

CUET · POLITICAL SCIENCE · CLASS XI · CODE 323

Election and Representation

CUET unit: Indian Constitution at Work — Election and Representation

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Snapshot

- Establishes why a democratic Constitution must lay down basic rules of election — who votes, who contests, who supervises, how votes are converted into seats.
- Explains the two principal methods of election — **First Past the Post (FPTP)** and **Proportional Representation (PR)** — and why India chose FPTP for Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas, while using a PR (Single Transferable Vote) variant for President, Vice-President, Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Parishads.
- Covers reservation of constituencies for SCs/STs (rejecting separate electorates), universal adult franchise (lowered from 21 to 18 by the 1989 amendment), and the right to contest.
- Details the Election Commission of India under Article 324 — independence, composition, tenure, removal procedure, functions, and emergence as an assertive constitutional authority.
- Closes with the electoral reform debate (PR vs FPTP, women's reservation, money/muscle power, criminalisation, caste/religious appeals).

Detailed Notes

2.1 Core concepts

In a democracy of more than 90 crore voters, the citizen cannot make every decision personally. Hence she elects representatives, and the rules of how that election happens are too important to be left to the ordinary law of the day. They are written into the Constitution itself — so that the ruling government of the moment cannot change voting eligibility, the office of returning officer, the method of counting, or the supervising authority just before an election to suit itself (NCERT §Introduction, pp. 51–53). A direct democracy, as practised in ancient Athenian assemblies or in the modern gram sabha, is unworkable at the scale of crores of voters; India therefore uses **representative democracy** structured by the Constitution (NCERT §Elections and Democracy, pp. 52–53).

There are two **methods of election**. Under the **First Past the Post (FPTP)** or "plurality" system used for the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies, the country is divided into 543 single-member constituencies; in each, the candidate who polls the **largest number of votes** wins — even if she fails to cross the 50%+1

majority threshold (NCERT §First Past the Post System, pp. 56–57). The **distortion** this method can produce is shown by the **1984 Lok Sabha election table** (p. 56): the Congress polled 48% of all votes but won 415 of 543 seats, more than 80%; the BJP polled 7.4% of votes but won only 2 seats; the Janata, Telugu Desam and CPI(M) similarly received vote shares grossly out of proportion to their seat shares. The seat–vote relationship in a plurality system is non-linear and tends to magnify the lead of the front-running party.

The alternative is **Proportional Representation (PR)**, in which each party's share of seats matches its share of votes. The voter votes for a **party**, not a candidate; the party then nominates members to fill the seats it has won. **Israel and the Netherlands** are examples where the whole country forms a **single constituency**, and **Argentina and Portugal** are examples of multi-member-constituency PR (NCERT §Proportional Representation, pp. 57–58). The **2015 Israel Knesset table** (p. 58) shows how a 3.25% vote-share threshold yields seat allocations almost exactly proportional to votes — Likud 23.4% → 30/120 seats, Zionist Union 18.7% → 24/120, Joint List 10.5% → 13/120.

India has **not** adopted full PR for its directly elected legislatures, but it does use a **limited PR — the Single Transferable Vote (STV)** variant — for **indirect elections** to the offices of **President, Vice-President, Rajya Sabha and Vidhan Parishads** (NCERT §Proportional Representation, pp. 58–59). For Rajya Sabha elections, MLAs of the State Legislative Assembly vote, marking candidates in **order of preference**. A candidate must secure a **quota** of first-preference votes to be declared elected. The **Rajya Sabha STV quota formula** is $[\text{Total valid votes} \div (\text{Seats} + 1)] + 1$. Rajasthan example: 4 seats are to be filled, 200 MLAs vote, so quota = $(200 \div 5) + 1 = 41$ (NCERT §How does PR work in Rajya Sabha elections, pp. 59–60). Surplus first-preference votes of an elected candidate, and votes of the lowest-ranked eliminated candidate, are **transferred according to the next preference** marked on each ballot — until all four seats are filled.

Why did India choose FPTP rather than PR? The Constituent Assembly weighed four considerations (NCERT §Why did India adopt the FPTP system?, pp. 60–63). First, FPTP is **simple for an electorate with low literacy** — voters mark a single name, not a ranked list. Second, FPTP produces a **clear voter-representative link**: each constituency has one identifiable MP, making accountability concrete. Third, FPTP tends to produce **stable single-party majorities** in a parliamentary system, avoiding the fragmented multi-party coalitions PR often generates. Fourth, in a diverse society FPTP forces parties to seek cross-community coalitions to cobble together a plurality in each constituency, **discouraging narrow caste or religious parties** that might survive on small fixed vote-banks under PR.

