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6th - 9th STD



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NCERT has not yet released Volume 2 for Class 9 - the compilation will be updated immediately once it is published.

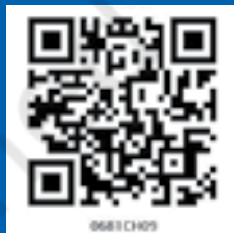
Family and Community

Love and dharma are the flower and fruit of family life.

— Tiruvalluvar

The Big Questions ?

1. Why is the family unit important?
2. What is a community and what is its role?

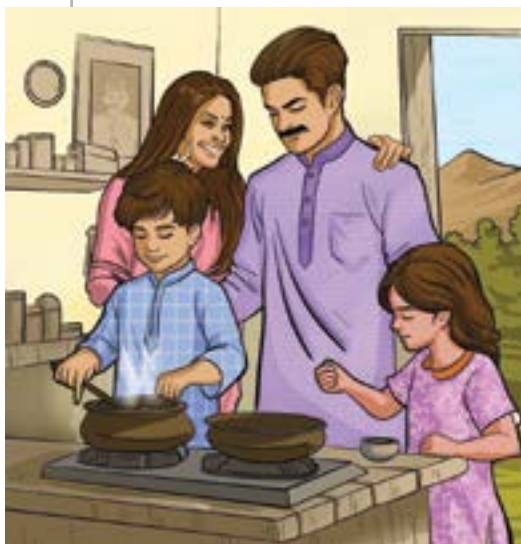


Family

Almost all of us live in a family. The family is the fundamental and most ancient unit of any society. In Indian society today, there are several types of families — from joint families to nuclear families. A joint family has several generations living together — grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts,



Examples of joint families



Examples of nuclear families

brothers, sisters and cousins. A nuclear family, on the other hand, is limited to a couple and their children, and sometimes one parent and children.

LET'S EXPLORE

- What types of families do you see in your neighbourhood? List the type with the number of households for each type.
- What types are more frequent? Why do you think this is so?
- As a class activity, compare with your classmates' findings and discuss.

In English, there are not many terms to describe family relationships; we saw some of them in the first paragraph. Indian languages have many more terms. For example, in Hindi there is *bua*, *tau*, *tai*, *chacha*, *mausi*, *nana*, *nani*, and many more. Some languages, such as Tamil, also have different terms for elder brother / sister or younger brother / sister. But what is the word for 'cousin' in an Indian language? In most Indian languages, you will find that there is no such word! That is because cousins are only 'brothers' and 'sisters'. This emphasises the deep bonds among all the children in the family.

LET'S EXPLORE

- Make a list of all the members of your family you can think of, including a few distant relatives. List their terms in your mother tongue or regional language and try to find the equivalent in English. Two examples are below for Hindi:

Name	Term in Hindi	Description / term in English
Rani	बहन	mother's brother's daughter (cousin) (among other possible meanings)
Sameer	चाचा	father's younger brother (uncle)

- Notice how, quite often, a single word in your mother tongue or regional language requires several words in English to give a precise definition.

Roles and Responsibilities

Relationships among family members are based on love, care, cooperation and interdependence. 'Cooperation' means 'working together'. Each member of the family has a role and responsibility towards other members. For instance, parents are responsible for raising their children to become happy individuals and responsible members of the society. But also, as children grow up, they take on more responsibilities in the home to help other family members — whether parents or a sister or a brother, etc. Through daily practice, children learn to participate in the life of the household. In many homes, children also learn some of the traditions and practices their family has been following for generations.



LET'S EXPLORE



Answer these questions and compare your answers with a few classmates:

- Who in your family decides what is to be bought from the market?
- Who cooks food in your home?
- Who is the oldest person in your family?
- Who cleans the floor in your home?
- Who washes utensils in your house?
- Who helps you to do your homework?

Following our dharma, or doing our duty, has been an important principle of Indian culture. The family is also a 'school', where children learn important values such as ahimsa, *dāna* (giving), *sevā* (service) and *tyāga* (sacrifice). Individuals in the family often give up their own needs to take care of the family's needs.

Let us see one such story.



Shalini lives with her family in a town in Kerala. Her father runs a small business and her mother is a teacher in a nearby school. Shalini has a younger brother. Her grandmother, Acchamma

(father's mother), Chittappa (father's brother or paternal uncle) and her Chitti (aunt or uncle's wife) live with them. They have a daughter, Shalini's cousin, who she calls Chinni. Shalini's uncle has just lost his job and her aunt is a homemaker. The whole family was preparing for the festival of Onam. Acchamma told Shalini's father that his brother was having financial difficulties, so they were not able to buy new clothes for the festival. When Shalini's parents took her and her brother shopping, they bought new clothes not only for themselves, but also for Chittappa, Chitti and Chinni. As a result, Shalini did not get the silk dress she had expected; she had to settle for a simple cotton one. Acchamma explained to Shalini that this is how families support each other and share what they have. Shalini did not mind her simpler dress. She was happy that everyone could get some new clothes.



LET'S EXPLORE

- Draw a simple tree of this family of seven members.
- Why do you think Shalini's parents bought clothes for everyone?
- What would you have done if you were in Shalini's place?

That story was set in Kerala. Let us now travel northeast, to a village in Meghalaya.

My name is Tenzing. I love the mountains we live in, though life is sometimes hard. My father runs a small grocery store. After my mother became busy in a local handicraft cooperative, making our beautiful traditional fabrics, wood carvings and other items for sale to tourists, my father joined in cleaning the house, taking care of our small vegetable garden





and other household chores. Often, he helps my grandmother prepare food for us all.

Grandmother always has all sorts of interesting stories to tell me, with humour and wisdom; no one seems to understand people better than her! Grandfather helps me with my homework and takes me to the school bus stop. He is also actively involved in social work in our colony and is always offering his help to others. For example, when there is a power failure in our area, he goes and registers a complaint at the nearby office. When our neighbours' house got damaged in a storm, he collected some money from the whole neighbourhood to help with repairs.

We are lucky that my parents can take care of our basic necessities like food and clothing. When any special expenses come up, I have often seen that they discuss them together. Mother says that we should always try to save some money for any unexpected needs that may arise in the future.



THINK ABOUT IT

- ◆ Why does Tenzing's father consult his wife for special expenses?
- ◆ How do you feel about his participation in household chores?
- ◆ What roles do the grandparents fulfil?

LET'S EXPLORE

- Create a story of a family somewhere in India, where we see some family values practised. Share it with your class either through writing or drawing.
- Stage a small drama with all your classmates around two or three families. The play you write could include some challenging situations that the families faced, and show how they are resolved.
- In the stories of Shalini and Tenzing, we see examples of joint families. What do you think are the aspects of modern living that make some couples opt for a nuclear family (i.e., living apart from older generations or other relatives)? What could be some advantages as well as disadvantages of the two kinds of families?



Community

Families are connected not only within themselves, but also with other families and the people around them. Such a group of connected people may be called a 'community' (there are other meanings for 'community', depending on the context). Members of a community come together for various reasons, like celebrating festivals and organising feasts, weddings and other events. In some villages, people come together to support each other with agricultural practices like land preparation, sowing and harvesting. Over time, communities often agreed upon some practices on the use of shared natural wealth and resources such as water, grazing lands and forest produce. This is the case with many tribal communities. To some extent, this remains the case in village communities in rural India today. Such practices — we may call them 'rules', though they were rarely written down — have provided communities a secure access to resources. But it also means that all families and

individuals within the community have specific duties to perform. Otherwise, the community will not function smoothly.

DON'T MISS OUT

- ❖ Year after year, the region around the town of Jhabua, in Madhya Pradesh, suffered from an acute water crisis. Following their *halma* (see facing page) tradition of coming together to support any individual or family in times of crisis, the Bhil community decided to plant thousands of trees in hundreds of villages. The Bhils also dug many trenches to conserve rainwater and created other water harvesting structures. They did not get paid for this work but did it as their duty towards their community and the environment. In the *halma* tradition, the objective is to serve Mother Earth. In 2019, Shri Mahesh Sharma of the Shivganga movement was honoured with the Padma Shri award for his transformational work with the Bhil communities.
- ❖ During the Chennai floods of 2015, roads turned to rivers and people could no longer move around. Almost all shops were closed and services interrupted. Many private groups, in particular spiritual and religious organisations, cooked large quantities of food and distributed it to people who needed it.
- ❖ There are many more such examples of people coming together to do something for the benefit of the community without expecting anything in return. Have you heard of any?

The real-life stories above illustrate community in a rural context. Community is also present in an urban context, although it may function a little differently. Let us see an example from another real-life story.



More than 20 years ago, in an area of Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Kamal Parmar, owner of a small auto-fabrication workshop, noticed a group of underprivileged children on the street. Some had dropped out of school, while others had never been to school. Kamal started giving them tuition from 5:30 to 9:30 pm every day, after his regular work hours. He also provided the kids with a free dinner. Soon, 150 children were attending those classes regularly and were deeply interested in the lessons!

A few teachers from a local school noticed the classes and joined the teaching for a while. One of them observed, “These children don’t get proper benches to sit on, have no ‘silence zone’ classrooms and the vehicles passing by make lots of noise, yet they pay all their attention to what the teachers tell them. This touched my heart. The love and affection I got from them was unbelievable.” Some older children who were attending regular schools also joined as volunteers to teach in Kamal’s classes. One of them remarked, “We went there to teach, instead we learnt a lot from them.”



- Discuss this story in your class. What kind of attitude towards the community does it reveal?
- What values get reflected in Kamal Parmar’s initiative?
- Think about those underprivileged children. Do you think society has been unfair to them?

- What should society do to make sure that all children get access to education?

New types of communities have also emerged in the last 30 or 40 years. Residents' Welfare Associations in many urban areas are examples of communities that make their own rules and regulations. Those could be rules about waste management, cleanliness of common areas, taking care of pets, and so on. People living in the community participate in making such rules and regulations.

Communities are ultimately interdependent. The same Residents' Welfare Associations, for instance, will depend on the trading community for supplies and also on municipal workers to handle waste. In our complex societies, everyone depends on a number of other people and communities.



LET'S EXPLORE

Make a list of all people outside your family that are supporting you through their work in one way or another.

We now understand that 'community' is a flexible concept. A few more examples:

- A *jāti*, or a subdivision of it, is also often called a community.



- A group of people of a particular religion, region, common work or interest, especially a smaller group, may also be called a community; for instance, 'Mumbai's Parsi community', 'Chennai's Sikh community', 'America's Indian community', 'Kerala's scientific community', 'our school's art community', 'the village's farming community', and so on... The list is endless!
- In your school, you may be part of different communities — your class, of course, but also the sports community, the National Service Scheme, the National Cadet Corps, a science or drama club, etc.



LET'S EXPLORE

- What types of communities are you part of?
- Is there a club that you are a part of in school? How does it function?



Before we move on ...

- Family is the foundation of human society. Ideally, members of a family support each other in their many duties and tasks.
- Community, a bigger unit, also implies that people do their best to support each other. 'Community' can be defined in several ways and there are many kinds of community.
- Ultimately, communities are interdependent.

Questions, activities and projects

1. What are some of the rules you follow in your family and neighbourhood? Why are they important?
2. Do you think some rules are unfair to a few people in the family or community? Why?
3. Describe several situations that you have observed where community support makes a difference. You can draw or write about these.

“The ruler protects dharma and dharma protects those who protect it.”

*“There is no peace without justice;
no justice without equality;
no equality without development;
no democracy without respect to the identity
and dignity of cultures and peoples.”*

Rigoberta Menchú Tum

The Big Questions

1. *What is the meaning of 'governance'?*
2. *Why do we need a government?*
3. *What is the meaning of 'democracy'? Why is it important?*



Introduction

Human beings have been living in communities for a long time. When a large number of people live together, there can be disagreements and disorder, and rules become necessary to maintain order and harmony in the society.

There are probably some simple rules at home that you are expected to follow. The school where you study has rules too — some for students, others for teachers. In higher classes, students appearing for examinations must follow certain rules. Drivers on the road are expected to obey traffic rules. People employed in all kinds of jobs also need to follow the rules set by their employer, while the employers must also follow rules which they have committed to their employees. What would happen if no one followed those rules? A simple answer is that society would not be able to function.

LET'S EXPLORE



- Describe the two pictures given in Fig. 10.1 on page 151 — what differences do you see between them?
- How do you connect this with our discussion on rules?
- What are some of the rules in your school? Who made them?

Who makes the rules and why? How are they made? These are some of the questions we will explore in this chapter. The process of taking decisions, organising the society's life with different sets of rules, and ensuring that they are followed, is called **governance**. The group of individuals or the system that makes the rules and ensures that they are followed is called a **government**. Some of the more important rules are called **laws**.

This does not mean that rules and laws are set once and for all. Just as you might discuss a particular rule at home with your parents, or as a student body might ask the school or

university management to change a rule, citizens also have a say in the laws and rules governing the society. We will see how this takes place.



Fig. 10.1



Fig. 10.2

LET'S EXPLORE

- Can you identify the categories of public service or other activities that are represented in the ten pictures in Fig. 10.2 on page 152?
- What role do you think the government plays in each of these activities?
- Can you think of other aspects of your daily life where the government plays an important role?



Three Organs of Government

All over the world, digital technologies have been transforming the way societies function. In India, till about 30 years ago, people who wanted to transfer money to a distant relative would have to queue up at the Post Office to send a money order after filling up a form; or if they had to send a payment to some business, they would queue up at their bank to obtain a demand draft, which would then have to be sent by post. You have probably never heard these terms ('money order' or 'demand draft'), because today we have digital means of sending across money instantly!

However, this has also created a new class of criminals who, without even leaving their desks, find digital ways of stealing people's money. This has led many governments to pass new laws in order to fight such criminal activities (called 'cybercrime'). Some of those criminals, who believe in robbing innocent people of their hard-earned money instead of using their skills to contribute to the society, have been arrested and convicted in court. They are usually fined as well as jailed for some years.

Through this example, we can see how the three branches or 'organs' of a government work together:

- The **legislature** is the organ that makes new laws (or 'legislates'). Sometimes it also updates or removes

existing laws. This is done by an assembly of representatives of the people. We will soon see how the Indian system works.

- The **executive** is the organ that implements (or 'executes') the laws. This includes the head of state (who may be a president, a prime minister or a chief minister), the ministers and any agency responsible for enforcing 'law and order'. (In our example above, that agency is the cyber police.)
- The **judiciary** is the system of courts which decides whether someone has broken the law and, if so, what course of action should be taken, including punishment if necessary. Sometimes it also examines whether a decision taken by the executive is right, or whether a law passed by the legislature is well conceived and fair to all.



LET'S EXPLORE

Explain how the three government organs are at work in the case of the cyber criminals described above. How do they intervene?

In a system of good governance, these three organs must be kept separate, although they interact with each other and work together. This separation is called the '**separation of powers**' (Fig. 10.3). It is intended to provide a system of checks and balances. This means that each organ of the government can check what the other is doing and restore balance if one organ acts beyond its expected role.

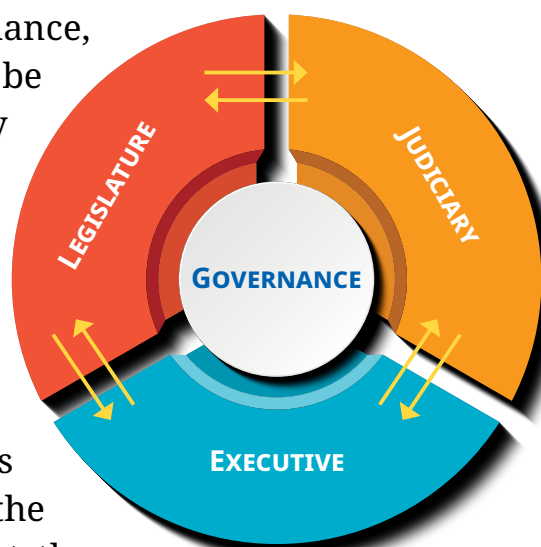


Fig. 10.3

LET'S EXPLORE

As a class activity, can you imagine the sort of disorder we might witness if all three organs were under the control of the same group of people? Can you describe any such real-life situation you may have heard of?



Three Levels of Government

Any democratic government operates at multiple levels. In many countries, including India, it functions at three levels or tiers — local, state or regional, and national. Each level deals with different matters. To use a comparison, if a bulb in your home is not lighting up, you will first check the bulb, switch, fuse, etc. If that does not work, you may call an electrician, and if it is found that the problem is not within your home, you may need to go to the Electricity Board and file a complaint. These are also three levels of dealing with a problem.

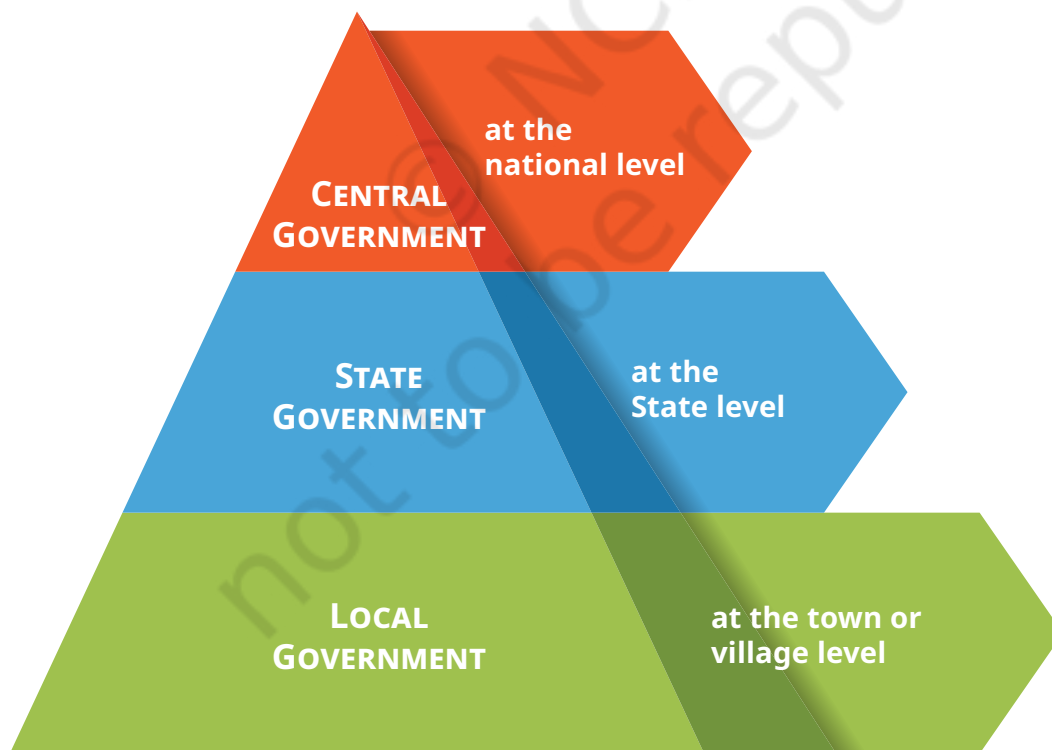


Fig. 10.4

In India, we have local governments, State governments, and Central or Union government (Fig. 10.4 on page 155). Imagine that following heavy rain for a few days, there is a flood in a part of a district. If it is not too severe, the local authorities may be able to deal with it. If it involves several towns and many villages, the State Government will step in and send rescue teams to help affected people. But if it's a massive flood affecting vast areas, the Central Government may also come to help by sending relief supplies, the army, etc. These are the three levels again.



DON'T MISS OUT

Many of our institutions have mottos inspired by the wisdom of our ancient texts. The Government of India's motto, for example, is *Satyameva Jayate*, which means "Truth alone triumphs". The Supreme Court's motto is *Yato Dharmastato Jayah*, or, "Where there is dharma, there is victory."

The table on the facing page provides in summary a general framework of the main functions of the government's three organs at the national and State levels. Their details (including the precise role of the assemblies) will be studied in greater depth in Grade 7. (Local government is not mentioned here as we will look at it more closely in the next two chapters.)



LET'S EXPLORE

- Observe the table (Fig. 10.5). Highlight the functions and responsibilities that affect your life the most.
- Ask two or three adults about their connection or interaction with the government – at what levels does it take place and for what purpose?

	ALL INDIA	STATE LEVEL
Judiciary	Supreme Court of India	High Court

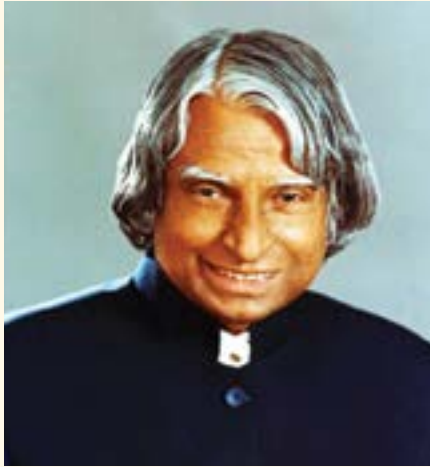
	NATIONAL LEVEL	STATE LEVEL
Legislature	Two houses – Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha – formulate national laws	One State Assembly or Vidhan Sabha (Note that most States have a single assembly; a few States have two)

House:
An assembly where laws are discussed or passed.

Nominal: In name only. It means, in our case, that the President of India and the Governor of a State are not the actual executive heads. They do have certain powers under special circumstances, but normally do not interfere in the affairs of the Central or State government.

	CENTRAL GOVERNMENT	STATE GOVERNMENT
Executive	Led by the President of India (nominal head and Supreme Commander of the Indian Armed Forces), Prime Minister as the executive head	Led by the Governor (nominal head), Chief Minister as the executive head
Functions and responsibilities of the Executive (the list is not exhaustive)	• Defence • Foreign Affairs • Atomic Energy • Communications • Currency • Inter-state Commerce • Education • Formulation of National Policies	• Police, law and order • Adaptation and implementation of laws made by the Central government at the State level. • Public health • Education • Agriculture • Irrigation • Local government

Fig. 10.5



Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

Born in a humble family in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu, in 1931, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam was a renowned scientist, nicknamed the 'Missile Man of India' for his crucial role in the development of India's space programme, missile programme and nuclear capabilities.

Dr. Abdul Kalam served as the 11th President of India from 2002 to 2007. Despite his high status, he remained deeply connected to the people, and the youth in particular, through his passion for good education and innovation. He inspired millions with his humility, dedication to social causes and commitment to the nation. He tirelessly encouraged young Indians to dream big and work hard to achieve their goals.

Dr. Kalam showed that even though his position as the President of India was nominal, he could play an important role, impacting countless lives.

Let us meditate on a few of his inspiring thoughts:

"Look at the sky. We are not alone. The whole universe is friendly to us and conspires only to give the best to those who dream and work."

"To succeed in your mission, you must have single-minded devotion to your goal."

"If you fail, never give up because F.A.I.L. means 'First Attempt In Learning'. End is not the end, in fact E.N.D. means 'Effort Never Dies'. If you get 'no' as an answer, remember N.O. means 'Next Opportunity'. So let's be positive."

"Dream is not that which you see while sleeping; it is something that does not let you sleep."

"If four things are followed — having a great aim, acquiring knowledge, hard work, and perseverance — then anything can be achieved."

Democracy

You may have noticed that we earlier mentioned ‘representatives of the people’. This is one of the foundation stones of the system of governance adopted by most countries of the world — **democracy**. The word ‘democracy’ comes from two Greek words — *dēmos* meaning ‘people’, and *kratos* meaning ‘rule’ or ‘power’; so ‘democracy’ literally means the ‘rule of the people’.

But can all people actually rule? It is clearly not possible. Imagine there is a problem that your class wants to bring to the attention of your school’s principal — maybe there is something wrong with the classroom, or with the school’s infrastructure, or perhaps you would like to propose a certain date for a field trip. Will the entire class go to the principal? It would clearly not be practical. In many schools, classes have a ‘class monitor’ or ‘class representative’, whom the whole class elected; even if there is none, one representative can be selected for this specific purpose. It will be enough to send the representative to the principal.

It is the same principle at the State or national levels — through elections, people vote for **representatives**, who will be the elected members of their respective assemblies. They are generally called ‘**Members of Legislative Assembly**’ (or MLAs) at the State level, and ‘**Member of Parliament**’ (or MPs) at the national level. All these members discuss laws, problems and solutions in the assemblies, and, through dialogue and debate, try to convince each other whenever there are different opinions.

Like any modern democracy, therefore, India is a **representative democracy**. It is also the world’s



10 — Grassroots Democracy - Part 1

largest democracy, with some 970 million voters in 2024! In principle, all Indian citizens above the age of 18 have the right to participate in these elections.

Imagine that your class is planning to go for a picnic. There are two possible places, A and B. The class discusses the pros and cons — distance, time, cost, availability of basic facilities, etc. It becomes difficult to arrive at a decision. So your teacher decides that voting can solve the problem. The number of students in favour of place A raise their hands, then the number of students in favour of place B raise theirs. The decision is taken by whichever option gets a larger number of raised hands. (This process is called voting.) This is a case of **direct democracy** where every student's opinion was taken to finalise the place.

The term **grassroots democracy** refers to a system that enables and encourages the participation of ordinary citizens — the base of the pyramid we saw in Fig. 10.4 on page 155. In such a system, the citizens can have a say in decisions which affect them.

We will study more features of Indian democracy in the next two chapters and also in later grades.



Before we move on ...

- No country can run without governance and government.
- A modern government has three organs — legislative, executive and judiciary — which need to work together.
- The Indian government functions at three levels — Centre or national, State and local.
- Democracy is the overall framework for this system. It functions through elected representatives, both at the State and the national levels.

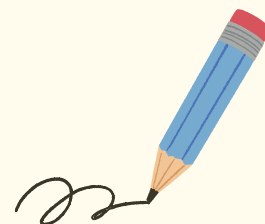
Questions, activities and projects

1. Test yourself — What is the meaning of democracy? What is the difference between direct democracy and representative democracy?
2. Recall the three organs of government. What are their different roles?
3. Why do we need three tiers of government?
4. Project: Many of you will remember the lockdown that took place during the COVID-19 pandemic. Make a list of all the actions that were taken at that time? Which tiers of government were involved in managing the situation? What was the role of each of the organs of government?

Noodles

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*'Noodles' is our abbreviation for 'Notes and Doodles'!



Grassroots Democracy – Part 2

Local Government in Rural Areas

The real India lives in its villages.

– M.K. Gandhi

The Big Questions ?

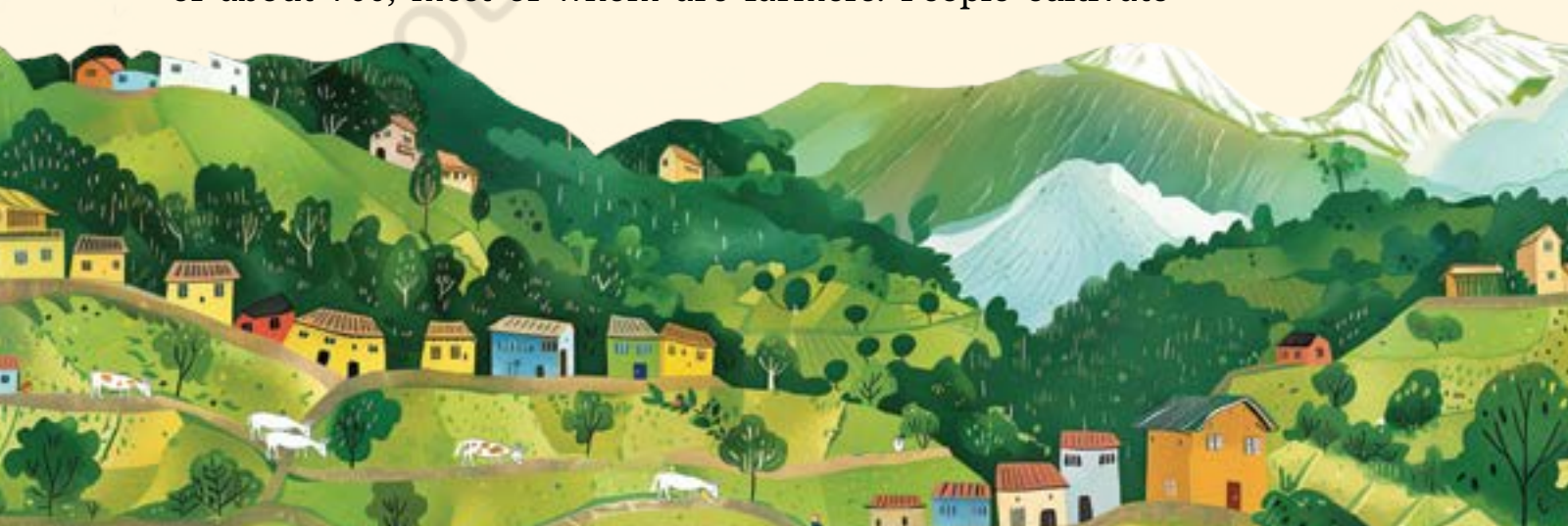
1. *What are Panchayati Raj institutions?*
2. *What are their functions?*
3. *Why are they important in governance and democracy?*



Let us now see how the government functions at the local level. In this chapter, our focus will be on local government in rural areas; we will move to urban areas in the next chapter.

India is a country of enormous size and diversity. We have about 600,000 villages, 8,000 towns and over 4,000 cities. Our population has crossed 1.4 billion, almost two-thirds of which live in rural areas. How do we govern ourselves in this complex society?

Let us take a trip to Lakshmanpur, a small village in the foothills of the Himalayas. It has 200 houses and a population of about 700, most of whom are farmers. People cultivate



their lands and rear cows or goats. Some have relatives serving in the armed forces; a few younger villagers have migrated to the city in search of jobs. What are the needs of this village — maybe water for the fields, repairing the main road if it got damaged by heavy rains, or maintaining the village's primary school? How will the villagers take decisions about such matters that affect their daily lives? And where will they get the resources to meet those needs? What will happen if there is a dispute about land or if some of the crop is stolen? Many such questions can arise in a village. Can people run to the State or the national capital for every such issue?

Panchayati Raj System

Like every village in India, the Lakshmanpur people have a system of **local** government called 'Panchayat', which refers to a village council. Panchayats bring governance closer to the people, making it possible for them to actively participate in decision-making processes. That is why the Panchayat system, also known as **Panchayati Raj**, is a form of **self-government**. Panchayats play a vital role in addressing local issues, promoting development and ensuring that the benefits of government schemes reach the grassroots level.

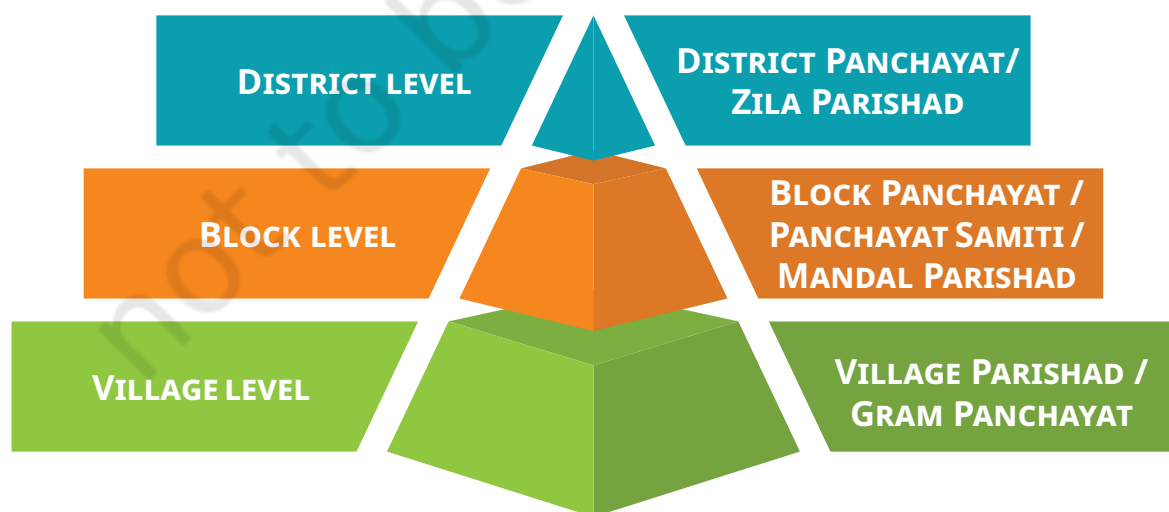


Fig. 11.1

As is clear from the diagram, the Panchayati Raj system works at three levels — from bottom up — the village, the block and the district. This is called a **‘three-tier system’**. Together, these institutions’ responsibilities cover almost all aspects of life in the district, from agriculture, housing, maintenance of roads, management of water resources, education, health care and social welfare to cultural activities.

Gram Panchayat

Let us begin with the base of Fig. 11.1 on page 164 — the Gram Panchayat, which is closest to the people in rural areas. Its members are elected directly by the Gram Sabha, which is a group of adults from a village (or group of neighbouring villages) who are enrolled as voters. In the Gram Sabha, women and men discuss all matters related to their area and take decisions. Each Gram Panchayat elects a head or president called the ‘Sarpanch’ or ‘Pradhan’. In recent years, more and more women have become Sarpanchs.



Exemplary Sarpanchs



Dnyaneshwar Kamble is a transgender person who was elected Sarpanch of Tarangfal village in the Solapur district of Maharashtra in 2017. Kamble's motto is *lok seva, gram seva*, that is, 'Service to the village is service to the public.' Kamble defeated six other candidates to become the Sarpanch.

Vandana Bahadur Maida, a member of the Bhil community from the village of Khankhandvi in Madhya Pradesh, defied

patriarchal norms to become the first female Sarpanch of her village. She convinced women in the village to attend the Sabha meetings and addressed critical issues like education and sanitation, earning recognition far and wide. Vandana's journey shows how women can play a leading role in transforming rural India.



Hiware Bazar, a village in Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra, used to be affected by frequent droughts and poor agricultural yield. After **Popatrao Baguji Pawar** became its Sarpanch, he started applying Anna Hazare's model of rainwater harvesting, watershed conservation and massive tree planting of lakhs of trees, all of which contributed to the recharge of groundwater. With the collaboration of the villagers, Hiware Bazar became a green and prosperous village in a few years. Shri Popatrao Pawar was awarded the Padma Shri in 2020.

The Gram Panchayat is assisted by a Panchayat Secretary who performs administrative functions such as calling meetings and maintaining records. Most Gram Panchayats are also assisted by an officer called 'Patwari' in many parts of India, who maintains the villagers' land records. In some cases, the Patwari keeps maps that are generations old!



THINK ABOUT IT

How do you think can these old maps be helpful for us?
Can they tell us something about the past and the present?

Child-Friendly Panchayat Initiative

Panchayats are supposed to listen to everyone's voice — including the voice of children. The Child-Friendly Panchayat Initiative creates opportunities for children to express their ideas and opinions on matters that concern their wellbeing. Steps are being taken in several States to encourage the participation of children in Bal Sabhas and Bal Panchayats on a regular basis, while village elders try to find solutions to their concerns.

In Maharashtra, for example, a few Bal Panchayats have worked to eliminate child labour and child marriage. They have brought many children back to school. The Bal Panchayat members get together to convince parents and other adults to send their wards back to school, and not to arrange marriages for girls who should be studying.

Several Gram Panchayats have won awards for taking child-friendly initiatives. Here's an example from Sikkim:

Sangkhu Radhu Khandu Gram Panchayat, in west Sikkim, has given a lot of importance to children's needs and rights.

The Panchayat has built compound walls for schools to make them safer for children. To ensure that students get hygienically cooked mid-day meals, the Gram Panchayat has constructed kitchens in the schools. It is for these efforts that Sangkhu Radhu Khandu has been declared a child-friendly Gram Panchayat.

Let us also look at another example from Rajasthan:

The 'Children's Parliament', an offshoot of Bunker Roy's 'Barefoot College' initiative a few decades ago, empowered underprivileged children in Rajasthan's rural areas through education and democratic participation. Children aged 8 to 14 are engaged in governance processes, learning about democracy and social responsibility through night schools and parliament-like elections. The 'Parliament' followed formal procedures, including voter ID cards and campaigning. Elected representatives formed a 'Cabinet', overseeing school management and advocating for community needs. The initiative fostered leadership skills and social awareness, enabling children to challenge societal norms and advocate for change. Children actively addressed issues such as access to education, sanitation and



social equality, contributing to community development. The Children's Parliament initiative received many accolades, including the World's Children's Honorary Award in 2001.

LET'S EXPLORE

As a class activity, let four or five students form a Bal Panchayat and the rest of the class imagine they are the villagers. What issues will the Gram Sabha discuss? What challenges could it encounter? What solutions will it propose?



Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad

Similar institutions exist at the block level and the district level, which are above the village level. Their names are listed in the pyramidal diagram we saw in Fig. 11.1 on page 164. The Panchayat Samiti at the block level is the link between the Gram Panchayat and the Zila Parishad at the district level. The members of these institutions are elected by the local people, but they may have other members like Sarpanchs of the villages in the area and local members of the State Legislative Assembly.

The composition of the Panchayat Samitis differs from State to State, but their role in strengthening the participation of local people remains the same. They coordinate matters across Gram Panchayats, for instance, by collecting development plans from all Gram Panchayats and putting them together to present them at the District or State levels respectively. This facilitates the allotment of funds for such development projects and for government schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, which promotes the construction of all-weather roads in rural areas.

At all the three levels, special rules have been made so that disadvantaged sections of the population can make their needs and problems heard. These institutions also have a provision for reserving one-third of the seats for women.



THINK ABOUT IT

Why do you think it is important for the government to pay more attention to the needs and problems of the disadvantaged sections of society?



LET'S EXPLORE

- What similarities and differences do you notice between the governance system at the Central level and at the Panchayat level? (*Hint: refer back to Chapter 10 if required.*)
- If you get an opportunity to meet a few Panchayat members, what questions would you like to ask them? Discuss in small groups to create a questionnaire. Meet some Gram Panchayat members or invite them to your school. Ask them the questions in your questionnaire and write a short report.

Let us remember that the structure and functions of the Panchayati Raj institutions differ a little across States. This is because the States have authority over those institutions. But their objectives are the same — it is to enable villagers to take an active part in the management and development of their villages and the local area.

The *Arthaśhāstra* is an ancient text of governance written by Kauṭilya (later also known as Chāṇakya) some 2,300 years ago. Among other things, it describes how a state should be structured and run, how the economy can be made prosperous, what the duties of the ruler are and how to conduct war. Kauṭilya, an expert in statecraft, also explains how a whole administrative structure should be put in place from the village to the regional capital:

"The king shall establish a *sangrahaṇa* (a sub-district head quarters) for every 10 villages; a *kārvaṭika* (district headquarters) for every 100 villages; a *droṇamukha* for every 400 villages; and a *sthānīya* (provincial headquarters) for every 800 villages."

In today's language, what are the names we would give these four categories? Is it not amazing that a similar structure was thought of so long ago?

Before we move on ...



- The local government in rural areas is organised into a three-tier system.
- Democracy in the Panchayati Raj system works both through direct participation of people and through their elected representatives.
- The Panchayati Raj institutions give people in rural areas a measure of self-governance, so they may manage their issues and collaborate in development plans.

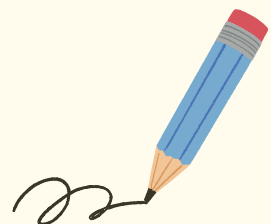
Questions, activities and projects

1. Test yourself — without looking at the text above, can you name the three tiers of the Panchayati Raj system? What are the key functions of each of the three tiers?
2. Write a letter to the Sarpanch regarding the issue of plastic bags lying on the roadside in the village.
3. In your view, what type of person should be a Gram Panchayat member?
4. Let us suppose that you study in a village school. The school is located next to a highway and students find it difficult to cross the road when they come to school or leave at the end of the day. What are the options to solve this issue? Which institutions in the Panchayati Raj can help you? What can the students do?

Noodles

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*'Noodles' is our abbreviation for 'Notes and Doodles'!



Grassroots Democracy – Part 3

Local Government in Urban Areas

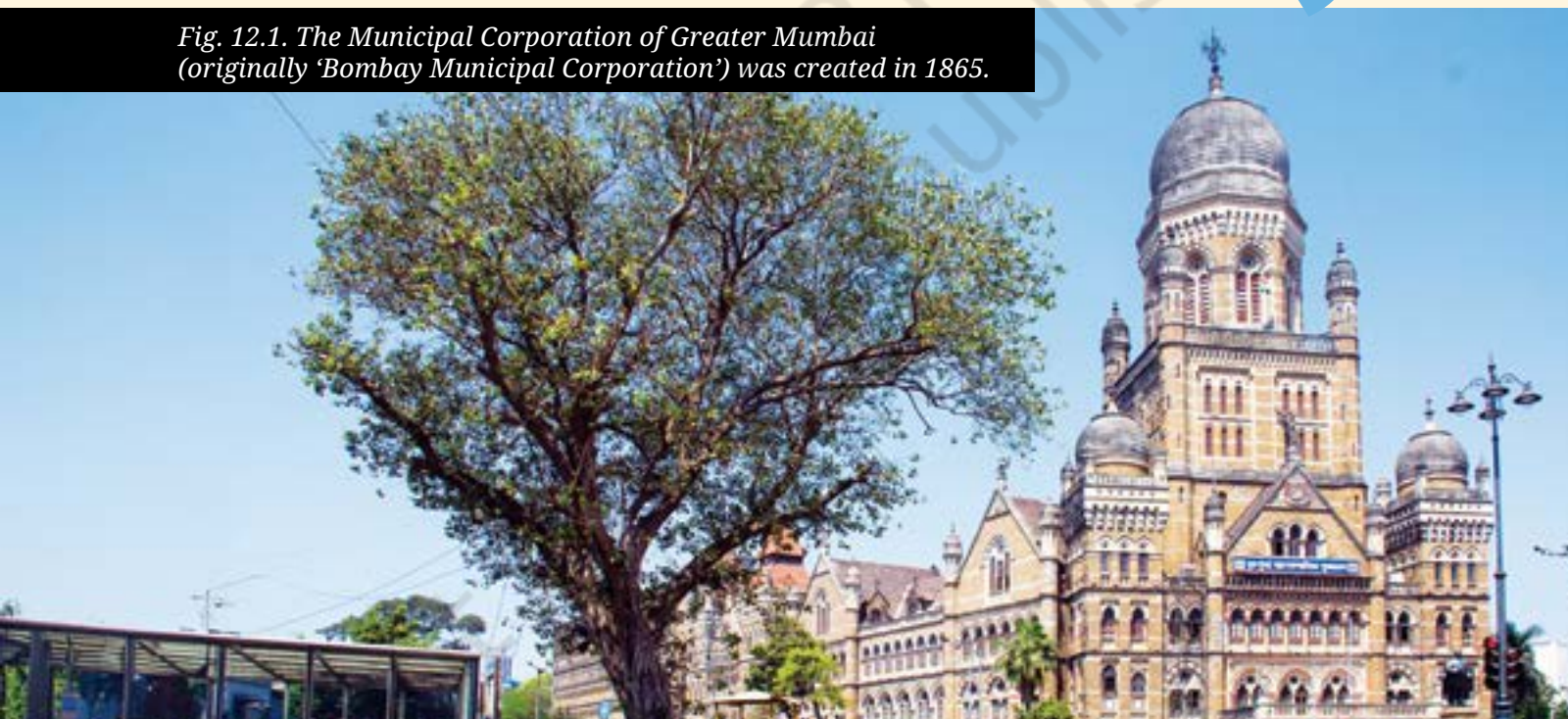
CHAPTER

12

I desire that ... a full-fledged local body should be immediately formed, ... so that people may know really what is an administration, what are the franchise, what are the powers, what are the rights and what are the privileges in a small sphere, in their own town, in their own villages.

