Chapter 7: Elections

Questions — Questions and activities

Q1 What reforms have been introduced by the ECI to make voting more inclusive for the following groups?
a. People with Disabilities
b. Service Voters
c. Senior Citizens—above 85 years of age
d. Prisoners
e. Persons in preventive detention

SOLUTION

The ECI has introduced several technology-driven and infrastructure-based reforms to ensure no voter is left behind.

a. People with Disabilities (PwDs): The Saksham App provides customised services to help PwDs register, find polling stations, and complete voter identification. EVMs with Braille labels allow visually impaired voters to vote independently. Additionally, home voting was extended to PwDs with a benchmark disability of 40% or more during the 2024 General Elections.

b. Service Voters: The Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS) was developed for service voters such as armed forces personnel, allowing them to receive their postal ballot electronically and cast it from any location outside their home constituency.

c. Senior Citizens above 85 years of age: Home voting was introduced and extended across India for the first time during the 2024 General Elections, allowing senior citizens above 85 to cast their votes from their homes without visiting a polling station.

d. Prisoners: The chapter does not specify a separate ECI initiative exclusively for prisoners in the sections covered. In general, Indian law provides that under-trial prisoners may vote if their names are on the electoral roll, subject to court orders, but a specific ECI reform for this group is not detailed in the chapter.

e. Persons in preventive detention: Similar to prisoners, the chapter does not detail a separate dedicated ECI reform for persons in preventive detention. Their voting rights are governed by existing laws, and the chapter's focus on inclusion primarily covers PwDs, senior citizens, and service voters.

Answer: ECI reforms: (a) PwDs — Saksham App, Braille EVMs, home voting; (b) Service voters — ETPBS for postal ballots from outside constituency; (c) Senior citizens (85+) — home voting extended nationwide in 2024; (d) & (e) Prisoners/preventive detainees — the chapter does not specify dedicated ECI reforms for these groups beyond existing legal provisions.

Q2 What are the various functions of the Election Commission of India? Which of these functions is most important for the conduct of free and fair elections? Explain.

SOLUTION

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is a constitutional body established on 25 January 1950 under Articles 324 to 329, which vest in it the superintendence, direction, and control of the entire electoral process.

Key functions of the ECI include:
1. Creating and updating the electoral roll through Special Intensive Revision (SIR) to add eligible voters, delete ineligible ones, and ensure every citizen above 18 is included.
2. Deciding the election schedule and dates, taking into account weather, the agricultural cycle, school exams, and festivals.
3. Registering political parties, classifying them as national or state parties, and allocating election symbols.
4. Ensuring free and fair elections through measures such as the Model Code of Conduct, Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), and digital apps like cVIGIL for reporting violations.
5. Acting as a quasi-judicial body in resolving disputes over party recognition and symbol allotment.
6. Making elections inclusive for marginalised groups such as PwDs, senior citizens, and service voters.

The most important function is ensuring free and fair elections. Without impartiality in the process — accurate vote counting, equal access for all voters, and strict enforcement against malpractices — elections lose their democratic value. Even if all other functions are performed correctly, biased or rigged elections would undermine public confidence in democracy itself.

Answer: The ECI creates electoral rolls (SIR), sets election schedules, registers parties and allocates symbols, enforces the Model Code of Conduct, uses EVMs and VVPAT for transparency, and resolves disputes. The most critical function is ensuring free and fair elections — it is the foundation that gives all other functions meaning, since biased elections hollow out democratic legitimacy.

Q3 Elections are the soul of a democracy. Do you agree? Why or why not?

SOLUTION

Yes, the statement that elections are the soul of democracy is largely correct, and the chapter strongly supports this view.

Elections are the primary means through which citizens exercise their right to vote and fulfil their responsibility as citizens. They ensure that representatives are accountable to the people and can be replaced if they fail to perform. Periodic elections prevent any individual or group from holding power indefinitely without the people's consent — as the chapter illustrates with the analogy of class representative Gurmat, who cannot continue without a fresh election.

