

CIVICS

Chapter 3: Electoral Politics



Electoral Politics

Elections in a Democracy

People cannot govern themselves directly in any democratic setup. Thus, elections are held in a democracy in which people elect their own representatives.

Why are Elections Needed?

Elections are needed because of the following reasons:

- It is not possible for people in large countries to hold meetings and take decisions regarding the working of the Government. Not all people are educated enough to take major decisions. Thus, in democratic countries, elections are held where people elect their own representatives who make laws for the country.
- Representatives cannot be selected on the basis of age and experience. Such representatives may not rule according to the wishes of the people. It is only through elections that people can elect their own representatives.

Therefore, elections are needed in any democracy. During elections, voters choose the people who could make laws for them. They also choose a specific party which may govern the country according to its principles. Thus, voters decide the people and the party which form the Government.

Free and Fair Elections

Sometimes elections may not be fair. For example, in China, elections are held at regular intervals but only the members of the Communist party can contest the elections. This is not a democratic election. Some features of free and fair elections are

- Every citizen above a certain age should have the right to vote, and every vote should have one value.
- There should be more than one party, and parties and people should be free to contest elections.
- Elections should be conducted at regular intervals.
- A candidate preferred by the people should be elected.
- More importantly, elections should be held in a free and fair manner and people should have the right to choose their own candidates.

In a democracy, political competency is always preferred even though it has some limitations. It is claimed that political competency encourages factionalism, petty party

politics and dirty tricks employed by the parties to ensure the victory of their candidates.

Our Constitution however has opted for free electoral politics despite short comings. Political competition is necessary in the world. To eliminate dirty tricks used by political leaders, efforts should be made to improve the knowledge and character of political leaders. Besides, if a leader is not fulfilling his promise, he may be rejected by the voters in the next election. Thus, even if a political party is driven by the motive to be in power, it will still be forced to serve the people.

What is system of elections in India?

General Election

- Elections are held in all constituencies at the same time, either on the same day or within a few days.

By-election

- Sometimes election is held only for one constituency or two to fill the vacancy caused by death or resignation of a member.

Electoral Constituencies

- The country is divided into different areas based on population for the purpose of elections which are called electoral constituencies.
- For Lok Sabha elections, the country is divided into 543 constituencies.
- Similarly, each state is divided into a specific number of Assembly constituencies.

Reserved Constituencies

- Some constituencies are reserved for people who belong to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Voter's List

- The list of people who are eligible for voting is prepared by the Election Commission of India before election.
- In India, all the citizens aged 18 years and above has the right to vote, regardless of his or her caste, creed, colour, religion or gender.

Nomination of Candidates

- Anyone who can be a voter can also become a candidate in elections.
- However, minimum age of in order to be a candidate the minimum age is 25 years.

Election Campaign

- The campaigns take place for a two-week period between the announcement of the final list of candidates and the date of polling.

Polling and Counting of Votes

- The final stage of an election is the day when the voters cast or 'poll' their vote.

Electoral System in India

- In India, the Lok Sabha elections are held at the national level, while the State Assembly (Vidhan Sabha) elections are held at the state level. The elected members of both Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha are held regularly after every five years.
- When elections are held after five years to the Lok Sabha and the Assembly, they are called general elections. When elections take place for one constituency only to fill the vacancy created by the death or the resignation of the member, it is called a by-election.
- India is divided into several areas known as electoral constituencies for the purpose of voting. People living in one constituency elect one representative from their area.
- For example, in the Lok Sabha elections, the country is divided into 543 constituencies. One person is elected from each constituency. He/she is called a Member of Parliament. Each constituency has roughly an equal population.
- Similarly, in the State Assembly elections, the state is divided into a specific number of constituencies. An elected member of a constituency is known as a Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA).
- The same is the case with the municipal or panchayat elections. Each village or town is divided into a number of wards which are like constituencies.
- In India, some constituencies are reserved for people belonging to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other economic backward castes. This has been done so that even the most marginal sections of society get a fair chance of representation in the Lok Sabha, State Assembly, Municipal Corporation and Panchayat. In municipal corporations and gram panchayats, one-third of the seats are reserved for women.

Voter's List

- In a democracy, the list of persons who can vote is prepared well before the elections. Officially, this list is called an Electoral Roll and is commonly known as the Voters' List.
- In India, every adult above the age of eighteen years is eligible to vote irrespective of

caste, religion and gender.