— Rustom K. Sidhwa, Member, Constituent Assembly
(during the Constituent Assembly Debates, 13 October 1949)

Fig. 12.1. The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (originally 'Bombay Municipal Corporation') was created in 1865.



The **Big**
Questions ?

1. What are urban local bodies and what are their functions?
2. Why are they important in governance and democracy?



Introduction



Earlier chapters have shown us how, in a democracy, good governance aims to empower the citizens so they may actively participate in their country's functioning, whether it is at the rural, regional, urban, state or national level. This is the broader concept of **participatory democracy**.

We saw the basics of the system in a rural context. Let us now see how it works in an urban scenario. Since the latter is generally more complex

and diverse than the former, it is understandable that the urban governance system needs to be more complex too. We will however limit ourselves here to its basic principles.

LET'S EXPLORE



- Why is a city like Kolkata, Chennai or Mumbai more complex and diverse than a village or a town?
- With your classmates, make a list of diverse communities residing in any city that you are familiar with. How many were you able to list? What else do you observe in the list?

Before we explore governance and administration in urban areas, it helps to take an overall look at the Indian system of governance, from rural to national, as depicted in Fig. 12.2 on page 175. The base of the pyramid is the local level, closer to the people, while the top is the national level. In Chapter 11, we explored the left side of the pyramid; we will now take a look at the right side.

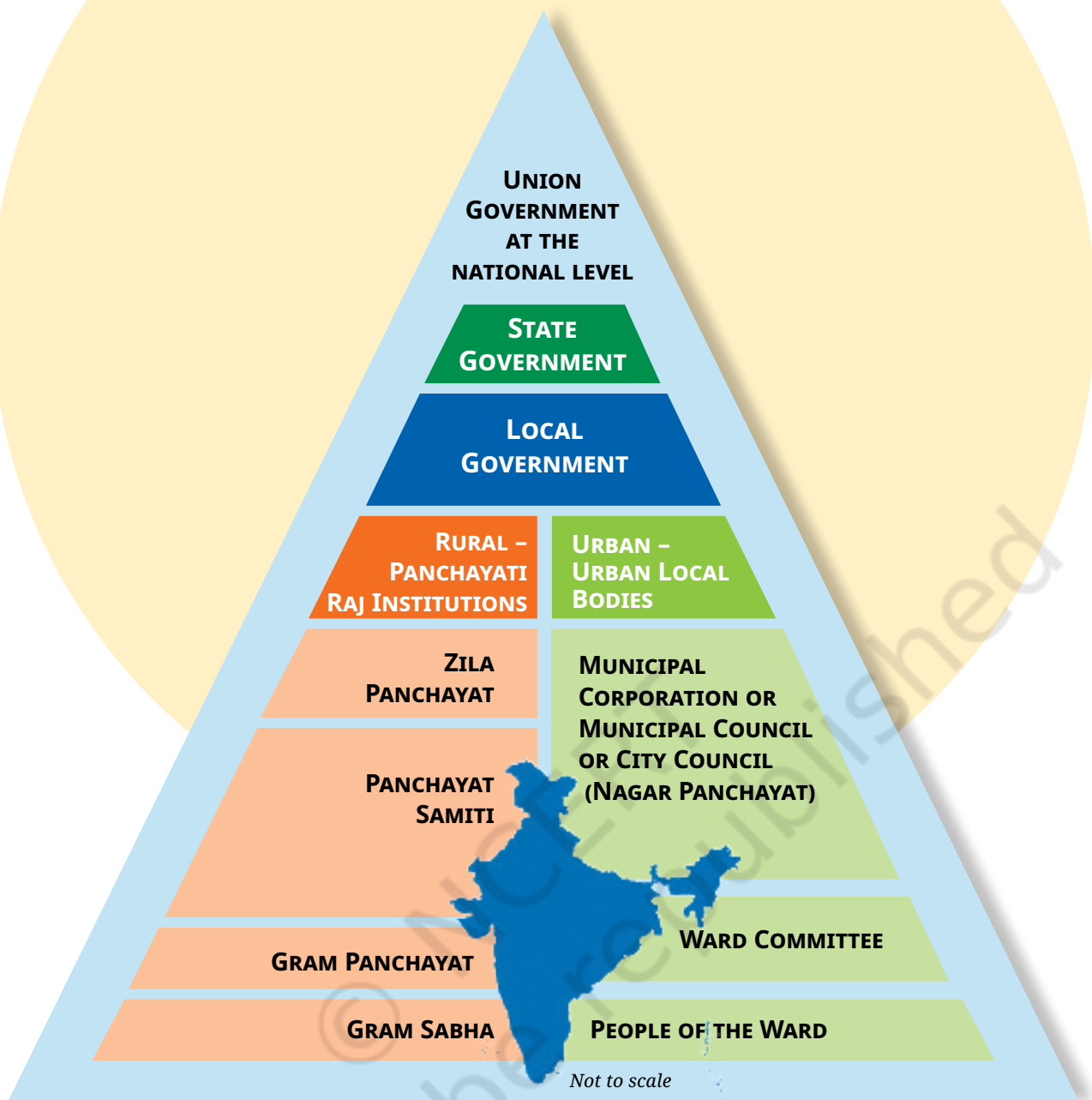


Fig. 12.2

LET'S EXPLORE

In Fig. 12.2 above, what similarities and differences do you notice between the Panchayati Raj system and the urban local government?

Urban Local Bodies

Local government structures in urban areas are called 'urban local bodies'. They are decentralised, which means that instead of operating under a central authority at the

top, the local communities have a direct say on how their areas are managed or the issues they face. It is a mechanism for citizens living in an area to come together and take decisions about what is best for them.

Cities and towns are divided into smaller units called 'wards', and the ward committees facilitate activities such as conducting health camps, organising a campaign against the use of single-use plastics, and so on. They also keep an eye on anything that might go wrong — a water leak, a blocked drain, a damaged road, etc. — and report such problems to the authorities. However, the precise functioning of wards differs from State to State, depending on the rules they make.



Altogether, urban local bodies are responsible for a range of functions — helping take care of the infrastructure, maintaining the burial ground, garbage collection and disposal, checking the implementation of government schemes, collecting local taxes and fines, and so on. They also have some role in planning for the area's economic and social development. However, for these bodies to be

able to perform their functions efficiently, people living in the city must also perform their duties, which means that they must show care and concern for their area (remember, this is a **participatory** democracy). For instance, if people carefully follow instructions regarding waste segregation, garbage collection becomes easier; or if they notice a water leakage in a street, reporting it promptly will prevent further wastage of precious water.

LET'S EXPLORE

Can you think of four or five more actions that responsible citizens might take to help their area of the city?



Fig. 12.3. The Madras Corporation

The Madras Corporation (now Greater Chennai Corporation), established on 29 September 1688, is the oldest municipal institution in India. The East India Company issued a charter the previous year constituting the town of 'Fort St. George' and all territories within 16 km from the Fort into a corporation. A Parliamentary Act of 1792 gave the Madras Corporation power to levy municipal taxes in the city, which is when the municipal administration properly began.

SERVICES UNDER THE INDORE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION					
					
PROPERTY TAX	WATER CHARGES	SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT	BUSINESS, HOARDINGS, TRADE LICENSES		
					
CRM* — MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE	CRM — FIRE SERVICES	CRM — VARIOUS LICENSES	CRM — WATER TANKER, DEBRIS CLEARANCE		
					
TREE CUTTING & TREE TRANSPORTATION		CRM — GRIEVANCES			
CRM — SERVICES ON REQUEST					
					
Water Tanker	Septic Tanker	Auditorium	Funeral Van	Mobile Toilet	Ambulance

**CRM: Citizen Relationship Management.*

(The list of services offered by the Indore Municipal Corporation is simplified here.)

Fig. 12.4. Services under the Indore Municipal Corporation



THINK ABOUT IT

Indore in Madhya Pradesh has been awarded the cleanest city in India under the *Swachh Survekshan* government scheme for seven years in a row. What could have been the role of Indore citizens in this achievement?

As we see, Chennai and Indore have a Municipal Corporation at the top of their urban bodies. Only cities with a population above 10 lakhs have a Municipal Corporation (also called 'Mahanagar Nigam') as their highest body. Between 1 and 10 lakhs, the highest body is a Municipal Council (also called 'Nagar Palika'). Cities and towns with smaller populations have a Nagar Panchayat.

LET'S EXPLORE

- Select a few cities, from your State and from a few neighbouring States. These may include the city you live in or the city nearest to your town or village. How will you find out if they have a Nagar Panchayat, Municipal Council or Municipal Corporation? Draw a table with the names of the cities and the type of urban local body each of them has.
- How do urban local bodies fund their activities? (*Hint: Look carefully at the pictures of the functions performed by Indore Municipal Corporation in Figure 12.4 on page 178.*) Are some of them paid services?

Sameer: Hello! I haven't seen you around here before. Are you new to this village?

Anita: Hello! Yes, I'm visiting my grandparents who live nearby. I am from the city. It's quite different from here!

Sameer: Oh, really? What's it like in the city?



Anita: Well, it's busy and crowded, with tall buildings everywhere. There are so many people rushing around all the time, and it's noisy compared to the quietness here. Also, people are more independent and often don't even know their neighbours.

Sameer: Wow! Here, everyone knows everyone else and pitches in to help each other out — we work together in the fields, celebrate festivals together, and even make decisions as a community.



Anita: Well, there's still some sense of community in the city. Just the other day, following heavy rains, a house collapsed two streets away. Dozens of people gathered from all over the place to help clear the rubble and make sure no one was trapped inside.

Sameer: Doesn't the local government help in such cases?

Anita: Yes, it does. In fact, we have local bodies and elected representatives who represent us and our interests.

Sameer: Well, it sounds like our village Panchayat, only bigger. Members are elected, too, but because they all know each other, a lot more people can participate and discuss all kinds of issues that concern the village. Sometimes, even us kids can get heard.

Anita: Really? You are not making that up?



Sameer: Not at all! The other day a few kids noticed that an electricity wire was hanging dangerously low, almost touching the roof of a building. Not only did we report it, but we explained to one of our Gram Sabha members that an electric post should be shifted a little. And it was done!

Anita: Great! I suppose that's how democracy should work. It seems more complicated in the city, but the idea is the same — everyone's voice matters.

Sameer: Yes, it does! Sorry, I must make a move. My mother needs my help for a little shopping. Thanks for telling me about the city.

Anita: And thanks for telling me about your village! I am definitely going to look around.

Sameer: Well, maybe we'll meet again sometime. Bye!

Before we move on ...

- In urban areas, decentralised governance works through different urban local bodies, which fulfil various functions affecting the citizens' lives.
- As with the rural context, urban local bodies have elected members who represent the local citizens.
- The citizens also have duties to ensure that the local bodies are able to perform their functions efficiently.



Questions, activities and projects

1. On your way to school, you and your friends notice that a water pipe is leaking. A lot of water is being wasted on account of the leak. What would you and your friends do in such a situation?
2. Invite a member of an urban local body near you to your class. Discuss with them their role and responsibilities. Prepare a set of questions to ask them so that the meeting is fruitful.

3. Discuss with adult members of your family and neighbourhood, and make a list of their expectations from the urban local bodies.
4. Make a list of characteristics of a good urban local body.
5. What are the similarities and differences between the Panchayati Raj system in rural areas and the urban local bodies?

Noodles

*'Noodles' is our abbreviation for 'Notes and Doodles'!



From the Rulers to the Ruled: Types of Governments

A ruler's duties in the internal administration of the country are three-fold: rakṣha (protection of the state from external aggression), pālana (maintenance of law and order within the state), and yogakṣhema (safeguarding the welfare of the people).

*Kauṭilya in Arthaśhāstra
(translation by L.N. Rangarajan)*

Fig. 9.1. Inside the Indian Parliament



The Big Questions ?

1. What are the different types of government?
2. Where do governments get their power from?
3. How does a country's government interact with the people?
4. Why does democracy matter?



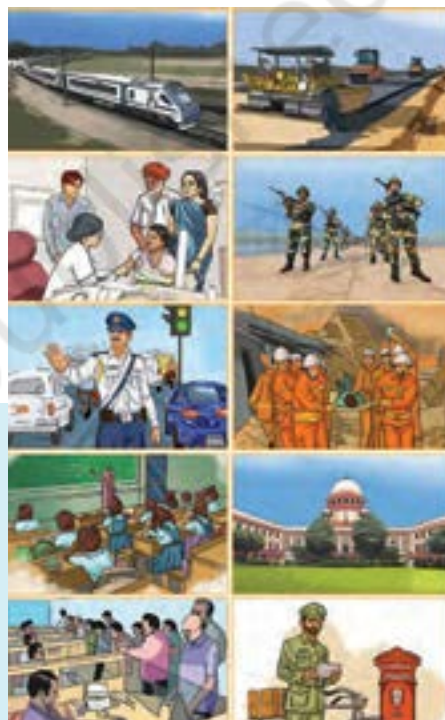
What is Government?

What are its Functions?

In Grade 6, we learned what government is and explored some of its roles.

The government plays an important role in our lives. This role includes:

- maintaining law and order in society;
- ensuring peace, stability, and security for the people;
- managing relationships with other countries;
- taking care of national defence;
- delivering essential goods and services (education, healthcare, infrastructure);
- managing the economy and economic activities;
- working for the welfare and improving people's lives.



LET'S EXPLORE

- Do you remember this picture from your Grade 6 textbook?
- The government also has many other roles. Try to list them.

Fig. 9.2

In Grade 6, we learned that India has a democratic form of government. Like India, many countries have a democratic government; but some countries have other forms of governments. Even all democratic governments are not exactly the same. In this chapter, we will learn about various forms of government, how they differ from each other, and how they function.

What is Democracy?

As we studied in Grade 6, 'democracy' is best understood as 'rule of the people.' This means that the source of power and authority in a democracy are the people of the country. Let's understand this with the example of a school.

A school example

A school is full of activities and things that must be done. Many day-to-day tasks need to be managed, and things need to be organised. For example, there are timetables to be made and followed, sports activities to be organised, food to be served during lunch time (also called the mid-day-meal), utensils to be cleaned, speakers to be decided for the morning assembly, and activities to be arranged for 'No Bag Days'. The list is very long in terms of all that needs to be done in the school.

With so many things to be done, the Head Teacher realised that a Student Committee should be appointed so that students can be part of making the relevant rules to get all this done, then help in implementation of the rules, and ensure that the rules are being followed. The question before the Head Teacher was — who will be part of the committee?

The Head Teacher discussed this in the assembly. She proposed that it would be good if some students can take responsibility for these tasks. A student committee should be formed. Hearing this, the students got excited and started arguing.

Naghma: Students in Grade 12 are the most senior; we will take care of everything.

Shobha: But you will finish school in a few months. The students in Grade 11 should take care of everything.

Gurpreet: If the students of only one grade will take care of everything, then how will they know about the problems that other grades face?



Fig. 9.3



THINK ABOUT IT

The school example helps us to understand the concept of representation and how it works. However, the students' committee is different from Parliamentary and Legislative committees, as class representatives in a school are quite different from Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs). What are these differences? Discuss with your teacher in the classroom and make a list.

Representative:

A person who is chosen to act or make decisions on behalf of another person or group of people

In this exciting situation, the students finally came to three options:

- Everyone in the school becomes part of the committee and takes responsibility.
- The Head Teacher chooses the students herself for the committee.
- The students choose their representatives through voting, and the chosen **representatives** become the members of the committee.

**LET'S EXPLORE**

Which of the three methods do you think is most effective? Why?

The first method may seem appealing, but if every student in the school is part of the committee, it will be difficult to reach decisions and manage implementation effectively. In the second method, since the Head Teacher selects the students for the committee, many students will not have a role and won't have a way to ensure that their voices are heard regarding what they need and want. However, in the third method, students from each grade can choose one representative from among themselves—someone they believe will effectively advocate for their class's needs. This representative will serve on the committee, meaning that the student committee will consist of representatives from each grade. This approach is a democratic way to choose representatives and form a committee.

Functions of Government

Previously, we discussed the various roles that a government plays in our lives, similar to the responsibilities of a student committee in a school. Just like the school committee, a government must create necessary rules, implement them, and ensure that everyone follows these rules. These three responsibilities are known as the functions of government.

The creation of rules is called the **legislative function**; these rules serve as the framework for running the country. The implementation of these rules and the administration of the country according to them is known as the **executive function**. Finally, ensuring that the rules are followed is referred to as the **judicial function**.

Democracy is defined as the ‘rule of the people’. This means that, similar to the third method of electing representatives in a school, in a democracy, the people select their representatives to govern them. However, not every country uses the same method for choosing these representatives. We will explore this topic in more detail in the following sections.



DO YOU KNOW?



Fig. 9.4. An 1896 **mural** by the painter Vedder called ‘Government’ from the Library of Congress, USA.

Abraham Lincoln, a U.S. president in the late 19th century, described democracy as a ‘government of the people, by the people, for the people’, a phrase still widely used today.

Mural:
A large painting or artwork created directly on a wall or a ceiling

What Makes Governments Different?

The government of any country evolves over time. Since countries have their own history, culture, and aspirations, it is natural that governments of different countries are different. Let's look at some aspects that can make one form of government different from another. These differences will become clearer when we look at various types of government later in the chapter.

Key differences between governments

Who gets to decide that 'this is the government'?

1. **Who gets to decide that 'this is the government'?** This is the most basic difference across many types of government. Who or what says that 'this is the government of our country'? That is, who or what gives the government its authority and power? For example, in a democracy like India, it is the people of the country who decide and are the source of authority, while in a theocracy, the source of authority is religious beliefs and the head of a religious institution.

How is the government formed?

2. **How is the government formed?** In a democracy, a government is formed usually through some kind of election. While in kingdoms which have kings or queens, the kind that you have read about in other chapters, usually someone from within the family continues to rule and decide how the government will be set up. There are other ways of forming a government, and even in democracies there can be different kinds of elections.

What are the different parts of the government and what do they do?

3. **What are the different parts of the government and what do they do?** Any government has many parts and systems, and these vary across different types of government. For example, the three functions of government referred to earlier—legislative, executive, and judiciary—can be performed by totally independent bodies or by the same body. The system to decide how the government will work can be written down in a book of fundamental rules of the country, called the 'constitution', which is what happens in most

democracies. Or it can be decided by the king or queen, as it happens in ‘monarchies’ — governments of kings or queens.

4. **What is the government working for? What goals is it trying to achieve?** Governments are designed to work towards certain values and ideals. Some governments, like the government of India, are designed to work towards equality and prosperity for all, while some other governments may be designed only for the prosperity of some families or groups.

What is the government working for? What goals is it trying to achieve?

There are differences between different forms of government based on these four major aspects, but there could be other kind of differences. So, let us now look at some types or forms of government.

Democratic Governments around the World

Democracy is the most popular form of government in the modern world. In this part of the chapter, we will see that there are different kinds of democratic governments. Before we get into the differences, we should know that there are some fundamental principles of any democracy.

Fundamental principles of democracy

Equality in a democracy means that every person has the right to be treated equally. It also means that everyone should have equal access to facilities like education and health, and that everyone is equal before the law.



Freedom in democracy means that citizens have the right to make their own choices and express their opinions.



Representative participation means that every person has a right to choose and elect their representatives. This is done through the process of elections. Elected representatives become a part of the legislature.





Universal adult franchise grants every citizen (above a certain age) the right to vote to choose their representative.



Fundamental rights of a citizen, such as—right to equality, right to freedom of speech and expression, and right against exploitation—are all provided and protected in a democracy.



Independent judiciary ensures that every citizen's fundamental rights are protected, and that laws are followed by the citizens and also by all the parts of the government.

It is useful to remember that even these fundamental principles have evolved over time. For example, India provided universal adult franchise (meaning the right to vote in elections to all adults) from the very beginning of the Indian republic in 1950; on the other hand, in Switzerland, women got the right to vote only in 1971.

Clearly, the above principles are ideals; not all democracies are able to put them in practice. But equally clearly, it is important for the citizens to keep these ideals in front of them.

Different forms of democratic governments

Let us now understand the different forms of democratic governments around the world.

1. Direct democracy

This is a form of democracy where all the citizens of a country are directly responsible for all the rules, regulations and functions. They participate in all the decisions directly.

In contemporary times, some kinds of this form are followed in a few countries, like Switzerland. The limitation of this form of government is that it is very hard to carry out in practice, particularly in larger countries—just as we saw in our school story: if everyone becomes a part of the

committee, then decision-making and working on all tasks smoothly will be difficult.

2. Representative democracy

This is the form of democratic government in which the people elect their representatives through universal adult franchise, just like in India. In this form of democracy, the people do not directly govern, but the government is always **accountable** to the people.

Elections are an integral part of representative democracy through which people can express changes in their choices as well. To accomplish this, elections happen in regular and fixed intervals of time. In India we have general elections every five years, while in the United States of America they occur every four years.

Accountability:
Accountability in democracy means that the government is answerable to the people who have elected them.



DON'T MISS OUT

As we stated in the beginning, democracies have evolved over time, and so have their characteristics. Even today, there are a lot of differences in the functioning of these democracies. It is useful to remember that when these countries adopted democracies, they may not have had all the principles of democracy as we understand them today. For example, effective Universal Adult Suffrage in the UK happened in 1928 and in the USA by 1965.

Country	Year when democracy was established
USA	1787
Switzerland	1848
India	1947
Germany	1949
Kenya	1964
Nepal	2008



Fig. 9.5. Voting in India

Most of the democracies today are representative democracies. But every democracy functions differently. Here are the two forms of representative democracy.

a. Parliamentary democracy

In this form of government, the members of the executive are also part of the legislature. For example, in India, the prime minister and the council of ministers are also members of the parliament.

The council of ministers are accountable to the legislature and continue working as long as they have the confidence of the legislature. In India, the council of ministers can continue working while they have confidence of the Lok Sabha.

In this form of government, people elect the legislature but not the executive. Selected members of the legislature become ministers.

b. Presidential democracy

In this form of government, the executive works independently of the legislature. The president is elected by the people. The president does not need to have the confidence of the legislature for his/her position.

In some countries like India, states within the country such as Rajasthan or Kerala have their own governments, but they are not completely independent. They are still governed by a larger national government, the Union Government of India.

The different forms of democratic government have different structures. You can understand the basic differences from the table 9.1 on the facing page.

What do these terms mean?

- **Executive:** The executive is the organ of the government which is responsible for implementing the law. But the process of its election is different in different countries.

Different forms of democratic government			
Institution	Executive	Legislature	Judiciary
India	prime minister and the council of ministers	Lower House (Lok Sabha) is more powerful than Upper House (Rajya Sabha)	independent from executive and legislature (separation of power)
USA	president	equal power between Upper House (Senate) and Lower House (House of Representatives)	independent from executive and legislature (separation of power)
South Korea	president	single house (National Assembly)	independent from executive and legislature (separation of power)
Australia	prime minister and the council of ministers	equal power between Upper House (Senate) and Lower House (House of Representatives)	independent from executive and legislature (separation of power)
A			
B			

Table 9.1 Different forms of democratic government

- **Legislature:** The legislature is the body of the government which is responsible for making laws. It is known by different names in different countries. In India, it is called Parliament; in the USA, it is called Congress. In most democracies, it has two houses, the Upper House and the Lower House.

- **Upper House and Lower House:** In most countries, the Lower House is elected by direct voting and is generally more powerful than the Upper House, which is formed either by election or nomination. These Houses are known by different names in different countries. In India, the Lower House is called the Lok Sabha, and the Upper House is called the Rajya Sabha.
- **Separation of Power** means that the three organs of the government—Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary—work independently and do not interfere in each other's functions.



LET'S EXPLORE

- Fill the blank columns under Country A and Country B in table 9.1 given on the previous page by taking two different countries of your choice.
- Analyse the table and discuss amongst yourselves the similarities and differences in all the examples.

The exercise must have given you an understanding that different forms of democratic governments have different ways of formation, structures and functioning. Along with this, the relationships between the three organs of government also differs. But as we read in the beginning, some characteristics, like equality, freedom and universal adult franchise remain the same in all democracies.



LET'S EXPLORE

- After studying the above examples, list the core principles of a democratic government. Based on your understanding, do the activity given below:
- You have to form a Student Committee in your school. Make a plan and execute it in a democratic manner, ensuring that:
 - ◆ Functions of the committee are well defined
 - ◆ The election process of the committee members is democratic

A Peek into History

Early republics

A republic is a form of government in which the head of state is elected and is not a hereditary monarch.

This was the case in at least two of India's ancient *mahājanapadas*, as you might recall from the chapter 'New Beginnings: Cities and States'. In the Vajji (or Vṛji) *mahājanapada*, the Lichchhavi clan, in particular, practised collective decision-making, and leaders were chosen based on merit rather than birth. Key positions were filled through elections, and representatives from various clans met regularly to address issues and develop solutions to ensure the people's welfare. As a result, such states have been called early republics.

Indeed, the voice of the common people has been valued and upheld in India through the ages, even when the power was in the hands of a king or queen. A remarkable example from the Chola period is seen in the Uttaramerur inscriptions from the 10th century CE in Tamil Nadu, which provide us with details about the election of members to the village *sabhā* (local administrative body). We learn about the election process, including sealed ballot boxes, qualifications of members, their duties, and also the conditions that could lead to their dismissal.



Fig. 9.6. Chola period inscriptions on the walls of Vaikuntha Perumal temple, Uttaramerur, Tamil Nadu

Slave:

A person who is forced to work for and obey another and is considered to be their property.

Subjugate:

To take control of people or a place by using force and make the people obey.

For instance, members would be immediately removed if found to have indulged in any corruption.

There were republics in other parts of the world too. In the 5th and 4th centuries BCE, Rome and Greece had republics. In some regions of Greece, free men could vote, but women, workers and **slaves** could not. Other areas had a system where only a small, privileged group could vote or make decisions.

Other Forms of Government

In the previous sections we saw that democracy is the most popular form of government in today's world, and that there are different forms of democracy as well. Let us now look at other forms of governments, and understand their basic structures.

1. Monarchy

As we saw in chapters of 'Tapestry of the Past', *mahājanapadas* were headed by kings, who were guided by the *sabhā* or *samiti* and were expected to take decisions and advice of these institutions

seriously. As empires were built and expanded across India, kings began to gain immense power. Yet, they relied on a council of ministers and a network of officials to help them govern the empire. In many cases, the king also sought the advice of learnt scholars on matters related to *dharma*. Of course, there were also examples of kings who used their power to **subjugate** their people.

In some parts of the world, kings had all the power; they made the laws, enforced them, and also decided the punishments. In some cases, they claimed to have received divine power from God.

However, in many parts of India, the power of the *raja* was neither absolute nor beyond question. The king was



Fig. 9.7. Adoration of the pillar of Sanchi Stūpa

expected to make decisions while staying within the limits of *rājadharmā*; this meant ruling according to dharma and ensuring the welfare of all people. This was an ideal that kings did not necessarily achieve.



THINK ABOUT IT

What might happen if the king considered himself to have divine powers? How would he rule over the people?



DON'T MISS OUT



Fig. 9.8. A 17th-century Rajput miniature painting depicting Bhīṣma lying on a bed of arrows, teaching Yudhiṣṭhira while Kṛiṣṇa sits at the head, witnessing the moment.

In the Shānti Parva of the Mahābhārata, when Bhīṣma, the wise elder of the Kuru dynasty, lies on a bed of arrows awaiting his death, he teaches Yudhiṣṭhira, the eldest Pāṇḍava, at great length on good governance, justice, and the moral responsibilities of a raja. A raja is not just a ruler; the welfare of his people is his highest priority. He must apply the law without bias to ensure fairness and equality. He must not get attached to power, as it fosters ego and corruption. He must seek guidance from wise advisors to ensure just and well-informed decisions. The raja must understand that his authority is temporary and bound by dharma.

King Chandrāpīḍa wanted to build a temple to his deity, but the hut of a stubborn cobbler stood in the way. When the builders complained to the king that he did not even allow them to take measurements, the king blamed them for not asking the cobbler's permission first. The king received the cobbler, who explained that his humble hut was like a mother to him and as precious to him as the palace was to the king: "The misery people feel when their homes are forcibly taken away can be described only by a god who has fallen from his celestial car or by a king who has lost his kingdom!" Nevertheless, the cobbler expressed his readiness to let go of his hut if only the king would come and respectfully ask for his permission — which the king did, giving him adequate money as compensation. "For those who desire happiness, there should be no false pride," concludes the text, while the cobbler praised the king's commitment to dharma, even towards a lowly subject!

– From *Rājataranṅinī* by the Kashmiri scholar Kalhaṇa (12th century CE)

Sovereign:

Sovereign indicates that the source of power of a country is independent from external influence.

Monarchs: Kings or queens who inherit their position from their family, usually passing it from one generation to the next within the royal family.

2. Monarchies today

A monarchy is the type of government that is ruled by a monarch. Kings and queens are called monarchs, who exercise their **sovereign** power. **Monarchies** are usually hereditary; typically, the eldest son of the ruling monarch becomes the next king.

Today we have two types of monarchy:

a. Absolute monarchy

In an **absolute monarchy** the monarch has complete control in the making of laws,

ensuring that they are followed and **adjudicating** when they are not. Saudi Arabia is an example of an absolute monarchy; here the king holds all power and governs according to Islamic law. However, he appoints a council that advises and assists him on governance; but he is not bound by the council's advice.

Adjudicating:
Judging a case
when there is
a dispute

b. Constitutional monarchy

Let us consider an example of a different kind of monarchy. The United Kingdom or Britain is also a monarchy. The head of the state is the king or queen, but he or she has only nominal power and the real power of the executive is exercised by the prime minister. The legislative power is exercised by the parliament.

This means that all the laws are made by the elected parliament, and executive power is exercised by the Council of Ministers led by the prime minister. So while Britain has a king, it really is, today, a parliamentary democracy. This kind of monarchy is called a constitutional monarchy.



Fig. 9.9. King Charles III in a ceremonial coach during the visit of a foreign dignitary.

2. Theocracy

A theocracy is a form of government where the country is ruled by the rules of religion and religious leaders.

Iran, whose full official name is 'Islamic Republic of Iran' has a unique political system combining elements of both a theocratic and democratic governance. Their constitution is based on the fundamental principles of Islam, the country's official religion. The Supreme Leader, who has the ultimate authority over the legislature, executive and judiciary, is selected by a group of Islamic clerics and his term is for life. There are also an elected president and a parliament that take care of everyday governance. The intent of the republic is to establish a society based on Islamic norms.

Other theocracies currently in existence include Afghanistan and Vatican City.

3. Dictatorship

A dictatorship is a form of government in which one person, or a small group possesses absolute power—they do not have any limits imposed on them by a constitution or law. The 20th century witnessed many examples of dictators who created extremely difficult circumstances for the people; we will only see two of them here.

- Soon after Adolf Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany in 1933, he passed laws that gave him full power and eliminated the opposition. He was now a dictator. Convinced of the superiority of his people, he believed that Germany should rule the world and dominate 'inferior races'. He was responsible for the killing of at least six million Jews (this is known as the 'Holocaust') as well as hundreds of thousands of Roma and other groups of people. In fact, he was the cause for World War II in the years 1939–1945,



Fig. 9.10. Caricature of Adolf Hitler

which resulted in immense loss of life and property in many countries.

- Idi Amin was a military dictator in Uganda. He was directly responsible for the merciless killing of thousands of people. Many Indians whose ancestors had migrated to Uganda a few generations before were forced to flee the country.



Fig. 9.11. Caricature of Idi Amin

Caricature:

A drawing that makes someone look funny or foolish because some part of the person's appearance is exaggerated



DON'T MISS OUT

The Roma, or Romani people; were originally nomads. Based on their linguistic and cultural characteristics, scholars have determined that they originated in India. They first settled in parts of eastern Europe but have now migrated to several countries of the world.



Fig. 9.12

Story of Shane

Shane lives in North Korea which has a set of defined rules for his everyday living. He is currently serving in compulsory military service in which he is expected to serve in the military till the time government decides. There are also rules about how his hair should be cut and the clothes he should wear. He cannot access the global internet, and so is unaware of the world outside his own country. The government watches his every action closely and he is also expected to report about anyone who tries breaking any of the defined rules. One day he met a tourist who asked him, "Why do all of you have the same haircut here?" To this Shane responded, "We all want to explore new styles, but the government decides the way we should keep our hair."



LET'S EXPLORE

- Does Shane's country look like a democracy?
- How do you think Shane's everyday life would be?
- Would you like to live in such a country? Explain why.

4. Oligarchy

The word 'oligarchy' is of Greek origin, where *oligos* means a few and *árkhō* means to rule or command. It is a type of government where a small, powerful group makes all the important decisions; usually they are wealthy families or influential people.

In some places in ancient Greece, aristocratic families ruled as oligarchies. In modern times, **political commentators** have observed that even some democracies show signs of oligarchy when a small group of politicians and wealthy businesspeople hold too much influence in governance.

Political commentators:
People who analyse and share their opinions about political events



Fig. 9.13. A cartoon from 1889 depicting an oligarchic situation.

LET'S EXPLORE

- Look carefully at the picture in Fig. 9.13 on the previous page. It depicts an elected body in the USA in the late 19th century. The people shown in the cartoon are all elected members. What do you observe? What do you see at the top left-hand corner of the cartoon? Who do you think is making decisions in this elected body?
- Can a democracy turn into an oligarchy? What can people do to keep democracy strong?



Why Democracy Matters

These different types of governments show us that democracy is not the only way in which countries are governed. But in most countries, democracy is considered to be a better form of government than others. Let us do a quick comparison to understand this better.

Consider the characteristics below in different forms of government and fill in the blank boxes with Yes or No:

Characteristics	Democracy	Dictatorship	Absolute Monarchy	Oligarchy
Universal Adult Franchise	Yes	No	No	No
Equality amongst citizens				
Freedom of speech				
Separation of powers				
Wellbeing and Prosperity of all citizens				

Governance and Democracy
9 – From the Rulers to the Ruled: Types of Government

Table 9.2 Characteristics of different forms of government

**LET'S EXPLORE**

You have learnt the basic characteristics of various forms of governments. Do a small role play of the various forms in your classroom:

- Enact democracy
- Enact monarchy
- Enact dictatorship
- What do you find to be the most suitable form of government?

You have read about different forms of government above and how the form of government defines the lives of its citizens. In the previous table, we could see that the representation of people's choices and rights varies across the different forms.

In a genuine democracy, the people can lead their everyday lives in the way they want. They can choose what to speak, what to wear, what beliefs to follow, and how to express themselves. All of this can be done in a democracy until and unless it harms someone else's rights.

In a democratic government, the people choose their government. The government is accountable for protecting the rights of its people and is responsible for providing basic needs to its citizens. If the government does not perform its functions properly, the people can change their representatives through elections. This ensures that there is a constant check of what the government does. Thus, the values and ideals of the government in a democracy should focus on the well-being of all its people.

Our country is a democracy, and you can see many of the features of a democracy in our lives every day. It is therefore no wonder that more than half of the countries in the world have adopted democracy and democratic forms of government.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that even democracies have their problems. Issues such as corruption, wealth disparity, excessive control by a few over democratic institutions, erosion of the judiciary's independence, manipulation of information

channels, and several more, can cause hurdles in achieving the ideals of democracy. What can we do as individuals, and as a society, to remain vigilant and minimize these issues and hurdles?

Before we move on ...



- Government plays an important role in running a country. Different types of governments across the world have different answers to the following questions: Who decides “This is the government”? What are the parts of the government and what do they do? Who or what is the government working for? What values and ideals should the government follow?
- The most popular form of government in the world today is democracy. Democratic governments across the world have variations, including direct democracy and representative democracy.
- There are two types of representative democracy—presidential and parliamentary democracy. India is a parliamentary democracy.
- Other types of government include monarchy, theocracy, dictatorship and oligarchy.
- Democracy matters, but there are serious challenges to democracy that citizens need to remain vigilant about.

Questions and activities

1. Write names of the various types of government that you have learnt in the chapter.
2. Which type of Government does India have? And why is that called that type?
3. You read that an independent judiciary is present in all types of democracies. State any three reasons why you think it is important for the judiciary to be independent.
4. Do you think democratic government is better than other forms of government? Why?

5. These are some practices in a few different countries. Can you match the practice with the type of government?

S. No	Practice in the country	Type of Government
I.	All citizens are treated equally before law	Dictatorship
II.	The government refers to the religious leader for each and every decision it takes.	Monarchy
III.	After the queen's death, her son became the new king.	Democracy
IV.	The ruler is not bound to follow any Constitution. He makes all the decisions as per his choice.	Theocracy

6. Below is a list of countries. Find out the types of government these countries have:

S. No	Country	Type of Government
1	Bhutan	
2	Nepal	
3	Bangladesh	
4	South Africa	
5	Brazil	

7. What are possible hurdles in a democracy in achieving its values and ideals? How can they be overcome?
8. Democracy is different from monarchy and dictatorship. Explain.

The Constitution of India — An Introduction

I would like to point out that if we are able to act according to the Constitution which has been adopted..., I am sure we shall be able very soon to make our country great. This is a goal which is within our power to reach, but its realisation would require hard physical and mental labour and above all great moral regeneration.

We have prepared a democratic Constitution. But the successful working of democratic institutions requires in those who have to work with them willingness to respect the viewpoint of others, capacity for compromise and accommodation.

— Dr. Rajendra Prasad, first President of India

Fig 10.1. Glimpses from the Republic day Parade



The Big Questions ?

1. What is a constitution, and why do we need one?
2. How was the Indian Constitution prepared?
3. How did our freedom struggle and civilisational heritage influence the Constitution?
4. What are the key features of the Constitution of India? Why is it still relevant, even though it was written more than seventy years ago?



Helium is a gas that doesn't react with paper or ink, helping to preserve the Constitution over time.

It was yet another chilly January morning in Delhi, much like every Republic Day. Ma's voice echoed through the house, "Wake up! It's time, or you'll miss the parade!" Papa, already up, switched on the television to Doordarshan and called out, "Kumar, Niharika, come quickly! The parade has started!" The children jumped out of their warm beds, rushing to sit in front of the television, eager not to miss even a moment of the Republic Day Parade.

The sight of the majestic marching bands, vibrant displays, and the unfurling of the tricolour at Kartavya Path filled the room with pride and excitement.

This day carries a deep significance — it marks the coming into effect of the Indian Constitution on 26 January 1950.

The book in the picture is our Constitution. To keep it safe, it is carefully preserved in a **helium**-filled glass case in Parliament. But what exactly is a constitution, and why is it so important?



Fig. 10.2. The Constitution of India carefully preserved in a helium-filled glass case



LET'S REMEMBER

Recall that in Grade 6, we saw the meaning of the word 'constitution'—a document that lays down the basic principles and laws of a nation. In small groups of three, list all the questions that come to your mind about a country's constitution.

The Constitution of India is the document that many of the important officials of our country pledge to uphold. The president takes an oath to preserve, protect, and defend it. The prime minister, council of ministers, and judges promise to follow its provisions.

What Is a Constitution?

A simple answer is that it is a document that spells out a nation's basic principles and laws. It lays out:

- the framework of the three organs of the government (legislature, executive, and judiciary) and their roles and responsibilities;
- checks and balances amongst the three organs of government to ensure fairness, responsibility and accountability;
- the rights and duties of the citizens;
- an outline of the long-term goals and aspirations of the nation.

Why do we need a constitution?

LET'S EXPLORE

Imagine that your school has reached the final tournament in kabaddi at the state-level. The opponent is a strong team that has won the tournament two years in a row. They are aiming to win a third time, a hat-trick. The match is on, and a player from your team has just got one of the players from the other team 'out'; then a dispute breaks out. The player from the other team insists that she had already crossed into her team area before your team player caught her. The referee has seen that the player from the other team was indeed 'out'. To settle the dispute amicably, she pulls out a little official rulebook. The team captains confer with the referee and look at the rules. They then agree that the player was indeed 'out', and your team has won the state-level trophy.



Discuss in your group what might have happened if there was no official rulebook that the referee and the team captains could refer to. What is required to ensure everyone agrees to abide by the rulebook? What might happen if the team captains did not agree to refer to the rulebook at all?

Think of a game that you play often and list the rules you follow. Each group will then present their set of rules to the rest of the class. Listen to each presentation, discuss the rules, and work together to decide on a common set of rules for the game. What challenges do you face in reaching a consensus on rules that everyone agrees with?

What could be the 'rulebook' for a country? How would it be made?

Our Constitution is something like a rulebook for the country.



DON'T MISS OUT

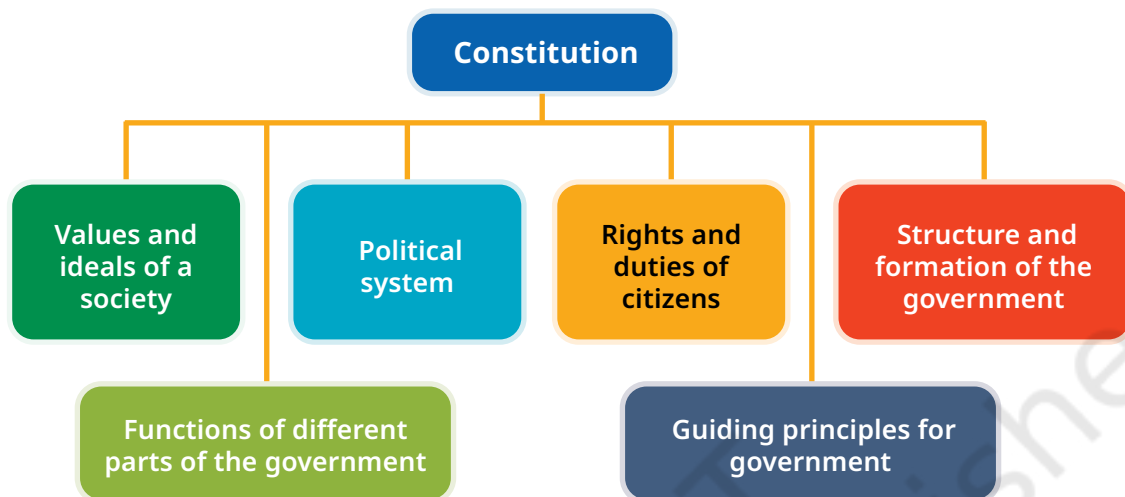
Just as your textbook has many sections and chapters, the Constitution of India has 25 parts and 12 schedules. Each part has sections within it. It is the world's largest written constitution. When it came into effect, it had 22 Parts and 8 schedules. You don't need to remember these numbers, but can you guess why they have increased since 1950?

