

# Electoral System – Independence of Election Commission

The Election Commission is a system that works within the framework of the constitution. It is not a system that fulfills the needs and interests of any political party. It is a system that should be operated in an impartial and democratic manner. Discussion whether the appointment of CEC (Chief Election Commissioner) and ECs is transparent or not is making rounds.

On the one hand, while the week-long hearing of the petitions on the appointment process of CEC and ECs is going on, an IAS officer of Punjab cadre who was to retire on December 31<sup>st</sup>, Arun Goel, Secretary of the Ministry of Heavy Industries, voluntarily retired and was appointed as the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) the very same day. Arun Goel has worked in various departments at the Centre for more than a decade and held many positions as a trusted 'yes man' after the BJP came to power in 2014. Especially on the occasion of completion of 75 years of India's independence, he played a key role in creating the Azadi Ka Amrita Mahotsav program and is campaigning it extensively.

In this context, the supreme court's comment that – "the time has come to bring reforms in the Election Commission (EC) and firstly the election commission should be selected by a collegium consisting of the PM, Chief Justice of India and the leader of the opposition; if the Election Commissioners are "yes men" to the government, the EC will not be independent; during elections if allegations are made against a person of the prime minister's stature, the EC should not shirk from even taking on the PM" have triggered a heated debate.

If we look at the role of the Election Commission in our independent country, since the general elections held in 1952, it has never been independent, but has served as "yes men" for the ruling clique.

Locking the poor, Dalit and oppressed people (voters) in their houses and locking them in the cattle yards ruthlessly and preventing them from going to the polling booths assuming that they will vote for the Communists if they go for voting; manipulating the results when the communists win; by rigging, distributing alcohol, money etc., and creating terror with the exercise of power where the top communist leaders are candidates are some methods used by the ruling parties. The Election Commission has always stood for the interests of the ruling parties. This farce has

been going on since the first Prime Minister Nehru till today's Prime Minister Modi. But an exception can be made for TN Seshan who served as Chief Election Commissioner in 1990-96. He tried to make the elections impartial and also made the common people exercise their right to vote in the elections in the democratic framework but it was not continued.

Let us take the remarks of the Supreme Court as Pro- people. But the way money was spent in the recent by-election in Munugode, Telangana - the future elections in Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh will also be in the similar manner. Will the upcoming general elections (2024) be different from being a center for caste and religious polarisation, money, and liquor distribution; and be impartial and honest; Are the Supreme Court's remarks going to be in practice? Only then can any democrat rejoice.

The authoritarian rule protects the exploitative classes; it constantly exploits the working class, the poor and the middle-class peasants. It increases caste-based apartheid and communalism. It suppresses the agitations and struggles for the just rights. It acts according to the interests of the imperialists. It creates differences based on caste, region and language among the people. It attacks progressive forces using private gangs. The revolutionary forces are constrained by the use of repressive bureaucracy. All this shows that our government has used fascism as a tool to maintain the existence of exploitative classes. Many a time this electoral system has been proven to be undemocratic. The left and revolutionary forces have the task to enlighten the masses to achieve true democracy.