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Ch:Electoral Politics

Read the passage carefully and try to understand.

What is Our System of Election?

Elections are held in India in Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha (Assembly) regularly after every 5 years. After 5 years, the term of all the elected representatives comes to an end.

Elections held in all constituencies at the same time, either on the same day or within a few days is called a **General Election**. 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**.

Electoral Constituency

India is divided into different areas for the purpose of elections. These areas are called **electoral constituencies**. The voters living in an area elect one representative.

- For Lok Sabha elections, India is divided into 543 constituencies. The representative elected from each constituency is called a **Member of Parliament** or an MP.
- Each state is divided into a specific number of Assembly constituencies. In this case, the elected representative is called the **Member of Legislative Assembly or an MLA**. Each Parliamentary constituency has within it several assembly constituencies.

The same principle applies for Panchayat and Municipal elections. Each village or town is divided into several '**wards**' that are like constituencies. Each ward elects one member of the village or the urban local body. Sometimes these constituencies are counted as '**seats**', for each constituency represents one seat in the assembly.

Reserved Constituencies

Some constituencies are reserved for people who belong to the Scheduled Castes [SC] and Scheduled Tribes [ST]. In the Lok Sabha, 84 seats are reserved for the SC and 47 for the ST.

- In **SC reserved constituency**, only someone who belongs to the Scheduled Caste can stand for election.

- Only those belonging to the **Scheduled Tribes** can contest an election from a constituency reserved for ST.

In many states, seats in rural (panchayat) and urban (municipalities and corporations) local bodies are now reserved for Other Backward Classes (OBC) and women candidates as well.

Voters' List

In a democratic election, the list of those who are eligible to vote is prepared much before the election and given to everyone, which is officially called the **Electoral Roll** and is commonly known as the **Voters' List**. It is the responsibility of the government to get the names of all the eligible voters put on the voters' list.

The voters are required to carry Election Photo Identity Card [EPIC] when they go out to vote, so that no one can vote for someone else. But the card is not yet compulsory for voting as voters can show many other proofs of identity, like the ration card or the driving licence.

Nomination of Candidates

Anyone who can be a voter can also become a candidate in elections. The candidate should be a minimum of 25 years age. Every person who wishes to contest an election has to fill out a 'nomination form' and give some money as 'security deposit'. The candidate has to make a legal declaration, giving full details of:

1. Serious criminal cases pending against the candidate
2. Details of the assets and liabilities of the candidate and his or her family
3. Educational qualifications of the candidate

This information is made available to the public so that voters can make their decision on the basis of the information provided by the candidates.

Election Campaign

The election campaigns are conducted to have a free and open discussion about who is a better Representative and in turn, which party will make a better government. 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. During this period the candidates contact their voters, political leaders address election meetings and political parties mobilise their supporters.

Some of the successful slogans given by different political parties in various elections:

- Save Democracy
- Land to the Tiller

- Protect the Self-Respect of the Telugus

According to India's election law, no party or candidate can:

1. Bribe or threaten voters
2. Appeal to them in the name of caste or religion
3. Use government resources for election campaign
4. Spend more than 25 lakh in a constituency for a Lok Sabha election or 10 lakh in a constituency in an Assembly election

If any Political Party does so, their election can be rejected by the court. In addition to the laws, all the political parties in our country have agreed to a Model Code of Conduct for election campaigns. According to this, no party or candidate can:

- Use any place of worship for election propaganda
- Use government vehicles, aircraft and officials for elections
- Once elections are announced, Ministers shall not lay foundation stones of any projects, take any big policy decisions or make any promises of providing public facilities

Polling and Counting of Votes

The day when the voters cast or 'poll' their vote is called the **election day**. The voting is done in the following manner.

1. Every person whose name is on the voters' list can go to a nearby 'polling booth'.
2. Once the voter goes inside the booth, the election officials identify her, put a mark on her finger and allow her to cast her vote.
3. 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 a sheet of paper on which the names of the contesting candidates along with party names and symbols are listed. The ballot paper was used earlier. Nowadays, **electronic voting machines (EVM)** are used to record votes.

- The machine shows the names of the candidates and the party symbols.
- The voter has to just press the button against the name of the candidate she wants to give her vote to.
- Once the polling is over, all the EVMs are sealed and taken to a secure place.
- A few days later, all the EVMs are opened and the votes secured by each candidate are counted.

- The candidate who secures the highest number of votes from a constituency is declared elected.

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SUBJECT TEACHER MUKESH KUMAR