Elections also provide representation, equality, legitimacy, and accountability — all of which are core to democratic functioning. Without free and fair elections, even a system with a written constitution may not be truly democratic, as shown by the comparison of Country B in the chapter (written constitution but only one party) where voting rights are meaningless in practice.

However, elections alone are not sufficient; they must be free, fair, and inclusive. The chapter notes that democracy is not limited to merely holding elections — the process must also be impartial and trustworthy. Thus elections are necessary but must be accompanied by strong institutions, laws, and active citizen participation.

Answer: Yes — elections are the soul of democracy. They ensure accountability, representation, equality, and legitimacy. Without periodic free and fair elections, elected representatives cannot be held responsible, and citizens cannot exercise meaningful choice. However, the chapter also clarifies that elections must be impartial and inclusive to retain their democratic value — holding elections alone is not enough.

Q4 Explain at least three differences between the national and state/regional political parties.

SOLUTION

The chapter describes the criteria for recognising national and state/regional parties as laid down by the ECI. Three clear differences are:

1. Geographical reach of recognition: A national party must fulfil criteria across multiple states — for example, it must secure at least 6% of valid votes in four or more states in a General Election and win four Lok Sabha seats, or be recognised as a state party in at least four states. A state/regional party only needs to meet criteria within one specific state, such as securing 6% of valid votes in that state's Legislative Assembly elections and winning two seats there.

2. Seat threshold in Parliament: For national party status, a party must win at least 2% of Lok Sabha seats with candidates elected from at least three different states. State parties are assessed on their performance in the respective state legislature (Vidhan Sabha), not in the Lok Sabha overall.

3. Scope of election symbols: National parties are allotted reserved election symbols that remain exclusively theirs across the country. State parties receive reserved symbols, but only within the state(s) where they are recognised; in other states the same symbol can be used by other parties.

A fourth distinction: parties that fail to meet either set of criteria are classified as Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs), which have not secured sufficient votes or have never contested elections since registration.

Answer: Three differences: (1) Reach — national parties must meet vote/seat criteria across four or more states; state parties only within one state. (2) Seat threshold — national status requires at least 2% of Lok Sabha seats from three states; state status requires performance in the state Vidhan Sabha. (3) Symbol reservation — national parties hold reserved symbols nationwide; state parties hold them only in their recognised state(s).

Q5 Why should you vote? Arrange the following in the descending order of your choice. Discuss the reasons for your choice.

a. Opportunity to choose my representative
b. Makes me a responsible person
c. Opportunity to change the non-performing representative
d. Strengthens democracy

SOLUTION

This question asks for a personal ranking with reasons. A model answer grounded in the chapter's principles is given below.

Model ranking (descending order of importance):

1. d — Strengthens democracy
2. a — Opportunity to choose my representative
3. c — Opportunity to change the non-performing representative
4. b — Makes me a responsible person

Reasoning: The chapter states that elections are the soul of democracy and that the vote is the principal means by which citizens exercise their rights. Voting first and foremost strengthens the entire democratic system — without wide participation, elections lose legitimacy. Choosing a representative (a) is the direct mechanism through which this happens. Changing a non-performing representative (c) is the accountability function that elected governance promises. Finally, the act of voting reflects a sense of civic responsibility (b), but this is more a personal benefit, whereas the other three options have a broader societal impact.

Note: Any order is acceptable as long as the reasons are logically connected to the chapter's emphasis on accountability, representation, and democratic participation.

Answer: Model order: (d) Strengthens democracy → (a) Choose my representative → (c) Change non-performing representative → (b) Makes me a responsible person. Voting's highest value lies in sustaining democracy as a whole; choosing and holding representatives accountable follows; personal civic responsibility, while important, is a derivative benefit.

Q6 What is the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) initiative of the ECI? Explain the objectives and the necessity of conducting SIR.

SOLUTION

Special Intensive Revision (SIR) is an initiative of the Election Commission of India aimed at thoroughly updating, verifying, and correcting the electoral rolls for each constituency.