- The voters' list is revised after every five years. Of late, an Election Photo Identity Card has been introduced, although it is not compulsory to show this card.



A lady showing her voters identity card while voting at the booth.

Nomination of a Candidate

- A person above 25 years can contest the elections. Political parties select their candidates for contesting elections and give them a 'ticket' to contest the elections.
- A person contesting the elections has to fill a nomination form and deposit an amount as a security deposit.
- While contesting elections, every candidate has to give complete details of educational qualifications, serious criminal cases pending against them and total property value of his/her family.



Political campaigning by the leaders of a major political party

Election Campaign and Voting

- In an election campaign, political parties hold rallies to highlight many local and

national issues. They make promises to voters to correct flaws in the working of the government machinery. Many slogans are also raised during the election campaign. The Congress party raised the slogan of 'Garibi Hatao' in the Lok Sabha elections of 1971 and the Left used the slogan 'Land to the Tiller' in the West Bengal Assembly elections.

- During the elections, no party or candidate can bribe or threaten the voters, use government resources for campaigning and spend more than 25 lakhs individually for the Lok Sabha elections and Rs 10 lakhs for the Assembly elections.
- During elections, in most polling booths, electronic voting machines (EVMs) are used. A voter has to press a button against the name or the symbol of the candidate for whom he/she wants to vote.
- All EVMs are taken to a safe place after the voting is complete. They are opened on the day of the beginning of the counting. Agents of all political parties are present at the time of the counting of votes to ensure fair counting of votes.
- The participation of the people in elections is usually measured by the figures of voter turnout. In India, the turnout has either remained stable or has gone up.
- In India, poor, illiterate and underprivileged people vote in large numbers as compared to the rich and the privileged sections. Common people in India, attach a lot of importance to elections.



Electronic Voting Machine

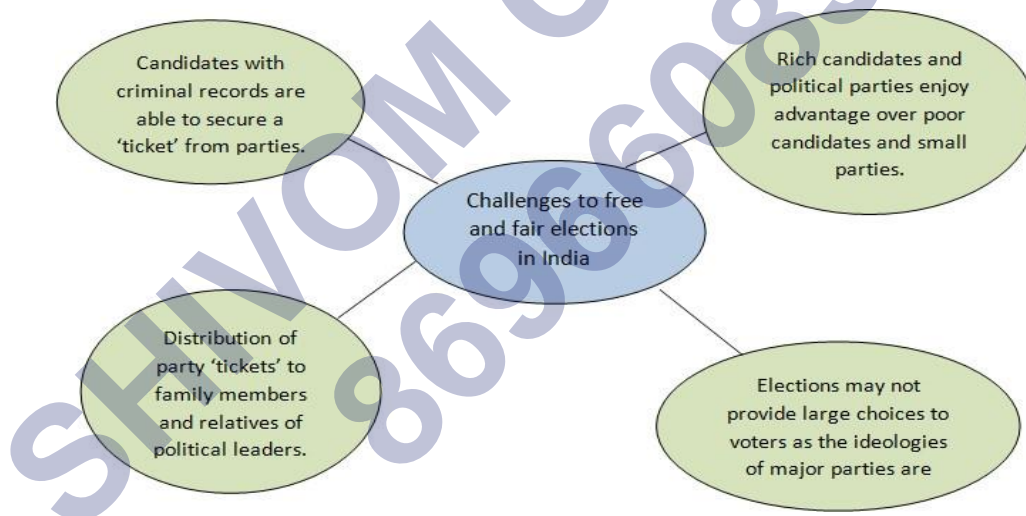
Role of the Election Commission

- In India, elections are held by an extremely powerful **Election Commission (EC)**. Similar to the judiciary, it is an independent body.