The basic rules and principles in a constitution determine what kind of government will be there, how it will be formed, and how it will function. This includes many principles we saw in the previous chapter, such as how the legislature, executive and judiciary are formed and how they work. A constitution describes, for example, how laws are to be made and implemented, who elects the executive, how the judiciary is made, and what rights and duties individual citizens have.

Many constitutions, including the Indian Constitution, also state the values and ideals the country is committed to — for instance,

equality and justice for all, fraternity, pluralism and freedom. In fact, it is these values and ideals that usually form the basis for the laws and principles in a constitution.

Some of the important things that most constitutions contain:



Writing the Constitution of India



I wish your labours success, and invoke Divine blessings that your proceedings may be marked not only by good sense, public spirit, and genuine patriotism, but also by wisdom, toleration, justice, and fairness to all; and above all with a vision which may restore India to her pristine glory, and give her a place of honour and equality amongst the great nations of the world.

— Dr. Sachidananda Sinha,
President of the Constituent Assembly at the start of the process of the writing of the Constitution

While India was struggling for independence from British rule, it was necessary to start planning for how we would govern ourselves. There were many important questions to be answered in a large, culturally diverse and complex country like India: What type of government should we have? What rules and principles should guide us? Who should have the right to vote? How should we decide on disputes?

To answer these and many other questions, a Constituent Assembly was formed in 1946, initially with 389 members (later reduced to 299 after the Partition of India), of which 15 were women. These members represented India's diverse regions, professions, and social groups.

How was our Constitution developed?

The Indian Constitution was developed and written by the Constituent Assembly over a period of almost three years. It was formed on 9 December 1946, with its members elected by the legislative assemblies of the provinces (whose members had been, in turn, elected by the people). Dr. Rajendra Prasad was the Chairman of the Constituent Assembly. The drafting work was completed and adopted as the Constitution of India on 26 November 1949. This resulting document came into effect on 26 January 1950, which is why we celebrate this day annually as Republic Day.

The initial text of the Constitution was prepared by a Drafting Committee chaired by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, an eminent social reformer and the first Law and Justice minister of independent India (Fig. 10.3).



Fig. 10.3. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (seated, centre) with a few other members of the Drafting Committee.



LET'S EXPLORE

In small groups, try to find out the names of people from your region who may have participated in the making of the Constitution. What sources can you use to gather this information? (Hint: Look for books in your school or local library. You could also ask your teacher, parents and other elders in the neighbourhood. Explore <https://sansad.in/ls/about/constituent-assembly>)

What Shaped and Influenced the Indian Constitution?

While the Constitution was developed by the Constituent Assembly, it had many influences. The experience, ideas and ideals of the Indian freedom movement were a significant influence. India's civilisational heritage and culture also played a key role. Useful learnings from constitutions of other countries were also considered.

Influence of the Indian Freedom Movement

Many key ideals and values of the Indian freedom struggle were enshrined in the Constitution. The Constitution was the cornerstone for an independent India. A number of leaders of India's freedom movement were members of the Constituent Assembly and, therefore, carried their experience and ideas from the freedom struggle to the Constitution.

Some of these values and ideals are: equality of all, justice for all, freedom, fraternity, preservation of India's cultural heritage, and the idea of using the Constitution as a tool for and means of achieving these values and ideals.

The experience and learnings from the freedom struggle also provided answers to many of the 'how' and 'what' questions:



Fig. 10.4.1. Workings of the Constituent Assembly



Fig. 10.4.2. and 10.4.3. Workings of the Constituent Assembly

- How do we make sure that every adult citizen has a right to vote?
 - How do we ensure that the powers of the executive, legislature and judiciary are kept separate?
 - How do we guarantee that every individual's fundamental rights are respected?
- What should be the process if we want to amend the Constitution?
 - What should be the relationship between the Central and State governments? And so on.
- We will get glimpses of how all these have been structured in the Constitution later in this chapter.

India's civilisational heritage and history



LET'S REMEMBER

In the chapter on “Unity in Diversity, or ‘Many in the One’” in Grade 6, we studied what makes India one country and the underlying unity that embraces the diversity.

This idea of India being one country is embedded in the Constitution.

Some fundamental principles are embedded in our culture — acceptance of the idea that people could have different points of view, Nature as sacred, the pursuit of learning and knowledge, respect for women, the concepts of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (“the world is one family”) and *sarve bhavantu*

sukhinah (an invocation for the well-being of all creatures). All these principles find a place in our Constitution though you might find them expressed a little differently.



LET'S REMEMBER

Earlier, we described various types of governance systems that we experimented within India—from the *janapadas*, *sanghas*, rulers and their councils, Kautilya's concept of *saptāṅga*, *rājadharmā* and so on. On the whole, there has been a great emphasis on the duties and role of the people in governance.

It was, therefore, quite natural that the Constitution makers would incorporate these ideas of our civilisational heritage into our Constitution—‘Fundamental Duties’, for instance, are part of it.

Learnings from across the world

In addition, in the Indian tradition of *ā no bhadraḥ kratavo yantu viśhwataḥ*—“Let noble thoughts come to me from every side”—the Constitution makers studied the constitutions of France, USA, UK, Ireland, Australia, and other countries that have a democratic system, to explore their usefulness for our context. For example, the ideals of ‘liberty, equality, fraternity’ were adopted from France’s constitution (which enshrined them from the French Revolution of 1789); the idea of the Directive Principles of State Policy (which we will study shortly) was inspired by the Irish Constitution; and the American Constitution helped shape the concept of an independent judiciary.



Fig. 10.5. This ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen’, which focused on equality, liberty and justice for all, was formulated during the 1789 French Revolution. It helped the spread of such ideals in many parts of the world; many constitutions (including the French one) adopted or adapted its values and principles.

Some illustrations in the Constitution of India

Fig. 10.6. A scene from an ancient gurukula



Fig. 10.7. A scene from the Rāmāyaṇa: Rāma's conquest of Lanka and recovery of Sītā



Fig. 10.8. A scene from the Mahābhārata: Kṛiṣṇa propounding the Gītā to Arjuna

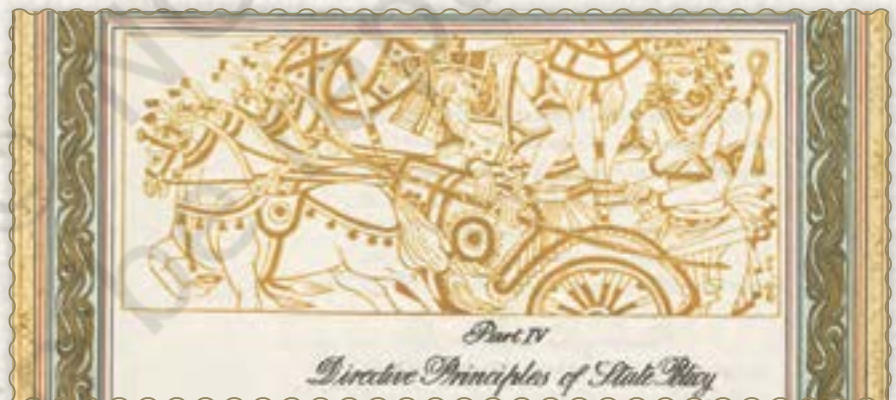


Fig. 10.9. A scene from Orissan sculptures





Fig. 10.10. An image of Natarāja

Fig. 10.11. Scenes from a Mahabalipuram bas-relief: Bhagīratha's penance and the descent of Gangā



Fig. 10.12. A scene with Akbar and Mughal architecture

Fig. 10.13. A scene depicting Nālandā, one of India's ancient universities



Key Features of the Constitution of India

Before we get acquainted with the main features of the Constitution, let us revisit some of the concepts we saw in Grade 6.



LET'S REMEMBER

- There are three organs of government—legislature, executive and judiciary—and the ‘separation of powers’ is essential to their effective working.
- The legislature makes the laws.
- The law is implemented by the executive, which is headed by the prime minister.
- The judiciary ensures that all laws made are in accordance with the Constitution. It also decides whether a law has been broken and what punishment is necessary.
- We have a three-tier system of government—central, state and local (Panchayati raj system).
- Some functions and responsibilities are reserved for the central government, and others are assigned to the state government.

The Constitution addresses these points comprehensively. It clearly defines the roles, functions, responsibilities, and accountability measures for each organ of government. The electoral system has been laid down to ensure that every eligible citizen of the country is enabled to vote.

Other core aspects of the Constitution are the Fundamental Duties, Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy. The infographic (Fig. 10.14) provides us with examples of a few of the Fundamental Duties and Rights (which are listed in full in the beginning of all NCERT textbooks). The Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP, as they are popularly called) represent the essence of the social and economic vision that the framers of the Constitution had for India. The examples we present in the infographic illustrate the principles they wanted governance to follow.



DON'T MISS OUT

Directive Principles are goals that the government should try to achieve. They reflect the direction they wished the country take to make India better for all; for example, everybody in the country must have a good standard of living. But if the government does not make efforts to follow this, one cannot go to a judge and complain about it. The DPSP are more like guidelines than strict rules. Fundamental Rights, on the other hand are promises that must be kept. If someone treats you unfairly because of who you are, you can actually go to court and the judge can help you.

The people who wrote our Constitution created this system on purpose. They wanted some rights that could be demanded immediately (Fundamental Rights) and some bigger goals (Directive Principles) that might take time to achieve as our country progressed.

LET'S EXPLORE

Read the quotation given below. Which article of the Constitution do you think she was referring to? Why do you think she said that the equality of women was not a new concept for India? Discuss in the class.



Sir, the women of India are happy to step into their rightful heritage of complete equality with men in all spheres of life and activity. I say so because I am convinced that this is no new concept which has been postulated for the purposes of this Constitution, but is an ideal that has long been cherished by India, though social conditions for some time had tragically debased it in practice. This Constitution affirms that ideal and gives the solemn assurance that the rights of women in law will be wholly honoured in the Indian Republic.

— Begum Aizaz Rasul, 22 November 1949,
during the Constituent Assembly's debates

- Right to Equality (Article 14. Equality before law)
- Right to Freedom (Article 21. Protection of life and personal liberty)
- Right against Exploitation
- Article 21-A. (Right to education)

Fundamental Rights

Directive Principles of State Policy

- Article 41: Welfare Government
- Article 44: Uniform Civil Code
- Article 38: Social, Political, and Economic Justice
- Article 48-A: Environment and Wildlife Protection
- Article 49: Protection of monuments, places, and objects of national importance
- Article 47: Nutrition, standard of living, and public health

Fundamental Duties

- to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag, and the National Anthem;
- to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;
- to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;
- to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wild life, and to have compassion for living creatures;
- to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement;
- if a parent or guardian, to provide opportunities for education to his or her child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years;

Fig 10.14. A glimpse of how the parts of the Constitution are organised

The Constitution is a Living Document

Our Constitution makers realised that a need for new laws and rules would emerge over time. For example, 'Part IV-A: Fundamental Duties' was added in 1976. However, we must remember that any changes (called 'amendments') to the Constitution are rigorously debated in the Parliament before they are accepted. Some require a debate in legislative assemblies as well. Many times, opinions are sought from the general public. Some changes can also be initiated by popular movements.

LET'S EXPLORE

- There was a time when people were not allowed to fly the national flag at their homes. This changed in 2004 when a citizen felt it was his right to express pride in his country and challenged the rule in court. The Supreme Court agreed, saying that flying the flag is part of the Fundamental Right to Freedom of Expression. We can now fly the tricolour with pride, keeping in mind that it should never be dishonoured.
- We studied the Panchayati Raj System in Grade 6. This was not a part of the original Constitution; it was integrated in it in 1992 with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act.
- Can you find out the amendments made to the Constitution in the past ten years?

The government also creates opportunities for people to provide feedback on proposed laws or changes in rules. See the highlighted portion on the next page.



DON'T MISS OUT

The Indian Constitution is not just a legal document but also a work of art. Calligrapher Prem Behari Narain Raizada wrote its text by hand, while Nandalal Bose and his team illustrated its pages with scenes from Indian history, from Mohenjo-daro to the freedom movement (see Figs. 10.6 to 10.13).



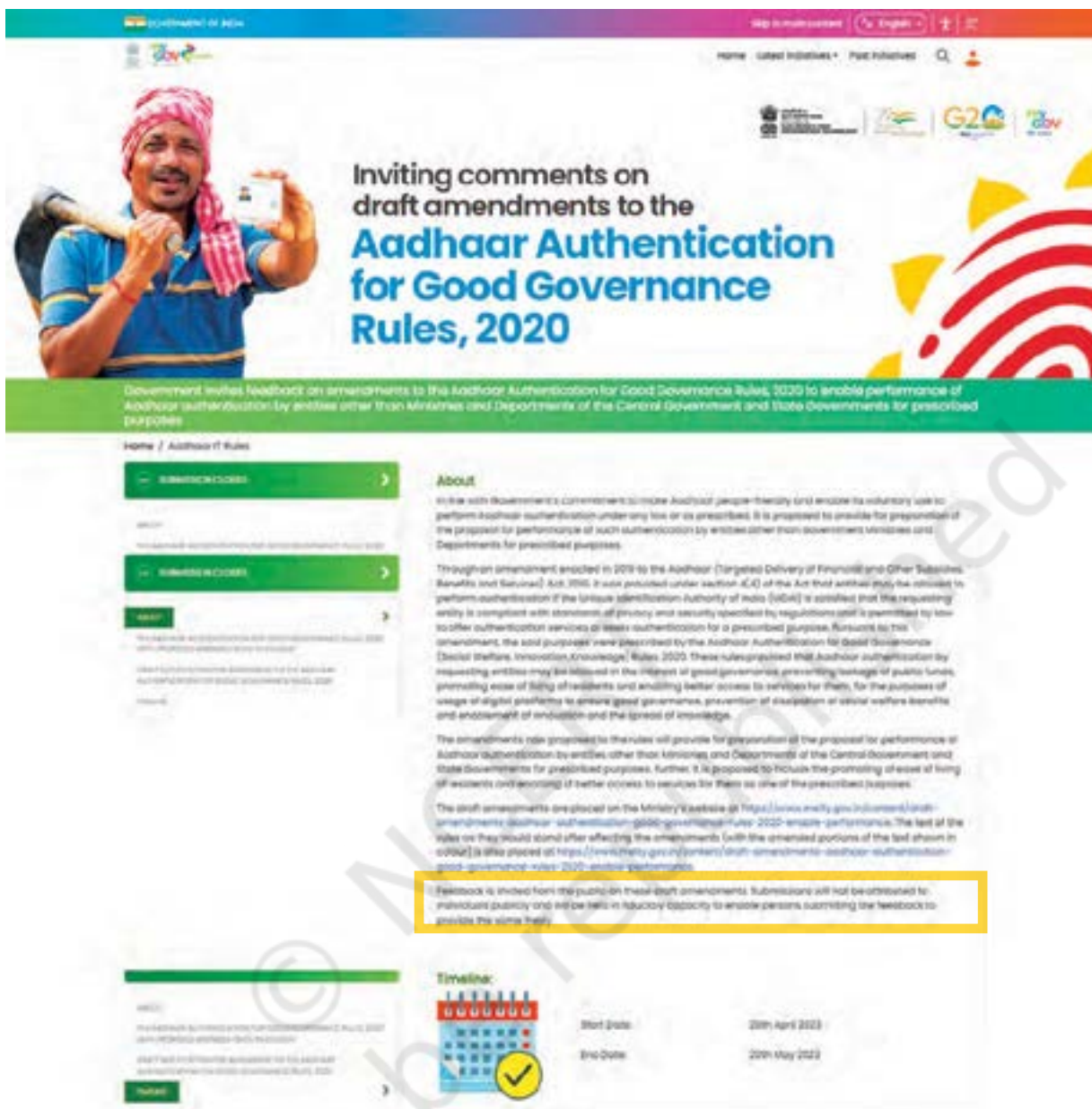


Fig 10.15

Understanding the Preamble: The Guiding Values of the Constitution of India

The Constitution's core values are the guiding principles for policies and decision-making, which the government is expected to follow. Citizens are also expected to practise them to the best of their ability. These guiding values are present across the Constitution, but their essence is written in the Preamble. So, let us study the Preamble, which is a fitting end to this chapter.

PREAMBLE OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION

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

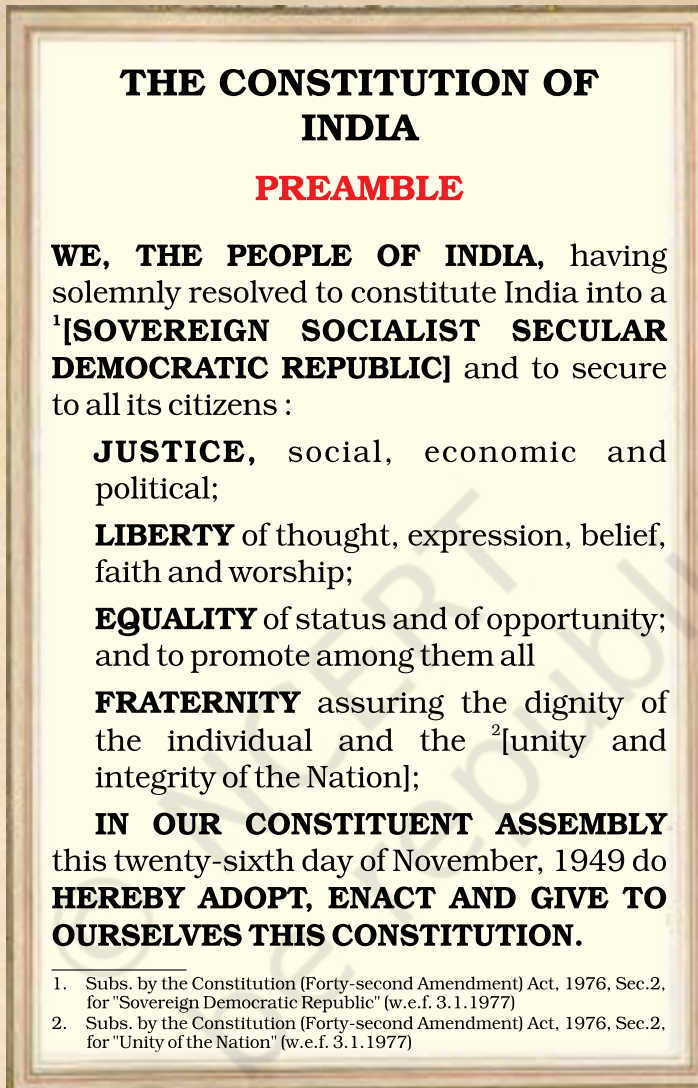
The people have supreme right to make decisions on internal as well as external matters. No external power can dictate the government of India.

SOCIALIST

Wealth is generated socially and should be shared by the 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 the people enjoy equal political rights, elect their rulers and hold them accountable. The government is run according to some basic rules.

FRATERNITY

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

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 less advantaged 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 follow up their thoughts in action.

EQUALITY

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

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

Fig. 10.16. Preamble of the Indian Constitution

LET'S EXPLORE



Below is the list of features given in the Preamble. Read them closely from the image above and write down examples of the application of these values in daily life around you. Two have been completed to help you with the exercise.

Features of the Preamble	How we see them in our daily lives
Sovereign	
Secular	A person does not have to take permission from the State to practice the rituals of their religion if the practice does not interfere with anyone else's day-to-day life.
Republic	
Justice	The State provides equal opportunity to all in jobs, regardless of gender, caste, religion, etc.
Liberty	
Equality	
Fraternity	

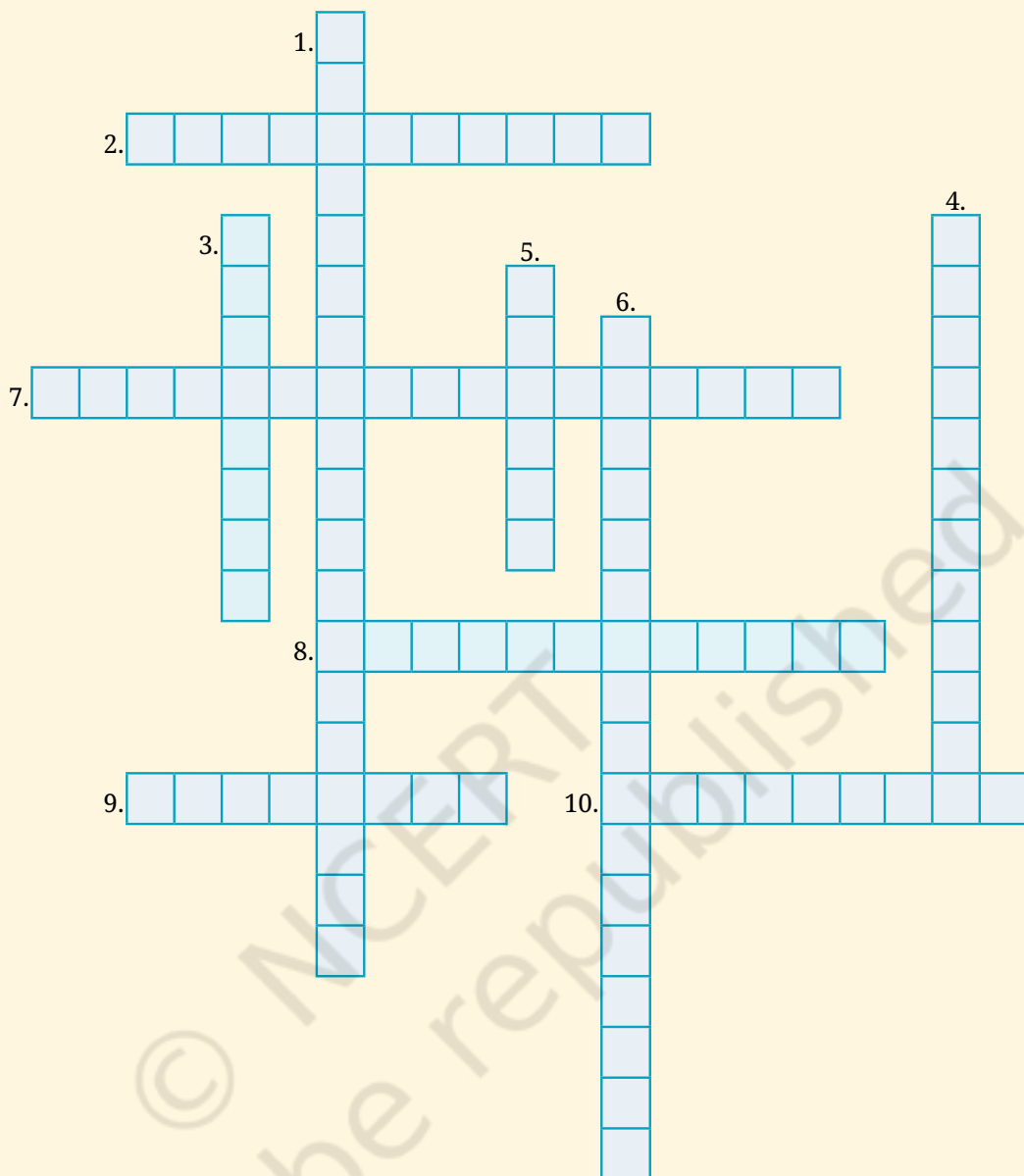
Before we move on ...



- The Constitution of India is a guiding book or 'rulebook' which protects the rights of all citizens. Citizens are also expected to follow the fundamental duties of the Constitution.
- The rich civilizational heritage of India, the freedom struggle and good practices from the constitutions of other countries served as the building blocks of the Indian Constitution.
- Its key features define the social, economic, and political structure of the country and its parliamentary form of government.
- It is a living document that can be improved as per the country's needs.

Questions and activities

1. “The Constituent Assembly had representatives from diverse backgrounds in India.” Why do you think it was important to have a diverse set of representatives from all over India?
2. Read the statements below carefully and identify which key features / values in the Constitution of India are reflected in each statement.
 - a. Sheena, Rajat, and Harsh are standing in a line. They are excited to cast their first vote in the general elections.
 - b. Radha, Imon, and Harpreet study in the same class in the same school.
 - c. Parents must make arrangements to ensure their children’s education.
 - d. People of all castes, genders, and religions can use the village well.
3. It is said that ‘All citizens in India are equal before the law’. Do you think this is a fact? If yes, why? If not, why not? Formulate your arguments.
4. You have learnt that ‘India is the only country that provided universal adult franchise to its citizens from the beginning.’ Can you explain why India did it?
5. How did the freedom struggle inspire the making of the Constitution of India? How did India’s civilisational heritage inspire some of the key features in the Constitution of India? Explain.
6. Do you think we, as a society, have achieved all the ideals of the Constitution? If not, what can we each do as citizens to move our country closer to these ideals?
7. Read the clues carefully to solve the crossword on the next page to uncover important concepts from the Indian Constitution.

**Across**

2. The branch of government that makes laws.
7. The part of the Constitution that outlines the duties of citizens towards the country.
8. The highest court in India that protects the Constitution.
9. A system where the head of state is elected, not hereditary.
10. The process by which the Constitution can be changed over time.

Down

1. The group of people who wrote the Indian Constitution.
3. The statement at the beginning of the Constitution that tells us the values it upholds.
4. The document that lays out the rules and laws of a country.
5. The gas used to preserve the original Constitution safely.
6. Basic rights given to every citizen, like freedom and equality.

The State, the Government, and You

CHAPTER

6



The greatest punishment for being unwilling to rule is being ruled by someone worse than oneself.

– Socrates, Greek philosopher
(in ‘The Republic’ by Plato c. 380 BCE)



Fig. 6.1. The government and us



The Big Questions ?

1. What is the difference between a state and a government?
2. What is the difference between a democracy and a republic? What makes India a democratic republic?
3. How do citizens engage with the government in day-to-day life? How can one make government work for the people?



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LET'S REMEMBER

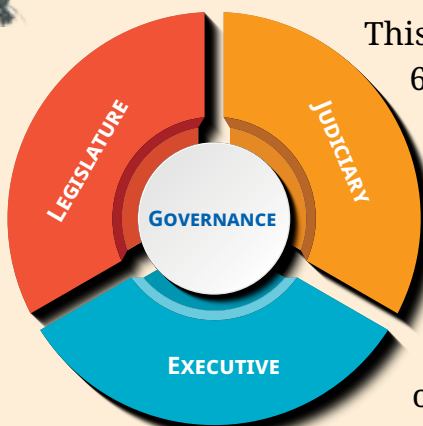


Fig. 6.2.

This is an illustration from your Grade 6 textbook. Do you recall that we discussed the need for a system of governance, commonly referred to as a government? There are three main functions that governments perform — making laws (legislature), carrying out laws and making policies (executive), and ensuring laws are followed (judiciary). We also looked briefly

at the three levels of government in India and their functions. In the chapter 'From the Rulers to the Ruled: Types of Government' in Part 1 of this textbook, we also came across some of the different forms of government in the world. We learned about democratic, monarchic, theocratic, dictatorial, and oligarchic forms of government, and how they function differently. Can you recount some of the differences?

In this chapter, we will look closely at the difference between a 'state' and a 'government', the difference between 'democracy' and 'republic', and how our government is structured.

What is a State?

A state (or a nation) is a political organisation that has the authority to govern a defined territory and its population.

A state has four important parts:

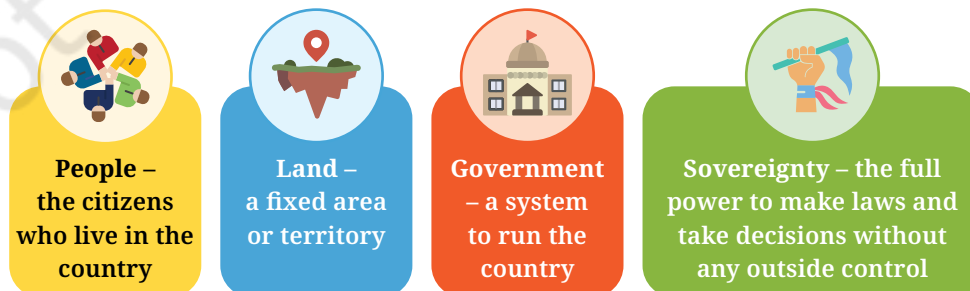


Fig. 6.3. The four important parts of the state.

We often hear the words 'state' and 'government' used as if they mean the same thing. But they are not truly the same, even though they are closely related.

Roshini didi, today we had a class on the difference between a state and a government. I am a bit confused. Since you are studying Political Science in college, can you tell me why it is important to have a permanent population for a place to become a state? Can a state not be a place where people can just go, visit, and come back?



First, without people, meaning a population, there can be no state. Second, if people just go visit and then move on then they are like tourists, with no identification with the place nor anything that is common and shared—they don't live together. But when people identify with a place or a territory, and usually live there, then they form a permanent population. Such a group of people—the permanent population—then develops its own culture and society, which also identifies with that geographically defined territory—the place where they live.

What exactly is a geographically defined territory?



It is a place, a geographical area, that has clear boundaries. The boundaries are not necessarily geographical features but sort of lines that are agreed upon by the neighbouring states that separate these states.

So, population and territory as a part of the state are clear. That also then explains why the government is a part of the state, but it is not the state. Because people live together, they need laws to be made and implemented for the state to function, which is what the government does.



What does sovereignty mean, and why is it essential for a state?



Sovereignty means that the state has complete control over its own matters and is able to make and implement laws in accordance with its own needs. No other state or external body can interfere in the internal affairs of that state. This is why sovereignty is an essential feature of a state.



Fig. 6.4.

So, a state has four features — a defined territory, a permanent population, a government, and sovereignty.



DON'T MISS OUT

In India, the word 'state' can refer to the Indian State or to our subnational units like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu or Kerala (e.g., the State of Kerala). Except in such cases, we have used 'state' rather than 'State' in this chapter, following current usage.

What is a Government?

The government is a group of people or a system that runs the country. It includes leaders, ministers, and officials who,

- make laws,
- enforce laws,
- resolve disputes.



Fig. 6.5. Aerial view of the Parliament of India

The government is just one part of the state. It can change after elections, but the state remains the same. Think of the state as a school, and the government as the principal and teachers. Teachers may come and go, but the school remains.

Why are these two words used interchangeably?

In real life, we often say “the state did this” or “the government decided that” as

if they mean the same thing. This is because the government acts on behalf of the state, and is the face of the state that we see in action every day.

So, while the words are different in meaning, people often mix them up because —

- the government runs the daily work of the state;
- we usually interact with the government, not the whole state.

People, police, and the government

You might have seen police in your daily life and in the movies. Are they a part of the government? What do they do? Do citizens have any control over them?

The police in India are responsible for maintaining law and order within each state. They are part of the state government and work directly with local communities in towns, cities, and villages. They are agents of the state who can legally use force to ensure that people live in a safe and secure environment, free from crime and violence.

The police work closely with courts, prisons, and other parts of the criminal justice system. Beyond crime control, the police contribute to social change by promoting safety, justice, and a better quality of life. For example, awareness programs on road safety, drug abuse, and women's safety are part of their work. However, they must respect and protect the rights guaranteed under the Constitution.

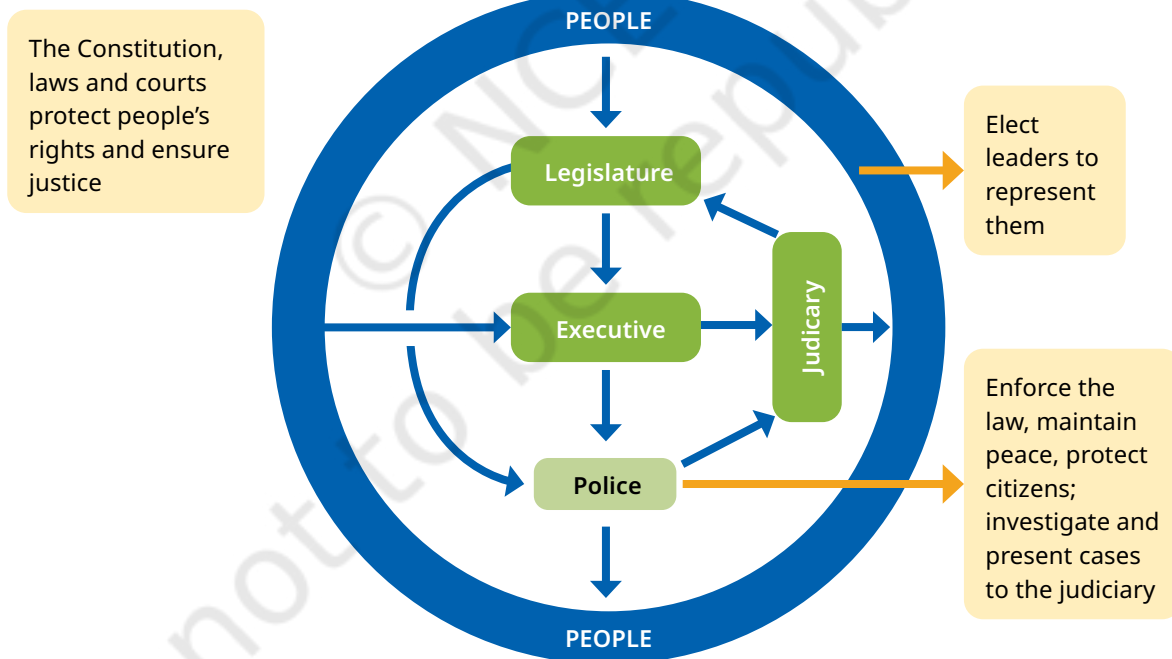


Fig. 6.6. A simplified diagram illustrating the various interactions between the people, police and different organs of government in India



LET'S EXPLORE

Make lists of different government departments you are familiar with, or whose names you may have seen on boards around your home or on your way to school. What functions do you think they perform?

These departments form part of the executive function of the government. They implement the policies and laws made by the legislature. The judiciary, in turn, ensures that these laws are followed. Together, the legislature, executive, and judiciary form the three key pillars of government. However, in our daily lives, we primarily interact with the various departments that form part of the executive.

In an earlier chapter, we surveyed the different forms of governments that exist, or have existed, across the world, including democracies, monarchies, theocracies, dictatorships, and oligarchies. We saw how democracies give people the power to choose their leaders, and how this differs from governments where power stays within one family or group. In a democracy like India, the government is expected to work for everyone's wellbeing and protect our rights and freedoms.

In some countries, the legislature, executive and judiciary are separate, while in others they may overlap.

Democracy and Republic

Your textbook carries the Preamble to the Constitution. Notice how the Constitution makers used the words 'democratic' and 'republic' together. Why did they, when 'democracy' and 'republic' are often used interchangeably? Though political scientists discuss the distinction between these two concepts in detail, we will look at it in a simplified way.

British rule in India persisted for nearly two centuries. When India got Independence, she did not blindly adopt the British parliamentary system. Among the many discussions and debates that took place during the making of our Constitution, one was on the type of parliamentary democracy that India should have.

People in both India and the UK elect their representatives, and the government is accountable to parliament. The British, however, have had a monarch (a king or a queen) as the head of state for centuries. On the other hand, the makers of our Constitution decided that India's head of state, the president, would be elected — not directly by the people, but by a group of elected representatives. (We will get into the details of this process in Grade 8.)

This brings us to the difference between a democracy and a republic.



The core idea of a democracy is 'rule by the people' (*demos* = people, *kratos* = rule). In a democracy, people have the power to choose their government through free and fair elections.

In a republic, the head of state (the highest office) is elected and not hereditary. Very simply, a republic is a form of government where the head of state is elected (directly or indirectly) by the people, rather than being a king or queen who inherits power. Moreover, in a republic, there are limitations set on the power of rulers through a constitution or laws.



Note that a country can be both a democracy and a republic, e.g., India or the U.S.A. But not all democracies are republics; for example, the UK, Canada, and Sweden are democracies but not republics — they each have a monarch.

India, a Republic that Protects the Rights of All

India is a democratic republic, and its constitution guarantees fundamental rights to all its citizens. Constitutional provisions and the law ensure that rule by a representative majority does not violate the fundamental rights of any citizen.



Fig. 6.7. Preamble to the Constitution

There exist certain geographical areas that belong to tribal communities. These lands are protected by law for their use, and private companies and other individuals cannot buy or lease the land without the permission of the local community and due legal process. For example, mining was not allowed in the sacred hills of the Dongria Kondh tribe in Odisha, as the community strongly opposed the destruction of their revered land. In this case, the rights of the tribals to their sacred hills were protected by law.

Why is the protection of rights important?

Let us take an example. As per its rulebook, a Resident Welfare Association (RWA) had banned deliveries after 9 pm in its apartment complex. This rule was based on a majority vote; it ignored the view of a minority of residents, who argued that such a ban would affect the sick and the elderly. Was this a fair rule?

One night, an elderly resident collapsed because of low blood sugar, as the medicine she needed could not be delivered to her flat in time. The RWA modified its rule to exclude food and medicines from the ban, protecting the voice of the minority.

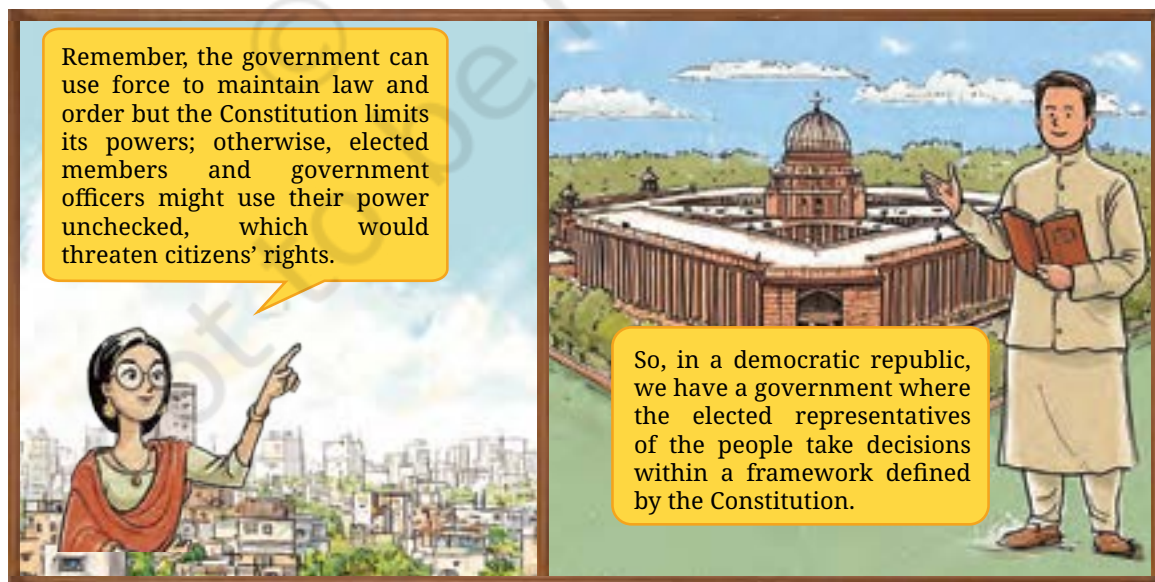


Fig. 6.8. How our democratic republic functions within the framework of the Constitution.

That's a republic in action — where the rule of law is more powerful than the wishes of the majority. This is how republics like India, France, and the USA defend against the '**dominance of the majority**'. It stops the powerful majority from unfairly hurting the rights of smaller groups.

The Constitution ensures that no part of the government becomes too powerful. The elected leaders cannot pass laws that go against people's basic rights — like freedom of speech, religion, or equality before the law.

Dominance of the majority:

A situation where the interests of the majority alone are pursued, to the detriment of the rights of minorities.



DON'T MISS OUT

In 1782, as the American War of Independence against Britain was ending, with General George Washington leading the American army, one of his officers wrote to him suggesting that he should become the king of America. Washington firmly refused, saying that such a plan would harm the country, and that he believed only in a government by the people under a constitution. Washington thus showed his deep commitment to a republican form of government, many years before he was chosen as the first President of the United States in 1789.

According to Kautilya, the author of *Arthashastra*, the king, the primary authority of the state, has to follow *Raja Dharma* and have a good governance system. He should ensure law and order. If there is no government, society will become chaotic with the big fish, i.e., the more powerful, eating the smaller fish.

In India, the state operates through institutions such as the legislature, executive, and judiciary. The state claims the legitimate use of power, for example, through control by the police and taxation.



Fig. 6.9. 'Matsya nyāya' — in the absence of law and order, the big fish swallow the smaller ones.



Fig. 6.10. Vidhan Sabha building (the Legislature), Jharkhand

Policy:
A set of ideas
or actions that
an institution
or government
decides on.

Legislature: The Lawmaking Body

The legislature is a branch of the government that makes laws for the country. In a democracy, the legislature represents the people and creates rules that apply to everyone. It ensures that governance happens through well-defined laws rather than personal wishes or arbitrary decisions. The states, too, have their own legislatures. They make laws only for the state.

Executive: The Law-Implementing and Policymaking Body

The executive organ is primarily responsible for **implementing or executing the laws** formulated by the legislature and taking **policy** decisions.

The executive: political and permanent

In every country, the government needs someone to enforce laws, design and implement policies, and manage the day-to-day activities of the government (administration). The executive does this important job. The executive is not just one person or one group; rather, it has two parts that work together — the political executive and the permanent executive. While the Constitution of India does not explicitly define the ‘political executive’ and the ‘permanent executive’, this distinction is an inherent part of India’s parliamentary system, derived from constitutional principles and governance conventions.

Political executive

The political executive consists of leaders who are elected by the people. These include the prime minister, chief ministers, and their ministers, as well as the president and governors (though the last two mostly have formal or symbolic roles).

These elected leaders are responsible for making big decisions, introducing new laws, setting goals for the country, and representing India in other countries. Since they are chosen in elections, they stay in power for a fixed time — usually five years — unless they are re-elected or dismissed by the president (we will explore this further in Grade 8). Their power depends on the trust and support of the people.

Permanent executive

The permanent executive includes government officers who are not elected but are selected through examinations like those conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC). They are also called bureaucrats or civil servants.

Unlike politicians, these officers are not removed or replaced after every election. They work in the background to keep the government running smoothly, no matter which party is in power. Their job is to offer expert advice, implement policies, and manage public services.

