



CHAPTER 1

What is Democracy? Why Democracy?

OVERVIEW

What is democracy? What are its features? This chapter builds on a simple definition of democracy. Step by step, we work out the meaning of the terms involved in this definition. The aim here is to understand clearly the bare minimum features of a democratic form of government. After going through this chapter we should be able to distinguish a democratic form of government from a non-democratic government. Towards the end of this chapter, we step beyond this minimal objective and introduce a broader idea of democracy.

Democracy is the most prevalent form of government in the world today and it is expanding to more countries. But why is it so? What makes it better than other forms of government? That is the second big question that we take up in this chapter.

1.1 WHAT IS DEMOCRACY?

You have already read about different forms of government. On the basis of your understanding of democracy so far, mentioning a few examples write down some common features of:

- Democratic governments
- Non-democratic governments

Why define democracy?

Before we proceed further, let us first take note of an objection by Merry. She does not like this way of defining democracy and wants to ask some basic questions. Her teacher Matilda Lyngdoh responds to her questions, as other classmates join the discussion:

Merry: Ma'am, I don't like this idea. First we spend time discussing democracy and then we want to find out the meaning of democracy. I mean logically shouldn't we have approached it the other way round? Shouldn't the meaning have come first and then the example?

Lyngdoh Madam: I can see your point. But that is not how we reason in everyday life. We use words like pen, rain or love. Do we wait to have a definition of these words before we use them? Come to think of it, do we have clear definition of these words? It is only by using a word that we understand its meaning.

Merry: But then why do we need definitions at all?

Lyngdoh Madam: We need a definition only when we come across a difficulty in the use of a word. We need a definition of rain only when we wish to distinguish it from, say, drizzle or cloudburst. The same is true for democracy. We need a clear definition only because people use it for different purposes, because very different kinds of governments call themselves democracy.

Ribiang: But why do we need to work on a definition? The other day you quoted Abraham Lincoln to us: "Democracy is government of the people, by the people and for the people". We in Meghalaya always ruled ourselves. That is accepted by everyone. Why do we need to change that?

Lyngdoh Madam: I am not saying we need to change it. I too find this definition very beautiful.

But we don't know if this is the best way of defining unless we think about it ourselves. We must not accept something just because it is famous, just because everyone accepts it.

Yolanda: Ma'am, can I suggest something? We don't need to look for any definition. I read somewhere that **the word democracy** comes from a Greek word 'Demokratia'. In Greek 'demos' means people and 'kratia' means rule. So democracy is rule by the people. This is the correct meaning. Where is the need to debate?

Lyngdoh Madam: That is also a very helpful way of thinking about this matter. I would just say that this does not always work. A word does not remain tied to its origin. Just think of computers. Originally they were used for computing, that is to say calculating, very difficult mathematical sums. These were very powerful calculators. But nowadays very few people use computers for computing sums. They use it for writing, for designing, for listening to music and for watching films. Words remain the same but their meaning can change with time. In that case it is not very useful to look at the origins of a word.

Merry: Ma'am, so basically what you are saying is that there is no shortcut to our thinking about the matter ourselves. We have to think about its meaning and evolve a definition.

Lyngdoh Madam: You got me right. Let us get on with it now.



A C T I V I T Y

Let us take Lyngdoh Madam seriously and try to write down the exact definition of some of the simple words that we use all the time: pen, rain and love. For example, is there a way of defining a pen that distinguishes it clearly from a pencil, a brush, a chalk or crayon.

- What have you learnt from this attempt?
- What does it teach us about understanding the meaning of democracy?

A simple definition

Let us get back to our discussion on similarities and differences among governments that are called



I have heard a different version. Democracy is off the people, far (from) the people and (where they) buy the people. Why don't we accept that?

democracies. One simple factor common to all democracies is: the government is chosen by the people. We could thus start with a simple definition: **democracy is a form of government in which the rulers are elected by the people.**

This is a useful starting point. This definition allows us to separate democracy from forms of government that are clearly not democratic. The army rulers of Myanmar were not elected by the people. Those who happened to be in control of the army became the rulers of the country. People had no say in this decision. Dictators like Pinochet (Chile) are not elected by the people. This also applies to monarchies. The kings of Saudi Arabia rule not because the people have chosen them to do so but

because they happen to be born into the royal family.

This simple definition is not adequate. It reminds us that democracy is people's rule. But if we use this definition in an unthinking manner, we would end up calling almost every government that holds an election a democracy. That would be very misleading. As we shall find out in Chapter 3, every government in contemporary world wants to be called a democracy, even if it is not so. That is why we need to carefully distinguish between a government that is a democracy and one that pretends to be one. We can do so by understanding each word in this definition carefully and spelling out the features of a democratic government.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ribiang went back home and collected some more famous quotations on democracy. This time she did not mention the names of the people who said or wrote these. She wants you to read these and comment on how good or useful these thoughts are:

- Democracy gives every man the right to be his own oppressor.
- Democracy consists of choosing your dictators after they've told you what you think it is you want to hear.
- Man's capacity for justice makes democracy possible, but man's inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary
- Democracy is a device that insures we shall be governed no better than we deserve.
- All the ills of democracy can be cured by more democracy.

read the cartoon

This cartoon was drawn when elections were held in Iraq with the presence of US and other foreign powers. What do you think this cartoon is saying? Why is 'democracy' written the way it is?

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1.2 FEATURES OF DEMOCRACY

We have started with a simple definition that **democracy is a form of government in which the rulers are elected by the people**. This raises many questions:

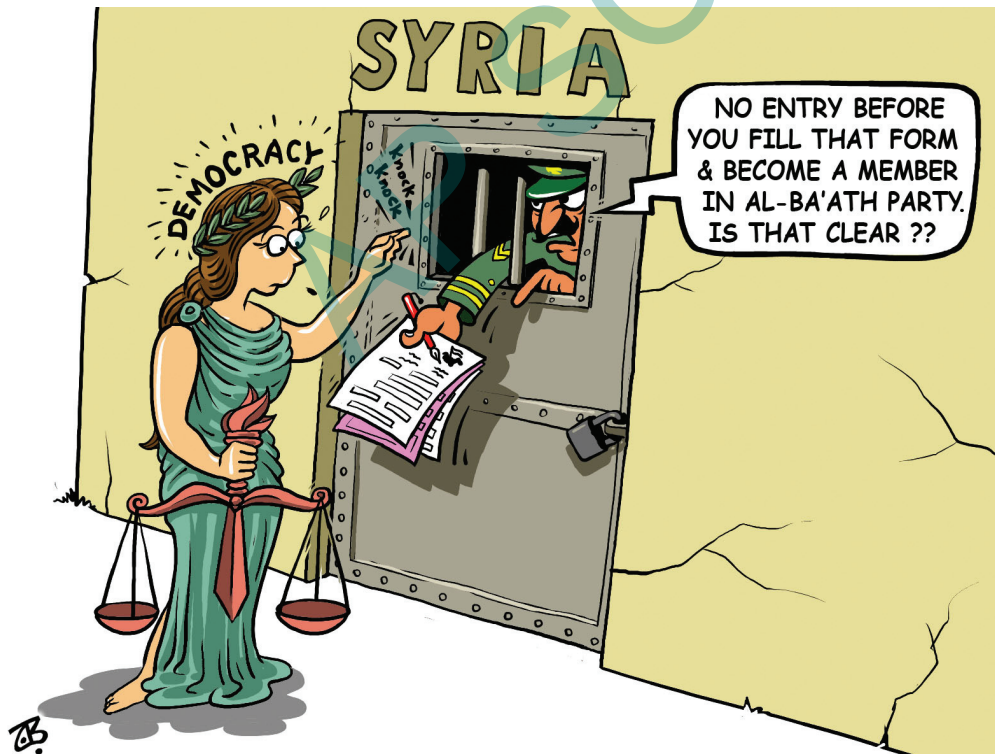
- Who are **the rulers** in this definition? Which officials must be elected for any government to be called a democracy? Which decisions may be taken by non-elected officials in a democracy?
- What kind of **election** constitutes a democratic election? What conditions must be fulfilled for an election to be considered democratic?
- Who are **the people** who can elect the rulers or get elected as rulers? Should this include every citizen on an equal basis? Can a democracy deny some citizens this right?
- Finally, what kind of a **form of government** is democracy? Can elected rulers do whatever they

want in a democracy? Or must a democratic government function with some limits? Is it necessary for a democracy to respect some rights of the citizens?

Let us consider each of these questions with the help of some examples.

Major decisions by elected leaders

In Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf led a military coup in October 1999. He overthrew a democratically elected government and declared himself the 'Chief Executive' of the country. Later he changed his designation to President and in 2002 held a **referendum** in the country that granted him a five-year extension. Pakistani media, human rights organisations and democracy activists said that the referendum was based on



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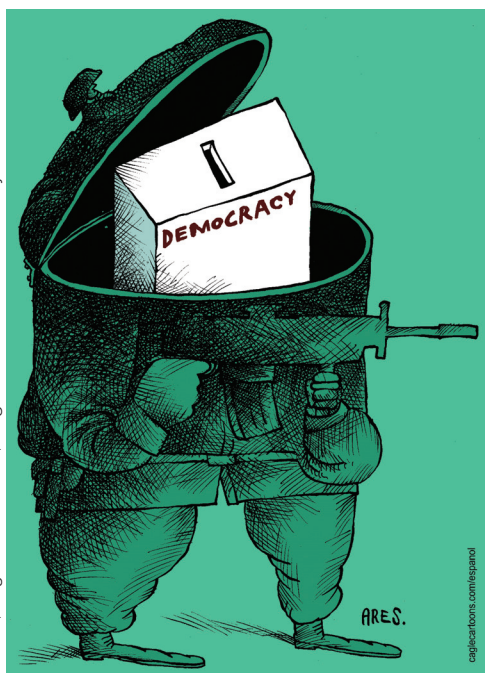
read
the
cartoon

Syria is a small west Asian country. The ruling Ba'ath Party and some of its small allies are the only parties allowed in that country. Do you think this cartoon could apply to China or Mexico? What does the crown of leaves on democracy signify?

read the cartoon

This cartoon was drawn in the context of Latin America. Do you think it applies to the Pakistani situation as well? Think of other countries where this could apply? Does this happen sometimes in our country as well?

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malpractices and fraud. In August 2002 he issued a 'Legal Framework Order' that amended the Constitution of Pakistan. According to this Order, the President can dismiss the national and provincial assemblies. The work of the civilian cabinet is supervised by a National Security Council which is dominated by military officers. After passing this law, elections were held to the national and provincial assemblies. So Pakistan has had elections, elected representatives have some powers. But the final power rested with military officers and General Musharraf himself.

Clearly, there are many reasons why Pakistan under General Musharraf should not be called a democracy. But let us focus on one of these. Can we say that the rulers are elected by the people in Pakistan? Not quite. People may have elected their representatives to the national and provincial assemblies but those elected representatives were not really the

rulers. They cannot take the final decisions. The power to take final decision rested with army officials and with General Musharraf, and none of them were elected by the people. This happens in many dictatorships and monarchies. They formally have an elected parliament and government but the real power is with those who are not elected. In a few countries, the real power was with some external powers and not with locally elected representatives. This cannot be called people's rule.

This gives us the first feature. **In a democracy the final decision-making power must rest with those elected by the people.**

Free and fair electoral competition

In China, elections are regularly held after every five years for electing the country's parliament, called Quanguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui (National People's Congress). The National People's Congress has the power to appoint the President of the country. It has nearly 3,000 members elected from all over China. Some members are elected by the army. Before contesting elections, a candidate needs the approval of the Chinese Communist Party. Only those who are members of the Chinese Communist Party or eight smaller parties allied to it were allowed to contest elections held in 2002-03. The government is always formed by the Communist Party.

Since its independence in 1930, Mexico holds elections after every six years to elect its President. The country has never been under a military or dictator's rule. But until 2000 every election was won by a



All this is so remote for me. Is democracy all about rulers and governments? Can we talk about a democratic classroom? Or a democratic family?

party called PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party). Opposition parties did contest elections, but never managed to win. The PRI was known to use many dirty tricks to win elections. All those who were employed in government offices had to attend its party meetings. Teachers of government schools used to force parents to vote for the PRI. Media largely ignored the activities of opposition political parties except to criticise them. Sometimes the polling booths were shifted from one place to another in the last minute, which made it difficult for people to cast their votes. The PRI spent a large sum of money in the campaign for its candidates.

Should we consider the elections described above as examples of people electing their rulers? Reading these examples we get a sense that we cannot. There are many problems here. In China the elections do not offer the people any serious choice. They have to choose the ruling party and the candidates approved by it. Can we call this a choice? In the Mexican example, people seemed to really have a choice but in practice they had no choice. There was no way the ruling party could be defeated, even if people were against it. These are not fair elections.

We can thus add a second feature to our understanding of democracy. Holding elections of any kind is not sufficient. The elections must offer a real choice between political alternatives. And it should be possible for people to use this choice to remove the existing rulers, if they wish so. So, **a democracy must be based on a free and fair election where those currently in power have a fair chance of losing.** We shall find out more about a democratic election in Chapter 3.

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One person, one vote, one value

Earlier, we read about how the struggle for democracy was linked to the demand for universal adult franchise. This principle has now come to be accepted almost all over the world. Yet there are many instances of denial of equal right to vote.

- Until 2015, in Saudi Arabia women did not have the right to vote.
- Estonia has made its citizenship rules in such a way that people belonging to Russian minority find it difficult to get the right to vote.
- In Fiji, the electoral system is such that the vote of an indigenous Fiji has more value than that of an Indian-Fijian.

Democracy is based on a fundamental principle of political equality. That gives us the third feature of democracy: **in a democracy, each adult citizen must have one vote and each vote must have one value.** We shall read more about it in Chapter 3.

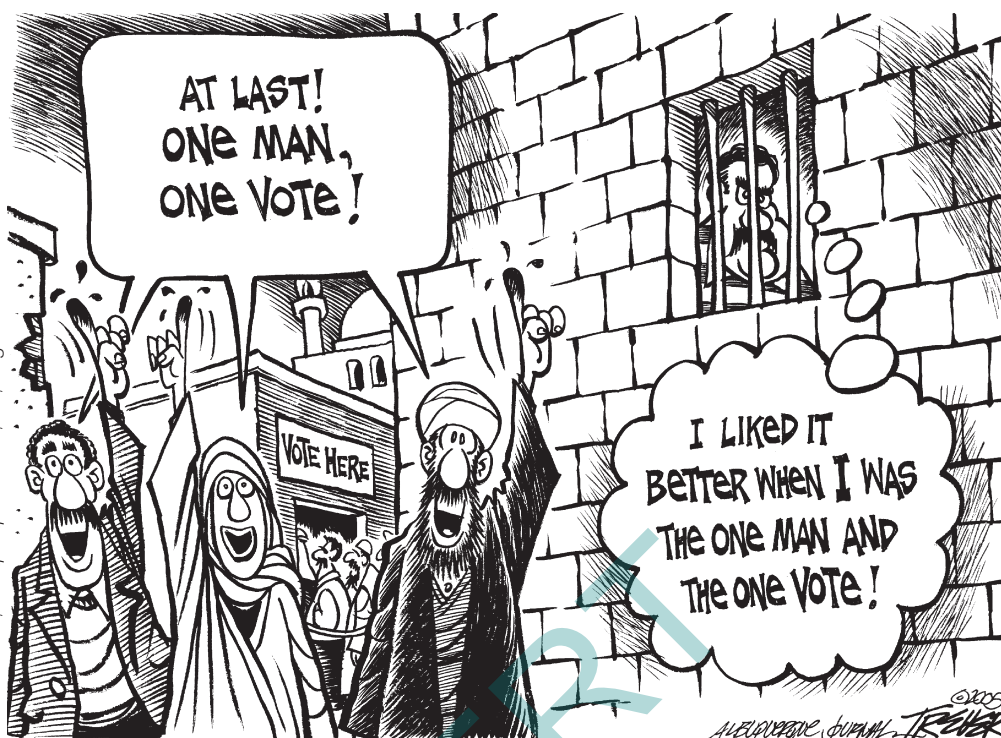
read
the
cartoon

This cartoon was titled 'Building Democracy' and was first published in a Latin American publication. What do moneybags signify here? Could this cartoon be applied to India?

read the cartoon

This cartoon is about the Iraqi election held after Saddam Hussein's regime was overthrown. He is shown behind the bars. What is the cartoonist saying here? Compare the message of this cartoon with the first cartoon in this chapter.

