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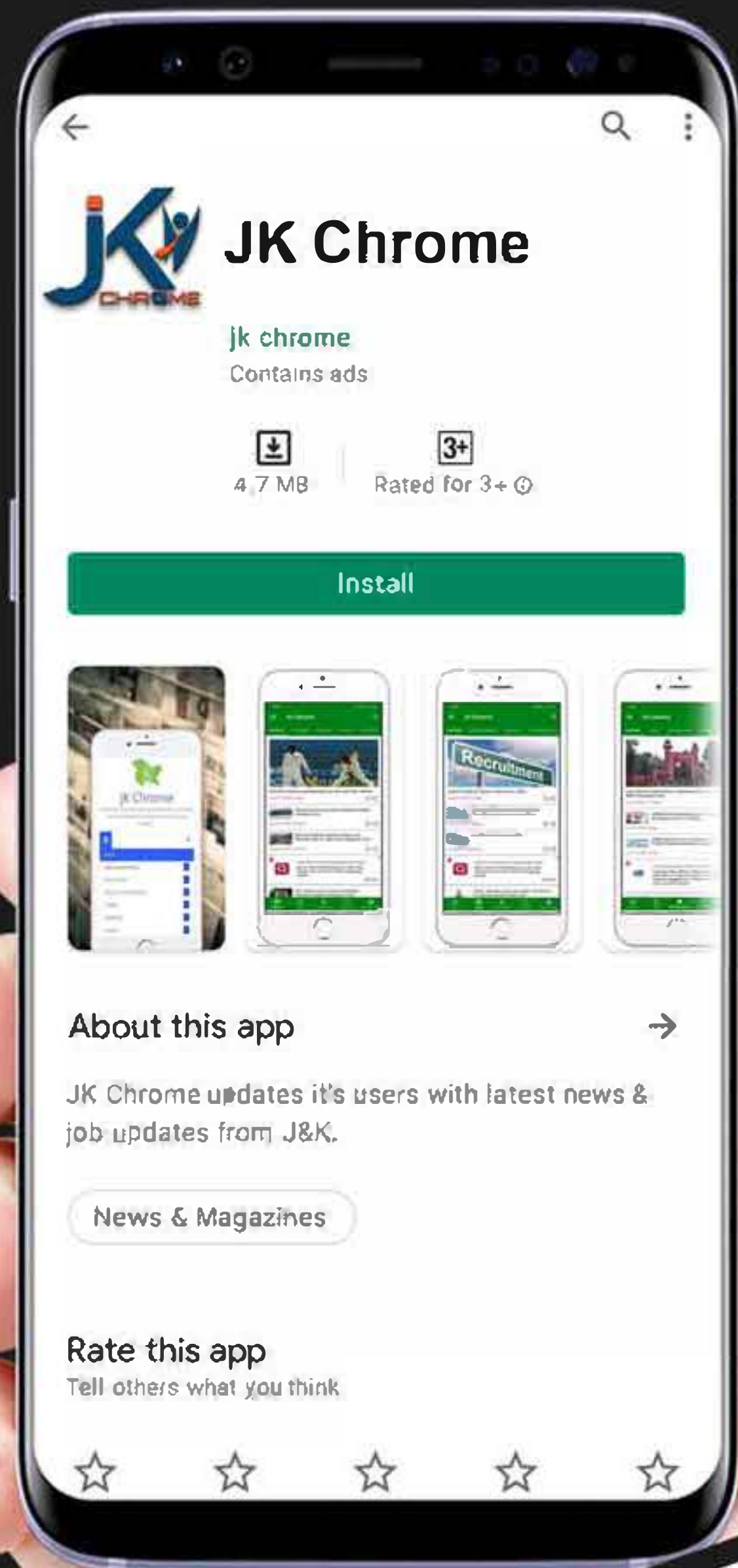
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NCERT Class 10 Polity notes

Power Sharing (Chapter 1)

'Ethnic':

Ethnic means a social division based on shared culture and common descent. People belonging to an ethnic group need not have the same religion or nationality.

Majoritarianism:

A belief that the majority community should be able to rule a country in whichever way it wants, by disregarding the wishes and needs of the minority is majoritarianism.