Objectives of SIR:
1. Addition of all eligible voters, especially young voters who have just turned 18 and may be unaware of the registration process.
2. Deletion of ineligible names from the roll — including names of deceased voters, voters who have changed their residence, cases of duplicate enrolment, and persons who are permanently untraceable.
3. Giving citizens time to raise claims or objections against the revised roll, and settling those claims before publishing the final electoral roll.

Necessity of SIR:
The electoral roll is the foundation of any election — only those whose names appear on it are allowed to vote. If the roll is inaccurate, eligible citizens are disenfranchised and ineligible persons may vote fraudulently, both of which undermine the fairness of elections. India's large and mobile population means that rolls quickly become outdated. SIR ensures that the roll remains accurate, current, and inclusive, so that every eligible citizen can exercise their constitutional right to vote.

Answer: SIR is the ECI's process of intensively updating electoral rolls: adding new eligible voters (especially first-time 18-year-olds), deleting names of deceased/relocated/duplicate voters, and settling objections before finalising the roll. It is necessary because an accurate roll is the foundation of a free and fair election — inaccurate rolls disenfranchise eligible voters or allow ineligible voting, both of which harm democratic integrity.

Q7 Match the political party name with its symbol.

Political Parties Name | Symbol
Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)
Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)
Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI (M)]
Indian National Congress (INC)
National People's Party (NPP)

SOLUTION

This is a matching exercise based on the official election symbols allotted by the ECI to recognised national parties. The correct matches are:

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) — Broom (Jhadoo)
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) — Lotus

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) — Elephant
Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI (M)] — Hammer, Sickle and Star
Indian National Congress (INC) — Hand (Palm)
National People's Party (NPP) — Book

These symbols are reserved and exclusively assigned to these parties by the ECI. Students should verify the current symbols from the official ECI website, as symbols can be updated.

Answer: AAP — Broom; BJP — Lotus; BSP — Elephant; CPI(M) — Hammer, Sickle and Star; INC — Hand (Palm); NPP — Book. These are the ECI-reserved symbols for these national parties; verify at the official ECI website for any updates.

Q8 Read the case study below and answer the following questions.
Ishani and her mother were in the local market, day before the state assembly elections. She noticed wall writing and campaign posters pasted everywhere. Large groups of campaigners were distributing pamphlets and raising slogans in support of the respective candidates. Ishani has turned 18 and will be voting for the first time. She had registered to vote through the ECI's online portal. The next morning, she, along with her mother and her disabled elder brother, went to the polling station, which was well guarded by the police personnel. A wheelchair was made available to them, and volunteers guided them to the polling booth. Inside the polling booth, there were only three people who were performing all duties. Ishani had forgotten her voter ID card and Aadhaar card, but her identity was verified with an alternative document. After casting her vote, she was also able to see the VVPAT slip. While leaving, she wondered how the police personnel vote, as they must be on duty from early morning till late evening. When she went home, she narrated her entire experience to her 89-year-old grandmother, who cast her vote from home.
a. What initiatives were taken by the ECI to enable the voters to cast their vote?
b. If Ishani was allowed to vote even without carrying her Voter ID card or Aadhaar card, which other document might she be carrying that is valid for voting?
c. Cite the examples of violations of the Model Code of Conduct.
d. Give a suitable title to the passage.
e. Find out how the police and army personnel cast their votes.

SOLUTION

a. ECI initiatives visible in the case study:
— Online voter registration portal (used by Ishani to register before the election).
— Wheelchair accessibility and volunteer assistance at the polling station for Ishani's disabled brother — reflecting the ECI's inclusive infrastructure for Persons with Disabilities.
— Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) that allows voters to verify their vote after casting it on an EVM.
— Home voting for senior citizens above 85 years — Ishani's 89-year-old grandmother voted from home.
— Deployment of police personnel to ensure security at polling stations.

b. The ECI allows voters to use several alternative documents for identity verification at polling

booths. Ishani may have carried one of the following: Passport, Driving Licence, PAN Card, Smart Card issued by RGI, MNREGA Job Card, Health Insurance Smart Card issued under the scheme of Ministry of Labour, Pension Document with photograph, or any other photo identity document issued by Central/State Government. (Students should verify the current list from the ECI website.)

