

CIVICS

Chapter 3: Why Do We Need a Parliament?



Why Do We Need a Parliament?

During the colonial period, people of India had no role in the formulation of the laws which dealt with the administration of the country. Laws made by the British officers aimed at impoverishing India and denied any fundamental freedom to the people. It was after India became independent that people were given the right to participate in the decision-making process.

Participation and Representation of People in the Parliament

The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885. Since the beginning, it demanded adequate representation of the Indians in the Legislature and the right to discuss the budget and ask questions.

After independence, the Constitution of India granted every citizen of India above the age of 18 years the right to vote.

It is by choosing their own representatives that people participate in the decision-making process. The candidates elected by the people represent them in the Parliament which is the law-making body. Thus, people through their elected representatives not only control the Government but also guide it.

Parliament

In India, elections to form the Government take place at two levels—at the central level and at the state level. Every state has a Legislative Assembly. Its members are elected by the people of the state. At the central level, the elections are held at the national level, where the people choose their candidates to represent them in the Lok Sabha.

Some facts about the elections to the Lok Sabha:

- Elections to the Lok Sabha are held after every five years unless it is dissolved before the completion of its term.
- For electing members to the Lok Sabha, the entire country is divided into several constituencies. One member is elected from each constituency.
- After being elected, the candidate becomes a Member of Parliament or MP.
- After the elections to the Lok Sabha are held, the party which has the majority of elected members is invited to form the Government. In India, the Lok Sabha has 543 elected members (apart from two nominated members).
- A party which has at least half of the number, i.e. 272 members, forms the Government

- at the Centre. All the other parties form the opposition in the Parliament.
- When no party gets a majority, then two or more parties come together to form a coalition government at the Centre.

Functions of Parliament

India has numerous constituencies. Each of these constituencies elects one person to the Parliament. The candidates who contest elections usually belong to different political parties. These candidates become Members of Parliament or MPs. Once elections to the Parliament have taken place, the Parliament needs to perform the following functions:

Role of the Parliament

Select the National Government

- The members of the Lok Sabha select the executive wing of the Government. The Executive implements the laws which are made by the Parliament.
- The leader of the ruling party which gets the majority in the Lok Sabha elections is chosen as the Prime Minister of the country. He selects the Council of Ministers and the cabinet ministers who look after various departments such as defense, health and education.
- The Rajya Sabha is the Upper House of the Parliament. It represents various states of India in the Parliament as its members are elected by the elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of the states.
- No bill can become a law until and unless it is passed by the members of the Rajya Sabha.
- The Rajya Sabha thus scrutinises and reviews each clause of the law.
- There are 245 members of the Rajya Sabha. Of these members, 233 members are elected, and 12 members are nominated by the President.

Control, Guide and Inform the Government

- The Parliament can control and review the work of the Government. The session of the Parliament begins with a 'Question Hour', where the members of the Parliament question various policies of the Government. They thus control the executive by asking questions on the implementation of various policies.
- The opposition parties play an important role by questioning various policies of the Government. It draws the attention of the people towards the flaws in government policies.

- The budget cannot be passed without the approval of the Parliament. It is one of the ways in which the Parliament controls the Government.

Law Making

- One of the most important roles of the Parliament is law making.

People in Parliament

People from various regions, religions and castes get elected to the Parliament in India. We can say that compared to the past; the Indian Parliament now has people belonging to various backgrounds. For example, many MPs belonging to rural regions and regional parties get elected to the Lok Sabha.

Some seats in the Parliament are reserved for the SCs and the STs. This is to ensure that people belonging to the marginalised communities get adequate representation so that they can represent the Adivasi and Dalit interests in the Parliament.

Similarly, there has been a demand to reserve seats for women in the Parliament. Currently, only about nine percent of MPs are women. This is an extremely small share given the fact that women constitute half of the population.

The Role of the Parliament

- The country is divided into numerous constituencies and each of these constituencies elects one person to the Parliament.
- Once elected, these candidates become Members of Parliament or MPs.
→ These MPs together make up the Parliament.
- The Lok Sabha is usually elected once every five years.
- After formation, the Parliament needs to perform the following functions:
→ To Select the National Government
→ To Control, Guide and Inform the Government
→ Law-Making

To Select the National Government

- The Parliament in India consists of the President, the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha.

The Lok Sabha

- For a political party to form the government in Lo Sabha, they must have a majority of elected MPs. → Since there are 543 elected (plus 2 nominated) members in Lok Sabha, to have a majority

a party should have at least half the number i.e. 272 members or more.

