**Introduction**

In a democracy, people do not govern directly. They govern through the elected- representatives. Governing through elected representatives is the most common form of democracy.  
Electoral politics is all about understanding election of representatives, need of elections and how to make election democratic. It also involves examining the role of the election commission in ensuring free and fair elections.

**Elections**The mechanism or procedure by which people choose their representatives at regular intervals is called election. If people are not satisfied with the working of the government then they can change the government in the next term of elections.

**Why Do We Need Elections?**

Elections take place regularly in any democracy. There are more than 100 countries in the world in which elections take place to choose people’s representatives. The mechanism by which people can choose their representatives at regular intervals and change them is called an **election**.

In an election, the voters make many choices:

* They can choose who will make laws for them.
* They can choose who will form the government and take major decisions.
* They can choose the party whose policies will guide the government and law-making.

**Procedure of Elections**

The procedure of election can be understood by the real example of Haryana Assembly elections. It will show how candidates standing in election become representatives and how power can be removed from their hands.

**Assembly Election in Haryana**

Formation of New Party ‘Lok Dal’ Haryana had been ruled by Congress party since 1982. At that time, Chaudhary Devi Lai was an opposition leader. He led movement called Nyaya Yudh (struggle for justice) and formed new party ‘Lok Dal’.

Election Campaign of Devi Lai In election campaign of 1987 Assembly election, Devi Lai promised voters that if his party win, he would give loans to farmers and small businessmen.

Voters favoured Lok Dal As people were unhappy with the existing government, they were attracted by Devi Lai’s promise. They voted in favour of Lok Dal and its partners won 76 out of 90 seats.

Results Announced Lok Dal won 60 seats that’s why it had a clear majority in the – Assembly. The party with a clear majority is invited by the governor to form the government. Congress got only 5 seats. As the election result was announced, the existing Chief Minister of Congress resigned.

Devi Lai became Chief Minister The newly elected Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) of Lok Dal chose Devi Lai as their leader. The Governor invited’ Devi Lai to be the new Chief Minister. After three days of the election result, he took the oath. Then his government issued a government order to give loans to small farmers, agricultural labourers and small businessmen.

Congress again forms Government Lok Dal ruled die state for 4 years. In 1991 election, the party did not win people’s support. This time Congress won the election and formed the government.

**Need for Elections**

Elections are needed to elect representatives. The need of elections can be understood by imagifufig of democracy without elections.

In the absence of the election, all the people have to sit together every day and take all the decisions. But this is not possible in any large community. Nor it is possible for everyone to have the time and knowledge to take decisions on all matters. Therefore, in most democracies, people rule through their representatives

The elections are needed for any representative democracy because

* They solve the problem of assessing people on the basis of education, knowledge or experience,
* They help in analysing that people like their representatives or not.
* They ensure that the representatives rule as per the wishes of the people and make sure that those who are not working for the people, do not remain their representatives.

In an election, the voters make many choices like

* They can choose who will make laws for them.
* They can choose who will form the government and take major decisions.
* They can choose the party whose policies will guide the government and lawmaking.

**What Makes An Election Democratic?**

The minimum conditions of a democratic election include the following points.

1. Everyone should be able to choose their own representative.
2. Parties and candidates should be free to contest elections and should offer some real choice to the voters.
3. Elections must be held regularly after every few years.
4. The candidate preferred by the people should get elected.
5. Elections should be conducted in a free and fair manner where people can choose as they really wish.

Elections are held in all democratic countries and also in most of the non-democratic countries in many ways. But there is a simple list of the minimum conditions which make an election democratic like

* Everyone should have the right to choose a representative. It means everyone has one vote and every vote has equal value.
* Political parties and candidates should be free to contest elections and offer some real choices to the voters.
* The choices should be offered at regular intervals. For that elections must be held regularly after a certain period.
* The candidates preferred by the people only should get elected.
* Elections are conducted in a free and fair manner where people choose those representatives whom they really wish.

**Political Competition**

Elections are all about competition. Without competition, elections would become meaningless. Political competition takes place when different political parties compete to gain confidence and ultimately the vote of the voters. They make promises and give incentives to motivate the voters.

**This electoral competition has many demerits like**

* It creates a sense of disunity and factionalism (Groupism) and party-politics in every locality.
* Different political parties and candidates often use dirty tricks like booth capturing to win elections.
* The pressure to win electoral fights does not allow to- form useful long term policies.
* The competition leads to the idea of being dragged into the unhealthy competition. That’s why good people do not enter and participate in political competition.

**The electoral competition also has some merits like**

* Regular electoral competition provides incentives to political parties and leaders. If they can satisfy the voters with their work, they will be able to win again.
* If a political party is motivated only by the desire to be in power, even then it will be forced to serve the people.
* It reveals the real motive of political parties.
* It gives choices to voters to choose among the best.

**Is It Good to Have Political Competition?**

Elections are all about political competition. This competition takes various forms. At the constituency level, it takes the form of competition among several candidates. Here are a few reasons that support political competition as being good for people.

1. Regular electoral competition provides incentives to political parties and leaders.
2. Political parties know that if they raise issues that people want to be raised, their popularity and chances of victory will increase in the next elections. On the contrary, if they fail to satisfy the voters with their work, they will not be able to win again.
3. If a political party is motivated only by the desire to be in power, despite that, it will be forced to serve the people.

**System Of Elections In India**

In India, Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha (Assembly) elections are held regularly every five years. After five years, the term of all the elected representatives comes to an end. Elections are held in all constituencies at the same time, either on the same day or within a few days. This is known as General Election. Sometimes an election is held only for one constituency to fill the vacancy caused by death or resignation of a member. This is known as a by-election.

**Electoral Constituencies**

In India, an area based system of representation is followed where the country is divided into different areas for purpose of elections. These are called Electoral Constituencies. Every voter who lives in an area elect one representative.

