Sentinels of Democracy
SENTINELS
OF
DEMOCRACY
Credits

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Introduction to Lawtoons 1
Messages & Acknowledgement 2
from Election Commission of India
Curators' Corner 6
A Day at the Parlour 7
The Acceptance 15
One Vote 23
An Important Event 31
Treasure Hunt 39
Kamala 51
Father’s Devotion 73
The concept of Lawtoons is simple: to create interesting cartoons on laws and policies. Graphics are one of the oldest forms of story-telling known to human civilization and communicate effectively to people of all ages. Through the medium of comics and storytelling, we create Lawtoons, depicting information about citizenship, democracy, laws and rights. The information that most people often find intimidating and uninteresting is catered to them through a medium that children and grown-ups enjoy reading. Through Lawtoons we are working to create a more empowered society in a way that is interesting and engaging for the audiences!
FOREWORD

The Election Commission of India has made significant, well-planned and innovative efforts to reach out to the remotest parts of the country to generate awareness, educate, motivate and encourage voting and electoral participation.

As part of the effort to create unique and innovative tools for qualitative education and awareness on voting, the ECI decided to develop a comic book “Sentinels of Democracy”.

In order to make people aware of the process of elections in a natural and humorous way, the Chief Electoral Officer of Gujarat undertook the task of preparing a comic compendium in collaboration with Ahmedabad based Research Foundation for Governance in India (RFGII). Lawtoons is a unique project, perhaps the first of its kind, to simplify laws of India in an interesting and humorous way.

This compilation contains stories from the length and breadth of India and has attempted to give a glimpse of what makes the Indian elections so unique! It touches upon the lives of people who put untiring efforts towards elections - from booth level officers to youth volunteers; it gives answers to those who doubt whether their one vote actually makes any difference; it talks about citizens who make tremendous efforts and sacrifice to make their vote count. Each of these stories is illustrated by a different artist – with enthusiasm for electoral participation.

We are proud to present to the reader these diverse stories – truly symbolizing the Indian spirit – which come together as a vibrant narrative of elections in India.

(Dr. Nasim Zaidi)
The Election Commission has been making systematic and innovative efforts to generate awareness among voters, motivate them and encourage voting and electoral participation and has created a large body of literature & handbooks in this regard. However, a need was felt for a simple, comic book which would not only entertain but also would inform about the basic principles of electoral participation. This book fully succeeds in serving that purpose.

The Chief Electoral Officer, Gujarat’s efforts are praiseworthy in preparing this Innovative Book which helps in imparting qualitative education and spreading awareness on Voting in a unique way.

This project of preparing a comic compendium called ‘Sentinels of Democracy’ undertaken in collaboration with Research Foundation for Governance in India (RFGI) is first of its kind.

The compilation attempts to highlight the glimpses of what makes the Indian elections so unique. It also throws light on the sacrifice, ceaseless and tireless efforts of the election machinery. It has attempted to convince each voter that his or her vote counts. The artists have performed a commendable job.

I congratulate all those who have contributed in preparing this wonderful Compilation.

A. K. Joti
Election Commissioner
MESSAGE

The Election Commission has been making innovative efforts to generate awareness among voters and to educate them through a programme called Systemic Voter's Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP). To add humour in these efforts, the Election Commission decided to prepare a comic book and collaborated with the Ahmedabad based Research Foundation for Governance in India (RFGi) to complete this project. In this context, the Chief Electoral Officer, Gujarat has come up with this voter-friendly compilation called 'Sentinels of Democracy'.

It is a unique compilation, first of its kind. This comic book not only tells stories of Indian elections in an interesting way but also gives glimpses of efforts put in and sacrifices made by people who are the backbone in the process of conducting of election. It fully succeeds in serving its purpose of conveying basic laws in a simplified way. All the stories have been wonderfully illustrated.

My hearty felicitations to Chief Electoral Officer, Gujarat, RFGi and especially all the artists who have produced this illuminating publication.

O.P. Rawat
Election Commissioner
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Election Commission under its flagship SVEEP program has been endeavoring to educate the voters about the electoral process. With a view to actively involve various stakeholders connected with electoral process, the Election Commission had constituted various technical committees. The task of one such committee was to focus on future voters and to educate them about electoral process. Chief Electoral Officer, Gujarat, who was entrusted with the responsibility of heading this particular committee, came up with the unique idea of using cartoons to educate the school children about the electoral process with fun and ease. This book is not only entertaining but also explains the electoral process in a simple and engaging way. The efforts put in developing the stories, illustrations and overall layout of this compendium are commendable. I am sure that the topics covered in this booklet will be very useful in bringing awareness and understanding about the electoral process among the people.