c. Violations of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) visible in the passage:
— Wall writing (graffiti) for political campaigning — this typically violates MCC rules about defacing public and private property.
— Campaign posters pasted everywhere — putting up banners, hoardings, and posters in unauthorised places violates the MCC.
— Campaigning close to the election day (the passage states this was the day before the election, and the MCC prohibits campaigning within 48 hours of polling).

d. A suitable title for the passage: 'Democracy in Action: A First-Time Voter's Election Day Experience' or 'Every Vote Counts: Inclusion, Technology, and Democracy at Work'.

e. Police and army personnel are classified as 'service voters' under the Representation of the People Act. They can cast their votes using the Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS), which allows them to receive a postal ballot electronically and cast it from their place of posting, outside their home constituency. This ensures that their election duties do not prevent them from exercising their voting rights.

Answer: a. ECI initiatives: online registration portal, wheelchair/volunteer access for PwDs, VVPAT for vote verification, home voting for 89-year-old grandmother (85+ scheme), police security. b. Alternative valid documents include Passport, Driving Licence, PAN Card, MNREGA Job Card, or any government-issued photo ID. c. MCC violations: wall writing, unauthorised campaign posters, and campaigning within 48 hours of polling day. d. Suggested title: 'Democracy in Action: A First-Time Voter's Election Day Experience'. e. Police and army personnel vote via ETPBS (Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System) — they receive a postal ballot electronically and cast it from their posting location.

Q9 A comparative chart of three countries is given below. Based on the information given in the chart, answer the questions.
Country A: Written constitution, periodic elections, voting rights, party system varies from two-party to multi-party; Average standard of living.
Country B: Written constitution, periodic elections, voting rights, one political party; Above-average standard of living.
Country C: Written constitution, monarchy, no voting rights, no political party; High standard of living.
a. What is the difference between having a voting right in a country with a multi-party system and another with a single-party system?
b. In which of the above countries would you like to stay and why?

SOLUTION

a. In a multi-party system (like Country A), voting rights are genuinely meaningful because citizens have a real choice between competing candidates and parties with different policies, visions, and ideologies. Voters can elect or reject any party based on performance, and the election outcome is uncertain — it depends on the free expression of citizens' preferences.

In a single-party system (like Country B), although citizens technically have the 'right to vote,' this right is hollow. There is only one party to vote for, so the election cannot produce a change in government or hold the ruling party accountable. As the chapter explains, one of the most crucial elements of democracy is the right to elect representatives from among competing choices — without that choice, the vote ceases to be a meaningful democratic tool. Country B's periodic elections thus provide only the appearance of democracy, not its substance.

b. Model answer: Country A is the most desirable to live in, despite having only an average standard of living. A multi-party democracy with genuine voting rights ensures that citizens can hold their government accountable, participate in decision-making, and seek change through elections if they are dissatisfied. The higher standard of living in Countries B and C comes at the cost of political freedom and genuine participation — in Country B there is no real electoral choice, and in Country C there are no voting rights at all. Liberty and democratic accountability are foundational to human dignity, making Country A preferable.

Answer: a. In a multi-party system, voting rights are substantive — citizens choose between competing parties and can change the government. In a single-party system, voting rights are nominal — there is no real choice, so the election cannot hold the ruling party accountable; democracy is reduced to a formality. b. Country A — multi-party democracy. Despite an average standard of living, it offers genuine political freedom, accountability, and the right to change an underperforming government. True democratic participation is more valuable than material prosperity without liberty.

Q10 What are the challenges to conducting free and fair elections?

SOLUTION

The chapter identifies several key challenges to conducting free and fair elections in India:

1. Misinformation and fake news: With the spread of social media, false information about candidates, policies, and voting procedures can mislead voters and distort the electoral process.

2. Intimidation: Voters, candidates, or election officials may face coercion or threats that prevent them from participating freely.