For the Lok Sabha election, India is divided into 543 constituencies. The representative elected from each constituency is called Member of Parliament or an MP. One of the features of a democratic election is that every vote has equal value.  
For Vidhan Sabha election, each state is divided into a specific number of assembly constituencies and the elected representative of eaph assembly constituency is called the Member of Legislative Assembly or an MLA.

India is divided into different areas for the purpose of elections. These areas are called **electoral constituencies**. The voters living in an area elect one representative.

* For the Lok Sabha elections, India is divided into 543 constituencies. The representative elected from each constituency is called a **Member of Parliament** or an MP.
* Each state is divided into a specific number of Assembly constituencies. In this case, the elected representative is called the **Member of the Legislative Assembly or an MLA**. Each Parliamentary constituency has within it several assembly constituencies.

The same principle applies to Panchayat and Municipal elections. Each village or town is divided into several ‘**wards**’ that are like constituencies. Each ward elects one member of the village or the urban local body. Sometimes these constituencies are counted as ‘**seats**’, for each constituency represents one seat in the assembly.

**By-election:** If a representative from a constituency dies while in office or if the office-falls are vacant because of reasons like resignation, fresh elections are held in that particular constituency. Such an election is called a by-election.  
Constituency’ Voters in a geographical area who elect a representative to the Legislative Bodies.

Each parliamentary constituency has within it several assembly constituencies. The same principle applies for Panchayat and Municipal elections.

Each village or town is divided into different wards that are like constituencies. Each ward elects one member of the village or the urban local body. Sometimes these constituencies are counted as ‘seats’ and each constituency represents one seat in the assembly.  
For example, when we say that ‘Lok Dal won 60 seats1 in Haryana, it means that candidates of Lok Dal won in 60 assembly constituencies in the state and thus Lok Dal had 60 MLAs in the State Assembly.

**Reserved Constituencies**

The Constitution makers were worried that in an open electoral competition, certain weaker sections may not stand a good chance to get elected to the lok Sabha and the state Legislative Assemblies.

If that happens, our Parliament and Assemblies would be deprived of the voice of a significant section of our population. That would make our democracy less representative and less democratic.

**Reservation for SC and ST**

The makers of our Constitution thought of a special system of reserved constituencies for the weaker sections. Some constituencies are reserved for people who belong to the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST).  
In an SC reserved constituency, only someone who belongs to the Scheduled Castes can stand for election.

Similarly, only those belonging to the Scheduled Tribes can contest an election from a constituency reserved for ST.

In many states, seats in rural (panchayat) and urban (municipalities and corporations) local bodies are now reserved for Other Backward Classes (OBC) and women candidates as well.

**Reservation in Lok Sabha/ District/Local Level**

A few seats in Lok Sabha are reserved for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). This number is in proportion to their share in the total population.

In the year 2012, 84 seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes and 47 for the Scheduled Tribes (in Lok Sabha).

Thus, the reserved seats for SC and ST do not take away the legitimate share of any other social group. This system of reservation was extended later to other weaker sections at the district and local level. In many states, seats in rural (panchayat) and urban (municipalities and corporations) local bodies are now reserved for Other Backward Classes (OBC) as well.

However, the proportion of seats reserved varies from state to state. Similarly, one-third of the seats are reserved in rural and urban local bodies for women candidates.

**Voters List**

When the constituencies are decided, the next step is to decide who can and who cannot vote. In a democratic election, the list of those who are eligible to vote is prepared much before the election and given to everyone. This list is officially called the Electoral Roll and is commonly known as the Voters’ List.

This is an important step as it is linked to the first condition of a democratic election i.e. everyone should get an equal opportunity to choose representatives. All the citizens are human beings with their own needs and views. That is why all of them deserve to have an equal say in decisions that affect them. Therefore everyone is given the right to vote.  
The right to vote falls under Universal Adult Franchise. It means all the citizens aged 18 years and above can vote in an election regardless of his or her caste, religion or gender.

**Maintaining of Voters’ list**

It is the responsibility of the government to get the names of all the eligible voters put on the voters’ list. As new persons attain voting age, names are added to the voters’ list, names of those who move out of a place or those who are dead are deleted. A complete revision of the list takes place every five years. This is done to ensure that it remains up to date.

**[Note Some criminals and persons with unsound mind can be denied the right to vote, but only in rare situations.]**

**Election Photo Identify Card (EPIC)**

In the last few years, a new system of Election Photo Identity Card (EPIC) has been introduced. The voters are required to carry this card when they go out to vote so that no one can vote in their place. The card has not been made compulsory for voting, and. voters can show many other proofs of identity like the ration card, driving’ licence or Adhar Card.

**Nomination Of Candidates**

The system of our country provides almost no restrictions on anyone to contest the election. This only makes any election a democratic election.

Anyone who can be a voter can also become a candidate in elections. The only difference to be a voter is that the minimum age is 18 years while to be a candidate in the election the minimum age is 25 years. There are also some other restrictions on criminals but these apply in very extreme cases.

Political parties nominate their candidates who get the party support and symbol. Party’s nomination is often called Party Ticket. The candidate has to fill a nomination form and give some money as a security deposit.

**Moreover, every candidate has to make a legal declaration giving full details of**

* Educational qualifications of the candidate
* Details of the assets and liabilities of the candidate and his/her family; and
* Serious criminal cases pending against the candidate.

The information provided has to be made public in order to provide an opportunity to the voters to make their decision on the basis of the information provided by the candidates.  
Electoral Roll It is the voters’ list prepared by a door to door survey to include only bonafide voters and minimise the role of bogus voters. Universal Adult Franchise Every Indian citizen of 18 years and above have the right to vote irrespective of caste, creed and sex.

**Educational Qualifications for Candidates**

There is no educational qualification for candidates for being an MP or an MLA. However, the relevant qualification for candidates is the ability to understand people’s concerns, problems and to represent people’s interests.

Putting an educational qualification would go against the spirit of democracy because it would deprive a majority of the citizens right to contest elections. This is because still, the majority of the Indian population is uneducated.

**Election Campaign**

Election campaign means the promotion (or propaganda) of the policies, offers and promises that the candidates make to voters to fulfill if they are elected. In this way, voters can decide the candidate to vote for. They vote for the candidate whose policies they like.

