



A forum for inclusive expression

March 2014



**Proud to Vote!**

We have made this newsletter accessible in terms of use of font, spacing and alignment.

For sending contributions & suggestions or availing Audio and Braille copies, write to us at:

**Action for Ability Development and Inclusion**

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According to Census 2011, the percentage of people with disabilities living in India is 2.21% of the total population. However, this is a grossly understated figure. Estimates given in the World Disability Report, 2011, published by the World Health Organization and the World Bank, place this figure closer to 10%. A realistic estimate of the number of people with disabilities in India would be at least 70 million. Minimally 40 million would be over 18 years. Are these large numbers of citizens with disability able to vote? What are the barriers that come in their way?

First and foremost, Article 326 of the Constitution of India and the Representation of People's Act 1951 disqualifies a person who is of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent Court from registering to vote. The implication of this is that some categories of people with disability may be denied the Right to Vote. India has ratified the United Nation's Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCPRD) in 2007. Article 29 of the UNCPRD, Participation in Political and Public Life, specifically says that all

citizens with disabilities should be able to exercise their franchise and should receive the support they need in doing so. It is imperative that in the future appropriate amendments are carried out so that all citizens with disabilities can vote, just like every other citizen.

Even for those people with disabilities who do enjoy the right to vote, effective participation in this important process is often not possible. Is the whole electoral process designed in a way that it includes persons with disabilities to actively participate and engage with the vibrant public and political life of India? Are persons with disabilities able to access pertinent information like manifestos and agendas of political parties in the pre-election period? Is access to polling booths adequate? Is the attitude of society (families, friends, neighbours and other members of the community) conducive to persons with disabilities participating in the electoral process?

In this issue we bring together the voices of persons with disabilities who want to generate the all-important discussion on this issue, even more pertinent in the light of the countdown to the 2014 Lok Sabha elections.

The newsletter is divided into two sections. While the first section has articles and interviews by persons with disabilities, the second section focuses on important information that may facilitate participation in the process of voting.



“The word democracy literally means “rule by the people.” It is derived from a Greek word coined from the words demos(“people”) and kratos (“rule”) in the middle of the 5th century BC as a name for the political system that existed at the time in some of the cities of Greece, notably Athens. As a form of government, democracy contrasts with monarchy (rule by a king, queen, or emperor), oligarchy (rule by a few persons), aristocracy (rule by a privileged class), and despotism (absolute rule by a single person), the modern term for which is dictatorship.

In India, elections are a democratic process where citizens aged 18 and over elect political candidates to represent them and their interests locally, nationally or internationally. The process is determined by a voting system, where citizens vote for one candidate. The candidate with the majority of votes is elected.”

**Source : [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democracy)**

## Failure of Governance and Lost Citizenship

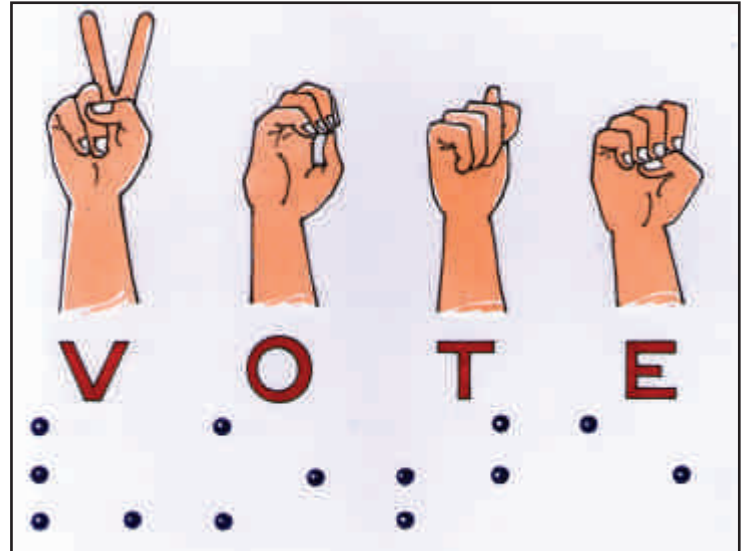
*Praveen Kumar. G is a development professional and has over a decade's experience of working in the development sector. His areas of specialisation are programme management, inclusion and advocacy. He has engaged with civil society organisations, corporate and government agencies in enabling them to promote inclusion and diversity in their working approach to reach out to all marginalised groups, in particular persons with disabilities. He has facilitated the formation of networks of persons with disabilities in rural India in the states of Chhattisgarh and Odisha and has been supporting them as an advisor.*



*Praveen is passionate about development and works for the upliftment of dalit and tribal communities. He currently heads VSO (Voluntary Services Organisation) India as the country lead and is working to promote the spirit of volunteerism and active citizenship to support the marginalised groups. He is a board member of AADI. A Chevening gurukul scholar from the London School of Economics and Political Science, Praveen has contributed many articles on development to magazines and government agencies. He has travelled widely within and around the world carrying the message of inclusion.*

