



Green Schools Network

ACTIVITY SHEET

February 2009

Why talk about Environment and Democracy?



Democracy is defined as the *government by the people. It is a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system. It can be considered as a state of society characterized by formal equality of rights and privileges.*

Democratic countries with strong public participation are often considered best at identifying and reacting to environmental problems. This is so as democracies empower citizens to affect the decision making process and hold the government officials, corporate authorities and other individuals accountable. Democratic freedom gives people the right to access information such as pollution reports, budgets etc. Through democracy citizens are able to protect their environmental interests.

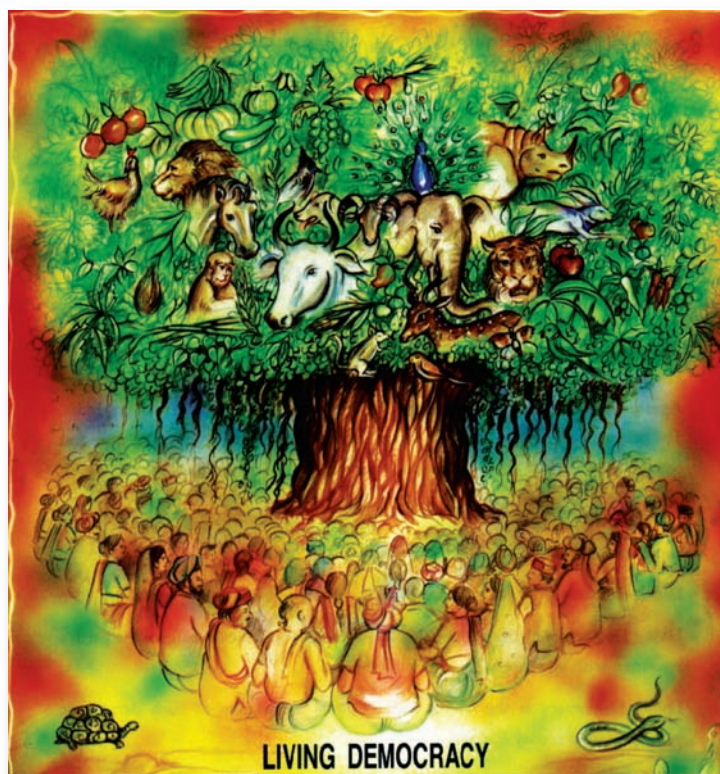
Name.....

School Name

Class..... Date.....

Gobar Gyan:

Environment plays a crucial role in the development of a country. If development takes place without keeping in mind the environmental implications then the consequences can be disastrous. Democracy acts as a binding force between development and the environment. It empowers the citizens through rights to properly manage the resources of the country that leads to development.



Public consciousness to save and protect the environment increased only in the past few decades. Laws to protect the environment have been present since the time of the British.

For example, article 48(a) directs the State to take strong measures not only for environment protection but also work actively for its improvement. Article 51(a) incurs a corresponding duty on the citizen to do the same.



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Activity 1: We all witnessed this year's elections and their surprising results. All political parties claimed to work for the betterment of the country. But did they talk about how they would try to deal with the various environmental issues troubling the country? Did they promise to carry out the function they have been so clearly been told to do under Section 48 (a) of the constitution?

Elections aroused the country's enthusiasm. You flipped through the newspapers, watched the news and heard the politicians. Do you remember the promises and commitments made by them to recovering our country's health by improving the environment? Complete the following table:

Name of Politician	Political Party	Environmental Issues raised
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____



Activity 2: Interview five people; make sure they voted this year! Ask them to prioritize the environmental issues given below. Each person has to choose 3 issues assigning a number to each issue, number 1 for the issue that is the most important to him and 3 which is the least important. These people should belong to different socio-economic strata of the society.

The purpose of this interview is that you have to find what environmental considerations voters keep in mind when they are going to vote and if these considerations are present, how they change with economic status.

You could interview:

- 1) A retired government servant
- 2) A person working in the private sector – like in a company
- 3) A person presently working in the public sector
- 4) Your domestic help or any one amongst them who voted.
- 5) A self employed person

The issues are: Water

Electricity

Waste Disposal — household waste and sewage treatment facilities

Pollution — water, air etc.

Provision of Public Transport

Others

If the voter chooses the other option ask the person to mention which other issue not mentioned here does he think is important.

Voter 1 Retired Government Official	Voter 2 Person working in Private Sector	Voter 3 Person working in Public Sector	Voter 4 Self Employed Person	Voter 5 Domestic Help/ Anyone they know
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Activity 3: By now you know what environmental issues the government has raised and what issues the voters want to be resolved. Compare the two. Which politician of which party addressed the problem of which voter?

For example: If the retired government official has rated water as its most important environmental consideration and Politician X has talked about solving the water problem, then write name of politician X and his party below. Also write retired government official in the corresponding voter column.



Complete the table:

Name of Politician	Political Party	Voter
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____

Activity 4: If you want to do more analysis see if out of the 5 environmental issues given above are there any issues that neither the government nor the voter has chosen. If yes, which ones are they?

Now go online and search on how they are effecting the environment and find out what could be the consequences if the government does not take them up seriously. You could also look at the archives of Gobar Times by logging on to www.gobartimes.org.



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