Mains Practice Question

Q. Assess the effectiveness of the current electoral reform measures in India in addressing issues of political financing, voter turnout, and fair representation. (250 words)

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Approach

- Start your answer by briefly discussing about electoral reforms.
- Discuss issues and initiatives related to political financing, voter turnout and fair representation in India.
- Conclude accordingly.

Introduction

- The electoral process is the **cornerstone of democratic governance.** Free and fair elections guarantee the legitimacy of the government and the representation of the will of the people. India, the largest democracy in the world, has made significant efforts in reforming its electoral process in recent years.

Body

- **Political Financing:** The issue of political financing has been a major concern in Indian politics. The **influence of money in elections has led to corruption, unethical practices,** and the exclusion of candidates from marginalized communities.
- In response to this, the government has introduced **several reforms, including:**
  - **Electoral bonds:** Electoral bonds were introduced in 2018 as a way to promote transparency in political funding.
    - The bonds can be purchased by individuals or companies, and the money can only be transferred to registered political parties.
  - **Cap on anonymous donations:** The government has capped **anonymous donations at Rs 2,000** and made it mandatory for political parties to disclose all donations above this amount. This is a significant move towards transparency in political funding.
  - **Electronic filing of donations**: Political parties are required to electronically file all donations above Rs 20,000 with the Election Commission. This has made it **easier to track donations and has increased transparency.**
- **Voter Turnout:** Low voter turnout has been a persistent problem in Indian elections. Despite being the largest democracy in the world, voter turnout in India has been consistently low.
- The government has taken several measures to increase voter turnout, including:
  - **Introduction of electronic voting machines:** Electronic voting machines (EVMs) were introduced in Indian elections in 2004. EVMs have significantly reduced the time taken to count votes and have made the process more efficient. This has led to an increase in voter turnout.
  - **Mobile voting booths:** The Election Commission has introduced mobile voting booths in remote and hard-to-reach areas to make it easier for voters to cast their votes.
  - **Voter education programs:** The government has launched several voter education programs to increase awareness about the importance of voting and to encourage more

people to participate in the electoral process.
- **Fair Representation:** The issue of fair representation is a crucial aspect of the electoral process. It is important that all communities are represented in the government to ensure that the policies and decisions taken are in the interest of all citizens.
- The government has taken several measures to ensure fair representation, including:
  - **Reservation for marginalized communities:** The Indian Constitution provides for reservations for marginalized communities such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. This has led to an increase in the representation of these communities in the government.
  - **Women's representation:** The government has introduced several measures to increase the representation of women in the government.
  - The Women's Reservation Bill, which proposes to reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies for women, is pending in the Parliament.
  - **Delimitation of constituencies:** The delimitation of constituencies is an important aspect of ensuring fair representation. The government has constituted a Delimitation Commission to redraw the boundaries of constituencies to ensure equal representation.
- Despite various initiatives India faces challenges in implementing electoral reforms due to limited resources, voter apathy, and the complexity of its electoral system. These factors can hinder efforts to implement reforms at scale, build momentum for change, and avoid unintended consequences.

Conclusion

- India has taken several measures to reform its electoral process to address issues of political financing, voter turnout, and fair representation. However, there is still much to be done to ensure free and fair elections.
  - The government needs to continue to work towards improving transparency in political financing, increasing voter awareness and participation, and ensuring fair representation of all communities.
  - It is imperative to implement the Women's Reservation Bill to increase the representation of women in the government. The continuous efforts to improve the electoral process will help in strengthening the democratic values and the overall progress of the nation.

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