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## Elections in Indian Democracy

In a democracy like India, it is not feasible for all citizens to participate directly in every decision-making process. Therefore, representatives are elected through elections to ensure a fair and democratic process.

Key rules for elections include:

- Eligibility criteria for voters.
- Eligibility criteria for candidates contesting elections.
- Supervision and conduct of elections.
- Methods for choosing representatives.
- Counting of votes.
- Declaration of elected representatives.

India follows the First Past the Post (FPTP) system, also known as the Plurality System, characterized by:

- The country being divided into 543 constituencies.
- Each constituency electing one representative.
- The candidate with the highest number of votes in a constituency is declared the winner.

In contrast, countries like Israel use the Proportional Representation (PR) system, where seats in the parliament are allocated to parties in proportion to the number of votes they receive.

For Rajya Sabha elections in India, the Single Transferable Vote system is used. Members are elected by representatives of State Legislative Assemblies. The number of votes for each candidate is calculated as:

$$\left( \frac{\text{Total votes polled}}{\text{Total number of candidates to be elected}} \right) + 1$$

The FPTP system tends to result in a two-party system in India.

### Exam Question

Q: What is the First Past the Post system and how does it function in Indian elections?

**A:** The First Past the Post system is an election method where the country is divided into constituencies, each electing one representative. They have an absolute majority.

## Election Characteristics and Electoral Reforms in India

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The Delimitation Commission, appointed by the President of India in collaboration with the Election Commission, is responsible for drawing their population proportion in each state.

Reservation of seats for women is provided in rural and urban local bodies to promote inclusive representation.

Voting age was reduced from 21 to 18 years in 1989, expanding the electorate.

Eligibility criteria for candidates include:

- Minimum age of 25 years to contest Lok Sabha or Assembly elections.
- Disqualification for candidates who have served imprisonment of two or more years for certain offenses.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) supervises elections at the central and state levels but not local body elections. The Chief Election Commissioner is elected by the President for a six-year term or until age 65.

The CEC can be removed before term expiry only by a special majority recommendation from both Houses of Parliament. Other Election Commissioners are appointed by the President.

Functions of the Election Commission include:

- Maintaining updated voters' lists.
- Scheduling elections.
- Ensuring free and fair polls.
- Recognizing political parties and allotting symbols.

The Election Commission has managed elections under challenging conditions such as militancy in Assam, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, and the Maoist insurgency in the Eastern Ghats.

Suggested electoral reforms include:

- Changing from FPTP to a variant of the PR system.
- Ensuring at least one-third representation of women in Parliament and Assemblies.
- Stricter control of money in politics.
- Barring candidates with criminal cases from contesting.
- Banning caste and religious appeals in campaigns.
- Regulating political parties through law.
- Encouraging active public vigilance and participation.
- Strengthening political institutions and watchdog organizations.

- (i) It supervises the preparation of up-to-date voters list, It ensures that the voters' list is free of errors.
- (ii) It also determines the timing of elections and prepares the election schedule
- (iii) During the entire process, the election commission has the power to take decisions to ensure a free and fair, poll
- (iv) It can also order a recount of votes when it feels that the counting process has not been fully fair and just.
- (v) Election commission accords recognition to political parties and all its symbols to each of them.

Functions of election commission of India

Election Representation

FPTP

System of election

- The country is divided into small geographical units called constituencies or districts.
- Every constituency elects one representative.
- Voter votes for a candidate.
- Candidate who wins the election may not get majority votes.
- Examples : U.K., India.

- Large geographical areas as constituencies.
- More than one representative elected from one constituency.
- Voter votes for the party.
- Candidate who wins the election may not get majority of votes.
- Examples : Israel, Netherlands

## Exam Question

Q: What are the main functions of the Election Commission of India?

A: The Election Commission of India supervises the preparation of voters' lists, schedules elections, ensures free and fair polls, recognizes political parties and all its symbols to each of them.

## Glossary

- **Democracy:** A government of the people, by the people, and for the people.
- **Direct Democracy:** A system where citizens directly participate in decision-making and governance.
- **Election:** A process where citizens choose representatives to govern on their behalf.
- **First Past the Post System:** An election system where the candidate with the most votes in a constituency wins.
- **Proportional Representation:** An election system where parties receive seats in proportion to their vote share.

- **Separate Electorates:** An election system where only voters from a particular community elect their representatives.
- **Special Majority:** A majority requiring two-thirds of those present and voting and a simple majority of the total membership.
- **Universal Adult Franchise:** The right of all adult citizens to vote regardless of religion, caste, gender, or income.

## Solved Examples

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### Example 1

**Question:** Explain why the First Past the Post system can lead to a two-party system.

**Answer:** In the FPTP system, only the candidate with the highest votes in a constituency wins, which discourages smaller parties as votes for them are wasted.

### Example 2

**Question:** What is the role of the Delimitation Commission in Indian elections?

**Answer:** The Delimitation Commission redraws the boundaries of constituencies based on population changes and reserves seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

## Practice Set

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### Easy

- What is the minimum age to vote in India?
- Define democracy.

### Moderate

- Describe the First Past the Post system.
- What are the functions of the Election Commission of India?

### Challenging

- Explain the need for electoral reforms in India.
- Discuss the significance of the Single Transferable Vote system in Rajya Sabha elections.

## Answer Key

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- **Easy:**
  - 18 years.
  - A government of the people, by the people, and for the people.
- **Moderate:**
  - FPTP is an election system where the candidate with the highest votes in a constituency wins.
  - The Election Commission supervises elections, updates voters' lists, schedules elections, ensures free and fair polls, recognizes political parties.

- **Challenging:**
  - Electoral reforms are needed to improve representation, reduce criminalization, control money power, increase women's participation
  - The Single Transferable Vote system ensures proportional representation in Rajya Sabha by requiring candidates to meet a quota

## Quick Reference

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- **FPTP System:** Candidate with most votes in a constituency wins.
- **PR System:** Seats allocated based on vote share.
- **Delimitation Commission:** Redraws constituency boundaries and reserves seats.
- **Election Commission:** Conducts and supervises elections.
- **Voting Age:** 18 years.
- **Candidate Eligibility:** Minimum 25 years, no serious criminal record.

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