



# Democratic Setup of India and the History of Delimitation orders of Parliamentary Constituencies

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## Abstract

India is the largest democracy of the world. India has a bicameral parliament operating under a Westminster-style parliamentary system, which consists of the upper house called the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) and the lower house called the Lok Sabha (House of People). The parliamentary constituencies in India have been delimited four times by the Independent Delimitation Commission prior to the general elections held in 2009. The first delimitation was done in 1956 under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1952. The other three delimitations were done in the year 1966, 1974 and 2008 under orders of the Delimitation Commission Acts, 1962, 1973 and 2002 respectively. This paper makes an attempt to make an inquiry into the Indian democratic setup along with arrangements of parliamentary constituencies after every delimitation order.

**Keywords:** Bicameral, Westminster-style, Delimitation, Council of States, House of People.

## Introduction

Spreading over an area of 32,87,263 Km.<sup>2</sup> India is the seventh-largest country by geographical area, the second-most populous country with over 1.35 billion people, and the most populous democracy in the World. It sprawls from the snowy ranges of the Himalayas in the north to the shores of the Indian Ocean in the south. It belongs to the Asia which is the largest continent of the World (Khullar, 2006, p.1).

Lying entirely in the northern hemisphere, India extends between 8° 4' North to 37° 6' North latitude and 68° 7' East to 97° 25' East longitude (Mamoria, 1992, p.1). The northern most part of Indian mainland lies in Jammu and Kashmir and southern point near Kanyakumari in Tamilnadu. Away from the main land of India, the southernmost point of the country in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, the Pygmalion Point which is now known as Indira Point is located at 6° 45' North latitude (Khullar, 2006, p.1). The maximum stretch of the country from north to south is 3214 Km and from east to west is 2933 Km. Its land frontier is 15200 Km and coastal line 7517 Km. (including Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshdweep). The territorial

water of India extends into the sea to a distance of twelve nautical miles measured from the appropriate base line (Kumar et al., 2006, p.530).

India became an independent nation in 1947 after a struggle for independence that was marked by widespread non-violent resistance. India has emerged as a super power and an economic power along with Russia, China and Japan in Asia. Its large resource base and formidable human resource have put it at par with these Asian leaders (Tikkha et al., 2006, p.3). The Indian economy is the World's eleventh largest economy by nominal GDP and the fourth largest by purchasing power parity (IMF, 2009) Economic reforms since 1991 have transformed it into one of the fastest growing economies in the World (ERS, 2007).

The Constitution of India, the longest and the most exhaustive constitution of any independent nation in the World, came into force on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1950 (Pylee, 2004, p. 4). The preamble of the constitution defines India as a *Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic, Republic* (Dutt, 1998, p. 421). India has a bicameral parliament operating under a Westminster-style parliamentary system. Its form of government was traditionally described as being 'quasi-federal' with a strong center and weaker states (Wheare, 1964, p. 28), but it has grown increasingly federal since the late 1990s as a result of political, economic and social changes (Echeverri-Gent, 2002, pp. 19-20).

## Major Question of Inquiry

In this paper an attempt has been made to make an inquiry into the Indian democratic setup along with arrangements of parliamentary constituencies after every delimitation order up to the parliamentary general election held in 2019.

## Democratic Setup of India

The President of India is the head of state elected indirectly by an electoral college for a five-year term (Gledhill, 1964. p. 127). The Prime Minister is the head of government and exercises most executive powers. Appointed by the President, the Prime Minister is by convention supported by the party or political alliance holding the majority of seats in the lower house of Parliament (Sharma, 1950). The executive branch consists of the President, Vice-President, and the Council of Ministers (the Cabinet being its executive committee) headed by the Prime Minister. Any minister holding a portfolio must be a member of either house of parliament or must be elected within six months to the either house after resuming the charge of the office. In the Indian parliamentary system, the executive is subordinate to the legislature, with the Prime Minister and his Council being directly responsible to the lower house of the parliament (Matthew, 2003, p. 524).

The legislature of India is the bicameral parliament, which consists of the upper house called the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) and the lower house called the Lok Sabha (House of People). The Rajya Sabha, a permanent body, has 245 members serving staggered six-year terms. Most are elected indirectly by the state and territorial legislatures in proportion to the state's population. 543 of the Lok Sabha's 545 members are directly elected by popular vote to represent individual constituencies for five-year terms. The other two members are nominated by the

President from the Anglo-Indian community if the President is of the opinion that the community is not adequately represented (Gledhill, 1964, p. 112).