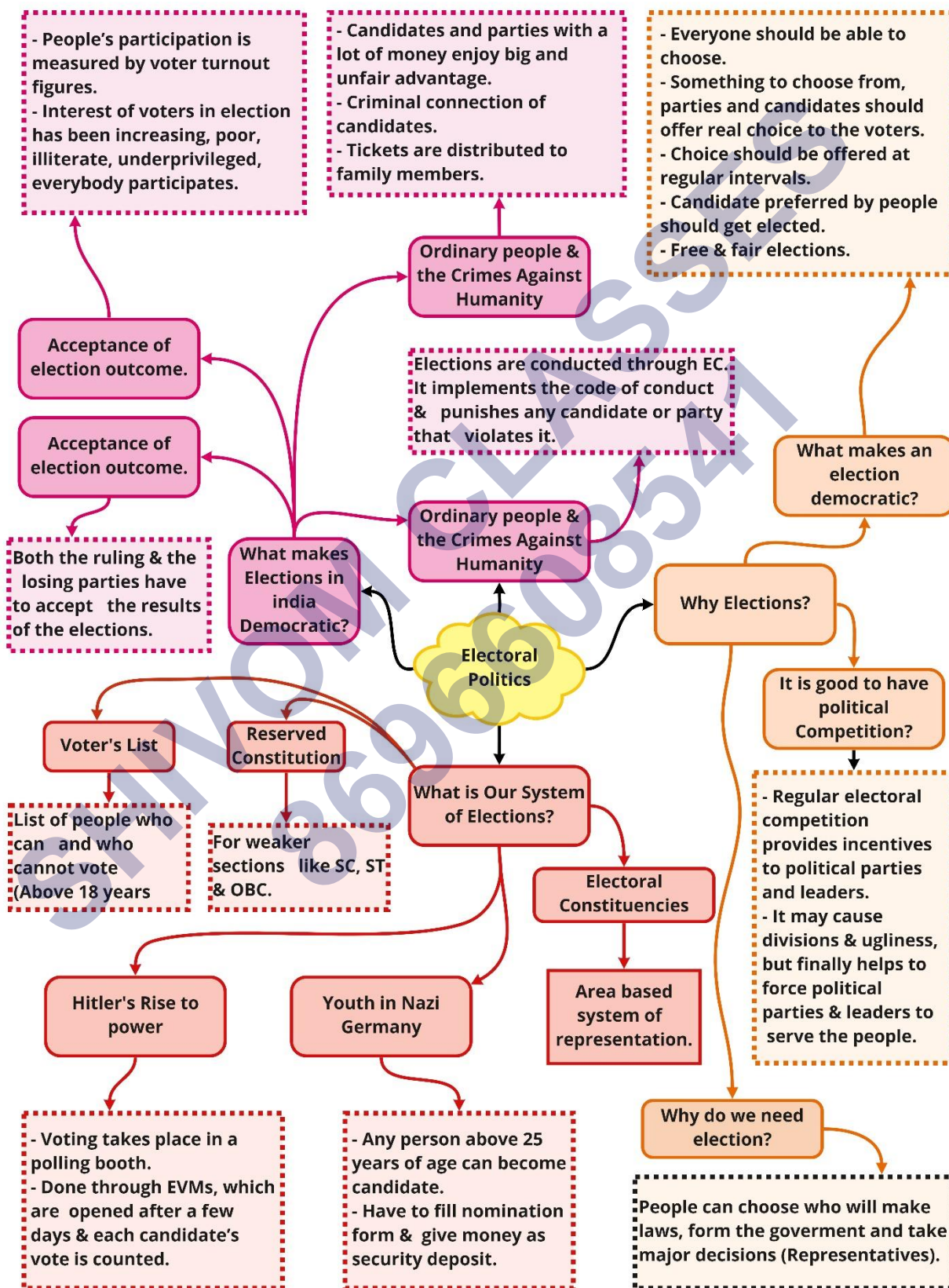
- The Chief Election Commission (CEC) is appointed by the President of India. CEC is not answerable to the President or to the Government of India. The powers of the EC are
 - It takes decisions on every matter related to the elections. It announces the date of the elections and the declaration of the results.
 - It implements the Code of Conduct and takes action against candidates who violate it.
 - It gives guidelines to the Government which have to be followed during the elections.
 - When on election duty, government officials work under the supervision of the EC and not the Government.
- Every political party has to obey the instructions and guidelines of the EC.

The results of the elections in India are respected by each political party. Free and fair elections are held in the country. This can be ascertained by the fact that the ruling Central Government and various State Governments routinely lose the elections. Candidates with criminal records and those who 'buy' votes also often lose the elections.

Challenges to Free and Fair Elections in India



Class : 9th Social Studies (Political Science)
Chapter-3: Electoral Politics



Important Questions

Multiple Choice questions-

Question 1. How much money was spent in conducting 2004 Lok Sabha elections?

- (a) About Rs. 1,000 crores
- (b) About Rs. 1,100 crores
- (c) About Rs. 1,200 crores
- (d) About Rs. 1,300 crores

Question 2. According to election law in India. What is the current limit of election expenses by a candidate or party in a constituency for a Lok Sabha election?