- If different political parties join together to form the government, then this is known as a coalition government. (This happens if any single party can't get clear majority in Lok Sabha).
- The Prime Minister of India is the leader of the ruling party in the Lok Sabha.
- From the MPs who belong to her party, the Prime Minister selects ministers to work with her to implement decisions.

The Rajya Sabha

- The Rajya Sabha functions primarily as the representative of the states of India in the Parliament.

- The Rajya Sabha can also initiate legislation and a bill is required to pass through the Rajya Sabha in order to become a law.

- The members of the Rajya Sabha are elected by the elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of various states.

→ There are 233 elected members plus 12 members nominated by the President.

To Control, Guide and Inform the Government

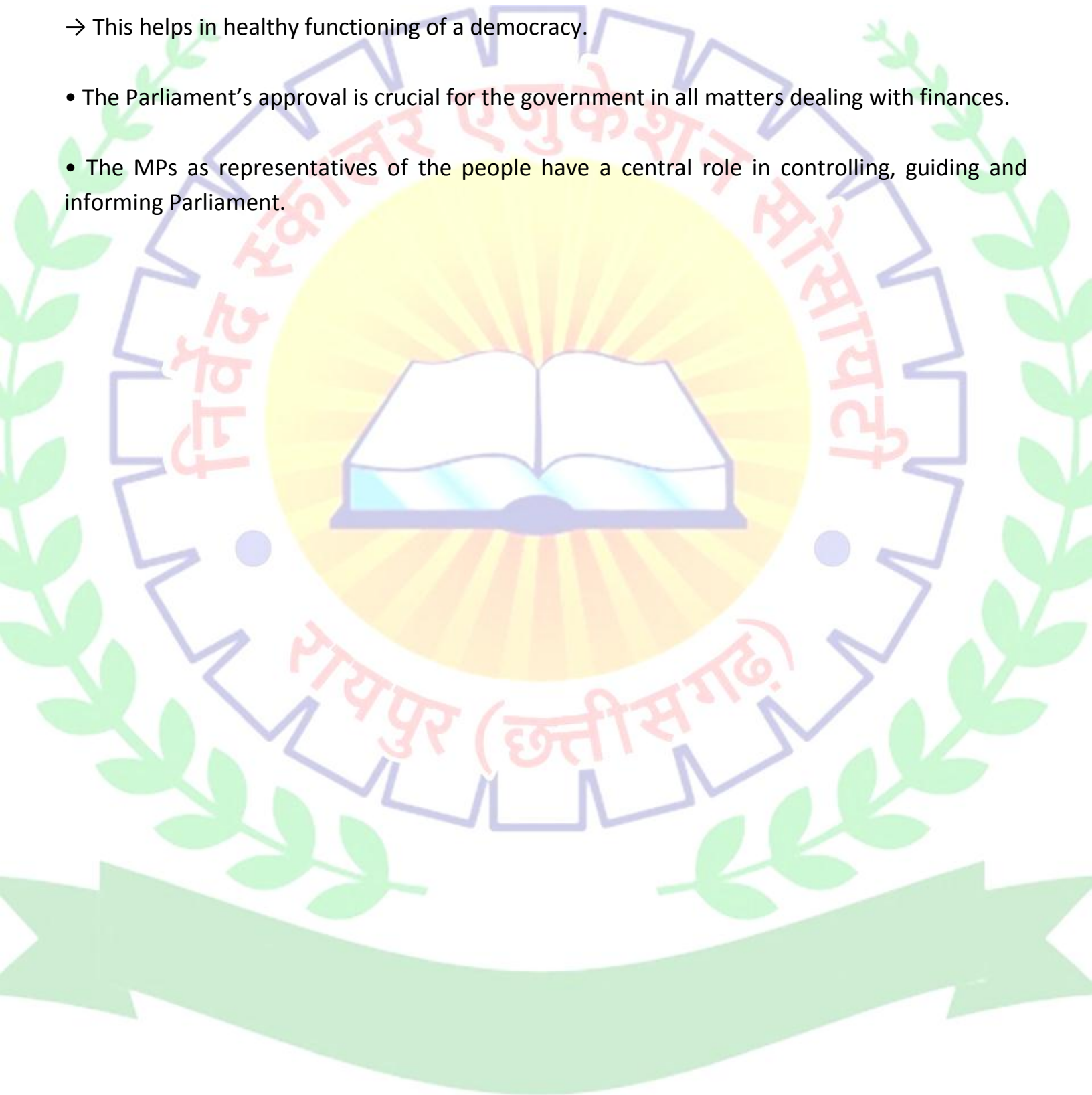
- The Parliament, while in session, begins with a question hour.

