3. Election and Representation

1. Which of the following resembles most a direct democracy?

a. Discussions in a family meeting
b. Election of the class monitor
c. Choice of a candidate by a political party
d. Decisions taken by the Gram Sabha
e. Opinion polls conducted by the media

Answer- Election of the class monitor and decisions taken by the Gram Sabha resembles decision making of direct democracy.

2. Which of the following tasks are not performed by the Election Commission?

a. Preparing the Electoral Rolls
b. Nominating the candidates
c. Setting up polling booths
d. Implementing the model code of conduct
e. Supervising the Panchayat elections

Answer- Nominating the candidates and Supervising the Panchayat elections (Done by state election commission) tasks are not performed by the Election Commission.

3. Which of the following is common to the method of election of the members of Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha?

a. Every citizen above the age of 18 is an eligible voter
b. Voter can give preference order for different candidates
c. Every vote has equal value
d. The winner must get more than half the votes

Answer- (c) Every vote has equal value

4. In the First Past the Post system, that candidate is declared winner who

a. Secures the largest number of postal ballots
b. Belongs to the party that has highest number of votes in the country
c. Has more votes than any other candidate in the constituency
d. Attains first position by securing more than 50% votes

Answer-(c) Has more votes than any other candidate in the constituency.

5. What is the difference between the system of reservation of constituencies and the system of separate electorate? Why did the Constitution makers reject the latter?

Answer- In system of reservation of constituencies, all voters in a constituency are eligible to vote but the candidates must belong to only a particular community or social section for which the seat is reserved whereas in the system of separate electorate, for electing a representative from a particular community, only those voters would be eligible who belong to that community. The constitution makers rejected the system of separate electorate because it went against their purpose of unity, secularism and a state that is free
from discrimination.

6. Which of the following statements are incorrect? Identify and correct them by substituting, adding or rearranging only one word or phrase.

a. FPTP system is followed for all the elections in India.

Answer- Incorrect. FPTP system is followed for Panchayats, Legislative Assemblies and the Lok Sabha elections.
b. Election Commission does not supervise Panchayat and Municipal elections.

Answer- Correct. State election commission supervise panchayat and Municipal elections.
c. President of India cannot remove an Election Commissioner.

Answer- Incorrect, President of India can remove an Election Commissioner if both houses of parliament make such recommendation with a special majority.
d. Appointment of more than one Election Commissioners in the Election Commission is mandatory.

Answer- Incorrect. The Election Commission of India can either be a single member or a multi member body. But now there is a general consensus that a multi member election commission is more appropriate as power is shared and there is greater accountability.

7. Indian electoral system aims at ensuring representation of socially disadvantaged sections. However, we are yet to have even 10 percent women members in our legislatures. What measures would you suggest to improve the situation?

Answer

The percent of women members would improve through the following measures:

• Using proportional representation system, we can ensure the proper representation of women in legislature according to their percentage in population.
• Also, we can have reserved constituencies from which seat is reserved for women which ensure proper representation of women.
• Some European countries have voluntary political party quotas that encourage and ensure women's participation in the political process. Similarly, India needs to implement Political party quota for women.

8. Here are some wishes expressed in a conference to discuss a constitution for a new country. Write against each of these whether FPTP or Proportional Representation

system is more suited to meet each of these wishes.
a. People should clearly know who their representative is so that they can hold him or her personally accountable.

Answer- FPTP system

b. We have small linguistic minorities who are spread all over the country; we should ensure fair representation to them.

Answer- Proportional representation system
c. There should be no discrepancy between votes and seats for different parties.

Answer- Proportional representation system
d. People should be able to elect a good candidate even if they do not like his or her political party.

Answer- FPTP system

9. A former Chief Election Commissioner joined a political party and contested elections. There are various views on this issue. One view is that a former Election Commissioner is an independent citizen and has a right to join any political party and to contest election. According to the other view, leaving this possibility open can affect the impartiality of the Election Commission. So, former Election Commissioners must not be allowed to contest any elections. Which position do you agree with and why?

Answer

The former Election Commissioner is an independent citizen and has a right to join any political party and to contest election. After leaving the post of election commissioner, he/she became an ordinary citizen and just like any citizen he/she has all rights which citizens have. She/he has no responsibility of conducting fair election so they can be a part of election as it is their right.

Another View

The Ex. Home Minister and also former Deputy Prime Minister of India L.K. Advani gave concrete suggestions for the reform of EC. He suggested that the retired members of the EC should not be offered any appointment. He felt that the neutrality of the members of the EC can be maintained and their credibility can be enhanced. Rules must be made to keep the officials of election commission out of active politics at least for five years of their retirement. If election commission official are allowed to contest election after retirement they will favour one particular group or party during their tenure as official to secure party ticket after retirement.

10. "Indian democracy is now ready to shift from a crude First Past the Post system to a system of Proportional Representation". Do you agree with this statement? Give your reasons for or against this statement.

Answer

Indian democracy is not yet ready to replace the First Past the Post system with Proportional Representation because

• Proportional representation system complicated system which would be difficult to work in a subcontinental country like India. First past the post system is the simplest system of counting votes and declaration of results.

• In PR system, voters have only choice to choose a party and the representatives are elected on the basis of party lists. There is no representative for one locality which would be held accountable.

• India is a vast country with a large number of ethnic and social groups. The system of proportional representation has the propensity of multiplying parties and groups in the political system. Every group gets representation in proportion to its strength. Therefore small groups are formed on petty grounds or big parties are broken up into small parties frequently. This encourages divisive forces in the society and the unity of the nation is ultimately threatened.

• Under the list system of representation more importance is attached to the political parties and groups and the individual candidates have to depend upon them. There are no individual or independent candidates and they have to dance to the tune of the parties and the groups.