

The Government is the group of people who officially and legally control the economic, social and other activities of a country or state and make all the decisions about taxes, laws, public activities etc.

The Need for Government

Every country needs a government to make decisions and get things done for the welfare of the people. When human beings live and work together, there needs to be some amount of organisation so that decisions can be made. Some rules of conduct have to be made for living together peacefully that apply to everyone. It requires a government to make rules and enforce them.

Functions of the Government

The government is responsible for ensuring that all its citizens have enough to eat and have good health facilities. When there are natural disasters like the tsunami or an earthquake it is the government that mainly organises aid and assistance for the affected people. The government decides about where to build roads, canals, hospitals and schools, or how to reduce the price of food grains when they get too expensive or ways to increase the supply of electricity, petrol, cooking gas and drinking water. In case of a dispute or crime, there are police and courts which are also part of the government. The government protects the boundaries of the country. The government also runs several public utility services such as postal, railway, ship and airtel services. It also manages big industries like steel plants and drilling of petroleum. The government has several programmes to help the poor.

The government functions in an orderly manner to perform these multifarious activities efficiently through organisation and planning. Organisation means that the government is divided into various departments that take decisions and carry out them at appropriate levels. Planning means that it does the work orderly in certain phases according to the resources available.

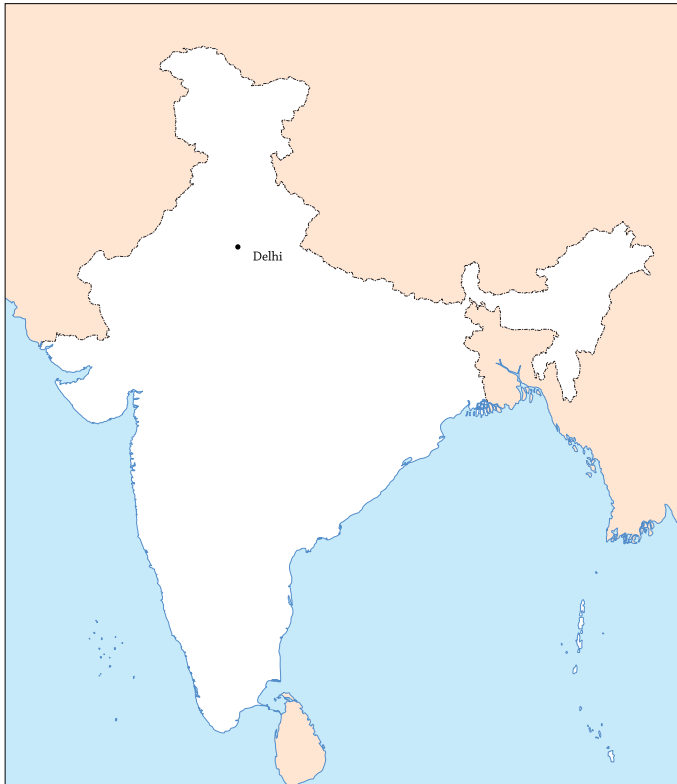


The Supreme Court



The Indian Railways

The people of the country has diverse political, religious, cultural and economic backgrounds. They have many differences in their thoughts and activities. To avoid conflict and ensure equality and opportunity to all, several laws and rules are contained in the Constitution. Several laws and rules are also made by the government for the welfare of one and all. The institutions of the government like the police, the courts, the army and other organs implement and put to practice these laws and rules. The government's priority is to ensure integrity and unity of the people of the nation. It is possible only by maintaining law and order.



India : National level




India : State level

Levels of Government

A single government cannot reach over a billion people living in India especially when there are many physical diversities. In order to manage the affairs of the nation properly, the government functions at different levels : at the local level, at the state level and at the national level. The **local level** means in your locality of village, town or city; the **state level** would mean entire state like Punjab or Haryana and the **national level** relates to the entire nation. The nation is presently divided into 29 States and 7 Union Territories. Each state is further divided into several districts for administration purpose. Later in this book you will read about how local level government functions. You will learn about how governments function at the state and central levels in the next few classes.

The district administration is the unit of state government at district level. A district is headed by the District Magistrate, earlier, known as the Collector. All villages, towns and cities of the district are under his/her supervision.



Some examples of the decisions of the Indian government at central level are to maintain friendly relations with Russia, introduction of a new 1000 rupee note and introduction of two new trains between Jammu and Bangalore. State level decisions may be like the decision of the Haryana government to provide free electricity to all farmers or the decision of the West Bengal Government to have Board examination in class 8 for all schools. Local level decisions are like to construct a common well in a village or a children's park in a city.