→ Through question hour MPs can bring out information about the working of the government.

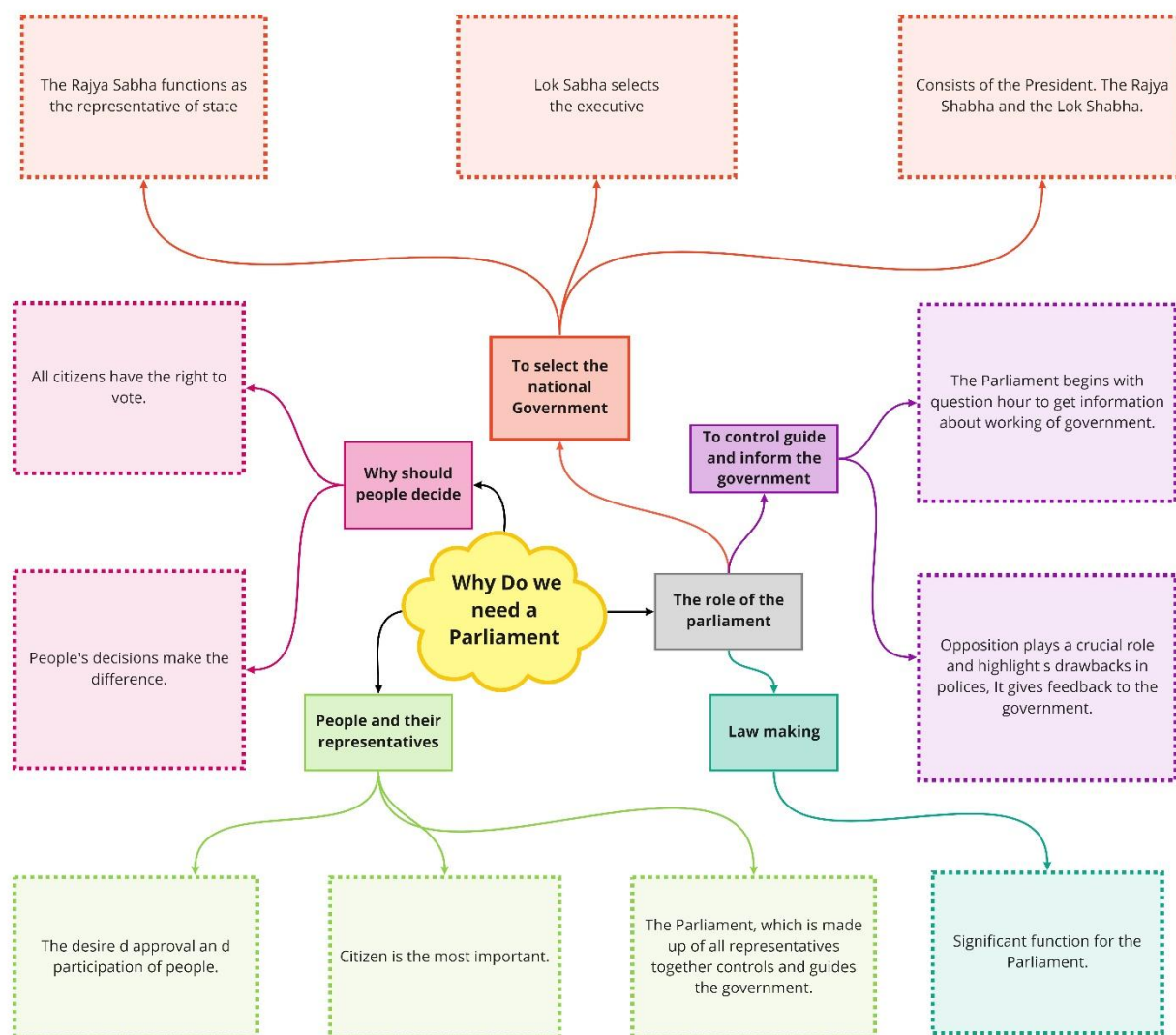
- The opposition party highlights drawbacks in various policies and programmes of the government and mobilise popular support for their own policies.

→ This helps in healthy functioning of a democracy.

- The Parliament's approval is crucial for the government in all matters dealing with finances.
- The MPs as representatives of the people have a central role in controlling, guiding and informing Parliament.



Class : 8th Social Science Political
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Important Questions

Multiple Choice Questions-

Question 1. What is the total strength of the Lok Sabha including the 2 nominated members?