In our country, election campaigning takes place for a two-week period between the announcement of the final list’of candidates and the elate of polling.

During this period, the candidates contact their electorate, political leaders, address. ..election meetings and political parties mobilise their supporters. This is also the period when Print Media and television news are full of election-related stories and debates.

The election campaign is not limited to these two weeks only. Political parties start preparing for elections months before they actually take place.

They prepare their election manifestos. In election campaigns, political parties try to focus public attention on some big issues. They want to attract the public to that issue and get them to vote for their party on that basis.

The election campaigns are conducted to have a free and open discussion about who is a better Representative and, in turn, which party will make a better government. In India, Election Campaigns take place for a two-week period between the announcement of the final list of candidates and the date of polling. During this period, the candidates contact their voters, political leaders address election meetings and political parties mobilise their supporters.

Some of the successful slogans given by different political parties in various elections:

* Save Democracy
* Land to the Tiller
* Protect the Self-Respect of the Telugus

According to India’s Election Law, no party or candidate can:

1. Bribe or threaten voters.
2. Appeal to them in the name of caste or religion.
3. Use government resources for election campaigns.
4. Spend more than 25 lahks in a constituency for a Lok Sabha election or more than 10 lahks in a constituency in an Assembly election.

If any political party does so, their election can be rejected by the court. In addition to the laws, all the political parties in our country have agreed to a Model Code of Conduct for election campaigns. According to this, no party or candidate can:

* Use any place of worship for election propaganda.
* Use government vehicles, aircraft and officials for election.
* Once elections are announced, ministers shall not lay the foundation stones for any projects, take any big policy decisions or make any promises of providing public facilities.

**Slogans Given by Different Political Parties**

Some of the successful slogans given by different political parties in various elections are given below

* The Congress party led by Indira Gahdhi gave the slogan of ‘Garibi Hatao’ (Remove poverty) in the Lok Sabha elections of 1971. The party promised to reorient all the policies of the government to remove poverty from the country.
* ‘Save Democracy’ was the slogan given by Janata Party in the next Lok Sabha election held in 1977. Hie party promised to undo the .excesses committed during Emergency and restore civil liberties.
* The Left Front used the slogan of ‘Land to the Teller’ 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.

**Code of Conduct and Laws**

To regulate the election campaign, there are some election laws. According to these laws, no party or candidate can

* bribe or threaten voters,
* appeal to them in the name of caste or religion,
* use government resources for election campaign and
* spend more than Rs. 25 lakh in a constituency for a Lok Sabha election or Rs. 10 lakh in a constituency in an Assembly Election.

If any party or candidate is found practising any of the above, their election can be rejected by the court even after they have won the election. In addition to the laws, all the political parties in our country have agreed to a Model code of conduct for an election campaign.

**According to this, no party or candidate can**

* use any place of worship for election propaganda
* use government vehicles, aircraft and officials for elections
* once elections are announced, ministers shall not lay foundation stones of any project, take any big policy decision or make any promise of providing public facilities.

**Polling**  
On the day when dying voters cast or ‘poll’ their vote is called an Election Day. Every person whose name is on the voters’ list can go to a nearby potting booth and cast his/her vote through a Secret ballot. Once the voter goes inside the booth, the election official identify him/ her, put a mark on the voter’s finger and allow him/ her to cast his/ her vote.

An agent of each candidate is allowed to sit inside the polling booth and ensure that the voting takes place in a fair way. Earlier voting was done, by putting a stamp on the ballot paper. A ballot paper is a sheet of paper on which die names of the contesting candidates along with party name and symbols are listed. Now Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) are used to record votes. The machine shows the names of the candidates and the party symbols. The voter has to press the button against the name of the candidate, he/she wants to cast his/her vote.

**Counting of Votes**

Once the polling is over, all the EVMs are sealed and taken to a secure place. A few days later, oft a fixed date, all the EVMs are opened and the votes secured by each candidate are counted. The candidate who secures the highest number of votes from a constituency is declared elected. Within a few hours of counting, all the results are declared. In general elections, the counting of votes in all constituencies takes place at the same time, on the same day. Within a few hours of counting, all the results are declared and it becomes clear as who will form the next government. This event is reported by television channels, radio and newspapers.

**Polling and Counting of Votes**

The day when the voters cast or ‘poll’ their vote is called **election day**. The voting is done in the following manner.

1. Every person whose name is on the voters’ list can go to a nearby polling booth.
2. Once the voter goes inside the booth, the election officials identify her, put a mark on her finger and allow her to cast her vote.
3. An agent of each candidate is allowed to sit inside the polling booth and ensure that the voting takes place in a fair way.

A **ballot paper** is a sheet of paper on which the names of the contesting candidates, along with party names and symbols, are listed. The ballot paper was used earlier. Nowadays, **electronic voting machines (EVM)** are used to record votes.

* The machine shows the names of the candidates and the party symbols.
* The voter has to just press the button against the name of the candidate she wants to give her vote to.
* Once the polling is over, all the EVMs are sealed and taken to a secure place.
* A few days later, all the EVMs are opened, and the votes secured by each candidate are counted.
* The candidate who secures the highest number of votes from a constituency is declared elected.

**What Makes Elections In India Democracy?**

There are many factors which ensure that elections held in India are democratic. An independent body ‘Election Commission’ responsible to conduct elections is formulated in the Constitution of India.

**Independent Election Commission :**

In our country, elections are conducted by an independent and very powerful Election Commission (EC). It enjoys the same kind of independence that the judiciary enjoys. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) is appointed by the President of India. But once appointed, he is not answerable to even the President or the government Powers of Election Commission Potters enjoyed by dying Election Commission ate.

* It takes decisions on every aspect of conduct and control of elections right from the announcement of elections to the declaration of results.
* It implements the code of conduct and punishes any candidate or party that violates it.
* During the election period, die Election Commission can order the government to follow some guidelines to prevent the use and misuse of governmental power to enhance its chances to win elections or to transfer some government officials.
* When on election duty, government officers work under the control of the Election Commission and not the government.
* When election officials come to the opinion that polling was not fair in some booths or even an entire constituency, they order a repoll.

