

Elections and the Election Commission

EXERCISES

Question 1.

What is meant by Elections? Mention any one principles according to which elections are conducted in a democracy.

Answer:

An election is an organised process in which people vote to choose the persons who shall represent them in Parliament or the State Legislature. Elections are also held to elect those persons who hold a constitutional position, such as the President or the Vice-President of India.

Elections in a democracy are conducted according to the following principles:

1. Universal Adult Franchise,
2. The Secret Ballot, and Electoral choice offered by competition between political parties or between many candidates.

Question 2.

Who can become a Voter in India?

Answer:

The Constitution of India permits every person, who is a Citizen of India and who is not less than eighteen years of age and is not otherwise disqualified under any law, is eligible to become a Voter in India.

Question 3.

What is the significance of Elections in a democracy? OR Mention any one need for Elections.

Answer:

Elections are the lifeline of democracy. We need elections for the following reasons:

1. It is the best way by which representatives of the people can be chosen and sent to legislatures.
2. When there is a contest between different candidates for the same position, it gives the voters a greater choice of selection and makes it easy to elect candidates by casting their vote.
3. Elections help the people to put a check on the activities of the government because political parties know that they will be ousted from power if they do not perform according to the expectations of the people.
4. By contesting elections, either as members of a political party or as an independent candidate, people get a chance to form the government and make laws and policies for the welfare of their people and their country.

Question 4.

What is a General Election?

Answer:

The Lok Sabha election is said to be a General Election.

Question 5.

What is a By-Election?

Answer:

A By-Election is held to choose a member of the Lok Sabha or that the State legislature "to replace a previous member who has resigned suddenly or died."

Question 6.

What is meant by Midterm-Election?

Answer:

A midterm-poll that is held in consequence to the dissolution of the Lok Sabha or the State Assembly before its term is over is called as Midterm-Election.

Question 7.

What is meant by Direct Election?

Answer:

The election in which the voters directly choose their representatives to the legislatures is known as Direct Election.

Question 8.

What is Indirect Election?

Answer:

The election in which the voters do not directly elect their representatives to the legislatures or Head of State, but elect an intermediate body which finally proceeds to elect the representative or the President, such an election is called as Indirect Election.

Question 9.

Name two bodies whose members are elected by Indirect Election.

Answer:

The Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Parishad (State Legislative Council) are the two bodies, whose members are elected by Indirect Election.

Question 10.

Mention one advantage and one disadvantage of Direct Election.

Answer:

Advantage of Direct Election: It stimulates the interest of the people in elections.

Disadvantage of Direct Election: The masses, under the influence of emotions or religious leaders, may reject someone who is rational and is able to think clearly.

Question 11.

Mention one main advantage and one disadvantage of Indirect Election.

Answer:

Advantage of Indirect Election: It reduces the heat of the election campaign.

Disadvantage of Indirect Election: It may lead to horsetrading or evil practices such as bribery, because the final electors are very few in number.

Question 12.

Who appoints the Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners?

Answer:

The President appoints the Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners.

Question 13.

Who acts as the Chairman of the Election Commission?

Answer:

The Chief Election Commissioner acts as the Chairman of the Election Commission.

Question 14.

What is the term of office of the Chief Election Commissioner?

Answer:

The term of office of the Chief Election Commissioner is six years.

Question 15.

The Chief Election Commissioner be removed from his office?

Answer:

The Chief Election Commissioner can be removed in the manner as a judge of the Supreme Court.

Question 16.

Mention any two powers (functions) of the Election Commission.

Answer:

Two powers (functions) of the Election Commission are:

1. Preparation of the Electoral Rolls.
2. Conduct of Elections.

Question 17.

What is meant by a Single-Member Constituency?

Answer:

A Single-Member Constituency is one, which returns only one representative from each area.

Question 18.

What is a Multi-Member Constituency?

Answer:

A Multi-Member Constituency is one, which elects more than one representative.

Question 19.

What is meant by a Reserve Constituency?

Answer:

It was the Scheme of Communal Electorates that falls under Indian Councils Act of 1909 introduced by the British Government. The Act provided for separate representation of the Muslim Community at the Center as well as in Provincial Legislatures. The Government of India Act, 1919 extended this privilege to the minorities such as the Sikhs, the Anglo-Indians, Europeans and the Indian Christians. In due course of time, the Constitution of India abolished Communal Electorates.

Question 20.