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Rule of law and respect for rights

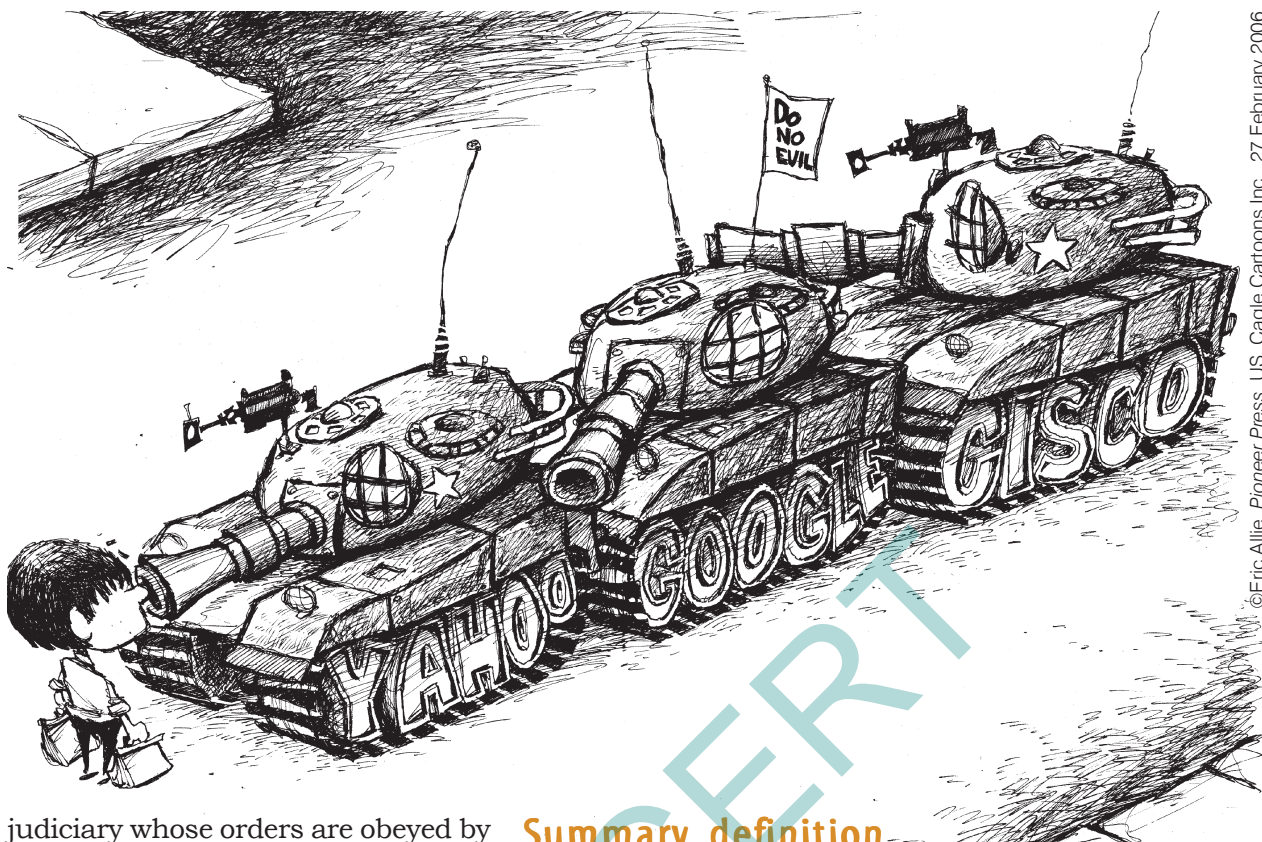
Zimbabwe attained independence from White minority rule in 1980. Since then the country has been ruled by ZANU-PF, the party that led the freedom struggle. Its leader, Robert Mugabe, ruled the country since independence. Elections were held regularly and always won by ZANU-PF. President Mugabe was popular but also used unfair practices in elections. Over the years his government changed the constitution several times to increase the powers of the President and make him less accountable. Opposition party workers were harassed and their meeting disrupted. Public protests and demonstrations against the government were declared illegal. There was a law that limited the right to criticise the President. Television and radio were controlled by the government and gave only the ruling party's version. There were independent newspapers but the

government harassed those journalists who went against it. The government ignored some court judgments that went against it and pressurised judges. He was forced out of office in 2017.

The example of Zimbabwe shows that popular approval of the rulers is necessary in a democracy, but it is not sufficient. Popular governments can be undemocratic. Popular leaders can be autocratic. If we wish to assess a democracy, it is important to look at the elections. But it is equally important to look before and after the elections. There should be sufficient room for normal political activity, including political opposition, in the period before elections. This requires that the state should respect some basic rights of the citizen. They should be free to think, to have opinions, to express these in public, to form associations, to protest and take other political actions. Everyone should be equal in the eyes of law. These rights must be protected by an independent



Why talk about Zimbabwe? I read similar reports from many parts of our own country. Why don't we discuss that?



judiciary whose orders are obeyed by everyone. We shall read more about these rights in Chapter 5.

Similarly, there are some conditions that apply to the way a government is run after the elections. A democratic government cannot do whatever it likes, simply because it has won an election. It has to respect some basic rules. In particular it has to respect some guarantees to the minorities. Every major decision has to go through a series of consultations. Every office bearer has certain rights and responsibilities assigned by the constitution and the law. Each of these is accountable not only to the people but also to other independent officials. We shall read more about this in Chapter 4.

Both these aspects give us the fourth and final feature of democracy: **a democratic government rules within limits set by constitutional law and citizens' rights.**

Summary definition

Let us sum up the discussion so far. We started with a simple definition that **democracy is a form of government in which the rulers are elected by the people.** We found that this definition was not adequate unless we explained some of the key words used in it. Through a series of examples we worked out four features of democracy as a form of government. Accordingly, democracy is a form of government in which:

- Rulers elected by the people take all the major decisions;
- Elections offer a choice and fair opportunity to the people to change the current rulers;
- This choice and opportunity is available to all the people on an equal basis; and
- The exercise of this choice leads to a government limited by basic rules of the constitution and citizens' rights.

read
the
cartoon

Chinese government blocked free flow of information on the internet by placing restrictions on popular websites like 'Google' and 'Yahoo'. The image of tanks and an unarmed student reminds the reader of another major event in recent Chinese history. Find out about that event.



Read these five examples of working or denial of democracy. Match each of these with the relevant feature of democracy discussed above.

Example	Feature
King of Bhutan has declared that in future he will be guided by the advice given to him by elected representatives.	Rule of law
Many Tamil workers who migrated from India were not given a right to vote in Sri Lanka.	Respect for Rights
The king imposed a ban on political gatherings, demonstrations and rallies.	One person one vote one value
The Indian Supreme Court held that the dissolution of Bihar assembly was unconstitutional.	Free and fair electoral competition
Political parties in Bangladesh have agreed that a neutral government should rule the country at the time of elections.	Major decisions by elected leaders

1.3 WHY DEMOCRACY?

An argument broke out in Madam Lyngdoh's class. She had finished teaching the previous section on what is democracy and asked the students if they thought democracy was the best form of government. Everyone had something to say.

Debating merits of democracy

Yolanda: We live in a democratic country. All over the world people want democracy. Countries that were not democratic earlier are becoming democratic now. All great people have said nice things about democracy. Isn't it obvious that democracy is the best? Do we need to debate this?

Tangini: But Lyngdoh Madam had said we should not accept something just because it is famous, just because everyone else accepts it. Isn't it possible that everyone is following a wrong path?

Jeni: Yes, it actually is a wrong path. What has democracy brought to our country? Seven decades of democracy and there is so much poverty in the country.

Ribiang: But what has democracy got to do with it? Do we have poverty because we are democratic or do we have poverty despite being a democracy?

Jeni: Whatever, how does it make a difference? The point is that this can't be the best form of government. Democracy is all about chaos, instability, corruption and hypocrisy. Politicians fight among themselves. Who cares for the country?

Poimon: So, what should we have instead? Go back to the British rule? Invite some kings to rule this country?

Rose: I don't know. I think what this country needs is a strong leader, someone who does not have to bother about elections and parliament. One leader should have all the powers. He should be able to do whatever is needed in country's interest. That alone can remove corruption and poverty from this country.

Someone shouted: That is called dictatorship!

Hoi: What if that person starts using all these powers for himself and his family? What if he is corrupt himself?

Rose: I am speaking only of the honest, sincere and strong leader.

Hoi: But that is not fair. You are comparing a real democracy with an ideal dictatorship. We should compare an ideal with an ideal, the real with the real. Go and check the record of dictators in real life. They are most corrupt, selfish and brutal. It is just that we don't get to know about this. And what is worse, you can't even get rid of them.



I want to be in Lyngdoh Madam's class! That sounds like a democratic classroom. Doesn't it?

Madam Lyngdoh was listening to this discussion with interest. Now she stepped in: "I was delighted to see you all arguing so passionately. I don't know who is right and who is wrong. That is for you to settle. But I did feel that you all wanted to speak your mind. You may have felt very bad if someone tried to stop you or if someone punished you for saying what you felt. Would you be able to do that in a country that is not democratic? Is that a good argument for democracy?"

Arguments against democracy

This conversation has most of the arguments that we routinely hear against democracy. Let us go over some of these arguments:

- Leaders keep changing in a democracy. This leads to instability.
- Democracy is all about political competition and power play. There is no scope for morality.
- So many people have to be consulted in a democracy that it leads to delays.
- Elected leaders do not know the best interest of the people. It leads to bad decisions.
- Democracy leads to corruption for it is based on electoral competition.
- Ordinary people don't know what is good for them; they should not decide anything.

Are there some other arguments against democracy that you can think of? Which of these arguments applies mainly to democracy? Which of these can apply to misuse of any form of government? Which of these do you agree with?

Clearly, democracy is not a magical solution for all the problems. It has not ended poverty in our country and in other parts of the world. Democracy as a form of

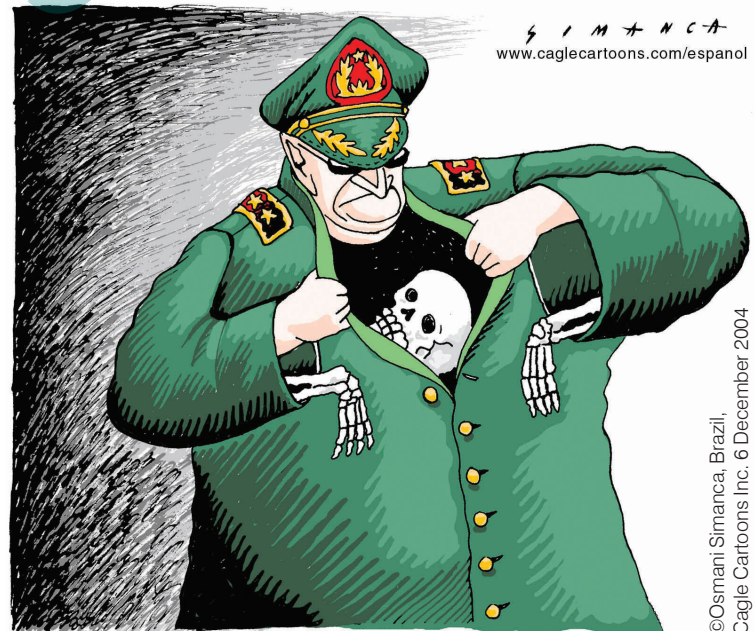
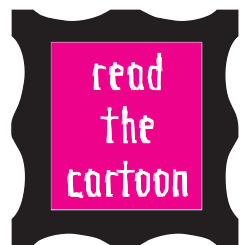
government only ensures that people take their own decisions. This does not guarantee that their decisions will be good. People can make mistakes. Involving the people in these decisions does lead to delays in decision making. It is also true that democracy leads to frequent changes in leadership. Sometimes this can set back big decisions and affect the government's efficiency.

These arguments show that democracy of the kind we see may not be the ideal form of government. But that is not a question we face in real life. The real question we face is different: is democracy better than other forms of government that are there for us to choose from?

Arguments for democracy

China's famine of 1958-1961 was the worst recorded famine in world history. Nearly three crore people died in this famine. During those days, India's economic condition was not much better than China. Yet India did not have a famine of the

This cartoon is from Brazil, a country that has long experience of dictatorship. It is entitled "The Hidden Side of Dictatorship". Which hidden sides does this cartoon depict? Is it necessary for every dictatorship to have a hidden side? If possible, find this out about the dictators including Pinochet in Chile, Jaruzelski in Poland, Sani Abacha in Nigeria and Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines.



kind China had. Economists think that this was a result of different government policies in the two countries. The existence of democracy in India made the Indian government respond to food scarcity in a way that the Chinese government did not. They point out that no large-scale famine has ever taken place in an independent and democratic country. If China too had multiparty elections, an opposition party and a press free to criticise the government, then so many people may not have died in the famine.

This example brings out one of the reasons why democracy is considered the best form of government. Democracy is better than any other form of government in responding to the needs of the people. A non-democratic government may and can respond to the people's needs, but it all depends on the wishes of the people who rule. If the rulers don't want to, they don't have to act according to the wishes of the people. A democracy requires that the rulers have to attend to the needs of the people. **A democratic government is a better government because it is a more accountable form of government.**

There is another reason why democracy should lead to better decisions than any non-democratic government. Democracy is based on consultation and discussion. A democratic decision always involves many persons, discussions and meetings. When a number of people put their heads together, they are able to point out possible mistakes in any decision. This takes time. But there is a big advantage in taking time over important decisions. This reduces the chances of rash or irresponsible decisions. **Thus democracy**

improves the quality of decision-making.

This is related to the third argument. **Democracy provides a method to deal with differences and conflicts.** In any society people are bound to have differences of opinions and interests. These differences are particularly sharp in a country like ours which has an amazing social diversity. People belong to different regions, speak different languages, practise different religions and have different castes. They look at the world very differently and have different preferences. The preferences of one group can clash with those of other groups. How do we resolve such a conflict? The conflict can be solved by brutal power. Whichever group is more powerful will dictate its terms and others will have to accept that. But that would lead to resentment and unhappiness. Different groups may not be able to live together for long in such a way. Democracy provides the only peaceful solution to this problem. In democracy, no one is a permanent winner. No one is a permanent loser. Different groups can live with one another peacefully. In a diverse country like India, democracy keeps our country together.

These three arguments were about the effects of democracy on the quality of government and social life. But the strongest argument for democracy is not about what democracy does to the government. It is about what democracy does to the citizens. Even if democracy does not bring about better decisions and accountable government, it is still better than other forms of government. **Democracy enhances the dignity of citizens.** As we discussed above, democracy is



What would have happened if India was not a democracy? Could we have stayed together as a single nation?

based on the principle of political equality, on recognising that the poorest and the least educated has the same status as the rich and the educated. People are not subjects of a ruler, they are the rulers themselves. Even when they make mistakes, they are responsible for their conduct.

Finally, democracy **is better than other forms of government because it allows us to correct its own mistakes**. As we saw above, there is no guarantee that mistakes cannot be made in democracy. No form of government can guarantee that. The advantage in a democracy is that such mistakes cannot be hidden for long. There is a space for public discussion on these mistakes. And

there is a room for correction. Either the rulers have to change their decisions, or the rulers can be changed. This cannot happen in a non-democratic government.

