Usage of Preferential voting system

What is the issue?

\n\n

The preferential voting system ensures a truly representative winner and it can be considered as an alternative to FPTP in India.

\n\n

What is a preferential voting system?

\n\n

\n
- Preferential voting is a system of voting in which voters indicate their first, second, and lower choices of several candidates for a single office.
\n
- Under this, a voter can choose just one candidate, but also rank candidates in an order of preference.
\n
- If a candidate wins 50% of the mandate plus one vote, he/she is declared the winner.
\n
- But if the candidate falls short of this threshold, the candidates are ranked again based on the second choice of a voter.
\n
- And if this still falls below the threshold, the contest moves on to the third round, and so on.
\n
- This system of voting is used for elections to the House of Representatives in Australia and to elect some mayors in New Zealand, along with some other countries.
\n
- Nobel laureate Amartya Sen had lauded the preferential voting system, as the ordered voting allows for a true majority choice to emerge, both in the form of the candidate chosen as well as the reflection of the views of the majority, unlike the simple first-past-the-post (FPTP) system.
\n

\n\n

What is the case with India?

\n\n

\n
- India follows a first-past-the-post (FPTP) system.
\n
- In the FPTP system, the leading candidate can win an election despite winning a minority of the votes.
\n
- The candidate with the highest number of votes, irrespective of the margin of victory or percentage of votes polled, is declared the winner.
\n
- The FPTP has several advantages due to which it is considered to be the simplest electoral system.
\n
- It is an easy system to understand, wherein the choices for the voters are clear and the counting is also simple and straightforward.
\n
- The system also guarantees one representative for each constituency who is accountable to his electorate, which is not necessarily the case in other voting systems.
\n
- Also, candidates get to know their relative support in the constituency, unlike other systems where electors vote for a party, and not for individual candidates.
\n
- In a country such as India, with near one billion voters, the ease of administering voting in this system almost makes it the most viable model to follow.
\n
- However, in states like U.P. and Bihar, parties which secure less than 50% of the vote tend to win substantive majorities.
\n
- The FPTP system rewards parties who target and treat preferentially specific segments of the electorate, or “vote banks,” rather than the majority of electors.
\n
- It thus rewards divisive electoral strategies and encourages parties to field tainted candidates.
\n
- In the past, this was mitigated at the Central level by the need for coalitions.
\n
- Even if the leading party in the election fell short in vote share terms, it had to get the support of regional parties to go past the halfway mark in seat

terms.
\n
- This rendered the system a truly representative one.
\n
- However, in the 2014 general elections, the ruling government won the majority of seats despite a vote share of only 38.5% and little accretion of outside support after the election.
\n
- Thus, even if the preferential voting system is more complicated than the FPTP system, it is worth considering as a just alternative in the longer term.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