I would like to record my appreciation to the curators for preparing the ‘Sentinels of Democracy’ and congratulate CEO, Gujarat and his team for this wonderful initiative.

(Umesh Sinha)
Deputy Election Commissioner
When we got the opportunity to create Lawtoons on electoral awareness for Election Commission of India, we were thrilled! We have always believed that important laws and policies affecting us all need to be made simple and interesting and we are so honoured to be associated with the Commission for this purpose.

‘Sentinels of Democracy’ is very close to our hearts! After each meeting with the Commission, both of us would come back inspired from the incidents, statistics and nuances that the officials would share with us. We wanted to make sure we do our best to capture the amazing feats of the Commission and represent them most adequately. We created characters that are relatable and realistic, developed stories that are from all across our country – unique and diverse as its geography. That is also the reason why even while looking for an artist who could illustrate the stories, we brought together artists from across the country – such that they could capture the nuances of the places and the characters.

We sincerely hope that this compendium successfully reaches the cross section of our country and aids the work of the Commission in spreading awareness about elections and democracy while encouraging citizens to go out and vote.

Kanan Dhru & Kelly Dhru
There is a general trend in our society not to get young women registered as electors until they are married.

The belief that since girls are to be married young and would change address to in-law’s address thereafter, there is no need to register them at parent’s address is predominant in almost all states.

Unfortunately, even after marriage the need to get them registered is often overlooked; thus they lose out on exercising their rightful franchise.

Therefore, one part of this story dwells on such issues and questions what true empowerment really means.

The other part of this story explores the issue of whether all private companies and organizations should be closed on the day of voting to enable staff to vote? The answer is a categorical Yes!

A business, trade, industrial undertaking or any other establishment is required to give a paid holiday to its employees who are eligible voters on the polling day as per Section 135B of the Representation of the People’s Act.
SURESH!!!

COMING MADAM!

TO THE PARLOUR SURESH.

SURESH, WHY ARE THE ROADS EMPTY? SOME HOLIDAY?

VOTING DAY MADAM!

ELECTIONS? UGH, WHO BOTHERS?
I also got my voter’s registration done Madam!

You? But aren’t you from Patna?

Yes Madam, but now I’m here only no?

The officer of the Election Commission told me I couldn’t have two voter cards. I had to choose between Patna and here!

Which reminds me Madam, can I go vote today afternoon?

Really Suresh? If you want a holiday, just say so! As if one vote will make a difference!

You never know Madam...

Oh look! The parlor’s open, thank God!

Good morning Ashaji!

One mani-padi.
AND ONLY REKHA AS MY THERAPIST PLEASE.

PLEASE TAKE A SEAT ASHAJI, REKHA WILL BE WITH YOU SHORTLY.

TODAY IS THE VOTING DAY AND IT IS MY RIGHT TO VOTE!

YOU HAVE KEPT THE PARLOUR OPEN AGAINST THE LAW!

OH, IT’S REKHA!

BUT REKHA, WE ALREADY TOLD YOU THAT YOU ARE FREE TO GO BEFORE AND AFTER YOUR WORKING HOURS...

HOW CAN I GO IF THE PARLOUR OPENS BY NINE AND CLOSES BY SEVEN?

I CAN’T TAKE AN UNPAID LEAVE BECAUSE I CAN’T AFFORD TO LOSE A DAY’S PAY!
LOOK!

THE ELECTION COMMISSION'S LAW PROVIDES THAT EVERY EMPLOYER, PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, HAS TO GIVE TIME OFF TO IT'S EMPLOYEES TO VOTE...

NOT ONLY ME...

WE SHOULD ALL GO OUT TO VOTE TODAY!

SHHH!

THE THINGS WE TAKE FOR GRANTED! WHERE I AM FROM, THE ELECTION COMMISSION CAN ONLY SEND US AN EVM ON THE RIVER ON A BOAT!
Look Rekha, we can't do anything. If you want to go, then go at your own expense. Keep your opinions out of this parlour! Right now, Ashaji is waiting for you and you're on duty.