In India, it is an acknowledged fact and there is an “overwhelming evidence” that “disabled people are disadvantaged and a marginalized constituency”. They are often ridiculed and kept behind doors and do not even derive a sense of citizenship in this country. They are often looked upon as individuals suffering with impairments or ailments, those who need support, care and medical treatment. The story is the same across social classes. Even the doles given out by governments with respect to social security benefits and various concessions are demeaning as they are merely a welfare based approach and confirm the secondary citizenship prescribed to persons with disabilities. Adding to this, the government terminology identifying this section of the population which is around 7% of the total population is “nishakt” in Hindi, meaning “powerless” .

Since the time of independence this huge section have suffered ostracization and denial of any kind of participation in development processes and there has always been a cry for accessing even basic essential services like health, education, livelihoods, social and cultural participation. Leaving aside the social and cultural exclusion,



disabled people are far away from any kind of civic or political participation, for instance, has there been any thought or action on people with disabilities voting? How many people with disabilities have voted in the last general or any other state elections? Isn't their participation in panchayat meetings negligible? There is no accurate data on this and many people with disabilities don't even have a voter identity card. It is unfortunate that disability has hardly been considered as a matter of any political campaign or agenda; they are left behind under the guise of physical incapacity and as the domain of medical and welfare subjects.

**Article 29 of the United Nations convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) calls for Participation in political and public life wherein the “States Parties shall guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others, and shall undertake to ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with others, directly including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected, fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others”.** India has been a signatory to the UNCRPD and there has not been any change on the ground in the past 6 years since the Convention was ratified. Persons with disabilities have no right to vote highlighted by the fact that voting booths are not made accessible despite many public interest



litigations filed by a few individuals with disabilities and disability rights groups both at the national and state level. Ramps were designed for few booths. However, these failed to give the necessary independence for visually impaired voters. The voting machines were not accessible thus denying visually impaired voters their right to secret ballot, in spite of the availability of technology. Punched card and optical scan machines are not fully accessible for the blind or visually impaired, and lever machines can be difficult for voters with limited mobility and strength.

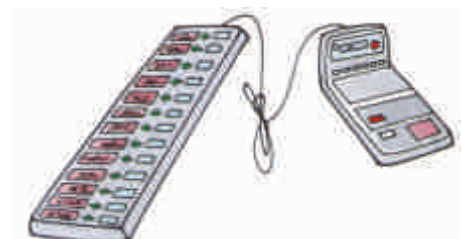
**Some of the prerequisites for ensuring accessibility are:**

- ❖ Prepare all voting instructions to be accessible to as many voters as possible, including installation of “accessible machines” like text to speech or screen reading machines.
- ❖ Work with state and local assistive technology groups or accessible materials producers to provide voting information, voting instructions, and equipment instructions in formats that can be easily used by people with disabilities. Look for alternative formats such as large print, audio tools, graphics, and video interpretations.
- ❖ Electronic voting machines can be made fully accessible for persons with disabilities. Electronic machines can use headphones, sip and puff, foot pedals, joy sticks and other adaptive technology to provide the necessary accessibility.
- ❖ For those with intellectual disabilities, information processing difficulties, it is necessary to provide good graphics and easily understood pictures or signages.
- ❖ Make sure every polling place is accessible and welcoming for people with mobility issues
- ❖ Provide easily visible signage directing voters to the accessible entrance to the polling place.
- ❖ Place signs at any inaccessible entrance and on approaches to building, as well as near accessible entrances and wherever there is accessible parking. Use large print and the accessibility symbol.
- ❖ If there are doors with obstacles, place a means for obtaining assistance and signs in locations that can be reached by wheelchairs

and people using crutches. Alternatively, position a poll worker at the door to assist voters.

- ❖ Make sure access routes are not blocked by trash cans, bicycle parking, etc.
- ❖ Make sure poll workers are sensitized enough to interact with voters with disabilities or other access problems
- ❖ Provide basic disability etiquettes training to all government officials.
- ❖ Make sure everyone knows the rules about who can assist a voter in the poll and post those rules where they can be easily seen (using large print, high contrast, eye-level placements, pictures, Braille signages, audio beepers etc.)
- ❖ The polling booths should be on the ground floor with ramps for entry and exit of people with physical disabilities.

**It is appalling to note that even after six decades of India's independence, citizens with disabilities are fighting for citizenship and the right to civil and political participation. Unless we reassert ourselves as an identity group and seek citizenship rights, our concerns will remain unaddressed, voices unheard and needs unmet in this country.** A country where the governance has failed as people with disabilities are excluded in all development, social, cultural, civil and political processes. Even in countries like El Salvador, Ghana, and Sierra Leone, there are inclusive polling booths. If less developed countries in Africa, Latin America and Southeast Asia, like Philippines can be inclusive, it is beyond imagination why India can't have inclusive systems, especially as we boast of having advanced technology and innovations. The duty bearers should become more accountable towards people with disabilities and ensure their full and equal participation in all civil and political rights.