Power Sharing in Sri Lanka:

Two major social groups are: (a) Sri Lankan Tamils (b) Indian Tamils. Sinhala-speaking (74 per cent) Buddhism

Tamil-speaking (18 per cent) Hindus or Muslims: Sri Lankan Tamils (13 per cent), Indian Tamils (5 per cent).

Establishment of Sinhala supremacy:

Sri Lanka emerged as an independent country in 1948. The democratically elected government adopted a series of measures to establish Sinhala supremacy:

1. In 1956, an Act was passed to make Sinhala the official language.
2. The government followed preferential policies favouring Sinhala applicants for University positions and government jobs.
3. The Constitution provided for State protection and fostering of Buddhism.

The Sri Lankan Tamils felt that none of the major political parties led by the Buddhist Sinhala leaders were sensitive to their language and culture and the government policies denied them equal political rights. The Sri Lankan Tamils launched parties and struggles for the recognition of Tamil, for regional autonomy and equality of opportunity in every field. Therefore, the measures adopted by the government to establish Sinhala supremacy led to Civil War.

Ethnic composition of Belgium:

Belgium is a small country in Europe, having a population of a little over one crore. 59 per cent of the country's total population lives in the Flemish region and speak Dutch language. Another 40 per cent people live in Wallonia region and speak French. Remaining one per cent of the Belgians speak German. Whereas in the Belgian capital, Brussels, 80 per cent of the population is French-speaking and 20 per cent is Dutch-speaking.

Belgian power-sharing model:

The power-sharing arrangements made by the Belgian leaders were different and more innovative than any other country. To recognize the existence of regional differences and cultural diversities, they amended their Constitution four times between 1970 and 1993.

The major elements of the Belgian Model are:

1. Constitution prescribes that the number of Dutch and French-speaking ministers shall be equal in the Central Government. No single community can take decisions unilaterally.
2. The State Governments are not subordinate to the Central Government.
3. Brussels, the capital, has a separate government where both the communities have equal representation.
4. A third kind of government, 'Community Government', is elected by people belonging to one language community — Dutch, French and German speaking—no matter where they live. This government can decide on cultural, educational and language related issues.

'Lebanon'—conflict related to power-sharing disputes were resolved by power sharing:

People from various communities lived in Lebanon's capital city, Beirut, and fought a bitter Civil War amongst themselves. As a result, thousands of people of various communities were either killed or lost their livelihood. At the end of this Civil War, Lebanon's leaders came together and agreed to some basic rules for power-sharing among different communities. As per these rules it was agreed that:

- The President would be from Maronite sect of Catholic Christians;
- The Prime Minister must be from the Sunni Muslim community;
- Deputy Prime Minister would be from an Orthodox Christian sect;
- Speaker—a Shia Muslim.

As per the pact, the Christians agreed not to seek French protection and Muslims agreed not to seek unification with the neighbouring state of Syria.

Prudential reasons:

Prudential reasons stress that power-sharing would bring out better outcomes by helping to reduce the possibility of any conflict between the social groups and power-sharing is a good way to ensure the stability of political order through unity of the nation.

Moral reasons:

Moral reasons uphold power-sharing as the very spirit of democracy. A democratic rule involves sharing power with those affected by its exercise. People have the right to be consulted and have equal participation in the government.

Principles of a good democracy:

- that power of a government must not vest in one person or a group of persons.
- that people are the source of all political power.
- that due respect be given to diverse groups and everyone should have a voice in the shaping of public policies.

System of checks and balances:

The horizontal distribution of power ensures that power is shared among different organs of government—the legislature, executive and judiciary. It allows different organs of government placed at the same level to exercise different powers. In a democracy, ministers and government officials exercise power. They are responsible to the Parliament or State Assemblies. The judges appointed by the executive can check the functioning of executive or laws made by the legislature. The horizontal distribution of power is also called a system of checks and balances.

Power-sharing in contemporary democracies:

In contemporary democracies, power-sharing takes the form of competition among different parties. Such competition ensures that power does not remain in one hand and is shared among different political parties representing different social groups and ideologies. This type of sharing often leads to the formation of an alliance between two or more parties, which, goes to form a Coalition Government.

Federalism (Chapter 2)

Federalism is a system of government in which the power is divided between a central authority and various constituent units of the country. This vertical division of power among different levels of governments is referred to as federalism. Federalism is one of the major forms of power-sharing in modern democracies.

