



## Teacher's Guide

Our Government

Part 3

Based on the Kerala State Board Curriculum for  
Standard VIII



JANAAGRAHA CENTRE FOR CITIZENSHIP & DEMOCRACY

Janaagraha's initiative to improve citizen engagement in India's democracy through their civic learning program

Developed in collaboration with Young Leaders for Active Citizenship (YLAC)

## Our Government | Teacher’s Guide (3/3)

### Part 3

Class VIII

Board – Kerala State Board

Subject – Social Science

Textbook – Social Science-I for class VIII (SCERT)

Chapter 4 – Our Government

Number of parts – 03

Length – 70-90 minutes (estimated, for a class of 40-45 students)

*Note: Teachers may divide the lesson plan into as many periods as they see fit*

#### **Section I – What are we going to learn and why is it important?**

##### **Learning objectives**

Students will:

- Understand the judiciary system in India.
- Identify possible flaws and inefficiencies in the judiciary and postulate ways to fix them.

##### **Learning outcomes**

Students will be able to:

- Come up with solutions to make the Indian judiciary more robust.
- Understand ways in which they can improve efficiency of the government.

##### **Key Terms**

Judiciary	Civil Cases	Criminal Cases	District Court	High Court
Chief Justice	Supreme Court	Apex		

##### **Materials needed**

Sticky notes for first activity



## Section II – How are we going to learn?

### 1. Opening Session: Making the KWL (Know, Want to know, Learn) chart

Time: 10 minutes

Materials needed: sticky notes

Facilitation notes:

- Before we start this class, we have been talking in detail about how the Indian government works. We have mostly focused on the central government with smaller introductions to the state and local government.
- Okay, so picture this. We have our constitution which contains many laws and principles by which India must be governed, we have the parliament to make new laws and amend the old ones in the constitution. We also have a system of to make sure that laws are followed and punish people who break the law. This system is the **Indian judiciary**. The court system understands the law, interprets it and then passes correct judgements and punishments to people who have broken the law.
- Very important- can anyone tell me why it is so important for us to have a separate wing of the judiciary. I mean, why couldn't the parliament just punish people for breaking laws etc.? (take a few sample responses)
- The Indian parliament makes the laws. All the members of the parliament are involved in this law-making process. The act of enforcing the law and giving out justice needs to be independent of any influence. Why? (take a few responses)
- This is because if the judiciary and the executive (or legislature) are not separate from one another, the system will get biased. Imagine if a law maker themselves breaks the law. Or if a politician is involved in something illegal. If the justice system is not completely independent of the other two wings, they will try to influence it and make decisions that favour them. This will defeat the very foundation of a democracy.
- How many of you have heard about court cases your parents/ relatives/ neighbours are stuck in? (expectedly most of the class will raise their hands)
- So, we have all heard them grumble about courts and lawyers right. Okay, so let's try and decode what this system is all about and how does it dispense justice?
- I am making a table on the board.

What I <b>know</b>	What I <b>want</b> to know	What have I <b>learnt</b>

- This chart is fairly simple. Take the next 5 minutes and think about only the first two columns:
  - What I know.
  - What I want to know.
- Think of as many things as you do about the Indian judiciary in these two columns and make this in your notebooks. Along with that, I am distributing sticky notes in class. Write down your top points for both these columns and come and paste them on the board. For now, leave the third column empty. (encourage them to think as creatively as possible)
- (after 5 minutes) okay let's quickly go through a few points under both these columns. (the teacher to read aloud a few things that students know and want to know. A few potential answers are given as follows)

What I <b>know</b>	What I <b>want</b> to know	What I have <b>learnt</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Judges punish people.</li> <li>2. There are many courts.</li> <li>3. Sometimes Judges put you in jail but sometimes you just have to pay a fine.</li> <li>4. Judges are respected by the society.</li> <li>5. Cases go on for years</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why do we have so many courts in India?</li> <li>2. Why do cases go on for years?</li> <li>3. How can a person become a judge?</li> </ol>	This part will be covered in the recap section of the lesson.