Let us sum it up. Democracy cannot get us everything and is not the solution to all problems. But it is clearly better than any other alternative that we know. It offers better chances of a good decision, it is likely to respect people's own wishes and allows different kinds of people to live together. Even when it fails to do some of these things, it allows a way of correcting its mistakes and offers more dignity to all citizens. That is why democracy is considered the best form of government.

This cartoon was published in Canada just before its parliamentary elections of 2004. Everyone, including the cartoonist, expected the Liberal party to win once again. When the results came, the Liberal Party lost the elections. Is this cartoon an argument against democracy or for democracy?



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Rajesh and Muzaffar read an article. It showed that no democracy has ever gone to war with another democracy. Wars take place only when one of the two governments is non-democratic. The article said that this was a great merit of democracy. After reading the essay, Rajesh and Muzaffar had different reactions. Rajesh said that this was not a good argument for democracy. It was just a matter of chance. It is possible that in future democracies may have wars. Muzaffar said that it could not be a matter of chance. Democracies take decisions in such a way that it reduces the chances of war. **Which of the two positions do you agree with and why?**



This famous cartoon by R K Laxman comments on the celebrations of the fifty years of independence. How many images on the wall do you recognize? Do many common people feel the way the common man in this cartoon does?

read
the
cartoon

1.4 BROADER MEANINGS OF DEMOCRACY

In this chapter we have considered the meaning of democracy in a limited and descriptive sense. We have understood democracy as a form of government. This way of defining democracy helps us to identify a clear set of minimal features that a democracy must have. The most common form that democracy takes in our times is that of a representative democracy. You have already read about this in the previous classes. In the countries we call democracy, all the people do not rule. A majority is allowed to take decisions on behalf of all the people.

Even the majority does not rule directly. The majority of people rule through their elected representatives. This becomes necessary because:

- Modern democracies involve such a large number of people that it is physically impossible for them to sit together and take a collective decision.
- Even if they could, the citizen does not have the time, the desire or the skills to take part in all the decisions.

This gives us a clear but minimal understanding of democracy. This clarity helps us to distinguish democracies from non-democracies. But it does not allow us to



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distinguish between a democracy and a good democracy. It does not allow us to see the operation of democracy beyond government. For this we need to turn to broader meanings of democracy.

Sometimes we use democracy for organisations other than the government. Just read these statements:

- *"We are a very democratic family. Whenever a decision has to be taken, we all sit down and arrive at a consensus. My opinion matters as much as my father's."*
- *"I don't like teachers who do not allow students to speak and ask questions in the class. I would like to have teachers with democratic temperament."*
- *"One leader and his family members decide everything in this party. How can they talk of democracy?"*

These ways of using the word democracy go back to its basic sense of a method of taking decisions. A democratic decision involves consultation with and consent of all those who are affected by that decision. Those who are not powerful have the same say in taking the decision as those who are powerful. This can apply to a government or a family or any other organisation. Thus democracy is also a principle that can be applied to any sphere of life.

Sometimes we use the word democracy not to describe any existing government but to set up an ideal standard that all democracies must aim to become:

- *"True democracy will come to this country only when no one goes hungry to bed."*
- *"In a democracy every citizen must be able to play equal role in decision making. For this you don't need just an equal right to vote. Every citizen needs to have equal information, basic education, equal resources and a lot*

of commitment."

If we take these ideals seriously, then no country in the world is a democracy. Yet an understanding of democracy as an ideal reminds us of why we value democracy. It enables us to judge an existing democracy and identify its weaknesses. It helps us to distinguish between a minimal democracy and a good democracy.

In this book we do not deal much with this expanded notion of democracy. Our focus here is with some core institutional features of democracy as a form of government. Next year you will read more about a democratic society and ways of evaluating our democracy. At this stage we just need to note that democracy can apply to many spheres of life and that democracy can take many forms. There can be various ways of taking decisions in a democratic manner, as long as the basic principle of consultation on an equal basis is accepted. The most common form of democracy in today's world is rule through people's elected representatives. We shall read more about that in Chapter 3. But if the community is small, there can be other ways of taking democratic decisions. All the people can sit together and take decisions directly. This is how Gram Sabha should work in a village. Can you think of some other democratic ways of decision making?



In my village the Gram Sabha never meets. Is that democratic?



A C T I V I T Y

Find out the total number of eligible voters in your assembly constituency and your parliamentary constituency. Find out how many people can fit into the largest stadium in your area. Is it possible for all the voters in your parliamentary or assembly constituency to sit together and have a meaningful discussion?

This also means that no country is a perfect democracy. The features of democracy that we discussed in this chapter provide only the minimum conditions of a democracy. That does not make it an ideal democracy. Every democracy has to try to realise the ideals of a democratic decision-making. This cannot be achieved once and for all. This requires a constant effort to save and strengthen democratic forms of decision-making. What we do as citizens can make a difference to making our country more or less democratic. This is the strength and the weakness of democracy: the fate

of the country depends not just on what the rulers do, but mainly on what we, as citizens, do.

This is what distinguished democracy from other governments. Other forms of government like monarchy, dictatorship or one-party rule do not require all citizens to take part in politics. In fact most non-democratic governments would like citizens not to take part in politics. But democracy depends on active political participation by all the citizens. That is why a study of democracy must focus on democratic politics.

exercises

- 1 Here is some information about four countries. Based on this information, how would you classify each of these countries. Write 'democratic', 'undemocratic' or 'not sure' against each of these.
 - a Country A: People who do not accept the country's official religion do not have a right to vote.
 - b Country B: The same party has been winning elections for the last twenty years.
 - c Country C: Ruling party has lost in the last three elections.
 - d Country D: There is no independent election commission.
- 2 Here is some information about four countries. Based on this information, how would you classify each of these countries. Write 'democratic', 'undemocratic' or 'not sure' against each of these.
 - a Country P: The parliament cannot pass a law about the army without the consent of the Chief of Army.
 - b Country Q: The parliament cannot pass a law reducing the powers of the judiciary.
 - c Country R: The country's leaders cannot sign any treaty with another country without taking permission from its neighbouring country.
 - d Country S: All the major economic decisions about the country are taken by officials of the central bank which the ministers cannot change.
- 3 Which of these is **not** a good argument in favour of democracy? Why?
 - a People feel free and equal in a democracy.
 - b Democracies resolve conflict in a better way than others.
 - c Democratic government is more accountable to the people.
 - d Democracies are more prosperous than others.

- 4 Each of these statements contains a democratic and an undemocratic element. Write out the two separately for each statement.
- a A minister said that some laws have to be passed by the parliament in order to conform to the regulations decided by the World Trade Organisation (WTO).
 - b The Election Commission ordered re-polling in a constituency where large-scale rigging was reported.
 - c Women's representation in the parliament has barely reached 10 per cent. This led women's organisations to demand one-third seats for women.
- 5 Which of these is **not** a valid reason for arguing that there is a lesser possibility of famine in a democratic country?
- a Opposition parties can draw attention to hunger and starvation.
 - b Free press can report suffering from famine in different parts of the country.
 - c Government fears its defeat in the next elections.
 - d People are free to believe in and practise any religion.
- 6 There are 40 villages in a district where the government has made no provision for drinking water. These villagers met and considered many methods of forcing the government to respond to their need. Which of these is **not** a democratic method?
- a Filing a case in the courts claiming that water is part of right to life.
 - b Boycotting the next elections to give a message to all parties.
 - c Organising public meetings against government's policies.
 - d Paying money to government officials to get water.
- 7 Write a response to the following arguments against democracy:
- a Army is the most disciplined and corruption-free organisation in the country. Therefore army should rule the country.
 - b Rule of the majority means the rule of ignorant people. What we need is the rule of the wise, even if they are in small numbers.
 - c If we want religious leaders to guide us in spiritual matters, why not invite them to guide us in politics as well. The country should be ruled by religious leaders.
- 8 Are the following statements in keeping with democracy as a value? Why?
- a Father to daughter: I don't want to hear your opinion about your marriage. In our family children marry where the parents tell them to.
 - b Teacher to student: Don't disturb my concentration by asking me questions in the classroom.
 - c Employee to the officer: Our working hours must be reduced according to the law.

exercises 9

- Consider the following facts about a country and decide if you would call it a democracy. Give reasons to support your decision.
- a All the citizens of the country have right to vote. Elections are held regularly.
 - b The country took loan from international agencies. One of the conditions for giving loan was that the government would reduce its expenses on education and health.
 - c People speak more than seven languages but education is available only in one language, the language spoken by 52 percent people of that country.
 - d Several organisations have given a call for peaceful demonstrations and nation wide strikes in the country to oppose these policies. Government has arrested these leaders.
 - e The government owns the radio and television in the country. All the newspapers have to get permission from the government to publish any news about government's policies and protests.
- 10 In 2004 a report published in USA pointed to the increasing inequalities in that country. Inequalities in income reflected in the participation of people in democracy. It also shaped their abilities to influence the decisions taken by the government. The report highlighted that:
- If an average Black family earns \$ 100 then the income of average White family is \$ 162. A White family has twelve times more wealth than the average Black family.
 - In a President's election nearly 9 out of 10 individuals in families with income over \$ 75,000 have voted. These people are the top 20% of the population in terms of their income. On the other hand only 5 people out of 10 from families with income less than \$ 15,000 have voted. They are the bottom 20% of the population in terms of their income.
 - About 95% contribution to the political parties comes from the rich. This gives them opportunity to express their opinions and concerns, which is not available to most citizens.
 - As poor sections participate less in politics, the government does not listen to their concerns – coming out of poverty, getting job, education, health care and housing for them. Politicians hear most regularly about the concerns of business persons and the rich.
- Write an essay on 'Democracy and Poverty' using the information given in this report but using examples from India.



Most newspapers have an editorial page. On that page the newspaper publishes its own opinions about current affairs. The paper also publishes the views of other writers and intellectuals and letters written by the readers. Follow any one newspaper for one month and collect editorials, articles and letters on that page that have anything to do with democracy. Classify these into the following categories:

- Constitutional and legal aspects of democracy
- Citizens' rights
- Electoral and party politics
- Criticism of democracy



CHAPTER 2

CONSTITUTIONAL DESIGN

OVERVIEW

We noted in the previous chapter that in a democracy the rulers are not free to do what they like. There are certain basic rules that the citizens and the government have to follow. All such rules together are called constitution. As the supreme law of the country, the constitution determines the rights of citizens, the powers of the government and how the government should function.

In this chapter we ask some basic questions about the constitutional design of a democracy. Why do we need a constitution? How are the constitutions drawn up? Who designs them and in what way? What are the values that shape the constitutions in democratic states? Once a constitution is accepted, can we make changes later as required by the changing conditions?

One recent instance of designing constitution for a democratic state is that of South Africa. We begin this chapter by looking at what happened there and how the South Africans went about this task of designing their constitution. Then we turn to how the Indian Constitution was made, what its foundational values are, and how it provides a good framework for the conduct of citizens' life and that of the government.



Nelson Mandela

2.1 DEMOCRATIC CONSTITUTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

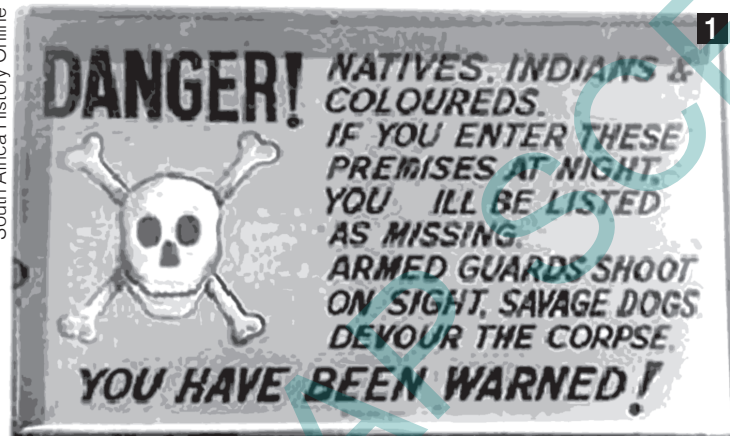
"I have fought against white domination and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

This was Nelson Mandela, being tried for **treason** by the white South African government. He and seven other leaders were sentenced to life imprisonment in 1964 for daring to oppose the **apartheid** regime in his country. He spent the next 28 years in South Africa's most dreaded prison, Robben Island.

apartheid divided the people and labelled them on the basis of their skin colour. The native people of South Africa are black in colour. They made up about three-fourth of the population and were called 'blacks'. Besides these two groups, there were people of mixed races who were called 'coloured' and people who migrated from India. The white rulers treated all non-whites as inferiors. The non-whites did not have voting rights.

The apartheid system was particularly oppressive for the blacks. They were forbidden from living in white areas. They could work in white areas only if they had a permit. Trains, buses, taxis, hotels, hospitals, schools and colleges, libraries, cinema halls, theatres, beaches, swimming pools, public

1
A signboard emblematic of the tense relations of the apartheid era, 1953.



South Africa History Online

Struggle against apartheid

Apartheid was the name of a system of racial discrimination unique to South Africa. The white Europeans imposed this system on South Africa. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the trading companies from Europe occupied it with arms and force, in the way they occupied India. But unlike India, a large number of 'whites' had settled in South Africa and became the local rulers. The system of

2
Sign on Durban beach in English, Afrikaans and Zulu
In English it reads: 'CITY OF DURBAN Under section 37 of the Durban beach by-laws, this bathing area is reserved for the sole use of members of the white race group'.



John Mullen, Wikipedia, GNU Free Documentation License

toilets, were all separate for the whites and blacks. This was called segregation. They could not even visit the churches where the whites worshipped. Blacks could not form associations or protest against the terrible treatment.

Since 1950, the blacks, coloured and Indians fought against the apartheid system. They launched protest marches and strikes. The African National Congress (ANC) was the umbrella organisation that led the struggle against the policies of segregation. This included many workers' unions and the Communist Party. Many sensitive whites also joined the ANC to oppose apartheid and played a leading role in this struggle. Several countries denounced apartheid as unjust and racist. But the white racist government continued to rule by detaining, torturing and killing thousands of black and coloured people.



A C T I V I T Y

- Make a poster on the life and struggle of Nelson Mandela.
- If available, read some portions of his autobiography, *The Long Walk to Freedom*, in the classroom.

Towards a new constitution

As protests and struggles against apartheid had increased, the government realised that they could no longer keep the blacks under their rule through repression. The white regime changed its policies. Discriminatory laws were repealed. Ban on political parties and restrictions on the media were lifted. After 28 years of imprisonment, Nelson Mandela walked out of the jail as a free man. Finally, at the midnight of 26 April

1994, the new national flag of the Republic of South Africa was unfurled marking the newly born democracy in the world. The apartheid government came to an end, paving way for the formation of a multi-racial government.

How did this come about? Let us hear Mandela, the first president of this new South Africa, on this extraordinary transition:

“Historical enemies succeeded in negotiating a peaceful transition from apartheid to democracy exactly because we were prepared to accept the inherent capacity for goodness in the other. My wish is that South Africans never give up on the belief in goodness, that they cherish that faith in human beings is the cornerstone of our democracy.”

After the emergence of the new democratic South Africa, black leaders appealed to fellow blacks to forgive the whites for the atrocities they had committed while in power. They said let us build a new South Africa based on equality of all races and men and women, on democratic values, social justice and human rights. The party that ruled through oppression and brutal killings and the party that led the freedom struggle sat together to draw up a common **constitution**.

After two years of discussion and debate they came out with one of the finest constitutions the world has ever had. This constitution gave to its citizens the most extensive rights available in any country. Together, they decided that in the search for a solution to the problems, nobody should be excluded, no one should be treated as a demon. They agreed that everybody should become part of the solution, whatever they might have done or represented in the past. The **preamble** to the South African Constitution (see page 212) sums up this spirit.



What would have happened in South Africa if the black majority had decided to take revenge on the whites for all their oppression and exploitation?