Mention any two stages in the election process before the Election Campaign begins.

Answer:

Two stages in the election process before the Election Campaign are:

1. Nomination of Candidates
2. Scrutiny of Nominations.

Question 21.

Mention any two techniques of Election Campaign.

Answer:

The two techniques of Election Campaign are:

1. Public meetings and rallies are organised.
2. The candidates do door-to-door canvassing.

Question 22.

What is an Election Manifesto? OR What is the use of an Election Manifesto?

Answer:

An Election Manifesto is a formal statement of the programme and objectives of a political party. The Manifesto contains programmes and promises for all sections of the society.

Question 23.

What is Secret Ballot?

Answer:

'Secret Ballot' means that each voter elects the candidates of his choice and the ballot paper is not shown to any one else.

Question 24.

Mention any two reasons why a Ballot Paper becomes invalid.

Answer:

A ballot paper becomes invalid when

1. It is not marked at all.
2. The voter indicates his choice for more than one candidate.

Question 25.

What is the maximum limit of the expenses for a Parliamentary contest?

Answer:

The maximum limit of the expenses for a Parliamentary contest amounts at Rs. 15 lacs.

Question 26.

Mention any two measures that ensure that elections are free and fair in India.

Answer:

The two measures that ensure free and fair elections in India are:

1. The Commission sends central observers to sensitive constituencies.
2. The Commission prescribes the code of conduct for the election campaigns.

Question 27.

Mention any one measure that has been taken to discourage non-serious candidates from jumping into the election fray.

Answer:

For election to the Lok Sabha the Security Deposit was raised in 1996 from Rs. 500 to Rs. 10,000 for the general candidates and from Rs. 250 to Rs. 5,000 for candidates belonging to SCs and STs. For Assembly elections it was raised from Rs. 250 to Rs. 5,000 for the general candidates and from Rs. 125 to Rs. 2,500 for candidates belonging to SCs and STs. The security deposit of such candidates as have obtained less than one-sixth of the total number of votes is forfeited.

STRUCTURED QUESTIONS**Question 1.**

With reference to the composition of the Election Commission, explain the following:

- (a) Appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners.
- (b) Their Terms of Office and Conditions of Service.

Answer:

Appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners:

(a) The Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners are appointed by the President.

(b) Terms of Office and Conditions of Service of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners.

1. The Chief Election Commissioner or an Election Commissioner shall hold office for a term of six years. However, if the Chief Election Commissioner or an Election Commissioner has attained the age of 65 years, he shall vacate office on the date on which he attains the said age.
2. The Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners are paid a salary equal to the salary of a judge of the Supreme Court e., Rs. 30,000 per month. On retirement, they are entitled to a pension.
3. If the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners differ in opinion on any matter, such matter shall be decided according to the opinion of the majority.

Question 2.

What measures have been taken to ensure Independence of Election Commission?

Answer:

The Election Commission's independence is secured by the following provisions:

1. The Chief Election Commissioner shall not be removed from office except in like manner as a judge of the Supreme Court. The other commissioners can not be removed from office except on the recommendation of the Chief Election Commissioner.
2. Their conditions of service shall not be varied to their disadvantage after their appointment.
3. It is the duty of the President or the Governor of a State to make available to the Commission such staff as may be necessary for the conduct of elections.

Question 3.

With reference to the powers and functions of the Election Commission, discuss the following:

- (a) Preparation of the Electoral Roll
- (b) Recognition of Political Parties
- (c) Allotment of Symbols

Answer:

The given headlines with reference to the powers and functions of the Election commission are discussed below:

(a) Preparation of the Electoral Roll:

The Constitution lays down that there shall be one 'General Electoral Roll' for every territorial constituency. The Lok Sabha or any of the Assemblies may be dissolved before its terms of five years has expired. Therefore, the electoral rolls will have to be kept up-to-date all the time so that the new election may take place without any difficulty.

(b) Recognition of Political Parties: The Election Commission grants recognition to the political parties for Election purposes. These national parties are Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian National Congress (INC) (Cong. I), the CPI (M), the Communist Party of India (CPI), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP).

(c) Allotment of Symbols:

The National and State level parties can have a reserved symbol for all the candidates nominated by them. The independent candidates, can select any symbol out of a list of 'Free Symbols'. The purpose behind allotting symbols is that illiterate masses can not read the names of the candidates of their parties. It is easy for them to identify the symbols for electing candidates of their choice. Secondly 'reserved symbols' become so popular that the parties do not have to do canvassing for their candidates.