**Popular Participation**

The participation and enthusiasm of people in an election is another criterion to check the quality of elections.

If the election process is not free or fair, people will not continue to participate in the exercise. People’s participation in election is usually measured by voter turnout figures. Turnout indicates the per cent of eligible voters who actually cast their vote. In India, there is greater voter turn out of poor illiterate people as compared to western democracies.

**Acceptance of Election Outcome**

The outcome of elections-the final test of the free and fairness of it. If elections are not free or fair, the outcome always favours the powerful. In such a situation, the ruling parties do not lose elections. Usually, losing party does not accept the outcome of a rigged election.

**The outcome of India’s election speaks for itself**

* The ruling parties routinely lose elections in India both at the national and state level.
* In the US, an incumbent or sitting elected representative rarely loses an election. But in India, about half of the sitting MPs or MLAs lose elections.
* Candidates who are known to have spent a lot of money on buying votes and those with Known criminal connection often lose elections.
* Except for some disputed elections, the electoral outcomes are usually accepted by the defeated party as ‘people’s verdict’.

**Challenges to Free and Fair Elections**

The challenges to free and fair elections are listed as follows

* Candidates and parties with a lot of money may not be sure of their victory but they do enjoy an unfair advantage over smaller parties and independents.
* Some candidates with criminal records are able to secure party tickets from major parties due to their connections political.
* Some families tend to dominate political parties; a tendency for the dynastic rule is very common.
* Elections offer only little choice to ordinary citizens. All the major parties are quite similar to each other both in policies and practice.
* Smaller parties and independent candidates suffer a huge disadvantage compared to bigger parties in terms of money power and organisational support.

These challenges exist not only in India but also in many established democracies. This is a matter of concern for all who believe in democracy. This is the reason due to which there is the demand for reforms in our electoral system by citizens, social activists and organisations.

**Question** Free and fair elections are ensured by the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer** Election Commission

**Question** The leader, Mr. Devi Lai from Haryana is the Chief of Haryana Sangharsh Samiti, led a movement named \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer** NyayaYudh

**Question** What does ‘EPIC’ stand for?

**Answer** Election Photo Identity Card.

**Question** How many voters took part in campaign-related activities during the 2004 elections?

**Answer** More than one-third voters took parts in campaign-related activities during the 2004 elections.

**Question** In India, Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections are held regularly after every \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer** Five years

**Question** Sometimes, election is held only for one constituency to fill the vacancy caused by death or resignation of a member. This type of election is called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer** By-election

**Question** In India, we follow area based system of representation. The country is divided into different areas for purposes of elections. These areas are called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer** Electoral constituency

**Question** Each state is divided into a specific number of Assembly constituencies. The elected representative from each area is called \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer** MLA or Member of Legislative Assembly

**Question** The list of those people who are eligible to vote is officially called the Electoral Roll and is commonly known as \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer** Voters List

**Question** To be a candidate to contest the elections, the minimum age is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer** 25 years

**Question** According to our election law, no party or candidate can \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer** Bribe or threaten voters and appeal to them in the name of caste/religion.

**Question** As per code of conduct for election campaign, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer** No party or candidate can use any place of worship for election propaganda.

**Question** What do you mean by “Universal Adult franchises”?

**Answer** Every citizen of India who is 18 years of age or above has a right to vote without discrimination of caste, creed, sex, colour, etc.

**Question** The members of Election Commission are appointed by the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ .

**Answer** President of India

**Question** What do you mean by voters?

**Answer** People who have the right to vote or participate in the election of representatives are known as ‘voters’.

**Question** Name the political party that ruled over Haryana between 1982 to 1987.

**Answer** The Congress Party.

**Question** What is the significance of Election Photo Identity Card?

**Answer** This card is given to every person on the voter’s list. The voters are required to carry, this card when they go out to vote, so that no one can vote for someone else.

**Question** Who formed a new party ‘Lok Dal’?

**Answer** Chaudhary Devi Lai

**Question** How many seats are reserved for Scheduled Tribes in Lok Sabha?

**Answer** One-third seats are reserved for Scheduled Tribes in Lok Sabha.

**Question** What do you mean by ‘Polling Booth’?

**Answer** A polling booth is a place where voters go inside to caste their vote. Inside the booth, and election officials identify them and put a mark on their finger and allow them to cast their vote. .

**Question** What are elections?

**Answer** It is a mechanism by which people can choose their representatives at regular intervals.

**Question** What is a constituency?

**Answer** The entire country is divided into fixed electoral areas for purposes of elections. This is called constituency.

**Question** What is the full form of EVM?

**Answer** Electronic Voting Machine.

**Question** What is the importance of Universal Adult Franchise?

**Answer** It promotes the national unity &nd integrity. It gives a chance to people to gain political education.

**Question** What do you understand by the ‘Polling Day’?

**Answer** On this day, the voters cast their votes and elect their representatives.

**Question** What are the reserved constituencies?

**Answer** The constituencies that are reserved for people who belong to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, are called reserved constituencies.

**Question** What is general election?

**Answer** The elections of the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha take place after five years. Elections are held in all constituencies at the same time, either on the same day or within a few days. This is called a general election.

**Question** Who is the head of the Election Commission?

**Answer** The Chief Election Commissioner is the head of the Election Commission.

**Question** What do you mean by ‘code of conduct’?

**Answer** It is a set of norms and guidelines to be followed by all political parties and contesting candidates during the election time.

**Question** What do you understanding by election manifesto?

**Answer** An election manifesto is a statement by a political party explaining its policies, saying what they will do if they win the election.

**Question** What are the main functions of the Election Commission of India?

**Answer** Section Commission takes decisions on every aspect of conduct and control of election. It implements code of conduct. It orders the government to follows the guidelines, to prevent use and misuse of governmental power to enhance its win elections, or to transfer some government officials. If Election Commission feels unfairness in polling, it orders a re-poll.