Some key functions of the bureaucracy are —

- **Implementing laws, policies, and schemes:** Bureaucrats ensure that laws and government programs and schemes passed by the political executive are appropriately implemented across the country.
- **Creating a link between citizens and the government:** Through various departments and field offices, bureaucrats interact with the public, deliver services such as public schools, roads, and hospitals, and address grievances.
- **Record-keeping and governance:** They keep records of government work, decisions, and procedures.



ORGANISATION CHART OF DIRECTORATE OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE SERVICES

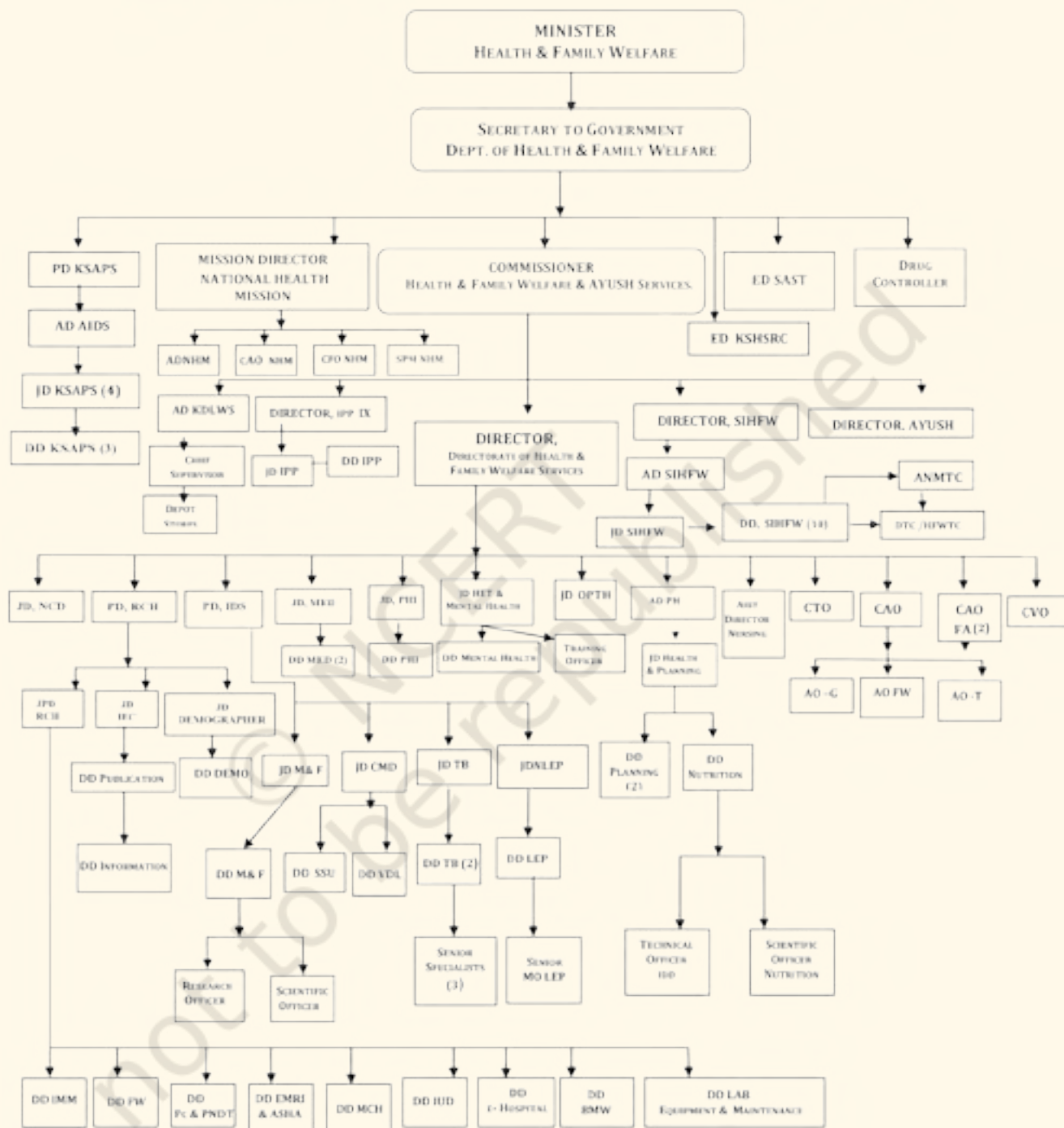


Fig. 6.11. The structure of the bureaucracy of just one department of a state.
(You need not memorise this chart.)

The bureaucracy is a hierarchical structure, as can be seen in this chart (Fig. 6.11). Such structures exist at the level of the district and block, too.

In India, the most well-known bureaucracies are the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), the Indian Police Service (IPS), Indian Revenue Service (IRS) and the Indian Forest Service (IFoS). There are a large number of officers working in these systems (see Fig 6.11 for an example). Our interactions are usually with the bureaucrats serving at the grassroots — government school teachers, anganwadi workers, health workers, water and sanitation workers, or bus conductors. The bureaucracy manages large-scale programs like the census, national elections, disaster relief, and the rollout of welfare schemes such as the Viksit Bharat— Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2026 (VB- G RAM G) or the COVID-19 vaccination drive.

Chonira Belliappa Muthamma (1924–2009), born in Karnataka, became the first woman to clear the examination for public services in 1948 and the first woman to join the Indian Foreign Service in 1949, although a strong gender bias prevailed. Women, for instance, “were made to sign an undertaking that they would resign if they got married,” as C.B. Muthamma wrote later. Nevertheless, she managed to conduct a distinguished diplomatic career, eventually serving as India’s first woman ambassador in several countries.



Fig. 6.12. Chonira Belliappa Muthamma

When she was unjustly denied promotion, Muthamma approached the Supreme Court; a bench led by Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer struck down gender-biased provisions as violating the Constitution and made strong comments on the Ministry of External Affairs’ record of discrimination against women. Muthamma’s struggle thus remains a defining milestone in the pursuit of gender equality in Indian public service.

C.B. Muthamma wrote on a number of public issues, from the decolonisation of the Indian mind to Indian democracy. In one of her essays, she pointed to the “unbounded freedom of thought and belief” characteristic of Indian religions as being “the single most important factor that makes democracy possible in this country”.

We will delve into the structure and process of lawmaking in the chapter ‘The Parliamentary System: Legislature and Executive’ in Grade 8.

The Government and You



Fig. 6.13. Social welfare schemes run by the government

The Government of India plays the triple role of protector (law and defence), provider (public welfare and infrastructure), and regulator (of economic activity and social justice). As examples, the government maintains law and order to protect the people through police forces, provides education free for children by building schools and hiring teachers, constructs infrastructure like roads, bridges, railways, and airports, and takes initiatives to ensure food safety.

The above roles of the government are executed through India’s Constitution, thousands of laws, many layers of elected representatives, a vast bureaucracy, and a judiciary (brief description in the next section), all of which help us greatly in our daily lives. However, you might wonder why, then, our country and her people also still face so many problems. Why do we still hear of cases of bribery and corruption in public office? We still encounter many issues that need to be addressed — people in difficult socio-economic conditions, lack of access to good education and healthcare, infrastructure that is of poor quality, inadequate access to government schemes, and so on.

How do you make or help the government do what it is meant to do? How do you ensure that your grievances with the government are addressed?



Fig. 6.14. Online method to register your complaint or grievance

Here are a few things you can do!

1. **Grievance redressal:** Many government departments have grievance redressal offices where you can file your grievance. The government also has vigilance commissions to investigate matters of corruption. You can approach them if you find cases of corruption. Today there are mechanisms like the Public Grievances Portal (<https://pgportal.gov.in/>) where one can lodge complaints and grievances. The concerned government department will respond within a specified time period. Several states also have such portals.

Transparency:

Open access to information to citizens regarding government policies and actions, expenditure of public funds, etc.

Accountability:

Those in power are responsible for their actions and decisions, and are obligated to answer for them to the public and other stakeholders.

2. **Ask the government for information about its policies and actions:** India has a powerful Act called the Right to Information Act (RTI), through which we can ask for information about government actions of public interest. For example, you could ask about how much money was spent on building roads in your neighbourhood, a list of beneficiaries of government schemes, such as a merit scholarship, the status of infrastructure projects like the metro line etc. Officials are bound to provide information under this Act, and the information brings **transparency** and **accountability**.

Bagepalli is a small town near Bengaluru. Several years ago, some government officials thought Bagepalli would be better off with double roads and streetlights. The work was carried out in a very unprofessional manner, making traffic movement difficult and causing numerous accidents. A local citizen filed an RTI to get information about finances allocated for the work. Armed with this information, a group of citizens confronted the concerned officials, who later ensured that the roadwork was completed to the satisfaction of all concerned.

3. **Use the media:** Write in print or electronic media about a particular issue on which the government can take action. Many government officials are active on social media. You can also use social media platforms like YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook or Instagram to share your concerns and tag the corresponding officials.



Fig. 6.15. The official X account to reach out to Indian Railways @RailwaySeva

4. **Engage through a civil society organisation** (such as an NGO): India has thousands of citizen groups, collectively termed as civil society, which work on issues like education, health, environment, livelihood, women empowerment, etc. One can join any of those (or create one!) to push the government to address an issue you care deeply about.



DON'T MISS OUT

In 1970, the Kerala Government planned a massive hydroelectric project in the Silent Valley, which would have submerged vast tracts of untouched evergreen forests and destroyed their immense biodiversity, including much wildlife. Many non-government organisations mobilised public opinion against the construction of the dam, soon joined by hundreds of scientists, environmentalists, writers, public figures, teachers, and local villagers. Eventually, in 1983, the Central Government intervened and cancelled the project. Two years later, the Silent Valley was declared a National Park, ensuring its lasting protection.



Fig. 6.16. The Silent Valley National Park, created after the Silent Valley Movement's successful campaign.

5. **Write to political representatives:** You can write a letter to your local representatives, ministers, or parliamentarians, seeking action on a particular issue.

6. **Vote in elections:** Once you are old enough to vote, make sure to participate and vote in local, state, and national elections, and thereby help to ensure that the leaders who care most about the issues you care about, and have the best plans for them, are elected to office.



LET'S EXPLORE

Collect editorials from a few newspapers. Read them in small groups. Identify the topics on which they have opinions. How many are about government policies?

Judiciary: Guardian of the Constitution

The judiciary is the part of the government that makes sure everyone follows the law. It settles disputes, protects people's rights, and checks whether the laws made by the government are fair and just. In a democracy like India, the judiciary is independent—it is not controlled by the government or politicians. This helps keep justice fair and equal for all.

What does the judiciary do?

- **Protects and defends the laws:** It makes sure that the laws are followed properly.
- **Interprets the laws:** It explains what a law means when the wording is complex or when people disagree on its meaning.
- **Protects the rights and liberty of citizens:** It protects the rights and freedoms given by the Constitution. If fundamental rights are violated, we can go to court to address the violations.
- **Safeguards the Constitution through judicial review:** It acts as a referee when the government or others break the law.

Why is the judiciary important?

The judiciary protects the rule of law, that is, the idea that everyone must follow the law, even the government. It keeps

a check on unfair actions, ensures laws don't harm people's rights, and resolves conflicts peacefully. Without a strong and fair judiciary, democracy cannot survive.

We will delve deeper into the judiciary in India in Grade 8.

Tiers of Government

LET'S REMEMBER

Do you remember this image from Grade 6, Chapter 10? It represents the three tiers of Government in India. Why do we have these levels of Government in India? Can't we have just one level to do fulfil all the functions? Let us explore this further.

India is a vast and diverse country with over 1.4 billion people, thousands of towns and villages, and many languages and cultures.

As a federal country, India has 28 states and 8 union territories, and a single central (union) government cannot meet the needs of all her people. Therefore, governance in such a large country must be decentralised at multiple levels.

Originally, the Constitution provided for only two levels of government, the Union Government (for the entire country) and the state governments (for each state). Local governments, such as panchayats and municipalities, were not separate constitutional levels at that time. They were listed under the State List, which means that state governments could decide how they worked.

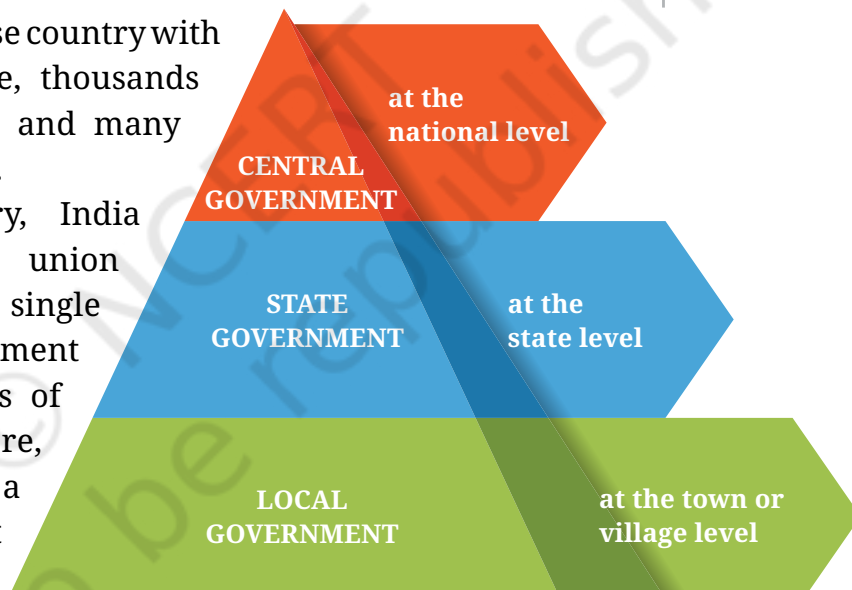


Fig. 6.17



DON'T MISS OUT

One of the Directive Principles of State Policy listed in the Constitution was: “The state shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.”

In the early 1990s, the Constitution was amended to create the *panchayati raj* system and the system of municipalities for towns and cities. Together, these made local governments the ‘third tier’ of India’s democracy, the other two being the union and state governments. This was done to strengthen democracy at the grassroots and enable people to participate directly in decision-making.

What is decentralisation?

‘Decentralisation’ means that power and decision-making are spread out and not concentrated in just one place or one small group. Local problems should be solved locally, and bigger issues can be solved by higher-level governments such as the state or the central government.



THINK ABOUT IT

If a streetlamp in your neighbourhood is broken, who would you contact to fix it? If a village road needs to be repaired, would the local people reach out to the Central Government?

LET'S EXPLORE

What might be the reasons that decisions regarding local concerns should be taken locally to the extent possible?

Generally, decisions regarding local matters are taken at the level closest to the people. Tasks that can be performed locally should be left in the hands of the local people and their representatives. The local municipal body can do it faster.

But if the country's defence is at stake, that is the responsibility of the central government.

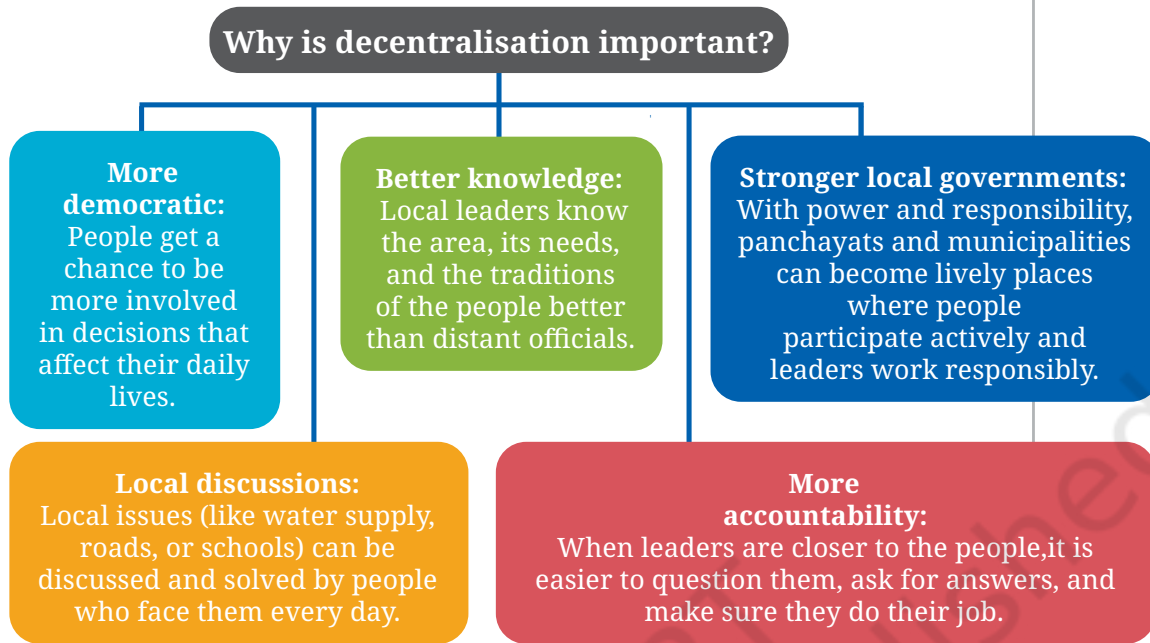


Fig. 6.18



DON'T MISS OUT

Mahatma Gandhi was a strong advocate of decentralisation and strongly believed in largely self-sufficient village governments called *grām swarāj*. He stated, “My idea of village *swarāj* is that it is a complete republic, independent of its neighbours for its own vital wants, and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity.”

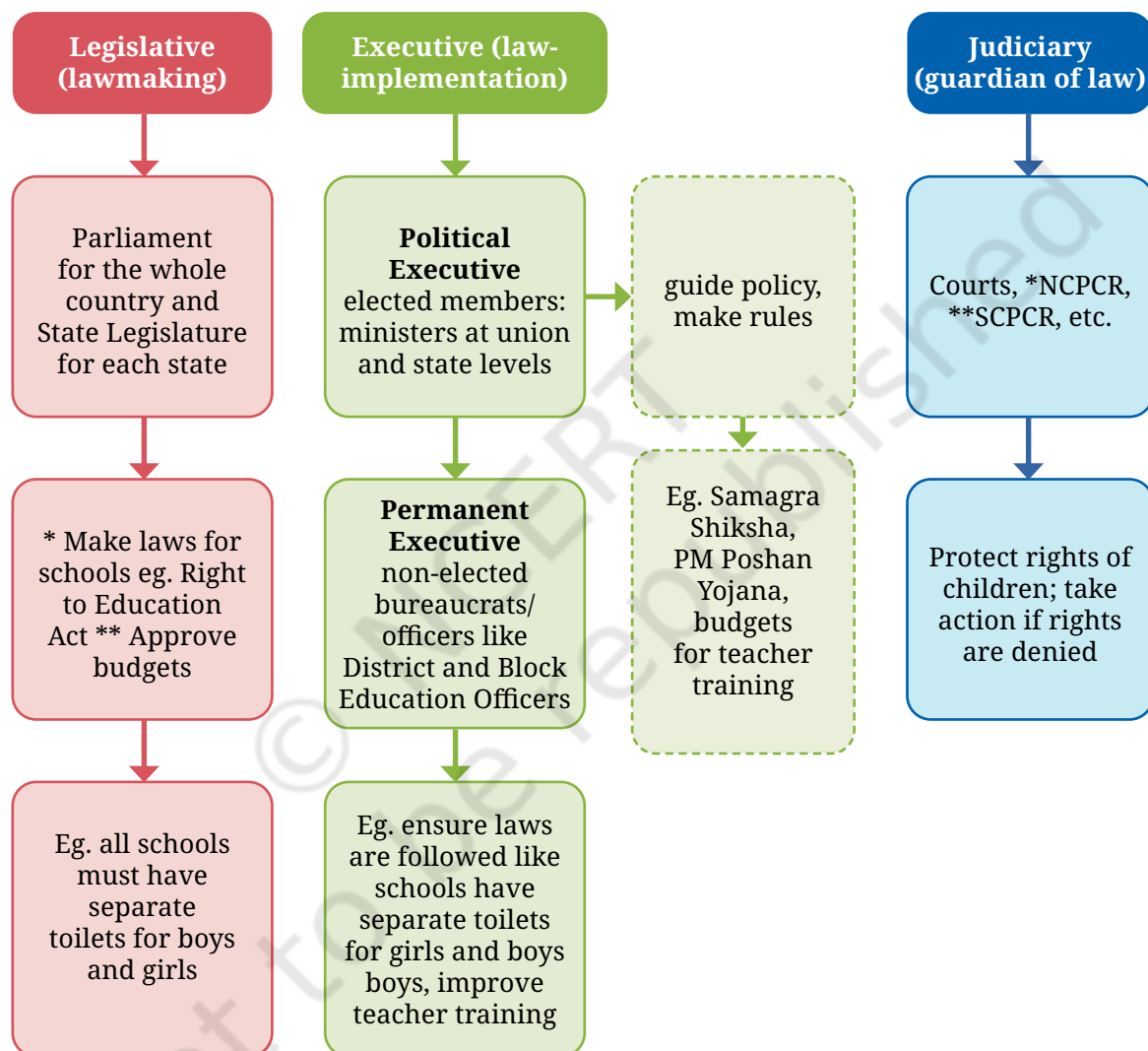
Central (Union) government: Looks after matters related to the whole country (like defence, foreign affairs, currency, and concurrent subjects like education and marriage).

State governments: Take care of the needs of people in each state (like police, land, health, agriculture, and education in the state).

Local governments: Work in villages, towns, and cities to solve local problems (like land, agriculture, water, drainage, streetlamps, parks, etc.).

The working of the three levels of the school education system

In India, schools are not managed by a single person or office. Let us see how the different levels of government play different, yet interconnected, roles to ensure that every child gets their right to education.



* NCPCR = National Council for the Protection of Child Rights

** SCPCR = State Council for the Protection of Child Rights

Fig. 6.19. A simplified diagram to illustrate the role of different parts of government in the education system

LET'S EXPLORE

It has been more than 75 years since India became a republic. During this time, we have had many governments at the national, state and local levels. Many policies and programs have been designed and implemented. We have come a long way by increasing literacy of our people, improving roads, trains, and airports, and strengthening communication systems such as the telephone and the internet. But we still have a long way to go in addressing India's challenges.

Have a class discussion on the following:

- List five major achievements of our country in improving the lives of ordinary people in your village, town or city. Which level of government made this possible and how?
- List five problems that ordinary people face frequently. At which level of government should these be addressed and how?

Before we move on ...

- The state and the government are different, but sometimes the terms are used interchangeably. The state is a larger concept that includes the citizens of a country, the territory of the country. It is sovereign, i.e., it has the independence to make its laws without any outside control. It has a government that makes and implements laws to run the country.
- A republic is a form of government where the head of state is elected (directly or indirectly) by the people, rather than being a king or queen who inherits power. In a republic, the powers of the head of state are limited through a constitution or laws.
- The three pillars or organs of the government are the legislature, the executive, and the judiciary.



- In India, there are also three levels of government — union (central), state, and local.
- The Constitution of India forms the fundamental and basic framework for the structure of our government. It ensures that there are ‘checks and balances’ among the three organs of the government. It also ensures that the three levels of government work together for the people without excessive centralisation.
- The media plays an important role in democracy — it keeps the citizens informed and provides a platform for discussion and debate.
- Civil society organisations (NGOs) play a critical role in raising issues, and also working with government to solve them.
- The permanent executive consisting of civil servants or bureaucrats implement laws and policies devised by the government.

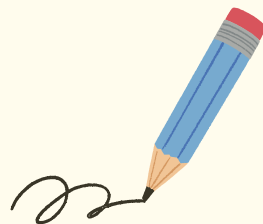
Questions and activities

1. “Every democracy is a republic.” Is this statement true or false? Explain.
2. Give two reasons why decentralisation is important in India.
3. Imagine you are part of your school’s student council. The council works like a mini-parliament — it has members elected by students, debates issues and makes decisions. In this context, do you think it would be better if only the council president makes all the decisions or if power is to be shared among all members?
 - Should the student council have the power to make rules about the food you eat, or the language you speak?
 - What can go wrong if the student council is the most powerful body in your school and no one questions its decisions?

4. Think about these real-life situations in relation to India's democracy:
- Should the Parliament be the most powerful institution in the country? Why or why not?
 - Should the Parliament have the power to make any law it wants, even if it affects your rights?
 - What could go wrong if lawmaking has no limits? Can it lead to unfair or unjust laws?
 - Who is more powerful in India, the Parliament or the Supreme Court? Give your reasons.
5. Ask your parents / guardians how they engaged with the government over the past year. Make a list and classify the items based on the level of government they had to work with. What challenges did they face?

Noodles

*'Noodles' is our abbreviation for 'Notes and Doodles'!



Universal Franchise and India's Electoral System

CHAPTER

5

[India] adopted the principle of adult franchise with an abundant faith in the common man and the ultimate success of democratic rule...never before in the history of the world has such an experiment been so boldly undertaken.”

– Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar

November 1949, Constituent Assembly Debates



Fig. 5.1. Headlines of major newspapers during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections

The Big Questions ?

1. What is universal adult franchise?
2. What is an electoral system?
3. How does India's electoral system work?





UNIVERSAL ADULT FRANCHISE

The Constitution makers decided that universal adult **franchise** would be a feature of Indian democracy right from the outset. This means that every adult citizen gets one vote, and all votes have equal value. Hence, every Indian citizen aged 18 and above has the right to vote — irrespective of caste, creed, race, religion, gender, education, income, etc. The word ‘universal’ connotes this.

LET'S EXPLORE

India changed the minimum age for voting from 21 to 18 in 1988. Discuss whether this was a good move.

Universal franchise is a cornerstone of Indian democracy. Elections to the Lok Sabha, the legislative assembly of every state and union territory, and all the local elections in villages and cities are based on universal franchise (Article 326 of the Constitution). Remember that no one can vote on another's behalf.

→ Can you calculate how long **you** have to wait before you can vote?

To be able to exercise your right, you need to be registered as a voter in your **constituency**. However, one is barred from voting if found guilty of committing certain serious crimes.

Do you remember India had a general election in the summer of 2024? Over 968 million voters were eligible to exercise their franchise for the 543 constituencies of the Lok Sabha.



DON'T MISS OUT

India has 3.1 million elected representatives (1.3 million of them women) in more than 250,000 local government bodies across India. All these are democratically elected through universal adult franchise.

We need an elaborate and well-organised system to manage this massive exercise and ensure that the elections take place fairly and freely. In this chapter, we will briefly explore who can vote, a few of the types of elections we have, the electoral **system**, and how it is organised.



DON'T MISS OUT

- Before Independence, around 13 per cent of Indians were allowed to vote, and franchise was not universal. We will delve more into this in another part of the textbook.
- India was among the early nations to grant women the right to vote, ahead of many others around the world. For example, women were given the right to vote in Switzerland only in 1971. Women fought long and hard in many countries to win this fundamental democratic right. In India, on the other hand, a progressive constitutional vision and deep democratic values rooted in India's ancient traditions ensured women had voting rights from the very beginning.



Fig. 5.3. Women's suffrage parade, USA, 1913

Constituency:
An area whose voters elect a representative to a legislative body.

System:
A group of interconnected or interdependent elements that work together to achieve a common purpose or function.

LET'S EXPLORE



In 1947, our literacy rate was about 14 per cent, only about 8 per cent among women. Some argued that the right to vote should be given only to literate people. Discuss in your group why the Constitution makers may have decided on universal franchise from the time of Independence itself.

There are several reasons why universal franchise is so important. A few are illustrated in the mindmap below. Can you add some more?

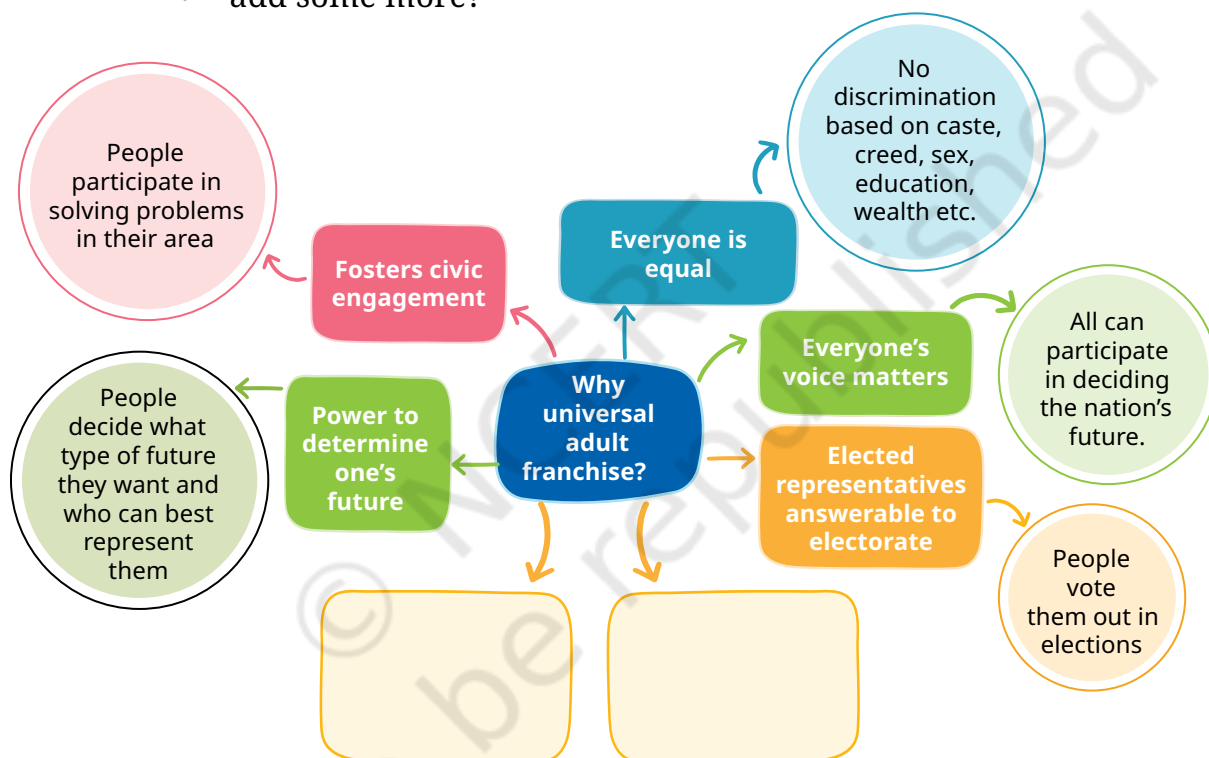


Fig. 5.4. Importance of universal franchise in a democracy. Add two reasons of your own in the empty boxes.

BRIDGING BARRIERS, ENABLING PARTICIPATION: ENSURING UNIVERSAL FRANCHISE

Democracy thrives when every eligible citizen can freely and fairly participate in the electoral process. Voting in elections is a powerful way for people to express their will. How does this take place in India?

India is a large, diverse, and complex country. To illustrate, the population of eligible voters in India is fifteen times the population of the United Kingdom, and in terms of area, India is six times larger than France. Geographic diversity is a challenge, too. Thus, elections in India need to be organised taking this complexity into account.

The Election Commission of India organises elections in India. (We will learn more about ECI later in the chapter.) The ECI has taken several innovative accessibility measures to remove barriers to exercising the franchise and ensure no voter is left behind.

Electoral officials travel to remote locations to ensure every citizen can exercise their democratic right. In 2024, for the first time, the elderly and people with disabilities could cast their votes from home, and the postal voting option was available for a specific category of voters. Assistive technologies like braille-enabled voter cards and app-based requests for assistance, including wheelchairs and ramps, were also made possible.

LET'S EXPLORE

- Discuss in groups — What role do such measures play in a democracy? Do you know of anyone who benefited from these improved accessibility measures? How might they increase voter participation in your neighbourhood? How can technology assist?
- If you have access to the internet, visit the ECI website (<https://www.eci.gov.in/persons-with-disabilities>). Read and identify the various interventions that the ECI has taken to facilitate voting by people with disabilities.



Fig. 5.5.





Fig. 5.6. India's electoral system endeavours to enable every citizen to exercise their franchise. This includes measures such as organising a polling station for a single woman voter, postal voting and providing wheelchair assistance.

LET'S EXPLORE

About 34 per cent of eligible voters did not exercise their right to vote in the 2024 elections. Why do you think this is so? What are some challenges people face in exercising their rights? Design and conduct a short survey among adults in your family and neighbourhood to answer these questions. Analyse the data and write a report with suggestions on how it may be possible to ensure everyone votes.



DON'T MISS OUT

The Uttaramerur inscriptions from the 10th century describe a transparent process for the selection of representatives. Eligible candidates' names were written on fragments of palm leaves and placed in a pot, which was then sealed. On the selection day, it was opened publicly and a young boy drew the palm leaves randomly one by one; a respected individual, after showing his empty hands to the public, would read out each name of the selected candidates.

Election for class representative — Grade 8, Suryodaya School

It was time for the annual election of the Class Representative (Class Rep). The Class Rep would represent the class in meetings with teachers, organise events, and act as a bridge between the students and school authorities. Three students — Ahmed, Gurmat, and Ravi — decided to contest for the position. The class teacher, Ms. Usha, was appointed as the Election Officer to ensure the election process was fair, transparent, and followed all the necessary rules.



Fig. 5.7.

Here's a brief introduction of each of the candidates:

Ahmed promised to improve the cleanliness of the classrooms and the playground.

Gurmat was interested in helping all her classmates learn better. She proposed creating a system of peer coaching and mutual support.

Ravi wanted to make more space in their class timetable for the arts curriculum — music, theatre, and visual art — in line with the new curriculum.

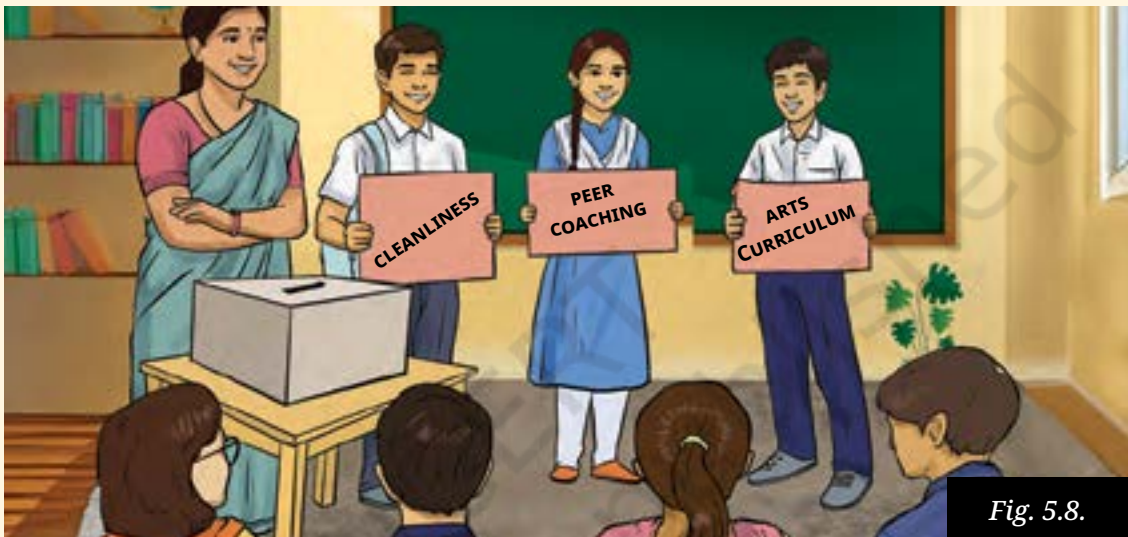


Fig. 5.8.

Campaigning

Ahmed put up posters, Gurmat used the noticeboard and spoke to classmates, while Ravi held a lunchtime music performance to promote his idea. As the Election Officer, Ms. Usha had to organise the elections and ensure it was conducted fairly. She explained the rules to the class, ensuring everyone understood how the secret ballot voting process would work; no one would know who voted for whom, ensuring the process was private and fair. She set up the voting booths in the corner of the classroom.

Voting day

On election day, each student was given a ballot paper with the names of the three candidates. The students were asked to mark an 'X' next to the name of the candidate they wished to vote for. Ms. Usha also ensured that there was a ballot paper in braille for Neha. After all the students voted, Ms. Usha collected the ballots in a box and sealed it until the counting session.

The results

After all the 33 votes were cast, Ms. Usha called Ms Sheeba from the next class to witness the counting process. One of the ballot papers was not marked, so it was declared invalid. The results were announced: Ahmed received 8 votes, Gurmat 12 and Ravi 10. Gurmat, with the most votes, was declared the new Class Representative. She thanked her classmates and promised to fulfil her commitments. Ahmed and Ravi congratulated her and offered to support her.

LET'S EXPLORE

- What are the most important aspects of the election process in this caselet?
- Why was it important to have a secret ballot?
- What considerations might the students have had while exercising their choice?
- Do you think the students have any responsibility after Gurmat was elected as the class rep? If yes, what are they?
- What was the role that Ms. Usha played? Why was it important?
- Why was it important for Ms. Usha to organise a braille ballot paper for Neha?
- What would happen if many students in the class chose not to mark a preference?



DON'T MISS OUT

Imagine if a student did not want to vote for any of the candidates — Ahmed, Gurmat, or Ravi. What option would they have? Some countries, including India, offer an additional option, **NOTA** — **None Of The Above**. This option allows voters to reject all candidates if they are not satisfied with any of them. It doesn't change the result but sends a message — voters want better choices. NOTA is a quiet but powerful tool in a democracy.

THE ROLE OF THE ELECTION COMMISSION OF INDIA (ECI)

We have seen the size and diversity that needs to be kept in mind in the organisation of the election process in India. In this section, we will look at the different types of elections that the ECI organises and oversees.



LET'S REMEMBER

India is a parliamentary democracy where, at the national level, citizens choose representatives for the Lok Sabha (the lower house of the Parliament). They focus on issues affecting the entire country. In addition, voters elect representatives from their constituencies to the legislative assemblies in the state and union territories where they are registered. These members focus primarily on regional issues.

These are just two of the elections that the ECI manages; we will see more in the later sections. However, before we get a glimpse of the election process, let us get introduced to the Election Commission of India, the institution that oversees it.



LET'S REMEMBER

In Grade 6, you read about direct elections to gram panchayats and urban local bodies. The State Election Commissions manage these.

Election Commission of India — A brief introduction

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is an independent constitutional body responsible for conducting free and fair elections. It was established in 1950 and conducts elections to the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies in India, and the offices of the President and Vice President. The first general elections in independent India were held in 1951-1952.

The ECI performs crucial tasks like:



Fig. 5.9. Tasks performed by the Election Commission of India



Fig. 5.10. Office of the the Election Commission of India in Delhi

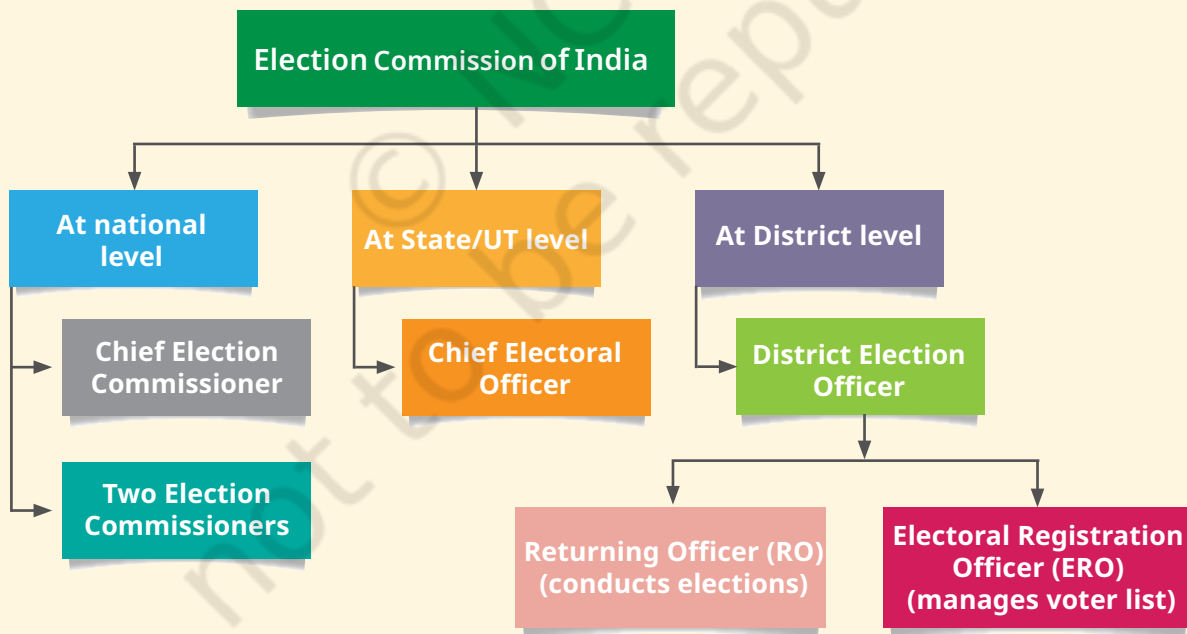


Fig. 5.11. Structure of the Election Commission of India

Managing the electoral process

Managing elections in India is a mammoth task. The ECI has been upgrading its capacities to keep pace with the needs of modern India in conducting free and fair elections. The electoral system is massive and needs to work efficiently. We take the example of the Lok Sabha elections to illustrate this. Note that the elections to the state assemblies follow a similar process. All elections take place at different times but with some periodicity; so every year, several polls are conducted in various parts of the country based on when they are due.

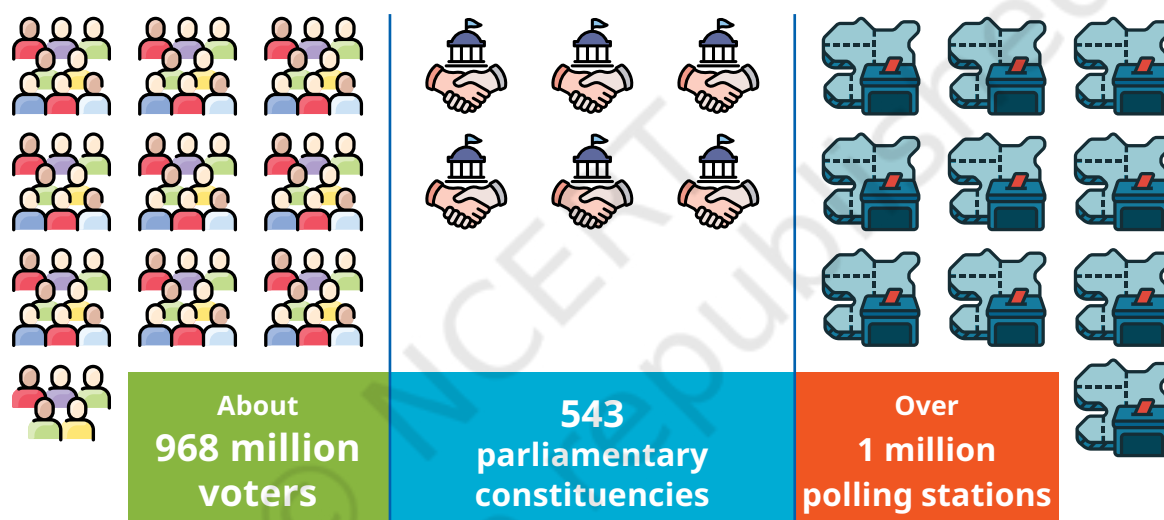


Fig. 5.12. A few numbers showing the scale of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

As you can see, the numbers are very large. Many people are deployed to assist the whole process, including teachers.