Question 4.

Elections are the barometer of democracy. In this context mention any four measures that have been taken to ensure free and fair elections in India ?

Answer:

In context of elections as the barometer of democracy, the given questions are answered as follows:

To ensure free and fair elections in India, many measures have been taken by the Election Commission:

1. The Commission sends central observers to sensitive constituencies;
2. The Commission prescribes the code of conduct for the election campaigns;
3. The Commission creates conditions for free and fair poll. Recent amendments to the Representation of the People Act provide severe punishment for booth-capturing.

Question 5.

With reference to powers and functions of the Election Commission, discuss the following:

- (a) Conduct of Elections
- (b) Ensuring Free and Fair Elections

Answer:**(a) Conduct of Elections:**

The Commission conducts all elections to Parliament and the State Legislature. Besides, it supervises and directs elections to the offices of the President and Vice-President. Exact dates or polls are finalised after consultations with the Election Commission.

(b) Ensuring Free and Fair Elections:

The Commission takes the following measures to ensure free and fair elections:

1. The Commission sends central observers to sensitive constituencies.
2. The Commission prescribes the code of conduct for the election campaigns.
3. The Commission creates conditions for a free and fair poll. Recent amendments to the Representation of the People Act provide severe punishment for booth-capturing.

Additional Questions

Short Answer Questions.

Question 1.

What is meant by an election ?

Answer:

Election is a procedure whereby persons are chosen, by voting, to represent the voters for running the government.

Question 2.

Under which method of elections are the elections to Lok Sabha held ?

Answer:

The elections to Lok Sabha are held directly. People of India directly elect their representatives to the Lok Sabha.

Question 3.

Name the system of election to the office of the President of India.

Answer:

The system of election to the office of the President of India is Indirect.

Question 4.

What is meant by a by-election ?

Answer:

When a seat held by any member of the Legislative Assembly in the Centre or States falls vacant due to death or resignation of the member, before completion of the term, to fill up this vacancy the election is called By-Election.

Question 5.

Who allots the symbols to political parties ?

Answer:

Election Commission allots the symbols to political parties.

Question 6.

When is a mid-term election held ?

Answer:

This type of election is held when a State Legislative Assembly or the Lok Sabha is dissolved before the completion of its full term (5 years).

Question 7.

Who appoints the Election Commissioners ?

Answer:

The Election Commissioners are appointed by the President of India.

Question 8.

What is the normal term of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners ?

Answer:

The normal term is of 6 years, but the retirement age is 65.

Question 9.

Name two important powers and functions of the Election Commission.

Answer:

The Election Commission has given wide range of power as: Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 1996. The functions and power of the Election Commission with respect to the conduct of elections to are given below:

1. Preparation of Electoral Rolls and Photo Identity Cards.
2. Registration and Recognition of Political Parties.
3. Allotment of Symbols etc.

Question 10.

Name one advisory function of the Election Commission.

Answer:

The Election Commission also advises the President or the Governors of the State in respect of Electoral matters.

Question 11.

What is known as the Voters List ? Who prepares it ?

Answer:

The Commission identifies eligible voters in each constituency and prepares the list of eligible voters. This is called 'Voters List'.

Question 12.

What is the need for elections ?

Answer:

Elections are the lifeline of democracy. We need elections for the following reasons:

1. It is the best way by which representatives of the people can be chosen and sent to legislatures.
2. When there is a contest between different candidates for the same position, it gives the voters a greater choice of selection and makes it easy to elect candidates by casting their vote.
3. Elections help the people to put a check on the activities of the government because political parties know that they will be ousted from power if they do not perform according to the expectations of the people.

4. By contesting elections, either as members of a political party or as an independent candidate, people get a chance to form the government and make laws and policies for the welfare of their people and their country.

Question 13.

Define the term Constituency. Name the types of constituencies.

Answer:

The division of country or a State into a number of representative areas is called constituencies. So, a constituency is a fixed area with a body of voters or residents with voting rights. The types of constituencies are the Parliamentary Constituency and the Assembly Constituency.

Question 14.

What is the main purpose of allotting symbols to political parties ?

Answer:

Political parties are allotted reserved common symbols, while the independent candidates may select them from the list of free symbols. Main purpose is that these symbols may be easily recognized by illiterate people.