Key features of federalism are:

1. Two or more levels of government.
2. Different levels of government govern the same citizens, where each level has its own jurisdiction in specific matters of legislation, taxation and administration.
3. Existence and authority of each level of government is constitutionally governed.
4. The fundamental provisions of the Constitution cannot be unilaterally changed. Such changes require the consent of both the levels of government.
5. Courts have the power to interpret the Constitution. The highest court acts as the umpire if any dispute arises between different levels of governments.
6. Sources of revenue for each level of government are specified to ensure its financial autonomy.
7. Federal system has dual objectives to safeguard and promote unity of the country, and to accommodate regional diversity.

Union Territories:

Some units of the Indian Union, which are too small to become an independent state and could not be merged with any of the existing states, are called Union Territories. They are also called 'Centrally Administered Territories'. For example, Chandigarh, Lakshadweep.

Coalition government:

A government formed by coming together of at least two political parties. Usually, partners in a coalition form a political alliance and adopt a common programme.

For example, National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and the Left Front.

India a federal country:

The Constitution declares India as a Union of States. Although the word 'Federation' is not used, the Indian Union is based on the principles of federation. The Constitution originally provided for a two-tier system of government, the Union Government or the Central Government representing Union of India and the State Governments. A third-tier of federation was added in the form of Panchayats and Municipalities. As in any federation, these different tiers enjoy separate jurisdiction. The Constitution provides for a three-fold distribution of legislative powers between the Union Government and State Government. It contains three lists:

- Union List (100 Subjects),
- State List (61 Subjects),
- Concurrent List (52 Subjects).

Since India is an example of 'holding together' federation where the Central Government is more powerful vis-a-vis the states; some states, for example, enjoy a special status like Jammu & Kashmir, which has its own Constitution.

'Coming together' federations:

This agreement induces independent states coming together on their own to form a bigger unit, so that by pooling sovereignty and retaining identity they can increase their security. Examples are: USA, Switzerland and Australia.

'Holding together' federations:

In this agreement, a large country decides to divide its power between the constituent States and the national government. The Central Governments tend to be more powerful vis-a-vis the states. Often different constituent units of the federation have unequal powers. Some units are granted special powers, for example, India, Spain, Belgium.

Sharing of power between the Union Government and State Governments:

The sharing of power between the Union Government and the State Governments is basic to the structure of the Constitution. The Parliament cannot, on its own, change this arrangement. Any change has to be first passed by both the Houses of the Parliament with at least two-third majority. It has then to be ratified by the legislatures of at least half of the total states. In case of any dispute about the division of powers, the High Courts and the Supreme Court make a decision.

Reasons for success of federalism in India:

- Clearly laid out Constitutional Provisions providing a three-fold distribution of powers in the three lists—Union List, State List and Concurrent List—between the Union and State Governments,
- The nature of democratic politics in our country.
- The creation of linguistic states. Boundaries of several old states of India were changed in order to create new states. This was done to ensure that people who spoke the same language lived in the same state.
- Restricting of Centre-State relations.

Language policy of India:

Our Constitution did not give the status of national language to any one language. The formation of linguistic states united the country and made administration easier. The leaders of our country adopted a very cautious attitude in spreading the use of Hindi. Hindi was identified as official language. Besides Hindi, there are 21 other languages recognized as scheduled languages by the Constitution.

Major steps towards decentralization taken in 1992 are:

- Now it is constitutionally mandatory to hold regular elections to Local Government bodies.
- Seats are reserved in elected bodies for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes (OBCs).
- At least one-third of all positions are reserved for women.
- The State Election Commission was created to conduct Panchayat and Municipal elections.
- The State Governments are required to share some powers and revenue with Local Government bodies.

Structure of the new Panchayati Raj institutions: Rural Local Government is known by the name of Panchayati Raj.

- Each village or group of villages has a Gram Panchayat. Panch, President or Sarpanch are directly elected by all the adult population of the village and is the decision-making body.
- The Panchayat works under the supervision of Gram Sabha, with all the voters as its members. The local structure goes up to the district level—a group of Gram Panchayats form a Panchayat Samiti or Block or Mandal. All the Panchayat Samitis or Mandals together constitute the Zilla Parishad which consists of elected members.
- Lok Sabha members, Local MLAs and officers are also members of the Zilla Parishad. Its Chairperson is the political head of the Parishad.

