



Teacher's Guide

The Indian Constitution

Period 1

Based on the NCERT 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)

The Indian Constitution | Teacher's Guide (1/3)

Period 1

Class VIII

Board – CBSE

Subject – Social and Political Life

Textbook – Social and Political Life Textbook III for Class VIII (NCERT)

Chapter 1 – The Indian Constitution

Number of periods – 03

Length – 60 minutes

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

Learning objectives

Students will:

- Understand what a Constitution is and why it is necessary.
- Understand how Constitutions embody certain ideals.
- Understand the difference between monarchy, dictatorship and democracy.
- Learn why there is a need for limits on power in a democratic form of government.

Learning Outcomes

Students will

- Will understand the different types of government and the key elements of each.

Key Terms

Constitution	Rules	Ideals	Monarchy	Misuse of authority
Dictatorship	Democracy	Fairness	Majority	Basic structure

Section II – How are we going to learn

1. What is a Constitution?

Time: 5 minutes

Note to the teacher:

This is a class discussion to get students to think about the need for rules. Please initiate the discussion and use the board to note down responses. Conclude the discussion with a de-brief.

Facilitation Notes:

- We'll start by understanding what a Constitution is and why it is needed.
- A Constitution is a written document that contains the set of rules and ideals that people in a society agree to live by.

Let's try to understand this by thinking about our classroom first. Are there any rules in this classroom? What are some examples of such rules? Why do you think we need these rules? *[Take a couple of responses. Likely answers:*

[\(Image Source\)](#)

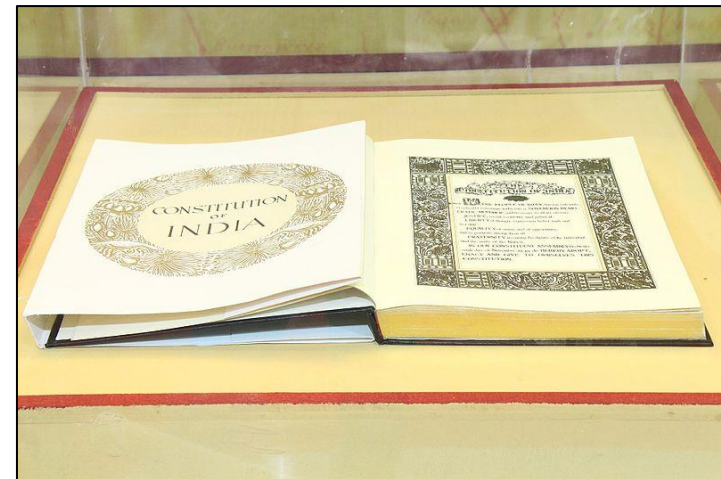
- *Rules that prevent you from running inside the class or in the corridors — to prevent students from falling and getting hurt.*
- *Raising your hand before you speak — to allow only one student to speak at a time.*
- *Silence in the classroom — to ensure that students can hear the teacher and learn.*
- *No copying in the exams — to accurately reward students who work hard.]*

De-brief:

- Do we all agree that these rules are required? Can we run a school without these rules?
- Just like in this classroom, there are rules that are required to govern a society.
- These rules define the type of government a country has, and are formulated through an agreement among the members of the society.
- In modern countries, the most fundamental/ important rules are usually written down in a document called a Constitution.
- Let's now look at some types of governments – monarchy, dictatorship, and democracy.

2. Types of Government

Time: 10 minutes





Monarchy

[\(Image Source\)](#)

A. Monarchy

- What is a monarchy?
- It is a type of government where all authority rests with a monarch (King or Queen). Only the monarch takes decisions, and everyone else must obey. Monarchies usually pass the rule of the country from parent to child within the family.
- What are some examples of monarchies? – Bhutan, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, UAE.



Dictatorship

[\(Image Source\)](#)

B. Dictatorship

- What is a dictatorship?
- All authority rests with the Dictator. Only the Dictator takes decisions, while everybody else obeys. In a dictatorship, it is harder to identify how authority is passed down. Usually, the most powerful person becomes the dictator.
- What are some examples of dictatorships? – North Korea.



Democracy

C. Democracy

- What is a democracy?
- All authority rests with the people. People regularly elect representatives through elections who take decisions on their behalf.
- What are examples of democracies? – India, USA, Germany, France.