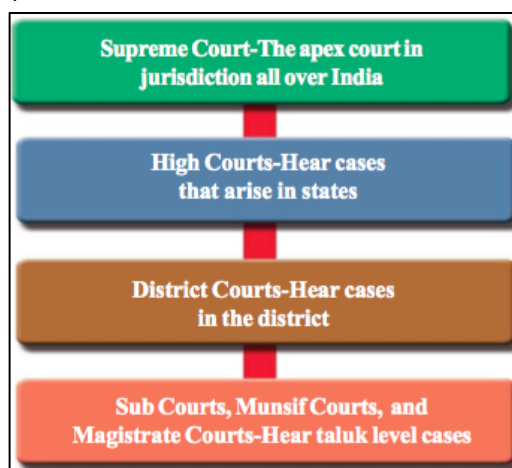
## 2. Discussion: Understanding the structure of the Indian judiciary

Time: 15-20 minutes

Materials needed:

Facilitation Notes:

- Help! I Lost My Case! Ramaa just walked out of the courthouse, and she’s furious! That’s why she’s on her cell phone calling you. That’s what friends are for, right? Ramaa just lost her case in a District Court. The judge gave a verdict in favour of the other side! Can you believe it? There must be something she can do, but Ramaa isn’t sure. Can she take her case to the High Court? What about the Supreme Court? And if she can take her case “up,” what will happen there? Do those courts work just like the district court?
- Let’s help Ramaa with her problem by looking at how the Indian judicial system actually works.
- The Indian justice system is one of the most well thought out in the world. We have courts that are set up at 4 levels. The levels are as such (ask the students to draw this diagram in their notebooks.)



- (after the students are done copying this in their notebooks) Now let’s understand how these levels are set up. At the lowest level, we have the subordinate or the magistrate court. Cases related to **civil** disputes (simply put, disputes that involve private matters between persons and organisations. These usually involve cases to do with property and financial matters) and some **criminal** cases (cases which involve a threat to society as a whole. Cases like robbery, murder etc fall in this category) are tried in the magistrate courts, sub district courts etc.
- The level directly above these lower courts is the **district court**. A district court is the highest court in a district. Every district has one district court in India. In some cases, two districts may share one court. District courts listen to civil and criminal matters related to private citizens and organisations in their area of jurisdiction.
- Above the district courts are the **high courts**. A high court is the apex court in a state. Apex means the one at the highest level. So, at a state level, high courts are the apex courts and at the national level, Supreme Court is the apex court.

- High Courts listen to the following kinds of cases:
  - Cases related to violation of human rights in their state.
  - Civil and criminal matters after they have been appealed from the lower courts.
  - Cases related to laws passed by the state legislature.
- A high court is presided by the **Chief Justice** (a highest presiding judge in a court) along with other judges appointed by the president of India. It also supervises the working of the lower courts. At present, we have 25 high courts in India.
- The **Supreme Court** is the highest-level court in India. It is also the apex body of the judiciary system in our country. The supreme court is presided over by the chief justice and 30 other judges.
  - Cases relating to violation of Fundamental Rights
  - Cases that arise between state government and central governments.
  - Disputes between state government.
  - Cases that require interpretation of constitutional provisions.
  - Appeal cases from High Courts.
- Isn't this information overload? Okay, I want you to now turn to your partners and suggest the next steps Ramaa can take and revise the functions of each court.
- So even though Ramaa has lost her case in the district court, she has not completely lost the battle. She can appeal to the High Court to hear her case again based on new evidence/information. The High Court may then decide to rule in her favour or against it. The losing party may further appeal to the Supreme Court to hear the case. Once the Supreme Court passes the final judgement on a case, it is considered to be closed.
- Now do you understand a part of why cases go on for so long?

### 3. **If I were chief justice of India**

Time: 10 minutes

#### Facilitation Notes:

- This part of the class is for you to now put your thinking caps on. You have been given basic information about the Indian judiciary. Believe me, the system is way more complex than just this!

- What I want all of you to now do is very simple. From this new knowledge and all the past knowledge that you have, think about the problems in the Indian justice system. Now imagine if you were the chief justice in our supreme court.
- The task is fairly simple. Take out a piece of paper and write down three points. Any three things that you would do as the chief justice of India to improve the justice system. But keep two things in mind-
- Be very specific. Do not give generalised answers like I will fix the system; I will end corruption. Instead tell us specifically what you will do.
- Think of steps that will have wide reaching impact. You're the chief justice! So think of ways you can make the most impact.
- Take the next 5 minutes and think these after which I will ask 5 students to share their responses.
- After 5 minutes, the teacher asks 5 students to share their responses. A few sample responses are as under:
  - I would like for the cases to be resolved quicker and not be pending for years.
  - I would like the citizens to have more information about the courts and more interaction among people and the courts.
  - I would like to reduce the corruption in the judiciary and ensure there is more transparency.

#### Debrief

- We came up with some fantastic points on how the Indian judiciary needs to be fixed.
- I really hope one of you becomes chief justice.
- Let's consider this one thing though. India has nearly 3 crore cases pending at various levels. The supreme court itself has roughly 60,000 pending cases. 60,000! Many of them are pending for more than 10 years.
- While judicial delays are a definite problem, we also need to consider that it is humanly impossible to fix all the cases in this country in a timely manner. Though this is not an excuse. But it should be a concern in the back of our minds whenever we consider the case of judicial inefficiency in India and the world over.