3. Scale and diversity: India had over 96.8 crore eligible voters in 2024, spread across diverse regions, terrains, languages, and socio-economic conditions, making logistical management extremely complex.

4. Corrupt practices: The Representation of the People Act, 1951 lists offences such as bribery (gifts or promises to voters), appealing to voters on the basis of religion, caste, race, or language, and misuse of government personnel and resources in favour of a candidate.

5. Exclusion of marginalised voters: Persons with disabilities, senior citizens, those in remote areas, and service voters face practical barriers to voting, requiring special infrastructure and systems.

The ECI addresses these challenges through the RPA 1950 and 1951, the Model Code of Conduct, EVMs, VVPAT, voter awareness campaigns, digital tools like the cVIGIL App for reporting violations, and constant vigilance. Active citizen participation is also essential to making elections more representative.

Answer: Challenges include: misinformation and fake news, voter intimidation, the vast scale and diversity of India's electorate (96.8 crore voters in 2024), corrupt practices (bribery, caste/religion-based appeals, misuse of government personnel), and exclusion of marginalised groups. The ECI counters these through the RPA, Model Code of Conduct, EVMs, VVPAT, awareness campaigns, and the cVIGIL App.

Q11 On the Stage. Elections are to be held in your school for the posts of Head Girl, Head Boy, and Sports Captain. Assume the roles of an Election Commissioner, Returning Officer, Polling Agent, Candidate, Campaigner, Polling Officer, Police Personnel, and a Journalist, and perform their roles while ensuring free, fair, and transparent elections.

SOLUTION

This is a hands-on role-play activity. Guidance for performing it:

Assign roles among students: Election Commissioner (oversees the whole process), Returning Officer (manages a specific constituency/post), Candidates (contest for Head Girl/Boy/Sports Captain), Campaigners (promote candidates' agendas), Polling Agents (represent candidates at the booth), Polling Officers (verify voters, issue ballot papers, manage the EVM/ballot box), Police Personnel (maintain order), and Journalist (reports on the campaign and voting process).

Key steps the activity should demonstrate: (1) Nomination and campaign phase — candidates present their agenda; campaigners create posters or make speeches while following a 'school Model Code of Conduct' (no defacing walls, no gifts). (2) Voting phase — students vote secretly and individually; polling agents observe but do not interfere. (3) Counting and result — counting is done transparently in front of all agents; the winner is declared by the Returning Officer. (4) The journalist reports on the process, highlighting any 'violations' for discussion.

The activity reinforces how elections ensure accountability, representation, and legitimacy at any level — from school to nation.

Answer: Guidance: Assign roles (Election Commissioner, Returning Officer, Candidates, Campaigners, Polling Agents, Polling Officers, Police, Journalist). Conduct nomination, campaigning under a school Model Code of Conduct, secret ballot voting, transparent counting, and result declaration. The journalist documents and reports. The activity illustrates how each electoral role contributes to free, fair, and transparent elections.

Q12 Try and make videos or audios on topics like: My Vote My Nation; No Voter to Be Left Behind; How to Eliminate the Ill of Money Power, etc.

SOLUTION

This is a creative project activity. Guidance for completing it:

Choose one topic. Plan your content using key ideas from the chapter:
— 'My Vote My Nation': focus on how every individual vote contributes to democratic governance, accountability, and the choice of representatives. Use the chapter's point that 'our vote is the principal means by which we exercise this right.'
— 'No Voter to Be Left Behind': highlight ECI initiatives for PwDs (Saksham App, Braille EVMs), senior citizens (home voting), service voters (ETPBS), and remote communities. Emphasise the Special Intensive Revision to ensure every eligible citizen is enrolled.
— 'How to Eliminate the Ill of Money Power': discuss how bribery is an electoral offence under RPA 1951, how the Model Code of Conduct prohibits gifts and inducements, and how the cVIGIL App empowers citizens to report violations instantly.

Keep the video/audio short (2–3 minutes), factual, and persuasive. Use examples from the chapter to make it credible. Cite the ECI and relevant laws as your sources.