[\(Image Source\)](#)

Facilitation Notes:

When a country wants to change its type of government, it will require a new Constitution with the revised set of rules that people in country agree with. For example:

- Nepal used to be a monarchy. Due to sustained protests from the people, the monarchy was abolished and a democratic government was established in 2008. A new Constitution was written to reflect the change in the type of government.
- Tunisia (a country in North Africa) used to be a dictatorship under President Ben Ali. However, the President was forced to flee the country in 2011 due to protests and people drafted a new Constitution for a democratic government.

3. Linking ideals to forms of government

Activity – Unfair quiz

Time: 15 minutes

Materials required: Blackboard and chalk

Note to the teacher:

This section will help students understand the link between ideals cherished by a society and its chosen form of government. It'll use an activity to get students to think about ideals respected in a democracy, in particular fairness and minority rights.

Facilitation Notes:

- (Notice that each type of government promotes certain kinds of ideals. For instance, dictatorships promote the ideal of “obedience”. The dictator will want everyone to obey his orders and will not allow anyone to question him or go against his commands.
 - What kind of ideals do you think a democracy would promote? Let's find out!)
1. Split the class into two teams, A and B, such that Team A is more numerous than Team B.
 2. Ask each team simple questions about the country and its government. For example:
 - a. Who is the President of India?
 - b. Who is the Prime Minister of India?

- c. How many states does India have?
 - d. What is the capital of India?
3. Create a tally on the board where the points awarded to each team are added. Do not announce the scoring system to students initially — let the students discover the rules on their own.
4. For every right answer, Team A should be awarded 20 points while Team B should be awarded only 5 points. The idea is to score the teams unfairly. Students will quickly realise that the game is unfair.
5. Once the students realise the unfairness of the scoring system, they will ask that the points system be changed. Ask them why they want to change it? They will most likely say that the rule is not fair. Write the word “fair” on the board and ask the students to keep it in mind.
6. Next, ask each team to discuss within the team and suggest a new rule to make the quiz more fair. (Team A is likely to propose a system that retains their advantage)
7. Ask the class to vote on both proposals. Team A’s proposal is likely to win since the team has more students than Team B.
8. Ask the class why Team A won and Team B lost. The students are likely to say that Team A had more students, that is, they had a majority. Write down the word “majority” on the board.

De-brief:

- Ask the students if we should allow rules that are unfair. Why? Why not?
- Also ask the students if the majority is always right. Is it okay to have a rule if the majority supports it, even if the rule is unfair? Why? Why not?
- Conclude by saying that the above are two examples of ideals that we see in a democracy — fairness and respect for the opinion/ rights of minorities.
- These ideals are usually reflected in the Constitutions of democratic countries.
- Thus, a Constitution not only contains the rules that define the type of government that a country has, but also embodies the ideals that the society wants to uphold.

4. Limits on Power in Democratic Countries

Time: 15 minutesNote to the teacher:

This section will use examples to introduce students to the concept of misuse of authority and the need for limits on power

Facilitation Notes:**A. Misuse of Authority:**

- Let’s discuss another important thing that constitutions do i.e. impose limits on power!

- Consider a democracy. In a democratic government, people elect leaders to take decisions on their behalf.
- However, winning elections does not automatically mean that leaders will take “fair” decisions. They may misuse their authority and take decisions that are unfair.
- Can you think of examples from your life - from school and home - where this happens? *[Take a couple of responses]*



[\(Image Source\)](#)

Examples:

1. Class Monitors

Class monitors sometimes act in unfair ways. They allow their friends to talk while they make other students keep quiet. They even complain to teachers about one or two students making noises even though others are doing the same thing!

Do we all agree that this is unfair? Class monitors were given authority but they misused it!

2. On the cricket ground

Let's say that you are playing cricket. One of your friends wants to bat first because the bat is his. If he does not get a chance to bat, he says that he will take his bat and go home. Nobody else will then be able to play.

Is this unfair?

- To ensure that these things do not happen, the Constitution sets limits on how leaders can use their authority, creating safeguards to prevent misuse.
- These limits are guaranteed in the Constitution in the form of Fundamental Rights. We will discuss this in further detail in a future class.

