

Social Science

(Chapter – 4) (Electoral Politics)

(Democratic Politics – I)

Question 1:

Which of the following sentiments about the reason for conducting elections are false?

- a. Elections enable people to judge the performance of the government.
- b. People select the representative of their choice in an election.
- c. Elections enable people to evaluate the performance of the judiciary
- d. People can indicate which policies they prefer.

 **Answer 1:** (c) Elections enable people to evaluate the performance of the judiciary

Question 2:

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

- a. India has the largest numbers of voters in the world.
- b. India's election commission is very powerful.
- c. In India, everyone above the age of 18 has a right to vote.
- d. In India, the losing parties accept the electoral verdict.

 **Answer 2:** (a) India has the largest numbers of voters in the world.

Question 3:

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

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 **Answer 3:** (a) iv (b) i (c) ii (d) iii.

Question 4:

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:

Releasing election manifestos, Counting of votes, Making of voters' list, Election campaign, Declaration of election results, Casting of votes, Ordering of re-poll, Announcing election schedule, Filing nomination.

 **Answer 4:** Different election related activities:

- a) Making of voters' list
- b) Announcing election schedule
- c) Filing nomination
- d) Election campaign
- e) Releasing election manifestos
- f) Casting of votes
- g) Counting of votes
- h) Declaration of election results
- i) Ordering of re-poll

Question 5:

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:

- a. Election campaign
- b. Polling day
- c. Counting day.

 **Answer 5:**

a. **Election campaign** – During election campaign, the different political parties hold their meetings, take out their rallies, distribute their manifestos, display their posters and do door-to-door canvassing. Surekha as an officer-in-charge should see that the meetings are held within the stipulated time, there are no clashes during the rallies, no party is violating code of conducts for elections such as, wall-postering, character assassination of the opponents etc.

b. Polling day – On the polling day, the voters go to their nearest polling booths to cast their votes. On this day she has to see that:

- The polling is done in a peaceful atmosphere.
- No bogus voter casts the vote.
- There is police arrangement in every booth.
- No unsocial element enters any booth.
- There is no booth capturing or rigging.
- The ballot boxes or electronic machines reach counting center safely.

c. Counting day – On the counting day the agents of almost every candidate take their seats inside the counting center. Surekha as an officer-in-charge has to take care of the following:

- ✓ There is a proper seating arrangement for the agents of different candidates.
- ✓ Proper police arrangement is there to ward off any undue incident.
- ✓ Counting of votes is carried peacefully without any outside interference and to the full satisfaction of all the candidates.
- ✓ Rejoicing should be peaceful and un-provocative.

Question 6:

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?

	Proportion of the community (in per cent) in the	
	House of representatives	Population of US
Blacks	8	13
Hispanics	5	13
Whites	86	70

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Answer 6:

1. The Blacks have lesser number of seats i.e. 8, in the House of Representatives as compared to their population (13%) so a system of reservation should be there for them in US Congress.
2. In case of Hispanics, the need of reservation is somewhat more as the number of their members in the House of Representatives is far less (5) as compared to their population (13%).
3. There is no need of reservation for the Whites as they have already more seats (86) in the House of Representatives as compared to their population (70%).

Question 7:

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

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

Answer 7:

(a) It is wrong to say that election commission of India does not have enough powers to conduct free and fair elections. Because Election Commission of India have enough powers to conduct free and fair elections in the country. The Election Commission of India is an independent and powerful body.

Firstly, the Election Commissioner of India is appointed by the President or Government of India. He can not be removed. Secondly, the can order Election Commissioner can order the Government to follow certain guidelines. Thirdly, if he feels that the elections have not been conducted fairly, he can order repoll in certain booths or even in the entire constituency. Fourthly, during election duty, other Government servants work under the control of Election Commissioner.

(b) It is a fact that there is a high level of popular participation in the elections in our country. During the last 50 years or so, the turn out of voters in the North America and Europe has declined while in India it has either remained stable or increased. It has been found that in our country the poor, the illiterate and the unprivileged people vote in larger proportion as compared to the rich and the privileged classes.

(c) It is quite a wrong notion that party in power can win an election quite easily in India. If such a thing would have been true, the Congress stalwart like Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, would not have been defeated by Raj Narain, an ordinary politician. There are many occasions when the ruling party has lost elections in India.