The South African constitution inspires democrats all over the world. A state denounced by the entire world till 1994 as the most undemocratic one is now seen as a model of democracy. What made this change possible was the determination of the people of South Africa to work together, to transform bitter experiences into the binding glue of a rainbow nation. Speaking on the South African Constitution, Mandela said:

“The Constitution of South Africa speaks of both the past and the future. On the one hand, it is a solemn pact in which we, as South Africans, declare to one another that we shall never permit a repetition of our racist, brutal and repressive past. But it is more than that. It is also a charter for the transformation of our country into one which is truly shared by all its people — a country which in the fullest sense belongs to all of us, black and white, women and men.”

Does the story of South African struggle for freedom
This image captures the spirit of South Africa today.
South Africans call themselves a 'rainbow nation'. Can
you guess why?

For more details about South Africa, visit <https://www.gov.za>



remind you of the Indian national movement? Make a list of similarities and dissimilarities between the two on the following points:

- Nature of colonialism
- Relationship between different communities
- Leadership: Gandhi/ Mandela
- Party that led the struggle: African National Congress/ Indian National Congress
- Method of struggle

2.2 WHY DO WE NEED A CONSTITUTION?

The South African example is a good way to understand why we need a constitution and what do constitutions do. The oppressor and the oppressed in this new democracy were planning to live together as equals. It was not going to be easy for them to trust each other. They had

their fears. They wanted to safeguard their interests. The black majority was keen to ensure that the democratic principle of majority rule was not compromised. They wanted substantial social and economic rights. The white minority was keen to protect its privileges and property.

After long negotiations both parties agreed to a compromise. The whites agreed to the principle of majority rule and that of one person one vote. They also agreed to accept some basic rights for the poor and the workers. The blacks agreed that majority rule would not be absolute. They agreed that the majority would not take away the property of the white minority. This compromise was not easy. How was this compromise going to be implemented? Even if they managed to trust each other, what was the guarantee that this trust will not be broken in future?

The only way to build and maintain trust in such a situation is to write down some rules of the game that everyone would abide by. These rules lay down how the rulers are to be chosen in future. These rules also determine what the elected governments are empowered to do and what they cannot do. Finally these rules decide the rights of the citizen. These rules will work only if the winner cannot change them very easily. This is what the South Africans did. They agreed on some basic rules. They also agreed that these rules will be supreme, that no government will be able to ignore these. This set of basic rules is called a constitution.

Constitution making is not unique to South Africa. Every country has diverse groups of people. Their relationship may not have been as bad as that between the whites and the blacks in South Africa. But all over the world people have differences of opinion and interests. Whether democratic or not, most countries in the world need to have these basic rules. This applies not just to governments. Any association needs to have its constitution. It could be a club in your area, a cooperative

society or a political party, they all need a constitution.



A C T I V I T Y

Approach a club or cooperative society or union or political party in your locality. Get a copy of their rule book (it is often called Rules of Association) and read it. Are these rules in accordance with principles of democracy? Do they give membership to any person without discrimination?

Thus, the constitution of a country is a set of written rules that are accepted by all people living together in a country. Constitution is the supreme law that determines the relationship among people living in a territory (called citizens) and also the relationship between the people and government. A constitution does many things:

- First, it generates a degree of trust and coordination that is necessary for different kind of people to live together;
- Second, it specifies how the government will be constituted, who will have power to take which decisions;
- Third, it lays down limits on the powers of the government and tells us what the rights of the citizens are; and
- Fourth, it expresses the aspirations of the people about creating a good society.

All countries that have constitutions are not necessarily democratic. But all countries that are democratic will have constitutions. After the War of Independence against Great Britain, the Americans gave themselves a constitution. After the Revolution, the French people approved a democratic constitution. Since then it has become a practice in all democracies to have a written constitution.



This is not fair! What was the point in having a Constituent Assembly in India if all the basics were already decided?



Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

(1875-1950) born: Gujarat. Minister of Home, Information and Broadcasting in the Interim Government. Lawyer and leader of Bardoli peasant satyagraha. Played a decisive role in the integration of the Indian princely states. Later: Deputy Prime Minister.

All sketches by Rajeev Kumar



Abul Kalam Azad

(1888-1958) born: Saudi Arabia. Educationist, author and theologian; scholar of Arabic. Congress leader, active in the national movement. Opposed Muslim separatist politics. Later: Education Minister in the first union cabinet.



T.T. Krishnamachari

(1899-1974) born: Tamil Nadu. Member, Drafting Committee. Entrepreneur and Congress leader. Later: Finance Minister in the Union Cabinet.

2.3 MAKING OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

Like South Africa, India's Constitution was also drawn up under very difficult circumstances. The making of the constitution for a huge and diverse country like India was not an easy affair. At that time the people of India were emerging from the status of subjects to that of citizens. The country was born through a partition on the basis of religious differences. This was a traumatic experience for the people of India and Pakistan.

At least ten lakh people were killed on both sides of the border in partition related violence. There was another problem. The British had left it to the rulers of the princely states to decide whether they wanted to merge with India or with Pakistan or remain independent. The merger of these princely states was a difficult and uncertain task. When the constitution was being written, the future of the country did not look as secure as it does today. The makers of the constitution had anxieties about the present and the future of the country.



ACTIVITY

Speak to your grandparents or some other elders in your locality. Ask them if they have any memory of partition or independence or the making of the constitution. What were their fears and hopes about the country at that time? Discuss these in the classroom.

The path to Constitution

Despite all these difficulties, there was one big advantage for the makers of the Indian Constitution. Unlike South Africa, they did not have to create a consensus about what a democratic India should

look like. Much of this consensus had evolved during the freedom struggle. Our national movement was not merely a struggle against a foreign rule. It was also a struggle to rejuvenate our country and to transform our society and politics. There were sharp differences of opinion within the freedom struggle about the path India should take after Independence. Such differences exist even today. Yet some basic ideas had come to be accepted by almost everyone.

As far back as in 1928, Motilal Nehru and eight other Congress leaders drafted a constitution for India. In 1931, the resolution at the **Karachi session** of the Indian National Congress dwelt on how independent India's constitution should look like. Both these documents were committed to the inclusion of universal adult franchise, right to freedom and equality and to protecting the rights of minorities in the constitution of independent India. Thus some basic values were accepted by all leaders much before the **Constituent Assembly** met to deliberate on the Constitution.

The familiarity with political institutions of colonial rule also helped develop an agreement over the institutional design. The British rule had given voting rights only to a few. On that basis the British had introduced very weak legislatures. Elections were held in 1937 to Provincial Legislatures and Ministries all over British India. These were not fully democratic governments. But the experience gained by Indians in the working of the legislative institutions proved to be very useful for the country in setting up its own institutions and

working in them. That is why the Indian constitution adopted many institutional details and procedures from colonial laws like the Government of India Act, 1935.

Years of thinking and deliberation on the framework of the constitution had another benefit. Our leaders gained confidence to learn from other countries, but on our own terms. Many of our leaders were inspired by the ideals of French Revolution, the practice of parliamentary democracy in Britain and the Bill of Rights in the US. The socialist revolution in Russia had inspired many Indians to think of shaping a system based on social and economic equality. Yet they were not simply imitating what others had done. At each step they were questioning whether these things suited our country. All these factors contributed to the making of our Constitution.

The Constituent Assembly

Who, then, were the makers of the Indian Constitution? You will find here very brief sketch of some of the leaders who played an important role in making the Constitution.



ACTIVITY

Find out more about any member of the Constituent Assembly from your state or region who is not mentioned here. Collect a photograph or make a sketch of that leader. Write a short note on him or her, following the same style as used here: Name (year of birth-year of death), place of birth (by current political boundaries), brief description of political activities; role played after the Constituent Assembly.

The drafting of the document called the constitution was done by an assembly of elected representatives

called the Constituent Assembly. Elections to the Constituent Assembly were held in July 1946. Its first meeting was held in December 1946. Soon after, the country was divided into India and Pakistan. The Constituent Assembly was also divided into the Constituent Assembly of India and that of Pakistan. The Constituent Assembly that wrote the Indian constitution had 299 members. The Assembly adopted the Constitution on 26 November 1949 but it came into effect on 26 January 1950. To mark this day we celebrate January 26 as Republic Day every year.

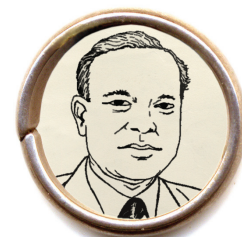
Why should we accept the Constitution made by this Assembly more than six decades ago? We have already noted one reason above. The Constitution does not reflect the views of its members alone. It expresses a broad consensus of its time. Many countries of the world have had to rewrite their Constitution afresh because the basic rules were not acceptable to all major social groups or political parties. In some other countries, the Constitution exists as a mere piece of paper. No one actually follows it. The experience of our Constitution is different. Over the last half a century, several groups have questioned some provisions of the Constitution. But no large social group or political party has ever questioned the legitimacy of the Constitution itself. This is an unusual achievement for any constitution.

The second reason for accepting the Constitution is that the Constituent Assembly represented the people of India. There was no universal adult franchise at that time. So the Constituent Assembly could not have been chosen directly by all the people of India. It was



Rajendra Prasad

(1884-1963) born: Bihar. President of the Constituent Assembly. Lawyer, known for his role in the Champaran satyagraha. Three times the president of Congress. Later: the first President of India.



Jaipal Singh

(1903-1970) born: Jharkhand. A sportsman and educationist. Captain of the first national Hockey team. Founder President of Adivasi Maha Sabha. Later: founder of Jharkhand Party.



H. C. Mookherjee

(1887-1956) born: Bengal. Vice-Chairman of the Constituent Assembly. Reputed author and educationist. Congress leader. Member of All India Christian Council and Bengal Legislative Assembly. Later: Governor of West Bengal.



**G. Durgabai
Deshmukh**

(1909-1981)

born: Andhra Pradesh.
Advocate and public activist
for women's emancipation.
Founder of Andhra Mahila
Sabha. Congress leader.
Later: Founder Chairperson
of Central Social Welfare
Board.

elected mainly by the members of the existing Provincial Legislatures that we mentioned above. This ensured a fair geographical share of members from all the regions of the country. The Assembly was dominated by the Indian National Congress, the party that led India's freedom struggle. But the Congress itself included a variety of political groups and opinions. The Assembly had many members who did not agree with the Congress. In social terms too, the Assembly represented members from different language groups, castes, classes, religions and occupations. Even if the Constituent Assembly was elected by universal adult franchise, its composition would not have been very different.

Finally, the manner in which the Constituent Assembly worked gives sanctity to the Constitution. The

Constituent Assembly worked in a systematic, open and consensual manner. First some basic principles were decided and agreed upon. Then a Drafting Committee chaired by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar prepared a **draft** constitution for discussion. Several rounds of thorough discussion took place on the Draft Constitution, **clause** by clause. More than two thousand amendments were considered. The members deliberated for 114 days spread over three years. Every document presented and every word spoken in the Constituent Assembly has been recorded and preserved. These are called 'Constituent Assembly Debates'. When printed, these debates are 12 bulky volumes! These debates provide the rationale behind every provision of the Constitution. These are used to interpret the meaning of the Constitution.



Read the information about all the makers of the Indian Constitution given in the side columns here. You don't need to memorise this information. Just give examples from these to support the following statements:

1. The Assembly had many members who were not with the Congress
2. The Assembly represented members from different social groups
3. Members of the Assembly believed in different ideologies



Baldev Singh
(1901-1961)

born: Haryana.
A successful entrepreneur
and leader of the Panthic
Akali Party in the Punjab
Assembly. A nominee of
the Congress in the
Constituent Assembly.
Later: Defence Minister in
the Union Cabinet.

2.4 GUIDING VALUES OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

In this book we shall study the exact provisions of the Constitution on different subjects. At this stage let us begin by understanding the overall **philosophy** of what our Constitution is all about. We can do this in two ways. We can understand it by reading the views of some of our major leaders on our Constitution. But it is equally important to read what the Constitution says about its own philosophy. This is what the preamble to the Constitution does.

Let us turn to these, one by one.

The Dream and the Promise

Some of you may have noticed a name missing from the sketches of the makers of the constitution: Mahatma Gandhi. He was not a member of the Constituent Assembly. Yet there were many members who followed his vision. Years ago, writing in his magazine *Young India* in 1931, he had spelt out what he wanted the Constitution to do:

I shall strive for a constitution which will release India from all thralldom and patronage ... I shall work for an India in which the poorest shall feel that it is their country in whose making they have an effective voice; an India in which there shall be no high class and low class of people; an India in which all communities shall live in perfect harmony. There can be no room in such an India for the curse of untouchability or the curse of the intoxicating drinks and drugs. Women will enjoy the same rights as men ... I shall be satisfied with nothing else.



This dream of an India that has eliminated inequality was shared by Dr. Ambedkar, who played a key role in the making of the Constitution but he had a different understanding of

how inequalities could be removed. He often bitterly criticised Mahatma Gandhi and his vision. In his concluding speech to the Constituent Assembly he stated his anxiety very clearly:

On the 26th of January 1950 we are going to enter a life of contradictions. In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality. In politics we will be recognising the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value. In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value. How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril.

Finally let us turn to Jawaharlal Nehru giving his famous speech to the

Constituent Assembly at the stroke of midnight on 15 August 1947:



Kanhaiyalal Maniklal Munshi

(1887-1971) born: Gujarat. Advocate, historian and linguist. Congress leader and Gandhian. Later: Minister in the Union Cabinet. Founder of the Swatantra Party.



Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar

(1891-1956) born: Madhya Pradesh. Chairman of the Drafting Committee. Social revolutionary thinker and agitator against caste divisions and caste based inequalities. Later: Law minister in the first cabinet of post-independence India. Founder of Republican Party of India.



Shyama Prasad Mukherjee

(1901-1953) born: West Bengal. Minister for Industry and Supply in the Interim Government. Educationist and lawyer. Active in Hindu Mahasabha. Later: Founder President of Bharatiya Jansangh.



Jawaharlal Nehru
(1889-1964) born: Uttar Pradesh. Prime Minister of the interim government. Lawyer and Congress leader. Advocate of socialism, democracy and anti-imperialism. Later: First Prime Minister of India.



Sarojini Naidu
(1879-1949)
born: Andhra Pradesh. Poet, writer and political activist. Among the foremost women leaders in the Congress. Later: Governor of Uttar Pradesh.



Somnath Lahiri
(1901-1984) born: West Bengal. Writer and editor. Leader of the Communist Party of India. Later: Member of West Bengal Legislative Assembly.



Long years ago we made a **tryst with destiny**, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes, which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity ...

Freedom and power bring responsibility. The responsibility rests upon this Assembly, a sovereign body representing the sovereign people of India. Before the birth of freedom we have endured all the pains of labour and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow. Some of those pains continue even now. Nevertheless, the past is over and it is the future that beckons to us now.

That future is not one of ease or resting but of incessant striving so that we may fulfil the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.

Read the three quotations above carefully.

- Can you identify one idea that is common to all these three?
- What are the differences in their ways of expressing that common idea?

Philosophy of the Constitution

Values that inspired and guided the freedom struggle and were in turn nurtured by it, formed the foundation for India's democracy. These values are embedded in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution. They guide all the

articles of the Indian Constitution. The Constitution begins with a short statement of its basic values. This is called the Preamble to the constitution. Taking inspiration from American model, most countries in the contemporary world have chosen to begin their constitutions with a preamble.

We the People of the United States,

in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

We, the people of South Africa,

Recognise the injustices of our past;

Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land;

Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and

Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.

We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to —

Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;

Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law;

Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person; and

Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

May God protect our people.

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika. Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso.

God seën Suid-Afrika. God bless South Africa.

Aludzimu thutshedza Afrika. Hosi katekisa Afrika.

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA

The constitution has been drawn up and enacted by the people through their representatives, and not handed down to them by a king or any outside powers.

SOVEREIGN

People have supreme right to make decisions on internal as well as external matters. No external power can dictate the government of India.

SOCIALIST

Wealth is generated socially and should be shared equally by society. Government should regulate the ownership of land and industry to reduce socio-economic inequalities.

