

Understanding Universal Franchise

Chapter 5: Universal Franchise and India's Electoral System · Topic 1

Key Concept

Before universal franchise, voting rights were often limited to specific groups, like property owners or men only, excluding large parts of the population.

India adopted universal adult franchise from its first general election in 1951-52, giving all citizens aged 18 and above (originally 21) the right to vote.

Universal franchise ensures that everyone's voice matters in choosing representatives, making democracy more inclusive and representative of the entire population.

This principle reflects the idea of political equality, where every citizen, regardless of background, has an equal say in how their country is governed.

Quick Revision Notes

- Universal franchise means every adult citizen can vote.
- It applies regardless of caste, religion, gender, or wealth.
- Earlier, voting was often limited to specific groups.
- India adopted universal adult franchise from its first election (1951-52).
- The voting age in India is 18 (originally 21).
- Universal franchise ensures everyone's voice matters.
- It makes democracy more inclusive and representative.
- It reflects the principle of political equality.

Practice Questions

- 1 Discuss why universal franchise is important for democracy.
- 2 Research when women gained voting rights in India.
- 3 Explain the voting age requirement in India.
- 4 Discuss what political equality means.
- 5 Research a country that didn't have universal franchise historically.
- 6 Discuss why voting rights should not depend on wealth or background.