Question 15.

Mention two functions of the Returning Officer.

Answer:

The Returning officer has to scrutinise the nomination papers and has authority to reject the nomination papers.

Question 16.

What is meant by the term 'election by secret ballot' ?

Answer:

This means that the voter chooses the candidates of his choice secretly.

Question 17.

What is called the 'simple majority' ?

Answer:

The person who gets 'the highest number of votes' or the 'simple majority' is declared the winner.

Question 18.

When is a vote declared invalid and not counted ?

Answer:

The ballot paper which is not properly stamped or bears more than one stamp is declared invalid.

Question 19.

What is meant by election petition ?

Answer:

In case any defeated candidate has a reasonable doubt about rigging of elections, voter or a defeated candidate can file a petition in the court of law.

Question 20.

When is repoll at a booth held ?

Answer:

The Election Commission orders are poll within two or three days after the first polling, in case there is a threat to voters security or other genuine reasons prevailing.

Question 21.

State one limitation of democracy in respect of elections.

Answer:

One limitation of democracy in respect of elections is the 'Proportionate Representation' i.e. a system in which parties in an election gain seats in proportion to the number of votes cast for them.

Question 22.

Name one important duty of an enlightened electorate.

Answer:

An enlightened electorate works out the election procedure keeping in view all the basic rules fixed for the election, in a disciplined manner with honesty and peace.

Question 23.

What is meant by Elections? Mention any one principles according to which elections are conducted in a democracy.

Answer:

An election is an organised process in which people vote to choose the persons who shall represent them in Parliament or the State Legislature. Elections are also held to elect those persons who hold a constitutional position, such as the President or the Vice-President of India.

Elections in a democracy are conducted according to the following principles:

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less than eighteen years of age and is not otherwise disqualified under any law, is eligible to become a Voter in India.

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Mention any one advantage of Elections.

Answer:

People Elect their Rulers:

It is through elections that Parliament and the State legislatures are constituted. The party or the parties which get the verdict in their favor form the government. The elected members of Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies elect the President of India. The Prime Minister and other ministers are appointed by the President. They are held responsible to the Lok Sabha. Thus it is through elections that various government structures are established and made functional.

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Answer:

Two powers (functions) of the Election Commission are:

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Answer:

For election to the Lok Sabha the Security Deposit was raised in 1996 from Rs. 500 to Rs. 10,000 for the general candidates and from Rs. 250 to Rs. 5,000 for candidates belonging to SCs and STs. For Assembly elections it was raised from Rs. 250 to Rs. 5,000 for the general candidates and from Rs. 125 to Rs. 2,500 for candidates belonging to SCs and STs. The security deposit of such candidates as have obtained less than one-sixth of the total number of votes is forfeited.

II. Structured Questions:**Question 1.**

With reference to Democracy and Elections, answer the following questions:

- (a) Distinguish between two types of elections.
- (b) What type of elections are direct and what type are indirect in a Parliamentary

Democracy ?

(c) How are elections of the President and Vice-President of India held ?

Answer:

(a)

Direct Elections

1. People vote directly for their representatives.
2. Law regulates the eligibility of voters and officials.
3. Every adult holds right to vote.
4. There is a very large body of voters called electorate.
5. M.L.A. and M.P.'s are elected directly indirectly

Indirect Elections

1. People elect their representatives indirectly through their elected representative
2. All elected representatives are treated as perfect.
3. Every elected representative hold right to vote
4. There is very small body of voters.
5. The members of State Legislative Councils, Members of Rajya Sabha the President and the Vice-President are elected

(b)

Direct elections are held for electing M.L.A. and M.P. Indirect elections are held for M.L.C., members of Rajya Sabha, the President and Vice-President.

(c)

The President of India is elected by a system of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote by the elected members of both Houses of Parliament and the M.L.A.'s of the States. The Vice-President is elected by members of both House of Parliament assembled at a joint meeting.

Question 2.

With reference to types of elections, answer the following:

(a) What is known as General Elections ?

(b) State two points of difference between a by-election and mid-term elections.

(c) When were the last General Elections held in India?

Answer:

(a)

The elections held to elect the members of the Lok Sabha after expiry of the normal term of five years are called the General Elections.

(b)

Mid-Term Election: Is held when a State Legislative Assembly or the Lok Sabha is dissolved before the completion of its full term (5 years)

By -Election when a seat held by any member of the Legislative Assembly in the Centre or State falls vacant due to death or resignation of the member before the completion of

his/her term.

