

1. WHAT ARE ELECTION MANIFESTOS? EXPLAIN THE SIGNIFICANCE AND CHALLENGES OF ELECTION MANIFESTOS IN INDIAN DEMOCRACY?

An Election Manifesto is a formal statement by a political party issued at the time of election. It states the aims and policies of the party which they commit to achieve if and when they are voted to power. It reflects the ideology and enables the people in understanding the priorities of a political party.

It is a chief source of information for the voters regarding the political parties. 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.

Such manifestos underline the competitive nature of electoral politics. They highlight that aspirations and expectations of citizens are critical basis of electoral exercises, which are given concrete shape in form of manifestos. Manifestos are important tool for mass mobilization. Political parties publicize their manifestos in a bid to shore up electoral support in their favour. They generate debates and discussion on issues which are considered important for elections.

Challenges of Election Manifestos in India

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.