**Question** What details are required from the candidates who wish to contest elections?

**Answer** The candidates who wish to contest elections have to make a legal declaration, giving full details of:

* Serious criminal cases pending against the candidate.
* Details of the assets and liabilities of the candidate and his or her family.
* Education qualifications of the candidate.

**Question** What are the two merits of electoral competition?

**Answer** Two merits of electoral competition are:

* Political leaders all over the world, like all other professionals, are motivated by a desire to advance their political careers.
* They want to come in power and retain positions for themselves. So they do their best to win the hearts of people. :

**Question** What are the choices generally a voter can make in an election?

**Answer** In an election, the voters make the following choices:

* They can choose who will make laws for them.
* They can choose who will form the government and take major decisions.
* They can choose the party whose policies will guide the government and law-making process.

**Question** What the minimum conditions of a democratic election?

**Answer** The minimum conditions of a democratic elections are:

* Everyone should be able to choose. This means that everyone should have one vote and every vote should have equal value.
* 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.
* The choice should be offered at regular intervals. Elections must be held regularly after every few years.
* The candidate preferred by the people should get elected.
* Elections should be conducted in a free and fair manner where people can choose them at their will. (Any three)

**Question** “Election campaigns are needed to regulate”. Why?

**Answer** It is sometimes necessary to regulate campaigns to ensure that every political party and candidate gets a fair and equal chance to compete.

According to our election law, no party or candidate can:

* Bribe or threaten voters.
* Appeal to them in the name of caste or religion.
* Use government resources for election campaign.
* Spend more than? 25 lakh in a constituency for a Lok Sabha election or? 10 lakh in a constituency in an assembly election.

**Question** What is the ‘Model code of Conduct’ for election campaign?

**Answer** According to the medal code of conduct, no party or candidate can:

* Use any place of worship for election propaganda. ‘
* Use government vehicles, aircrafts and officials for election.
* Once elections are announced, the Ministers shall not lay foundation stones of any projects, take any big policy decisions or make any promises of providing public facilities.

**Question** Why should elections be held regularly?

**Answer** Elections should be held regularly because:

* Elections should be held regularly because it provides incentives to the political parties and leaders.
* They know that if they raise-issues that people want to raised, it would make them popular and increase their chances of victory in the next elections.
* But, if they fail to satisfy the voters with their work, they will not be able to win again.

**Question** What are the demerits of an election competition?

**Answer** An electoral competition has many demerits such as.

* It creates a sense of disunity and ‘factionalism’ in every locality.
* Different political parties and leaders often level allegations against one another.
* Parties and candidates often use dirty tricks to win elections.

**Question** Why is there a provision of reservation of seats in the legislatures?

**Answer** The constitution makers were worried that in an open electoral competition, certain weaker sections may not stand a good chance to get elected to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies. They may not have the required resources, education and contacts to contest and win elections against the more influential and resourceful contestants. Hence, the seats are reserved for them in the legislatures.

**Question** How can you say that elections are expensive in our country?

**Answer** A large amount of money is spent in conducting elections in India. For instance, the government spent about? 3,500 crores in conducting Lok Sabha elections in 2014. That works out to about? 40 per person on the voters’ list. The amount spent by the parties and candidates was more than what the government spent. It is often said that elections are a burden on people. Our poor country cannot afford to hold elections once every five years.

**Question** What are some of the activities undertaken by political parties to carry out elections? Mention any three activities.

**Answer** Firstly, in election campaigns, political parties try to focus public attention on some big issues. For instance, the Congress party led by Indira Gandhi gave the slogan of “Garibi Hatao” (remove poverty) in the Lok Sabha elections of 1971. “Save Democracy” was the slogan given by Janata Party in the Lok Sabha election of 1977.

Secondly, political leaders contact their voters, address election meetings, promise to remove the grievances of the people. .

Thirdly, support of media – TV channels and newspaper columns – is also taken by the political parties to further their cause to gather more votes.

**Question** What type of election system is followed in India?

**Answer** In India, two types of election system are followed. First, when elections are held regularly after every five years is called a general electior. Second, when election is held only for one constituency to fill the vacancy caused by death or resignation of a member. This is called a by-election. Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha (Assembly) elections are held regularly after every five years. After five years, the term of all the elected representatives comes to an end. The Lok Sabha or Vidhan Sabha stands ‘dissolved’.

**Question** Write a short note on election campaigns.

**Answer** In our country, election campaigns take place for a two-week period between the announcement of the final list of candidates and the date of polling. During this period, the candidates contact their voters, political leaders address election meetings and political parties mobilise their supporters.

This is also the period when newspapers and television news are full of election related stories and debates. But, election campaign is not limited to these two weeks only. Political parties start preparing for elections months before they actually take place.

**Question** How does the polling take place?

**Answer** The final stage of an election is the day when the voters cast or ‘poll’ their vote. That day is usually called the election day. Every person whose name is on the voters’ list can go to a nearby ‘polling booth’, situated usually in a local school or a government office. Once the voters go inside the booth, the election officials identify them, put a mark on their finger and allow then to cast their vote. An agent of each candidate is allowed to sit inside the polling booth and ensure that the voting takes place in a fair way.

**Question** What are Electronic Voting Machines?

**Answer** Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) are used to record votes. The machine shows the names of the candidates and the party symbols. Independent candidates too have their own symbols, allotted by election officials. All the voter has to do is to press the button against the name of the candidate she wants to give her vote.

**Question** What unfair practices are generally used in elections by our contesting candidates?

**Answer** Unfair practices are quite common in elections. A lot of unfair practices are used during this time. Some of these are given below:

* Inclusion of false names and exclusion of genuine names in the voters’ list;
* Misuse of government facilities and government officials by the ruling party;
* Excessive use of money by rich candidates and big parties;
* Intimidation of voters and rigging on the polling day.

