellence by enhancing active engagement, participation; and deepening and strengthening electoral democracy in India and globally.

Establishment of T.N. Seshan chair on Electoral studies

- Sh. T.N. Seshan former Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) by virtue of his vibrant, dynamic and quintessentially eternal thought process, had generated incredible confidence in the working of ECI.
- The methodology, practice and procedures introduced by Sh. Seshan for conducting free, fair transparent, timely and successful elections were appreciated and adopted widely.
- Keeping in view the enduring contribution of Sh. T.N.Seshan to the cause of probity, transparency and integrity in various aspects of electoral process, ECI on 16.11.2019 announced the establishment of a chair in his memory.
- Dr. N. Gopaldaswami, former CEC has kindly agreed for mentoring this chair.
- The Chair programme is open for young academics, civil servants, researchers who have specialized in fields relatable to electoral studies such as Election Management, Political Science, Economics, Management, Law, Mass Communication, IT, ICT and Statistics, the programme is expected to stimulate the development of an academic genre focusing on election management studies and its multi facilitated and interdisciplinary dimensions. It is expected to foster interdisciplinary research and outlook by creating new areas of research as well as ideas, for engaging with various stakeholders in democratic process and in election management⁸.
- The chair will monitor and guide researchers associated with IIIDEM.

8. TN Seshan Chair on Electoral Studies Scheme Document Page.