#### **4. How can students influence the decision of the government?**

Time: 15-20 mins

#### Facilitation notes:

- You may not feel like a part of the government, but you are! The "dem" in the word "democracy" comes from the Greek word demos, meaning "people." But how can one person have an impact on a government as huge as ours?
- Let's spend some time thinking about the problems around us that can be solved by the government.

- We will start with identifying different problems around us. Ask students to sit in groups of 5. Now each group has to shortlist 6 issues they believe are the most important for the country and can be solved by the government. There will be 10-15 issues in each group that students may individually think are important. They have to debate/discuss in their groups and shortlist 6 issues.
- A teacher can co-create criteria with their students to assess what makes an issue important. Some example could be:
  - The number of people or groups affected
  - Impact across the region
  - For how long people have been waiting for a solution
  - Whether the issue involves basic human needs
  - Whether human rights are being violated
  - The social, economic, and/or environmental impact of an issue
- The teacher will then write issues of each group on the board. The possible issues that could be brought up are; poverty, unemployment, lack of education, crime rate, safety, environment, pollution, health care.
- The instructor asks students to write down what they see at this point as the most pressing issue; that is, their first choice of an issue to solve, which would be their first choice to champion. Next, students are asked on the count of three to shout their concerns.
- Then, the teacher asks the students, “What was that?” If no one answers with “noise,” the teacher announces, “That was noise.” The teacher follows this exercise by picking one of the issues on the board and asking the students on the count of three to say the issue aloud. “What was that?” the instructor asks again, and the answer is, “Voice!” The point is that if the government is hearing a unified message as to what is most important, then they can act accordingly. If elected leaders hear that everything is important, then they may not take up a given concern. To have a more effective political voice citizens need to be united in their demand.
- In class, students are given another 10 minutes or so in the new group to discuss, debate, and decide the issue(s) they feel should be on the agenda. This time each group is asked to narrow its lists to no more than one issue.
- Ask students based on their understanding of the previous lessons which branch of the government will they approach to solve the particular issue and why?
- Teacher will now list various ways citizens can have an impact on the government:
  - Emailing or phoning government officials
  - Joining a community group
  - Writing to the newspaper
  - Voting



- Demonstrating for their rights/ protests
- They can move the court if a right is being violated
- They can request their MPs to pass a new Bill, if a new law needs to be made

### **Section III: Assessment**

Time: 5 minutes

- List the different levels of Judiciary in India.
  - *(From lower to higher level)*
    - *Sub courts, munsif courts, magistrate courts*
    - *District Courts*
    - *High Courts*
    - *Supreme Court*
- If you lose a case in the High court, the case is closed. T/F? *(False, you can go to Supreme Court)*
- There is a High Court in every city in India. T/F? *(False, each State has a High Court, with some High Courts having control over more than 1 state)*
- What court should I approach if my Human Rights are violated? *(High Court)*

### **Section IV: Closure**

#### **Recap by the teacher and students**

Time: 5 minutes

- I want everyone to go back to their initial KWL chart. Now, I want you to fill up the third column of the KWL chart, which we initially left blank. (give students 2-3 minutes to fill it)
- (ask students to tell everyone what they learnt. The points should cover the following:
  - There are 4 level courts in India: the magistrate/ sub- district courts, the district court, high courts and the supreme courts.
  - A case that is once tried at a lower court can always be appealed to a higher court, all the way to the supreme court.
  - Each court has specific kinds of cases they hear.
  - The Indian judiciary has many problems, much like every other wing in any government across the world. But there is room to fix these problems and keep becoming more efficient.

- We as citizens may not be able to impact the central government directly all the time. But citizen's voice is a very important and powerful tool that we have to make government officials act upon issues.

#### **Section V: Homework:**

- Explain in detail the purpose of our government. Further comment upon how satisfied you are with the way our government is currently working.

Or

- Write/draw what an ideal government would look like according to you in not more than 150 words.

#### **Section V: Additional resources**

##### **Resources for teachers:**

1. The problem of pending cases in India  
The opinion piece talks about how to solve the problem of pending cases in India  
Link: [Clearias](#)
1. Why there is an immediate need to reform the Indian judicial system  
The article details the problems faced by the Indian judiciary and why there is a grave need for immediate reform  
Link: [Economic Times](#)

##### **Resources for students:**

1. India's top new judge trying to fix the justice system  
The article talks about how Rajan Gogoi, Indian's new chief justice (appointed in 2018) sees the Indian judiciary and plans to address it.  
Link: [Business Insider](#)



2. Re-imagining India's justice system

The article talks about the problems common man faces on the path to getting justice

Link: [The Hindu Business Line](#)

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