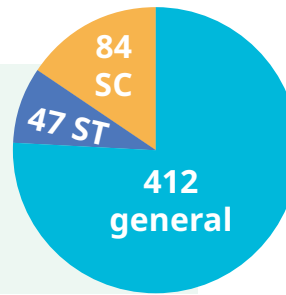
LET'S EXPLORE

Identify teachers in your school or vicinity who may have performed election duty. Invite them to your class to share their experiences.



DON'T MISS OUT

84 of the Lok Sabha constituencies are reserved for persons from the scheduled castes, while 47 are reserved for scheduled tribes.



Process of voting for the Lok Sabha and State assemblies



1st polling officer:

Checks name on voter list and ID proof.



2nd polling officer:

Inks finger, gives chit and takes your signature.

3rd polling officer:
Takes chit and checks your finger. NOTA (None Of The Above) option is also available.



4th Press button to

vote on the electronic voting machine (EVM); you hear a beep sound. Also check the printed slip in VVPAT.

Fig. 5.13.



Fig. 5.14. Managing the elections — extensive use of technology



Fig. 5.15. Shyam Saran Negi, a school teacher in Himachal Pradesh, was the first voter in India's general elections of 1951. Here, in 2017, he cast his vote at the age of 100.



LET'S EXPLORE

→ India's electronic voting machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) systems have been used in countries like Namibia and Bhutan with support from the ECI. Other countries have also studied this technology and have received training from India to adopt it in their countries.



Fig. 5.16. Electronic voting machines

→ VVPAT is a system that produces a physical paper record, allowing voters to verify that their electronic votes were cast correctly. This paper trail provides a backup for verification and recounting purposes in case of disputes or failures of the electronic system.

Model Code of Conduct (MCC)

The code is followed to ensure free and fair elections, listing the dos and don'ts for leaders, political parties, and candidates that must be adhered to.

A few elements of the code:

- i. There are rules that the party in government must follow; this ensures that the resources available to the government are not used for the purpose of the elections. For example, no new schemes and projects are to be announced that may influence voters.
- ii. All candidates are expected to exercise discretion and restraint to ensure that the elections take place peacefully.
- iii. Influencing voters through gifts in return for votes is punishable.

LET'S EXPLORE

→ Here are a few types of complaints that the ECI handles.



Fig. 5.17. A candidate distributed sarees and household appliances to women voters.



Fig. 5.18. Abusive language used by the candidate of one party against the candidate from an opposing party.



Fig. 5.19. Officials of the government campaigning for the ruling party.



Fig. 5.20. Bundles of ₹500/- notes found in the car of a candidate during inspections.

→ Why do you think these might be violations of the code of conduct?



DON'T MISS OUT

The Model Code of Conduct was adopted in Kerala in 1960, voluntarily approved by representatives of the major political parties of the time. The ECI circulated it to political parties during the 1962 general elections, and from 1991, the ECI became proactive in ensuring the observance of the MCC.



DON'T MISS OUT

T.N. Seshan became the Chief Election Commissioner in 1990. He brought in reforms to ensure free and fair elections, among them: campaigning to follow precise rules, voter IDs to eliminate proxy voting, and strict vigilance on spending by candidates. T.N. Seshan worked hard to protect the rights of voters and is often remembered as the officer who made Indian elections fairer, transparent and fearless!



Fig. 5.21. T.N. Seshan

LET'S EXPLORE



When is the next election in the region where you are located? Is it to the state, urban local body or panchayat?

UNDERSTANDING ELECTIONS IN INDIA — A VERY BRIEF OVERVIEW

Election to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies

Elections in India are often referred to as the 'Festival of Democracy' — a time when citizens exercise their right to choose representatives freely, fairly, and responsibly.

We know that India follows a parliamentary system of government where citizens participate in various levels of elections — Lok Sabha (national level), state legislative assemblies (state level) and local bodies (city and village level). The country is divided into 543 constituencies for the Lok Sabha elections. The elected candidates to the Lok Sabha are known as **Members of Parliament** (MPs), whereas candidates elected to state assemblies are known as **Members of Legislative Assembly** (MLAs). India uses the 'First-Past-the-Post' electoral system, wherein the candidate receiving the most votes in a

constituency wins. This means that a candidate can win without securing even 50 per cent of the total votes (like Gurmat won despite getting only 12 out of the 33 votes).



DON'T MISS OUT

The legislative assembly is called by several names in regional languages, for example, Vidhan Sabha and Niyama Sabha. What is it called in your state?

After the voting process is completed, the process of government formation begins. The political party or **coalition** winning a majority of the seats in the Lok Sabha forms the national government. The leader of this majority typically becomes the prime minister. Similarly, at the state level, the leader of the majority party becomes the chief minister.

Coalition:
A group of two or more parties working together

What's the difference between an MP and an MLA?

MPs represent us in the national parliament, while MLAs represent us in our state assembly. Both are chosen through similar electoral processes but work at different levels of governance.

If a party or coalition wins a majority of the seats in the Lok Sabha, it forms the national government and its leader becomes the prime minister.

In states, if a party or coalition wins a majority of seats in the State Assembly, it forms the government and its leader becomes the state's chief minister.

Fig. 5.22

As we saw in Fig. 5.11, the State Election Commission is a part of the election apparatus. It plays an important role not only in general and state elections but also in conducting elections to

local bodies at the grassroots level. It works in consultation with the ECI in these matters, and universal adult franchise, and all other Constitutional provisions applicable in the case of direct elections by the people are pertinent here too.

LET'S EXPLORE



- Who are the MP and MLA / MLAs of the constituency you are located in? (A Lok Sabha constituency may have two or more assembly constituencies.)
- Which party does each of them belong to?
- What are the concerns of the MP and MLA, respectively?

Election to the Rajya Sabha

The candidates elected to the Rajya Sabha are also known as Members of Parliament (MPs), but they are chosen through **indirect elections**.

Let us revisit the example of Suryodaya School. Imagine that the school is setting up a special council at the school level. If the members of this council are elected by the class representatives, it would be an indirect election.

Of the 245 members of the Rajya Sabha, 233 are elected by the elected members of the state legislative assemblies (MLAs), while the President of India nominates 12. Each state is allotted a different number of Rajya Sabha seats based on population. For example, more populous states like Uttar Pradesh have more seats than less populous states like Arunachal Pradesh.

The Rajya Sabha is also called the Permanent House — it is never **dissolved**. A member of the Rajya Sabha has a six-year term. One-third of its members retire every two years, and new members are elected.

There is a difference, however, in the voting process. It uses what is called a '**single transferable vote system**'. This is a special way of ensuring that smaller states also get fair representation in the Rajya Sabha. You will learn more about the exact mechanism of how this works in higher classes.

Dissolution:
Expiry or
termination
due to the
end of its
term or other
Constitutional
reason

Rajya Sabha: The Council of States

MLAs

Vote in
indirect
elections

Elect 233
Rajya Sabha
members

President of
India

Nominates
12 members

Rajya Sabha members are elected by MLAs through **indirect elections**, while the President nominates 12 distinguished individuals.



Seat allocation is based on state populations; more populous states like Uttar Pradesh have more seats.



Rajya Sabha is a **permanent body**; one-third of its members retire every two years, ensuring continuity.



MLAs vote using a single transferable vote system, ranking candidates by preference.

Fig. 5.23

Bicameral legislatures:

A bicameral legislature is a system where the legislative body is divided into two separate chambers or houses.

Election of the President of India

The **President of India** is not directly elected by the common people. Instead, an electoral college is formed to carry out the election. This Electoral College consists of:

- Members of Parliament (MPs) from both the houses of the Parliament — Lok Sabha (Lower House) and the Rajya Sabha (Upper House)
- Members of the Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) from each of India's states and the union territories of Delhi and Puducherry

The single transferable vote system is followed in this election. Since the president represents the whole country, this method ensures the support of both the central and state governments. The rules for voting and counting are very elaborate; the more populous states have a greater say. (We need not go into the details at this stage.)

The following group of people is **not involved** in electing the President of India:

- Nominated members of Rajya Sabha (12)
- Nominated members of State Legislative Assemblies
- Members of Legislative Councils (both elected and nominated) in **bicameral legislatures**
- Nominated members of union territories of Delhi and Puducherry



THINK ABOUT IT

Why do you think the above group of people is not involved in electing the President of India? Why are the common people not involved in the election of the president?

It is because this ensures that only directly elected representatives vote to elect the President. This maintains democratic legitimacy, as the President is meant to represent the will of the people, indirectly but meaningfully.

Election of the Vice President of India

The Vice President of India is elected by an electoral college consisting of the elected and nominated members of both Houses of Parliament; again, the system of single transferable vote is used.

The vice president is the chairperson of the Rajya Sabha. If there are situations when the president is not able to discharge their function, the vice president steps in to play the role.

CHALLENGES AND THE ROAD AHEAD

India's electoral system is celebrated as the world's largest democratic exercise. However, like all systems, it faces its share of challenges. Issues such as the growing influence of money in elections, a significant proportion of candidates with criminal records, and voter apathy, (particularly in urban areas), raise important questions about the health and future of our democracy.

The way forward lies in empowering voters with the information they need to make thoughtful and responsible choices. Media, education, and awareness campaigns must work together to help people, especially the youth, understand the importance of voting wisely. An aware and vigilant voter is the strongest safeguard of a democratic system. It starts with asking the right questions — and ends with casting a responsible vote.

Before we move on...

- Universal adult franchise is the cornerstone of Indian democracy.
- The right to vote is a responsibility, too. It needs to be taken seriously by every voter. Voter awareness is an important aspect of the right to vote.
- It is important to facilitate the participation of all eligible voters.
- The Election Commission of India is the Constitutional body that conducts elections in the country.



- The ECI oversees all the elections in the country, including those of the president and vice president.
- Indian democracy faces challenges that call for the voters' vigilance and awareness.

Questions and activities

1. Why is universal adult franchise important for a healthy democracy?
2. What is the meaning of 'secret ballot'? Why is this important in a democracy?
3. Give examples of direct and indirect elections.
4. How is the election of members to the Lok Sabha different from that to the Rajya Sabha?
5. What, in your view, are the advantages of the EVM over paper ballots?
6. Voter turnout has been declining in some urban areas of India. What could be the reasons for this trend, and what steps can be taken to encourage more people to vote?
7. Why do you think a proportion of seats in the Lok Sabha is reserved for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes? Write a short note.
8. Social media is changing the way we experience elections — from catchy campaign reels and live speeches to political debates on Instagram and Twitter. But is this strengthening democracy or confusing it? Discuss in pairs: What are the benefits, what are the challenges, and what might the future of elections be in a digital age?
9. Visit the website <https://www.indiavotes.com>, and choose a parliamentary constituency election from any year and explore its results. Do the same for an assembly election in your state.

The Parliamentary System: Legislature and Executive

The Constitution is not a mere lawyer's document; it is a vehicle of life, and its spirit is always the spirit of the age.

– Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar

November 1949, Constituent Assembly Debates

The Big Questions ?

1. What is India's parliamentary system, and how is it structured?
2. What are the key functions of the Parliament?
3. What are the roles of the legislature and the executive in India's Parliamentary democracy?
4. How are the legislature and the executive organised at the union and state levels?

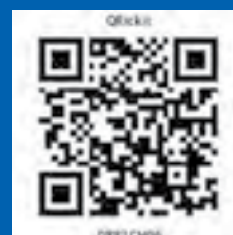


Fig. 6.1. Features of the new Parliament building



The Grade 8 students from Nalanda Vidyalaya were on a school trip to Delhi. Usha, Sukhwinder, Anjali, John, and Farida were especially excited to visit the new Parliament building.

It's not square or round — it's like a soft triangle!

The three-sided design reflects balance, inclusivity, and purpose.

It also uses green construction, cutting electricity use by 30 per cent.



Inside, they saw walls decorated with carvings — peacocks, lotuses, tribal art, temple patterns, and freedom fighters.



It feels like a museum of India.

The Ashokan emblem!



This new building houses so many ancient symbols!

Exactly, democracy must look ahead — but never forget its roots.



INTRODUCTION

India's independence was achieved through great sacrifices by many people of the country after years of struggle against colonial rule. The citizens of a free country could now make decisions about their own governance. The first important step in this new epoch in the life of our nation was the drafting of the Constitution of independent India. This comprehensive document laid foundational principles for the nation, including that of Universal Adult Franchise which guarantees all adult citizens of the country the right to vote irrespective of their social or economic background, gender, race, or religion.

The people of India directly elect their representatives who become members of the Lok Sabha. A majority group from among these elected representatives forms the government. The Parliament is the supreme legislative body of the government (it makes laws for the country). It comprises all elected and nominated representatives of the people and controls and guides the work of the government. The government can therefore be seen as functioning with the people's consent. There have been 17 Lok Sabhas since the first one in 1952. The 18th Lok Sabha was constituted in June 2024.



Fig. 6.2. Our old Parliament (now called Samvidhan Sadan) building was constructed in the 1920s. The Constituent Assembly met there for its deliberations, and it served as Parliament House for over seven decades.



Fig. 6.3. The Parliament Building (Sansad Bhavan) in New Delhi was constructed to accommodate the growing needs including capacity, technology, sustainability and safety.

Governance and Democracy
6 – The Parliamentary System: Legislature and Executive

COMPOSITION OF THE PARLIAMENT OF INDIA

The Indian Parliament is composed of the President and two houses: the Lok Sabha (House of the People / Lower House) and the Rajya Sabha (Council of States / Upper House). This structure with two houses is called a 'bicameral' system ('bi' means two, 'cameral' means chamber / house).



Fig. 6.4. Lok Sabha Chambers in the new Parliament building



Fig. 6.5. A view of the Chamber of the Rajya Sabha taken from the Press Gallery



LET'S REMEMBER

The people of India choose their representatives for the Lok Sabha through a direct election (based on universal adult suffrage). The maximum number of members of this House envisaged by the Constitution is 550. The Members of Parliament (MPs) in the Rajya Sabha are elected indirectly by the electoral college that you read about in the previous chapter. Both, the number of Rajya Sabha seats allocated and the number of MPs represented in the Lok Sabha, are based on the population of each state.



DON'T MISS OUT

We are aware that several aspects of the Indian Constitution were drawn from the constitutions of other countries. Britain's system inspired our system of Parliamentary democracy. However, there were also experiences that our freedom fighters and Constitution makers had — the practical experience gained through participation in British colonial governance structures, even if in a very limited way, that provided familiarity with Parliamentary procedures; the memory of the ancient republics (*mahājanapadas*); the village panchayats where elders made collective decisions, as we learnt in a previous chapter.

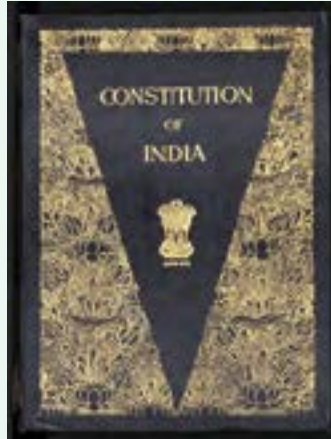


Fig. 6.6. Constitution of India

Extensive discussions took place during the making of the Constitution regarding whether India should have a bicameral system. It was felt that a single directly elected House would be inadequate to meet the challenges independent India would face. In the spirit of 'federalism', it was felt that a Council of States, the Rajya Sabha, was needed. The composition and process of election to the Rajya Sabha were also designed to be different. India practices federalism, which is a form of government where power is distributed between the centre, states, as well as local governments. This system helps to keep the balance between national unity and local interests.

FUNCTION

Each House of the Parliament has a presiding officer to ensure that debates and discussions are conducted in an orderly manner. In the Lok Sabha, the members elect a speaker, who conducts the sessions, allows members to speak, maintains discipline, and ensures that rules are followed. The Rajya Sabha is presided over by the Vice President of India, who acts as its chairperson.



DON'T MISS OUT

Sceptre:
A decorated
rod carried
by a king
or queen at
ceremonies
as a symbol
of their
power

The Sengol, a gold-plated, silver **sceptre** was symbolically handed over to Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, on 14 August 1947 on the occasion of Indian Independence as a powerful symbol to mark the transfer of power. It is now placed near the Speaker's chair in the new Lok Sabha, and served as a symbol of righteous and just rule. Dating back to the Chola period, the Sengol was handed to new rulers as a reminder that power must be guided by dharma and righteousness. At its top sits Nandi, symbolising justice.

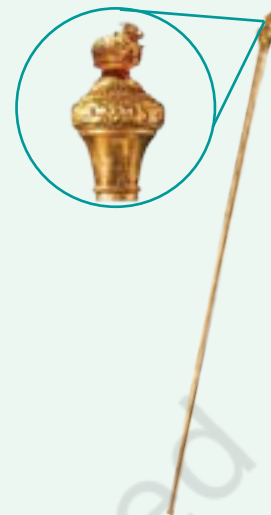


Fig. 6.7. The Sengol

To help make Parliamentary discussions accessible to all, translation services are provided in multiple Indian languages. Previously, simultaneous interpretation was available in 12 languages, namely, Hindi, English, Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Tamil, Punjabi and Telugu. Recently, six more languages were added: Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, Manipuri, Urdu, and Sanskrit. More languages are expected to be added in the future.

The 'executive' responsibility of the Parliament (i.e., ensuring that laws are implemented and enforced) is as important as its 'legislative' function (i.e., the making of laws). The Union Executive gives life to the legislative functions and power of the Parliament. The Union Executive consists of the following members:

- The President,
- The Vice President, and
- The Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister.

The Council of Ministers is chosen from among the MPs of both houses of Parliament. These ministers are collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha.

Let us now discuss the Legislative and Executive functions of the Parliament.

LEGISLATIVE FUNCTIONS OF THE PARLIAMENT

The Constitution lays down the key functions that the Parliament needs to fulfil. They can be broadly classified under the following heads:

1. Constitutional functions
2. Lawmaking
3. Executive accountability
4. Financial accountability

We explore them briefly in the sections below.

1) Constitutional function



LET'S REMEMBER

From your previous lessons on the theme of Democracy and Governance, name a few Constitutional functions of the Parliament. Did you list the election of President and Vice President? What about amendments to the Constitution? Indeed, these are vital constitutional functions of the Parliament. There are other important functions that we will explore in higher grades.

The Parliament is directly entrusted with upholding the core values of the Indian Constitution, including:

- a. Enabling parliamentary democracy through universal adult suffrage,
- b. Following the separation of powers between the legislature, executive, and judiciary,
- c. Ensuring federalism, and
- d. Upholding Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy by framing laws and policies.

Bill:

A bill is a draft of a proposed law that needs to be approved by the parliament before it can be enacted into law.

2) Lawmaking

Among the primary responsibilities of the legislature is to make laws. The Constitution has laid out an elaborate and rigorous process for lawmaking. A law is generally brought into force through an instrument called an **act**. A **bill**, which is a draft of a proposed law, is introduced in Parliament and goes through a long and effortful journey before it becomes an act. Given below is the journey of how a bill becomes an act, and ultimately a law, in the case of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE).



“Most people call me RTE. I came into existence in August 2009, though the idea began almost a century before.

My roots lie in the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Indian Constitution. Though the Constitution makers wanted me implemented within a decade after Independence, this didn't happen, leaving countless children without access to education.

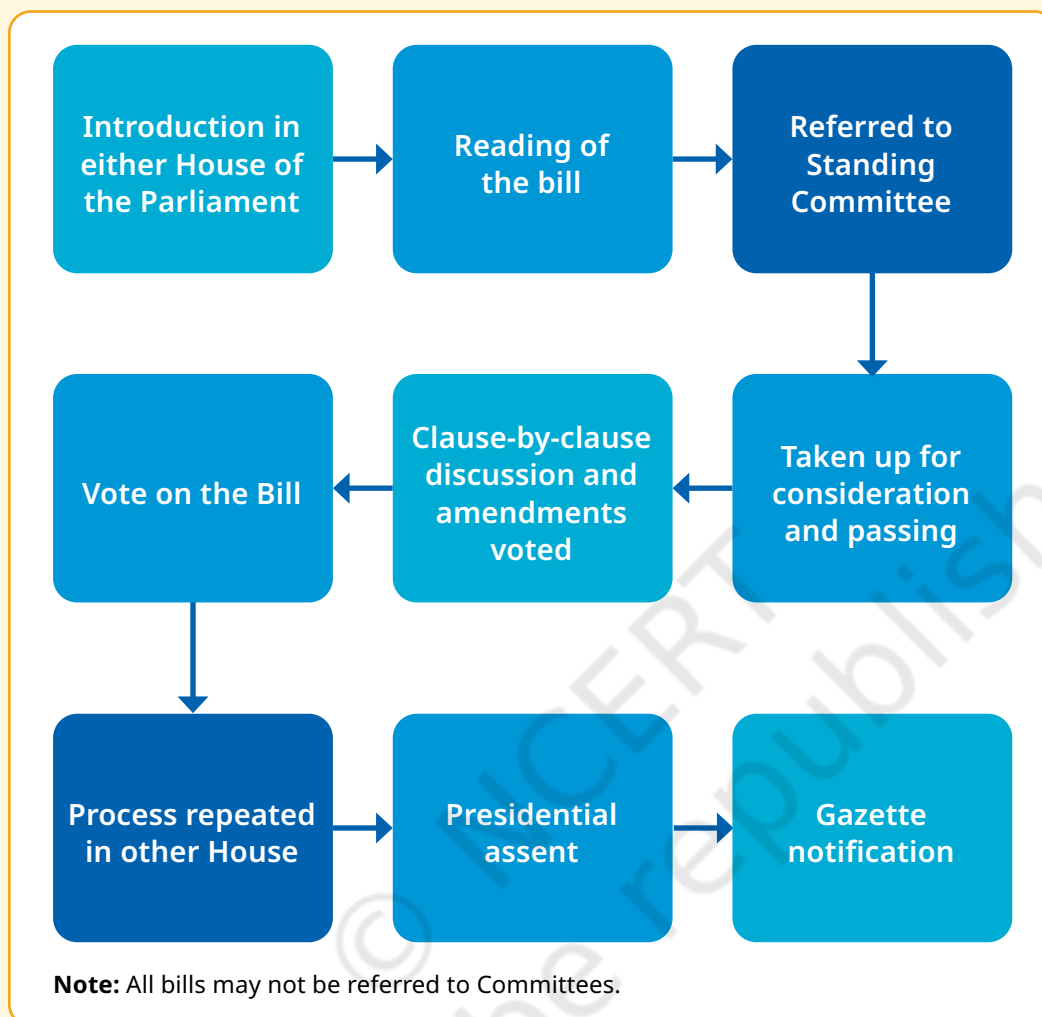
In the early 1990s, someone argued in court that I was inherently part of the Fundamental Rights in the Constitution, namely, the Right to Life — as education is important to lead a meaningful life. Parliamentary action began some years later with the introduction of the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002, which mandated — as Article 21A of the Constitution — that the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children between the ages of 6 and 14 years.

Six years later, I was tabled as a bill in the Rajya Sabha. A committee studied me thoroughly and suggested modifications. The major debate concerned funding — new schools, infrastructure, and teachers for millions of children would be costly. By 2008, the MPs determined it was time.

After the 2009 elections, the new government pursued the matter, and in August 2009, I was passed in the Lok Sabha and received the President's assent, becoming an Act.

Today, I've enabled the creation of legal pathways for children to attend school, facilitated new school construction, and ensured free books and uniforms for children.”

From bill to act – the process of lawmaking in the Parliament



Standing Committee:

It is a permanent committee consisting of MPs (the MPs may change, but the committee as a structure remains) that scrutinises government activities, makes recommendations and asks questions on actions taken by the government.

Fig. 6.8. Process of lawmaking — a simplified diagram to illustrate key steps.

Reading: The origins are in the British Parliament. Many MPs were illiterate, so a clerk would read out the contents of the bill for the MPs to discuss. Today MPs read the bill before the discussions take place.

Clause: These are parts of a bill that explain the specific details of the bill; eg. RTE defines the age group to which it applies (6 to 14 years).

Gazette: This is an official government publication that announces legal documents and official information.



LET'S EXPLORE

Draw a small chart to show the process of how RTE became an act. What do you think the process would be if RTE had been tabled in the Lok Sabha?



DON'T MISS OUT

Some types of bills have to be tabled only in the Lok Sabha. One example is a 'Money Bill' that is concerned with financial matters (including taxation, government borrowing, etc.). It is essentially a draft law that can be introduced only in the Lok Sabha; however, the introduction of the bill requires the prior recommendation of the President.

3) Executive accountability

The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers are part of the Union Executive. They are:

- primarily responsible for implementing and enforcing laws and overseeing the effective running of the government;
- take decisions regarding the day-to-day functioning of the government based on the principles laid out in the Constitution and its laws;
- answerable to the Lok Sabha, through mechanisms like the Question Hour which require ministers to justify their actions and decisions. The Question Hour in the Lok Sabha is a select period (typically the first hour of a Parliamentary session) where MPs can ask the ministers questions about government policies and activities. It is a process of the Parliament that holds the Executive 'accountable' (i.e., it must justify all actions and decisions). Special committees also hold meetings where ministries have to explain and answer questions about their policies. These committees may include MPs from different political parties.

The Parliament isn't always formal and serious. Sometimes, the atmosphere is set through poetry and humour!

Example 1: Verse in the Parliament

While presenting the Union Budget for the year 2025–26 on the 1 February 2025, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman recited the following verse from *Tirukkural* (an ancient Indian treatise in Tamil on ethics and morality):

*Vaanokki vaalum ulakellaam
Mannavan koalnokki vaalung kudi.*

It means:

*Just as living beings live expecting rains,
Citizens live expecting good governance.*

On hearing this, there was an enthusiastic thumping of desks from the Treasury Benches.



Example 2: Humour in the Parliament

In 2011, during a spirited debate in the Lok Sabha, Parliamentary Sushma Swaraj quoted a poetic verse to criticise the government:

*“Tu idhar udhar ki na baat kar, yeh bata ki kafila kyun luta,
humein rahjano se gila nahi, teri rahbari ka sawal hai.”*

Don't change the topic, just say why the caravan was looted. We have no complaint with the robbers, but this is a question on your leadership.

In response, the then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh calmly replied with another poetic line:

*“Maana ki teri deed ke qabil nahin hoon main, tu mera shauq
dekh mera intezaar dekh.”*

I admit that I am not worthy of your sight; you should look at my zeal and my perseverance.



Fig. 6.9. Extract from a report of the Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare

1.2 Co-location of Ayush facilities at Primary Health Centers (PHCs), Community Health Centers (CHCs) and District Hospitals (DHs)

Recommendation:

1.2.1 The Committee, at this juncture, notices that in some states and UTs, a separate Department of Ayush has not been opened. The Committee, to boost the Ayush system and for better coordination in Ayush Healthcare, recommends the Ministry of Ayush to impress upon and persuade the States and UTs with no separate department of Ayush to create such a department for speedy development and implementation of Ayush sector and schemes respectively.

(Para 2.13 of the Report)

Action Taken:

1.2.2 Public Health is being a state subject, creation of separate Department of Ayush in the States/UTs comes under purview of respective State/UT Governments. However, Ministry of Ayush has requested State/UT Governments in different meetings to create separate Directorates, deployment of manpower in SPMU & DPMU in the States/UTs for speedy development and implementation of NAM scheme. As on date, separate Ayush Directorate is available in 24 States/UTs. (SPMU=state project management unit; DPMU=district project management unit)

(Para 2.23 of the Report)

LET'S EXPLORE

Given here is an extract from the report of meetings between the Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare and the officers from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. Observe the screenshots above and discuss the following in small groups — Who is reporting to whom? What is the subject that has been reviewed? Identify the Committee's recommendation. What is the government's reply?

4) Financial accountability

The Parliament approves and monitors government expenditure through the annual budget, and examining the distribution of funds to different ministries.

LET'S EXPLORE

Why do you think that Parliament keeps an eye on government expenditure? (*Hint: Whose money does the government spend?*)

The government is expected to provide the necessary information to Parliament in a timely and accurate manner.

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS OF PARLIAMENT

We have uncovered a few points on the role of the executive in the previous sections. We look at this a little more closely now.



DON'T MISS OUT

Part V of the Indian Constitution begins with Chapter I — The Executive. It looks at the roles and responsibilities of the President, Vice President, and Council of Ministers, among others. It is in Chapter II that the role and functions of Parliament are listed. Why might this be so?

1) The President

The President is the Head of State and the nominal head of the Executive. The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers are responsible for running the government. The President appoints the Prime Minister and other ministers, summons the Parliament, and gives assent to bills, among other functions. The Council of Ministers aids and advises the President. However, in specific circumstances, the President can exercise discretionary powers, particularly during political crises, like when no party holds a clear majority in a Lok Sabha election.



2) The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers

The Prime Minister is the *de facto* executive authority in India's Parliamentary system. The President appoints the leader of the majority party or coalition in the Lok Sabha as the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister serves with the support of the majority of the MPs in the Lok Sabha.

The Prime Minister's key functions include:

- Leading the Council of Ministers
- Coordinating the work of different ministries
- Advising the President
- Shaping national policies

The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers take decisions and run the government. They are collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha. Most of the bills that come to the Parliament for discussion are initiated by the government. A permanent group of officials — called 'civil servants' — help in implementing laws and policies. These officers, often called administrators or bureaucrats, work under the direction of ministers and ensure that government departments function smoothly.

LET'S EXPLORE

If the Executive is part of the Legislature, how do we say that there is separation of power? (*Hint: revisit the section on legislature above*)

DON'T MISS OUT

In 1956, Railway Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri resigned after a train accident. Although he was not blamed for the accident, he believed that a minister must take moral responsibility for anything that happens in their ministry. He offered his resignation to the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru; Nehru declined at first, but Shastri insisted. Finally, his resignation was accepted.



Fig. 6.10. Lal Bahadur Shastri (Minister for Railways and later Prime Minister of India)

Differences Between the Legislature and the Executive

It is important to understand some key differences between the Legislature and the Executive. The following table briefly summarises the distinctions.

Aspect	Legislature	Executive
Composition	The Parliament of India is the supreme legislative body of the country, composed of the President, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.	The Executive is composed of the President, the Vice-President, and the Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister.
Main Role	Making laws and overseeing the work of the Executive	Enforcing the laws made by the Legislature
Functions	Can introduce some bills in the Parliament	Most of the bills are introduced by the Executive in the Parliament
	Keeps a check on the activities of the Executive by asking questions and seeking explanations	Provides information and explanations to the Legislature on its decisions and actions. Aids and advises the President on important matters, including calling sessions of Parliament.
	Sanctions all government-related expenses	Prepares and implements the budget approved by Parliament.
	Consults different Parliamentary committees	Can function independently in day-to-day matters and may consult committees when required.

THE JUDICIARY — ROLE OF CHECKS AND BALANCES

The Judiciary is the branch of government that is responsible for interpreting and applying the laws of the land, including in specific cases of disputes. The Judiciary functions through a system of courts and plays a pivotal role in maintaining the democratic nature of society and governance. The Judiciary acts as the custodian of the Constitution, ensuring that all branches of the government operate within the principles and parameters enshrined in the Constitution. It keeps a check on the effective functioning of society and institutions of the government by interpreting laws, resolving disputes, and safeguarding fundamental rights.

The Constitution not only describes how the Legislature and Executive are given power to govern the country, but it also lists the specific responsibilities of these organs. To ensure that the powers of the Legislature are used properly and responsibilities are followed, the Judiciary is given the unique and critical responsibility of checking that the laws passed by Parliament have not violated the Constitutional framework. Similarly, if a violation of the Constitution occurs when the laws are implemented by the Executive, the Judiciary again has the power to step in. Just as the Parliament functions through its Legislature and the Executive arms, the Judiciary functions through its Courts.

In this chapter, we have explored how the organs within the Parliament balance making of the law and executing it, and how the Judiciary checks these actions. These are all examples of the separation of powers and the system of checks and balances among the Legislature, the Executive, and the Judiciary, ensuring that no one organ becomes too powerful.

LET'S EXPLORE

- What might happen if one of the organs — Legislature, Executive, Judiciary — had all the power? How could it affect the rights of people? Discuss with your classmates

how each organ checks the others. For example, how does the Legislature question the actions of the Executive? How does the Judiciary make sure that laws and government actions respect the Constitution? Do you think there might be ways in which the actions of the Judiciary itself are reviewed?

- Can you find examples where the Judiciary has asked lawmakers to review a law? Can you find any instances when the implementation of a law has been questioned by the Judiciary?



We will learn more about the Judiciary in a later chapter.

LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS AT THE STATE LEVEL

As discussed, the Union Government has a Parliament with legislative and executive functions. Similarly, each state has its own legislature and executive, called its 'State Assembly'. Just as the Parliament has Members of Parliament (MPs) who make laws, there are Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) who formulate laws on subjects that are on the 'State List' and on the 'Concurrent List'.

Union List, State List, and Concurrent List

The Constitution has lists that help to clarify the areas on which the Union and State governments can exclusively legislate, called the Union List and the State List, respectively. There is also a Concurrent List that has subjects on which both the Union and State governments can legislate. However, in the case that the Union government legislates on a subject in the Concurrent List, the state government is bound to follow it. In the case of RTE, for example, the Act is applicable all over India even though education is in the Concurrent List.

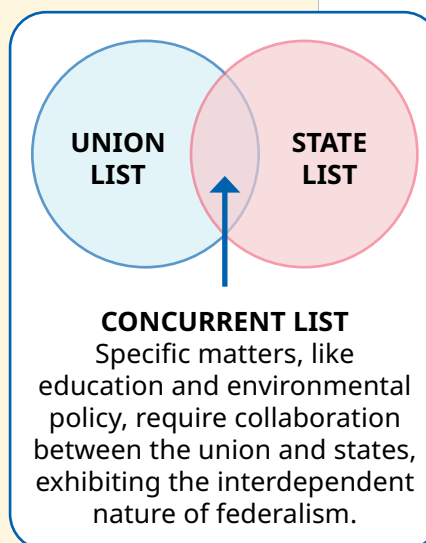


Fig. 6.11

Parallel Structure of Union and State Governments in India

The structure at the state-level imitates the one at the union-level. You can see this structure across both levels in the table:

Feature	Union Government	State Government
Constitutional Head	The President of India elected by an electoral college	Governor of the State appointed by the President
Term of Office (Head)	5 years	5 years
Executive Head	The nominal head is the President, but the Prime Minister is the <i>de facto</i> executive authority at the centre	The nominal head is the Governor, but the Chief Minister is the <i>de facto</i> executive authority of the state
Selection of Executive	Leader of majority party/coalition in Lok Sabha	Leader of majority party/coalition in Vidhan Sabha
Council of Ministers	Selected by Prime Minister	Selected by Chief Minister
Responsibility	Collectively responsible to Lok Sabha	Collectively responsible to Vidhan Sabha
Legislature Structure	Bicameral — Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha	Can be unicameral (Vidhan Sabha only) or bicameral (Vidhan Sabha and Vidhan Parishad)
Lower House	Lok Sabha (House of the People)	Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly)
Upper House	Rajya Sabha (Council of States)	Vidhan Parishad (Legislative Council) — in some states only
Term of Lower House	5 years	5 years
Presiding Officer (Lower House)	Speaker	Speaker
Legislative Powers	Makes laws on subjects in Union List and Concurrent List	Makes laws on subjects in State List and Concurrent List
Financial Powers	Money bills originate only in Lok Sabha	Money bills originate only in Vidhan Sabha

Structure of State Legislatures

Unlike the Centre, the State legislatures can be ‘unicameral’ (having only one house) or ‘bicameral’ (having two houses). The legislative assembly is called the *Vidhan Sabha*, and the legislative council (the upper house) is called the *Vidhan Parishad*. The states having a bicameral system are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh, while the remaining states have a unicameral system.



Fig. 6.12. Vidhana Soudha houses the legislature in Karnataka. This building was envisioned by Kengal Hanumanthaiah, who was a freedom fighter and a member of the Constituent Assembly, Chief Minister of Karnataka, and later a Member of Parliament.

LET'S EXPLORE

What type of legislature does your state have?



CHALLENGES TO THE EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF THE LEGISLATURES

As discussed, the Indian legislature (including the Parliament at the Centre and the State Assemblies) has the critical and vital role of enacting laws, overseeing administrative processes, and approving the budget. It also provides a platform for discussing national policies, development plans, international relations, and addressing public grievances. However, the legislature also faces several challenges in its effective functioning.

Productivity:

In the Parliamentary context, productivity is measured by the number of hours either the Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha actually functioned against the time it was scheduled to.

Some of these can include regular absenteeism of members, non-cooperative conduct or communication of members, reduced quality of important debates, and disruptions of the Question Hour.

The Parliament typically meets three times a year. These meetings are called ‘sessions’ — Budget Sessions, Monsoon Sessions and Winter Sessions. Each of these has ‘sittings’, where the Parliament meets to deliberate upon proposed laws, discuss important matters of governance, and seek explanations from the Executive on its decisions and actions. Usually, the Parliament sits for 6 hours a day during sessions. This can be extended on special occasions or when there is a need to complete urgent business. The State Assemblies too, have similar schedules.

LET'S EXPLORE

→ Study the data given in the following table. What conclusions can you draw about the functioning of Parliament over time? Compile data for more recent years.

Period of Lok Sabha	Number of sessions	Number of sittings
1st Lok Sabha (1952–1957)	14	677
2nd Lok Sabha (1957–1962)	16	567
10th Lok Sabha (1991–1996)	16	423
13th Lok Sabha (1999–2004)	14	356

→ Read the following statement of the former chairman of the Rajya Sabha, M. Venkaiah Naidu given in 2021: “...the productivity of Rajya Sabha during 2004-14 has been about 78% and it declined to about 65% since then. Of the 11 sessions [that he presided over], four of them clocked low productivity of 6.80%, 27.30%, 28.90% and 29.55%; during the year 2018, the Rajya Sabha recorded the lowest ever **productivity** of 35.75% under the impact of disruptions.” What conclusions can you draw from this statement? What implications does this have for the role that the Rajya Sabha is expected to play?

The Parliament and the State Assemblies have been envisioned as spaces for thoughtful debates and discussions where laws are made in the interest of the people. However, when debates are disrupted, sessions are cut short and some bills take years to be discussed and passed, it becomes a matter of concern.

LET'S EXPLORE

- Take up a small group project. Compile data regarding the functioning of the legislature in your state or union territory.
- Seek an appointment with an MLA and gather information about challenges with respect to the state legislature.

Concerns have been expressed by sections of the society about the fact that a substantial proportion of their representatives in the Lok Sabha have criminal cases against them, and that many sessions are marked by angry or biased debates that do not seriously address issues affecting the people.

The media also plays an important role in communicating the concerns of the electorate. Fig. 6.13 expresses them with humour, a practice common to all healthy democracies.



Fig. 6.13. Monsoon Session: Expect thunder, lightning, storms, breaches etc. It's Monsoon Session.

Yet, our democracy grows stronger when citizens stay informed and engaged. By asking questions, sharing their views, and participating in public discussions, people help shape better policies. Therefore, one of the best ways to overcome the challenges India faces regarding its legislature, is to ensure that many more citizens stay informed on matters of importance to society, participate in discussions through public debate on digital spaces that various government departments offer during policymaking processes, and constructively engaging with political representatives on policies.

Many more young leaders and diverse voices are entering public life, and technology is making it easier to stay connected and involved with governance. As future voters, your choices, and participation will play a key role in strengthening our Parliament and the assembly of the state you belong to, ensuring that they truly serve all people.



DON'T MISS OUT

- Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a former Prime Minister of India, said during a speech in the Lok Sabha, *“Sarkaarein aayengi, jaayengi. Paartiyaan banengi, bigadengi. Lekin yeh desh rehna chaahiye, is desh ka loktantra amar rehna chaahiye.”* (Governments will come and go, parties will rise and fall. But the nation must endure, and its democracy must live on.)



Fig. 6.14. Atal Bihari Vajpayee

- What message do you think this gives about the role of Parliament and leaders in a democracy? Why is it important to protect democratic values even when political power changes?

Before we move on...



- India's Parliamentary system ensures that power is shared, decisions are debated, and leaders are held accountable.
- The Legislature makes laws, the Executive implements them, and the Judiciary ensures that they follow the Constitution.
- The Parliament represents the voice of the people and reflects the federal spirit of our democracy.
- Both at the Centre and in the states, structures are designed to balance representation, responsibility, and unity.
- Checks and balances between institutions help protect citizens' rights and uphold democratic values.
- The functioning of the Parliament needs to become more efficient and productive so that the country's progress is not thwarted.

Questions and activities

1. Find out how many representatives from your state are in each House of the Parliament.
2. What makes the Indian Parliament the “voice of the people”? How does it ensure that different opinions are heard?
3. Why do you think the Constitution made the Executive responsible to the Legislature?
4. Why do you think we have chosen the system of bicameral legislature at the Union level?
5. Try to track the journey of a recent bill passed by the Parliament. Identify in which House it was introduced. Were there any major debates or disagreements? How long did it take for the bill to become a law? Use newspaper archives, government websites, and Lok Sabha debates, or ask your teacher for help.

6. Choose a recent law passed by the Parliament. Divide into teams to role-play different parts of the process — MPs debating in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, ministers answering questions, and the President giving assent. Present a short skit showing how a bill becomes a law; enact a ‘model Parliament’.
7. The Women’s Reservation Bill, 2023, was passed with wide support. Why might it have taken over 25 years for this bill to be passed, despite being discussed for so long?
8. Sometimes the Parliament is disrupted and does not function for the number of days it is supposed to. What impact do you think this has on the quality of laws and the trust people place in their representatives?
9. Can you create ‘interest’ groups among students and list questions related to any policy that you may want to ask your MP and / or your MLA? How would these questions be different if it is to the MP instead of the MLA, and vice versa?
10. What is the role that the Judiciary plays in Indian democracy? What could happen if we didn’t have an independent judiciary?

The Role of the Judiciary in Our Society

CHAPTER

4

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

—Dr Martin Luther King Jr.



Fig. 4.1. The Supreme Court of India, New Delhi

The Big Questions ?