B. Safeguarding the basic structure

- But recall that Constitutions can also be changed! So to prevent leaders from misusing their power to change the Constitution, a good Constitution goes a step further and prevents changes to its basic structure (also thought of as the most important parts of the Constitution).
- Let's look at some examples to understand why this is important.

Examples:



Video: The Enabling Act

The video talks about how Hitler swayed the political leaders of Germany to pass a law that enabled him to take decisions without any consultations.

Link: [YouTube](#)

Relevant terms:

1. Reichstag - German word for Parliament
2. Reich - Term used to refer to Germany
3. Chancellor - Prime Minister

Context:

- In the 1930s, Germany was a democratic country with a Constitution that protected the same democratic ideals as India does. But in 1933, Adolf Hitler swayed the emotions of Germans and became the leader of Germany.
- He passed a law to change the German Constitution that allowed him to take decisions without consultations.
- Within a few months, Germany became a dictatorship where Hitler ruled using terror and fear. He ordered the murders of millions of Germans, and declared war on nearby countries initiating World War II.
- Germany has reverted back to its earlier ideals now but its people deeply regret the mistakes made during Hitler's rule.

Decisions taken in haste

Let's come closer home and look at our own lives. There may be times when we feel frustrated and emotional. In the heat of the moment, we may take a decision that goes against our ideals.

Think about it: has it ever happened with you that you shouted at a friend or your parents when you are angry, but then feel really bad about it later? In hindsight, you regret the decision.

De-brief:

- What should be done to prevent such things from happening? *[Take a couple of responses]*
- To prevent such things from happening, the Constitution often contains rules that aim to protect us from our own decisions. It has a basic structure that cannot be changed and which helps us achieve our long term ideals as a society.
- As times change, changes to the Constitution can be made. However, the basic structure of the Constitution cannot be changed.
- Thus, the Constitution sets limits to power by preventing leaders from misusing their authority and tampering with its basic structure.

Section III - Assessment

Time: 5 minutes

Materials needed: Blackboard and chalk (or chart paper, marker, sticky notes, pens - depending on availability)

Divide the blackboard/chart into two columns – Democracy on the left side and dictatorship/ monarchy on the right side. Speak out the following terms. Ask the students to come to the front and write them under the appropriate column on the blackboard (or to write these terms on sticky notes and stick them under the column on the chart).

- Fairness
- Discipline
- Obedience
- Freedom
- Order
- Justice
- Fear
- Equality
- Unlimited power

- Elections
- King
- Political parties
- Dictator

OR

Divide the students into groups of four or five students. Hand out copies of the Preamble of the Indian Constitution to each group. Ask them to read the Preamble and identify the ideals that the Constitution wishes to promote.

Homework

Ask students to write down their own Constitution for their classroom. What kind of rules and ideals would they like and would want their classmates to follow?

Section IV – Closure

Summary by Students

Time: 5 minutes

Note to the teacher:

Select a student at random to and summarize the key points of the session and why this particular session is important. *[Add to the summary from the recap below, if required]*

Recap by the teacher

Time: 5 minutes

A Constitution is a written document that contains the set of rules and ideals that people in a society agree to live by.

The Constitution is necessary for three major reasons:

- Firstly, it helps us identify the ideals that we as a society wish to uphold and strive for.

- Secondly, it provides guidelines on how decisions can be made by our political leaders.
 - Thirdly, it creates safeguards to prevent leaders from misusing their authority. It also contains a basic structure that cannot be modified.
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Section V: Additional Resources

Resources for students:

1. Article: Celebrate the Supreme Law
The article details how the constitution was made, why is a constitution important for the smooth functioning of the country, and a few facts about the drafting process for the Indian Constitution.
Link: [The Hindu](#)
2. Article: The story behind the Indian Constitution
The article mentions the important events that happened immediately before and after the Indian independence, and the drafting of the constitution.
Link: [Yourstory](#)

Resources for teachers:

1. Article: Why the Indian Constitution was ahead of its time
The article cites some extremely interesting points about the Indian Consitution and the reason why the document continues to be extremely relevant even in the face of rapidly changing times.
Link: [Times of India](#)
2. Article: How informed are you about the Constitution of India?
India celebrates November 26 as 'Constitution Day' and yet very few of us know about it. The article explains some important parts of the Indian constitution.
Link: [The Hindu](#)

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