

Ch-4 ELECTORAL POLITICS

Q.1.What were the promises made by Devi Lal in the Assembly Elections in 1987?

In the election campaign, Devi Lal said that if his party won the elections, his government would waive the loans of farmers and small businessmen. He promised that this would be the first action of his government.

Q.2.What is Election?

Election is a mechanism by which people can choose their representatives at regular intervals and change them if they wish to do so. It is the process through which people choose their representatives to form the government. E. Parliament election or Assembly election.

Q. 3. Why do we need elections?

- i) To make the rule of the people elections are necessary. In most democracies people rule through representatives. To choose the representatives we need election
- ii) To find out if people like their representatives or not elections are required to elect or not to elect.
- iii) To ensure that these representatives rule as per the wishes of people elections are required.
- iv) To make sure that those who the people don't like do not remain in power elections are required.

Q.4.What are the choices that voters normally make in an election?

In an election the voters may make the following choices:

- 1) They can choose who will make laws for them.
- 2) They can choose who will form the government and take major decisions.
- 3) They can choose the party whose policies will guide the government and law making.
- 4) To find out if the people like their representatives or not
- 5) To ensure that these representatives rule as per the wishes of the people
- 6) To make sure that those who the people don't like do not remain their representatives.

Q.5. What are the minimum conditions of a democratic election? (What makes an election democratic?)

- 1) First, everyone should be able to choose. This means that everyone should have one vote and every vote should have equal value.
- 2) Second, there should be something to choose from. Parties and candidates should be free to contest elections and should offer some real choice to the voters.
- 3) Third, the choice should be offered at regular intervals. Elections must be held regularly after every few years.
- 4) Fourth, the candidate preferred by the people should get elected.
- 5) Fifth, elections should be conducted in a free and fair manner where people can choose as they really wish.

Q.6.What is the merits/advantages of political competition?

- 1) If there is no competition, elections will become pointless.
- 2) Regular electoral competition provides incentives to political parties and leaders. They know that if they raise issues that people want to be raised, their popularity and chances of victory will increase in the next elections. But if they fail to satisfy the voters with their work they will not be able to win again. Thus it motivate them to do good things.
- 3) Political competition enlighten people about election and democratic principles and during their competition people can identify the party that they should choose.

Q.7.What are the de-merits/disadvantages of political competition?

- 1) An electoral competition has many demerits. It creates a sense of disunity and 'factionalism' in every locality.
- 2) Different political parties and leaders often level allegations against one another.
- 3) Parties and candidates often use dirty tricks to win elections.
- 4) Some people say that the pressure to win electoral fights does not allow sensible long-term policies to be formulated.
- 5) Some good people who may wish to serve the country do not enter this arena. They do not like the idea of being dragged into unhealthy competition.

Q.8. How do we deal with the real life situation in political competition?

- i) One way is to try and improve the knowledge and character of political leaders.
- ii) The other and the more realistic way is to set up a system where political leaders are rewarded for serving the people and punished for not doing so.

Q.9.Distinguish between General Election and By- election.

- 1) Elections that are held in all constituencies at the same time, either on the same day or within a few Days, after a regular interval of five years are called general elections.
- 2) Sometimes elections that are held only for one or a few constituencies to fill the vacancies caused by death or resignation of members, these are called a by-election.
- 3) After a General Election a new government will be formed whereas in a by-election the existing government will not change.

Q.10.What is Electoral Constituencies?

In our country we follow an area based system of representation. The country is divided into different areas for purposes of elections. These areas are called electoral constituencies. In a constituency only one candidate will be elected during election. For Lok Sabha election the country is divided into 543 constituencies. The representative elected from each constituency is called a Member of Parliament.

(MP)

Q.11.What are Reserved Constituencies?

- 1) Some constituencies are reserved for people who belong to the backward classes like the Scheduled Castes [SC] and Scheduled Tribes [ST]. In a SC reserved constituency only someone who belongs to the Scheduled Castes can stand for election.
- 2) Similarly only those belonging to the Scheduled Tribes can contest an election from a constituency reserved for ST. Currently, in the Lok Sabha, 79 seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes and 41 for the Scheduled Tribes.
- 3) It is a measure to include representation for all classes in the legislature.

Q.12.What is Voter's List?

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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.
- 3) It contains name, age, sex, fathers name or husband's name, address and serial number of the voters in a constituency.

Q.13.What is meant by Universal Adult Franchise? Why is it adopted in India?

All the citizens aged 18 years and above, regardless of his or her caste, religion or gender can vote in an election. It is known as Universal Adult Franchise. It is adopted in India due to the following reasons: Different citizens in India differ from one another in many ways; some are rich some are poor; some are highly educated and some are literate; some are kind others are not so. But all of them are human beings with their own needs and views. All of them deserve to have equal say in decisions that affect them.

Q.14.What is meant by EPIC?

It is a new system called Election Photo Identity Card [EPIC]. The government has tried to give this card to every person on the voters list. The voters are required to carry this card when they go out to vote, so that no one can vote for someone else. But the card is not yet compulsory for voting.

Q.15.What are the different stages of election procedure?

- 1) Nomination of Candidates
 - 2) Election Campaign
 - 3) Polling and Counting of Votes (Explain points)
- (Get points from Q.16, Q.19, and Q.22)

Q.16.What is meant by Nomination of Candidates?