- (a) Rs. 35 lakhs
- (b) Rs. 30 lakhs
- (c) Rs. 25 lakhs
- (d) Rs. 20 lakhs

Question 3. Who appoints member of the Election Commission?

- (a) Prime Minister
- (b) President
- (c) Vice-President
- (d) None of these

Question 4. Who issues Election Manifesto?

- (a) President
- (b) Prime Minister
- (c) Political Parties
- (d) None of these

Question 5. What is the tenure of Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha in India?

- (a) Four years
- (b) Five years
- (c) Six years
- (d) None of these

Question 6. Which institution conducts elections in India?

- (a) Parliament

- (b) Supreme Court
- (c) Election Commission
- (d) None of these

Question 7. What is the age when a citizen get voting rights?

- (a) 18 years
- (b) 21 years
- (c) 25 years
- (d) None of these

Question 8. The procedure of impeaching Chief Election Commissioner:

- (a) The resolution should be passed by 2/3rd majority of the members of Parliament.
- (b) The resolution should be passed by 1/3rd majority of the members of Parliament.
- (c) The resolution should be passed by 3/4th majority of the members of Parliament.
- (d) None of these

Question 9. Challenge before free and fair elections is:

- (a) Allotment of Symbols
- (b) Casteism and Communalism
- (c) Withdrawal of Nominations
- (d) None of these

Question 10. What is the meaning of Criminalization of politics?

- (a) Ruling parties try to use official machinery during election campaign
- (b) Candidates and political parties use lot of money in the election
- (c) People with criminal background and tendencies are entering politics
- (d) None of these

Question 11. Importance of Election Symbols is:

- (a) Illiterate voters can identify party and candidate through these symbols
- (b) In a constituency if there are more than one candidate with same name, then symbol can be used to differentiate
- (c) Both
- (d) None of these

Question 12. How many assembly seats are there in Haryana Vidhan Sabha/ (Assembly)?

- (a) 90

- (b) 70
- (c) 100
- (d) 80

Question 13. How many seats are there in Delhi Assembly/(Vidhan Sabha)?

- (a) 90
- (b) 70
- (c) 100
- (d) 80

Question 14. For Lok Sabha elections, the country is divided into constituencies.

- (a) 553
- (b) 563
- (c) 533
- (d) 543

Question 15. What is the minimum age required for getting voting rights in India?

- (a) 21
- (b) 25
- (c) 18
- (d) 16

Very Short:

1. What is considered as the barometer of democracy?
2. What is known as the lifeline of the election procedure?
3. Name the state where the National Conference is active in politics.
4. In which state AI'ADMK is a prominent party?
5. What is the name of the Chief Election Commissioner during whose tenure a large number of electoral -reforms were carried out?
6. What are the means of electronic media?
7. By whom the election procedure of our country is controlled?
8. What is the election called which is held when Lok Sabha or the State Assembly is dissolved before die expiry of its full term?
9. What is meant by an election?
10. On which principle is the system of universal adult franchise based?

Short Questions:

1. Did Devi Lai fulfil promise to waive farmer loans on becoming Chief Minister?
2. What is Constitution
3. What are the different methods used by political parties during the election campaign to seek vote?
4. How many seats did the Lok Dal also capture in the 1987 elections?
5. How many seats did the Congress Party obtain in 1987?
6. Why are elections considered essential for any representative democracy in our times?
7. It is said that the elections are about political competition. Explain

Long Questions:

1. Give some of the successful slogans by different political parties in various elections in India in the past
2. Give details of the election laws which prohibit the candidates when they indulge in election campaign
3. Mention the details about a model code of conduct for the election campaign as agreed by all the political parties in India.
4. Explain Universal Adult Franchise.
5. "It is said elections are the barometers of Democracy". What do you understand by this sentence?