## Let's Not Be Deterred ... Let's Vote !

*Shivani Gupta, Founder AccessAbility is a pioneer in promoting physical accessibility for all in India. She holds a Diploma in Architecture Technology and MSc in Inclusive Environments from the University of Reading, UK.*

*Shivani is the author of 'No Looking Back – a True Story'. She is a recipient of several prestigious awards such as the National Award, Neerja Bhanot Award just naming a few for her work.*



### **What have been your personal experiences while trying to cast your vote in the elections?**

I have cast my vote only twice. I cast my vote in 2009 general elections for the first time. There had been a lot of hype about voting booths becoming accessible for persons with disabilities based on the Supreme Court ruling. The polling station (a neighbourhood school) was situated very close to my house and I was able to reach there using my motorized wheelchair. However, to my disappointment, I found that the main gate of the polling station was closed. The side gate was open but it had a baton at the bottom of the gate. Obviously, I could not enter. I waited as my friends asked the cops present at the station for help. The cops tried to look for the 'maali' who supposedly had the keys of the main gate. To add to the disappointment, the 'maali' was on leave and nobody else had any clue about the keys. Some cops volunteered to lift my wheelchair over the baton but that was an impossible as my wheelchair is very heavy.

Eventually, somebody guided me through another route to get inside the station. This route was also not completely accessible as it had some steps. Also, there was no proper ramp to reach the booth as some mud had been put to create a temporary one.

During the same elections, a friend with visual impairment had shared that his mother had to accompany him inside the booth. As a result, there was no secrecy in his ballot.



### **Inaccessible Polling booth**

I wrote to the Election Commissioner about such experiences and also suggested ways in which people with severe disabilities could cast their vote like a postal ballot system .The Commissioner did write back with a lot of promises but they never got followed up.

**Do you think it is important for many persons with disabilities to start contesting elections? If so, what would be some of the supports and reasonable accommodations required to help them contest elections?**

According to article 29 of the UNCRPD, people with disabilities have the equal right to participate in political and public life and with India having ratified the Convention, has to work towards realization of this right. **It is the responsibility of the government to make not only the voting system accessible to all persons with disabilities but also to provide the support and reasonable accommodation required by persons with disabilities to stand for elections.** Further to encourage participation of



persons with disabilities in political arenas, the government must have reservations for candidates with disabilities to ensure that their concerns and voices are heard.. Therefore, people with disabilities must fight elections. Accommodations like sign language interpretation ,access to information and communications, physical accessibility must be ensured to facilitate participation of candidates with disabilities. Candidates with intellectual impairment need to be supported legally for decision making.

**What about institutions like the parliament and legislative assemblies? Would they be able to meet the requirements of any persons with disabilities?**

I don't think presently these institutions meet the requirements to enable full and equal participation of persons with disabilities & are accessible in the true sense. Some ramps may have been provided but the overall system is not sensitive to meeting requirements of any members with disabilities.

**Without having provisions such as all information including internal party documents, party websites, public manifestos etc available in alternate and accessible formats or having the availability of sign language interpreters etc., people with disabilities are never going to get engaged within the political arena.** Providing reasonable accommodation along with accessibility must be mandatory as a beginning at least, to participate in the legislative or parliamentary assemblies. Its only then that the candidates with disabilities would be encouraged to contest. If communication and information are not presented in accessible formats, the processes become insignificant for members with disabilities. Memos and bills need to have Braille and audio versions. Sign language interpretation during meetings and sessions are a must.

**What should the Election Commission do to ensure that persons with disabilities are able to exercise their franchise in the upcoming elections?**

Of course they need to continue to make the polling booths accessible. But that is just a beginning. Apart from accessibility of the polling booths they need to ensure accessibility even prior to the elections. Some thoughts that

arise for areas of action by the Election Commission to make the election process more accessible may include:

- ❖ Public speeches and press conferences need to be accessible to all persons with disabilities.
- ❖ Discussions related to elections on news channels need to be captioned.
- ❖ Manifestos available in alternate formats including Braille, e-text, must be written and presented in easy to read formats etc. so that all people with disabilities are able to access them.
- ❖ Easy to understand format for the benefit of persons with intellectual impairment. They need to ensure that secrecy of ballot is maintained for voters with disabilities.
- ❖ Training of electoral booth staff so that they can interact effectively with persons with disabilities is absolutely vital.
- ❖ They need to put a system in place to facilitate persons with severe disabilities to cast their vote as they may not be able to visit the polling booth.
- ❖ There needs to be awareness raising about persons with disabilities being able to access voter id cards.

