

Revision Notes

Class 8 Social Science - Civics

Chapter 3 - Why Do We Need a Parliament?

A legislative body of the government is a parliament. It allows citizens of India to participate in decision-making and be in charge of the government. Hence, it makes the most significant symbol of Indian democracy and a primary feature of the Constitution.

Why should people decide?

- On 15th August, 1947, India got independence.
- People used to fear the British government and were unable to give or agree with their decisions.
- When the struggle for independence started, numerous people participated in the struggle and got inspired by the decision-making quality and ideas of freedom that was introduced by the freedom fighters.
- They also faced backlash and were scared while opposing and criticizing the decisions made by the British government.
- In 1885, the Indian National Congress demanded the legislature a right to discuss and ask questions about the budget by the elected members.
- In 1909 the government of India act allowed the elected members to raise questions and participate in decision-making under British legislatures.
- After independence, the citizens were free to participate in the decision-making process of the country indirectly by choosing the representatives of their choice.
- The hopes and dreams of the freedom struggle have been made solid in the Constitution of independent India that set out the fundamental principle of a global adult franchise, i.e., that each and every grown-up citizen of the nation have the right to vote.

People and their representatives

- The idea of democracy is all about the people's participation in the political process. It is based on the concept of "consent" of the people.

- The decision by the people makes a government democratic and also decides its functioning.
- The idea of democratic government is that the citizen of the country is an important person and the government and other public institutions need to have the trust of these citizens.
- People elect their representative to the parliament and then the government is formed from these elected representatives.
- The Parliament, which has been made up of all representatives jointly, regulates and directs the government. In this sense people, through the elected representatives, make up the government and also keep it under control.

The role of parliament

Established soon after 1947, the Indian Parliament constitutes an expression of the belief that the citizens of India have in principles of democracy. Parliament has immense power as they are the representative of the people. Our country has numerous constituencies and each constituency selects one person to the parliament. The elected candidate becomes a member of parliament or MPs. These MPs together form the parliament. The Lok Sabha is voted once in five years. The candidates who generally contest elections belong to different political parties. The parliament performs various functions such as

- a) Selecting the national government,
- b) Making laws,
- c) Controlling, guiding, and informing the government.

1. Selecting the national government

The Indian parliament consists of the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha, and the president.

Lok Sabha

- After the Lok Sabha elections have taken place, a list is prepared that reveals the number of MPs who belong to each political party. The political party that has the maximum number of its MPs elected to the Lok Sabha, is the winner and that party forms the government. Since there are 543 elected (plus two Anglo-Indian nominated) members in Lok Sabha, to have

a majority a party should contain at least half the number i.e., 272 members or more. The members of the other political parties that do not have the majority, they constitute the Opposition in the parliament.

- When different political parties join all together to make the government, this is known as a coalition government. This usually happens when a single party doesn't get majority positions in Lok Sabha.
- The leader of the majority party becomes the Prime Minister of the country and the rules of the Lok Sabha.
- One of the major tasks that the prime minister has to perform once he comes to power is to assign Portfolios to its ministers. For example-Health, Defence, finance, Textile, etc. Lok Sabha chooses the executive who is a group of individuals who together enforce the laws that are generated by the parliament.

The Rajya Sabha

The Rajya Sabha is known as the upper house of the Indian parliament. It is the permanent house of the parliament.

- It comprises 233 elected members plus 12 members who are appointed by the president for their tremendous contributions to fields such as science, literature, art, etc. The other members are elected by the members of the legislative assembly of the states. The tenure of the member of the Rajya Sabha is 6 years with one-third of its members retiring every year.
- The Rajya Sabha serves as the representative of the states of India in the parliament. Its main role is to review and alternate the laws passed by the Lok Sabha.
- It also initiates the bills and legislation which passes through the Rajya Sabha and then goes to Lok Sabha for approval. A bill can only become a law after it has been passed by both houses.
- To become a member of the Rajya Sabha, one must be a citizen of India with a minimum age of 30 He/she should possess all the qualifications laid by the parliament.

2. Control, guide, and inform the government

The Parliament, at the same time in a session, starts with a question hour. The

question hour is a significant mechanism by which the members of parliament can deliver information regarding the working of the government. This is the most important way in which the parliament can keep a check on the workings of the government and can also prevent it from becoming arbitrary in nature. The government is notified of its shortcomings through asking questions and also understand the view of the individuals through their representatives in the Parliament, i.e., the members of parliament. The opposition plays an important role in the question hour as they are most critical of the policies and decisions of the government. They raise important questions regarding the demands of the people and the working of the government. The question hour also helps in increasing the political awareness of the people as the citizens of India get to know about the workings of the government.

3. Making of new laws

Making laws is an important function of parliament. All the proposals from the legislative assembly are brought to the parliament in the form of bills. The bills are first introduced in the parliament house by any minister or member of parliament. Then it undergoes three readings:

- **1st Reading:** Introduction of the bill in Lok Sabha or Rajya sabha
- **2nd Reading:** Discussing the principles and provisions related to the bill. Later on, elaborating the considered bill clause by clause.
- **3rd Reading:** Discussing the bill, as amended, to be passed.

Who are the people in parliament?

- The parliament has different people belonging from different backgrounds. They belong to different political parties and have different ideologies.
- Over the years we have witnessed an increase in political participation by the Dalits, minorities, and backward classes.
- In the parliament, some seats are reserved for SC and ST to give equal advantage to the backward section of the society. This helps in strengthening our democracy.

Important Questions and Answers

1. Who is the MLA and how does he/she get elected?

Ans: A Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) is a representative elected by the voters of an electoral district (constituency) to the legislature of the State government in the Indian system of government. The people elect one representative from their constituency who becomes a member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA).

2. Following are some of the works done by the government. Fill in the blank with which government has done it (central or state government).

A. Introduction of a new train between Ajmer and Mysore.

Ans: Central government.

B. Introduction of a new 2000 rupee note.

Ans: Central government.

C. The decision of the Madhya Pradesh state government to discontinue board exams of class 8 students.

Ans: State government.

D. Appointing new candidates in the states.

Ans: State government.

E. Supporting and the making of an invention.

Ans: Central government.

F. Making decisions on a river dispute.

Ans. State government.

3. Why does our national government support the idea of the right to vote for all adults?

Ans: In the struggle for independence, people from different backgrounds came together to fight against the British government. Everyone wanted an independent, free and equal nation where the people have a role in decision-making. People wanted a country to be governed by leaders who can protect

people's demands and needs. So, the national movement supported the idea of the right to vote for all adults.

4. Who is the prime minister of India and what is the function of the ministers selected by him?

Ans: The Prime Minister of India is the leader of the majority party. The prime minister selects the ministers from his party who work with him to make important decisions. They take charge of different areas of the government like finance, education, health, etc.

5. How does the parliament control, guide, and inform the government?

Ans: The parliament begins with a question hour in the winter session where important questions from different aspects are raised about the government's work. Through these questions, the government gets information about the situations and gets to know about people's demands and needs. The opposition party highlights the drawbacks of various programs and policies and mobilizes support for their own programs. The opposition acts as the main critic of the policies made by the government.