Urban areas local bodies:

Municipalities are set up in towns. Big cities are constituted into Municipal Corporations. Both are controlled by elected bodies consisting of people's representatives. Municipal chairperson is the political head of the Municipality. The head

Democracy and Diversity (Chapter 3)

Homogeneous Society:

A society that has similar kinds of people, especially where there are no significant ethnic differences, for example, Germany and Sweden.

'Migrant':

Anybody who shifts from one region or country to another region within a country or to another country, usually for work or other opportunities, is called migrant.

Civil Rights Movement:

Led by Martin Luther King Jr., this movement lasted from 1954-1968. The movement refers to a set of events and reform movements aimed at abolishing legal racial discrimination against African-Americans. This movement practiced non violent methods of civil disobedience against racially discriminatory laws and practices.

Black Power Movement:

This movement emerged in 1966 and lasted till 1975. It was a more militant and anti-racist movement. The Black Power Movement advocated even violence, if necessary, to end racism in the US.

Incident of two US athletes who protested at Mexico Olympics in 1968:

Tommie Smith and John Carlos, the US athletes received their medals wearing only a pair of black socks with no shoes to represent Black poverty. The black-gloved and raised clenched fists were meant to symbolize Black Power. They were responding to social divisions and social inequalities. With this gesture their intention was to draw international attention to racial discrimination in the United States. Peter Norman wore a human rights badge on his shirt during the ceremony to show his support to the two Americans. The medals were taken back from Tommie Smith and John Carlos because the International Olympic Association held both of them guilty of violating the Olympic spirit by making a political statement.

Origins of Social differences:

- **Accident of birth:** We don't choose to belong to our community. We belong to it simply because we were born into it. We experience social differences based on accident of birth in our everyday lives.
- **Based on choices:** Some of the differences are based on our choices. Some people are atheists. They don't believe in God or any religion. Some people choose to follow a religion other than the one in which they were born. Most of us choose to study a subject of our interest and an occupation where we can excel. All these lead to formation of social groups that are based on our choices.

Overlapping:

Overlapping social differences create possibilities of deep social divisions and tensions. In overlapping, one kind of social difference becomes more important than the other and the people start feeling that they belong to a different community.

For example, in Northern Ireland, class and religion overlap each other. If you are Catholic, you are likely to be poor.

suffering a history of discrimination.

Catholics and Protestants have had conflicts in Northern Ireland.

Cross-cutting:

Cross-cutting social differences are easier to accommodate. In cross-cutting, groups that share a common interest on one issue, are sometimes on different sides on different issues.

For example, in Netherlands, class and religion tend to cut across each other. Catholics and Protestants are about equally likely to be poor or rich. There are no conflicts in the Netherlands.

Factors determining the outcome of politics of social divisions are:

- **How people perceive their identities.** If people see their identities in exclusive terms, it becomes difficult to accommodate. As long as people in Northern Ireland saw themselves as only Catholic or Protestant, their differences were difficult to reconcile. It is easier if identities are complimentary with national identity. This helps to stay together.
- **How political leaders raise demands of any community.** It is easier to accommodate demands that are within the constitutional framework and are not at the cost of another community. The demand for 'only Sinhala' was at the cost of the interest and identity of the Tamil community in Sri Lanka.
- **How Government reacts to demands of different groups.** If the rulers are willing to share power and accommodate the reasonable demands of minority community, as in Belgium, social divisions become less threatening for the country. But if the demand is suppressed in the name of national unity, as in Sri Lanka, the end result is quite opposite. Such attempts at forced integration sow the seeds of disintegration.

Gender, Religion and Caste (Chapter 4)

Feminist:

A woman or a man, who believes in equal rights and opportunities for women and men, is called a feminist.

Feminist Movements are radical women's movements aiming at attaining equality for women in personal and family life and public affairs. These movements have organized and agitated to raise channels for enhancing the political and legal status of women and improving their educational and career opportunities.

Patriarchal society:

A patriarchal society is essentially male dominated. The line of descent is traced through the father. Men are valued more in terms of work they do and the place they hold in society. This gives them more power than women.