**What should persons with disabilities do to ensure that they are seen as a powerful vote bank?**

**Persons with disabilities must vote. They must come out of their homes and start exercising their rights so that they get noticed. They must be seen everywhere and be part of mainstream.** They would then be able to draw attention to and raise awareness about inaccessibility in services. They must voice opinions on every matter and could do write ups in newspapers as well.

**How would you like to encourage first time voters especially voters with disabilities?**

First and foremost, everyone must vote. It is very basic to being a citizen. I did not go to vote for so many years and I regret it and am not proud of it. **We**

**can fight for our rights only if we have voted and demonstrated ourselves to be citizens. have the right to demand our rights only when we vote. We must be visible to be able to change and improve various systems including the system of elections.**

**Are there any other thoughts you would like to share with us?**

I would really hope that disabled people's organizations take a more proactive role in ensuring equal participation of persons with disabilities in political life. They must advocate on issues relating to promotion of accessibility of the political system where only ramps at polling stations and Braille ballot paper are not enough. They must advocate on issues pertaining to rights of all persons with disabilities to be able to cast their vote or stand for elections without discrimination. They may also engage in awareness raising programmes for persons with disabilities on their right to vote, facilitate persons with disabilities to vote and contest elections. They must influence the media to have campaigns about voting rights of persons with disabilities. They must influence the Election Commission by saying that having ramps and Braille ballots do not ensure adequate accessibility. Most importantly, elections are close and they must support people associated with their organizations to exercise their right to vote.

Historically, other groups of people have also been excluded from voting. For instance, the democracy of ancient Athens did not allow women, foreigners, or slaves to vote. Much of the history of elections involves the effort to promote suffrage for excluded groups. The women's suffrage movement gave women in many countries the right to vote. Extending voting rights to excluded groups (such as convicted felons, members of certain minorities, the socially and economically disadvantaged, persons with disabilities) continues to be a goal of voting rights advocates.

**Source : [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Election)**



## Are political rights of Persons With Disabilities real?

*Pramod Sharma, is a graduate from Delhi. He did his schooling from AADI and Hansraj Model School. He does online trading of shares. He has a variety of interests ranging from politics, sports to 'creative writing.'*



As a citizen, even 'persons with disabilities,' are entitled to all civil and political rights, including the right to vote but the question is-are they enforceable? Lack of accessible infrastructure, comes as a big hurdle in their effective enforcement. Generally, it has been observed that 'persons with disabilities,' cannot access the polling booth, independently. Even if they do, their voting may not be impartial as they may feel obliged to follow the wishes of the persons, who help them in reaching the booth or casting their vote. Similarly, we all have the right to assemble and demonstrate, form political organizations, but is there enough supportive infrastructure, which can allow persons with disabilities to do that?

**So, should we let go of our legitimate rights? Definitely not! But we should try and make joint efforts to demand our rights. To raise an issue effectively, the support of like minded persons is a must. This is a proven fact as disability issues have hardly been taken up by the political parties and their manifestos.** This is unfortunate as issues of other marginalized groups do get much highlighted. According to me, persons with disabilities lack good leadership which can effectively put forth their demands.

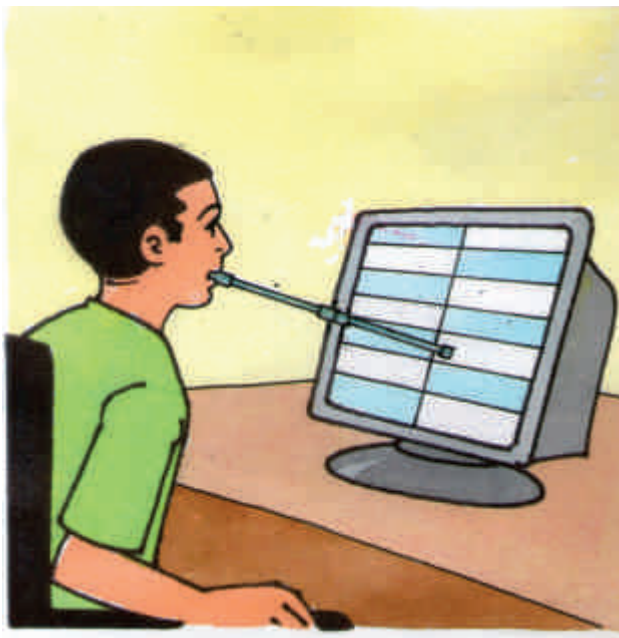
I think, pre-election period is the best time to bring up important issues related to disability. This is because every political party is attempting to project an image of being sensitive to various social causes. They would not be able to turn down genuine demands as that may affect their chances of winning. However, demands need to be continuously voiced. For this purpose, persons with disabilities and all the concerned NGOs should come together, plan, strategize and support each other in taking such a movement forward. This will surely lead to real empowerment of persons with disabilities.