Reservation of constituencies applies to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies (NCERT §Reservation of Constituencies, pp. 63–65). The Constituent Assembly faced a choice between two models — the **separate electorate** model (which Britain had imposed since 1909, in

which only voters of a particular community could vote for the representative of that community) and the **reserved constituency** model (in which **all voters** in the constituency vote, but **only candidates** of the specified community can contest). It rejected the separate electorate because it deepened communal cleavages, and adopted the reserved constituency. The current numbers are **84 SC seats and 47 ST seats** out of 543 Lok Sabha seats — equal to the SC and ST shares of population. Initially intended for ten years, the reservation has been repeatedly extended; the latest extension runs **up to 2030**. The **Delimitation Commission**, appointed by the President in consultation with the Election Commission, draws constituency boundaries and decides which constituencies are reserved — ST seats are concentrated in constituencies with the highest ST population share, while SC reserved seats are spread across regions because the SC population is more geographically dispersed. The **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's Reservation Act), 2023**, which provides reservation of seats for women in Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas; one-third reservation for women in rural and urban local bodies already existed under the 73rd and 74th Amendments.

Universal adult franchise is the constitutional guarantee that every adult citizen of India may vote, regardless of property, income, education, gender, caste or religion (NCERT §Universal franchise and right to contest, pp. 66–67). The Constitution originally fixed the voting age at **21**; the **Sixty-first Constitutional Amendment of 1989** lowered it to **18**, enfranchising the post-Emergency generation. The **right to contest** is governed by a separate set of rules: the minimum age is **25 years** for both the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assembly; a person sentenced to imprisonment of **two years or more** is disqualified; but there is no minimum income, no educational qualification, and no class or gender bar.

The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** operates under **Article 324** (NCERT §Independent Election Commission, pp. 68–71). Article 324 vests in the ECI the **superintendence, direction and control** of the electoral rolls and the conduct of all elections to Parliament, the State Legislatures and the offices of the **President and Vice-President**. Significantly, the ECI is **not** responsible for elections to Panchayats and Municipalities — those are conducted by independent **State Election Commissioners**. The ECI's composition has changed: it was a single-member body until 1989, briefly multi-member just before the 1989 elections, single-member again, and **multi-member since 1993** — the **Chief Election Commissioner plus two Election Commissioners**, all three with **equal powers**, deciding as a collective body. They are appointed by the **President on the advice of the Council of Ministers**. The **tenure** is **six years or until the age of 65, whichever is earlier**. The CEC can be removed only by the President on a resolution passed by **both Houses of Parliament with a special majority** (two-thirds of those present and voting AND simple majority of total House membership); other Election Commissioners can be removed by the President. The ECI's functions include preparing electoral rolls, scheduling and notifying elections, postponing or cancelling elections, enforcing the Model Code of Conduct, ordering re-polls or recounts, recognising political parties and allotting symbols, and controlling

election-duty officers. NCERT stresses that the ECI's growing assertiveness — postponing the 1991 elections after Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, postponing the 2002 Gujarat Assembly elections (upheld by the Supreme Court) — has come not from new powers but from **more effective use of existing constitutional powers**. **Electoral reform proposals** include: switching from FPTP to a PR variant, one-third women's reservation, state funding of elections to control money power, barring candidates with pending criminal cases, a complete ban on caste/religious appeals, and a law to regulate the internal functioning of political parties (NCERT §Electoral Reforms, pp. 72–73).

