

How are Symbols Allotted to Political Parties?

April 6, 2024 • vajiramandravi.com



What's in today's article?

Background

How are Symbols Allotted?

What is the Current Issue w.r.t. Political Parties in Tamil Nadu?

What Can be the Way Forward?

Background

- The Naam Tamilar Katchi (NTK) that secured 3.9% and 6.5% votes in Tamil Nadu in 2019 and 2021 respectively, has been allotted a new common symbol (Mike).
- The Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) that secured 1.09% and 0.99% votes in 2019 and 2021 has been denied a common symbol (Pot).
- This has raised questions about the allotment of symbols to 'registered unrecognized parties.'

- In the largest democracy where a sizeable population is still illiterate, symbols play a crucial role in the voting process.

How are Symbols Allotted?

- A party is recognised as a 'national' or 'state' party under the provisions of the **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, by the Election Commission of India (ECI)**.
- The **criteria for recognition at the State level** consists of:
 - Winning one Lok Sabha seat for every 25 seats or 3% of Legislative Assembly seats or
 - Winning one Lok Sabha or two Assembly seats along with 6% of votes polled or
 - Securing 8% of votes polled in a general election.
- Symbols are allotted to political parties and contesting candidates as per the provisions of the Symbols Order by ECI.
- A recognized political party has a reserved symbol that is not allotted to any other candidate in any constituency.
- For registered but unrecognized political parties, one of the free symbols is allotted as a common symbol during an election if that party contests in two Lok Sabha constituencies or in 5% of seats to the Assembly of a State as the case may be.

What is the Current Issue w.r.t. Political Parties in Tamil Nadu?

- Rule 10B of the Symbols Order provides that the concession of a common free symbol shall be available to a 'registered unrecognized party' for two general elections.
- Furthermore, a party shall be eligible for a common symbol in any subsequent general election if it had secured at least 1% of votes polled.
- Such an unrecognized party should however apply for a symbol every time in the prescribed format.
- This application can be made any time during the period commencing six months prior to the expiry of the term of the Lok Sabha or State Assembly as the case may be.
- The **symbols are thereafter allotted on a 'first-come-first-served' basis**.
- In the above cases, the NTK had secured more than 1% of votes in the last two elections with the common symbol of 'Ganna Kisan'.
- However, since they applied for that symbol only in February 2024, the ECI had allotted that symbol to Bharatiya Praja Aikya Party (BPAP), that had applied earlier, based on the 'first-come-first-served' rule.

However, the BPAP has not contested elections in Tamil Nadu before.

- The VCK was declined allotment of a common symbol as it had failed to secure 1% of votes polled in the elections to the State Legislative Assembly in 2021.
- The VCK notably has one Lok Sabha MP and four MLAs in Tamil Nadu contesting on the 'Pot' symbol in 2019 and 2021 elections.

What Can be the Way Forward?

- The ECI has decided on the applications of NTK and VCK as per existing rules.

- However, it is counter intuitive from a layman's perspective that the NTK which secured more than 6% of votes polled is not allotted the previous common symbol of its choice.
- Also, it would be confusing for an average voter that the VCK which has elected representatives is ineligible to obtain a common symbol.
- The two VCK candidates have been eventually allotted the free symbol of 'Pot' by the respective returning officers.
- The existing threshold for recognition of a party may continue.
- The **candidates set up by recognised parties enjoy the advantage of being listed at the top of the ballot in the Electronic Voting Machine.**
- Nevertheless, the ECI may consider amending the rules that registered unrecognized parties that secure at least 1% of votes polled in a previous election or have an elected representative in the Lok Sabha or State Assembly, shall have the right to be allotted a common symbol of their choice.

This would ensure a fair weightage being given for their past electoral performance and strengthen the democratic process.

Q1. What is the use of VVPAT?

A VVPAT is intended as an independent verification system for voting machines designed to allow voters to verify that their vote was cast correctly, to detect possible election fraud or malfunction, and to provide a means to audit the stored electronic results.

Q2. What is an Electoral Roll?

An electoral roll is a compilation that lists persons who are entitled to vote for particular elections in a particular jurisdiction. The list is usually broken down by electoral districts, and is primarily prepared to assist election officials at polling places

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/how-are-symbols-allotted-to-political-parties-explained/article68029670.ece#:~:text=The%20symbols%20are%20thereafter%20allotted,symbol%20of%20'Ganna%20Ki'>

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/how-are-symbols-allotted-to-political-parties/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.