SECULAR

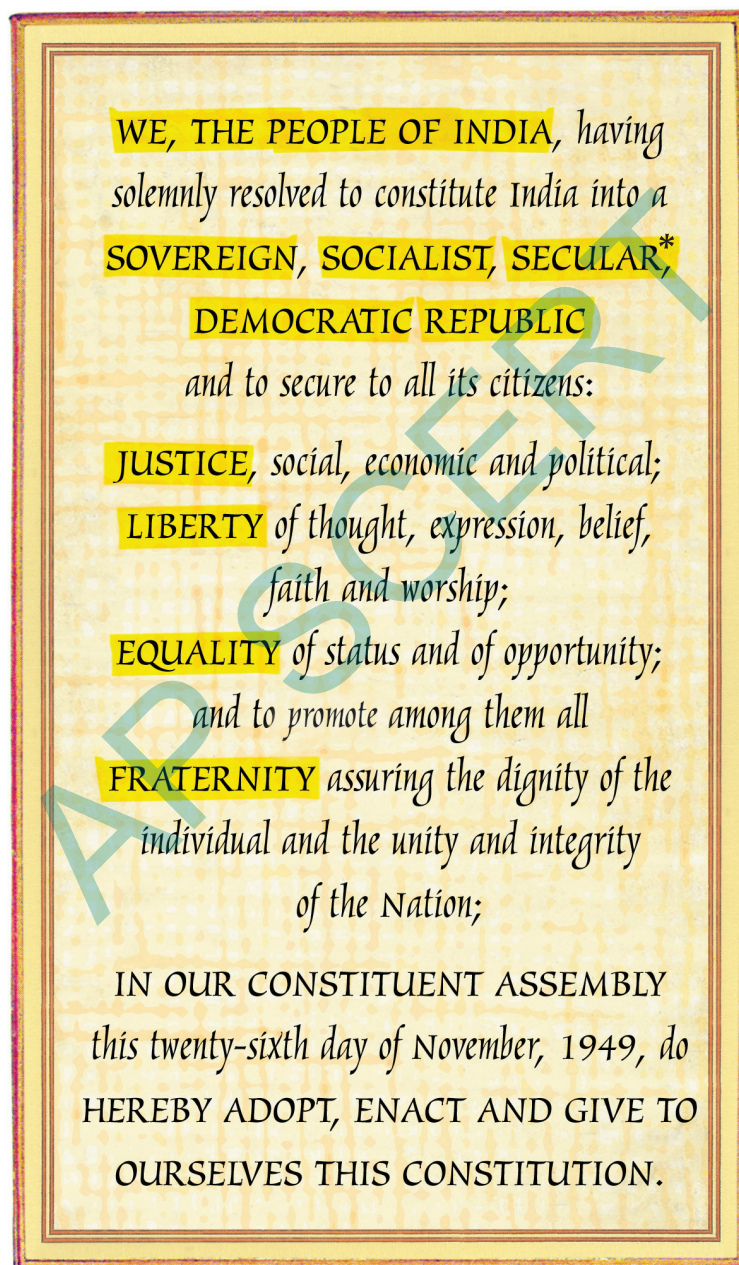
Citizens have complete freedom to follow any religion. But there is no official religion. Government treats all religious beliefs and practices with equal respect.

DEMOCRATIC

A form of government where people enjoy equal political rights, elect their rulers and hold them accountable. The government is run according to some basic rules.

Let us read the Preamble of our Constitution very carefully and understand the meaning of each of its key words.

The Preamble of the Constitution reads like a poem on democracy. It contains the philosophy on which the entire Constitution has been built. It provides a standard to examine and evaluate any law and action of government, to find out whether it is good or bad. It is the soul of the Indian Constitution.



Note: *The terms 'Socialist' and 'Secular' were added in Preamble through the 42nd Constitutional Amendment in 1976.

REPUBLIC

The head of the state is an elected person and not a hereditary position.

JUSTICE

Citizens cannot be discriminated on the grounds of caste, religion and gender. Social inequalities have to be reduced. Government should work for the welfare of all, especially of the disadvantaged groups.

LIBERTY

There are no unreasonable restrictions on the citizens in what they think, how they wish to express their thoughts and the way they wish to follow up their thoughts in action.

EQUALITY

All are equal before the law. The traditional social inequalities have to be ended. The government should ensure equal opportunity for all.

FRATERNITY

All of us should behave as if we are members of the same family. No one should treat a fellow citizen as inferior.

Compare the Preambles to the constitutions of the United States of America, India and South Africa.

- Make a list of ideas that are common to all these three.
- Note down at least one of the major differences among these.
- Which of the three makes a reference to the past?
- Which of these does not invoke God?



Institutional design

A constitution is not merely a statement of values and philosophy. As we noted above, a constitution is mainly about embodying these values into institutional arrangements. Much of the document called Constitution of India is about these arrangements. It is a very long and detailed document. Therefore it needs to be amended quite regularly to keep it updated. Those who crafted the Indian Constitution felt that it has to be in accordance with people's aspirations and changes in society. They did not see it as a sacred, static and unalterable law. So, they made provisions to incorporate changes from time to time. These changes are called constitutional amendments.

The Constitution describes the institutional arrangements in a very legal language. If you read the Constitution for the first time, it can

be quite difficult to understand. Yet the basic institutional design is not very difficult to understand. Like any Constitution, the Indian Constitution lays down a procedure for choosing persons to govern the country. It defines who will have how much power to take which decisions. And it puts limits to what the government can do by providing some rights to the citizen that cannot be violated. The remaining three chapters in this book are about these three aspects of the working of Indian constitution. We shall look at some key constitutional provisions in each chapter and understand how they work in democratic politics. But this textbook will not cover all the salient features of the institutional design in the Indian Constitution. Some other aspects will be covered in your textbook next year.

Apartheid: The official policy of racial separation and ill treatment of blacks followed by the government of South Africa between 1948 and 1989.

Clause: A distinct section of a document.

Constituent Assembly: An assembly of people's representatives that writes a constitution for a country.

Constitution: Supreme law of a country, containing fundamental rules governing the politics and society in a country.

Constitutional amendment: A change in the constitution made by the supreme legislative body in a country.

Draft: A preliminary version of a legal document.

Philosophy: The most fundamental principles underlying one's thoughts and actions.

Preamble: An introductory statement in a constitution which states the reasons and guiding values of the constitution.

Treason: The offence of attempting to overthrow the government of the state to which the offender owes allegiance.

Tryst: A meeting or meeting place that has been agreed upon.



- 1 Here are some false statements. Identify the mistake in each case and rewrite these correctly based on what you have read in this chapter.
 - a Leaders of the freedom movement had an open mind about whether the country should be democratic or not after independence.
 - b Members of the Constituent Assembly of India held the same views on all provisions of the Constitution.
 - c A country that has a constitution must be a democracy.
 - d Constitution cannot be amended because it is the supreme law of a country.

- 2 Which of these was the most salient underlying conflict in the making of a democratic constitution in South Africa?
 - a Between South Africa and its neighbours
 - b Between men and women
 - c Between the white majority and the black minority
 - d Between the coloured minority and the black majority

- 3 Which of these is a provision that a democratic constitution does not have?
 - a Powers of the head of the state
 - b Name of the head of the state
 - c Powers of the legislature
 - d Name of the country

- 4 Match the following leaders with their roles in the making of the Constitution:

a Motilal Nehru	i President of the Constituent Assembly
b B.R. Ambedkar	ii Member of the Constituent Assembly
c Rajendra Prasad	iii Chairman of the Drafting Committee
d Sarojini Naidu	iv Prepared a Constitution for India in 1928

- 5 Read again the extracts from Nehru's speech 'Tryst with Destiny' and answer the following:
 - a Why did Nehru use the expression "not wholly or in full measure" in the first sentence?
 - b What pledge did he want the makers of the Indian Constitution to take?
 - c "*The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye*". Who was he referring to?

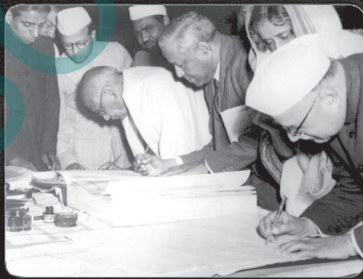
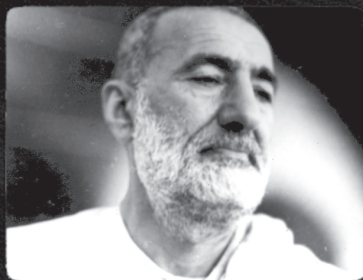
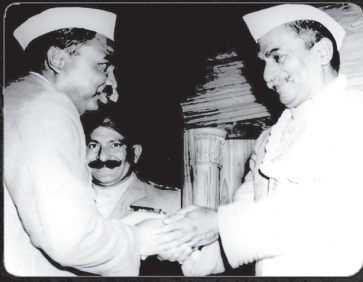
- 6 Here are some of the guiding values of the Constitution and their meaning. Rewrite them by matching them correctly.

a Sovereign	i Government will not favour any religion.
b Republic	ii People have the supreme right to make decisions.
c Fraternity	iii Head of the state is an elected person.
d Secular	iv People should live like brothers and sisters.

- 7 How did your school celebrate the Constitution Day on November 26th? Prepare a brief report.
- 8 Here are different opinions about what made India a democracy. How much importance would you give to each of these factors?
 - a Democracy in India is a gift of the British rulers. We received training to work with representative legislative institutions under the British rule.
 - b Freedom Struggle challenged the colonial exploitation and denial of different freedoms to Indians. Free India could not be anything but democratic.
 - c We were lucky to have leaders who had democratic convictions. The denial of democracy in several other newly independent countries shows the important role of these leaders.
- 9 Read the following extract from a conduct book for 'married women', published in 1912. *'God has made the female species delicate and fragile both physically and emotionally, pitiably incapable of self-defence. They are destined thus by God to remain in male protection – of father, husband and son – all their lives. Women should, therefore, not despair, but feel obliged that they can dedicate themselves to the service of men'*. Do you think the values expressed in this para reflected the values underlying our constitution? Or does this go against the constitutional values?
- 10 Read the following statements about a constitution. Give reasons why each of these is true or not true.
 - a The authority of the rules of the constitution is the same as that of any other law.
 - b Constitution lays down how different organs of the government will be formed.
 - c Rights of citizens and limits on the power of the government are laid down in the constitution.
 - d A constitution is about institutions, not about values

Follow the newspapers for any report on a discussion on any constitutional amendment or demand for any constitutional amendment. You could, for example, focus on the demand for constitutional amendment for reservation for women in legislatures. Was there a public debate? What reasons were put forward in favour of the amendment? How did different parties react to the constitutional amendment? Did the amendment take place?





Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi



CHAPTER 3

Electoral Politics

OVERVIEW

In Chapter 1 we have seen that in a democracy it is neither possible nor necessary for people to govern directly. The most common form of democracy in our times is for the people to govern through their representatives. In this chapter we will look at how these representatives are elected. We begin by understanding why elections are necessary and useful in a democracy. We try to understand how electoral competition among parties serves the people. We then go on to ask what makes an election democratic. The basic idea here is to distinguish democratic elections from non-democratic elections.

The rest of the chapter tries to assess elections in India in the light of this yardstick. We take a look at each stage of elections, from the drawing of boundaries of different constituencies to the declaration of results. At each stage we ask what should happen and what does happen in elections. Towards the end of the chapter, we turn to an assessment of whether elections in India are free and fair. Here we also examine the role of the Election Commission in ensuring free and fair elections.



Do most leaders
fulfil their election
promises?

3.1 WHY ELECTIONS?

Assembly Election in Haryana

The time is after midnight. An expectant crowd sitting for the past five hours in a chowk of the town is waiting for its leader to come. The organisers assure and reassure the crowd that he would be here any moment. The crowd stands up whenever a passing vehicle comes that way. It arouses hopes that he has come.

The leader is Mr. Devi Lal, chief of the Haryana Sangharsh Samiti, who was to address a meeting in Karnal on Thursday night. The 76-year-old leader, is a very busy man these days. His day starts at 8 a.m. and ends after 11 p.m. ... he had already addressed nine election meetings since morning... been constantly addressing public meetings for the past 23 months and preparing for this election.

This newspaper report is about the State assembly election in Haryana in 1987. The State had been ruled by a Congress party led government since 1982. Chaudhary Devi Lal, then an opposition leader, led a movement called 'Nyaya Yudh' (Struggle for Justice) and formed a new party, Lok Dal. His party joined other opposition parties to form a front against the Congress in the elections. In the election campaign, Devi Lal said that if his party won the elections, his government would

waive the loans of farmers and small businessmen. He promised that this would be the first action of his government.

The people were unhappy with the existing government. They were also attracted by Devi Lal's promise. So, when elections were held, they voted overwhelmingly in favour of Lok Dal and its allies. Lok Dal and its partners won 76 out of 90 seats in the State Assembly. Lok Dal alone won 60 seats and thus had a clear majority in the Assembly. The Congress could win only 5 seats.

Once the election results were announced, the sitting Chief Minister resigned. The newly elected Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) of Lok Dal chose Devi Lal as their leader. The Governor invited Devi Lal to be the new Chief Minister. Three days after the election results were declared, he became the Chief Minister. As soon as he became the Chief Minister, his Government issued a Government Order waiving the outstanding loans of small farmers, agricultural labourers and small businessmen. His party ruled the State for four years. The next elections were held in 1991. But this time his party did not win popular support. The Congress won the election and formed the government.

Jagdeep and Navpreet read this story and drew the following conclusions. Can you say which of these are right or wrong (or if the information given in the story is inadequate to call them right or wrong):

- Elections can lead to changes in the policy of the government.
- The Governor invited Devi Lal to become the Chief Minister because he was impressed with his speeches.
- People are unhappy with every ruling party and vote against it in the next election.
- The party that wins the election forms the government.
- This election led to a lot of economic development in Haryana.
- The Congress Chief Minister need not have resigned after his party lost elections.





ACTIVITY

Do you know when the last Assembly election was held in your state? Which other elections have taken place in your locality in the last five years? Write down the level of elections (National, Assembly, Panchayat, etc.), when were they held and the name and designation (MP, MLA, etc.) of the persons who got elected from your area.

Why do we need elections?

Elections take place regularly in any democracy. There are more than one hundred countries in the world in which elections take place to choose people's representatives. We also read that elections are held in many countries that are not democratic.

But why do we need elections? Let us try to imagine a democracy without elections. A rule of the people is possible without any elections if all the people can sit together everyday and take all the decisions. But as we have already seen in Chapter 1, this is not possible in any large community. Nor is it possible for everyone to have the time and knowledge to take decisions on all matters. Therefore in most democracies people rule through their representatives.

Is there a democratic way of selecting representatives without elections? Let us think of a place where representatives are selected on the basis of age and experience. Or a place where they are chosen on the basis of education or knowledge. There could be some difficulty in deciding on who is more experienced or knowledgeable. But let us say the people can resolve these difficulties. Clearly, such a place does not require elections.

But can we call this place a democracy? How do we find out if the people like their representatives or not? How do we ensure that these representatives rule as per the wishes of the people? How to make sure that those who the people don't like do not remain their representatives? This requires a mechanism by which people can choose their representatives at regular intervals and change them if they wish to do so. This mechanism is called election. Therefore, elections are considered essential in our times for any representative democracy.

In an election the voters make many choices:

- They can choose who will make laws for them.
- They can choose who will form the government and take major decisions.
- They can choose the party whose policies will guide the government and law making.

What makes an election democratic?

Elections can be held in many ways. All democratic countries hold elections. But most non-democratic countries also hold some kind of elections. How do we distinguish democratic elections from any other election? We have discussed this question briefly in Chapter 1. We discussed many examples of countries where elections are held but they can't really be called democratic elections. Let us recall what we learnt there and start with a simple list of the minimum conditions of a democratic election:

- First, everyone should be able to choose. This means that everyone should have one vote and every vote should have equal value.



We have seen why democracies need to have elections. But why do rulers in non-democratic countries need to hold elections?