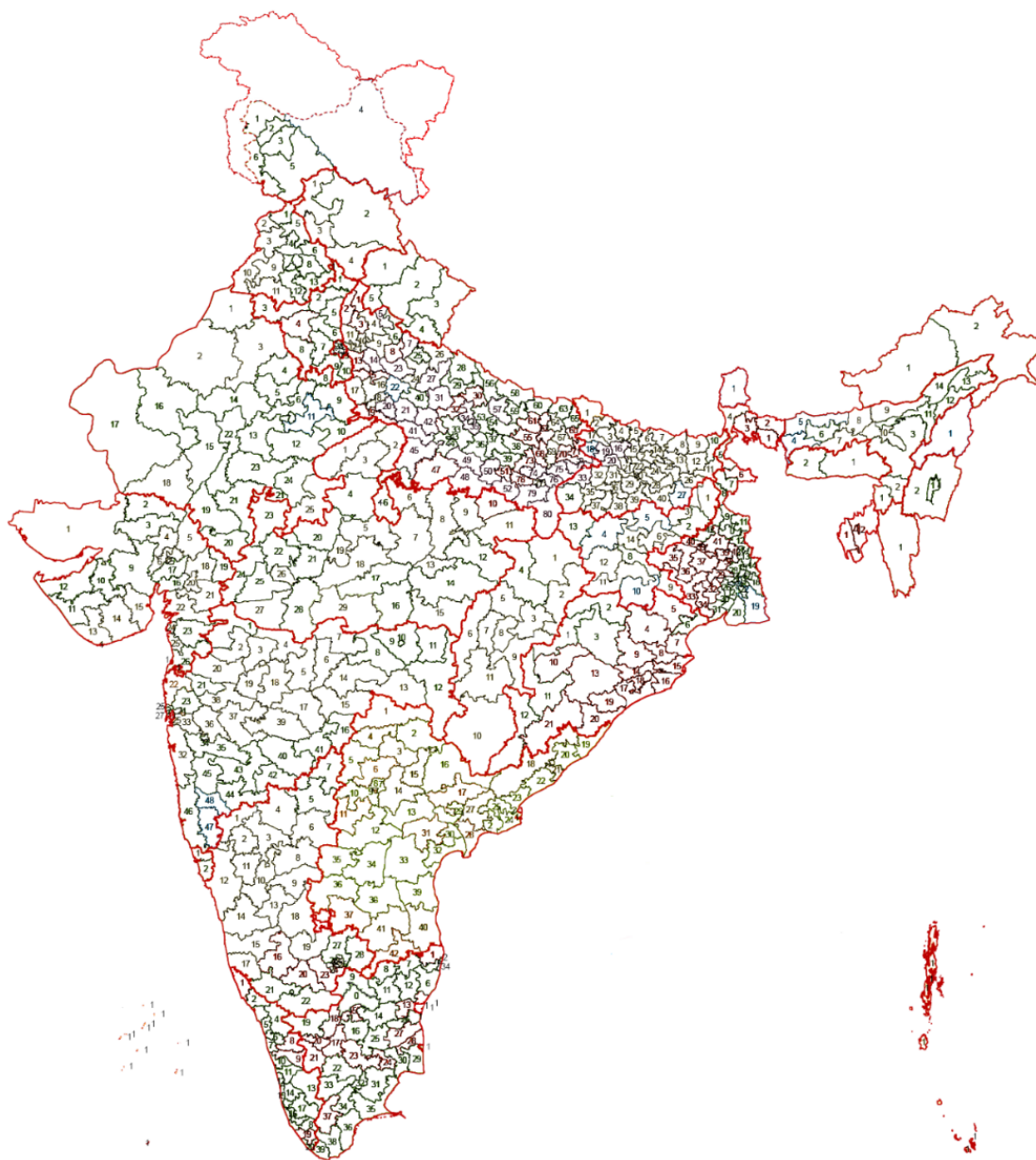
## **Delimitation Orders of Parliamentary Constituencies**

The constituencies in India have been delimited four times by the Independent Delimitation Commission prior to the general elections held in 2009. In India the first delimitation was done in 1956 under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1952. The other three delimitations were done in the year 1966, 1974 and 2008 under orders of the Delimitation Commission Acts, 1962, 1973 and 2002 respectively. There were 86 double member constituencies in 1952 which increased to 91 in 1957 general elections. But in 1952 the North Bengal constituency was designated as three-member constituency. In these constituencies the electorate could exercise their franchise as many times as there were the number of seats. The total number of seats were 489 in 1952. The whole country was divided into 314 single member, 86 double member and one three-member constituency. In 1957 general elections there were 494 seats in the parliament, out of these 312 single members and 91 double member constituencies.

Reservation of seats for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) as per the constitutional provision was the main reason for the creation of double member constituencies. The Constitution of India under Article 330 (2) stipulates that the number of seats reserved for these two categories of social groups should as far as possible be in the same proportion as their population in the total population of state/country.

The double member constituencies were however not favoured by the political parties and candidates because of their size. The double member constituencies were consequently scrapped just before the 1962 general elections by the two member constituencies Abolition Act, 1961. The act merely bifurcates the existing double member constituencies to create two single member constituencies, one reserved and another unreserved leaving all other aspects of the 1956 Delimitation Commission Order unchanged. Thus, the numbers of constituencies were remained unchanged to 494 in 1962 elections. For the 1967 Lok Sabha elections the numbers of constituencies were increased from 494 to 520 on the basis of the second Delimitation Commission Order.