(d) There is no system as such where can not be a reform and improvement. Reforms are required to prevent use of money, muscle power, and unfair practices from bearing fruit.

Question 8:

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

Answer 8:

In both the cases, Chinappa and Satbir, the court has done the right thing by not allowing either of them to contest elections. This decision does not go against the principle of democratic elections. The convicted and the guilty persons should not be allowed to contest elections otherwise they would criminalize the whole election process and that jeopardize the high principles of democracy.

Question 9:

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?

- (a) 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 5 lakh votes cast for one candidate were counted in favour of another.
- (b) Just before the 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.
- (c) 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 9:

- (a) The officer-in-charge during elections (counting) should have been impartial and should have ordered repoll. For voting there should be electronic machines so that no fraud could be done in counting. In the event of non-availability of electronic machines, the votes should be counted in presence of representatives of different candidates or political parties. Nigeria can learn this lesson from India.

(b) Such a thing is quite wrong against the spirit of a free and fair election. Firstly, the voters should never be threatened to cast their vote against their conscience. Secondly, if at all, any pamphlet was to be distributed then it should have been done at least 48 hours before the date of election as done in India. So Fiji can learn these lessons from India – not to intimidate the voters and even if such a thing happens, then the election can be postponed or cancelled.

(c) In India, one and uniform rules are followed in all states as far as the method of voting, procedure of counting are concerned. Different rules, different authorities, and different procedures of counting lead to the ambiguity and vagueness and take away the sense of justice, which is one of the main principles of democracy. US can take some good points and lessons from India how to follow same rules, procedures etc. in all states and across the country.

Question 10:

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?

(a) Following the announcement of elections the minister promised to provide financial aid to reopen the closed sugar mill.

(b) Opposition parties alleged that their statements and campaign was not given the due attention in Doordarshan and All India Radio.

(c) An inquiry by the Election Commission showed that electoral rolls of a state contain names of 20 lakh fake voters.

(d) 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 10:

(a) By doing so, the minister has erred on two counts. Firstly, he should not have made this promise when the announcement of elections has already been made. Secondly, by promising financial aid he is trying to bribe the voters by using financial tricks. He is trying to take advantage of his party being in power. This mill should not be opened and it should be left to the winning party to decide after the elections.

(b) In order to remove this allegation of the opposition parties, the best solution is that Doordarshan and All India Radio must be made autonomous bodies so that government could not influence them in its favour. Equal time should be given to all parties and candidates to present their views in front of the voters.

(c) The Election Commission has the power to remaking of the electoral rolls and to see that the names of 20 lakh fake voters are removed from the new electoral rolls.

(d) The Election Commission has the power to check this malpractice of moving with guns, physically preventing supporters of other political parties to meet the voters and attacking meetings of other parties. It can withdraw the recognition of any party or disqualify such a candidate from contesting elections if its supporters are found to be moving with weapons.

Question 11:

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

(a) Women always vote the way men tell them. So what is the point of giving them the right to vote?

(b) Party politics creates tension in society. Elections should be decided by consensus not by competition.

(c) Only graduates should be allowed to stand as candidates for elections.

Answer 11:

(a) Women always vote the way men tell them to do is a wrong statement. It would be totally undemocratic if we debar women who are about 50 per cent of the population, of their right to vote on the basis of gender distinction. It will also take away the quality of true representation of a democracy. Often we see husband contesting election from one party while his wife contesting from another party.

(b) A healthy competition provides option to the people to choose the better. A consensus can make the people deaf and dumb which against the spirit of democracy. Electoral competition is necessary because it provides incentives to political parties and leaders and forces them to serve the people better.

(c) Educational qualifications are not necessary to all kinds of jobs. It is also a wrong notion that only graduates should be allowed to contest elections. A majority of people who fought for the independence of the country were almost illiterate. They have equal right with those of the educated to enjoy the fruit of the hard won independence. It is also agreed that if a graduate degree is made an eligibility criteria, then more than 90% of the voters would become ineligible for contesting an election. Would that be a democracy, certainly not. India follows the rule – ‘One person one vote’. This is in true spirit of democracy.