## SOME IDEAS FOR AN ACCESSIBLE POLLING BOOTH



## SOME IDEAS FOR AN ACCESSIBLE VOTING MACHINE



## Sip and Puff technology used by voters with limited hand function in Texas

**Source :**  
**[www.globalaccessibilitynews.com](http://www.globalaccessibilitynews.com)**



Resembling an electronic reading device, the eSlate machines from Texas facilitates voters such as people with sight, hands and motor disabilities to make their election day choices on their own and in private. Headphones and voice commands can help, there are special buttons for those who cannot use their hands easily and the device also lends itself to the sip and puff device for people who can't use their hands at all.

## We have the Right to Vote... Right to Choose !

*Alok Sikka is a member of AADI's governing body. He has a PG Diploma in journalism and is working as a freelance writer. Some of his articles have also been published. He did his graduation in Commerce. He has a blog and likes to write on Disability, Spirituality and Bollywood.*



Here is a person, who has full faith in democracy but still doesn't cast his vote. "For casting the vote, I have to be carried in an ambulance, which costs around Rs 1200", he says. The reason being he is a person with disability. Mr. Rajinder Johar, has paralysis. His is not an isolated case as millions of persons with disabilities like him do not cast their vote because of the effort they need to put in to avail this fundamental right.

Rajinder Johar, may be an exception, who need special facilities and trained people to carry him to the polling booth because of his severe disability. But this doesn't mean enough facilities are available at the polling booth to encourage persons with disabilities to cast their vote. As a visually disabled person Preeti Monga puts it, "I have to be assisted to cast my vote. This prevents my vote from being a secret." Others who use wheelchairs, find it tough when the doors of the booth are small and prove to be a barrier for free movement.

In spite of all these obstacles, most persons with disabilities want to exercise their democratic rights. Various options and alternative methods need to be figured out if persons with disabilities are to be helped in availing this right given by the constitution. To begin with, as Mr. Rajinder Johar puts it, "If nothing can be done at all and the authorities cannot help me in any way, give us the facility of proxy vote. In this way, we will at least be able to choose a candidate of our choice."

But many persons with disabilities feel that a proxy vote can be a part of the process but not a final solution. Whereas it allows you to choose your representative, it has many limitations. On one hand it totally destroys the secrecy of the vote and on the other it leaves you at the mercy of others and

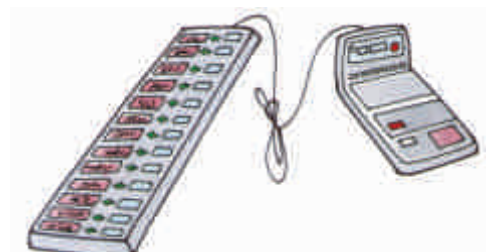
does not give you the option to cross check whether the vote has been cast as per your instructions.

Persons with disabilities are keen that the government and the Election Commission explore options to help them cast their vote in an easy way. Some persons with disabilities think that the facility of postal ballot, which has been given to some other sections of the society such as the personnel from the armed forces, should also be extended to them. Many persons with disabilities also look forward to the day when other facilities like, mobile polling booths and casting of vote through internet are provided to them. As Anjali Arora, a lawyer with visual disability demands, “In cities like Delhi, vote could be cast through telephone.”

What is heartening to see in this issue is that for the past some time, the Disability Commission and groups working in the sector have intervened in the matter and brought about some change. One of the major changes is the construction of ramps at polling stations, so that persons using wheelchairs can exercise their voting right. Officials on election duty in the polling booths are now being issued guidelines to ensure that all persons with disabilities can cast their vote with dignity. The Disability Commission is also said to be in talks with the Election Commission to ensure that a new rule is passed, which gives the severely disabled persons, such as those with Cerebral Palsy the right to use postal ballot.

**But a lot more needs to be done. Officials should be trained to assist persons with disabilities. There should be facilities of sign language interpretation for persons with hearing impairment and embossing of symbols for persons with visual impairment.**

In short, all attempts need to be made to enable persons with disabilities to cast their vote so that they can become a part of the process and choose people, who care for them as their representatives.



## How to get Voter ID Card ?

You must have a voter card to cast vote in India. An Indian citizen, who has been residing in the country and has attained 18 years, can be eligible to get a voter card. Remember however, that getting your name listed in the voter's list is also a must. But, this enrollment would not be enough. When you exercise your franchise, you must have voter's card as well

Apart from voting rights, a voter ID card would allow a voter to book e-tickets for railways, reserve a hotel room and avail other services offered by the government to citizens of India only. Voters ID serve as a photo card that can be a proof of age, identity and place of residence.

