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Importance of Elections in Democracy

The Big Questions

Elections are essential to a democratic system because they allow citizens to choose their representatives and hold them accountable. The misinformation and intimidation can affect the democratic process.

Direct and Indirect Elections

Direct elections involve citizens voting directly for their representatives, such as members of the Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha, and local bodies.

Periodic Elections and Accountability

Periodic elections are vital to democracy as they ensure that representatives remain accountable to the people. Governments cannot continue to rule without the consent of the governed.

Functions of Elections

- Accountability: Leaders must answer to the people and can be voted out.
- Representation: Leaders reflect the views of the people they serve.
- Equality: Every citizen has an equal chance to vote and be heard.
- Legitimacy: Elections give the government rightful authority to rule.
- Participation: Citizens take part in decision-making.
- Transparency: The electoral process is clear and fair.



Fig. 7.1. Importance of elections in c

why elections are important for democracy

is ensured

Exam Question

Why are periodic elections important in a democracy?

Periodic elections ensure that elected representatives remain accountable to the people and that governments cannot continue without the consent of the governed.

India's Election Machinery

Electoral Process and Stakeholders

India's electoral process is vast and complex, requiring laws, coordination, and a robust system at national, state, and local levels. Key stakeholders include the Election Commission of India, political parties, and the electorate.

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Fig. 7.2. Indian

Exam Question

What roles do different stakeholders play in India's election process?

The ECI manages the election process, political parties contest elections, civil society and media inform and monitor, and voters participate

Electoral Systems in India

First-Past-The-Post and Proportional Representation

India uses the First-Past-The-Post (FPTP) system for Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections, where the candidate with the most votes wins.

Bicameral Legislatures

Some states have a bicameral legislature with the Vidhan Parishad (Legislative Council) elected through proportional representation and th



Feature	First Past The Post (FPTP)
 Name of the Country (Imaginary)	Harithhumi
 Seats in the Parliament	25 seats
 Main Political Parties	Party A Party B Party C



How Voting Works?

Each voter votes for one candidate in the constituency. The candidate with the most votes wins, even if the votes are less than 50% of total votes polled.



Sample Results (Vote Percentage)

Party A: 40%
Party B: 35%
Party C: 25%



Party A forms the government

Who forms the Government?

government.

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$$\text{Quota} = \left\lceil \frac{\text{Total valid votes}}{\text{Seats to be filled}} \right\rceil$$

Counting process

1. Voters mark their preferences.
2. First preference votes are counted. Candidates who receive the minimum number of votes declared elected.
3. The candidate who receives the least votes. Their votes are transferred to the next preference on the ballot.
4. Process continues till the required number of seats are elected.

Exam Question

What is the difference between the First-Past-The-Post system and the Proportional Representation system?

In FPTP, the candidate with the most votes wins the seat, even without a majority. In Proportional Representation, seats are allocated based on the proportion of votes received by each party.

Major Election Laws in India

The Representation of the People Acts

The Representation of the People Act, 1950, deals with seat allocation, delimitation, and electoral rolls. The Representation of the People Act, 1951, deals with the conduct of elections.

Electoral Offences and Corrupt Practices

The 1951 Act lists offences such as giving gifts to influence votes, appealing on religious or caste grounds, and misuse of government office for electoral purposes.



Delimitation adjusts the boundaries of parliamentary and assembly constituencies based on population changes to ensure equal representation.

Exam Question

Why is delimitation important in elections?

Delimitation ensures that each elected representative represents approximately the same number of people, maintaining fairness in political representation.

Election Commission of India

Constitutional Role and Functions

The ECI is an autonomous constitutional body responsible for supervising, directing, and controlling elections to the Parliament, State Legislatures, and local bodies.

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Fig. 7.4. An officer voter's name

Exam Question

What are the key functions of the Election Commission of India?