**Question** In which way does the Election Commission enjoy the same kind of independence as the judiciary?

**Answer** The Election Commission enjoys the same kind of independence that the judiciary enjoys.

* The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) is appointed by the President of India.
* But, once appointed, he is not answerable to the President or the government.
* Even if the ruling party or the government does not like what the Commission does, it is virtually impossible for it to remove the Chief Election Commissioner.

**Question** What are the challenges to free and fair elections in India?

**Answer** The elections in India are basically free and fair. But, a few candidates may win purely based on money power and unfair means. These challenges exist not just in India but also in many established democracies. These deeper issues are a matter of concern for those who believe in democracy. The challenges to free and fair elections in India are as follows.

* Candidates and parties with a lot of money may not be sure of their victory but they do enjoy a big and unfair advantage over smaller parties and independents.
* In some parts of the country, candidates with criminal connection have been able to push others out of the electoral race and to secure a ‘ticket’ from major parties.
* Some families tend to dominate political parties; tickets are distributed to relatives from these families.
* Very often elections offer little choice to ordinary citizens, for both the major parties are quite similar to each other both in policies and practice.
* Smaller parties and independent candidates suffer a huge disadvantage compared to bigger parties.

**Question** How can you say that the outcome of elections is a final test of free and fair elections? Explain

**Answer** One final test of the free and fair of election has in the outcome itself. If elections are not free or fair, the outcome always favours the powerful. In such a situation, the ruling parties do not lose elections. Usually, the losing party does not accept the outcome of a rigged election.

The outcome of India’s elections speaks for itself:

* The ruling parties routinely lose elections in India both at the national and state level. In fact, in every two out of the three elections held in the last fifteen years, the ruling party lost.
* In the US, an incumbent or ‘sitting’ elected representative rarely loses an election. In India, about half of the sitting MPs or MLAs lose elections.
* Candidates who are known to have spent a lot of money on ‘buying votes’ and  
  those with known criminal connections often lose elections.
* Barring very few disputed elections, the electoral outcomes are usually accepted as ‘people’s verdict’ by the defeated party.

**Question** What do you mean by Voter’s List? What is its significance?

**Answer** (i) In a democratic election, the list of those who are eligible to vote is prepared much before the election and given to everyone. This list is officially called the Electoral Roll and is commonly known as the Voters’ List.

(ii) The significance of Voter’s List is as follows:

* This is an important step for it is linked to the first condition of a democratic election. Everyone should get an equal opportunity to choose representatives.
* In our country, all the citizens aged 18 years and above can vote in an election. Every citizen has the right to vote, regardless of his or her caste, religion or gender.
* It is the responsibility of the government to get the names of all the eligible voters put on the Voter’s List. As new persons attain voting age, names are added to the voters’ list. Names of those who move out of a place or those who are dead are deleted.
* A complete revision of the list takes place every five years. This is done to ensure that it remains up to date. In the last few years a new system of Election Photo Identity Card (EPIC) has been introduced. The government has tried to give this card to every person on the voters’ list. But the card is not yet compulsory for voting. For voting, the voters can show many other proofs of identity like the ration card or the driving licence.

**Question** Explain the role of the Election Commission in conducting the free and fair elections.

**Answer** The role of the Election Commission in conducting the free and fair elections is as follows.

* Election Commission takes decisions on every aspect of conduct and control of elections from the announcement of elections to the declaration of results.
* It implements the Code of Conduct and punishes any candidate or party that violates it.
* It allots election symbols to parties and independent candidates.
* During the election period, the Election Commission can order the government to follow some guidelines, to prevent use and misuse of governmental power to enhance its chances to win elections, or to transfer some government officials.
* When on election duty, government officers work under the control of the Election Commission and not the government.

**Question** What are the changing trends of people’s participation in elections in India?

**Answer** The changing trends of people’s participation in elections in India are as follows:

* People’s participation in election is usually measured by voter turnout figures. Turnout indicates the per cent of eligible voters who cast their vote. In India, the turnout figures over last few decades have either remained stable or gone up.
* In India, the poor, illiterate and underprivileged people vote in larger proportion as compared to the rich and privileged sections. This is in contrast to western democracies.
* Common people in India attach a lot of importance to elections. They feel that through elections, they can bring pressure on political parties to adopt policies and programmes favourable to them.
* The interest of voters in election-related activities has been increasing over the years. During the 2004 elections, more than one-third voters took part in a campaign-related activity.
* More than half of the people identified themselves as being close to one or the other political party. One out of every seven voters is a member of a political party.

**Question** What are the minimum conditions needed for a democratic election?

**Answer** There are five minimum conditions needed for a democratic election. They are :

* Everyone should have the right to vote and every vote should have equal value.
* Parties and candidates should be free to contest elections and they should offer some real choice to the voters.
* Elections must be held regularly .
* Candidates preferred by the people should be elected.
* Elections should be conducted in a free and fair manner.

**Question** Can elections be considered as competition ?

**Answer** Elections can be considered as a competition. It is a political competition. The competition is among political parties. At the constituency level, it is a competition among several candidates. If there is no competition, elections will become pointless.

An electoral competition also has many demerits . It creates a sense of disunity and ‘factionalism’ in every locality. Different political parties and leaders often level allegations against one another. Parties and candidates often use dirty tricks to win elections.

Some good people who may wish to serve the country do not enter this arena because of this unhealthy competition.

**Question** What is our system of elections?

**Answer** Elections for the Lok sabha are held every 5 years. After five years the term of all the elected representatives comes to an end. The Lok Sabha stands ‘dissolved’.

Elections for the Lok Sabha are held in all constituencies on the same day or within a few days. This is called a general election. Sometimes election is held only for one constituency to fill the vacancy caused by death or resignation of a member. This is called a by election.

**Question** What are electoral constituencies?

**Answer** India is divided into different areas for purposes of elections. These areas are called electoral constituencies. We follow an area based system of representation. The voters who live in a particular constituencies elect one person to represent their constituencies.

**Question** How many constituencies do we have in India?

**Answer** India is divided into 543 constituencies for Lok Sabha elections. The representative elected from each constituency is called a Member of Parliament.