- Second, there should be something to choose from. Parties and candidates should be free to contest elections and should offer some real choice to the voters.
- Third, the choice should be offered at regular intervals. Elections must be held regularly after every few years.
- Fourth, the candidate preferred by the people should get elected.
- Fifth, elections should be conducted in a free and fair manner where people can choose as they really wish.

These might look like very simple and easy conditions. But there are many countries where these are not fulfilled. In this chapter we will apply these conditions to the elections held in our own country to see if we can call these democratic elections.

Is it good to have political competition?

Elections are thus all about political competition. This competition takes various forms. The most obvious form is the competition among political parties. At the **constituency** level, it takes the form of competition among several candidates. If there is no competition, elections will become pointless.

But is it good to have political competition? Clearly, an electoral competition has many demerits. It creates a sense of disunity and 'factionalism' in every locality. You would have heard of people complaining of 'party-politics' in your locality. Different political parties and leaders often level allegations against one another. Parties and candidates often use dirty tricks to win elections. Some people say that this pressure to win electoral fights does not allow sensible long-term policies to be formulated. Some good

people who may wish to serve the country do not enter this arena. They do not like the idea of being dragged into unhealthy competition.

Our Constitution makers were aware of these problems. Yet they opted for free competition in elections as the way to select our future leaders. They did so because this system works better in the long run. In an ideal world all political leaders know what is good for the people and are motivated only by a desire to serve them. Political competition is not necessary in such an ideal world. But that is not what happens in real life. Political leaders all over the world, like all other professionals, are motivated by a desire to advance their political careers. They want to remain in power or get power and positions for themselves. They may wish to serve the people as well, but it is risky to depend entirely on their sense of duty. Besides even when they wish to serve the people, they may not know what is required to do so, or their ideas may not match what the people really want.

How do we deal with this real life situation? One way is to try and improve the knowledge and character of political leaders. The other and more realistic way is to set up a system where political leaders are rewarded for serving the people and punished for not doing so. Who decides this reward or punishment? The simple answer is: the people. This is what electoral competition does. Regular electoral competition provides incentives to political parties and leaders. They know that if they raise issues that people want to be raised, their popularity and chances of victory will increase in the next elections. But if they fail to satisfy the voters with their work they will not be able to win again.



Ah! So, elections are like exams where politicians and parties know if they have passed or failed. But who are the examiners?

So if a political party is motivated only by desire to be in power, even then it will be forced to serve the people. This is a bit like the way market works. Even if a shopkeeper is interested only in his profit, he is forced to give good service to the

customers. If he does not, the customer will go to some other shop. Similarly, political competition may cause divisions and some ugliness, but it finally helps to force political parties and leaders to serve the people.

read
the
cartoon



Read these two cartoons carefully. Write the message of each of them in your own words. Have a discussion in class on which of the two is closer to the reality in your own locality. Draw a cartoon to depict what elections do to the relationship between voters and political leaders.

3.2 WHAT IS OUR SYSTEM OF ELECTIONS?

Can we say that Indian elections are democratic? To answer this question, let us take a look at how elections are held in India. Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha (Assembly) elections are held regularly after every five years. After five years **the term** of all the elected representatives comes to an end. The Lok Sabha or Vidhan Sabha stands 'dissolved'. Elections are held in all constituencies at the same time, either on the same day or within a few days. This is called a general election. Sometimes election is held only for one constituency to fill the vacancy caused by death or resignation of a

member. This is called a by-election. In this chapter we will focus on general elections.

Electoral constituencies

You read about the people of Haryana electing 90 MLAs. You may have wondered how they did that. Did every person in Haryana vote for all the 90 MLAs? You perhaps know that this is not the case. In our country we follow an area based system of representation. The country is divided into different areas for purposes of elections. These areas are called electoral constituencies. The voters who live

in an area elect one representative. For Lok Sabha elections, the country is divided into 543 constituencies. The representative elected from each constituency is called a Member of Parliament or an MP. One of the features of a democratic election is that every vote should have equal value. That is why our Constitution requires that each constituency should have a roughly equal population living within it.

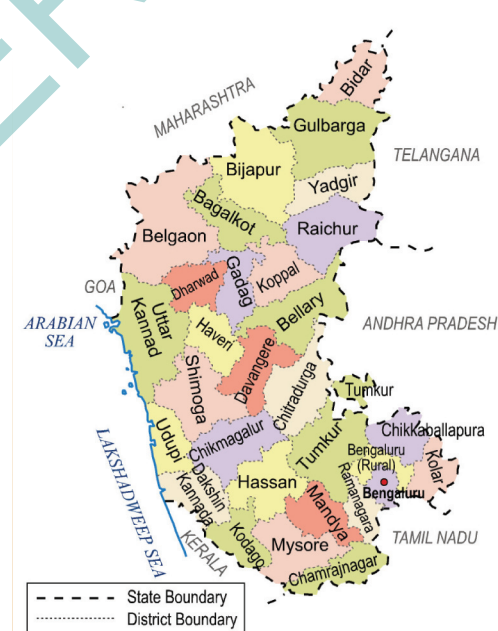
Similarly, each state is divided into a specific number of Assembly constituencies. In this case, the elected representative is called the Member of Legislative Assembly or

an MLA. Each Parliamentary constituency has within it several assembly constituencies. The same principle applies for Panchayat and Municipal elections. Each village or town is divided into several 'wards' that are like constituencies. Each ward elects one member of the village or the urban local body. Sometimes these constituencies are counted as 'seats', for each constituency represents one seat in the assembly. When we say that 'Lok Dal won 60 seats' in Haryana, it means that candidates of Lok Dal won in 60 assembly constituencies in the state and thus Lok Dal had 60 MLAs in the state assembly.

GULBARGA LOK SABHA CONSTITUENCY



GULBARGA (KALABURAGI) DISTRICT IN KARNATAKA



- Why is the boundary of the Gulbarga Lok Sabha constituency not the same as the district boundary of Gulbarga (Kalaburagi)? Draw a similar map for your own Lok Sabha constituency.
- How many Assembly constituencies are there in the Gulbarga Lok Sabha constituency? Is it the same in your own Lok Sabha constituency?

Reserved Constituencies

Our Constitution entitles every citizen to elect her/his representative and to be elected as a representative. The Constitution makers, however, were worried that in an open electoral competition, certain weaker sections may not stand a good chance to get elected to the Lok Sabha and the state Legislative Assemblies. They may not have the required resources, education and contacts to contest and win elections against others. Those who are influential and resourceful may prevent them from winning elections. If that happens, our Parliament and Assemblies would be deprived of the voice of a significant section of our population. That would make our democracy less representative and less democratic.

So, the makers of our Constitution thought of a special system of reserved constituencies for the weaker sections. Some constituencies are reserved for people who belong to the Scheduled Castes [SC] and Scheduled Tribes [ST]. In a SC reserved constituency only some one who belongs to the Scheduled Castes can stand for election. Similarly only those belonging to the Scheduled Tribes can contest an election from a constituency reserved for ST. Currently, in the Lok Sabha, 84 seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes and 47 for the Scheduled Tribes (as on 26 January 2019). This number is in proportion to their share in the total population. Thus the reserved seats for SC and ST do not take away the legitimate share of any other social group.

This system of reservation was extended later to other weaker sections at the district and local level. In many states, seats in rural (panchayat) and urban (municipalities and corporations)

local bodies are now reserved for Other Backward Classes (OBC) as well. However, the proportion of seats reserved varies from state to state. Similarly, one-third of the seats are reserved in rural and urban local bodies for women candidates.

Voters' list

Once the constituencies are decided, the next step is to decide who can and who cannot vote. This decision cannot be left to anyone till the last day. In a democratic election, the list of those who are eligible to vote is prepared much before the election and given to everyone. This list is officially called the Electoral Roll and is commonly known as the Voters' List.

This is an important step for it is linked to the first condition of a democratic election: everyone should get an equal opportunity to choose representatives. Earlier, we read about the principle of universal adult franchise. In practice it means that everyone should have one vote and each vote should have equal value. No one should be denied the right to vote without a good reason. Different citizens differ from one another in many ways: some are rich, some are poor; some are highly educated, some are not so educated or not educated at all; some are kind, others are not so kind. But all of them are human beings with their own needs and views. That is why all of them deserve to have an equal say in decisions that affect them.

In our country, all the citizens aged 18 years and above can vote in an election. Every citizen has the right to vote, regardless of his or her caste, religion or gender. Some criminals and persons with unsound mind can



Do you know, like in Panchayats, one-third of the seats in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies have also been reserved for women as per Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 (Women's Reservation Act 2023)

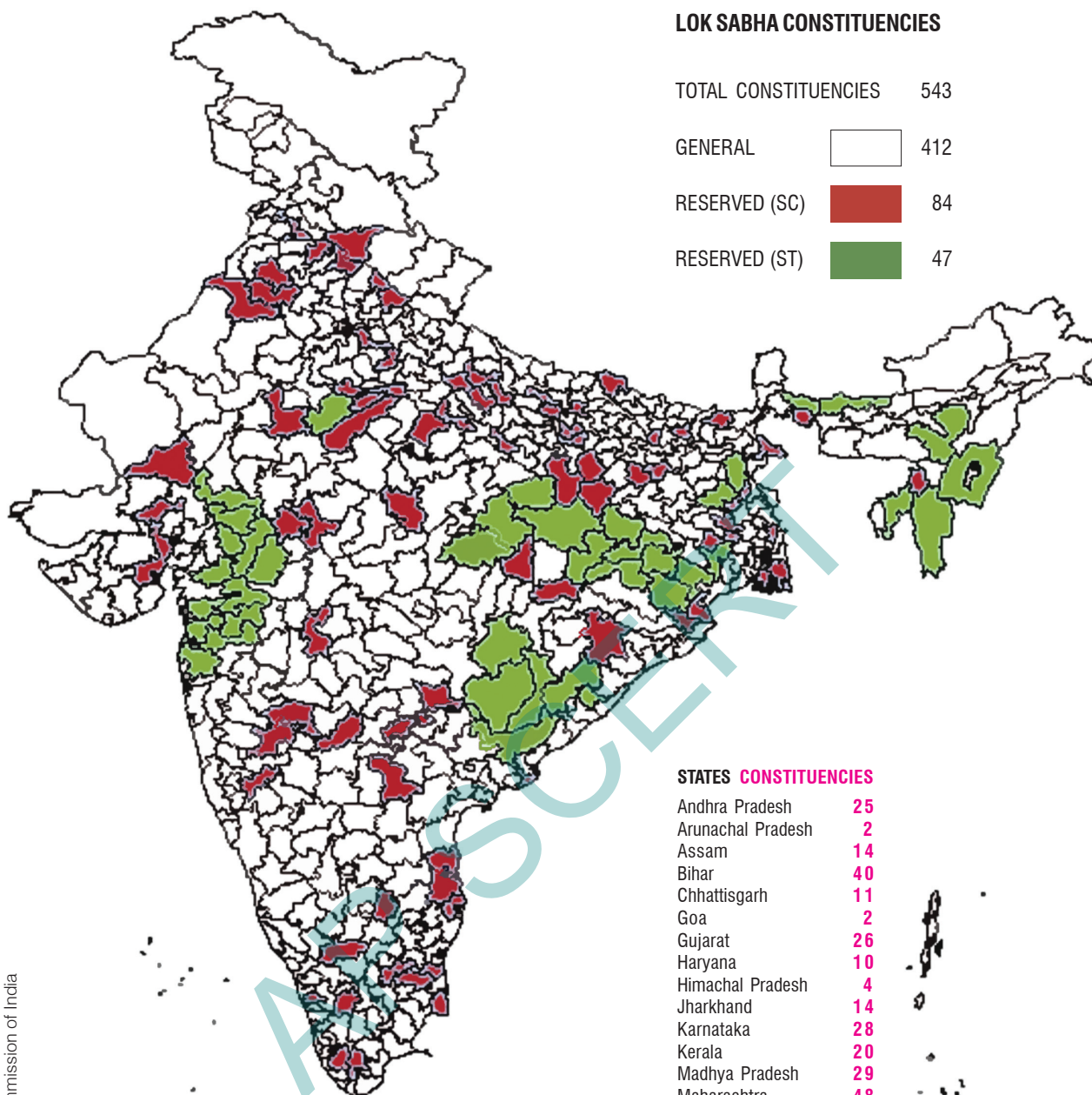
LOK SABHA CONSTITUENCIES

TOTAL CONSTITUENCIES 543

GENERAL 412

RESERVED (SC) 84

RESERVED (ST) 47



STATES CONSTITUENCIES

Andhra Pradesh	25
Arunachal Pradesh	2
Assam	14
Bihar	40
Chhattisgarh	11
Goa	2
Gujarat	26
Haryana	10
Himachal Pradesh	4
Jharkhand	14
Karnataka	28
Kerala	20
Madhya Pradesh	29
Maharashtra	48
Manipur	2
Meghalaya	2
Mizoram	1
Nagaland	1
Odisha	21
Punjab	13
Rajasthan	25
Sikkim	1
Tamil Nadu	39
Telangana	17
Tripura	2
Uttar Pradesh	80
Uttarakhand	5
West Bengal	42
UNION TERRITORIES	
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	1
Chandigarh	1
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	1
Daman & Diu	1
Delhi	7
Jammu and Kashmir	5
Ladakh	1
Lakshadweep	1
Puducherry	1

See the map above and answer the following questions.

- What is the number of Lok Sabha constituencies in your state and the neighbouring two states?
- Which states have more than 30 Lok Sabha constituencies?
- Why do some states have such a large number of constituencies?
- Why are some constituencies small in area while others are very big?
- Are the constituencies reserved for the SCs and STs evenly spread all over the entire country or are there more in some areas?

be denied the right to vote, but only in rare situations. It is the responsibility of the government to get the names of all the eligible voters put on the voters' list. As new persons attain voting age names are added to the voters' list. Names of those who move out of a place or those who are dead are deleted. A complete revision of the list takes place every five years. This is done to ensure that it remains up to date. In the last few years a new system of Election Photo Identity Card [EPIC] has been introduced. The government has tried to give this card to every person on the voters list. The voters are required to carry this card when they go out to vote, so that no one can vote for someone else. But the card is not yet compulsory for voting. For voting, the voters can show many other proofs of identity like the ration card or the driving licence.

Nomination of candidates

We noted above that in a democratic election people should have a real choice. This happens only when there are almost no restrictions on anyone to contest an election. This is what our system provides. Anyone who can be a voter can also become a candidate in elections. The only difference is that in order to be a candidate the minimum age is 25 years, while it is only 18 years for being a voter. There are some other restrictions on criminals etc. but these apply in very extreme cases. Political parties nominate their candidates who get the party symbol and support. Party's nomination is often called **party 'ticket'**.

Every person who wishes to contest an election has to fill a 'nomination form' and give some money as 'security deposit'.

Recently, a new system of declaration has been introduced on direction from the Supreme Court. Every candidate has to make a legal declaration, giving full details of :

- Serious criminal cases pending against the candidate;
- Details of the assets and liabilities of the candidate and his or her family; and
- Educational qualifications of the candidate.

This information has to be made public. This provides an opportunity to the voters to make their decision on the basis of the information provided by the candidates.

Educational qualifications for candidates

Why is there no educational qualification for holding such an important position when some kind of educational qualification is needed for any other job in the country?

- Educational qualifications are not relevant to all kinds of jobs. The relevant qualification for selection to the Indian cricket team, for example, is not the attainment of educational degrees but the ability to play cricket well. Similarly the relevant qualification for being an MLA or an MP is the ability to understand people's concerns, problems and to represent their interests. Whether they can do so or not is examined by lakhs of examiners — their voters — after every five years.
- Even if education was relevant, it should be left to the people to decide how much importance they give to educational qualifications.
- In our country putting an educational qualification would go against the spirit of democracy for yet another reason. It would mean depriving a majority of the country's citizens the right to contest elections. If, for example, a graduate degree like B.A., B.Com or B.Sc was made compulsory for candidates, more than 90 per cent of the citizens will become ineligible to contest elections.