Ahem!

Huh?

What?

Is it okay if I take Rekha out instead of getting my mani-pedi?

Rekha, you're a fierce woman.

Fighting for your rights... I wish everyone could be like that.

But it's not true that we city people have things easy.
I got married very early and have to fight for many things at home even today!

Voting has nothing to do with this.

Really? Then why are you even taking me to the polling booth?

I don’t know...

Hear me out Rekha, I am not a registered voter...

My parents did not register me because they thought I should do it at my husband’s house after marriage.
WHEN I GOT MARRIED NOBODY IN THE HOUSE THOUGHT IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR WOMEN TO VOTE.

TO SEE YOU FIGHTING IN THE PARLOUR I FELT LIKE I WAS MISSING OUT ON SOMETHING IN LIFE!

HAHA, YOU'RE MISSING OUT ON THE BIG FESTIVAL OF DEMOCRACY!

OH, THERE IT IS! YOU CAN DROP ME OFF HERE.

ASHAJI, MAYBE IT'S TIME YOU STOPPED WAITING FOR OTHERS TO DECIDE FOR YOU!

LET'S MAKE SURE YOU VOTE NOW SUresh, TAKE THE CAR TO YOUR POLLING BOOTH.

ALSO, HOW DID YOU REGISTER FOR YOUR VOTER ID?

WELL MADAM, HAVE YOU HEARD OF A FORM-6? IT'S A FORM FOR REGISTERING YOU AS A VOTER.
The Acceptance

This story is about the significant directions and efforts of the Commission for inclusion of communities/persons who are identified as excluded.

For example, if a person who is homeless, has been living on the streets or any other public place without a roof on his/her head for more than three days at the same location, then the Election Commission of India recognizes such a person as an ordinary resident of that location and considers them eligible for electoral registration and voting.

The emphasis on electoral participation by all walks of voters, from all communities, castes, creeds, ethnicities, genders, etc. is the hallmark of the ECI.

This story also educates about the ‘None of the Above (NOTA)’ option provided in the EVM.

Illustration: Ranjitha Rajeevan

Story: Kanan Dhru & Kelly Dhru
I have never believed in democracy. It has been almost 50 years of my silent rebellion against it.

Here I sit under a tree, a beggar of sorts, disabled, can’t walk, can barely see...

my day gets made if I get a meal to quench my hunger.

My possessions are few - a pair of clothes, a blanket, broken shoes, and a good luck charm from my mother, which I know is secretly looking over me.

I may not have much - but I know that I have a voice. At the time of every election - I express my voice by not casting my vote.
Oh - weren't we just talking about elections?

He tells me that he is working for a Civil Society Organisation for electoral awareness.

CSO

does not even take a moment's hesitation!

not accepting these 'gifts'!

I see a young man walking towards me. Why would someone like him want to speak to me?

In so many years, many politicians and their teams have approached me.

Luring me with money, sometimes alcohol or even gifts to make my vote for them.

And I'll take piece I'm completely convinced of my choice.

My will is too strong to be tricked by them.

Voting or not voting is a decision. But...

we need good and clean system for that - but where do we get that?
He asks me if I have an EPIC. I say I have read all epics, mind you, what do you mean if I have an epic?

“Arrey Chacha... I meant the voter-ID card.”

“I am homeless!”

“Chacha, is your name on the voter’s list?”

“I have been living next to this...”

...tree for many many years, my son. I have filled my registration form (Form Number 6) many years ago through the people from the Election Commission, who came and registered me.

They told me I can get registered if I have been staying at this place for more than 3 days, even though it is literally sleeping on the road.

This tree and me are...

“Arrey Chacha!”

“And since you were asking...

...inseparable”

Here is my EPIC

The boy gets very surprised. He sits down and starts talking to me. I must say that at this stage, I am feeling happy as someone is taking so much interest in my opinions. I tell him. He smiles.
He asks me if I will go and vote. I look away. Something wrong? He asks me. I am silent.

The country needs your vote, your participation.

Have you been to Sangli?

No, where is that?

In Maharashtra. That is where I am from...

But you still vote here

Yes, my EPIC is valid across the country, right and my name is in the Electoral List

But who do I vote for?

It is your choice. You can vote for any of the candidates

or you can vote for NOTA!
What do you mean?

In the voting machine,

There will be a None-of-the-above (NOTA) button,

You can press NOTA button if you do not wish to vote for any of the candidates.