Communal politics:

When the demands of one religious group are formed in opposition to another and when State power is used to establish domination of one religious group over the rest, this manner of using religion in politics is called communal politics.

Discrimination against women:

- In studies girls mostly perform better than boys, but they drop out simply because parents prefer to spend their resources on their boys' education. A smaller proportion of girls go for higher studies.
- On an average, a woman works more than an average man everyday. Since much of her work is not paid for, therefore often not valued.
- The Equal Wages Act provides for equal wages for equal work. But in almost all areas of work from sports to cinema, from factories to fields, women are comparatively paid less.
- The child sex ratio (number of girl children per thousand boys) is very low. In India the national average is 927. In some places it is as low as 850 or even 800, because parents prefer to have sons so they get the girl child aborted before her birth.
- In urban areas, women are unsafe. Even in their homes they suffer from beating, harassment and other forms of domestic violence.

Caste inequalities in India:

Caste has not disappeared from contemporary India and caste division is special to India. Even now most people marry within their own caste. The caste groups that had access to education under old system have done well, whereas those groups that did not have access to education have lagged behind. There is a large presence of 'upper caste' among the urban middle classes in our country. Caste continues to be linked to economic status as is evident from National Sample Survey. The average economic status of caste groups still follows the old hierarchy—the 'upper' castes are best off, the Dalits and Adivasis are worst off and the backward classes are in between. The upper castes are heavily over represented among the rich while the lower castes are under-represented. The SC, ST and OBC together account for about two-thirds of India's population.

Status of women's representation in India's legislative bodies:

The one way to ensure that women related problems get adequate attention is to have more women as elected representatives. To achieve this, it is legally binding to have a fair proportion of women in the elected bodies.

- Panchayati Raj in India has reserved one-third seats in Local Government bodies for women.
- In India, the proportion of women in legislature has been very low. The percentage of elected women members in Lok Sabha is not even 10 per cent and in State Assemblies less than 5 per cent. Only recently, in March 2010, the women's reservation bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha ensuring 33% reservation to women in Parliament and State Legislative bodies.

Religion and politics in India:

Gandhiji said, "Religion can never be separated from politics". By religion he did not mean any particular religion like Hinduism or Islam, but moral values and ethics drawn from religion to guide politics. Religion in politics is not as dangerous as it may seem to us. Ethical values of each religion can play a major role in politics. According to human

rights groups, most of the victims of communal riots in our country are from religious minorities. Government can take special steps to protect them. These instances show a relationship between religion and politics. People should be able to express in politics their needs, interests and demands as members of a religious community. Thus, it is the responsibility of those whose political power is able to regulate the practice of religion, to prevent discrimination and oppression.

Reasons which have contributed to changes in caste system:

- Efforts of political leaders and social reformers like Gandhiji, B.R. Ambedkar who advocated and worked to establish a society in which caste inequalities are absent.
- Socio-economic changes such as: urbanization; growth of literacy and education; occupational mobility; weakening of landlord's position in the village; breaking down of caste hierarchy; have greatly contributed.
- The Constitution of India prohibited any caste-based discrimination.
- Provision of fundamental rights has played a major role because these rights are provided to all citizens without any discrimination.
-

Popular Struggles and Movements (Chapter 5) – to be discussed in class

Political Parties (Chapter 6)

A party that secures atleast 6 per cent of the total votes in Lok Sabha elections or Assembly Elections in four States and wins atleast four seats in the Lok Sabha, is recognised as a 'National party'.

A party, that secures atleast 6 per cent of the total votes in an election to the Legislative Assembly of a State and wins atleast two seats, is recognized as a 'State party'.

Tabulate four national parties and four regional parties of India.

National Parties:

Indian National Congress; BJP (Bharatiya Janta Party); CPI (Communist Party of India); CPI (M) (Communist Party of India —Marxist).

Regional Parties:

Akali Dal (Punjab); DMK (Tamil Nadu); RJD (Rashtriya Janta Dal) (Bihar); Shiv Sena (Maharashtra).

Components of a political party are:

- The leaders,
- active members and
- the followers.

Partisanship:

A partisan is a person who is strongly committed to a party, group or faction. As parties (political) are about a part of the society, they involve 'partisanship'.

Role of an opposition party:

Opposition parties mobilize opposition to the government. It puts forward its own views in Parliament and criticizes the government for its failures. By doing this, it keeps a check on the ruling party.