(c)

The Last General Elections were held in India in the year 2009 in April and May.

Question 3.

With reference to terms of office and conditions of service of the Election Commission, answer the following questions

(a) Who is the head of the Election Commission ?

(b) How is he appointed ?

(c) State any two functions of the Chief Election Commissioner.

Answer:

(a)

Chief Election Commissioner is the head of the Election Commission.

(b)

The Chief Commissioner is appointed by the President of India and is done at the behest of the Prime Minister as per Article 74.

(c)

The two functions are:

1. Preparation of Electoral rolls
2. Sole authority for superintendence and conduct of elections.

4. With reference to powers and functions of the Election Commission, answer the following:

Question 4(a).

Explain the role of the Election Commission in fixing the dates for elections and conducting the elections.

Answer:

The Election Commission fixes dates for elections. Under the Constitution, the Government decides as to when the elections should be held. The fixing of exact dates rests with the Election Commission.

Question 4(b).

How does the Election Commission ensure free and fair elections ?

Answer:

The Election Commission tries to ensure free and fair elections through prescribing code of conduct, central observers, countermanding, severe punishment for booth capturing etc.

Question 5.

With reference to Election procedures, answer the following questions.

(a) State the procedure for allotment of symbols, state its advantages.

(b) State the nomination procedure. What happens when a nomination paper is incomplete ?

(c) State the procedure by secret ballot ?

Answer:

(a)

The allotment of symbols is done much before the election by the Election Commission. The symbols help the illiterate to identify their candidate by the symbol, to avoid confusion of duplicate names and to carry elections systematically.

(b)

The candidate who intend to contest the elections either as individual candidate or from a political party have to fill in a form called -Nomination paper. If it is incomplete, the Returning officers have the authority to reject the Nomination Paper.

(c)

Secret ballot: It is the method of stamping ballot paper secretly and then placing the ballot paper in a sealed box or casting a vote on the Electronic Voting Machine by pressing a button.

Question 6.

With reference to elections, answer the following question:

(a) State the difference between secret ballot and open ballot.

(b) What is known as Election Petition ? State the procedure of filling an election petition.

(c) When is a repoll ordered ?

Answer:

(a)

Secret Ballot

1. It is the method of stamping ballot paper secretly.
2. This process is conducted by Election Commission
3. It is safe and does not create jealousy.

Open Ballot

1. It is the method of raising hands by the voters.
2. This process is done in certain cases.
3. It creates the feeling of jealousy against the voter.

(b)

If the defeated candidate has any doubt regarding unjust elections, he can file a petition in a court of law especially in High Court. He may be declared winner on the basis of merits of the case; however, litigations have always a final choice to appeal to the Supreme Court.

(c)

The Election Commission on its own can countermand an election. It can also suspend polling when it fears a threat to voter's security or other genuine reasons. Then the Election Commission orders a repoll which takes place within two or three days after the first polling.

Question 7.

What is the need for Elections? What are the comparative advantages and disadvantages of Direct and Indirect Elections?

Answer:

It is generally said, 'No elections, no democracy'. This saying is not without meaning, it simple words it devotes that without the elections a democratic government cannot be set up.

1. **People Elect their Rulers:**

It is through elections that Parliament and the State legislatures are constituted. The party or the parties which get the verdict in their favour form the government. The elected members of Parliament and State Legislative.

2. **People Exercise Control over their Representative:**

Representatives are elected for a fixed tenure and they have to seek fresh mandate from the people at regular intervals. In 2002 the Congress and the PDP (People's Democratic Party) had formed a coalition government in Jammu and Kashmir. But in 2008 the people voted for a change. Omar Abdullah led the National Conference.

3. **Protection of Human Freedoms:**

A government based on the consent of the citizens is relatively more secured than one in which people have no right of participation. In complete democracy no one can complain that he has not a chance to be heard.

Question 8.

With reference to the composition of the Election Commission, explain the following:

- (a) Appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners.
- (b) Their Terms of Office and Conditions of Service.

Answer:

Appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners:

- (a) The Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners are appointed by the President.
- (b) Terms of Office and Conditions of Service of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners.