- (a) 545
- (b) 233
- (c) 549
- (d) 588

Question 2. The allowed for some elected representation.

- (a) Pitts India Act 1784
- (b) Regulating Act 1773
- (c) Govt of India Act 1909
- (d) Government of India act 1858.

Question 3. EVM was used throughout the country for the first time in:

- (a) 2000
- (b) 2004
- (c) 2006
- (d) 2008

Question 4. How many nominated members are there in the Rajya Sabha by the President?

- (a) 2
- (b) 6
- (c) 8
- (d) 12

Question 5. Situation in which there is no easy solutions to the problems is called:

- (a) Approval
- (b) Coalition
- (c) unresolved
- (d) Crucial

Question 6. What is the full form of EVM?

- (a) Election Valid Machine
- (b) Electronic Voting Machine

- (c) Election Voting Machine
- (d) None of these

Question 7. What do you mean by the Houses of people?

- (a) Lok Sabha
- (b) Vidhan Sabha
- (c) Rajya Sabha
- (d) Parliament

Question 8. The parliament of India has how many houses?

- (a) 2
- (b) 6
- (c) 7
- (d) 3

Question 9. When was the EVM used for the first time?

- (a) 2007
- (b) 2004
- (c) 2003
- (d) 1990

Question 10. For what period of time the President of India holds office?

- (a) 6 years
- (b) 5 years
- (c) 4 years
- (d) 7 years

Question 11. The members of the Rajya Sabha are elected by whom?

- (a) Legislative Assemblies
- (b) Parliament member
- (c) Advocate
- (d) None of these

Question 12. How Many members are nominated by president in Rajya sabha?

- (a) 15
- (b) 14
- (c) 12

(d) None of these

Question 13. When did the Indian congress demanded the elected members in the legislature?

(a) 1880

(b) 1885

(c) 1896

(d) 1945

Question 14. Who is the head of the Executive at the central level?

(a) President

(b) Prime Minister

(c) Chief Minister

(d) None of these

Question 15. Who implements laws?

(a) Court

(b) President

(c) Executives

(d) None of these

Very Short:

1. What is the advantage of the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)?
2. Name the two Houses of the Parliament.
3. What is the term or tenure of the Lok Sabha?
4. What makes the Indian Parliament powerful?
5. What do you mean by the executive?
6. Who is the leader of the ruling party in the Lok Sabha?
7. Name the ministries which are housed in the North Block?
8. Who nominates the 12 members of the Rajya Sabha?
9. How is the question hour an important mechanism?
10. What has been done to give adequate representation to the communities that have been historically marginalised?

Short Questions:

1. What are the basic ideals of a democracy?
2. What is the purpose of a Parliament?

3. What was the main principle of the Indian constitution?
4. How can all the citizens participate in the decision-making process of the government?
5. Who designed the Parliament house in India?
6. What is an EVM?
7. What is a constituency?
8. Mention the 2 houses of the Indian Parliament.

Long Questions:

1. How is the national government formed?
2. Write a brief note on the Rajya Sabha.
3. What is meant by the Opposition parties? What role do they play in the government?
4. Discuss the role and functions of the Parliament?
5. Why do you think our national movement supported the idea that all adults have a right to vote?
6. Discuss with your teacher the difference between a State Legislative Assembly (Vidhan Sabha) and the Parliament (Lok Sabha)

Answer Key:

MCQ:

1. (a) 545
2. (c) Govt of India Act 1909
3. (b) 2004
4. (d) 12
5. (c) unresolved
6. (b) Electronic Voting Machine
7. (a) Lok Sabha
8. (a) 2
9. (b) 2004
- 10.(b) 5 years
- 11.(a) Legislative Assemblies
- 12.(c) 12
- 13.(b) 1885
- 14.(a) President

15.(c) Executives

Very Short Answer:

1. Cutting of trees has been stopped.
2. The Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha.
3. The tenure of the Lok Sabha is 5 years.
4. It is the representative of the people.
5. The executive is a group of persons who work together to implement the laws made by the Parliament.
6. The Prime Minister is the leader of the ruling party in the Lok Sabha.
7. The Minister of Finance and the Ministry of Home Affairs.
8. The President of India nominates the 12 members of the Rajya Sabha.
9. It is through this mechanism that MPs can elicit information about the working of the government.
10. Some seats are reserved in the Parliament for people belonging to SC and ST category.

Short Answer:

Ans: 1. The basic ideals of democracy are:

- The participation of the citizens in the government's decision- making.
- The need for the government to have the consent of its citizens in all major issues taken by it.