Answer: Guidance: Select one topic and script a 2–3 minute video/audio using chapter concepts — e.g., 'My Vote My Nation' uses accountability and representation arguments; 'No Voter to Be Left Behind' highlights Saksham App, ETPBS, home voting, and SIR; 'Money Power' cites RPA 1951 offences, Model Code of Conduct, and the cVIGIL App. Keep content factual and cite ECI sources.

Q13 Select one national or state political party. Using authentic and reliable sources such as the Election Commission of India (ECI) website, the official website of the selected political party, and newspapers. Prepare a comparative chart of the last two State Legislative Assembly elections.
The chart should include the following details for the chosen party:
a. Some promises made in the Election manifesto
b. Percentage of votes polled
c. Number of seats won
d. Number of women who contested
e. Number of women candidates elected
Present the data for both elections in a clear and comparative format, citing all sources used.

SOLUTION

This is a research project activity. Guidance for completing it:

Step 1 — Choose a party: Select a national party (e.g., Indian National Congress, BJP, AAP) or a state party relevant to your state.
Step 2 — Identify the last two Vidhan Sabha elections for your chosen state from the ECI website (https://eci.gov.in/).
Step 3 — For each election, collect the following from the official ECI results and the party's official website or manifestos:

a. 2–3 key manifesto promises (e.g., jobs, education, welfare schemes).
b. Total percentage of valid votes polled for the party.
c. Number of seats contested and seats won.
d. Number of women candidates fielded by the party.
e. Number of women candidates who won.

Step 4 — Present the data in a two-column comparative table (Election Year 1 vs Election Year 2) with a row for each parameter.

Step 5 — List all sources at the bottom: ECI website URL, party website URL, newspaper article name and date.

Example structure for the chart: rows = manifesto promises, vote %, seats won, women contested, women elected; columns = the two election years.

Answer: Guidance: Visit eci.gov.in and the chosen party's official website. For each of the last two Vidhan Sabha elections, record: (a) key manifesto promises, (b) vote percentage, (c) seats won, (d) women candidates contested, (e) women elected. Present as a two-column comparative table. Cite ECI website, party website, and newspaper sources at the bottom.

Q14 Do you think 'One Nation, One Election' can improve the efficiency of the electoral process? Divide the class and discuss into two groups—one to examine its potential advantages and the other to analyse its limitations.

SOLUTION

This is a structured debate/discussion activity. Arguments for both sides, grounded in the chapter's concepts:

Group 1 — Potential Advantages of 'One Nation, One Election':
— Reduced frequency of elections lowers the overall cost of conducting elections across the country, freeing up resources for governance and development.
— The Model Code of Conduct, which restricts policy announcements during election season, would be in force less frequently, allowing governments to implement policies without interruption.
— Simultaneous deployment of security forces and election machinery would reduce logistical complexity.
— Voters experience less 'election fatigue' if all elections occur together.

Group 2 — Limitations of 'One Nation, One Election':
— If a state government falls before completing its term (e.g., due to a no-confidence motion), holding by-elections or mid-term polls would break the 'one election' cycle, making it unworkable in practice.
— In India's federal system, state and national issues are often distinct; simultaneous elections may cause national issues to dominate, overshadowing local concerns of voters.
— The chapter emphasises that elections must be conducted when constitutionally mandated terms end or legislatures are dissolved — a rigid 'one election' calendar may conflict with this constitutional principle.

— Smaller regional parties focused on state issues may be disadvantaged compared to national parties with wider reach.

Students should present their arguments, listen to the other side, and discuss how both efficiency and democratic representation can be balanced.

Answer: Advantages: reduced cost, less disruption from Model Code of Conduct, simpler logistics, less voter fatigue. Limitations: mid-term government collapses break the cycle, national issues may overshadow state concerns in simultaneous polls, federal diversity is harder to represent, and constitutional flexibility for dissolution may conflict with a fixed calendar. Both groups should present arguments and discuss the balance between efficiency and democratic representation.