Why are the candidates required to give a detailed statement of their property?

ELECTORAL ROLL -2018 STATE (S16) MIZORAM

No. Name and Reservation Status of Assembly Constituency :	7 - TUIVAWL (ST)	Part Number 14								
No. Name and Reservation Status of Parliamentary Constituency (ies) in which the assembly constituency is located :										
1 - MIZORAM (ST)										
1 . DETAILS OF REVISION										
Year of Revision : 2018 Qualifying Date : 01/01/2019 Type of Revision : Special Summary Revision Date of Publication : 28/12/2018	Roll Identification: Basic Roll of Intensive Revision, 2005 integrated with all supplements preceeding Special Summary Revision, 2019									
2 . DETAILS OF PART AND POLLING AREA										
No. & Name of Sections in the part : 1 Vervek										
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"> Main Village/Town : VERVEK PostOffice : DARLAWN Block : DARLAWN PoliceStation : SAKAWRDAI Subdivision : SAKAWRDAI District : AIZAWL Pincode : 796111 </td> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> </tr> </table>			Main Village/Town : VERVEK PostOffice : DARLAWN Block : DARLAWN PoliceStation : SAKAWRDAI Subdivision : SAKAWRDAI District : AIZAWL Pincode : 796111							
Main Village/Town : VERVEK PostOffice : DARLAWN Block : DARLAWN PoliceStation : SAKAWRDAI Subdivision : SAKAWRDAI District : AIZAWL Pincode : 796111										
3 . POLLING STATION DETAILS										
No. and Name of Polling Station :	14VERVEK	Type of Polling Station (Male/Female/General)								
Address of Polling Station :		General								
Govt. Primary School, Village Name :VERVEK Post Office :DARLAWN District:AIZAWL		Number of Auxiliary Polling Stations in this part :								
		0								
4 . NUMBER OF ELECTORS										
Starting Serial No.	Ending Serial No.	Net Electors								
		Male	With Photo	Without Photo	Female	With Photo	Without Photo	Total	With Photo	Without Photo
1	181	93	93	0	88	88	0	181	181	0

Assembly constituency **7 - TUIVAWL**

Part No. - 14

Section No. & Name: **1 Vervek**

District - AIZAWL

PIN- 796111

1 KDJ0178376 Name : Lawrkhumna Father's Name : Khawma House No : 1 Age : 60 Sex : Male	2 KDJ0178566 Name : Thanseii Husband's Name : Lawrkhumna House No : 1 Age : 50 Sex : Female	3 KDJ0203133 Name : Nghakliana Father's Name : Lawrkhumna House No : 1 Age : 31 Sex : Male
4 KDJ0196766 Name : Hmingchhuangi Father's Name : Lawrkhumna House No : 1 Age : 28 Sex : Female	5 TXU0025494 Name : Malsawmzuali Father's Name : Lawrkhumna House No : 1 Age : 24 Sex : Female	6 KDJ0177931 Name : Lalrinmawia Father's Name : Lawrkhumna House No : 2 Age : 42 Sex : Male
7 KDJ0178483 Name : Lalthapuii Husband's Name : L. Rinmawia House No : 2 Age : 28 Sex : Female	8 TXU0051458 Name : Jessy Vanlaidiki Father's Name : Zomawia House No : 2 Age : 21 Sex : Female	9 KDJ0178160 Name : Thanzuala Father's Name : Lalrema House No : 3 Age : 52 Sex : Male

Match the following features of our electoral system with the principles they reflect.

Principles	Features of election system
Universal adult franchise	Each constituency has roughly the same population
Representation of weaker sections	Everyone who is 18 years of age or older has a right to vote
Open political competition	Anyone can form a party or contest elections
One vote one value	Reservation of seats for the SCs and the STs



Election Campaign

The main purpose of election is to give people a chance to choose the representatives, the government and the policies they prefer. Therefore it is necessary to have a free and open discussion about who is a better representative, which party will make a better government or what is a good policy. This is what happens during election campaigns.

In our country such campaigns take place for a two-week period between the announcement of the final list of candidates and the date of polling. During this period the candidates contact their voters, political leaders address election meetings and political parties mobilise their supporters. This is also the period when newspapers and television news are full of election related stories and debates. But election campaign is not limited to these two weeks only. Political parties start preparing for elections months before they actually take place.



ACTIVITY

How was the election campaign in your constituency in the last Lok Sabha elections? Prepare a list of what the candidates and parties said and did.

In election campaigns, political parties try to focus public attention on some big issues. They want to attract the public to that issue and get them to vote for their party on that basis. Let us look at some of the successful slogans given by different political parties in various elections.

- The Congress party led by Indira Gandhi gave the slogan of **Garibi Hatao (Remove poverty)** in the Lok Sabha elections of 1971. The party promised to reorient all the policies of the government to remove poverty from the country.
- **Save Democracy** was the slogan given by Janata Party under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan, in the Lok Sabha election held in 1977. The party promised to undo the excesses committed during Emergency and restore civil liberties.
- The Left Front used the slogan of **Land to the Tiller** in the West Bengal Assembly elections held in 1977.
- **'Protect the Self-Respect of the Telugus'** was the slogan used by N. T. Rama Rao, the leader of the Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh Assembly elections in 1983.

In a democracy it is best to leave political parties and candidates free to conduct their election campaigns the way they want to. But it is sometimes necessary to regulate

campaigns to ensure that every political party and candidate gets a fair and equal chance to compete. According to our election law, no party or candidate can:

- Bribe or threaten voters;
- Appeal to them in the name of caste or religion;
- Use government resources for election campaign; and
- Spend more than ₹ 25 lakh in a constituency for a Lok Sabha election or ₹ 10 lakh in a constituency in an Assembly election.

If they do so, their election can be rejected by the court even after they have been declared elected. In addition to the laws, all the political parties in our country have agreed to a Model **Code of Conduct** for election campaigns. According to this, no party or candidate can:

- Use any place of worship for election propaganda;

- Use government vehicles, aircrafts and officials for elections; and
- Once elections are announced, Ministers shall not lay foundation stones of any projects, take any big policy decisions or make any promises of providing public facilities.

Polling and counting of votes

The final stage of an election is the day when the voters cast or 'poll' their vote. That day is usually called the election day. Every person whose name is on the voters' list can go to a nearby 'polling booth', situated usually in a local school or a government office. Once the voter goes inside the booth, the election officials identify her, put a mark on her finger and allow her to cast her vote. An agent of each candidate is allowed to sit inside the polling booth and ensure that the voting takes place in a fair way.

Are the elections too expensive for our country?

A large amount of money is spent in conducting elections in India. For instance, the government spent about ₹3,500 crores in conducting Lok Sabha elections in 2014. That works out to about ₹40 per person on the voters' list. The amount spent by parties and candidates was more than what the government spent. Roughly speaking, the expenditure made by government, parties and candidates was around ₹30,000 crores or ₹500 per voter.

Some people say that elections are a burden on our people, that our poor country cannot afford to hold elections once every five years. Let us compare this expenditure with some other figures:

- In 2005, our government decided to buy six nuclear submarines from France. Each submarine cost about ₹3,000 crores.
- Delhi hosted the Commonwealth Games in 2010. The estimate for its cost is around ₹20,000 crores.

Are the elections too expensive? You decide.

Election result in Gulbarga

Let us go back to our example of Gulbarga. In 2014, a total of 8 candidates contested elections in that constituency. The total eligible voters were 17.21 lakhs. Of these 9.98 lakh voters had cast their votes. The candidate of the Congress party, Mallikarjun Kharge secured about 5.07 lakh votes. This was 50.82 percent of the total votes polled. But since he had secured more votes than anyone else, he was declared elected a Member of Parliament from Gulbarga Lok Sabha constituency.

Election Result of Gulbarga constituency, GENERAL ELECTION TO LOK SABHA, 2014

CANDIDATE	PARTY	VOTES POLLED	% OF VOTES
D.G. Sagar	JD(S)	15690	1.57
Mallikarjun Kharge	INC	507193	50.82
Danni Mahadev B.	BSP	11428	1.14
Revunaik Belamagi	BJP	432460	43.33
B.T. Lalitha Naik	AAAP	9074	0.91
S.M. Sharma	SUCI	4943	0.50
Shankar Jadhav	BHPP	2877	0.29
Ramu	IND	4085	0.41
None of the Above	NOTA	9888	0.99

- What is the percentage of voters who had actually cast their votes?
- To win an election is it necessary for a person to secure more than half the votes polled?

Earlier the voters used to indicate who they wanted to vote for by putting a stamp on the ballot paper. A ballot paper is a sheet of paper on which the names of the contesting candidates along with party name and symbols are listed. Nowadays electronic voting machines (**EVM**) are used to record votes. The machine shows the names of the candidates and the party symbols. Independent candidates too have their own symbols, allotted by election commission. All that the voter has to do is to press the button against the name of the candidate she wants to give her vote.

Once the polling is over, all the EVMs are sealed and taken to a

secure place. A few days later, on a fixed date, all the EVMs from a constituency are opened and the votes secured by each candidate are counted. The agents of all candidates are present there to ensure that the counting is done properly. The candidate who secures the highest number of votes from a constituency is declared elected. In a general election, usually the counting of votes in all the constituencies takes place at the same time, on the same day. Television channels, radio and newspapers report this event. Within a few hours of counting, all the results are declared and it becomes clear as to who will form the next government.

Identify the fair and the unfair electoral practices among the following:

- A minister flags off a new train in his constituency a week before polling day.
- A candidate promises that she will get a new train for her constituency if she is elected.
- Supporters of a candidate take the voters to a temple and make them take an oath that they will vote for him.
- The supporters of a candidate distribute blankets in slums in return for a promise for vote.



Why are party agents present in the polling booth and the counting centre?



3.3 WHAT MAKES ELECTIONS IN INDIA DEMOCRATIC?

We get to read a lot about unfair practices in elections. Newspapers and television reports often refer to such allegations. Most of these reports are about the following:

- Inclusion of false names and exclusion of genuine names in the voters' list;
- Misuse of government facilities and officials by the ruling party;
- Excessive use of money by rich candidates and big parties; and
- Intimidation of voters and **rigging** on the polling day.

Many of these reports are correct. We feel unhappy when we read or see such reports. But fortunately they are not on such a scale so as to defeat the very purpose of elections. This becomes clear if we ask a basic question: Can a party win an election and come to power not because it has popular support but through electoral malpractices? This is a vital question. Let us carefully examine various aspects of this question.

Independent Election Commission

One simple way of checking whether elections are fair or not is to look at who conducts the elections. Are they independent of the government? Or can the government or the ruling party influence or pressurise them? Do they have enough powers to be able to conduct free and fair elections? Do they actually use these powers?

The answer to all these questions is quite positive for our country. In our country elections are conducted by an independent and very powerful Election Commission (EC). It enjoys the same kind of

independence that the judiciary enjoys. The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) is appointed by the President of India. But once appointed, the Chief Election Commissioner is not answerable to the President or the government. Even if the ruling party or the government does not like what the Commission does, it is virtually impossible for it to remove the CEC.

Very few election commissions in the world have such wide-ranging powers as the Election Commission of India.

- EC takes decisions on every aspect of conduct and control of elections from the announcement of elections to the declaration of results.
- It implements the Code of Conduct and punishes any candidate or party that violates it.
- During the election period, the EC can order the government to follow some guidelines, to prevent use and misuse of governmental power to enhance its chances to win elections, or to transfer some government officials.
- When on election duty, government officers work under the control of the EC and not the government.

In the last 25 years or so, the Election Commission has begun to exercise all its powers and even expand them. It is very common now for the Election Commission to reprimand the government and administration for their lapses. When election officials come to the opinion that polling was not fair in some booths or even an entire constituency, they order a repoll. The ruling parties often do not like what the EC does. But they have to obey. This would not have happened if the EC was not independent and powerful.

For more details about the Election Commission of India, visit <https://eci.gov.in>



Why does the Election Commission have so much powers? Is this good for democracy?



EC issues notification constituting 14th Lok Sabha

Photo I-cards not mandatory in Bihar polls

EC tightens norms for poll expenses

EC accepts new Haryana DGP

EC to visit Gujarat again, review poll arrangements

EC will seek power to censure political ads

HC asks EC to bar 'criminal' netas

EC says no immediate plan to ban Exit Polls

EC shoots down HM advice on poll reforms

EC orders repoll in 398 more booths

EC to keep closer eye on hidden poll costs

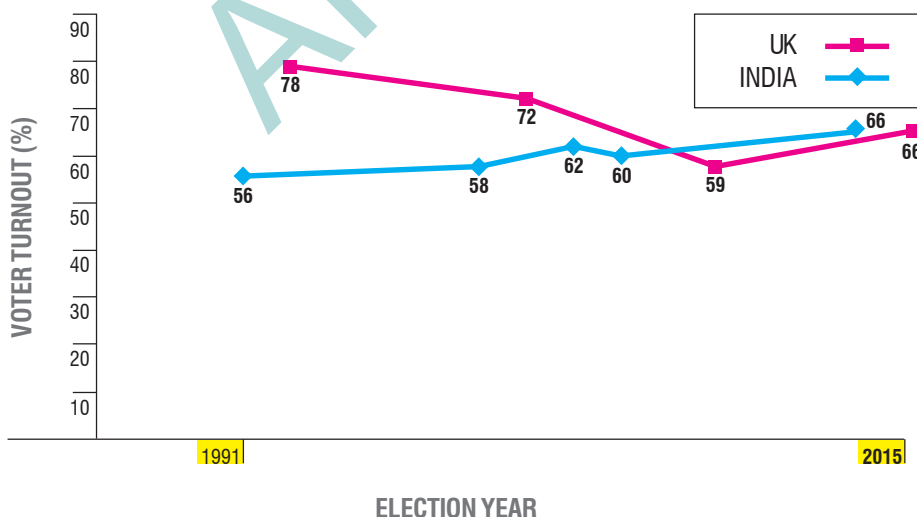
Read these headlines carefully and identify which powers are used by the Election Commission in each instance to ensure free and fair elections.

Popular participation

Another way to check the quality of the election process is to see whether people participate in it with enthusiasm. If the election process is not free or fair, people will not continue to participate in the exercise. Now, read these charts and draw some conclusions about participation in India:

1 People's participation in election is usually measured by voter turnout figures. Turnout indicates the per cent of eligible voters who actually cast their vote. Over the last fifty years, the turnout in Europe and North America has declined. In India the turnout has either remained stable or actually gone up.

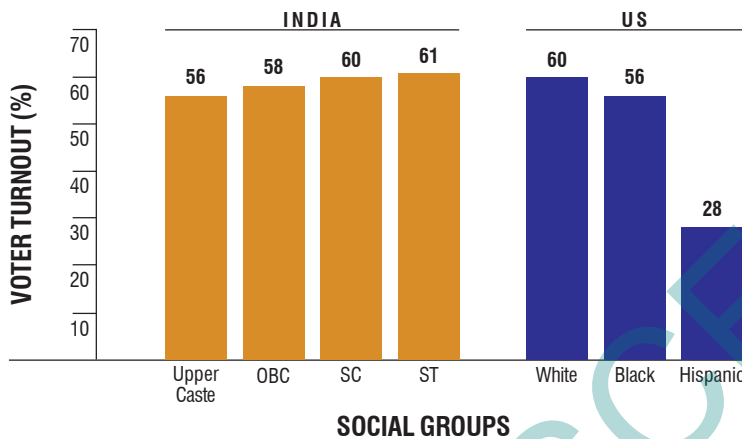
1 VOTER TURNOUT IN INDIA AND THE UK



2 In India the poor, illiterate and underprivileged people vote in larger proportion as compared to the rich and privileged sections. This is in contrast to western democracies. For example in the United States of America, poor people, African Americans and Hispanics vote much less than the rich and the white people.

4 The interest of voters in election-related activities has been increasing over the years. During the 2004 elections, more than one-third voters took part in a campaign-related activities. More than half of the people identified themselves as being close to one or the other political party. One out of every seven voters is a member of a political party.