1. The Chief Election Commissioner or an Election Commissioner shall hold office for a term of six years.
2. However, if the Chief Election Commissioner or an Election Commissioner has attained the age of 65 years, he shall vacate office on the date on which he attains the said age.
3. The Chief Election Commissioner and other Commissioners are paid a salary equal to the salary of a judge of the Supreme Court i.e., Rs. 30,000 per month. On retirement, they are entitled to a pension.
4. If the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election commissioners differ in opinion on any matter, such matter shall be decided according to the opinion of the majority.

Question 9.

What measures have been taken to ensure Independence of Election Commission?

Answer:

The Election Commission's independence is secured by the following provisions:

1. The Chief Election Commissioner shall not be removed from office except in like manner as a judge of the Supreme Court. The other commissioners can not be removed from office except on the recommendation of the Chief Election Commissioner.
2. Their conditions of service shall not be varied to their disadvantage after their appointment.
3. It is the duty of the President or the Governor of a State to make available to the Commission such staff as may be necessary for the conduct of elections.

Question 10.

With reference to the powers and functions of the Election Commission, discuss the following:

- (a) Preparation of the Electoral Roll
- (b) Recognition of Political Parties
- (c) Allotment of Symbols

Answer:

The given headlines with reference to the powers and functions of the Election commission are discussed below:

(a) Preparation of the Electoral Roll:

The Constitution lays down that there shall be one 'General Electoral Roll' for every territorial constituency. The Lok Sabha or any of the Assemblies may be dissolved before its terms of five years has expired. Therefore, the electoral rolls will have to be kept up-to-date all the time so that the new election may take place without any difficulty.

(b) Recognition of Political Parties:

The Election Commission grants recognition to the political parties for Election Commission grants recognition to the political parties for Election purposes. These national parties are Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), Indian National Congress (INC) (Cong. I), the CPI (M), the Communist Party of India (CPI), Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) and Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP).

(c) Allotment of Symbols:

The National and State level parties can have a reserved symbol for all the candidates nominated by them. The independent candidates, can select any symbol out of a list of 'Free Symbols'. The purpose behind allotting symbols is that illiterate masses can not read the names of the candidates of their parties. It is easy for them to identify the symbols for electing candidates of their choice. Secondly 'reserved symbols' become so popular that the parties do not have to do canvassing for their candidates.

Question 11.

With reference to powers and functions of the Election Commission, discuss the following:

- (a) Conduct of Elections
- (b) Ensuring Free and Fair Elections

Answer:

(a) Conduct of Elections:

The Commission conducts all elections to Parliament and the State Legislature. Besides, it supervises and directs elections to the offices of the President and Vice-President. Exact dates or polls are finalised after consultations with the Election Commission.

(b) Ensuring Free and Fair Elections:

The Commission takes the following measures to ensure free and fair elections:

1. The Commission sends central observers to sensitive constituencies.
2. The Commission prescribes the code of conduct for the election campaigns.
3. The Commission creates conditions for a free and fair poll. Recent amendments to the Representation of the People Act provide severe punishment for booth-capturing.

Question 12.

Write a detailed note on the nomination of candidates and the Scrutiny of Nominations.

Answer:

Nomination of Candidates and the Scrutiny of Nominations: In order to be chosen a member of the Rajya Sabha or the State Legislative Council, a person must be not less than 30 years of age. For election to the Lok Sabha or the State Legislative Assembly a person should have attained an age of 25 years. A person is disqualified for being a member of any House on a number of grounds, such as being of unsound mind or holding of an office of profit. On the date fixed for scrutiny, the Returning Officer examines the nomination papers. He may reject any nomination if the candidate is not qualified for being chosen to fill the seat.

Question 13.

Elections are the barometer of democracy. In this context, answer the following questions:

- (a) Mention any three measures that have been taken to ensure free and fair elections in India?
- (b) What reforms would you suggest to curb the rigging and violence (use of muscle power) in elections?

Answer:

In context of elections as the barometer of democracy, the given questions are answered as follows:

(a)

To ensure free and fair elections in India, many measures have been taken by the Election Commission:

1. The Commission sends central observers to sensitive constituencies;
2. The Commission prescribes the code of conduct for the election campaigns;
3. The Commission creates conditions for free and fair poll. Recent amendments to the Representation of the People Act provide severe punishment for booth-capturing.

(b)

To curb the evil of money and muscle-power during elections, persons with proven criminal record should be debarred from contesting elections; elections should positively be annulled in those constituencies, where unfair means were resorted to; severe penalties should be laid down for offences like rigging and booth-capturing.