The ECI prepares and updates electoral rolls, schedules elections, registers political parties, allocates election symbols, and ensures free and

Political Parties

Role in Democracy

Political parties organize public opinion, campaign on issues, offer voters choices, and help voters make informed decisions. They present p



**Political parties
are essential to a
democratic system
as they work directly
at the grassroots
level.**

Fig. 7.9. Impo

Multi-Party System and Defection

India has a multi-party system reflecting its diversity. Defection refers to elected members leaving their party, which can destabilize govern

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graph TD; A[Winning Party] --> B[Forms Government]; B --> C[ ];
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Winning Party

**Forms
Government**

Formulates and Implements Policies

Fig. 7.11. Ro

Recognition of Political Parties

The ECI recognizes national and state parties based on vote share and seats won. Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPP) have lim

Criteria State P

Criteria for NATIONAL PARTY RECOGNITION (Any one condition should be fulfilled)

- Secures not less than 6% of valid votes polled in any four or more states in a General Election to the Lok Sabha or the Legislative Assembly, and in addition, it wins four seats in the Lok Sabha from a single state or more states.
- Wins at least 2% of seats in the Lok Sabha, and the candidates are elected from at least three

states.

What is the purpose of the Anti-Defection Law?

- It is recognised as a State Party at least in four states.

The Anti-Defection Law aims to prevent elected members from switching parties after elections, ensuring political stability and party discipline.

Challenges to Free and Fair Elections

Common Challenges

Challenges include misinformation, fake news, intimidation, and accessibility issues. These can undermine the fairness and inclusiveness of the electoral process.

Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPP)

- The parties that have not secured enough percentage of votes in the Legislative Assembly or the General Elections.
- Parties that have never contested elections since the registration.





Fig. 7.13. Chal

Measures to Ensure Fairness

The ECI uses laws, the Model Code of Conduct, Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), and awareness

Exam Question

How does the Election Commission of India ensure free and fair elections?

The ECI enforces election laws, monitors campaigns, uses technology like EVMs and VVPAT, conducts voter awareness programs, and takes

Solved Examples

Example 1

Question: What is the significance of the Representation of the People Act, 1951?

Answer: It regulates the conduct of elections, including nomination, campaigning, voting procedures, and dispute resolution, ensuring tran

Example 2

Question: Explain the role of the Election Commission of India in maintaining democracy.

Answer: The ECI supervises elections, prepares electoral rolls, registers parties, schedules elections, and ensures free and fair voting, thus

Practice Set

Easy

- What is a direct election?
- Name two offices elected through indirect elections in India.
- What is the main function of the Election Commission of India?

Moderate

- Describe the First-Past-The-Post electoral system.

- What are the main provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1950?
- Explain the role of political parties in elections.

Challenging

- Discuss the importance of delimitation in ensuring fair representation.
- Analyze the impact of the Anti-Defection Law on political stability.
- Evaluate the challenges faced by the Election Commission in conducting free and fair elections in India.

Answer Key

Easy

- Direct election is when citizens vote directly for their representatives.
- President and Vice President are elected through indirect elections.
- The Election Commission of India conducts and supervises elections.

Moderate

- FPTP is a system where the candidate with the most votes wins the seat.
- The 1950 Act deals with seat allocation, delimitation, and electoral rolls.
- Political parties organize public opinion, present policies, and help voters make informed choices.

Challenging

- Delimitation ensures equal population representation in constituencies.
- The Anti-Defection Law prevents elected members from switching parties, promoting stability.
- The ECI faces challenges like misinformation, large voter base, and diverse regions but uses laws and technology to maintain fairness.

Quick Reference

- **Direct Elections:** Citizens vote directly for representatives.
- **Indirect Elections:** Representatives elect leaders.
- **First-Past-The-Post:** Candidate with most votes wins.
- **Proportional Representation:** Seats allocated based on vote percentage.
- **Representation of the People Act:** Laws governing elections.
- **Delimitation Commission:** Adjusts constituency boundaries.
- **Election Commission of India:** Conducts and supervises elections.
- **Anti-Defection Law:** Prevents party switching by elected members.

Glossary

- **Accountability:** The responsibility of elected leaders to answer to the people.
- **Delimitation:** The process of redrawing constituency boundaries based on population.
- **Direct Election:** Election where citizens vote directly for candidates.
- **Election Commission of India:** Constitutional body managing elections.
- **First-Past-The-Post:** Electoral system where the highest vote-getter wins.
- **Indirect Election:** Election where representatives elect leaders.

- **Political Party:** An organized group contesting elections to form government.
- **Proportional Representation:** Electoral system allocating seats based on vote share.
- **Representation of the People Act:** Laws regulating elections in India.
- **Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail:** A method to verify votes cast electronically.