1. What is the concept of justice?
2. Why is it important for a just and harmonious Society?
3. What is the structure and role of the judiciary in India?
4. What are the alternative modes of dispute resolution?



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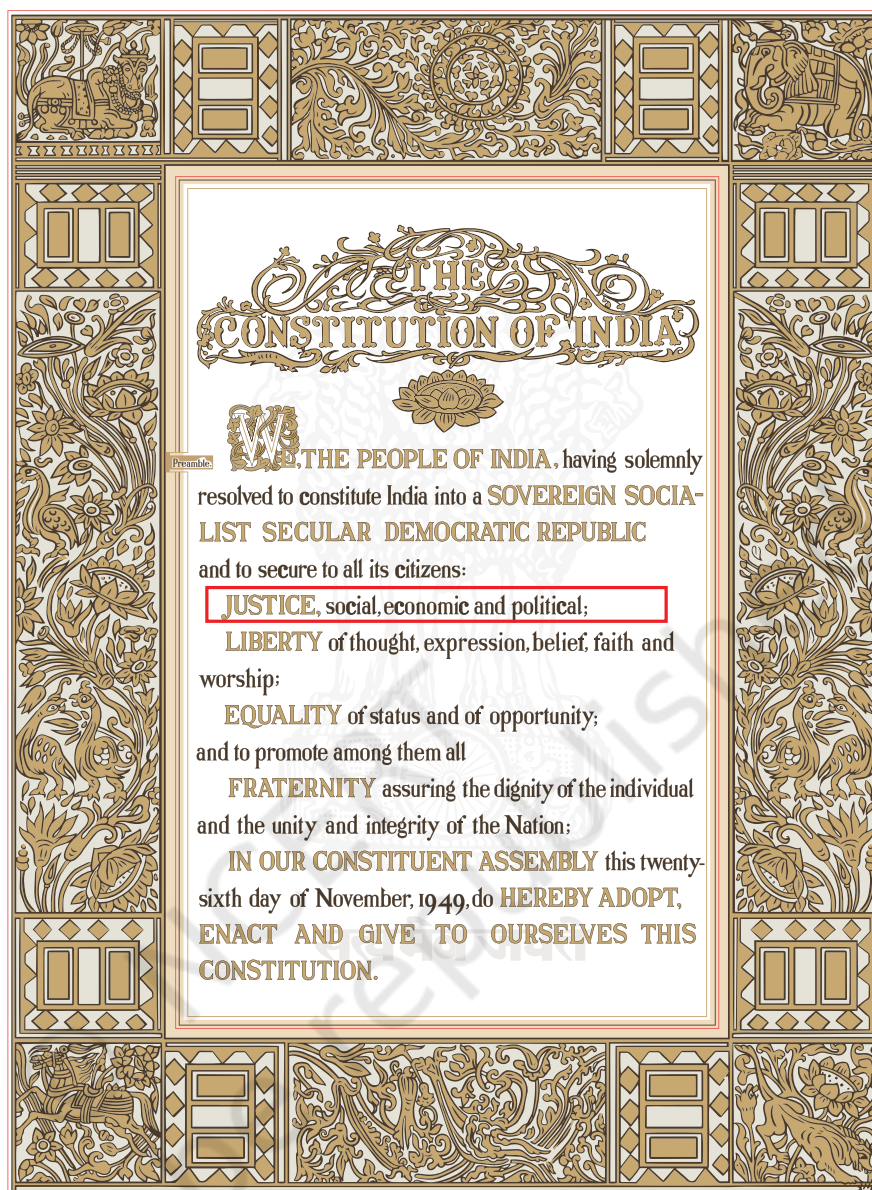


Fig. 4.2. The Preamble to the Constitution of India

The Preamble to the Constitution of India promises all Indian citizens social, economic, and political justice. The founders of independent India laid the foundation for a sound judicial system in a democratic society.

Justice is essential for maintaining peace and harmony in any society. It ensures that individuals in a society can live with equality and dignity. The Judiciary is the institution which ensures fair adjudication of disputes in accordance with the law and that everyone is treated justly and with fairness.

LET'S EXPLORE

Think of a time when you felt that someone had not been fair to you. How did you feel? What did you think needed to be done to make the situation right? Who could have made things right? What would you do in such a situation? Share in small groups.



LET'S REMEMBER

We know that the Judiciary is one of the three pillars of the government, which is independent from the legislature and the executive. An independent judiciary is essential to ensure that disputes between parties are decided in a fair and just manner.

Society has many complex interactions happening all the time, both personal and professional, therefore, disagreements and disputes may arise from diverse contexts and situations. Often disputes between parties are resolved through dialogue, mediation, or adjudication by courts of law.

The judiciary plays a vital role in ensuring that the laws passed by the legislature are within the framework of the Constitution, and that the executive does not overstep its role as outlined in the Constitution.

This chapter looks at the role and structure of this branch of the State, i.e., the Judiciary.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LAW AND JUSTICE

As human societies grew larger and more complex, systems of governance started emerging. Societies expect fair treatment and peaceful living for everyone, but now this task has been given over to the government. Governments were given the power to administer a society through laws and the power to enforce such laws, with force if needed. The government's way to ensure that justice is achieved in any society is by the framing of laws.

Laws are general rules made by the government to regulate individuals' activities in a society and impose consequences for not following them.

These consequences could be something as simple as paying a fine, giving compensation to the affected party or even imprisonment in some cases. The system that enables individuals to complain in case of a grievance, and for the affected person to be able to place their point of view so that justice is ensured (within the framework of the law and the Constitution), is called the judicial system.

Post-independence, hundreds of laws framed during the colonial era were found to be discriminatory, and were contrary to the fundamental principles of a democratic polity. Over the years, the government has taken steps to review laws and has repealed over 1500 such laws, enacted during the British Rule.

For example, the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871, that labelled certain communities as criminals by birth; and the Vernacular Press Act, 1878, that restricted freedom of press, etc., have been repealed. These laws were considered to be inconsistent with the values and principles of justice, and India as a democratic republic.



Fig. 4.3. Segregation of water facilities in public places based on colour and race (Jim Crow laws)

Unjust laws existed in other countries, like the 'Jim Crow laws' in parts of the United States which prohibited African Americans and other people of colour from using public facilities reserved exclusively for white people. This included access to water fountains, public pools, and even restaurants. The Jim Crow Law was officially repealed in the 1960s.

Similarly, during the apartheid era in South Africa (mid to late 20th century), people were divided by law on the basis of race, with coloured people facing severe restrictions under a range of laws. These restrictions prevented the citizens of those countries from gaining access to public facilities and living a life with dignity. Such laws prevalent in South Africa were repealed in 1991.

Let us revisit the exercise you did at the beginning of this chapter. When you experienced injustice, you might have felt that the wrong-doer should be punished, that you would feel better if they apologised, or that you should be compensated in some way. The person accused, on the other hand, might have thought that they should be given a chance to explain what had happened.

This brings us to two important aspects of justice — substantive justice and procedural justice.



Fig. 4.4. Aspects of justice

Substantive justice focuses on the final result or outcome. It asks whether the decision is actually fair, just, and reasonable.

Procedural justice means that every person involved gets a full opportunity of hearing, before a decision is taken by the court.

As a rule, it is presumed that every person is innocent, till proved guilty.

THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM IN INDIA

The Indian Judicial system is a unified system, comprising of a hierarchy of courts with the Supreme Court of India at the apex level, the High Courts at the State level and Subordinate Courts at the District level.

COURTS IN INDIA

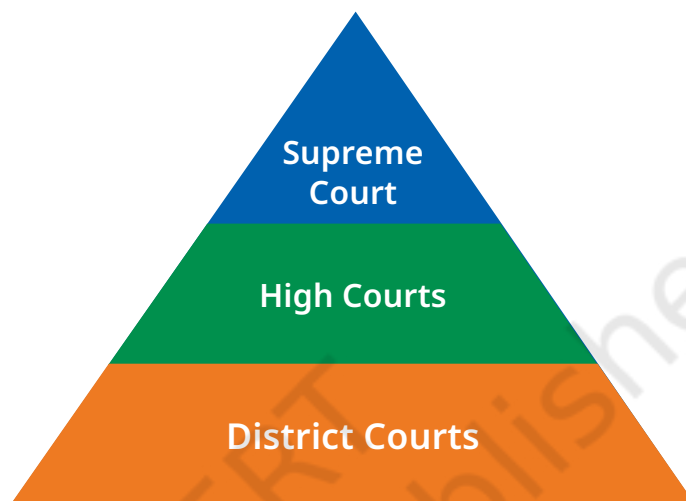


Fig. 4.5. A simplified diagram to illustrate the hierarchy of the judicial system in India

THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA

The Supreme Court of India is the highest court of law in the country, which came into existence on the date when the Constitution of India came into effect, i.e., 26.01.1950.

The Supreme Court is the final interpreter of the Constitution of India.

Article 124 of the Constitution provides for the establishment of the Supreme Court of India, which is seated in New Delhi.



DON'T MISS OUT

This is the logo of the Supreme Court of India. What are the elements familiar to you? Notice the Sanskrit motto, 'yato dharmastato jayah'

— 'Where there is dharma, there is victory.' (You might recall this motto from your Grade 6 textbook.)



The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court is designated as the Chief Justice of India. The current strength of the Supreme Court is 33+1 i.e. the Chief Justice of India and 33 Supreme Court judges. As per Article 124, the Judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President of India. Every Judge of the Supreme Court is appointed by the President of India.

The Qualifications for appointment as a Judge of the Supreme Court require that he/ she is a citizen of India, and additionally is required to have been:

- (i) a Judge of a High Court (or High Courts) for five years; or
- (ii) an Advocate of a High Court (or more than one High Court) for ten years; or
- (iii) a distinguished jurist, in the opinion of the President of India

A Supreme Court Judge retires when he/she attains the age of 65 years.

Writ Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court and High Court

Writ jurisdiction has been conferred on the Constitutional Courts for enforcement of Fundamental Rights guaranteed by Part III of the Constitution of India.

The Fundamental Rights guaranteed to every citizen of India include Equality, Liberty, Right to Life, Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Religion, etc.

For enforcement of Fundamental Rights, a citizen has the right under the Constitution to file a **“Writ Petition”** directly before the Supreme Court (Article 32), where the issue has an all India ramification; or before the High Court (Article 226), which pertains to the violation of the Fundamental Rights of citizens within the territorial limits of the State.



Fig. 4.6. Writ Petition

Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed under Articles 32 and 226

PIL is an innovation introduced by the Supreme Court to address issues of public concern and give meaning to the Right to Life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.

The first reported case of a PIL was a complaint made by a lawyer called Mrs. Kapila Hingorani. She had read in the newspaper that there were prisoners who were undergoing a trial, and who had been in jail for a period longer than what their punishment would have been if they were found guilty. She filed a writ petition to secure the release of all such under-trial prisoners in Bihar. The Supreme Court immediately ordered the release of such prisoners, and also issued guidelines to release almost 40,000 under-trial prisoners throughout India.

Some other important PIL cases are:

M.C. Mehta v. Union of India:

Environmental issues such as cleaning of the River Ganga and the protection of the Taj Mahal, etc., were taken up by the Supreme Court.

Vishaka & Ors. v. State of Rajasthan:

Supreme Court in 1997 laid down guidelines against sexual harassment at workplace. Later in 2013, the Government enacted the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

Original Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court

The Supreme Court has exclusive original jurisdiction (Article 131) to decide legal disputes arising between:

- (a) The Centre and a State;
- (b) The Centre and a State on one side, and another State on the other side;
- (c) Inter-state disputes, such as river water disputes, etc.

Appellate Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court

The Supreme Court can hear an appeal from any final order of the High Court, if the High Court itself certifies that the case involves interpretation of the Constitution or substantial question of law (Articles 132, 133 and 134A). Judgments of the High Court in criminal cases involving death sentence or where a judgment is certified as fit for appeal can be heard by the Supreme Court (Articles 134 and 134A). Supreme Court also has jurisdiction to hear appeals from specialised tribunals like National Green Tribunal (NGT) and National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT).

Advisory Jurisdiction

If the President of India seeks the opinion of the Supreme Court on a question of law or fact of public importance, the Supreme Court can give its opinion to the President. Such cases must be heard by a 'Constitution Bench' of not less than five (5) judges (Article 143).

Special Leave Petitions (Article 136)

The Supreme Court has an extraordinary discretionary jurisdiction to grant 'Special Leave to Appeal' from any judgment, decree or order made by any court or tribunal in the territory of India where a question of law of general public importance has arisen, or to do substantive justice between the parties.

The law declared by the Supreme Court of India is binding on all courts within the territory of India (Article 141).



DON'T MISS OUT

The Supreme Court has the power to pass any order that is necessary for doing complete justice (Article 142).

All civil and judicial authorities shall act in aid of the Supreme Court (Article 144).

HIGH COURT

A High Court is the highest court at the State level. Article 214 of the Constitution provides that there shall be a High Court in each State. At present, India has 28 States. There are 25 High Courts, since in some cases, two or more States or Union Territories share a common High Court, as follows:

S. No.	High Court	States / Union Territories Covered
1	Allahabad High Court	Uttar Pradesh
2	Andhra Pradesh High Court	Andhra Pradesh
3	Bombay High Court	Maharashtra, Goa, Union Territory of Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu
4	Calcutta High Court	West Bengal and Union Territory of Andaman & Nicobar Islands
5	Chhattisgarh High Court	Chhattisgarh
6	Delhi High Court	Delhi
7	Gauhati High Court	Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh
8	Gujarat High Court	Gujarat
9	Himachal Pradesh High Court	Himachal Pradesh
10	Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh High Court	Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh
11	Jharkhand High Court	Jharkhand
12	Karnataka High Court	Karnataka
13	Kerala High Court	Kerala and Union Territory of Lakshadweep
14	Madras High Court	Tamil Nadu and Union Territory of Puducherry
15	Madhya Pradesh High Court	Madhya Pradesh
16	Manipur High Court	Manipur

17	Meghalaya High Court	Meghalaya
18	Orissa High Court	Odisha
19	Patna High Court	Bihar
20	Punjab & Haryana High Court	Punjab, Haryana and Union Territory of Chandigarh
21	Rajasthan High Court	Rajasthan
22	Sikkim High Court	Sikkim
23	Telangana High Court	Telangana
24	Tripura High Court	Tripura
25	Uttarakhand High Court	Uttarakhand

LET'S EXPLORE

Several High Courts mentioned in the table have more than one bench. Explore which High Courts have more than one bench with the help of your teachers.



The High Court consists of a Chief Justice and other Judges. The number of judges in a High Court varies from State to State. Judges of the High Court are appointed by the President of India in consultation with the Chief Justice of India, the Governor of the State, and the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court.

The qualifications for appointment as a judge of a High Court are provided in Article 217(2) of the Constitution of India. It provides that a High Court Judge should be a citizen of India, and must have held a judicial office in India, or been an advocate of a High Court or more than one High Court for ten years. High Court Judges retire at the age of sixty-two years [Article 217(1) and 224(3)].

Jurisdiction of the High Courts

Each High Court exercises its powers within its territorial limits. The High Court also exercises writ jurisdiction (Article 226).

The High Court entertains appeals against decisions of subordinate courts in civil and criminal matters, as well as

Tribunal:
A committee
or body
established
to settle
certain
types of
disputes.

decisions of certain tribunals. It also exercises supervisory control on the functioning of all subordinate courts within its territorial limits.

Every High Court has the power of superintendence over all courts and tribunals within its territorial jurisdiction (Article 227). This power is supervisory in nature and is exercised to ensure that the subordinate courts and tribunals act within the bounds of their authority and jurisdiction. This power is to be exercised sparingly. The writ and supervisory jurisdiction of the High Courts has also been declared to be part of the basic structure of the Constitution.

SUBORDINATE COURTS

In each State, there is a system of subordinate courts below the High Courts. The Constitution makes a few provisions in Articles 233 to 237 of the Constitution to regulate the organisation of these courts, and to ensure independence of the subordinate judiciary.

The subordinate judiciary constitutes a very important segment of the judicial system, as it is in these courts that the judiciary comes in close contact with the people. Subordinate Courts broadly include District Courts, Sessions Courts, Revenue Courts, Small Causes Courts, etc.

It is incumbent on each High Court to maintain and uphold the honour and integrity of the subordinate judiciary in the concerned States.

The Governor of a State in consultation with the High Court appoints the District Judges (Article 233).

LET'S EXPLORE

Which Subordinate Court is closest to where you live?

TRIBUNALS

There are specialised **tribunals** which have been established under various enactments, which are quasi-judicial in nature, and decide on specific categories of disputes.

TRIBUNALS

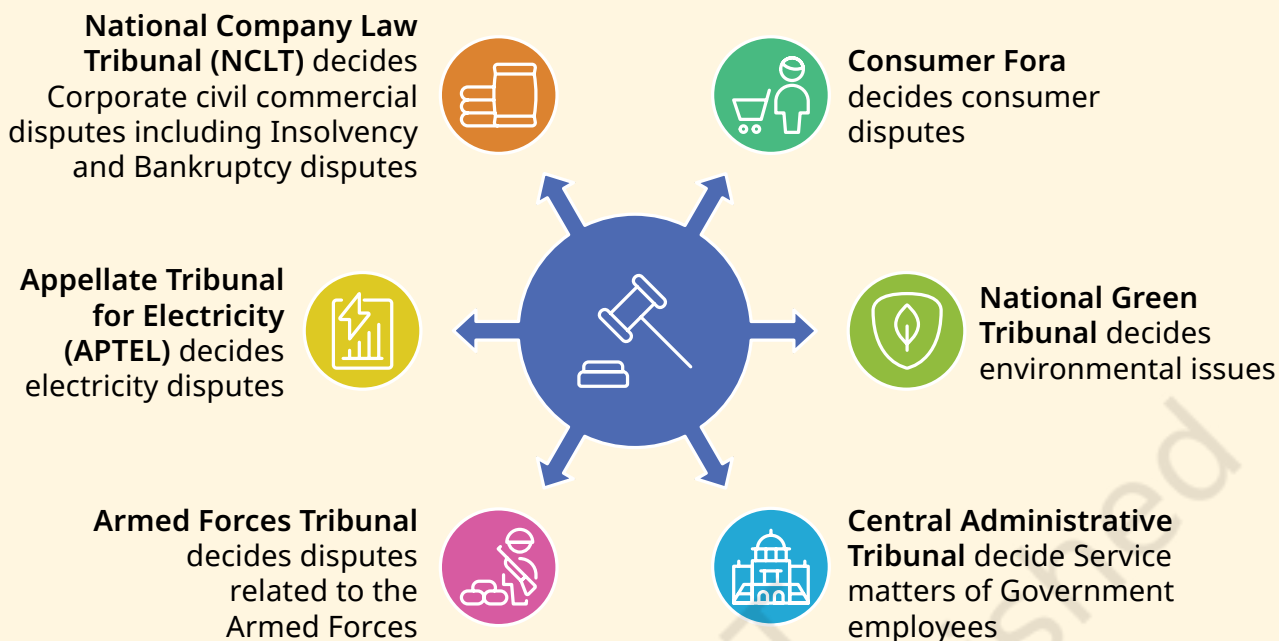


Fig. 4.7. Tribunals and their jurisdiction

LET'S EXPLORE

A builder planned to start constructing a complex of flats in 2011. A family decided to buy a flat, paying an advance of almost ₹65 lakhs. The family visited the site regularly and found that even after four years, there was no sign of a building coming up where their flat was supposed to be constructed. This was a breach of the agreement with the builder. So, the family went to the National Consumer Commission to complain about the builder. After listening to both parties, the Commission ordered the builder to return the amount to the family with interest, and also to pay the cost of the litigation. *(The names of the concerned parties are not mentioned to protect their privacy.)*



Fig. 4.8



DON'T MISS OUT

- The Indian Penal Code, 1860, has been replaced by the **Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023.**
- The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, has been replaced by the **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023.**
- The Indian Evidence Act, 1872 has been replaced by the **Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023.**

These laws aim to facilitate faster justice, use of digital evidence, and better protection for victims while making the justice system modern, transparent and effective.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND JUDICIAL SYSTEM

Digital technology has been introduced to make the judicial system more accessible and transparent. One use of this technology is allowing **litigants** to directly check the details of their cases instead of only relying on their lawyers. Another example is making copies of court orders and judgements freely available to the public, in multiple languages, so that anyone can read and understand the proceedings of the court.

Litigant:
A person involved in a legal case. The person who sues and the person who gets sued are both called litigants.



Fig. 4.9. Online access to details regarding cases are available on the website of each court; details are also available to the public through a portal called the National Judicial Grid of India.



DON'T MISS OUT

Digital Initiatives

Courts have taken many digital initiatives in past years to make the judicial system more user-friendly. Some examples are:

- e-Filing
- Hybrid hearings
- Live Streaming of Court Proceedings
- Translation of judgments in multiple Indian languages
- National Judicial Data Grid

Since 2024-2025, a large display screen dedicated to '**Virtual Justice Clock**' has been prominently positioned at the main entrance gates of the Supreme Court of India. This initiative reinforces the Court's commitment to transparency, accountability and free access to real time judicial data.

ALTERNATE MODES OF DISPUTE RESOLUTION

To further strengthen and reduce the burden on the judiciary, courts increasingly encourage litigants to settle disputes through alternate modes of dispute resolution such as arbitration, mediation/ conciliation, negotiation, *Lok Adalat*, etc.

Arbitration: Arbitration is a mode of dispute resolution, where the parties agree to refer their disputes to an independent adjudicator or panel of adjudicators, referred to as 'arbitrator' or 'panel of arbitrators'. An arbitrator can be a retired judge, a lawyer or an expert. In arriving at a decision, the arbitrator must follow certain basic requirements, such as to act fairly and impartially, allowing each party to put forth their respective case. The decision of the arbitrator/ panel is final and legally binding on the parties, and enforceable by a court of law. Arbitration in India is conducted under the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996.

Mediation: Mediation is the most common form of Alternate Dispute Resolution, where a neutral person is appointed as a Mediator. The Mediator assists the disputing parties in arriving at a mutual settlement. A mediator has no power to make any decision, or impose a view on the parties. Mediation in India is governed by The Mediation Act, 2023.

Lok Adalats: Lok Adalats are special fora, where disputes/cases can be settled or resolved amicably. Lok Adalats can resolve the disputes which are pending in the courts. In some cases, the parties can even approach Lok Adalats even before going to the Court. Lok Adalats are rooted in the principles of access to justice and derive statutory recognition under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. They function as people's courts, aiming to reduce judicial backlog while promoting amicable dispute resolution without the rigours of formal adjudication.

Gram Nyayalayas: Gram Nyayalayas are established under the Gram Nyayalayas Act, 2008, with the objective of decentralising the judicial system and reducing the burden on regular courts. They function as mobile, village-level courts, designed to adjudicate on disputes which follow a simplified procedure, with no technicalities.

Before we move on...

- The judiciary is one of the three pillars of the government.
- The key roles of the judicial system are to ensure that justice is served and that laws are made within the framework of the Constitution.
- The Constitution prescribes separation of powers among the legislature, executive and judiciary, and that the judiciary remains independent of the other organs of the government.
- The judicial system addresses huge number of cases on a regular basis which are resolved at different levels of courts as well as through alternative modes of dispute resolutions.

- Citizens have a role in helping the judicial system by bringing to its notice social concerns that affect the rights of people, animals, and nature.

Questions and Activities

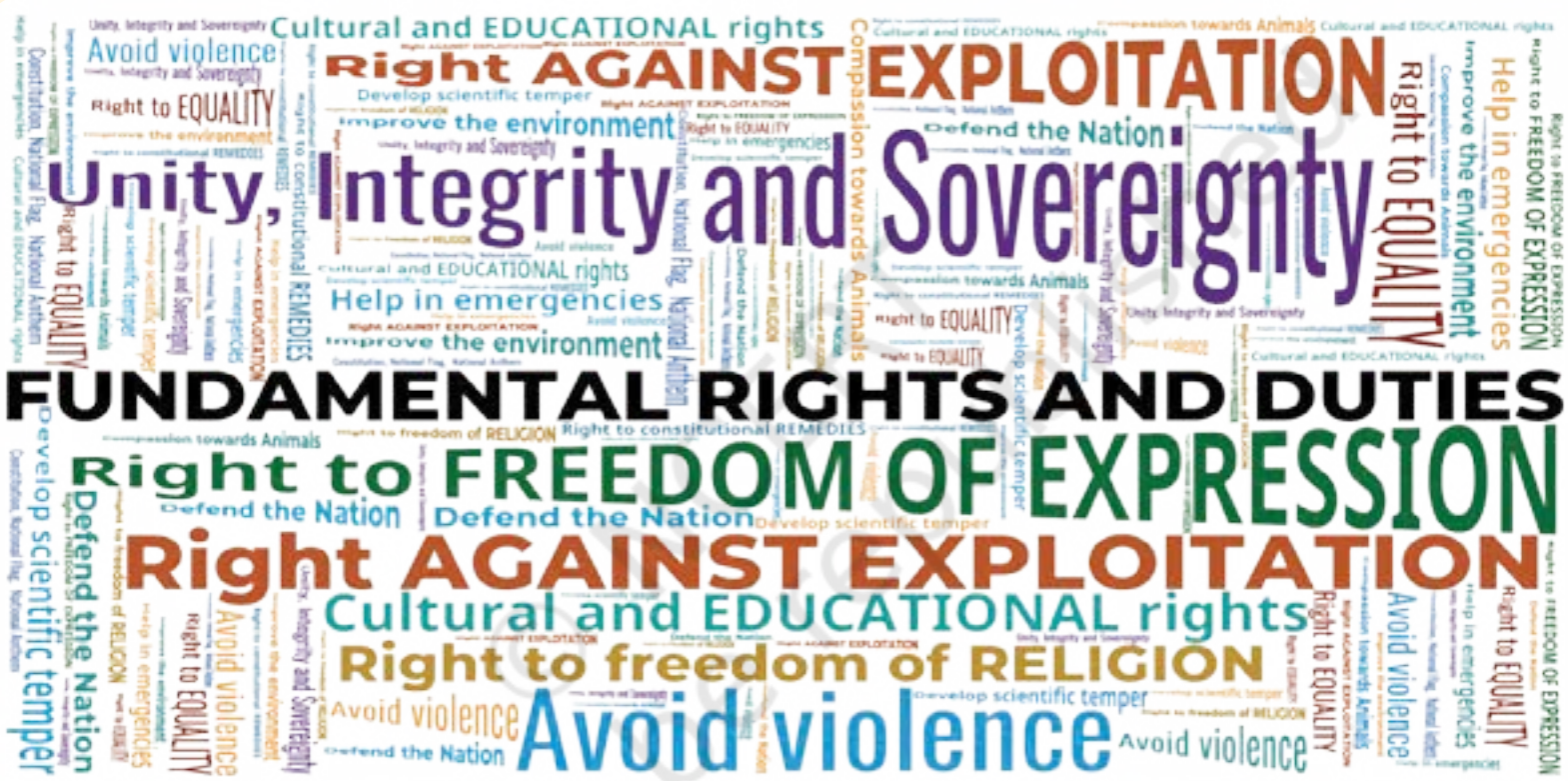
1. Write a model letter to the High Court or Supreme Court about a current social issue you have observed to bring it to the notice of the judiciary.
2. Imagine that you are part of the legislature or executive. Given the large number of cases in the judicial system, what are some innovative solutions that you can devise to address the issue?
3. Create a moot court and enact the following cases. What are the considerations that the judge might need to take into account to arrive at a just outcome?
 - i. Anita and Sameer worked in a factory that produced different types of screws. They had both completed an Industrial Training Institute diploma and joined the factory together. One day, Anita discovered that she was getting paid less than Sameer for the same job. After many appeals to her boss and no change in her salary, she decided to go to court. Enact this scene from the litigants' perspective, showcasing their respective points of view. What might be the outcome of the case?
 - ii. The people of a village living next to a river used its water for drinking and irrigation purposes. Gradually, they began to notice that the clear water was turning a brownish colour and had begun to smell too. Many people were falling sick. They figured that this was due to the effluents that were being discharged by a factory upstream. What are the steps that the residents of the village could take to ensure that the water is clean again?

4. Many eminent individuals from across India have served as Supreme Court or High Court judges. Write an essay about one such individual from your state or district, talking about their contributions as a judge of the Supreme Court or High Court.
5. Have an interaction with anyone you know who is a part of the judicial system. Try to understand their work, the challenges they face, and what gives them satisfaction. Create a small presentation and share it with the class.
You can do this in small groups.

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The true source of rights is duty.
— Mahatma Gandhi

— Mahatma Gandhi



The Big Questions ?

1. *What does it mean to be a citizen, not just legally, but in everyday life?*
2. *Why are both rights and duties essential?*
3. *How can we help build a society where everyone is treated fairly, respected, and included?*



The topics in this chapter — citizenship, rights, duties, discrimination, and inclusion — are complex. They have legal meanings too. However, we have simplified them here to help you understand them. You will delve deeper into them in higher grades.

WHO IS A CITIZEN?

New student Kruti was being teased on the playground for her accent. Sonali and Harshada saw this happening and decided to help. They bravely told the bullies to stop teasing her. But they didn't just stop there. They also invited Kruti to join their badminton team so she would feel welcome and included. Kruti happily joined them and finally felt like she belonged. Sonali and Harshada showed what it means to be good citizens—they stood up for someone who needed help and made sure everyone felt included.

A citizen is someone who legally belongs to a country and is a member of its political community i. e. they can participate in the decision-making of the country. In a democracy, citizenship gives rights such as voting, free speech, and living and working safely, but these rights have limits. At the same time, citizens have duties like obeying the law, paying taxes, respecting others, and helping keep society safe. Citizenship is both a legal identity and a social responsibility. As a legal identity, it formally connects people to their country. As a social responsibility, it creates a sense of belonging, and unites them through shared values, rights, and duties.



DON'T MISS OUT

Living in a place makes you a resident, but citizenship is a formal, legal membership in a country. Not every resident of a country is a citizen. A person can be a resident without being a citizen, and a citizen can even reside in another country.

Citizenship is about active participation. It involves fulfilling duties like paying taxes, helping others in need, and protecting the environment. Crucially, citizenship also grants you rights: the power to question unfair practices and stand up for what is right, shaping the future of your society.

In India, all citizens are equal under the Constitution despite differences of language, religion, or culture. The Citizenship Act of 1955 and Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019 set the rules for gaining or losing citizenship.

In this chapter, we will explore what it truly means to be a citizen of India. We will focus on the following four concepts. 'Rights', 'duties' and 'discrimination' are specifically mentioned in our Constitution. 'Inclusion' is an affirmative way to ensure non-discrimination.



Rights: Freedoms like equality, free speech, religion, and education that let people live with dignity.

Duties: Responsibilities or duties such as obeying laws, paying taxes, keeping clean, and helping others.



Discrimination: Unfair treatment based on identity; citizens must stand against it.

Inclusion: Ensuring no one is left out because of language, religion, culture, ethnicity, caste, or gender.



RIGHTS



Every year, a town held a big festival. Children looked forward to it, as there were plays, debates, food stalls, and prayers at different places of worship. This year, a few problems arose.



Meena was told she could not take part in the debate because "girls should not speak on stage."



Ravi, a street vendor's son, was not allowed inside the library stall, while a wealthy boy was welcomed in.



Near the fair ground, some children were kept busy cleaning instead of going to school.



Gaganjit, who used a wheelchair, found he could not enter the exhibition hall because there was no ramp.



Together, they went to their teacher, who explained that the Constitution of India gives every citizen fundamental rights. These include the right to equality, the right to freedom of speech and expression, the right to freedom of religion, the right to life and dignity, and the right to education. If any of these rights are denied, citizens have the right to approach the courts for justice.



Encouraged, the children spoke to the fair organisers. Slowly, changes were made.



Meena joined the debate.



Ravi entered the library stall.



Ramps were built for Gaganjit.



The children working outside were enrolled in school after volunteers stepped in.



At the closing ceremony, everyone clapped as the children came on stage together.

Fig. 5.1.

What are rights?

Rights are what we are all entitled to as human beings and members of society. But not everything we want can be called a right. Rights are what we need to live with dignity, safety, and respect, like the right to education, to earn a living, or to express our ideas. These help us grow, learn, and live freely. However, actions that cause harm to ourselves or others cannot be considered rights. True rights are those that support the wellbeing and dignity of all. Hence, rights are justified claims.

Fundamental Rights in the Indian Constitution

The Constitution gives us Fundamental Rights – these are basic rights that every Indian citizen has. It lists six broad categories of fundamental rights that protect people's freedom and dignity. These rights can be enforced by law, which means that if they are violated, people can approach the courts for justice.

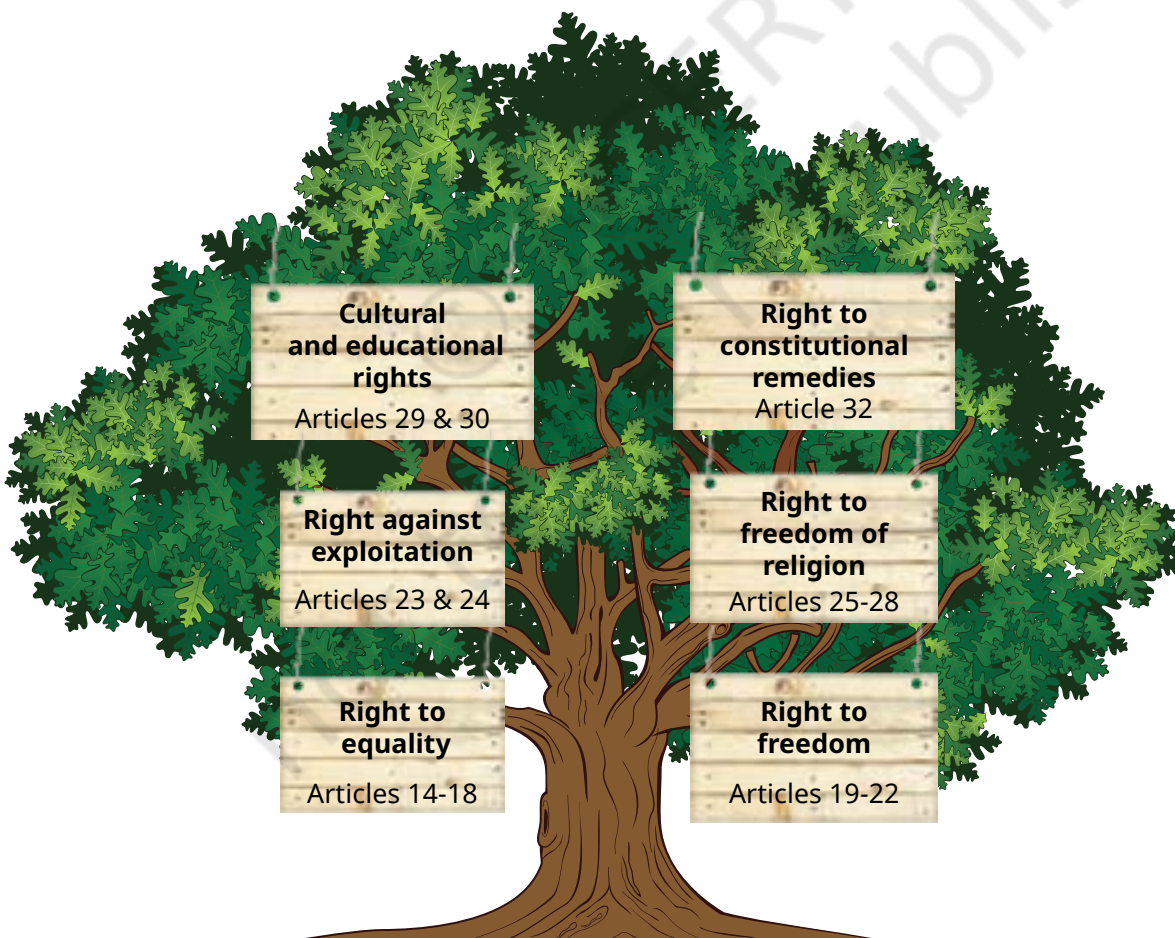


Fig. 5.2.

Fundamental rights protect people from unfair treatment by others; it also protects people from unfair actions by the government. Rights ensure that every person is treated fairly, and that power is not misused.

Right to equality

The right to equality ensures that every person is treated equally before the law, has equal opportunities in jobs and education, and cannot be discriminated against because of religion, race, caste, gender, or place of birth. It also ends practices like untouchability and prevents the government from giving out special titles to individuals (except for military or academic honours).

LET'S EXPLORE

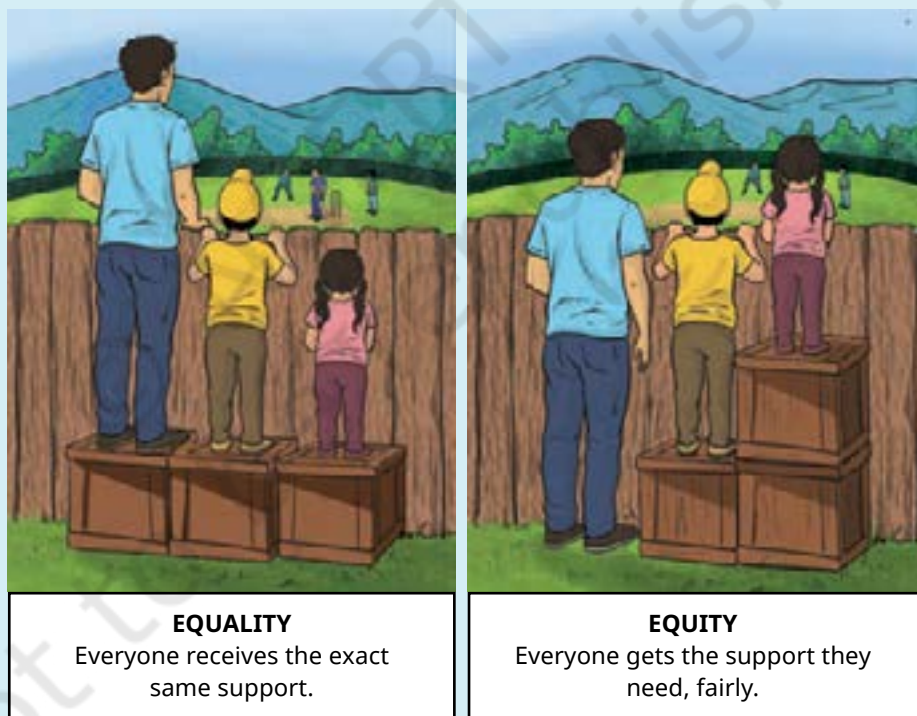


Fig. 5.3.

What do you observe in the illustrations above? As you can see, sometimes providing the same thing to every individual does not provide the same benefits on account of differences among them. These differences can be due

to inequality and discrimination which may have been carried historically too. To be able to ensure that everyone gets the support they need, we look at the principle of **equity** (as you can see in the figure on the right). There are many initiatives taken by the government as well as civil society organisations to ensure that equity is established in such cases. The *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* campaign was to build awareness in society as well as to provide support to girls' education. Can you think of other such examples?

Equity:
The quality of being fair and just, especially in a way that takes account of and seeks to address existing inequalities.

Right to freedom

The right to freedom is one of the most important rights of every Indian. It allows people to express themselves, move freely, and choose how they want to live and work. However, these freedoms are not unlimited; they come with reasonable restrictions so that they are not misused or harmful to others or the nation.



THINK ABOUT IT

It's Sports Day at school. The weather is very hot. Some students are told to wear full school uniforms with shoes, even though they will be running, playing games, and spending time outdoors. A few students feel uncomfortable and wonder why they can't wear lighter clothes like T-shirts and sports shoes for such activities. One student starts a discussion at break time. "Shouldn't we be allowed to wear comfortable sports clothes on Sports Day?" Some classmates agree, saying that comfort and safety are important while playing sports. Others feel that wearing the school uniform shows discipline and equality among all students. A couple of teachers overhear the conversation and remind everyone that school rules about uniforms must be followed. Was the student exercising freedom of speech? Could they have raised their concern differently? How should schools handle student opinions?



Fig. 5.4. Making a tactile map available in a school for the blind helps facilitate the right to education.

Right to life

The right to life protects a person's life and liberty. It means that everyone has the right not only to live, but to live with dignity. This also includes the right to livelihood, education, health, a clean environment, and fair treatment under the law. These rights ensure that people can live safely, freely, and respectfully.

The right to life also protects children with disabilities, ensuring they receive the support they need to learn, play or participate fully in all aspects of life on an equal basis with others. It ensures that they can live with dignity, access education, healthcare, and a safe environment.



DON'T MISS OUT

- Some countries have given rivers the same rights as people. Imagine if a tree could say, "Don't cut me down!" In New Zealand, the Whanganui River is legally treated as a living being. Costa Rica, too, protects Nature's rights in its Constitution.
- In 2017, the Uttarakhand High Court declared the rivers Ganga and Yamuna as legal entities, giving them the rights of a living person. The Court also appointed legal guardians responsible for protecting and conserving the rivers. However, this decision was suspended and ultimately overturned by the Supreme Court of India, who called it 'legally unsustainable'. Why do you think some people want to give nature (like rivers and forests) legal rights, just like humans? How could this help protect the environment?

Right against exploitation

Exploitation means taking unfair advantage of others, often by denying them basic respect, liberty and rights. It can happen in many ways: when people are forced to work without fair wages (bonded labour), when they are traded or sold for profit (human trafficking), when women or children are abused or treated unfairly, or when children are made to work instead of going to school, particularly in hazardous situations (child labour).

Children need special protection because they depend on adults for their safety and wellbeing. Children may not understand their rights or be able to stand up for themselves, or access help against unfair treatment or unsafe situations. When children are made to work, they lose out on education, play, and a healthy childhood – things that are essential for their growth and future.

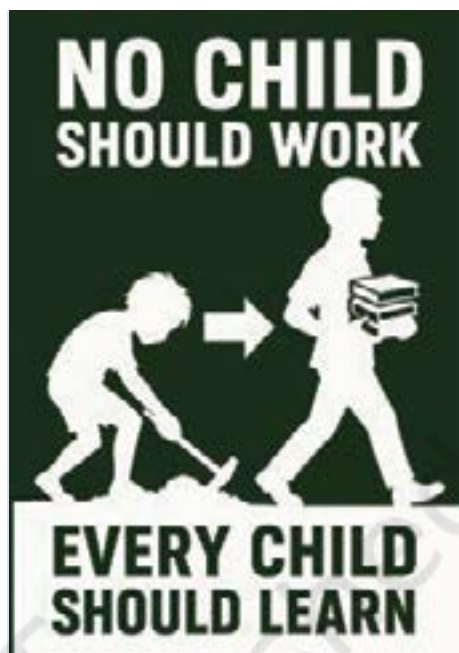


Fig. 5.5. Children have the right to education.