Source of inspiration of Bharatiya Janata Party:

The source of inspiration of Bharatiya Janata Party is the ancient Indian culture and values. Cultural nationalism (Hindutva) is an important element in its conception of Indian nationhood and politics.

Source of inspiration of Bahujan Samaj Party:

The Bahujan Samaj Party draws inspiration from the ideas and teachings of Sahu Maharaj, Mahatma Phule, Periyar Ramaswami Naicker and Babasaheb Ambedkar. It stands for the interest and welfare of the dalits and other oppressed people.

Ideology of Indian National Congress:

Under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian National Congress sought to build a modern secular democratic republic in India. The party propagates secularism and welfare of the weaker sections and minorities of society. It supports new economic reforms but with a human face.

There are three kinds of party systems as given below:

1. **One-party system.** In some countries only one party is allowed to control and run the government. For example, in China only the Communist Party is allowed to rule.
2. **Two-party system.** In this system, several parties may exist, contest the elections and win a few seats in the national legislatures. But only two main parties have a serious chance of winning majority of seats to form government. For example, The USA and the UK.
3. **Multi-party system.** In this system, the government is formed by various parties coming together in a coalition. When several parties in a multi-party system join hands for the purpose of contesting elections and winning power, it is called an alliance or a front. For example, in India there were three major alliances in 2004 parliamentary elections—the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) and the Left Front. This system on one hand

leads to political instability but at the same time, allows for a variety of interests and opinions to enjoy political representation.

Efforts to reform political parties are:

1. The Constitution has been amended to prevent elected MLAs and MPs from changing parties. Now if any elected MLA or MP changes his party, he/she will lose his/her seat in the Legislative Assembly or Parliament. This amended law has helped to bring down the number of defections.
2. The Supreme Court has passed an order to reduce the influence of money and criminals. Now it has become mandatory for every candidate, who contests election, to file an affidavit giving details of his assets and criminal cases pending against him. This has helped in making this information available to the public.
3. The Election Commission has passed an order making it necessary for political parties to hold their organisational elections and file their Income-tax Returns.

Role of money and muscle power grows during elections:

Since focus of the parties is on winning elections, they use short-cuts to win the elections. They nominate candidates who have or can raise lot of money. In some cases, parties support criminals who can win elections. Thus the role of rich people and big companies in the democratic process has been a cause of worry.

Dynastic succession:

Most political parties do not practice open and transparent procedures for their functioning. So there are very few ways for an ordinary worker to rise to the top in a party. Those who happen to be the leaders are in a position of unfair advantage as they favor people close to them or even their family members.

In many parties, the top positions are always controlled by members of a particular family, which is unfair to other members of the party, and bad for democracy.

Functions of Political Party:

- **Contesting Elections.** Political parties contest elections.
- **Policies.** Political parties put forward different policies and programmes so that the voters can choose from them. The policies and programmes of the Ruling Party are expected to be followed by the government.
- **Making Law.** Political parties play a decisive role in making laws for the country.
- **Formation of Government.** Political parties form and run governments. The executive body is formed by people from the ruling party.
- **Playing Opposition.** A party which does not get majority or come under the majority coalition, needs to play the role of opposition.
- **Shaping Public Opinion.** Political parties shape public opinion. They do so by raising and highlighting issues in the

- **Providing Access to Government Machinery.** Political parties provide people access to government machinery and welfare schemes implemented by governments.

Outcomes of Democracy (Chapter 7)

Democracy produces an accountable, responsive and legitimate government:

A democracy is concerned with ensuring that people have the right to choose their rulers and have control over the rulers.

When possible and necessary, citizens should be able to participate in decision-making in a democracy. Democracy ensures that decision making is based on norms and procedures. A citizen has the right and the means to examine the process of decision making. Thus democracy entails transparency.

For a democracy to produce an accountable, responsive and legitimate government, it must ensure the following—

Regular, free and fair elections; Open public debate on major policies and legislation's; Citizens' right to be informed about government policies; A government free from corruption.