Similarly, each state is divided into a number of Assembly constituencies, depending on its population and it size.The elected representative of the Assembly constituencies are called the Member of Legislative Assembly or an MLA.

Each Parliamentary constituency has several Assembly constituencies .

**Question** What are Reserved Constituencies ?

**Answer** Reserved Constituencies are constituencies that are set aside for certain weaker sections of the society.

Weaker sections of the society may not stand a good chance to get elected to the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies. They may not have the required resources, education and contacts to contest and win elections against others. Those who are influential and resourceful may prevent them from winning elections.

As our Constitution entitles every citizen to elect its representative, Reserved Constituencies are a necessity.

**Question** Who can vote and who cannot vote in India ?

**Answer** In India , all the citizens above the age of 18 can vote in an election. They have the right to vote, regardless of their caste, religion or gender.

The government gets the names of all the eligible voters and prepares the voters’ list. As new persons attain voting age names are added to the voters’ list. Names of those who move out of a place or those who are dead are deleted. A complete revision of the list takes place every five years.

Criminals and persons with unsound mind are denied the right to vote.

**Question** What should a citizen do if he or she wants to contest the elections?

**Answer** Every person who wishes to contest an election has to fill a ‘nomination form’ and pay a ‘security deposit’. They are requested to present a declaration. The legal declaration has to have the following details:

* Details of any serious criminal cases pending against them. (If applicable).
* Details of the assets and liabilities they have and that of their family members.
* Educational qualifications.
* This information will be made public. This provides an opportunity to the voters to voice their objections, if any, and make the right decision during elections.

**Question** What are the two methods of voting?

**Answer** The two methods of voting are

* The Ballot Paper: A ballot paper is a sheet of paper on which the names of the contesting candidates along with their party name and symbols are listed. The voters indicate whom they want to vote for by putting a stamp on the ballot paper.
* Electronic Voting: Electronic voting machines (EVM) are used to record votes. The machine shows the names of the candidates and the party symbols. The voter has to press the button corresponding to the name of the person he wants to vote. Then the vote gets registered automatically.
* Independent candidates too have their own symbols, allotted by election officials. Voting is conducted in total secrecy.

**Question** Why do we need elections?

**Answer** Elections are essential for any representative democracy. In an election the citizens have many choices. They are :

* They can choose the people who will make laws.
* They can choose the government that will rule them.
* They can decide on the party whose policies they prefer.

**Question** What is the percentage of reservation for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok shaba?

**Answer** In the Lok Sabha, 79 seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes and 41 for the Scheduled Tribes. This number is proportionate to their population. This reservation does not lessen the legitimate share of any other social group.

**Question** What is called a ticket in politics?

**Answer** Party’s nomination of a candidate is often called party ‘ticket’.

**Question** Mention a few successful slogans that were used during election campaigns.

**Answer** The most successful slogans used during election campaigns were:

* Garibi Hatao or Remove poverty: This slogan was used by the Congress party led by Indira Gandhi in the Lok Sabha elections of 1971. The party promised to remove poverty from the country.
* Save Democracy: This slogan used by Janata Party in the Lok Sabha election held in 1977. The party promised to undo the excesses committed during Emergency and restore civil liberties.
* Land to the Tiller: This slogan was used by the Left Front in the West Bengal Assembly elections held in 1977.
* Protect the Self Respect of the Telugus: This slogan used by N. T. Rama Rao, the leader of the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections in 1983.

**Question** Write a brief note on the Election Commission.

**Answer** The Election Commission is independent and very powerful . It enjoys the same kind of independence that the judiciary enjoys. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) is appointed by the President of India. He heads the Election Commission. After his election the C E C is not answerable to the President or the government. It is impossible for the government to remove the CEC, even if it is dissatisfied with him. The powers of the Election Commission of India are as follows:

* EC takes decisions on every aspect of conduct and control of elections from the announcement of elections to the declaration of results.
* It implements the Code of Conduct and punishes any candidate or party that violates it
* During the election period, the EC can order the government to follow some guidelines, to prevent use and misuse of governmental power to enhance its chances to win elections, or to transfer some government officials
* When on election duty, government officers work under the control of the EC and not the government.

**Question** What is meant by rigging?

**Answer** Fraud and malpractices indulged by a party or candidate to increase its votes, in an election is called rigging.

* Using the votes of others
* Recording multiple votes by the same person.
* Bribing polling officers to favour a candidate are considered as rigging during elections.

**Question** Which of the following statements about the reasons for conducting elections are false?

1. Elections enable people to judge the performance of the government.
2. People select the representative of their choice in an election.
3. Elections enable people to evaluate the performance of the judiciary.
4. People can indicate which policies they prefer.

**Answer** c. Elections enable people to evaluate the performance of the judiciary.

**Question** Which of these is not a good reason to say that Indian elections are democratic?

1. India has the largest number of voters in the world.
2. India’s Election Commission is very powerful.
3. In India, everyone above the age of 18 has a right to vote.
4. In India, the losing parties accept the electoral verdict.

**Answer** a) India has the largest number of voters in the world.

**Question** Match the following :

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| It is necessary to keep the voters list up to date because | There is a fair representation of all sections of our society |
| Some constituencies are reserved for SCs and STs so that | Everyone has an equal opportunity to elect their representative |
| Everyone has one and only one vote so that | All candidates must have a fair chance of competing in elections |
| Party in power is not allowed to use government vehicles because | Some people may have moved away from the area where they voted last |

**Answer**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| It is necessary to keep the voters list up to date because | Some people may have moved away from the area where they voted last |
| Some constituencies are reserved for SCs and STs so that | There is a fair representation of all sections of our society |
| Everyone has one and only one vote so that | Everyone has an equal opportunity to elect their representative |
| Party in power is not allowed to use government vehicles because | All candidates must have a fair chance of competing in elections |

**Question** List all the different election-related activities mentioned in the chapter and arrange them in a time sequence, beginning with the first activity and ending with the last. Some of these activities are given below:

* 1. releasing election manifestos
  2. counting of votes
  3. making of voters’ list
  4. election campaign
  5. declaration of election results
  6. casting of votes
  7. ordering of re-poll
  8. announcing election schedule
  9. filing nomination

**Answer**

1. Making of Voters’ List

2. Announcing Election Schedule

3. Releasing Election Manifesto

4. Election Campaign

5. Filing Nomination

6. Casting of Votes

7. Ordering of Re-poll

8. Counting of Votes

9. Declaration of Election Results

**Question** Surekha is an officer-in-charge of ensuring free and fair elections in an assembly constituency in a state. Describe what she should focus on for each of the following stages of election:

1. Election campaign
2. Polling day
3. Counting day

**Answer**.

1. Election Campaign
   1. Check law and order
   2. Keep a check on muscle and money power
   3. Keep a check on the expenditure limit of a candidate
   4. To ensure no promotion on the grounds of religion, caste or sex
2. Polling Day
   1. Check the voters’ list
   2. Check on voters’ id
   3. Prevent booth capturing
   4. Ensure free and fair elections
3. Counting Day
   1. Keep a fair counting practice
   2. Prevent the rigging of votes

**Question** The table below gives the proportion of different communities among the candidates who won elections to the US Congress. Compare these to the proportion of these communities in the population of the US. Based on this, would you suggest a system of reservations in the US Congress? If yes, why and for which communities? If no, why not?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Communities | The proportion of the Community (in per cent) | |
| House of representatives | Population of US |
| Blacks | 8 | 13 |
| Hispanics | 5 | 13 |
| Whites | 86 | 70 |

**Answer** Yes, the system of reservation should be present in the US Congress for Hispanics and Blacks. Their representation in the US Congress is comparatively lower than Whites, who are the majority in the US.

**Question**. Can we draw the following conclusions from the information given in this chapter? Give two facts to support your position for each of these.

1. Election Commission of India does not have enough powers to conduct free and fair elections in the country.
2. There is a high level of popular participation in the elections in our country.
3. It is very easy for the party in power to win an election.
4. Many reforms are needed to make our elections completely free and fair.

**Answer**

1. No. The given conclusion for the Election Commission cannot be drawn because:
   1. Election Commission released the code of conduct for elections and has the power to punish whoever violates them.
   2. During elections, the election in-charge works under the Election Commission of India and not the government.
2. Yes, the given conclusion can be drawn because:
   1. Voter-turnout has soared in the past few years
   2. There has been an increase in people’s participation in election-related activities
3. No, it is not the right conclusion because:
   1. The ruling party in one election loses the power in the next
   2. Despite a lot of expenditure in the election campaign, candidates lose
4. Yes, the conclusion is fair because:
   1. Reforms will make it easier for small parties to face no major challenge in fighting an election
   2. To stop candidates’ facing criminal charges from running an election

**Question** Chinappa was convicted of torturing his wife for dowry. Satbir was held guilty of practising untouchability. The court did not allow either of them to contest elections. Does this decision go against the principles of democratic elections?

**Answer** No. The decision to not allow both Chinappa and Satbir to contest elections for the crime they committed is totally fair. According to the elections’ rule, no criminal can participate in elections. Hence, it is a fair verdict.

**Question** Here are some reports of electoral malpractices from different parts of the world. Is there anything that these countries can learn from India to improve their elections? What would you suggest in each case?

1. During an election in Nigeria, the officer in charge of counting votes deliberately increased the votes of one candidate and declared him elected. The court later found out that more than five lakh votes cast for one candidate were counted in favour of another.
2. Just before elections in Fiji, a pamphlet was distributed warning voters that a vote for former Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry will lead to bloodshed. This was a threat to voters of Indian origin.
3. In the US, each state has its own method of voting, its own procedure of counting and its own authority for conducting elections. Authorities in the state of Florida took many controversial decisions that favoured Mr. Bush in the presidential elections in 2000. But no one could change those decisions.

**Answer**

1. On the vote-counting day, the representatives of each party that has contested in the election should be present. Nigeria should follow this rule of the election that is practised in India.
2. In Fiji, the election commission should set up an enquiry-committee, and the party or the candidate who was involved in this negative propaganda should be debarred from the election.
3. The US should have one Election Commission, who can make rules for states for the election.

**Question** Here are some reports of malpractices in Indian elections. Identify what the problem in each case is. What should be done to correct the situation?

1. Following the announcement of elections, the minister promised to provide financial aid to reopen the closed sugar mill.
2. Opposition parties alleged that their statements and campaign was not given due attention in Doordarshan and All India Radio.
3. An inquiry by the Election Commission showed that electoral rolls of a state contain name of 20 lakh fake voters.
4. The hoodlums of a political party were moving with guns, physically preventing supporters of other political parties to meet the voters and attacking meetings of other parties.

**Answer**

1. As per the code of conduct that a candidate has to obey during the election, they should not announce any promises. Hence, in this case, the Election Commission should take this up with the minister.
2. Election Commission should ensure free and fair representation to all parties in the government-owned media.
3. Election Commission should announce re-elections, as the presence of fake votes shows the vote-rigging.
4. Election Commission should ban the party, as the use of muscle power and money power is totally illegal.

**Question** Ramesh was not in class when this chapter was being taught. He came the next day and repeated what he had heard from his father. Can you tell Ramesh what is wrong with these statements?

1. Women always vote the way men tell them to. So what is the point of giving them the right to vote?
2. Party politics creates tension in society. Elections should be decided by consensus not by competition.
3. Only graduates should be allowed to stand as candidates for elections.

**Answer**

1. In elections, the secret-ballot system is used where an individual can vote for the party he/she likes. Hence, women can also use their discretion and cast a vote as per their wish.
2. Competition is important for any profession, as it motivates one to improve. Competition in elections ensures that candidates work hard for society. Hence, it should be encouraged.
3. Educational qualification is not the only factor for a candidate to understand the social needs of the people. Hence, it should be fair if someone who is not a graduate decides to run for an election.