Answer Key:

MCQ:

1. (d) About Rs. 1,300 crores
2. (c) Rs. 25 lakhs
3. (b) President
4. (c) Political Parties
5. (b) Five years
6. (c) Election Commission
7. (a) 18 years
8. (a) The resolution should be passed by 2/3rd majority of the members of Parliament.
9. (b) casteism and Communalism
- 10.(c) People with criminal background and tendencies are entering politics

- 11.(c) Both
- 12.(a) 90
- 13.(b) 70
- 14.(d) 543
- 15.(c) 18

Very Short Answer:

1. Elections.
2. The political parties are known as the lifeline of the election procedure.
3. Jammu and Kashmir.
4. In Tamil Nadu.
5. T. N. Seshah.
6.
 - Radio,
 - Television,
 - Cinema.
7. By the Election Commission.
8. Mid-term election.
9. An election is the contest which is held between different political parties in order to get people's support.
10. On the principle of "one person one vote"

Short Answer:

Ans: 1. Yes, after, becoming Chief Minister, Devi Lai fulfilled the promise he made in election campaign by passing an order waiving the loans of the farmers, agricultural labourers, and small shopkeepers.

Ans: 2. Devi Lai's approach was direct- talking to liis audience.

Ans: 3. Processions, public meetings, door to door campaign, holding corner meetings, distributing pamphlets, badges etc.

Ans: 4. 60 seats out of 90; Lok Dal together with Bhartiya Janata Party captured 76 seats.

Ans: 5. 5 seats.

Ans: 6. The elections are considered essential for democracy because of the following reasons

- The voters are able to choose who will make laws for them.
- They can choose who will sit in government and take major decisions.
- They can choose the party whose ' policies will guide the government and lawmaking.

These choices are not made once and for all. In democratic elections, the people get a chance to make a fresh choice after some time. If they want they can retain the same party', the same government and the same representatives. But if they are not, satisfied with the performance of any of these, they can make a change at that level or at all the levels. This ensures that representatives remain answerable to the people.

Ans: 7. Elections are all about political competition. The competition takes various forms. The most obvious form is the competition among political parties. At the level of constituency, it takes the form of competition among several candidates. Very often the competition turns into a personality race among the top leaders of various parties. Elections also involve competition among various policies and ideologies. If there is no competition, there is no point in having elections.

Long Answer:

Ans: 1. Some of the successful slogans are asunder:

The Congress party led by Indira Gandhi gave the slogan of "Remove Poverty" (Garibi Hatao) in the Lok Sabha elections of 1971. The party promised to recurrent all the policies of the government to remove poverty from the country.

"Save Democracy" was the slogan used by Janata Party in the next Lok Sabha election held in 1977. The party promised to undo the excesses committed during Emergency and restore civil liberties.

The Left Front used the slogan of "Land to the Tiller" in the West Bengal assembly elections held in 1977.

"Protect the Self-Respect of the Telugus" was the slogan used by N. T. Rama Rao, the leader of the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh assembly elections in 1983.

Ans: 2. According to our election laws, no party or candidate can:

- Bribe or threaten the voters.
- Appeal to them in the name of caste or religion etc.
- Use government resources for election campaign.
- Spend more than Rs. 25 Lakh for a Lok Sabha election or Rs. 10 Lakhs in an assembly election.

If they do so/their election can be rejected by court even after they have been declared elected. Minimum conditions of a Democratic Elections First, everyone should be able to choose; Everyone can vote and every vote should have equal value. Second, there should be something to choose from. Parties and candidates should be free to contest elections and

should offer some real choice to the voters.

Third, the voice should be offered at regular intervals. Elections must be held regularly after every few years.

Fourth, the candidate preferred by the people should get elected. Fifth, elections should be conducted in a free and fair manner where people can choose as they really wish.

Ans: 3. The following sum up the Model Code of conduct for the election campaign:

- Any place of worship shall not be used for election propaganda.
- Criticisms of the opponents shall be limited to their policies, programmes, past records and work and will not mention their personal lives.
- No flags, banners, notices, slogans shall be placed on any building without the permission of the owner.
- The government transport including official aircrafts, vehicles, machinery and personnel shall not be used by ministers and the ruling party.
- The ministers shall not lay foundation stones of any projects or make any promises of providing public facilities after elections have been announced.

Ans: 4. The Universal Adult Franchise 'refers to the enjoyment of right to vote by all the adult citizens of the county, without any discrimination i.e., on the basis of caste, creed, colour, sex, education and place of birth. It is a well-known fact that every citizen of India who is 18 years of age and above and who is not otherwise disqualified, is entitled to vote in the elections.

Ans: 5. In a democratic form of government, the elections are considered as barometers of democracy because the elections are very crucial in democratic setup. Elections provide opportunity to the people to judge the performance of the representatives. Elections also generate a new political attitude which can determine the future course of the country at large.