Two conditions necessary for a democracy to achieve harmonious society:

Democracy must fulfill the following two conditions in order to achieve a harmonious social life:

1. Majority and minority opinions are not permanent. Democracy is not simply rule by majority opinion. The majority needs to work with the minority so that government may function to represent the general view.
2. Rule by majority does not become rule by majority community in terms of religion or race or linguistic groups, etc. Democracy remains democracy so long as every citizen has a chance of being in majority at some point of time. No individual should be debarred from participating in a democracy on the basis of religion, caste, community, creed and other such factors..

Outcomes of democracy:

There are certain things that democracy must provide.

1. In a democracy people have the right to choose their rulers and people will have control over them. Whenever possible and necessary, citizens should be able to participate in decision-making, that affects them all.
2. It is right to expect democracy to produce a government that follows procedures and is accountable to people. Democratic government develops mechanisms for citizens regular, free and fair elections, open public debate on major policies and legislation's, and citizens' right to information about the government and its functioning.

Democracy is a better form of government than others:

- Based on the idea of deliberation and negotiation. Thus the necessary delay in implementation.

- Decisions are acceptable to people and are more effective.
- A citizen has the right and the means to examine the process of- decision-making. There is transparency.
- Democratic government is legitimate government, people's own government.
- There is inability of democracy to achieve higher economic growth which is a cause of worry.
- Ability to handle differences, decisions and conflicts is a positive point of democratic regimes.
- Democracy has strengthened the claims of the disadvantaged and discriminated castes for equal status and equal opportunity.

Dignity and freedom of citizens are best guaranteed in a democracy:

1. **Dignity of women.** The one way to ensure that women related problems get adequate attention is to have more women as elected representatives. To achieve this, it is legally binding to have a fair proportion of women in the elected bodies. Panchayati Raj in India has reserved one-third seats in local government bodies for women. In March 2010, the Women's Reservation Bill was passed in the Rajya Sabha ensuring 33% reservation for women in Parliament and State legislative bodies.
2. **Democracy has strengthened the claims of disadvantaged and discriminated castes.** When governments are formed, political parties usually take care that representatives of different castes and tribes find a place in it. Some political parties are known to favour some castes. Democracy provides for equal status and opportunities for all castes.
3. **Democracy transforms people from the status of a subject into that of a citizen.** A democracy ensures that people will have the right to choose their rulers and people will have control over the rulers.
4. **A citizen has the right and the means to examine the process of decision-making.** There is transparency in a democracy like India. In October 2005, the Right to Information (RTI) law was passed which ensures all its citizens the right to get all the information about the functions of the government departments.

Challenges to Democracy (Chapter 8)

Challenge:

A challenge is a difficulty that carries within it an opportunity for progress.

The challenges faced by democracy are:

- **Foundation challenge;**

- Challenge of expansion;
- Challenge of deepening of democracy.

Political reform:

All the suggestions or proposals about overcoming various challenges to democracy are called democratic reforms or political reforms

Challenges faced by countries which do not have a democratic form of government:

1. These countries face the foundation challenge of making the transition to democracy and then instituting democratic government.
2. They also face the challenge of bringing down the existing non-democratic regime, and keeping the military away from controlling the government.
3. Such countries have to make great efforts to establish a sovereign and functional State.

Three challenges faced by democracy:

- **Foundation challenge.** It relates to making the transition to democracy and then instituting democratic government. It involves bringing down the existing non-democratic regime, keeping military away from controlling government and establishing a sovereign and functional State.
- **Challenge of expansion.** It involves applying the basic principle of democratic government across all the regions, different social groups and various institutions. It pertains to ensuring greater power to local governments, extension of federal principle to all the units of the federation, inclusion of women and minority groups, etc. Most established democracies, e.g., India and US, face the challenge of expansion.
- **Challenge of deepening of democracy.** This challenge involves strengthening of the institutions and practices of democracy. It means strengthening those institutions that help people's participation and control in the government. It aims at bringing down the control and influence of rich and powerful people in making governmental decisions.