2.2 Definitions to memorise

Term	Definition	Page
First Past the Post (FPTP)	Plurality system — candidate with the highest votes in a single-member constituency wins, even without majority (50%+1).	57
Proportional Representation (PR)	System where each party's seat share equals its vote share; voter votes for the party, not the candidate.	57–58
Single Transferable Vote (STV)	Variant of PR used in India for Rajya Sabha — voters rank candidates by preference and surplus/eliminated votes are transferred by preference.	60
Rajya Sabha quota formula	$[\text{Total valid votes} \div (\text{Seats} + 1)] + 1$ — minimum first-preference votes a candidate needs to win.	60
Reserved Constituency	Constituency where all citizens vote but only SC/ST candidates can contest.	64
Separate Electorate	British-era system (rejected by the Constitution) — only voters of a particular community could vote to elect a representative of that community.	63–64
Delimitation Commission	Independent body appointed by the President (with the EC) to draw constituency boundaries and decide reserved constituencies.	65
Universal Adult Franchise	Right to vote for every adult citizen; age 18+ since 1989 amendment (earlier 21).	66
Article 324	Constitutional provision vesting superintendence, direction and control of elections in the Election Commission.	68
Special Majority	Two-thirds of those present and voting AND simple majority of total House membership — required to remove the CEC.	69
Model Code of Conduct	Set of norms enforced by the EC on parties and candidates during the election period.	70
Chief Election Commissioner	Head of the Election Commission; presides over the three-member body; has equal voting power.	69
Re-poll		70

Term	Definition	Page
	Fresh polling ordered by the EC in a polling station / constituency where vitiation has occurred.	
Multi-member Election Commission	Three-member ECI restored in 1993 after a brief single-member period.	68–69
State Election Commissioner	Independent officer appointed by State to conduct Panchayat/Municipal elections; not under ECI.	68
Plurality System	Another name for FPTP — winner needs only a plurality, not a majority.	57
Right to Contest	Minimum age 25 for Lok Sabha/Assembly; bar on candidates sentenced to 2+ years' imprisonment.	67
Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023	Women's Reservation Act providing one-third seat reservation for women in Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabhas.	65
Model Code of Conduct enforcement	EC's power to issue notices, censure parties, and act against violations during election period.	70
Postponement / Cancellation Powers	EC's authority to defer or cancel polls in case of violence or unforeseen circumstances.	70
61st Constitutional Amendment, 1989	Amendment that lowered the voting age from 21 to 18.	66
Returning Officer	Official designated by the EC to receive nominations, conduct the count and declare the result in a constituency.	70
Council of Ministers (advice)	Body whose advice the President follows in appointing the CEC and ECs.	69
Supreme Court (Gujarat 2002)	Upheld the EC's postponement of the 2002 Gujarat Assembly elections.	70–71

2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

Several compact comparative tables recur in CUET items. The **1984 Lok Sabha votes-vs-seats table** (p. 56) shows the Congress at 48% / 415 seats, BJP at 7.4% / 2 seats, Janata 6.7% / 10, CPI(M) 5.7% / 22 and Telugu Desam 4.1% / 30 — together, the textbook proof that FPTP can magnify a vote plurality into a seat super-majority. The **2015 Israel Knesset table** (p. 58) is its mirror: with a 3.25% vote threshold, Likud's 23.4% became 30/120 seats (25%) and the Zionist Union's 18.7% became 24/120 (20%) — a near-perfect proportional outcome. The **comparison table of FPTP vs PR** (p. 59) lays out five dimensions side by side — geographical size of constituency, single vs multi-member, candidate-centred vs party-centred ballot, majority guaranteed under PR but not under FPTP, and large parties advantaged under FPTP but not PR. The **Tamil Nadu 2016 Assembly table** (p. 62) — AIADMK 40.77% / 135 seats, DMK 31.64% / 88 seats — is used as a thought experiment: under PR, the AIADMK would have held about 95 seats and the DMK about 75, and a coalition government would have been

necessary. The **Rajya Sabha quota worked example** (p. 60) — Rajasthan, 200 MLAs voting, 4 seats, quota = 41 — should be memorised exactly as written, because the same numbers recur in CUET items. The **process map** flows: rules-of-election (§Introduction) → why representative democracy (§Elections and Democracy) → FPTP method (§FPTP) → PR alternative (§Proportional Representation) → Indian use of STV (§Rajya Sabha) → why India chose FPTP (§Why FPTP) → reservation (§Reservation of Constituencies) → universal adult franchise and right to contest (§Universal franchise) → independent ECI under Article 324 (§Independent Election Commission) → electoral reform debate (§Electoral Reforms).

