

Assignment

Mind Map- A type of graphic organiser that places a central idea or concept at the center of a diagram and then adds associated ideas around the main idea.

Q-Read the passage carefully and create a mind map with at least five main nodes.

India is the largest democracy in the world. Elections are the most integral and important part of politics in a democratic system of governance. True democracy can function only when elections to the offices of power are held in a free and fair manner. The issue of electoral reforms is a very important and often-heard topic in Indian Polity.

Chief Election Commissioner Sushil Chandra has written to Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad requesting for expedited action on the electoral reform proposals pending with the government, including the one which seeks an enhanced two-year jail term for those furnishing incorrect information in their poll affidavit. Enhancing the imprisonment period for those furnishing incorrect details in poll affidavits from existing six months to two years is a key electoral reform proposal of the Election Commission. A two-year jail term could bar the candidate from contesting elections for six years.

Electoral Reforms in India Introduction

It is generally accepted that while the first three general elections were held in a free and fair manner, a plummeting of standards started during the fourth general elections in 1967. Many consider the electoral system in the country as the basis of political corruption.

There are multiple issues plaguing the electoral process in India. In every constituency, candidates have to spend crores of rupees for campaigning, publicity, etc. Most candidates far exceed the permissible limit of expenses. In certain parts of the country, there are widespread reports of illegal and untoward incidents during polling such as the use of violence, intimidation, booth capturing, etc. Criminals enter into politics and ensure that money and muscle power wins them elections, so that the cases against them are not proceeded with. Political parties are also happy as long as they have winnable candidates. Political parties field criminals in elections for funds and in return provide them with political patronage and protection. There is a general opinion that the party in power uses government machinery such as using government vehicles for canvassing, advertisements at the cost of the exchequer, disbursements out of the discretionary funds at the disposal of the ministers, and other such means to improve the chances of their candidates winning. Serious candidates float non-serious candidates in elections to cut a good portion of the votes that would otherwise have gone to rival candidates. There are cases of certain caste groups lending strong support to particular political parties. Thus, political parties make offers to win over different caste groups, and caste groups also try to pressurise parties to offer tickets for their members' elections. Voting on caste lines is prevalent in the country and this is a serious blotch on democracy and equality. This also creates rifts in the country. Communal polarisation poses a serious threat to the Indian political ethos of pluralism, parliamentarianism, secularism and federalism. The political corruption in India has led to politics becoming a business. People enter the political arena for making money and retaining their money and power. There are very few leaders who enter politics

to make a difference in the lives of their people. The Gandhian values of service and sacrifice are missing from the Indian political scene.

Electoral reforms undertaken by authorities can be broadly divided into two categories: pre-2000 and post-2000. Many electoral reforms were implemented before the year 2000. The 61st Amendment Act to the Constitution reduced the minimum age for voting from 21 to 18 years. Election commission was formed. All personnel working in preparing, revising and correcting the electoral rolls for elections shall be considered to be on deputation to the EC for the period of such employment, and they shall be superintended by the EC. The number of electors required to sign as proposers in the nomination papers for elections to the Rajya Sabha and the State Legislative Councils has been raised to 10% of the electors of the constituency or ten such electors, whichever is less chiefly to prevent frivolous candidates. The security deposit has also been hiked to prevent non-serious candidates. First introduced in 1998 during the state elections of Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, EVMs are used widely now as they are fool-proof, efficient and a better option in terms of the environment. This shall lead to disqualification of the person for 6 years from contesting to the Parliament and the state legislatures. A candidate cannot contest from more than 2 constituencies. Previously, the election was countermanded on the death of a contesting candidate. In the future, no election will be countermanded on the death of a contesting candidate. If the deceased candidate, however, was set up by a recognised national or state party, then the party concerned will be given an option to nominate another candidate within 7 days of the issue of a notice to that effect to the party concerned by the Election Commission. It is prohibited by law to go to or near a polling booth bearing arms. This is punishable by imprisonment for up to 2 years. On poll days, employees of organisations get a paid holiday and violation of this is punishable by a fine. No liquor or other intoxicants shall be sold or given or distributed at any shop, eating place, or any other place, whether private or public, within a polling area during the period of 48 hours ending with the hour fixed for the conclusion of poll. Bye-elections to any House of Parliament or a State Legislature will now be held within six months of the occurrence of the vacancy in that House. The period of campaigning has been reduced. Certain other reforms were implemented after year 2000. The electoral reforms target the election process in the country. The list of such electoral reforms are: At present, there is no limit on the amount a political party can spend in an election or on a candidate. But, the Commission has put a cap on individual candidates' spending. For the Lok Sabha elections, it is Rs. 50 – 70 lakh, and Rs. 20 – 28 lakh for an assembly election. The EC issued a statement before the 2019 Lok Sabha elections saying that exit poll results could be broadcast only after the final phase of the elections were over. This was done to avoid prospective voters being misguided or prejudiced in any manner. In 2013, the EC decided to expand the ambit of postal ballot voting in the country. Previously, only Indian staff in missions abroad and defence personnel in a limited way, could vote via postal ballots. Now, there are 6 categories of voters who can use the postal ballot: service voters; special voters; wives of service voters and special voters; voters subjected to preventive detention; voters on election duty and Notified voters. The government decided to observe January 25th as 'National Voters Day' to mark the EC's founding day. Political parties need to report any contribution in excess of Rs 20000 to the EC for claiming income tax benefit. Declaring of criminal antecedents, assets, etc. by the candidates is required and declaring false information in the affidavit is now an electoral offence punishable with imprisonment up to 6 months or fine or both.