- 1) Anyone who can be a voter can become a candidate in elections. The only difference is that in order to be a candidate the minimum age is 25 years, while it is only 18 years for being a voter. There are some other restrictions on criminals etc.
- 2) Every person who wishes to contest an election has to fill a 'nomination form' and register their name on or before the last date of the nomination.

Q.17.What are the qualifications to become a candidate in an election?

Every candidate has to make a legal declaration, giving full details of :

- 1) No serious criminal cases are pending against the candidate;
- 2) Details of the assets and liabilities of the candidate and his or her family; and:
- 3) Educational qualifications of the candidate

Q.18.What is the importance and purpose of Election Campaigns?

- 1) The main purpose of election is to give people a chance to choose the representatives, the government and the policies they prefer.
- 2) In our country such 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 mobilize their supporters.
- 3) 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.

Q.19.What are the different techniques of Election Campaigns?

- 1) Publishing Election Manifesto
- 2) Public Speeches, Sticking of Wall Posters, Issuing Pamphlets
- 3) Advertisement through mass media
- 4) Door-to-Door Canvassing etc are the different techniques of Election Campaigns.

Q.20.State any 4 important slogans raised by different political parties in India.

- 1) The Congress party led by Indira Gandhi 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.
- 2) Save Democracy was the slogan given by Janata Party in the next Lok Sabha election held in 1977. The party promised to undo the excesses committed during Emergency and restore civil liberties.
- 3) The Left Front used the slogan of Land to the Tiller in the West Bengal Assembly elections held in 1977.
- 4) '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.

Q.21. Mention the Code-of-conduct of party and candidates during elections.

- 1) No party or candidate can bribe or threaten voters;
- 2) No party or candidate can appeal votes in the name of caste or religion;
- 3) No party or candidate can use government resources for election campaign; and
- 4) No party or candidate can 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.

Q.22. How is polling done during an election?

- 1) 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 her, put a mark on her finger(by using indelible ink) and allow her to cast 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.
- 2) Earlier the voters used to indicate who they wanted to vote for by putting a stamp on the ballot paper. A ballot paper is a sheet of paper on which the names of the contesting candidates along with party name and symbols are listed.
- 3) Nowadays electronic voting machines (EVM) are used to record votes. The machine shows the names of the candidates and the party symbols.
- 4) 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.

Q.23. State some unfair practices in the conducting of elections in India.

- 1) Inclusion of false names and exclusion of genuine names in the voters' list;
- 2) Misuse of government facilities and officials by the ruling party;
- 3) Excessive use of money by rich candidates and big parties; and
- 4) Intimidation of voters and rigging on the polling day.

Q.24. Why should we have an Independent Election Commission in India?

- 1) 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, the Chief Election Commissioner is not answerable to the President or the government. Even if the ruling party or the government does not like what he Commission does, it is virtually impossible for it to remove the CEC.
- 2) To conduct elections in free-and-fair manner
- 3) It ensures that no ruling party or government official influence the Election Commission.

Q.25.Explain the functions of Election Commission.

- 1) EC takes decisions on every aspect of conduct and control of elections from the announcement of elections to the declaration of results.
- 2) It implements the Code of Conduct and punishes any candidate or party that violates it.
- 3) 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 prevent transfer of government officials.
- 4) When on election duty, government officers work under the control of the EC and not the govt.

Q.26.Under what circumstances does the Election Commission order re-polling in a constituency?

When election officials come to the opinion that polling was not fair in some booths or even an entire constituency, they order a re-poll.

Q.27.What is 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.

Q.28.How is people's participation usually measured in an election? (Or) What is Voters Turnout in Elections?

People's participation in elections is usually measured by Voter Turnout figures. Turnout indicates the percent of eligible voters who actually cast their vote. Over the last 50 years, the turnout in Europe and North America has declined. In India the turnout has either remained stable or actually gone up.

Q.29.Prove by giving examples that the quality of election process is fair in India

- 1) People's participation in elections is usually measured by Voter Turnout figures. Turnout indicates the percent of eligible voters who actually cast their vote. Over the last 50 years, the turnout in Europe and North America has declined. In India the turnout has either remained stable or actually gone up.
- 2) 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. For example in the United States of America, poor people, African Americans and Hispanics vote much less than the rich and the white people.
- 3) 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 favorable to them. They also feel that their vote matters in the way things are run in the country.
- 4) 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 campaign-related activities. 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.

Q.30.The outcome of India's elections speaks for itself. Explain

The outcome of India's elections speaks for itself:

- 1) 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. It proves that unfair practices are not used by the ruling parties.
- 2) 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.
- 3) Candidates who are known to have spent a lot of money on 'buying votes' and those with known criminal connections often lose elections.
- 4) Except a very few disputed elections, the electoral outcomes are usually accepted as 'people's verdict' by the defeated party.

Q.31.What are the challenges to Free and Fair elections in India?

1) A few candidates may win purely on the basis of money power and unfair means. But the overall verdict of a general election still reflects popular preference. There are very few exceptions to this rule in the last fifty years in our country.

2) 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.

3) 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.

4) Some families tend to dominate political parties; tickets are distributed to relatives from these families. It is known as dynastic succession in politics.

5) 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.

6) Smaller parties and independent candidates suffer a huge disadvantage compared to bigger parties. They got less number of workers and less amount of money.

Q. 32. What makes election in India democratic?

i) An independent Election Commission

ii) Universal Adult Franchise

iii) Popular Participation

iv) Acceptance of election results. (Explain all points)