### Applying for Voter ID Card online:

- ❖ Visit the SEC (State Election Commission) website, which should, say for Delhi, be <http://ceodelhi.gov.in/OnlineErms/login.aspx>.
- ❖ Sign up if you are a new user. A new login and password would be generated.
- ❖ Access the website again with the new login and password. An e-registration menu item page is displayed.
- ❖ Click on the link that specifies new voter. Form 6 will be displayed.
- ❖ Download form 6
- ❖ Fill in the form specifying each detail correctly. Specify your assembly constituency in the form, for instance. If you do not know your constituency, select the required link to know the same.
- ❖ Upload a passport size photograph in the correct slot.
- ❖ The form must be submitted with valid credentials, such as a proof of residence, identity proof and age proof



- ❖ Upload documents in the slot asked. If you have soft copies of the documents, it should be simple. If not, you need to submit your credentials to the nearest Booth Level; Officer(BLO) in Delhi.
- ❖ Click the submit button once you have completely filled the form.

**Alternatively, visit Voter Registration and Epic. Centre (VREC) to get voter card**

Many applicants submit the form as well as the documents online. However, in case you are not able to upload documents online, you can send it by post to the Voters' Registration and EPIC centre (VREC) of your constituency.

**So apply online, visit VREC or submit the form to your nearest BLO to get you Voter ID**

**Source : [eci.nic.in/eci\\_main1/index.aspx](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/index.aspx)**



Voting is the best way to get one's opinions heard, as it allows one to select the candidate who best represents their view or views. In this way, the voters' future is decided by the decisions they make when voting. Voting also helps democracy to prevail and if people didn't vote they would be ruled by someone who wouldn't necessarily represent them or have the country's interests at heart.

# Symbols of Political Parties

Political parties are often recognized by their Symbols and Abbreviations. In a country where one is seeing a proliferation of regional parties along with the long existing national ones, our minds may feel a bit confused. Are we familiar with all the symbols and abbreviations ?Do we need a revision? Let’s have quick look...

Names of National parties, States and Other Political parties in India have been arranged in Alphabetical order

## National Parties



Bahujan Samaj Party  
BSP



Bharatiya Janata Party  
BJP



Communist Party of India  
CPI



Communist Party of India  
(Marxist)  
CPM



Indian National Congress  
INC




Nationalist Congress Party  
NCP

## Other Political Parties in India

### Andhra Pradesh



Telugu Desam Party  
TDP



Telangana Rashtra Samithi  
TRS

## Arunachal Pradesh



All India Trinamool Congress  
AITMC



People's Party of Arunachal  
PPA



Rashtriya Janata Dal  
RJD

## Assam



Indian National Democratic Front  
INDF



Bodoland People's Front  
BPF



Asom Gana Parishad  
AGP

## Bihar



Janata Dal (United)  
JDU



Lok Janshakti Party  
LJP



Rashtriya Janata Dal  
RJD

## NCT (Delhi)



Aam Aadmi Party  
AAP

## Goa



Maharashtrawadi Gomantak  
MG

## Haryana



Indian National Lok Dal  
INLD



Haryana Janhit Congress  
HJC

## Jammu & Kashmir



Jammu & Kashmir People's  
Democratic Party  
JKPDP



Jammu & Kashmir National  
Panthers Party  
JKNPP

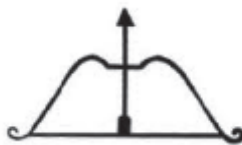


Jammu & Kashmir  
National Conference  
JKNC

## Jharkhand



AJSU Party (Jharkhand)



Jharkhand Mukti Morcha  
JMM



Jharkhand Vikas Morcha  
(Prajatantrik)  
JVMP

## Karnataka



Janta Dal (Secular)  
JD(S)

Symbol yet to  
be allotted

Karnataka Jantha Paksha  
KJP



## Kerala



**Janta Dal (Secular)  
JD(S)**



**Kerala Congress (M)  
KCM**



**Muslim League Kerala State Committee  
MLKSC**

## Maharashtra



**Maharashtra Navnirman Sena  
MNS**



**Shiv Sena  
SS**

## Manipur



**All India Trinamool Congress  
AITMC**



**Manipur State Congress Party  
MSCP**



**Naga Peoples Front  
NPF**

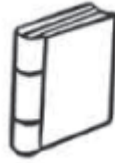
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**People's Democratic Alliance  
PDA**