Laws and the Government


The central and state governments make laws and every citizen of India has to follow these. Without these laws the government's power to take decisions is not of much use. The government also has the power to enforce its decisions. For example, according to law all persons driving a motor vehicle must have a license to drive. The government enforces this law to ensure that the drivers of all motor vehicles have adequate training and health and age certificate before driving. Otherwise, they may cause an accident and hurt themselves and other people. Any person caught driving a vehicle without a licence can either be jailed or fined a large sum of money. The punishment forces the people to get proper training and fulfil other conditions required for a licence.

In addition to any actions that governments can take, there are also steps that people can take if they feel that a particular law is not being followed. For example, the government ensures that only suitable persons are hired for a job with some reservations for the backward classes. If any person feels that they were not hired for a job because of any discrimination on the basis of caste, colour or religion, the aggrieved person can approach the courts and claim that the law is not being followed. The courts has the power to issue thenecessary orders to give justice to the aggrieved person if it finds the claim correct.

Types of Government

There are different types of government in different countries. For example, India has a democratic type of government and its neighbouring country Bhutan is ruled by a king or a monarch. We say that Bhutan is a monarchy. In democracy, people give the government power to make decisions and enforce laws. They elect their representatives through elections in which they vote for particular persons. These elected representatives constitute the legislature. The majority of representatives elect a government. It is the government who usually proposes the law before the legislature which discusses and passes the law if majority of representatives vote in favour of it. In a democracy the government has to explain its actions and defend its decisions to the people.

In a monarchy, it is the monarch (king or queen) who has the power to make decisions and run the government. A monarch may have a small group of advisors to discuss matters with, but the final decisionmaking



power remains with the monarch. The monarch does not have to explain their actions or defend their decisions to the people. In a monarchy people have no power to go to the courts to seek justice against the monarch as in a democracy. Our neighbouring country Nepal was a monarchy, now it is a democracy.

Democratic Governments

A democracy can be explained as — 'people obeying the rule' passed by the representatives they have elected to rule. So, in a sense a democracy is ruled by the people. The main idea is that people rule themselves by participating in the making of these rules indirectly.

In a **direct democracy** as in ancient Greece all the people, though only a part of the whole, participated in the governing process. The population those days was not too much as in modern times. The size of the countries and the population is so large nowadays that it is not feasible to involve all the people directly in decision-making activities. Hence, we have **representative democracies**, where people elect their representatives through elections and they are involved in formulating policies and making laws. These representatives meet and make decisions for the entire population.

In a direct democracy, which prevailed in ancient times in Greece, only some categories of people had the right to vote and in the other forms of democracy, only the educated people were allowed to vote. Still in other types of democracies, only the people who owned property and were educated had the right to vote. In the past, in the United States of America and United Kingdom women did not have the right to vote. These days a government cannot call itself democratic unless it allows **Universal adult franchise** in political elections. This meant that all adults in the country are allowed to vote. In India every citizen can vote at the age of 18 or more.

In India, before independence, only a small minority was allowed to vote and they, therefore, came together to determine the fate of the majority. India is a democracy where Universal Adult Franchise was implemented soon after the independence. There is no distinction on the basis of caste, colour, religion and gender of the person or even education. The principle of Universal Adult Franchise is also described as a sound one besides being fair to all sections of society. It only denies the right to vote to people below 18 years of age on the ground that at this age they are still minors and cannot take sound decision.

The Right to Vote

"I cannot possibly bear the idea that a man who has got wealth should get the vote but a man who has got character but no wealth or literacy should have no vote, or that a man who honestly works by the sweat of his brow day in and day out should not have the vote for the crime of being a poor man."

— Gandhiji, in the journal *Young India* in 1931

Women's Suffrage Movement

The term 'suffrage' usually means right to vote in political elections.

During the First World War, many men were away fighting and because of this, women were called upon to do work that was earlier considered men's work such as drivers of vehicles and working at big machines. Many women began organising and managing different kinds of work. This brought about awakening among women. They thought they were unfairly made stereotypes and confined to home. Now they gained courage and confidence to do things which earlier were considered the exclusive domain of the men. They felt that they were equally capable of making decisions.