Broad guidelines for political reforms:

1. As legal-constitutional changes by themselves cannot overcome challenges to democracy, democratic reforms need to be carried out mainly by political activists, parties, movements and politically conscious citizens.
2. Any legal change must carefully look at what results it will have on politics. Generally, laws, that seek a ban on something are rather counter-productive; for example, many states have debarred people who have more than two children from contesting Panchayat elections. This has resulted in denial of democratic opportunity to many poor women, which was not intended. The best laws are those which empower people to carry out democratic reforms; for example, the Right to Information Act which acts as a watchdog of democracy by controlling

3. Democratic reforms are to be brought about principally through political parties. The most important concern should be to increase and improve the quality of political participation by ordinary citizens.
4. Any proposal for political reforms should think not only about what is a good solution, but also about who will implement it and how. Measures that rely on democratic movements, citizens organizations and media are likely to succeed.



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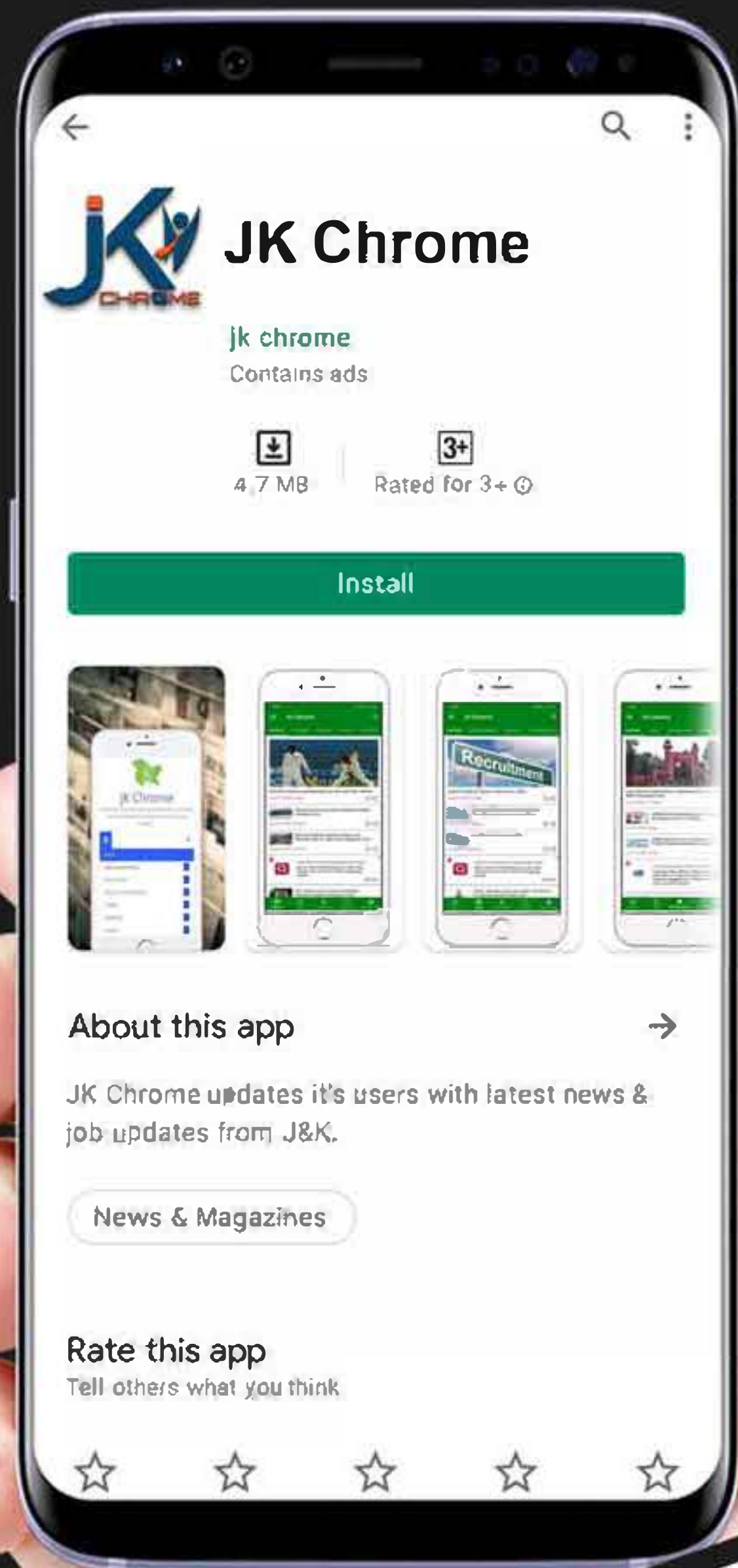
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