Ans: 2. The Parliament enables citizens of India to participate in decision making and control the government.

Ans: 3. The main principle of the Indian constitution was Universal adult franchise. All adults in free India could vote and participate in decision- making.

Ans: 4. In a democracy general elections are held and all adults have a right to vote. The citizens elect a few people to represent them in the Parliament. The Parliament is made up of all these representatives. These representatives are known as Members of the Parliament. One group, from among these elected representatives forms the government. It is through these representatives that the citizens take part in the decision-making of the government.

Ans: 5. The Parliament house in India was designed by the British architect Herbert Baker.

Ans: 6. An EVM is an Electronic Voting Machine used for elections in India. Indian voting

machines use a two-piece system with a balloting unit presenting the voter with a button for each choice connected by a cable to an electronic ballot box.

Ans: 7. The country is divided into many areas for election purposes. Each area is called a constituency. A representative is elected from each constituency to serve in the legislative body.

Ans: 8. The 2 Houses of the Indian Parliament are

(i) The Rajya Sabha

(ii) The Lok Sabha

Long Answer:

Ans: 1. After the Lok Sabha elections are declared, a list is prepared showing how many MPs belong to each political party. For a political party to form the government, they must have a majority of elected MPs. The total membership of the Lok Sabha is 545, in which 543 are elected members while 2 are nominated. Thus, a party should have at least half the number i.e., 272 members or more to have a majority. The opposition in Parliament is formed by all the political parties that oppose the majority party or coalition formed. The largest amongst these parties is known as the Opposition party.

Ans: 2. The Rajya Sabha is also called the Council of States. The Rajya Sabha functions primarily as the representative of the states of India in the Parliament. It can also initiate legislation and a bill is required to pass through the Rajya Sabha in order to become a law. In this way, it plays an important role of reviewing and altering, if alterations are required, the laws initiated by the Lok Sabha. The members of the Rajya Sabha are elected by the elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of various states. The total strength of the Rajya Sabha is 245, in which 233 members are elected while 12 members are nominated by the President. The Rajya Sabha is chaired by the Vice-President of India.

Ans: 3. After election results are declared, the leader of the party with clear majority of elected members form a government. The other political parties form the opposition. The largest amongst these parties is known as the Opposition party. The Opposition parties play a crucial role in the healthy functioning of a democracy. They keep a check on the government by highlighting its drawbacks in various policies and programmes. They also mobilise popular support for their own policies.

Ans: 4. The parliament is the most important institution in a democracy. It performs the following role and functions:

(i) The Lok Sabha selects the executive, which is a group of persons who work together to implement the laws made by the Parliament.

(ii) The Parliament controls, guides and informs the government. The question hour with which the Parliament in session begins, is an important mechanism through which MPs can elicit information about the working of the government. This is a very important way through which the Parliament controls the executive. By asking questions the government is alerted to its

shortcomings and also comes to know the opinion of the people through their representatives in the Parliament.

The government gets valuable feedback and is kept on its toes by the questions asked by the MPs. In addition, in all matters dealing with finances, the Parliament's approval is crucial for the government. This is one of the several ways in which the Parliament controls, guides and informs the government.

(iii) The Parliament makes law for the entire country.

Ans: 5 . Under colonial rule, the people had lived in fear of the British govt. & did not agree with many of the decisions that they took.

- But they faced great danger if they tried to criticise these decisions.
- The freedom movement changed this situation & the nationalists began to openly criticise the British govt & make demands.
- They demanded that there be elected members in the legislature with a right to discuss the budget & ask questions.

That is why nationalist movement supported the idea of universal adult franchise, so that the people can take part in the decision making of the country.

Ans:6.

Parliament (Lok Sabha)	State Legislature Assembly (Rajya Sabha)
The Members of Lok Sabha are directly elected by the people	The members of Rajya Sabha are indirectly elected by members of various legislative assemblies
There are 542 members & 2 are nominated by the President	There are 245 members, out of which 12 are nominated by the President
Its term is for 5 years	It's term is for 6 years

Lok Sabha can be dissolved by the President That is why, it is known as the Temporary House	It cannot be dissolved because it is a Permanent House & 2/3 of its members retire after every two Years & new members join in their place
Vidhan Sabha (State Legislative Assembly)	Parliament (Lok Sabha)
Vidhan Sabha is the lower house of the state	Lok Sabha is known as lower house of the Parliament
The members of Vidhan Sabha are known as MLAs	The members of Lok Sabha are known as MPs