2 VOTER TURNOUT IN INDIA AND US BY SOCIAL GROUPS, 2004

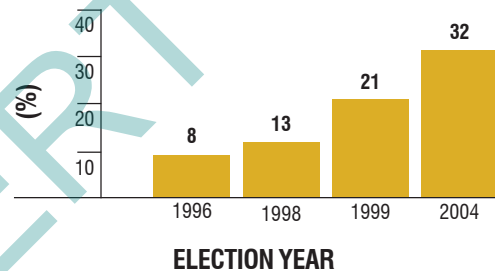


Source: Figures for India from National Election Study 2004, CSDS. Figures for US from National Election Study 2004, University of Michigan.

3 Common people in India attach a lot of importance to elections. They feel that through elections they can bring pressure on political parties to adopt policies and programmes favourable to them. They also feel that their vote matters in the way things are run in the country.

4 THOSE WHO PARTICIPATED IN ANY ELECTION RELATED ACTIVITY IN INDIA

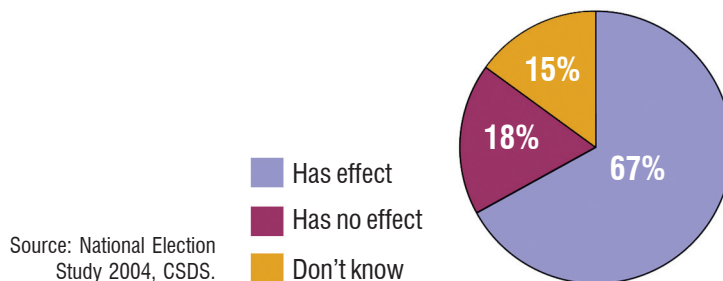
Source: National Election Study 1996-2004, CSDS.



ACTIVITY

Ask the eligible voters in your family whether they voted in the last election to the Lok Sabha or to the state assembly. If they did not, ask them why did they not vote. If they did, ask them which party and candidate they voted for and why. Also ask them whether they had participated in any other election-related activity like attending an election meeting or rally etc.

3 DO YOU THINK YOUR VOTE MAKES A DIFFERENCE?



Source: National Election Study 2004, CSDS.

Acceptance of election outcome

One final test of the free and fairness of election has in the outcome itself. If elections are not free or fair, the outcome always favours the powerful. In such a situation, the ruling parties do not lose elections. Usually, the

losing party does not accept the outcome of a rigged election.

The outcome of India's elections speaks for itself:

- The **ruling parties** routinely lose elections in India both at the national and state level. In fact in every two out of the three elections held in the last 25 years, the ruling party lost.
- In the US, an **incumbent** or 'sitting' elected representative rarely loses an election. In India about half of the sitting MPs or MLAs lose elections.
- Candidates who are known to have spent a lot of money on 'buying votes' and those with known criminal connections often lose elections.
- Barring very few disputed elections, the electoral outcomes are usually accepted as 'people's verdict' by the defeated party.

Challenges to free and fair elections

All this leads to a simple conclusion: elections in India are basically free and fair. The party that wins an election and forms government does so because people have chosen it over its rivals. This may not be true for every constituency. A few candidates may win purely on the basis of money power and unfair means. But the overall verdict of a general election still reflects popular preference. There are very few exceptions to this rule in the last 60 years in our country. This is what makes Indian elections democratic.

Yet the picture looks different if we ask deeper questions: Are people's preferences based on real knowledge? Are the voters getting a real choice? Is election really **level playing field** for everyone? Can an ordinary citizen hope to win



The leader is coming out of a press conference: "What was the need to say that we have distributed tickets only amongst suitable and winnable family relations?" Do you think that family politics is confined to only a few states or parties?

read
the
cartoon

Titled 'Electoral Campaigns', this cartoon was drawn in the Latin American context. Does this apply to India and to other democracies in the world?

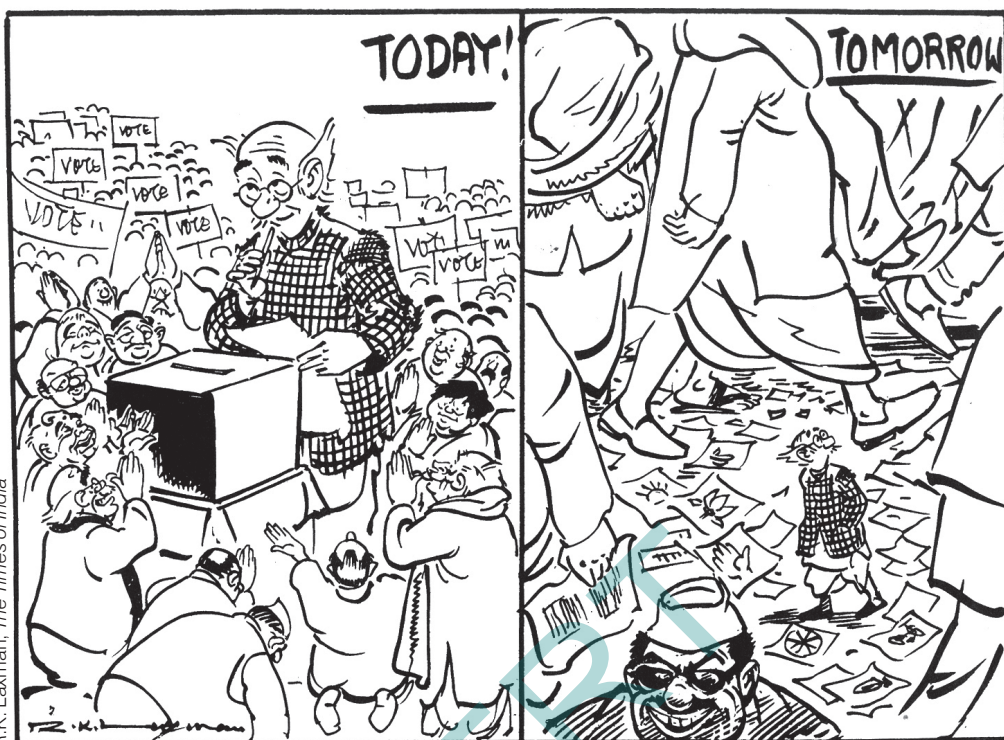


©Nerilicon, ElEconomista, Cagle Cartoons Inc.

Is this an accurate picture of what happens to the voter before and after elections? Must this always happen in a democracy? Can you think of examples when this did not happen?

read
the
cartoon

R.K. Laxman, The Times of India



- Candidates and parties with a lot of money may not be sure of their victory but they do enjoy a big and unfair advantage over smaller parties and independents.
- In some parts of the country, candidates with criminal connection have been able to push others out of the electoral race and to secure a 'ticket' from major parties.
- Some families tend to dominate political parties; tickets are distributed to relatives from these families.
- Very often elections offer little choice to ordinary citizens, for both the major parties are quite

similar to each other both in policies and practice.

- Smaller parties and independent candidates suffer a huge disadvantage compared to bigger parties.

These challenges exist not just in India but also in many established democracies. These deeper issues are a matter of concern for those who believe in democracy. That is why citizens, social activists and organisations have been demanding reforms in our electoral system. Can you think of some reforms? What can an ordinary citizen do to face these challenges?



Here are some facts on Indian elections. Comment on each of these to say whether they reflect the strength or the weakness of our electoral system:

- The 16th Lok Sabha has 12 per cent women members.
- The Election Commission often refuses to accept the government's advice about when the elections should be held.
- The 16th Lok Sabha has more than 440 members whose assets are more than Rs.1 crore.
- After losing an election the Chief Minister said: "I respect the people's verdict".

Code of Conduct: A set of norms and guidelines to be followed by political parties and contesting candidates during election time.

Constituency: Voters in a geographical area who elect a representative to the legislative bodies.

Incumbent: The current holder of a political office. Usually the choice for the voters in elections is between the incumbent party or candidate and those who oppose them.

Level playing field: Condition in which all parties and candidates contesting in an election have equal opportunities to appeal for votes and to carry out election campaign.

Rigging: Fraud and malpractices indulged by a party or candidate to increase its votes. It includes stuffing ballot boxes by a few persons using the votes of others; recording multiple votes by the same person; and bribing or coercing polling officers to favour a candidate.

Turnout: The percentage of eligible voters who cast their votes in an election.



- 1 Which of the following statements about the reasons for conducting elections are false?
 - a Elections enable people to judge the performance of the government.
 - b People select the representative of their choice in an election.
 - c Elections enable people to evaluate the performance of the judiciary.
 - d People can indicate which policies they prefer.
- 2 Which of these is *not* a good reason to say that Indian elections are democratic?
 - a India has the largest number of voters in the world.
 - b India's Election Commission is very powerful.
 - c In India, everyone above the age of 18 has a right to vote.
 - d In India, the losing parties accept the electoral verdict.
- 3 Match the following :

a	It is necessary to keep the voters list up to date because	i	there is a fair representation of all sections of our society
b	Some constituencies are reserved for SCs and STs so that	ii	everyone has equal opportunity to elect their representative
c	Everyone has one and only one vote so that	iii	all candidates must have a fair chance of competing in elections
d	Party in power is not allowed to use government vehicles because	iv	some people may have moved away from the area where they voted last

exercises

- 4 List all the different election related activities mentioned in the chapter and arrange them in a time sequence, beginning with the first activity and ending with the last. Some of these activities are given below: releasing election manifestos; counting of votes; making of voters' list; election campaign; declaration of election results; casting of votes; ordering of re-poll; announcing election schedule; filing nomination.
- 5 Surekha is an officer in-charge of ensuring free and fair elections in an assembly constituency in a state. Describe what should she focus on for each of the following stages of election:
 - a Election campaign
 - b Polling day
 - c Counting day
- 6 The table below gives the proportion of different communities among the candidates who won elections to the US Congress. Compare these to the proportion of these communities in the population of the US. Based on this, would you suggest a system of reservations in the US Congress? If yes, why and for which communities? If no, why not?

	Proportion of the community (in per cent) in the	
	House of representatives	Population of US
Blacks	8	13
Hispanics	5	13
Whites	86	70

- 7 Can we draw the following conclusions from the information given in this chapter? Give two facts to support your position for each of these.
 - a Election Commission of India does not have enough powers to conduct free and fair elections in the country.
 - b There is a high level of popular participation in the elections in our country.
 - c It is very easy for the party in power to win an election.
 - d Many reforms are needed to make our elections completely free and fair.
- 8 Chinappa was convicted for torturing his wife for dowry. Satbir was held guilty of practicing untouchability. The court did not allow either of them to contest elections. Does this decision go against the principles of democratic elections?
- 9 Here are some reports of electoral malpractices from different parts of the world. Is there anything that these countries can learn from India to improve their elections? What would you suggest in each case?
 - a During an election in Nigeria, the officer in charge of counting votes deliberately increased the votes of one candidate and declared

him elected. The court later found out that more than five lakh votes cast for one candidate were counted in favour of another.

- b** Just before elections in Fiji, a pamphlet was distributed warning voters that a vote for former Prime Minister, Mahendra Chaudhry will lead to bloodshed. This was a threat to voters of Indian origin.
- c** In the US, each state has its own method of voting, its own procedure of counting and its own authority for conducting elections. Authorities in the state of Florida took many controversial decisions that favoured Mr. Bush in the presidential elections in 2000. But no one could change those decisions.

10 Here are some reports of malpractices in Indian elections. Identify what the problem in each case is. What should be done to correct the situation?

- a** Following the announcement of elections, the minister promised to provide financial aid to reopen the closed sugar mill.
- b** Opposition parties alleged that their statements and campaign was not given due attention in Doordarshan and All India Radio.
- c** An inquiry by the Election Commission showed that electoral rolls of a state contain name of 20 lakh fake voters.
- d** The hoodlums of a political party were moving with guns, physically preventing supporters of other political parties to meet the voters and attacking meetings of other parties.

11 Ramesh was not in class when this chapter was being taught. He came the next day and repeated what he had heard from his father. Can you tell Ramesh what is wrong with these statements?

- a** Women always vote the way men tell them to. So what is the point of giving them the right to vote?
- b** Party politics creates tension in society. Elections should be decided by consensus not by competition.
- c** Only graduates should be allowed to stand as candidates for elections.

Assembly elections are usually held every year in a few states of the country. You can collect information about the elections that take place during this session. While collecting news items, divide these into three parts:

- Important events that took place before the election – main agenda discussed by political parties; information about people’s demand; role of the Election Commission.
- Important events on the day of the election and counting – turnout in elections; reports of malpractice; re-polls; the types of predictions made; and the final outcome.
- Post elections – reasons offered by political parties for winning or losing elections; analysis of the election verdict by the media; selection of the Chief Minister.

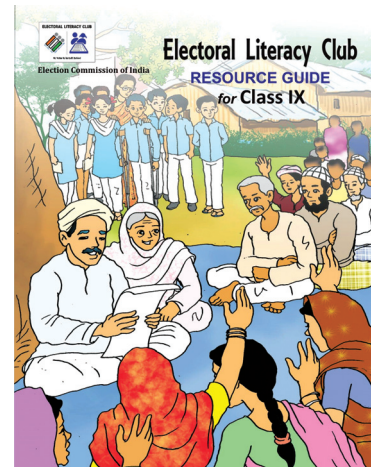




National Voters' Day (NVD) Pledge

We, the citizens of India, having abiding faith in democracy, hereby pledge to uphold the democratic traditions of our country and the dignity of free, fair and peaceful elections, and to vote in every election fearlessly and without being influenced by considerations of religion, race, caste, community, language or any inducement.

How did your school celebrate the National Voters' Day on 25th January? Did you take the NVD Pledge?



Is Electoral Literacy Club (ELC) functioning in your school? For details about Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) programme of the Election Commission of India, visit <http://ecisveep.nic.in>

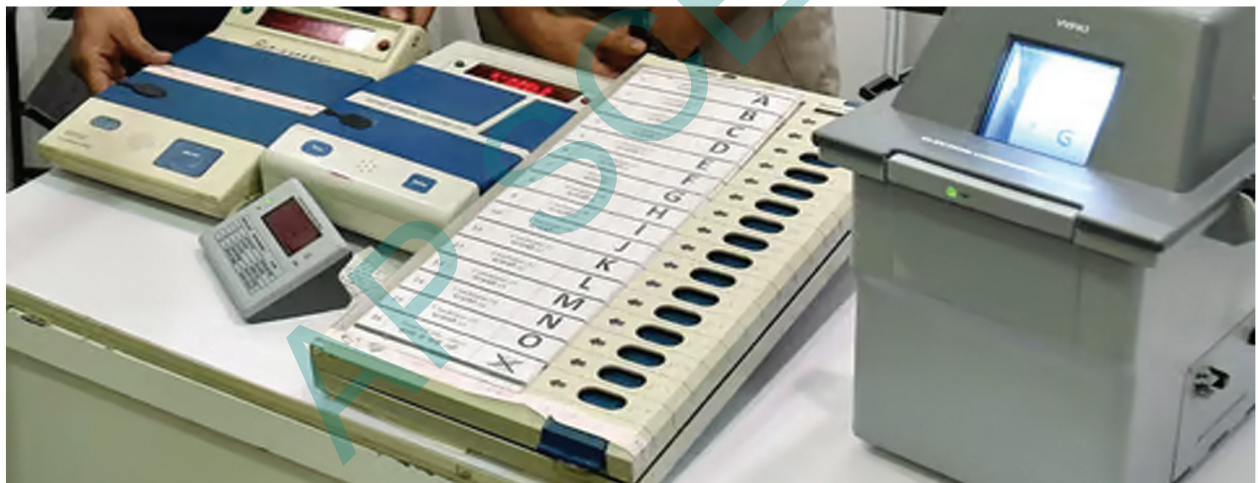


The tableau of the Election Commission of India passes through the Rajpath, New Delhi, on the occasion of the 67th Republic Day Parade in 2016.

General Election 1952



Electronic Voting Machine



Secret voting compartment



Election Commission of India