Seats for Himachal Pradesh, when it becomes a new state in 1971, were reduced from six to four constituencies. Thus, the total numbers of constituencies were reduced to 518. But in 1977, again the total number of constituencies increased to 542 as per the provision of the third Delimitation Commission Order, 1974 and further, the number increased to 543 with the granting of statehood to Goa in 1987. So, in the general elections of 1989 the number of constituencies increased from 542 to 543. The fourth delimitation was done in the year 2008 but the number of constituencies remained unchanged for 543 with just making some adjustments in the boundaries of the existing constituencies (See Map 1).



Source:[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_constituencies\\_of\\_the\\_Lok\\_Sabha](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_constituencies_of_the_Lok_Sabha)

**Figure 1.India Parliamentary constituencies**

The constituencies reserved for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) have also been increased on the basis of population as per 2001 census. The details of changes which took place in the parliamentary constituencies in India are given in Table 1.

**Table 1. Major Changes in the Parliamentary Constituencies in India**

Year	General Seats	Scheduled Caste Seats	Scheduled Tribe Seats	Total Seats	Remarks
1952	303	72	26	401	Delimitation under President of India
1957	296	76	31	403*	First Delimitation Commission Order, 1956
1962	390	76	31	494**	Two member Constituencies Abolition Act, 1961
1967	406	77	37	520	Second Delimitation Commission Order (1966)
1971	405	76	31	518***	Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966
1977	426	78	38	542	Third Delimitation Commission Order, 1974
1980	423	79	40	542****	
1984	423	78	41	542	
1989	424	78	41	543*****	
1991	424	78	41	543	
1996	424	78	41	543	
1998	424	78	41	543	
1999	424	78	41	543	
2004	424	78	41	543	
2009	412	84	47	543	Fourth Delimitation Commission Order, 2008
2014	412	84	47	543	
2019	412	84	47	543	

\*The only one triple member constituency was abolished and the number of double member constituencies were increased from 81 to 91.

\*\*The double member constituencies were abolished and two single member constituencies were created.

\*\*\*On the formation of full-fledged state, the number of constituencies reduced from 6 to 4 in Himachal Pradesh.

\*\*\*\*The election was not held in 13 constituencies (12 in Assam and one in Meghalaya) in 1980 general elections due to non-filing of nomination papers by any candidate. Therefore, during 1980-84, the number of seats in the Lok Sabha was not more than 529.

\*\*\*\*\*On 30<sup>th</sup> May, 1987 Goa became a state with two Lok Sabha seats, while Daman & Diu remained a Union Territory with one Lok Sabha seat.

At present India is consisting of 28 states and 9 union territories with a parliamentary system of democracy. All states, and the two union territories of Puducherry and the National Capital Territory of Delhi, have elected legislatures and governments patterned on the Westminster model. The other seven union territories are directly ruled by the Centre through appointed administrators. In 1956, under the State's Reorganisation Act, states were formed on a linguistic basis (CLII, 2007). Since then, this structure has remained largely unchanged. Each state or union territory is further divided into administrative districts. The districts in turn are further divided into tehsils and eventually into villages.

India is the largest democracy of the World. For most of the years since independence, the federal government has been led by the Indian National Congress (INC). Politics in the states have been dominated by several national parties including the INC, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)) and various regional parties. From 1950 to 1990, barring two brief periods, the INC enjoyed a parliamentary majority. The INC was out of power between 1977 and 1980, when the Janata Party won the election owing to public discontent with the state of emergency declared by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. In 1989, a Janata Dal-led National Front coalition in alliance with the Left Front coalition won the elections but managed to stay in power for only two years (Bhambhri, 1992, pp. 118, 147).

As the 1991 elections gave no political party a majority, the INC formed a minority government under Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao and was able to complete its five-year term. (The Hindu, 2004). The years 1996-1998 were a period of turmoil in the federal government with several short-lived alliances holding sway. The BJP formed a government briefly in 1996, followed by the United Front coalition that excluded both the BJP and the INC. In 1999, the BJP formed the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) with several other parties and became the first non-Congress government to complete a full five-year term. (Dunleavy et al., 2007, p. 11).

In the 2004 Indian elections, the INC won the largest number of Lok Sabha seats and formed a government with a coalition called the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), supported by various Left-leaning parties and members opposed to the BJP (Hermann and Dietmar, 2004, p. 384). The UPA again came into power in the 2009 general election; however, the representation of the Left leaning parties within the coalition has significantly reduced. Dr. Manmohan Singh became the first prime minister since Jawaharlal Nehru in 1962 to be re-elected after completing a full five-year term (Business Standard, 2009).

However, in the 2014 general election, the BJP came into power with thumping majority under the charismatic leadership of the Sh. Narendra Damodardas Modi ji who become the Prime Minister of India. Again in 2019 general elections, BJP repeated its government in the center.

## **Conclusion**

India is the largest democracy of the world with parliamentary form of government on the Westminster model, which consists of the upper house called the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) and the lower house called the Lok Sabha (House of People). Since 1956, parliamentary constituencies have been delimited four times by the independent delimitation commission. The fourth delimitation was done in the year 2008, but the number of constituencies remained unchanged for 543 with just making some adjustments in the boundaries of the existing constituencies, however, the number of constituencies reserved for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) have been increased.

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