## Meghalaya



**United Democratic Party**  
**UDP**



**National People's Party**  
**NPP**



**Hill State People's Democratic Party**  
**HSPCP**

## Mizoram



**Mizo National Front**  
**MNF**



**Mizoram People's Conference**  
**MPC**



**Zoram Nationalist Party**  
**ZNP**

## Nagaland



**Naga Peoples Front**  
**NPF**

## Odisha



**Biju Janta Dal**  
**BJD**

## Puducherry



**All India Anna Dravida Munnetra  
Kazhagam – AIADMK**



**All India N.R. Congress  
AINRC**



**Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam  
DMK**



**Pattali Makkal Katchi  
PMK**

## Punjab



**Shiromani Akali Dal**

## Sikkim



**Sikkim Democratic Front**

## Tamil Nadu



All India Anna Dravida Munnetra  
Kazhagam – AIADMK



Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam  
DMK



Desiya Murpokku Dravida  
Kazhagam - DMDK

## Uttar Pradesh



RashtriyaLok Dal  
RLD



Samajwadi Party  
SP

## West Bengal



All India Forward Bloc



All India Trinamool Congress  
AITMC, TMC



Revolutionary Socialist Party

**Updated list of political parties sourced from  
[www.eci.nic.in/eci\\_main1/index.aspx](http://www.eci.nic.in/eci_main1/index.aspx)  
as on 13-3-2014**



## Manifestos ... Let's have a Say !

### What is an Election Manifesto?

The pamphlet or the booklet issued by a political party that tells people about its programmes and policies, is known as the election manifesto of that political party. It is issued by all the political parties who are fighting for elections.

### An election manifesto has the following uses:

- (i) The election manifestos issued by various political parties at the time of elections enable the voters to know about the policies and programmes of the parties who are fighting the elections. After studying those manifestos, the voters can vote for the party (candidate) of their choice.
- (ii) The manifesto of the ruling party tells the people about its achievements during the last tenure. Similarly, the manifestos of the opposition parties point out the failures of the government and mobilize public opinion against them.
- (iii) After the elections, the party which is able to get majority in the Parliament forms the government. The people can exert their pressure on the party in power to fulfill the various promises made to the people in its election manifesto. They are pressed to implement the policy and programmes issued in their election manifestos.



### Did you know ?

- Elections were used as early in history as ancient Greece and ancient Rome, and throughout the Medieval period to select rulers such as the Holy Roman Emperor and the Pope.
- In medieval India, around 920 AD, in Tamil Nadu, palm leaves were used for village assembly elections. The leaves, with candidate names written on them, were put inside a mud pot for counting. This was known as the Kudavolai system.
- The Pala king Gopala in early medieval Bengal was also elected.
- Elections were carried out to select rajas by the gana during the Vedic Period.
- Ancient Arabs also used election to choose their caliph, Uthman and Ali, in the early medieval Rashidun Caliphate.

Source : [wikipedia.org/wiki/Election](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Election)

Generally, manifestos are released two or three months before the actual day of the elections. However, the Election Commission might soon issue new directives in this regard. At the time of going to print the political parties were yet to come out with their manifestos for Lok Sabha Elections 2014. We bring you excerpts from the manifestos of political parties for Lok Sabha Elections 2009, as taken from the Official websites of the respective Parties.

### **Indian National Congress**

#### **Inclusion of disability**

The Indian National Congress will ensure a comprehensive cover of social security to all persons who are at special risk including (i) single-woman headed households; (ii) disabled and the elderly; (iii) urban homeless; (iv) released bonded workers; (v) members of primitive tribal groups; and (vi) members of designated “most backward” dalit communities.

The Indian National Congress is deeply committed to ensuring equality of opportunity and full participation of persons with disabilities, including the blind, in all sectors of life. To begin with, a comprehensive review of laws and programmes will be undertaken and the shortcomings noticed in their implementation will be removed.

**Source :** <http://www.indian-election.com/partymanifestoes/congress.html>

### **Bharatiya Janata Party**

#### **Care of the Disabled Integrating the Differently Abled**

Disabled people constitute five per cent of India’s population. Years of neglect has delayed their integration into the social mainstream. Their welfare and rehabilitation is integral to NDA’s vision of a caring society and a responsive government.

#### **The BJP will:**

1. Ensure and implement the right for education and vocational training for the disabled.
2. Ensure disabled-friendly access to public utilities, public buildings, and transport.

3. Ensure maximum economic independence of the disabled by creating more income generation models for the disabled.
4. Facilitate establishment of an Institute of Vocational Training for the Disabled in every district with public-private partnership.
5. Provide special incentive for the adoption of a disabled child.
6. Support voluntary organizations working for the care of the disabled.

