

Long Answer Questions

Q.1. What are the minimum conditions for a democratic election?

OR

Do people have real choice in a democratic election?

Ans. Minimum conditions for democratic elections are as follows:

- (i)** Everyone should be able to choose. This means that everyone should have one vote and every vote should have equal value.
- (ii)** Parties and candidates should be free to contest elections and should offer some real choice to the voters.
- (iii)** The choice should be offered at regular intervals. Elections must be held every few years.
- (iv)** The candidates preferred by the people should get elected.
- (v)** Elections should be conducted in a free and fair manner, where people can choose as they wish.

Q.2. What are the merits and demerits of an electoral competition?

Ans. Merits:

- (i)** In an ideal world, all political leaders know what is good for the people and are motivated only by a desire to serve them.
- (ii)** Our constitution makers opted for free competition in elections as the way to select our future leaders, because this system works better in the long run.
- (iii)** Political leaders are motivated by a desire to advance in their political careers. They want to remain in power or get power and position for themselves for which, they can compete with other political parties.

Demerits:

- (i)** An electoral competition creates a sense of disunity and factionalism in every locality.
- (ii)** Different political parties and leaders often level allegations against one another.
- (iii)** Parties and candidates often use dirty tricks to win elections.

Q.3. How are elections held in India?

Ans. (i) Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections are held regularly, after every five years.

(ii) After five years, the term of all the elected representatives comes to an end.

(iii) The Lok Sabha or Vidhan Sabha stands dissolved.

(iv) 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'.

(v) Sometimes, elections are held only for one constituency to fill the vacancy caused by the death or resignation of a member. This is called a 'by-election'.

Q.4. How was the system of 'reserved constituencies' introduced for the SCs and STs?

Ans. (i) Some constituencies are reserved for the people who belong to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

(ii) In an SC-reserved constituency, only someone who belongs to the scheduled caste can stand for elections.

(iii) Similarly, only those belonging to a scheduled tribe can contest elections from a constituency reserved for STs.

(iv) Currently, 79 seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes and 41 for the Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha.

(v) This number is in proportion to their share in the total population; thus the reserved seats for SCs and STs do not take away the legitimate share of any other social group.

Q.5. How does a party file a nomination for its candidate?

Ans. (i) In order to be a candidate, the minimum age is 25 years.

(ii) Political parties nominate their candidates who get the party symbol and support.

(iii) Party's nomination is often called a party 'ticket'.

(iv) Every person who wishes to contest an election has to fill a 'nomination form' and give some money as 'security deposit'.

If the information provided is not correct, the nomination can be cancelled and the security deposit is returned.

Q.6. How is campaigning done for elections held in India?

Ans. (i) 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.

(ii) During this period, the candidates contact their voters.

(iii) Political leaders address election meetings and political parties mobilise their supporters.

(iv) This is also the period when newspapers and the television news broadcasting channels are full of election-related stories and debates.

(v) During election campaigns, political parties try to focus the public attention on some big issues.

(vi) They want the public to vote for their party on that basis.

Q.7. Write some of the successful slogans given by different political parties in various elections.

Ans. (i) 'Garibi Hatao' was the slogan of the Congress party, led by Indira Gandhi in the Lok Sabha elections of 1971. The party promised to prepare all policies to remove poverty from the country.

(ii) 'Save Democracy' was the slogan of the Janata Party in the Lok Sabha elections of 1977. The party promised to undo the excesses committed during the Emergency and restore civil liberties.

(iii) 'Land to the Tiller' was the slogan used by the Left Front in the West Bengal Assembly elections held in 1977.

(iv) 'Protect the Self-respect of the Telugus' was the slogan used by N.T. Rama Rao, the leader of the Telugu Desam Party in the Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections in 1983.

Q.8. What election laws are made for campaigning?

Ans. 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 the voters to vote for them only;
- appeal to the voters in the name of caste or religion;
- use the government resources for election campaigns;
- spend more than `70 lakhs in a constituency for the Lok Sabha elections or `28 lakhs in a constituency during an assembly election.

If they do so, their election can be rejected by the court even after they have been declared elected.

Q.9. How are 'polls' conducted in India?

Ans.

- The final stage of an election is the day when the voters cast their votes in a polling booth. 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 voter goes inside the booth, the election officials identify him or her by putting a mark on his or her finger and allow him or her to cast the 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.
- A ballot paper is placed in which the names of the contesting candidates along with their party name and symbols are listed.
- Nowadays, Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) are used to record votes.
- The machine shows the names of the candidates and party symbols. Independent candidates too have their own symbols, allotted by the election officials.
- Each voter has to press the button against the name of the candidate she or he wants to vote for.

Q.10. How are votes counted after the polls?

Ans.

- Once the polling is over, all the EVMs are sealed and taken to a secure place.
- A few days later, on a fixed date, all the EVMs from a constituency are opened and the votes secured by each candidate are counted.
- The agents of all candidates are present there to ensure that the counting is done properly.
- The candidate who secures the highest number of votes from a constituency is declared elected.
- In a general election, the counting of votes in all the constituencies usually takes place at the same time, and on the same day.
- Within a few hours of counting, all the results are declared and it becomes clear as to who will form the next government.

Q.11. What does 'voter turnout' during an election in India signify?

Ans. (i) People's participation in elections is usually measured by the voter turnout figures. Turnout indicates the per cent of eligible voters who actually cast their votes.

(ii) In India, the poor, illiterate and the underprivileged people vote in larger proportion as compared to the rich and privileged sections.

(iii) Common people in India attach a lot of importance to elections. They feel that through elections, they can bring pressure on the political parties to adopt policies and programmes favourable for them.

(iv) The interest of voters, in election-related activities, has been increasing over the years.

Q.12. What are the challenges to free and fair elections in India?

Ans. Challenges to free and fair elections in India are as follows:

(i) 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.

(ii) In some parts of the country, candidates with criminal connection have been able to secure a 'ticket' from major parties.

(iii) Some families tend to dominate the political parties; tickets are distributed to relatives from these families.

(iv) Very often, elections offer little choice to ordinary citizens as both the major parties are similar to each other in their policies and practices.

(v) Smaller parties and independent candidates suffer a huge disadvantage as compared to the bigger parties.