DON'T MISS OUT

The government has a helpline for children called Childline 1098. (It is printed in your textbook too.) It is available all over the country and is easy to remember; just count backwards from 10. It started as an action project at an educational institution in the late 1990s and soon became a national-level helpline.

To stop such unfair treatment, the right against exploitation protects every person's dignity and safety. It makes it illegal to force anyone to work against their will or under unsafe conditions. In general, children below the age of 14 are not allowed to be employed, though they can help out in non-hazardous family enterprises, and only during vacations or after school hours. There is a ban on work in places such as factories, mines, or restaurants. These protections ensure that

everyone, especially children, can live and work with freedom and respect.



THINK ABOUT IT

What would you do if you saw a child working instead of being in school? Discuss in class, then write one step you could take:

- Could you talk to your teacher or principal?
- Could you write to a child helpline?

In 2015, the Childline 1098 received a call from a concerned citizen about 20 children being forced to work in a factory that embroidered clothes. Based on this call, a team visited the place and found the children. Not only were they being forced to work, but the room they worked in was congested and unhealthy, and the food they received once a day was not nourishing at all. The team rescued the children, provided them with medical care and ensured that they would be taken care of. The culprits were arrested.

Right to freedom of religion

India is a diverse country where people follow many different religions. The right to freedom of religion allows every person to choose, practise, and share their religion freely, while ensuring that no one is forced to follow, propagate or fund a particular religion.



Fig. 5.6. Teenagers of different religions praying

At the same time, state-run or government-aided schools are not allowed to promote any particular religion. This helps protect India's diversity and keeps all faiths equal in the eyes of the state.

Cultural and educational rights

The cultural and educational rights protect India's rich cultural diversity and ensure equal access to education for all. Communities can preserve their language, script, and traditions, and no student can be denied admission to a government institution because of religion, caste, race, or language.

Religious and linguistic minorities also have the right to set up and manage their own schools. These rights help maintain cultural identity while supporting equality and non-discrimination.

Together, these rights safeguard cultural identity while promoting equal access to education. On one hand, the Constitution seeks to protect the rights of minorities, while on the other, it also upholds equality and non-discrimination on the basis of religion. At times, these two aims can seem to be in conflict. Some people feel that minority protections (the special rights and safeguards given to groups with a different religion, language, or culture) may go against the idea of secularism.

Right to constitutional remedies

The right to constitutional remedies allows citizens to approach the Supreme Court if their fundamental rights are violated. It ensures that these rights are not just promises on paper but can actually be protected and enforced.

LET'S EXPLORE

“If I was asked to name any particular article in this Constitution as the most important — an article without which this Constitution would be a nullity—I could not refer to any other article except this one [right to constitutional remedies]. It is the very soul of the Constitution and the very heart of it...”, said Dr. B.R. Ambedkar during the Constituent Assembly Debates. Why is it important to have a way to protect rights?



Key Constitutional Articles That Guide Our Rights

(Note: You need not memorise these, but as a citizen of India, you should be aware of them.)

Fundamental Rights (Articles 14–32)

Article No.	The Guarantee
14	Equality before the law for all persons
15	No discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth
16	Equal opportunity in public employment
17	Abolition of untouchability
18	End of titles (except military/academic distinctions)
19	Freedom of speech, movement, and peaceful assembly
21	Protection of life and personal liberty
21A	Right to free and compulsory education (6–14 years)
23–24	Ban on human trafficking, forced labour, and child labour
25–28	Freedom to practise, profess, and manage one's religion
29–30	Protection of language, script, and cultural rights; rights of minority institutions
32	Right to approach courts to protect Fundamental Rights

These articles help us understand how the Constitution and the Judiciary protect the dignity and equality of every citizen.

DUTIES

One pleasant Sunday morning, the residents of Green Park Colony decided to come together for a community clean-up and improvement drive. Families gathered in the park, armed with gloves, garbage bags, and tools. The air was filled with energy and excitement. Children collected plastic



Fig. 5.7. Duty to keep the environment clean

wrappers and papers lying around, while their parents swept the streets and cleared drains that had been clogged with leaves and plastic bags. Some residents planted saplings along the footpaths, hoping they would grow into tall, shady trees for the future. Others painted the walls with bright colours and positive messages, making the neighbourhood look cheerful and welcoming. Not stopping there, a group of older students went around placing bowls of water and food for the street dogs, showing kindness to the animals who shared their surroundings. A few mothers took the initiative to talk to younger children about saving water and electricity at home, while the senior citizens patiently guided everyone, sharing their wisdom and encouragement. When the work was nearly done, a local reporter who had come to cover the event asked the youngest participants why they were spending their Sunday morning like this instead of playing. A little girl, wiping the sweat from her forehead, replied confidently: “It’s our duty to care for our neighbourhood.” Her simple answer carried a deep truth. Duties are not only about obeying laws or following rules, they are about the responsibility each one of us has towards our family, our community, our country, and even the environment. That Sunday morning became more than just a clean-up; it turned into a reminder that when every citizen takes their duties seriously, society becomes a healthier, happier, and more harmonious place to live in.

What are duties?

The Constitution not only gives us rights, it also tells us what we should do as responsible citizens. These responsibilities are called fundamental duties. The idea behind incorporating them was to remind citizens of their duties, along with enjoying their fundamental rights.



DON'T MISS OUT

When the Indian Constitution came into effect in 1950, it had no Fundamental Duties. They were added in 1976 by an amendment to the Constitution. At first, there were 10 duties listed in Article 51A (Part IV-A). In 2002, the 11th duty was added, which stated that parents or guardians must make sure children between ages 6 and 14 years get an education.

Understanding duties

Fundamental duties help citizens play an active role in keeping our democracy strong and society healthy. They remind us that being a citizen is not just about enjoying rights but also about contributing to the country's progress. They help maintain good governance, promote unity, protect nature, encourage learning, and build a society where everyone can live with dignity. In short, these duties guide us to be responsible, caring, and active citizens.



Fig. 5.8.

What the Constitution of India says about Duties (Article 51A)

1. Abide by and respect the Constitution, National Flag and National Anthem.

Example: During the morning assembly, when the anthem plays, everyone stands silently. A student who laughed was reminded that respect is part of citizenship.

2. Follow the ideals of the freedom struggle.

Example: After watching a play on Bhagat Singh, students discussed how speaking against bullying in school is also fighting injustice.

3. Protect India's unity, integrity and sovereignty.

Example: Two classmates argued over language differences. Their friends encouraged them to learn phrases from each other's languages, showing unity in diversity.

4. Defend the nation and help in emergencies.

Example: In a flood-hit village, NCC cadets rescued stranded people and distributed food packets.

5. Promote harmony among all people and respect women.

Example: When a group teased a girl, other students stopped them and told the teacher, showing respect for dignity.

6. Preserve culture and heritage.

Example: On a school trip, a student stopped his friend from writing on a fort wall, reminding him that it is a part of India's heritage.

7. Protect and improve the environment and have compassion towards animals.

Example: Students planted trees in their locality and kept water bowls for stray dogs in summer.



Fig. 5.9.

8. Develop scientific temper and the spirit of inquiry.

Example: Not content with memorising notes on the purification of water, a group of students showed a disadvantaged community how to do basic filtering followed by boiling of water before drinking it.

9. Protect public property and avoid violence.

Example: After losing a football match, some boys wanted to break benches. Others reminded them it was school property, and accept winning and losing as part of sports.



Fig. 5.10.

10. Strive for excellence in all activities.

After a class on waste segregation and a discussion with the school's director, a group of students implemented such practices in the school and made sure all teachers and students eventually followed them.

11. Ensure education for children (6–14 years).

Example: A parent wanted to stop sending his daughter to school. A neighbour convinced him that it is every parent's duty to educate their child.



DON'T MISS OUT

- Are concepts of rights and duties entirely modern? In the case of India, scholars have often debated this question. 'Dharma', of course, is often translated as 'duty', although it has a much wider range of meaning, including that which is beneficial to people and to the society.
- Another important ancient concept related to duty is that of *ṛiṇa* or 'debt' — the debts we owe to *devatās*, ancestors and parents, gurus, fellow humans, and Nature, by the very fact of being born. The duty of 'repaying' those 'debts' naturally follows; but it is more than today's sense of duty, since this ancient concept also creates deep connections with family, the society, nature and beyond.
- 'Rights' is a more ambiguous concept. In many Indian languages, the word for rights is *adhikāra*. In ancient texts, however, *adhikāra* referred to capacity, competence or authority: if you were competent to perform a certain task in society, that gave you the right to do so. Rights, in other words, were not guaranteed universally, as they are now (in our Constitution, for instance), since they depended on one's capacity. There was one exception, though, as the concept of dharma implicitly gave everyone the right to justice — in theory at least.



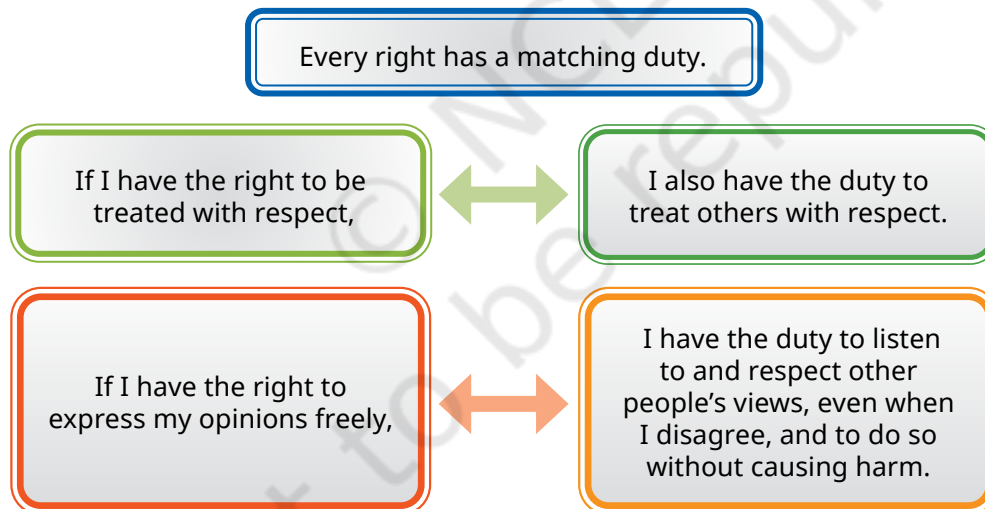
THINK ABOUT IT

Can you name a duty that matches your right to education?

RIGHTS AND DUTIES: TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

Rights are the freedoms and benefits that every citizen enjoys. Duties are the responsibilities that we must follow as members of a community. They are not opposites but go together. Rights allow us to live with dignity, while duties remind us to use our freedom wisely and respectfully.

Rights are protected by law. If someone's rights are violated, even by the government, they can go to court for help. Duties, on the other hand, are moral and social responsibilities. We are expected to follow them, but not doing so may not always lead to legal action. Fulfilling our duties helps protect everyone's rights and keeps society fair and peaceful.



LET'S EXPLORE

Here are some everyday situations for reflection. Which right or duty is involved?

- Ravi decides not to join a protest march at school because he disagrees with it. Some classmates say they will exclude him from their group unless he joins.



- On School Culture Day, Rukmini wants to wear her family's traditional dress from her village. Some students laugh at her and say she should wear 'modern' clothes instead.
- During the recess, some children were throwing chocolate wrappers on the playground, instead of the dustbin. The teacher then reminds them to keep their surroundings clean.
- In a mock youth parliament activity, students use a voting app to share their ideas for improving school facilities. Even those who live in remote areas are able to join in the discussion online.

Can we demand rights without doing our duties?

DISCRIMINATION

Sanya was excited to audition for the school play. Some students whispered that she did not "fit the image" of a lead actor and suggested she should try for a smaller role instead. Sanya felt discouraged but decided to audition anyway. During the auditions, her expressive acting and confidence impressed the teachers, and she was chosen for an important role. The drama teacher later spoke to the class about how excluding someone or judging them because of their looks is unfair and a form of discrimination. The students realised that talent and effort matter far more than appearance.

Understanding discrimination



Fig. 5.11.

Discrimination is mistreating any person or group because of their caste, religion, ethnicity, disability, race, physical appearance, gender, sexuality, or economic background. This is not only unethical, but also legally prohibited. Discriminating against someone based on the above-mentioned backgrounds not only impacts the affected person or group (both psychologically and physically), but also the society as a whole.

It could be as subtle as not talking or including a classmate in a group project because of their social or economic background, or even not letting someone sit next to you in a school bus, because of their social or economic background. Discrimination creates a social barrier on those subjected to it, hampering them from enjoying their fundamental rights. Additionally, if someone is discriminating against a person or a group, the person discriminating ethically ceases to be an active citizen of India, because they have breached the very core of the Indian Constitution, i.e., respect and unity.



DON'T MISS OUT!

- In the mid-19th century, Savitribai Phule established a school for girls. This was a time when girls' education was at a low ebb; people believed girls should not go to school. What appalled them even more was that she was from a so-called lower caste, the Mali community. She was abused, and mud was thrown at her on her way to school, yet she remained steadfast in her commitment to educating girls. Together with her husband, Jyotiba Phule, she worked to ensure that girls and children from all backgrounds had access to education.
- In 1874, nine-year-old Anandibai Joshi was married. By 15 she had become a mother but her baby died soon after due to lack of medical care. Anandi decided to study medicine and become a doctor so that she could serve mothers and children. People were aghast when she decided to go the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania. But she was determined and fought discrimination and sustained considerable hardship to realise her dream. Unfortunately, she succumbed to an illness soon after she graduated, leaving her dream unfulfilled.



Fig. 5.12. Savitribai Phule



Fig. 5.13. Anandibai Joshi

Visible and invisible discrimination



LET'S EXPLORE

The following are two caselets. Read them individually and discuss the questions at the end in small groups.

- A group of students makes fun of Rohan's weight; they nickname him 'Drummy'. They make it difficult for him to join their football game, joking that he would be competing with the football. Everyone around notices this behaviour of the group.
- Mina's school announced an overnight educational trip to a historical site. Many of her classmates were excited and enrolled immediately. Mina, however, did not; she knew that her family would not be able to afford paying for it. When her friends found out, some started ignoring her, whispering to each other that she "wasn't fun", "never joined anything", or "was not of their status". Mina felt hurt and left out.

What are the types of discrimination you can identify in the examples given above? What would you do if you were part of the groups? Have you faced discrimination yourself? What did you do about it?

Discrimination may not always be visible. It may even be indirect, through taking a jibe at somebody, excluding someone or being unwilling to include someone in a project or a celebration just because of their social background, physical appearance, or perception of intellectual ability. The major issue with invisible discrimination is that it is difficult to prove, and hence difficult to penalise.

INCLUSION

Smt. Amita noticed the number of books being borrowed from the library had dropped. She decided to start a reading club to get students back into the habit of reading. She found that only a few confident readers of English joined the club. So she expanded the

scope of the reading club to include books in the regional language. Soon the club's membership increased and its activities included storytelling and puppetry from the region. All children began to participate irrespective of their fluency in a particular language.

Understanding inclusion

Inclusion means creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed, respected, valued, and included, with equal access to opportunities. This is especially important for groups that have historically been excluded because of their social or economic background. Inclusion goes beyond just giving reservations; it means making sure everyone feels accepted and supported. In our Constitution, fundamental rights and duties together support inclusion. For example, it can mean finding ways for people speaking different languages to communicate, welcoming students from all castes, religions, or backgrounds into schools, and giving extra help like braille books, ramps, or classroom support to children with special needs. It also means removing barriers to participation.



Fig. 5.14. Compare this illustration with Fig. 5.3 that illustrates equality and equity. What difference do you observe?



THINK ABOUT IT

Imagine there is a student in your class who takes a little longer to read or write because they have a different way of learning. Sometimes during group work, others do not wait for them or forget to include them. What would you do in this situation? Could you support them by being patient, explaining something clearly, or making sure they get a chance to speak? What steps can you take to make your classroom more inclusive?



Fig. 5.15. Designing and creating facilities that are inclusive

Before we move on ...



- Being a responsible, empathetic and active citizen means living your rights while respecting others' rights.
- The Constitution guarantees fundamental rights. One can go to court and seek remedies if they are violated.
- Discrimination based on caste, religion, gender, personal preferences like choice of clothing, etc., is against fundamental rights.
- Rights and duties work together — you cannot fulfil one while ignoring the other.
- Deliberate actions need to be taken to prevent discrimination and ensure inclusion.
- Actions matter: speak up against unfairness, follow the law, and help others feel respected and included.
- Democracy is strengthened through enabling and facilitating participation of all.
- A peaceful society is built through everyday choices, words, and actions.
- Listening with empathy and acting with responsibility helps everyone feel valued and safe.

Questions and activities

1. Why is it important to respect others' religions?
2. How would you feel if you were left out of something?
3. If rights are guaranteed, why do we still see discrimination in society?
4. Can there ever be a conflict between rights and duties? Give an example.
5. How does respecting diversity strengthen democracy?
6. Do you think technology (social media, online platforms) makes it easier or harder to practise citizenship? Why?

7. Imagine everyone in society enjoyed rights but ignored their duties. What would life look like?
8. How can students your age practise inclusion in everyday school life?
9. What can be done in the following situations?
 - a) A school does not allow girls to join a mathematics or science club.
 - b) A fellow student has dropped out of school because they are forced to work in a welding shop.
10. Make a classroom charter that outlines rights and duties, and ensures inclusion and prevents discrimination.

Chapter 6

Democracy



The Big Questions

1. *How has the idea of democracy evolved over time and shaped our understanding of it today?*
2. *What are the different forms of democracy, and how are they practised in India and other parts of the world?*
3. *What are the essential features of a democracy and how do they extend beyond government institutions?*
4. *What are the challenges faced by Indian democracy?*



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LET'S RECALL

We have learnt in previous grades that democracy is a form of government in which the source of power and authority lies with the citizens of the country, who elect their representatives through free and fair elections. Democracy is founded on the principles of freedom, equality, justice, rights and duties, ensuring that citizens have the right to vote, express their opinions, and participate in the decision-making processes.



India is the world's largest democracy. With a population of over 140 crore and a voter base of over 96.8 crore (in 2024), India, that is, Bharat, represents the largest participatory democracy, where people choose their government by electing their representatives. Our democracy serves as a beacon of hope and an example for the rest of the world. However, like all democracies, India also faces certain challenges, some of which we will examine later in this chapter.

A constitution plays a crucial role in safeguarding the rights of the people in a democracy. In India, democratic principles are guided by the Constitution of India, which was adopted on 26 November 1949 and came into force on 26 January 1950. The Constitution not only guarantees but also protects the Fundamental Rights of all citizens. It ensures that no citizen is discriminated against on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. It also encourages active citizen participation in democratic processes at the national, state, and local levels through elections.



However, it is important to understand that the democratic ethos in India did not emerge suddenly; rather, it evolved through a long historical process. In this chapter, we will explore the genesis and development of democratic ideas in India. We will also deepen our understanding of democracy by examining its meaning, key features, and various practices associated with it in India and around the world.

Tracing Democratic Traditions from Early Times

The idea of democracy has been a part of the Indian ethos since early times. In the previous chapter, we read about Assemblies of

*Samāno mantrah samitiḥ samānī
samānān manah saha chittam eṣhām |
Samānān mantram abhimantraye vah
samānena vo haviṣhā juhomi ||*

Their counsel is one and the same; their assembly is one.
Their mind is one, and their intention together is one. I
invoke for you this same guiding resolve; with a common
offering, on your behalf, I make the oblation. (I make the
oblation on your behalf.)

– *Rigveda*, 10.191.3

Fig. 6.1. A verse from the Aikyamatya Sūktam of the *Rigveda*



Fig. 6.2. Members of the Constituent Assembly

the Vedic period such as *Sabha*, *Samiti*, and *Vidhata* that involved collective decision-making. We also read about the functioning of the early republican states (*gaṇas* or *saṁghas*). Thus, from the earliest times, the king was not an independent ruler but rather worked in consultation with assemblies, ministers, and officers of various capacities.

A verse (Fig. 6.1) from the *Aikyamatya Sūktam* of the *Ṛig Veda* emphasises the importance of collective thinking, shared discussion, and unity of purpose. The values expressed in this verse help us understand that democratic principles, such as consultation, consensus, and shared responsibility have deep roots in India's intellectual and cultural traditions.

The functioning of the *Bauddha Saṁghas*—a monastic community established by Gautama Buddha—also reflects India's democratic traditions. The *Saṁgha* encouraged debate and discussion, and its members could choose their leader and make decisions through voting, demonstrating collective decision-making.

Over the long passage of time, invasions by foreign invaders disrupted the political and social fabric of some parts of the country. By the 19th century, the British had colonised most parts of the Indian subcontinent. Foreign rule altered political structures and limited people's participation in their governance. However, the long struggle for independence from British colonial rule revived and strengthened democratic ideas among the people.

Before India attained independence in 1947, the Constituent Assembly was formed in 1946 to draft a constitution for the country. As studied in earlier grades, it took the Assembly 2 years, 11 months,



Fig. 6.3. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution of India

and 18 days to draft the world's longest written Constitution. Apart from the indigenous democratic traditions, the global spread of democratic values also influenced the Constituent Assembly's Debates (CAD), contributing to the creation of a robust, flexible, transformative, and responsive constitution.

The CAD reflects the members' belief that the constitution should not be a rigid legal code, but a dynamic document capable of evolving through lawful amendments without compromising its fundamental values. Accordingly, while making provisions for establishing democratic institutions and processes that uphold liberty, equality, justice, and fraternity, the Constitution also provides for amendments under Article 368. This ensures that the Constitution remains flexible and responsive to the changing socio-political needs.

Principles of Democracy

A thriving democracy rests on certain non-negotiable principles. Let us study the essential principles of democracy that are upheld in India through various provisions of the Constitution.

Popular Sovereignty

In a democracy, the ultimate source of power lies with the people. Thus, the idea of popular sovereignty means that the state derives its authority from the people.

A government elected through free and fair elections formulates policies and implements laws. Every citizen, 18 years of age and above has the right to vote through a secret ballot. This right is known as the Universal Adult Franchise. Citizens exercise their right to vote to elect governments and representatives. You will read more about elections in the next chapter.

THINK ABOUT IT

- ❖ Why is it important that the ultimate source of power rests with the people in a democracy?
- ❖ How does people's participation through voting strengthen popular sovereignty?



Rule of Law

The Rule of Law is a fundamental principle of any democratic society. It ensures **equality before the law** and **equal protection of the law**, and establishes that no one is above the law. When laws are violated, disputes are resolved in a court of law through **procedures established by law**, not by force or personal influence. This prevents misuse of power and protects people's rights. No citizen can be punished without following the procedure established by law, and everyone is provided a fair opportunity to defend their rights against arbitrary action. In this way, the rule of law promotes justice, accountability, and trust in the democratic system.

Fundamental Rights

The Fundamental Rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution play a crucial role in safeguarding the rights, freedom, and dignity of citizens. There are six Fundamental Rights—the Right to Equality (Articles 14–18); the Right to Freedom (Articles 19–22); the Right Against Exploitation (Articles 23–24); the Right to Freedom of Religion (Articles 25–28); Cultural and Educational Rights (Articles 29–30); and the Right to Constitutional Remedies (Article 32). Any violation of these can lead to appropriate legal action, and citizens can seek constitutional remedies under Articles 32 and 226 for the protection and reinforcement of their fundamental rights. These rights are enforceable in courts of law and are indivisible and inalienable, subject to reasonable restrictions in accordance with the procedure established by law.

Procedure established by law:

It refers to a legal principle that stresses on strict adherence to duly enacted and valid laws. This principle is enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution of India which states, "no persons shall be deprived of life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law."

LET'S EXPLORE

- The Constitution not only guarantees Fundamental Rights to citizens but also outlines their Fundamental Duties and the Directive Principles of State Policy. Discuss their significance and identify the differences among them.
- The Right to Education (Article 21A) was added in 2009, ensuring free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14. Discuss its significance.



Equality before law: Every individual irrespective of status, identity, or rank is treated equally by the law.

Equal protection of law: All persons in similar circumstances shall be treated equally by law without arbitrary discrimination.

Public Interest Litigation: A legal action initiated in a court of law for the enforcement of public interest.

Separation of Powers

The separation of powers among the legislature, executive, and judiciary—each with distinct responsibilities—enables democratic institutions to function effectively and responsibly. The legislature makes laws, the executive implements them, and the judiciary interprets them, thereby preventing the concentration of power in any one organ. This separation is essential for maintaining checks and balances among the three organs of the government. For example, while parliament has the power to amend the Constitution, the judiciary can review such amendments to ensure they are consistent with the spirit of the Constitution. Similarly, the executive power of enforcement agencies is regulated by laws and rules framed by the Parliament and can also be reviewed by competent courts. If a law is inconsistent with the constitutional provisions, the judiciary has the power to declare it unconstitutional.

The judiciary upholds the Constitution and plays a vital role in protecting and promoting democratic values and the rights of all sections of the society. It ensures the laws enacted by the Parliament of India and the State Legislative Assemblies are in accordance with the Constitution. The judiciary is an impartial and independent institution that safeguards citizens' rights and upholds the spirit of the Constitution. Important initiatives, such as **Public Interest Litigation** (PIL), have also been taken by the judiciary from time to time to ensure access to justice for all.

THINK ABOUT IT



What do you think would happen if the same organ of the government made laws, implemented them, and enforced them? Share your thoughts with your classmates.

Accountability and Transparency

Democratic governments are accountable to citizens. Through elections, public debates, and engagement with civil society, citizens can evaluate the actions of the government. This continuous public involvement strengthens democracy and builds trust between the government and the people. Several institutional and policy frameworks ensure accountability and transparency in the Indian

democratic system. For example, the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, allows citizens to seek information from government agencies. You will learn more about this later in this chapter.

Multi-Party System

In a multi-party system, several political parties contest elections, representing diverse voices and interests. This gives people the power to choose those they consider most suitable. Each political party is guided by certain ideas, values, and principles that shape its policies and actions. In elections to the Parliament or State Assemblies, the party—or a coalition of parties—that secures more than 50 per cent of the seats forms the government, while the largest opposing group becomes the opposition. Political parties represent a wide range of socio-cultural, political, ideological, and regional interests, reflecting the diversity of Indian society. They function within the framework of rules and regulations laid down by the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Safeguarding the Rights of Vulnerable Groups

It is the duty of the government to protect all communities, regardless of caste, gender, religion, or regional background. Given historical factors that have led to an unequal distribution of opportunities and resources, it is essential for the government to ensure that resources are distributed equitably, especially to the most vulnerable sections of society, without discrimination. For example, Article 46 of the Constitution states that “the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.”

DON'T MISS OUT

The real strength of democracy lies in its citizens—their participation, awareness of duties and rights, and commitment to honesty and fairness. Without these, no democratic process or institution can function effectively or deliver meaningful outcomes. The table on the next page highlights how different democratic processes are supported by specific institutions and the values they promote:

Civil Society:
Refers to the voluntary groups, NGOs and community associations that function interdependently within society.

Process	Institutions	Democratic values
Legislative Process	Legislature (Parliament, State legislature, and Local bodies)	Representation, Deliberation, Dissent
Electoral Process	Election Commission of India	Participation, Equality
Judicial Process	Courts	Rule of law, Equality, Justice
Participatory Processes	Media, Civil Society	Debate and discussion, freedom of expression
Accountability Mechanisms	Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG), Central Information Commission (CIC), Lokpal, Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)	Transparency
Decentralisation	Rural and Urban local bodies	People's participation at grassroots level
Federalism	Division of powers between the centre and the states is guaranteed through a written constitution	Devolution of power



LET'S EXPLORE

The first column of the table below lists some key features of democracy in India. Fill in the second column with suitable examples from your state, town, or village. One row has been completed for you.

Features of Democracy	Examples
Popular Sovereignty	
Rule of Law	
Separation of Powers	
Fundamental Rights	
Accountability and Transparency	Parliamentary procedures such as Question Hour and the auditing of government accounts ensure accountability. Laws like the Right to Information provide transparency.
Multi-Party System	

Question Hour

The first hour of a parliamentary session when members ask questions to the government. This helps check the government's work and hold it accountable.



Role of Media in Democracy

In present times, the media has become an integral part of our lives. In addition to keeping people informed about developments around the world, it serves as a voice of the masses. Newspapers, news channels, and social media platforms raise issues concerning the public and contribute to their resolution through appropriate mechanisms. Owing to its critical role in safeguarding people's voices and upholding democratic principles, media is often referred to as the 'fourth pillar of democracy'.

Types of Democracy

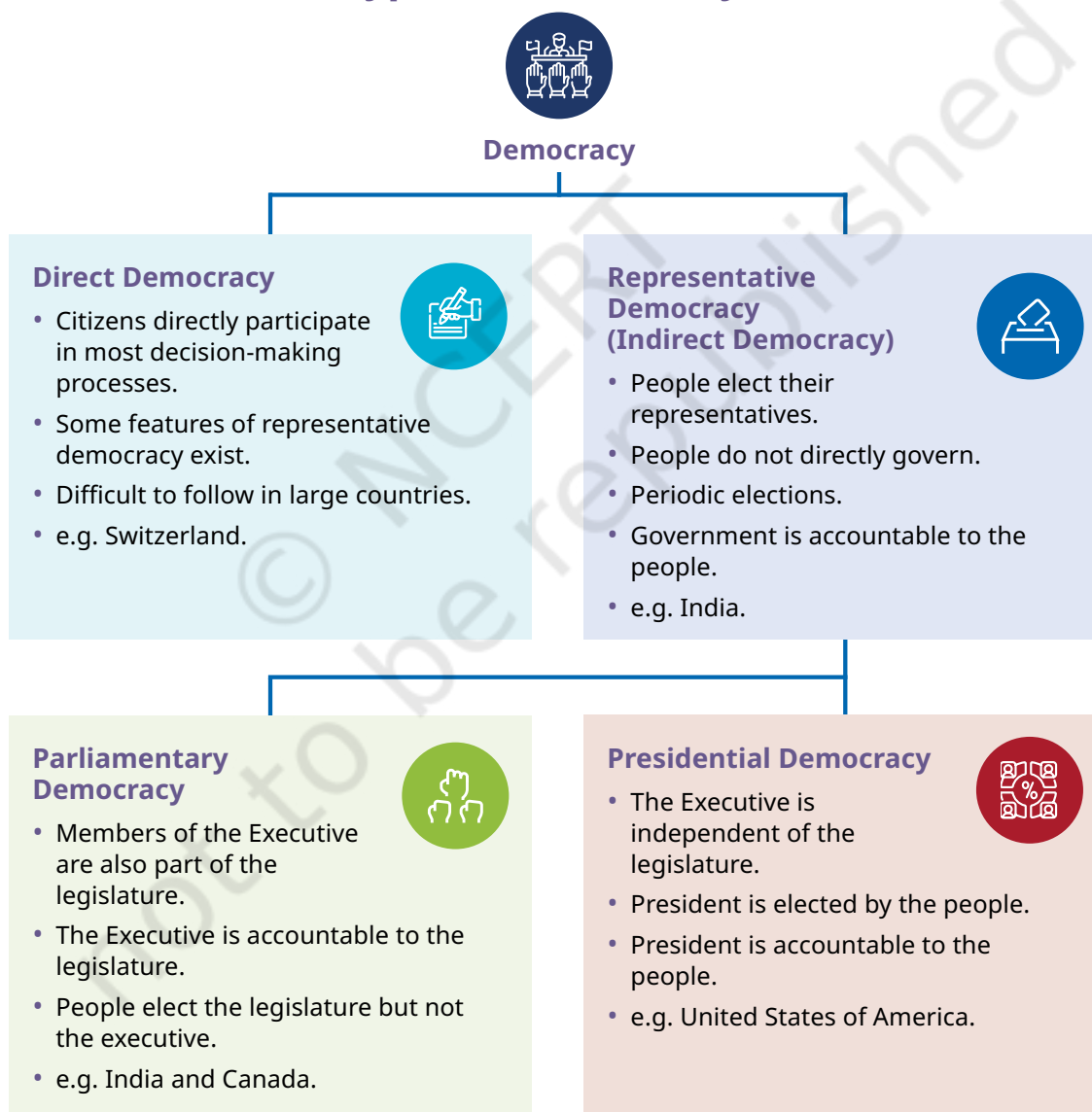


Fig. 6.4. Types of Democracy

You must have understood by now that though there are some fundamental principles of any democracy, like freedom, equality, participation, rule of law, rights, and duties, yet democracy does not offer a single model of government. The characteristics and features of democracy vary from country to country. Different societies institutionalise democracy in diverse ways, depending on how citizens participate in decision-making and how political power is structured. As you have learnt in previous grades, there are different forms of democracy—some involve direct citizen participation, while others function through elected representatives.

Imagine your school is celebrating a ‘Youth for Democracy’ festival. Students’ Councils from different countries are visiting your school. Each follows its own model of functioning, similar to how countries around the world practise democracy. Let us see what we can learn from them.

These examples show that systems may differ in how power is shared, who participates in decision-making, and whether checks and balances are in place.

Team A



All students gather in one place and elect their president once a year. However, the president has very limited powers. For major decisions, such as the canteen menu, they gather at a designated place and vote using ballot papers.

Team B



The school holds elections every year. Every class elects a representative, who then participates in the election of the Students’ Council President. The President and the representatives together make decisions.

Team C



Students directly vote for the School President as well as for members of the Council. The President acts as both the head of the Students’ Council and the chief decision-maker.

Team D



Elections are held, but only selected candidates are allowed to contest. The School President holds most of the power. The Student Council exists but has very limited authority, and opposition voices are weak or discouraged.

Fig. 6.5



LET'S EXPLORE

Select your ideal team from Fig. 6.5 and give reasons for your selection.

Having understood the different types of democratic systems, let us now look at how democracies function across the world:

Federalism:

A system of government in which power and responsibilities are shared between the union and the state governments as expressed in the union, state and concurrent list of the Constitution of India, and the residual power remains with union government.

Sovereignty:

Derived from the Latin word *superanus*, meaning 'supreme'. It refers to the supreme, final, and independent legal authority of a State over its territory and citizens.

Country	Type of Democracy	System of Government	Head of State / Head of Government	Key Features
India 	Representative Democracy (Parliamentary Democracy)	Executive power lies with the council of ministers headed by the Prime Minister	President (Head of State), Prime Minister (Head of Government)	Multi-party democracy, Written constitution, Fundamental Rights and Duties, Federalism
Canada 	Representative Democracy (Parliamentary Democracy)	Executive power lies with the Prime Minister	Governor-General appointed by the Monarch (Head of State) on the advice of the Prime Minister (Head of Government)	Federalism, multi-party system
United Kingdom 	Representative Democracy (Parliamentary Democracy with Constitutional Monarchy)	In a Constitutional Monarchy, the executive power lies with the Prime Minister	Monarch (Head of State), Prime Minister (Head of Government)	Unwritten constitution, parliamentary Sovereignty , multi-party system.
Switzerland 	Direct Democracy	Executive Power lies with the Federal Council	The President is the Head of the Government	Written constitution with multiple parties
United States of America 	Representative Democracy (Presidential Democracy)	Executive power lies with the President	The President is the Head of the Government	Written constitution, with two major parties

LET'S EXPLORE

Work in pairs or small groups. Choose any two of India's neighbouring countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, or Sri Lanka) and find out the following:

- Does the country hold regular elections?
- Who chooses the Head of the Government?
- Is there more than one political party?
- How much freedom do citizens have to express their opinions and criticise the government?

How would you describe this system? Give reasons for your answer.

- Democratic or Partially democratic or Non-democratic



Democracy in Practice: India's Living Democracy

DON'T MISS OUT

India is the world's largest democracy, and more people vote in Indian elections than the total population of many countries.

In 2024, India had over 96.8 crore registered voters.

- ❖ **Huge representation:** On average, a Member of Parliament represents about 25 lakh people (2019). This shows the enormous scale at which democratic representation operates in India.
- ❖ **Many languages, one election:** Elections in India are conducted in 22 scheduled languages, along with several other languages. Election symbols are used so that every citizen, including those who cannot read, can vote independently.
- ❖ **Over one million polling stations:** More than one million polling stations, including those in remote areas, such as mountains, forests, deserts, and islands, are set up. In some cases, polling stations are created even for a single voter.
- ❖ **Thousands of political parties:** India has over 2,800 registered political parties, reflecting the country's social and regional diversity and allowing many viewpoints to compete peacefully.



Fig. 6.6. Unique Polling Stations

Based on the given facts and figures, imagine the strength of Indian democracy.



India's democracy stands out for its scale, depth, and inclusiveness. With nearly a hundred crore voters, it represents an unparalleled exercise in public participation. This vast electorate reflects not only the size of the population but also the extensive reach of its democratic institutions. The ability to conduct regular, nationwide elections for such a large and diverse population highlights the institutional strength and organisational capacity of Indian democracy.

What makes Indian democracy truly “living” is its diversity and citizens’ active engagement in the electoral process. The Indian electorate includes people from varied linguistic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds, all participating within a single democratic framework. Hence, elections become a collective national exercise in which voices from different regions and communities are expressed through the ballot. This continuous and widespread public participation reinforces India’s position as the world’s largest democracy—not merely in terms of numbers, but through the sustained involvement of its people in shaping governance and public life. One of the most widely recognised features of a democratic system is the conduct of periodic elections, which enable people to choose their representatives. You will study this feature in detail in the next chapter on ‘Elections’.

A deeper understanding of democracy also requires an appreciation of citizens’ broader role in democratic processes. Participatory democracy emphasises greater involvement of citizens not only through elections but also through active engagement in shaping policies and governance. Such participation takes place through mechanisms, such as local councils, public consultations, and community-driven initiatives.

India's constitutional framework operates through a three-tier system comprising the Union, State, and Local governments, facilitating administrative efficiency and democratic participation. You have learnt about them in your Grades 6 to 8 Social Science textbooks. Beyond the Panchayati Raj and Municipalities, the Constitution also provides provisions to protect tribal heritage. In specific north-eastern regions, Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) are established, granting them legislative and judicial authority to preserve tribal customs. Complementing this, the PESA Act (Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas) of 1996 applies to tribal areas in other states, empowering the Gram Sabha as the primary decision-making body. By balancing these levels of authority, the Constitution of India provides a unified national framework that draws its strength from the diverse traditions of every community.

Case Study: Democracy at the Grassroots in India

Across India, several villages demonstrate how democracy functions beyond elections through active participation in local self-government. The following examples show how local bodies of democratic institutions at the grassroots in India can play a vital role in improving people's lives.

1. Jethipura Gram Panchayat (Block Idar, Sabarkantha, Gujarat)

Development Through People's Participation

Jethipura Gram Panchayat of Gujarat was awarded Nanaji Deshmukh Rashtriya Gaurav Gram Sabha Puraskar (NDRGGSP) in 2019 for its exemplary performance. It not only ensured the effective conduct of Gram Sabhas and proper maintenance of records, but also went a step further by organising Special Gram Sabhas. Other initiatives included timely and appropriate action on issues related to education, sanitation, and welfare of



Fig. 6.7. Gram Panchayat meeting (Representative image)

Quorum: The presence of the minimum number of members in the meetings of an assembly to make the proceedings valid.

Cooperatives: Groups formed by people to work together for a common benefit; members share profits and responsibilities equally.

women and children. It also conducted Mahila Sabhas and ensured adequate **quorum** in Gram Sabhas, with active participation from marginalised sections of the society, including Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women.

2. South Manubankul Gram Panchayat, Rupaichari Block, Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council, Tripura

Women-Friendly Panchayat

The South Manubankul Gram Panchayat in Tripura functions as an active local government focused on improving people's lives, especially those of women. It promotes women's participation in decision-making and provides facilities related to health, sanitation, and livelihoods. The Panchayat organises community programmes, supports self-help groups, and ensures the effective implementation of government schemes for village development. It also works towards improving cleanliness, education, and social awareness. Owing to its strong focus on women's welfare and inclusive development, it has been recognised as a "women-friendly panchayat" at the national level by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj.

Cases like these show that democracy in India is not limited to voting during elections. When citizens actively participate in grassroots and Panchayati Raj institutions, democracy becomes more responsive, inclusive, and effective at all levels.

LET'S EXPLORE



A democratic system seeks to promote participation, ensure fairness, limit the concentration of power, and resolve disagreements peacefully. Identify examples from the above case study that reflect these features.

Democracy, however, is not limited to formal institutions of the government. The spirit of democratic functioning also extends into everyday social life. Civil society organisations, socio-religious and community institutions, **cooperatives**, and trade unions often adopt democratic decision-making methods.

Women and the Right to Vote: The Indian Experience

In a number of countries, women had to wage a long and difficult struggle to secure the right to vote. In Britain, women received full voting rights only in 1928, while in the United States of America, this occurred in 1920, after decades of protests and movements. These developments show that democracy in these societies expanded gradually.



Fig. 6.8

In contrast, women in India were granted the right to vote. When the Constitution of India came into force in 1950, Universal Adult Franchise was extended to all citizens—men and women alike—without discrimination, and Indian women did not have to engage in prolonged legal battles or protest to secure voting rights. However, the right to vote does not automatically ensure equal participation. Social prejudices continue to act as barriers and affect women's adequate representation in politics.

Women's Reservation in Local Bodies

Empowerment of women starts with their active participation in institutions of decision-making. Article 243(d) of the Constitution of India provides not less than one-third reservation for women out of total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat. However, 21 States and 2 Union Territories have gone even further and have made provisions of 50% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institutions in their respective State Panchayati Raj Acts.

Similarly, Article 243(t) of the Constitution of India provides not less than one-third reservation for women out of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality. As of 2023, 17 States and 1 Union Territory have given 50% reservation for women in Urban Local Bodies.

LET'S EXPLORE

India continues to work towards more inclusive institutions. Discuss in class about the advantages of increased representation of women in the legislature.



Legislation:

Laws made by the government. These laws help maintain order and regulate society.

**DON'T MISS OUT**

The Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, was enacted in India through democratic processes of representation and **legislation**. Over time, concerns raised by citizens, journalists, civil society groups, and elected representatives regarding transparency and accountability were examined by parliamentary committees and addressed within government institutions. These discussions highlighted the need for a law that would enable citizens to access information held by public authorities. The proposal for an RTI Act was reviewed by expert groups, debated in the Parliament, and refined through consultations with various stakeholders.

Elected representatives played a key role in shaping the final legislation by incorporating safeguards related to national security and administrative efficiency. After being passed by the Parliament, the RTI Act came into force in 2005. This Act empowers citizens to seek information from government departments, thereby strengthening accountability and democratic governance.

These examples show how civil society and community institutions act as bridges between citizens and the State. Through Public Interest Litigation (PIL), campaigns, and community organisations, they help make democracy more inclusive and responsive.