**Source:** [http://www.bjp.org/images/pdf/election\\_manifesto\\_english.pdf](http://www.bjp.org/images/pdf/election_manifesto_english.pdf)

### **Communist Party of India (Marxist)**

#### **Disability Section of Manifesto for the 15th Lok Sabha Elections, 2009**

##### **Differently Abled People**

- Strengthening of the Persons with Disabilities Act
- Properly implementing reservations provided for persons with disabilities in public sector employment, poverty alleviation, programmes and education
- All buildings, public places, transport, information and other avenues to be fully accessible and barrier free to people with disabilities
- Ensuring free provision of aids and equipments for differently abled people by the Government

**Source :** [www.election.com/partymanifestoes/cpim.html](http://www.election.com/partymanifestoes/cpim.html)

### **Communist Party of India**

#### **Rights of People with Special Needs**

- Implement the Persons with Disabilities Act 1995 effectively giving adequate opportunities to build their capacities and also makes schools and other premises accessible to all.
- There is an emerging need to combat HIV/AIDS/STD etc. and ensure medical care, human treatment and security to the victims

**Source :** [www.communistparty.in](http://www.communistparty.in)

#### **What to look for in a manifesto...**

Political parties will shortly come out with their Manifestos for upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Here are some possible questions that you could keep in

mind while analyzing the manifesto:

- Does the manifesto clearly convey that persons with disabilities have been consulted as to what concerns they would want to be addressed?
- Does the manifesto address issues of accessibility such as creating accessibility to information, to the built environment, to transport, to roads and other indoor and outdoor facilities, including schools, housing, medical facilities and workplaces?
- Are different disabilities such as hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical impairment, intellectual disability, mental illness, autism and health related conditions such as thalassemia and hemophilia are being considered rather than focusing on only some impairments?
- Does it address the needs of people with disabilities in both urban and rural areas?
- Does it focus on needs across lifespan and across domains such as Health, Shelter, Education, Livelihood, Relationships, Independent Living, Recreation & Leisure and Identity?
- Is there a clear and detailed plan of action to overcome existing barriers for persons with disabilities? For example, apart from an emphasis on physical accessibility of public buildings, is there a thought also given to training or sensitization of human resources at these places that will ensure effective support for with persons with disabilities? Is awareness raising being looked at actively? Is the need for caregivers addressed?
- How does it address the issue of maltreatment, neglect and abuse?
- Is there a specific focus on the needs of women and children with disabilities?
- How is reasonable accommodation addressed? Is there a move towards universal design?

- Editorial team



## How to Choose the Right Candidate

So now the all important question-how do you choose the right candidate? Or for that matter the right political party? Well, nobody has straightforward answers to this but here are a few tips to help you make your choice.

- Make a list of things that are important to you-values, things that you think a candidate or party should have.
- Motivate these choices-why are these things on your list? How important are they to you? Mark the most important ones but keep the others as well.
- Look for a candidate or party you relate to: Listen to speeches, visit their websites, find out about their opinions and even more important-what motivates them.
- Check their history, find out if they are telling the truth and if they are willing to do what they are promising you.
- Discuss your thoughts with your friends and people you respect especially the ones whose opinions matter to you.
- Make a final pick. Take your first pick, the election programme of your chosen candidate or party and any important information you stumbled upon. Compare them and decide if this candidate or party is really the one you want to be represented by.
- Definitely cast your Vote. By following some of these tips and being true to yourself, you can be sure you've done your best to choose the right candidate or party that's most suitable to represent you. So vote!

**Acknowledgment : [www.wikihow.com/vote](http://www.wikihow.com/vote) for the right candidate in an election**





## Process of Voting

As soon as you enter the polling station, you will meet the first polling officer. This officer is in charge of the marked copy of the electoral roll and identifies all electors. You should keep your identity document ready to show to the polling officer. The first polling officer will then call out your name and serial number.



You will now proceed to the second polling officer who will mark your left forefinger with the indelible ink. He will record your serial number in the electoral roll in the Register of Voters.



Once this is recorded, you are to sign in the appropriate column in the Register of Voters. If a voter cannot sign, his/her thumb impression will be obtained.



The second polling officer will then give you a signed voter's slip.



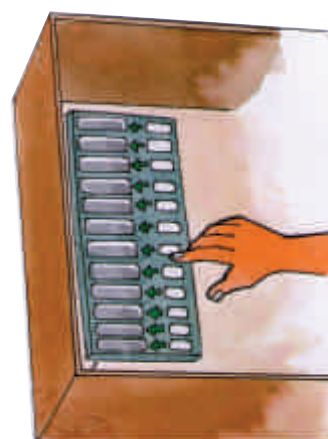
You will then proceed to the Third Polling Officer who will take the voter's slip issued to you. The third polling officer will press the "Ballot" button on the control unit of voting compartment where you will record your vote on the balloting unit of the voting machine.



Inside the voting compartment, you are to press the blue candidate button on the Balloting unit against the name and symbol of the candidate of your choice. You may press None of the above (NOTA) last button of Electronic Voting Machine, if you so desire.

Press the button only once.

On the candidate button being pressed, the red lamp will glow against the name and symbol of that candidate.



There will also be a beep sound heard to indicate that your vote has been recorded and the busy lamp goes off in the control unit.



**Sources : [eci.nic.in/eci\\_main1/index.aspx](http://eci.nic.in/eci_main1/index.aspx)  
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