2.5 Key Articles / Treaties / Events

Reference	Source / Subject	NCERT cite
Article 324	Vests superintendence, direction and control of elections in the ECI	p. 68
61st Constitutional Amendment, 1989	Lowered the voting age from 21 to 18	p. 66
Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023	Women's Reservation Act — 1/3 seats for women in Lok Sabha / Vidhan Sabhas	p. 65
1984 Lok Sabha Election	Congress 48% / 415 seats — landmark illustration of FPTP distortion	p. 56
2015 Israel Knesset Election	Illustration of PR with 3.25% threshold	p. 58
2016 Tamil Nadu Assembly Election	Hypothetical PR-vs-FPTP comparison (AIADMK 40.77% / 135)	p. 62
1991 Lok Sabha Election	Postponed by ECI after Rajiv Gandhi's assassination	p. 70
2002 Gujarat Assembly Election	Postponed by ECI; Supreme Court upheld	p. 70–71
Multi-member EC (1993)	Three-member ECI restored	pp. 68–69
Single-member EC (till 1989)	Original ECI composition	p. 68
Special Majority for CEC removal	Two-thirds present and voting + simple majority of House	p. 69
Rajya Sabha STV quota formula	$[\text{Total votes} \div (\text{Seats} + 1)] + 1$	p. 60
Reserved Constituencies extension	Reservation for SC/ST in Lok Sabha now extended up to 2030	p. 64
Council of Europe / British separate electorates (1909)	Historical system rejected by Constituent Assembly	pp. 63–64
State Election Commissioners	Independent of ECI; conduct Panchayat/ Municipal elections	p. 68

2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

- **Reserved Constituencies vs Separate Electorates** — in reserved constituencies ALL voters vote (only candidate is restricted); in separate electorates only that community's voters voted. India rejected the latter.
- **FPTP "winner"** — has more votes than ANY OTHER candidate; need NOT cross 50%. A common trap option says "secures more than 50% votes".
- **PR for Indian President / Vice-President / Rajya Sabha** — these use the **Single Transferable Vote variant of PR**, NOT the Israeli party-list PR. Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha still use FPTP.
- **EC and local elections** — the Election Commission of India does NOT conduct Panchayat or Municipal elections; State Election Commissioners do.
- **Removal of CEC vs other ECs** — CEC removable ONLY by Presidential order on Parliament's special-majority resolution; other Election Commissioners removable by the President (on the CEC's recommendation, in practice). Distractors often swap these.
- **Voting age** — 18 since the 1989 constitutional amendment; before that it was 21. The minimum age to CONTEST a Lok Sabha/Assembly seat is 25 (not 18, not 21).
- **Delimitation Commission ≠ Election Commission** — separate body, appointed by the President, works in collaboration with the EC.
- **Rajya Sabha quota** — formula is $[\text{Total votes} \div (\text{Seats} + 1)] + 1$, NOT $\text{Total} \div \text{Seats}$. Trap items drop the "+1" in either place.
- **84 SC + 47 ST reserved seats** in Lok Sabha — distractors swap (47 SC + 84 ST) or inflate the total.
- **STV ranking** — voters rank candidates in order of preference; they do NOT vote for parties. A common trap conflates STV with party-list PR.
- **Three-member ECI since 1993** — multi-member status was restored in 1993, NOT 1989. The brief 1989 multi-member experiment was reversed.
- **Article 324** controls Parliament, State Legislatures AND offices of President/Vice-President — not just Lok Sabha. Trap items understate the scope.

Practice MCQs

PYQ Alignment

This chapter is one of the most heavily tested in the Class XI Indian Constitution at Work book — CUET 2023–25 has drawn roughly 5–7 MCQs per year from it. Recurring foci:

definition of FPTP vs PR (one direct factual question almost every year), Article 324 and the composition/tenure/removal of the EC, the distinction between reserved constituencies and separate electorates, the Rajya Sabha STV method, and recent updates (voting age amendment, Women's Reservation Act 2023). Statement-based "which of the following is correct" and Assertion–Reason items are the dominant formats.

CUET 2023 — Actual PYQs from this chapter

Q.1 (CUET 2023) In which year was the concept of first-past-the-post (FPTP) adopted as a form of electoral system in the Indian subcontinent?

- A) 1919 B) 1935 C) 1947 D) 1951 **Tests:** Election and representation **Answer:** Not in extracted key

Q.40 (CUET 2023) In which year did the entire country shift to Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)?

- A) 1951 B) 2004 C) 2008 D) 2019 **Tests:** Election and representation **Answer:** Not in extracted key