Nowhere in the world have governments willingly shared power. The women campaigned for their voting right. They organised themselves into a movement. They held rallies and to demonstrate their determination of achieving the right to vote they chained themselves to railings in public places. They argued that many women in the past had become queens who discharged their duties wisely. Many of them were imprisoned and went on hunger strikes and they had to be fed by force. As a result, the women got right to vote in the United States in 1920 on the same terms as men. In the UK the women got the right to vote in 1928.



Key Words

- » Democracy : a government run by a group of people elected by the whole population.
- » Monarchy : a government headed by a king or queen.
- » Government : a group of people who control economic, social and other activities of a country or state and make all the decisions about taxes, laws, public activities etc.
- » Universal Adult Franchise : in which all adults in the country are allowed to vote.
- » Representative Democracy : modern democracy based on representatives of people elected to legislatures.
- » Suffrage : the right to vote in political elections.
- » Legislature : the law-making body of a country, for example, Lok Sabha in India.
- » Licence : a permit from an authority to own, use or do something.
- » District : lowest unit of government for administrative purposes in India.

SUMMARY

- ▶ Every country needs a government to make decisions and get things done for the welfare of the people.
- ▶ The government is responsible for ensuring food, health, education, supply of electricity, fuel, drinking water, safety, etc.
- ▶ The government functions in an orderly manner to perform multifarious activities efficiently through organisation and planning.
- ▶ In order to manage the affairs of the nation properly, the government functions at different level: local, state and national.
- ▶ The central and state governments make laws and every citizen of India has to follow these. The government also has the power to enforce its decisions.
- ▶ People can go to courts to seek justice if a particular law is not being followed.

- ▶ In a democracy the government has to explain its actions and defend its decisions to the people.
- ▶ The monarch does not have to explain their actions or defend their decisions to the people.
- ▶ All adults in India are allowed to vote in political elections.

Exercise Time

A. Tick (✓) the only correct choice amongst the following :

1. It means that it does the work orderly in certain phases according to the resources available _____
 a. Planning b. Organising c. Manipulating d. Adjusting
2. The nation is presently divided into 29 _____.
 a. Union Territories b. States c. Parts d. Cities
3. The district administration is the unit of _____ government at district level.
 a. State b. Central c. national d. International
4. Our neighbouring country, _____ was a monarchy, now it is a democracy.
 a. Pakistan b. Nepal c. Sri Lanka d. Bangladesh
5. The _____ has the power to issue the necessary orders to give justice.
 a. Governement b. Police c. Court d. People

B. Fill in the blanks :

1. Every country needs a _____ to rule.
2. A _____ is a government headed by a king or queen.
3. India is presently divided into _____ states and _____ union territories .
4. Bhutan is ruled by a _____.
5. India has a _____ type of government.

C. Match the following :

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| 1. Law-making body of a country | a. monarchy |
| 2. A government headed by people's representatives | b. licence |
| 3. A government headed by a king | c. democracy |
| 4. The right to vote | d. legislature |
| 5. A permit from an authority to own, use or | e. suffrage |

D. Write true (T) or False (F) against the following statements in given brackets :

1. In a democracy the king has absolute powers to rule the country.
2. A person below the age of 18 is not permitted to drive a motor vehicle.
3. Women in United states of America got the right to vote in 1920.
4. In a monarchy people can seek justice from the courts against the order of the monarch.
5. In a democracy the government has to explain its actions and defend its decisions to the people.

E. Define the terms :

- | | | |
|----------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Government | 2. Democracy | 3. Monarchy |
| 4. Legislature | 5. Universal Adult Franchise | |



F. Answer in one word or one phrase :

1. Which type of government does India have ?
2. In which neighbouring country there was a monarchy ?
3. Which type of government does Nepal have?
4. Who has the power to make laws in a monarchy ?
5. Are the police and courts part of the government ?

G. Answer these questions briefly :

1. Why is it important for people to be involved in decisions ?
2. Which type of government would you prefer to have ? Give two reasons.
3. Why is it important that people abide by law ?
4. How government affects your daily life ?
5. Name two essential features of a democratic government.
6. What was the women's suffrage movement ? What did it accomplish ?
7. Why is the Universal Adult Franchise called a sound principle ?
8. Describe briefly the levels at which the government works in India.

H. Answer these questions in detail :

1. What is the need of a government ? What are its functions ?
2. Why and how does government make laws ? How does it implement these laws ?
3. Discuss different types of government.

PROJECT WORK

- List the neighbouring countries of India. Write the type of government against each. Find out the names of the heads (president/prime minister/king) of these countries.