THINK ABOUT IT

As we studied in earlier grades, the village serves as a unit of grassroots democracy in India, empowering rural communities to participate in decision-making processes. Many Indian leaders, such as Chaudhary Charan Singh and Babu Jagjivan Ram, who emerged from these rural backgrounds, advocated for the rights of the rural poor and other marginalised sections of society.

Explore and discuss the contributions of eminent Indian leaders who worked towards strengthening grassroots democracy.

**Challenges to Democratic Practices in India**

Democracy requires constant care, awareness, and active participation from both institutions and citizens. While the Constitution guarantees valuable rights to all citizens, it also expects individuals to exercise these rights responsibly. In this sense, democracy is not limited to elections—it is reflected in everyday

behaviour, decision-making, and civic responsibility. Actions, such as damaging public property, spreading misinformation, or violating public rules weaken democratic values. Similarly, indifference towards public issues can adversely affect the health of a democracy.

India has made significant progress in ensuring representation and participation. However, it continues to face several challenges, such as illiteracy, misinformation, and inequality. In recent times, the spread of fake news, especially through social media and other digital platforms, has emerged as a major concern. Such misinformation can influence public opinion, create confusion, and sometimes even lead to conflict. Issues like poverty, regionalism, gender inequality, and social discrimination also create barriers to equal participation. In addition, gaps in the effective implementation of laws and policies may reduce public trust in institutions.

LET'S EXPLORE

In small groups, identify two or three examples of information shared on social media that you believe may be misleading or false. Discuss what made you question their reliability and how such information can influence people's opinions. Reflect on why access to accurate and authentic information is important in a democracy.



Emergency

One of the major challenges to democracy in India was recorded when an **Emergency** was imposed in 1975–77. In the early 1970s, public dissatisfaction with the government led by Indira Gandhi was growing. Rising unemployment, inflation, and allegations of misgovernance led to widespread protests. In June 1975, a National Emergency was imposed by the government on the grounds of internal disturbance. During this period, a majority of Fundamental Rights were suspended, the press was censored, and numerous political leaders and activists were arrested. Democratic institutions came under severe strain, and citizens' freedom was restricted. Mass movements led by Jayaprakash Narayan—a political leader and socialist thinker, popularly known as Lok Nayak—mobilised students and citizens, especially in Bihar and Gujarat.

The Emergency was lifted in 1977, and general elections were held, allowing people to express their will through the ballot. The defeat of the ruling government demonstrated the strength of Indian democracy and highlighted the importance of

Emergency: Articles 352, 356, and 360 of the Constitution of India deal with the provisions for declaration of National Emergency, President's Rule, and Financial Emergency, respectively.

Civic responsibility:

Civic responsibility also includes respecting others' rights, using social media responsibly, abiding by laws and rules, appreciating the country's diversity, and participating in activities that strengthen unity.

constitutional safeguards, civil liberties, and active citizen participation in protecting democratic values. This period highlighted both the vulnerabilities and the resilience of democratic institutions in India.

Democracy and You

Being well-informed is one of the vital responsibilities of a young citizen. Reading newspapers, watching news programmes, and using the internet responsibly help us stay aware of national and international events. Access to authentic information enables us to form informed opinions on public issues, understand how democracy operates in practice, and contribute positively to society. Programmes like the National Service Scheme (NSS) and the National Cadet Corps (NCC) are designed to instil **civic responsibility**, social awareness, and respect for democratic ideals. Through community service, teamwork, and organised activities, you can learn the importance of participation, responsibility, and service to the nation.

LET'S EXPLORE

Observe Fig 6.9 and explore the various other digital and non-digital ways through which you can participate in a democracy.

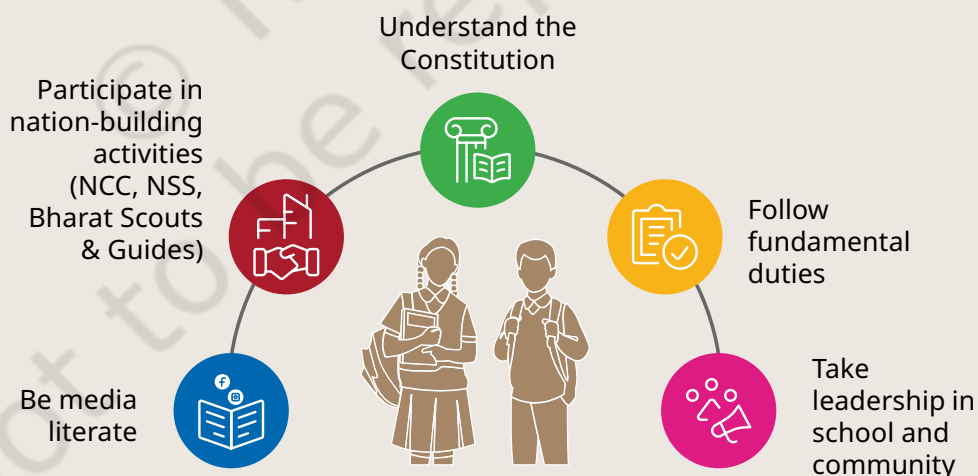


Fig. 6.9. Youth and Democracy

THINK, DISCUSS, ACT

Think: How do your actions as a student contribute to your school community and to democracy in a larger context?

Discuss: Talk to your classmates about a social or community issue that you care about. How can you, as a student, make a difference?

Act: Choose one activity to fulfil your civic responsibility this month. Reflect on how your actions contribute to strengthening democracy and community spirit.



Democracy is not merely a system of government but a continuous process shaped by institutions and active citizenship. From early ideas of collective decision-making to the constitutional framework of the modern Republic, democratic principles have evolved to ensure authority is exercised with accountability. India's democracy stands out for its scale, diversity, and resilience. It functions through elections, constitutional values, and everyday civic practices. While challenges remain, sustained public participation and respect for democratic norms keep it vibrant. Ultimately, the strength of a democracy depends not only on its institutions and laws but also on informed and responsible citizens who actively participate in shaping their society.

Before we move on...

- Democracy is a system of self-governance that involves institutions, rules, and practices enabling people to participate in decision-making at the local, state, and national levels; it is not limited to elections alone.
- Democratic processes are guided by principles, such as transparency, participation, inclusion, fairness, equality, accountability, and respect for diverse opinions.
- Democratic ideas in India have deep roots in ancient traditions, such as the *Sabhā* and *Samiti* mentioned in Vedic texts, which emphasised consultation and collective decision-making. Such ideas and values, along with later developments from around the world, shaped the modern democratic system.
- India's democracy is based on its Constitution, which provides for popular sovereignty, universal adult franchise, fundamental rights and duties, the rule of law, and the separation of powers.



- India is considered the world's largest democracy due to the scale of citizen participation, particularly the number of registered voters, although challenges remain in ensuring deeper inclusion and representation.
- Democracies across the world follow different systems but share common democratic values and principles.
- Citizens contribute to democracy through civic awareness, responsible use of media, participation in community activities, and respect for democratic values in everyday life.



Questions and activities

1. Read the passage and answer the questions that follow:
A school cabinet was responsible for planning a Republic Day celebration, and members had different opinions on which activities to include. After a discussion, they decided to vote, and the activities supported by the majority were selected.
 - a. Which democratic values are reflected in this situation?
 - b. How does voting help resolve differences of opinion?
 - c. Why is the majority decision important in a democracy?
 - d. Mention responsibilities of elected representatives after a decision is made.
2. How would democracy be affected if citizens stopped following laws and civic responsibilities? Explain with an example.
3. Which situation best reflects the idea of popular sovereignty and why?
 - a. A law is passed without public discussion
 - b. Citizens vote to choose their representatives
 - c. A court gives a final judgment
 - d. A minister takes an independent decision
4. The Rule of Law is violated when:
 - a. Laws are applied equally to all
 - b. Courts review government actions
 - c. Powerful individuals are treated above the law
 - d. Citizens challenge laws through legal means

5. Why is the Rule of Law essential for protecting democracy?
6. Is voting alone enough to make a country democratic? Support your answer with examples from the chapter.
7. Social media allows people to express opinions freely.
 - a. How can this strengthen democracy?
 - b. How can it weaken democracy if used irresponsibly?
8. Write a paragraph on what democracy means to you as a young citizen.
9. Conduct a model parliament session or Gram Sabha in class on local issues—cleanliness, responsibilities towards public property, or school safety.
10. Choose any one democratic institution in India (such as Parliament, Election Commission, Judiciary, or Panchayat). Prepare a short note explaining:
 - a. Its role in democracy
 - b. How it ensures accountability and participation.
11. What role does the Constitution play in strengthening democracy in India?
12. What challenges do you think democracy in India faces today?

Notes

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Chapter 7

Elections



The Big Questions

1. *Why are elections essential to a democratic system?*
2. *How do electoral systems and rules shape political representation and fairness?*
3. *What role do institutions and laws play in ensuring free and fair elections?*
4. *What challenges do elections face in practice, and how can these challenges affect democracy?*



Why do Elections Matter?

Elections are one of the most important processes for exercising democratic rights. Regular and periodic elections lie at the core of democracy. Representatives to public offices can be chosen through either direct or indirect elections. In India, members of the Lok Sabha at the central level, members of the Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly) at the state level, and members of local bodies (like Panchayats, municipal corporations, etc.) are elected through **direct elections** every five years. In contrast, the President, Vice President, and members of the Rajya Sabha are elected through **indirect elections**.

You read about a case in Grade 8 where Gurmat was elected as class representative (CR). Can we allow her to continue as the CR in Grade 9 without facing a fresh election? Similarly, can the government continue beyond the prescribed term without seeking the people's mandate again? And can we exercise our choice if only one political party is contesting the election? The answer to all these questions is No, because one of the most crucial elements of democracy is participating in the periodic election of those who will make decisions on our behalf. Elected representatives are accountable to the people. The right to elect our representatives and holding them accountable is ensured through periodic elections, and our vote is the principal means by which we exercise this right.

Direct Elections:

Elections in which citizens vote directly to choose their representatives or leaders.

Indirect Elections:

Elections in which citizens vote for representatives who then choose/elect the leaders.

An election is a process through which we exercise the right to vote and fulfil our responsibility as citizens.

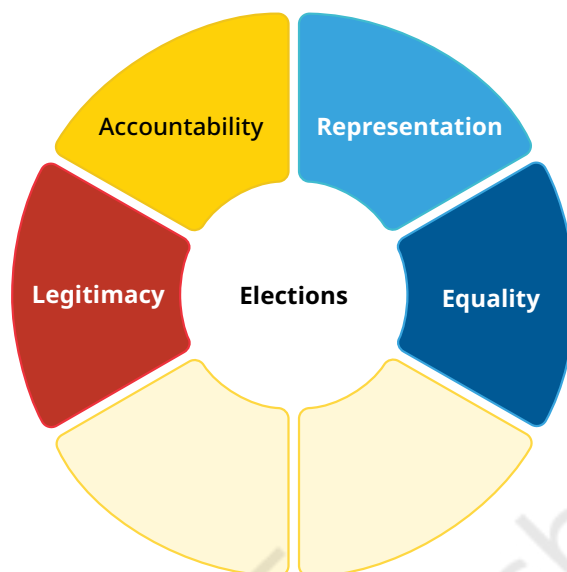


Fig. 7.1. Importance of elections in a democracy. (Fill in the two empty boxes to indicate why elections are important for democratic functioning, and discuss how each one of them is ensured through elections.)

DON'T MISS OUT



Have you heard the term ‘psephology’? It refers to the scientific study of elections. The term is derived from the Greek word *psēphos*, meaning ‘pebble,’ and *logy*, meaning ‘systematic study.’ In ancient Greece, pebbles were used for voting, leading to the origin of the term ‘psephology.’

Inside India's Election Machinery

For democracy to be realised, elections must be conducted in a free, fair, and transparent manner. The electoral process in a vast and diverse country like India, where millions of people vote across thousands of constituencies, requires laws, a well-organised and coordinated system at all levels—national, state, and local—and a robust machinery to manage it. This is where the electoral system and the various stakeholders, like the Election Commission of India (ECI), various political parties, civil society, media, and the voters, come to play their roles. Our Constitution and various parliamentary laws provide for the functions and powers of all these stakeholders.



Fig. 7.2. Indian elections— a festival of democracy

The Electoral System

The first step towards successfully conducting elections is deciding on the method of converting the votes cast into seats in the legislature. The way an electoral system allocates seats is what distinguishes it from other systems. The framers of our Constitution discussed the two most common electoral systems and ultimately chose the plurality system, also known as the ‘First-Past-The-Post’ (FPTP) system.

We elect members of the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabha using the FPTP, and the elections to the Rajya Sabha and those of the President and the Vice President are conducted using the system of proportional representation (Fig. 7.3).

The Vidhan Sabhas are directly elected bodies that make laws for their respective States and some Union Territories. Elections to the Vidhan Sabha are conducted in the same manner as those to the Lok Sabha, using the FPTP electoral system. In six states—Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Telangana, and Uttar Pradesh—the legislature has a bicameral structure. This means it has two houses—the Upper House, known as the Vidhan Parishad (Legislative Council), and the Lower House, known as the Vidhan Sabha (Legislative Assembly). The Vidhan Parishad consists of representatives elected by the members of the Vidhan Sabha and local bodies, and also by graduates and teachers in the State having such a Parishad. In addition, the Governor of the State nominates some members to represent fields, such as art, science, social service,

literature, and co-operatives. The elections to the Vidhan Parishad are held under the system of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote (Fig. 7.3).

Electoral Systems

Feature	First Past The Post (FPTP)	Majority System	Proportional Representation (PR)
 Name of the Country (Imaginary)	Haritbhumii	Ratnadweep	Swarnalok
 Seats in the Parliament	25 seats	25 seats	100 seats (nationwide list)
 Main Political Parties	Party A Party B Party C	Party X Party Y Party Z	Party M Party N Party O Party P
 How Voting Works?	Each voter votes for one candidate in their constituency. The candidate with the most votes wins, even if the votes are less than 50% of total votes polled.	Each voter votes for one candidate. To win, a candidate must receive more than 50% of the votes. If not, the top two candidates compete again in the second round.	Voters vote for a party, not a person. Seats in the Parliament are allotted in proportion to the total votes received by each party.
 Sample Results (Vote Percentage)	Party A: 40% Party B: 35% Party C: 25%	Party X: 45% Party Y: 40% Party Z: 15%	Party M: 40% Party N: 35% Party O: 15% Party P: 10%
 Who forms the Government?	Party A forms the government.	No one got 50% in Round 1. In Round 2, Party Y wins with 55%, and forms the government.	Seats distributed: M: 40; N: 35; O: 15; P: 10 Power is shared proportionately.

$$\text{Quota} = \left[\frac{\text{Total valid votes}}{\text{Seats to be filled} + 1} + 1 \right] = \text{Minimum votes to win}$$

Counting and Transfer of Votes

1. Voters mark their preference.
2. First preference votes are counted for all candidates. Those who receive the minimum votes required to win (quota) are declared elected.
3. The candidate who receives the lowest votes is eliminated. Their votes are transferred to those who are mentioned as second preference on those ballot papers.
4. Process continues till the required number of candidates are elected.

Fig. 7.3. Single transferable vote system

LET'S EXPLORE

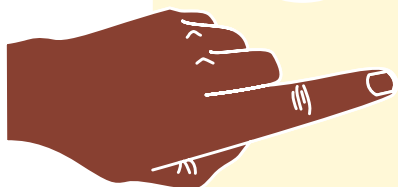
Different democracies use different electoral systems. Make groups of 5–6 students. Each group will select six countries from different continents. Prepare and present a case study on the type of electoral system(s) operating in those countries, and discuss their latest election results of those countries.



The Laws

Let us now briefly examine the major legislations that govern the conduct of elections in India—The Representation of the People Act, 1950 (RPA, 1950), and the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RPA, 1951). There also exists ‘The Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952’. The Representation of the People Act, 1950 deals mainly with the allocation of seats and delimitation of constituencies, the preparation and revision of electoral rolls, and ensuring that every citizen above 18 years of age and above has the right to vote without discrimination. The Representation of the People Act, 1951 deals with all the other aspects of the conduct of elections and post-election disputes. It lays down rules for nomination of candidates, election campaigns, voting procedures, and resolution of disputes. Together, these Acts ensure the integrity, transparency, and accountability of India’s electoral process.

The Representation of the People Act, 1951 also lists out the electoral offences and corrupt practices. For example:



Any gift, offer, or promise made by a candidate (or with their consent) to a person in order to make them contest, withdraw, vote, or refrain from voting.



Appealing people to vote or refrain from voting on the basis of religion, caste, race, community, or language.



Candidates or any other person on their behalf are prohibited from taking any assistance in favour of the candidate from government-related personnel. This includes gazetted officers, judges and magistrates, armed forces personnel, police personnel, and excise officers.

Delimitation Commission

Did you know that the boundaries of your parliamentary and assembly constituencies are not permanently fixed? The boundaries of the constituencies change over time depending on shifts in the population density. Without delimitation, one Member of Parliament (MP) might represent five lakh people, while another might represent twenty-five lakh, defeating the objective of equal representation. Delimitation is the process of determining the number of seats and fixing the territorial boundaries in each state for elections to the Lok Sabha and the Vidhan Sabha. It aims to ensure that the ratio of seats to population is as close to equal as possible across all constituencies.

DON'T MISS OUT

Article 82 of the Constitution of India mandates the establishment of a Delimitation Commission. India has had four Delimitation Commissions—in 1952, 1963, 1973, and 2002. Can you find out the reason for the long interval between 1973 and 2002 with the help of your teacher?



Election Commission of India (ECI)

The Constitution of India has vested in the Election Commission of India (ECI) the superintendence, direction, and control of the entire process for the conduct of elections.

LET'S RECALL

The ECI is an autonomous permanent constitutional body that was established on 25 January 1950. It conducts elections to the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha, the Vidhan Sabha, the Vidhan Parishad, the President, and the Vice President of India. Articles 324 to 329 of the Constitution provide for the establishment of an ECI and define its powers and duties.



At the State level, election work is supervised by the Chief Electoral Officer of the State, who is appointed by the ECI from among the civil servants in consultation with the concerned State Government. Various State Government officers, such as District Magistrates, Sub-Divisional Magistrates, and Tahsildars, etc., are also assigned election duties by designating them as District Election Officers, Returning Officers, Electoral Registration Officers, and so on.

Let us look at what the ECI actually does. Remember, you have already studied a few of its functions in Grade 8; let us now understand them in detail.

- **ECI creates the electoral roll:** The ECI sends official enumerators to every household to collect data about the eligible electors. As you have studied, only citizens who meet the eligibility criteria can vote. Based on the collected information, electoral rolls are prepared for each constituency, organised polling station-wise. Only those whose names appear on the roll are allowed to vote. The ECI also conducts Special Intensive Revision (SIR), which involves updating, verifying, and correcting the electoral rolls. Through SIR, it ensures that no eligible citizen is left out and no ineligible person is included in the electoral roll. This exercise ensures the addition of all voters, especially the young voters who have just turned 18 and may be left out due to a lack of awareness or any other reason. The SIR also deletes the names of the voters on the basis of death of the voter, change of residence, duplicate enrolment, and being



Fig. 7.4. An officer on election duty verifying voter's name from electoral roll

7- Elections

permanently untraceable. The ECI also gives time to raise claims or objections against the revised electoral roll and settles the claims and objections before publishing the final electoral roll.

THINK ABOUT IT

You will turn 18 in a few years. As a responsible citizen, you should register yourself as a voter. Find out the various steps of the procedure for registration and the list of required documents for the same. Discuss, with anyone who has just turned 18 and has registered as a voter, the ease or difficulty faced in the voter registration process.



LET'S EXPLORE

→ Do you know what ETPBS is?

ETPBS stands for Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System. It enables service voters to cast their vote on an electronically received postal ballot from their preferred location, which is outside their originally assigned voting constituency.

→ Find out who are classified as service voters and who can vote using ETPBS?



- ⦿ **ECI decides the schedule and date for the election:** When the constitutionally mandated term of the Legislature ends, which is five years or when the Legislature is dissolved before the completion of its term, the ECI activates the machinery needed to conduct an election. While deciding the election schedule for a country as large and diverse as India, the ECI must consider several factors, such as weather conditions, agricultural cycle, school and university examination schedules, festivals, etc.
- ⦿ **ECI registers political parties and allocates symbols:** Only political parties registered with the ECI can contest elections. Apart from the candidates affiliated to the political parties, independent candidates (who are not affiliated to any political party) can also contest elections. The ECI ensures inner party democracy by insisting upon the political parties to hold their organisational elections periodically. The ECI also classifies political parties as recognised national or state/regional parties or registered-unrecognised parties. National and state parties,

are allotted election symbols. The ECI also acts as a quasi-judicial body in addressing disputes regarding the recognition of political parties and the allotment of symbols.

DON'T MISS OUT

Every year, 25 January is celebrated as National Voters' Day, and there is a voters' pledge that goes as follows —

"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".

Fig. 7.5. Voters' Pledge
<https://ecisveep.nic.in/pledge/englishpledge.php>



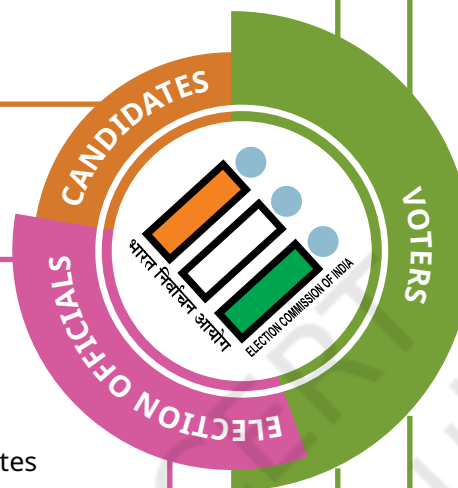
- ◎ **Ensuring free and fair elections:** For elections to be meaningful, the entire process must be conducted in a fair and transparent manner. If fairness is not ensured, public confidence in electoral institutions may gradually weaken. Consider situations in which candidates are influenced by personal favours, votes are not counted accurately, or some participants face difficulties in exercising their right to vote due to accessibility issues. In such cases, although elections may be held, their democratic value is reduced. This shows that democracy is not only limited to conducting elections, but also in ensuring that the electoral process is inclusive, impartial, and trustworthy.

The ECI has taken several initiatives to make the process of elections more inclusive (see Fig. 7.7 and Fig. 7.8). These initiatives focus on infrastructure accessibility as well as technology-assisted inclusion, particularly for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs), Senior Citizens, transgender persons, and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). Voting from home for senior citizens above 85 years of age and persons with disabilities (PwDs) with a benchmark disability of 40% was extended across India for the first time during the 2024 General Elections.

Suvidha: An exclusive app for contesting candidates and political parties. Here, candidates can get all the nomination-related forms and updates. They can also use the app to apply for permissions (meetings, rallies, vehicles, loudspeakers, etc.) and check the real-time permission status through the app.

ERONET: Brings in seamless processing of forms and easy handling of the databases. It facilitates efficient form-processing, simplified dashboards, role-based access, and maintenance of E-Rolls.

Sugam: A web-based application for managing vehicles diverted/ requisitioned from other departments for election work. All details of the departments, vehicle registration numbers, driver contacts, and periodical fuel allotment to the vehicles are uploaded on this app.



ETPBS (Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System): Developed for 'Service Voters', allowing them to receive and cast their postal ballots electronically from anywhere outside their constituency.

Voter Helpline App: This is a multipurpose app, which can be used for various voter services including registration, transposition, verification, etc. With the help of this app, voters can also get all the information related to election and related news and updates, too.

Saksham App: The ECI has taken into consideration the need for easing the voter identification and registration process for persons with disabilities (PwDs) by offering customised services. The Saksham App provides a number of features to help PwDs in registration for voting, finding polling station, etc.

cVIGIL App: With this app, voters can report any Model Code of Conduct violations and election misconducts within minutes of witnessing them. The flying squads will navigate to the spot of incidence with the help of auto location to take prompt action.

Fig. 7.6. Digital ecosystem for electoral services and voter engagement

No Voter to Be Left Behind

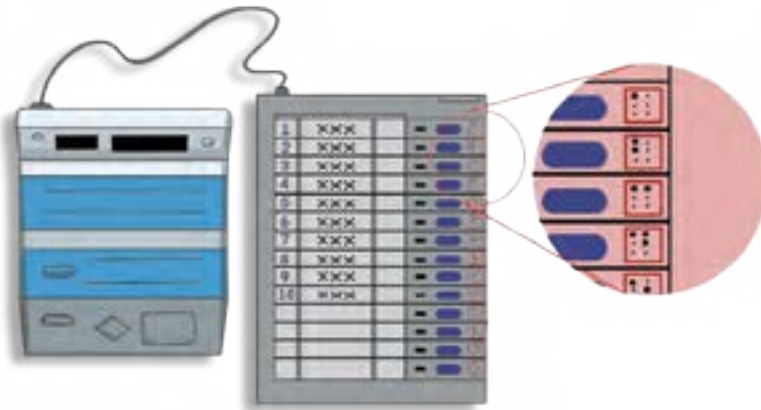


Fig. 7.7. EVM with Braille



Fig. 7.8. Voting from home for senior citizens

India's electoral exercise is unparalleled, and distinct from those in other parts of the world, with over 96.8 crore eligible voters spread across diverse regions and terrains. The ECI manages this exercise autonomously, ensuring free and fair elections nationwide. To carry out its functions, such as updating electoral rolls, candidate nominations, regulating campaigns, law enforcement, coordination among states, extensive security arrangements, counting of votes, declaration of election results, and dispute resolution, the ECI makes extensive use of information and communication technologies, and e-governance. The ECI has also taken several initiatives to make the process of elections more inclusive.

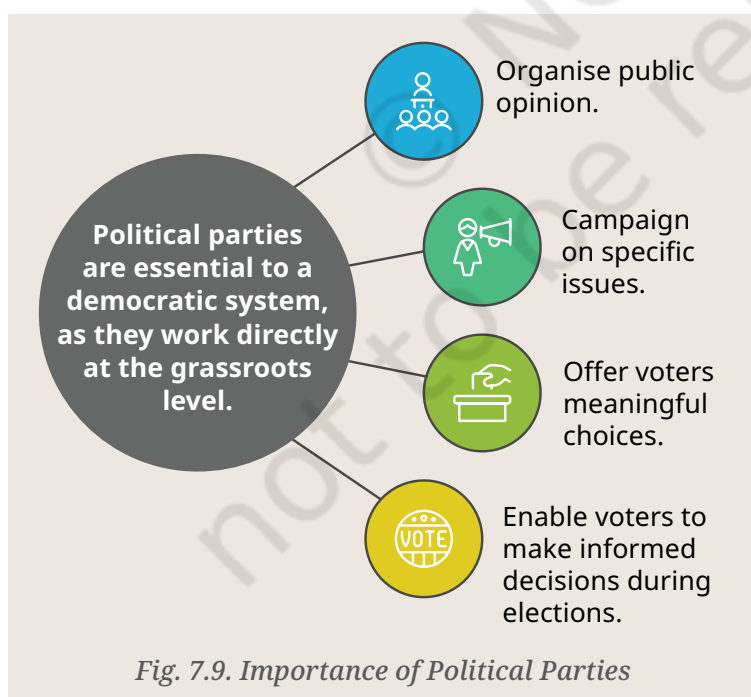
DON'T MISS OUT



The International Election Visitors' Programme (IEVP) is a flagship programme of the ECI for international cooperation and engagement with Election Management Bodies (EMBs) of other countries and international organisations. The ECI has signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with 28 EMBs and three international organisations, namely, the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), and the United Nations.

Political Parties

How do we learn about various issues that affect citizens in their daily lives? How do voters get to know about the candidates contesting elections? How is the election agenda set? What role do political parties play in elections? There are often dozens of contestants for each constituency. Most candidates belong to a political party, though some contest independently. Voters learn about candidates, their policies, their vision for development, and their positions on various social, economic, cultural, and political issues primarily through the political parties.



They help ensure that the democracy functions effectively by providing governance, accountability, representation, and public engagement.

You will become eligible to vote in another four or five years; however, you must have heard or read about various promises that political parties make during the election campaigns. They present their agenda, elaborate on their promises in election rallies, and discuss and debate on issues of local, state, national, and international concern through various media platforms.

LET'S MAP

1. Choose any three states (including yours). Find the symbols of state parties belonging to those states and plot them on the given map of India. List down their major agenda, as mentioned in their manifesto in the latest Lok Sabha/Vidhan Sabha/Local Body Elections.

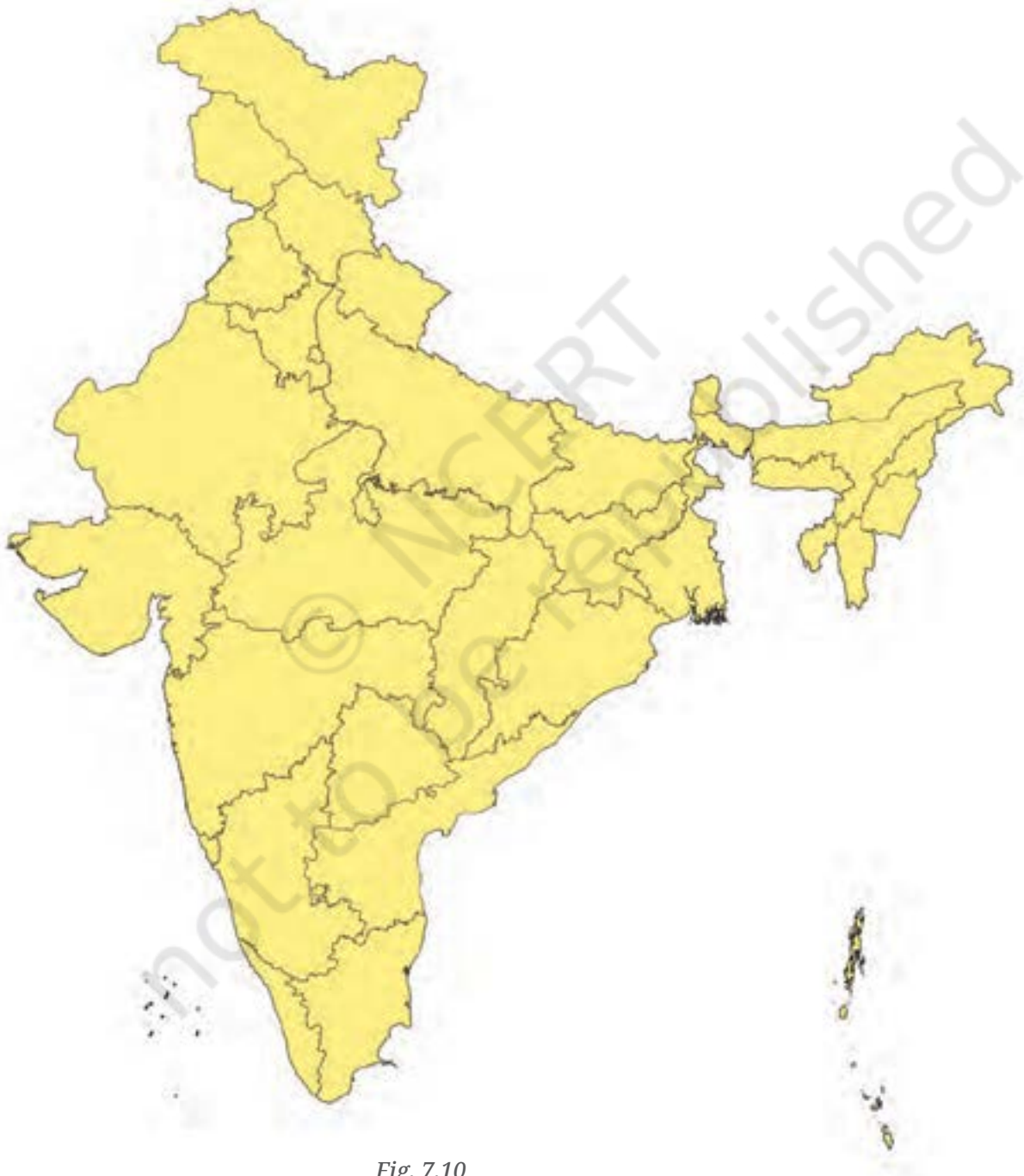


Fig. 7.10

7- Elections

2. Form groups of 4–6 students. Identify and compare the policy preferences on the following parameters for two political parties in the last Lok Sabha Elections using credible sources like party manifestos, newspapers, etc. Present the points of comparison in a poster using bullet points, symbols, colour coding, etc.

Policy area	Party's viewpoint	Any policy/law that aligns with the party's viewpoint	Source
Education			
National security			
Social welfare			
Environment			
Economy			
Health			



India has a multi-party system, which means that many political parties exist and compete in elections. This system reflects the country's rich diversity of languages, cultures, religions, and regions.

If there are so many political parties, can someone simply leave one party and join another whenever they wish? Yes, they can. However, once a person has been elected on a particular party's ticket, leaving that party is considered as Defection. Defection refers to abandoning or switching from the political party under whose banner the candidate was elected. This may involve joining another party or choosing to act independently of the party's decisions, particularly in matters such as voting in the legislature. Such actions, if understood in the context of party discipline and political stability, are considered as political opportunism. On the contrary, defection can also be viewed as a way to uphold conscience or respond to changing public expectations.

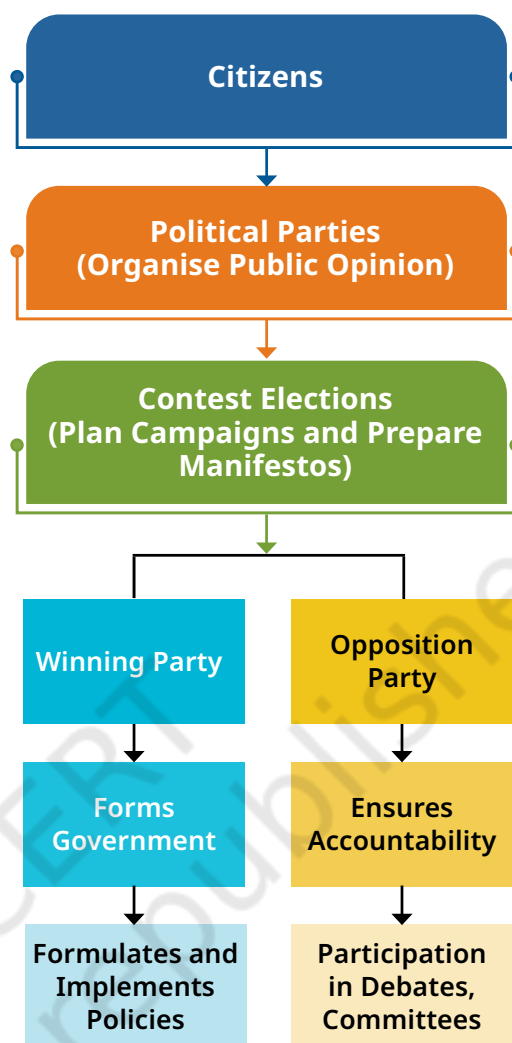


Fig. 7.11. Role of Political Parties

DON'T MISS OUT

The Anti-Defection Law in India was passed in 1985 through the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act. The purpose of the law is to prevent defection, thereby providing stability to the elected government. According to this law, if a member of the Parliament or a State Assembly voluntarily gives up their party membership or votes against the party's instructions (whip), the member can be disqualified from the respective House. The Speaker or Chairman of the House decides what needs to be done in such cases.



You have already read that the Election Commission registers and recognises political parties. It does so based on specific criteria.

Criteria for National and State Party Recognition

Criteria for NATIONAL PARTY RECOGNITION (Any one condition should be fulfilled)

- Secures not less than 6% of valid votes polled in any four or more states in a General Election to the Lok Sabha or to the Legislative Assembly, and in addition, it wins four seats in the Lok Sabha from a single or more states.
- Wins at least 2% of seats in the Lok Sabha, and the candidates are elected from at least three states.
- It is recognised as a State Party at least in four states.

Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPP)

- The parties that have not secured enough percentage of votes in the Legislative Assembly or the General Elections.
- Parties that have never contested elections since their registration.

Criteria for STATE PARTY RECOGNITION (Any one condition should be fulfilled)

- Secures not less than 6% of the valid votes polled at a general election to the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned and, in addition, wins at least two seats in the Legislative Assembly of that State.
- Secures not less than 6% of the valid votes polled at a general election to the Lok Sabha from the State concerned, and in addition, wins at least one seat in the Lok Sabha from the State concerned.
- Wins at least 3% of the seats at the General Election to the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned or at least three seats in the Legislative Assembly, whichever is more.
- Wins at least 1 seat in the Lok Sabha for every 25 seats or any fraction thereof allotted to the State at a General Election to the Lok Sabha from the State concerned.
- Secures not less than 8% of the valid votes polled in the State at a General Election to the Lok Sabha from the State or to the Legislative Assembly of the State.

Fig. 7.12



LET'S EXPLORE

Find out the number of State parties and Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPP). You may visit the website of ECI.

LET'S EXPLORE

The year 1967 witnessed an end to the era of single-party dominated elections in India and an era of alliances began. Even though various states witnessed politics of alliance starting from 1967, it was in 1977 that various political parties formed an alliance as the Janata Party against the backdrop of the National Emergency (1975–1977). The Janata Party formed the first coalition government at the national level, which was popularly known as the Janata Government. Since the late 1990s, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the United Progressive Alliance (UPA), led by the Indian National Congress (INC) until the UPA's dissolution in 2023 and subsequent reconstitution as the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance, have been the major political alliances in Indian elections.

Find out the name and the composition (number and name of the national and state parties) of the alliances that won in the following elections to the Lok Sabha.

Year	Alliance Won	National parties	State parties
1977			
1999			
2004			
2009			
2014			
2019			
2024			



Challenges to Free and Fair Elections

In India, conducting elections for over 96.8 crore (in 2024) voters with thousands of polling stations and hundreds of political parties, spread across diverse regions and socio-economic realities, is a challenging task. For challenges such as misinformation, fake news, intimidation, etc., the ECI addresses them through RPA 1950 and



Fig. 7.13. Challenges to free and fair elections

1951, the Model Code of Conduct, EVMs, Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT), voters' awareness campaigns, and other measures. With constant vigilance and active citizen participation, elections can become more representative and the democracy more robust.

LET'S ANALYSE



Look at the road to free and fair elections above (Fig. 7.13). Fill in the empty potholes with some more challenges after discussing them with your teachers and parents. How can we overcome these challenges?



Before we move on...

- Casting a vote is a constitutional right as well as a duty of every citizen.
- Elections are the soul of democracy as they give every citizen an equal voice in the formation of a government.
- The various laws, such as the Representation of the People Act of 1950 and 1951, and bodies like the Delimitation Commission and the ECI, ensure that the entire process of elections remains free, fair, and transparent.

- Political parties play a fundamental role by presenting diverse view points in terms of programmes and policies, thus helping voters make informed choices.
- Despite numerous challenges to conducting free and fair elections, the ECI tries to ensure that elections at multiple levels are carried out impartially.

Questions and activities

1. What reforms have been introduced by the ECI to make voting more inclusive for the following groups?
 - a. People with Disabilities
 - b. Service Voters
 - c. Senior Citizens— above 85 years of age
 - d. Prisoners
 - e. Persons in preventive detention
2. What are the various functions of the Election Commission of India? Which of these functions is most important for the conduct of free and fair elections? Explain.
3. Elections are the soul of a democracy. Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. Explain at least three differences between the national and state/regional political parties.
5. Why should you vote? Arrange the following in the descending order of your choice. Discuss the reasons for your choice.
 - a. Opportunity to choose my representative
 - b. Makes me a responsible person
 - c. Opportunity to change the non-performing representative
 - d. Strengthens democracy
6. What is the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) initiative of the ECI? Explain the objectives and the necessity of conducting SIR.



7. Match the political party name with its symbol.

Political Parties Name	Symbol
Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)	
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	
Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)	
Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI (M)]	
Indian National Congress (INC)	
National People's Party (NPP)	

8. Read the case study below and answer the following questions.

Ishani and her mother were in the local market, day before the state assembly elections. She noticed wall writing and campaign posters pasted everywhere. Large groups of campaigners were distributing pamphlets and raising slogans in support of the respective candidates. Ishani has turned 18 and will be voting for the first time. She had registered to vote through the ECI's online portal. The next morning, she, along with her mother and her disabled elder brother, went to the polling station, which was well guarded by the police personnel. A wheelchair was made available to them, and volunteers guided them to the polling booth. Inside the polling booth, there were only three people who were performing all duties. Ishani had forgotten her voter ID card and Aadhaar card, but her identity was verified with an alternative document. After casting her vote, she was also able to see the VVPAT slip. While leaving, she wondered how the police personnel vote, as they must be on duty from early morning till late evening. When she went home, she narrated her entire experience to her 89-year-old grandmother, who cast her vote from home.

- a. What initiatives were taken by the ECI to enable the voters to cast their vote?
 - b. If Ishani was allowed to vote even without carrying her Voter ID card or Aadhaar card, which other document might she be carrying that is valid for voting?
 - c. Cite the examples of violations of the Model Code of Conduct.
 - d. Give a suitable title to the passage.
 - e. Find out how the police and army personnel cast their votes.
9. A comparative chart of three countries is given below. Based on the information given in the chart, answer the questions.

	Country A	Country B	Country C
Political Dimension	Written constitution, periodic elections, voting rights, party system varies from two-party to multi-party.	Written constitution, periodic elections, voting rights, one political party.	Written constitution, monarchy, no voting rights, no political party.
Economic Dimension	Average standard of living.	Above-average standard of living.	High standard of living.

- a. What is the difference between having a voting right in a country with a multi-party system and another with a single-party system?
 - b. In which of the above countries would you like to stay and why?
10. What are the challenges to conducting free and fair elections?
11. On the Stage.

Elections are to be held in your school for the posts of Head Girl, Head Boy, and Sports Captain. Assume the roles of an Election Commissioner, Returning Officer, Polling Agent, Candidate, Campaigner, Polling Officer, Police Personnel, and a Journalist, and perform their roles while ensuring free, fair, and transparent elections.

12. Try and make videos or audios on topics like: My Vote My Nation; No Voter to be Left Behind; How to Eliminate the Ill of Money Power, etc.
13. Select one national or state political party. Using authentic and reliable sources such as the Election Commission of India (ECI) website, the official website of the selected political party, and newspapers. Prepare a comparative chart of the last two State Legislative Assembly elections. The chart should include the following details for the chosen party:
 - a. Some promises made in the Election manifesto
 - b. Percentage of votes polled
 - c. Number of seats won
 - d. Number of women who contested
 - e. Number of women candidates elected

Present the data for both elections in a clear and comparative format, citing all sources used.

14. Do you think 'One Nation, One Election' can improve the efficiency of the electoral process? Divide the class and discuss into two groups—one to examine its potential advantages and the other to analyse its limitations.

Notes



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