'NOTA' option is to enable electors who do not wish to vote for any of the candidates to exercise their right not to vote for any candidate without violation of the secrecy of their decision.

I felt this could be a revolutionary thing in our democracy.
On the day of the vote, I silently walk to the booth.

The ink recognizes my existence, and I vote.

This time, I feel I truly celebrated the festival of democracy - I felt I made my voice heard - to those who will,

one day change the future of my country.
During every election, there are some people who wonder what difference a single vote can make, especially in a country whose voter population exceeds population of even some continents of the world!

This story is dedicated to busting the myth amongst all those who ask this question!

Illustration: Abhijeet Kini

Story: Kanan Dhru & Kelly Dhru
THE SUN WAS SHINING DOWN HARD. IT WAS A HOT SUMMER DAY IN A SMALL TOWN IN RAJASTHAN...

BUT THINGS WERE HEATING UP MAJORLY IN MURARI LAL'S OFFICE...

HOPE EVERYTHING IS IN PLACE!

HAVE I FORGOTTEN SOMETHING?

HE HAD FINALLY MANAGED TO SECURE A TICKET FROM HIS PARTY TO CONTEST THE ELECTIONS, AFTER YEARS OF WAITING.

1978

1999

TICKET

WELL, I HAVE LEFT NO STONE UNTURNED IN THIS CAMPAIGN! I HAVE MADE MY TEAM WORK REALLY HARD!

ON THE OUTSIDE, MURARI LAL WAS CONFIDENT -

ARREY, ISS BAR JEET HAMARI HOGI!!!
But on the inside, he was as nervous as he could get.

Gulp! But what if it doesn't work out?

Stop worrying and get some sleep!

Yes, Lajwanti, I think I will...phew, it's been a long day!

After all, everything was riding on the day of the voting! Will people vote for me?
FINALLY, THE DAY OF THE POLLS ARRIVES!
BLESS ME, O GODDESS! I SHALL SHOWER YOU WITH SWEETS IF I COME OUT OF THIS VICTORIOUS!

BUT MULA LAL'S ANXIETY WOULDN'T EASE -
WHAT IF - ? HAVE I - ? WON'T IT- ? ....

CHALO, I'M READY TO LEAVE FOR THE POLLING BOOTH, LET ME CALL - HUH!!!
WHERE'S MY CELL PHONE??

OH NO! I HAD KEPT IT ON SILENT LAST NIGHT!! I CAN'T FIND IT NOW!!!

IT'S RINGING, BUT I CAN'T FIND IT!! HELP!!!
SECRETARY JI, WE ARE GOING TO THE BOOTH IN HALF AN HOUR.

MAKE SURE ALL MEDIA IS COVERING MY VISIT.

LAJWANTI! LET'S GO! ARE YOU READY TO COME ALONG?

I DON'T HAVE FIVE MINUTES. I AM GOING TO LEAVE NOW. MAKE SURE YOU GO VOTE LATER.

GIVE ME JUST FIVE MINUTES!

GIVE ME BLESSINGS, MOTHER!

...BUT I CAN'T FIND MY EPIC.

YOU WILL MAKE IT MY SON...

OUR NAMES ARE IN THE ELECTORAL ROLLS, YOU CAN EVEN VOTE WITH YOUR PHOTO VOTER'S SLIP, WHICH I HAVE GIVEN TO LAJWANTI.
AND SO, THEY ARRIVED AT THE POLLING BOOTH. THE MEDIA WAS THERE, MAINTAINING THE REQUIRED DISTANCE OF 100 METERS FROM THE BOOTH.

MURARILAL PROUDLY CAST HIS VOTE...

THE REST OF THE DAY WENT BY INTERACTING WITH THE MEDIA. INTERVIEW AFTER INTERVIEW, MURARILAL ALREADY FELT LIKE A WINNER!
He reached home at half past five -

Oh, I'm so proud of my indelible ink!

Huh?

Arre Lajwanti, where is your ink?

I haven't voted.

Mother? Bans! Didn't you go and vote?

I... Err...

Gulp! I forgot to tell Bans! to pick up Lajwanti and my mother!!

Not to worry, sir! you will make it anyhow.

The voting just got over at 5 pm, oh no!

What difference will one vote make? You will win anyway!

Sigh! Yes, one vote wouldn't make much difference.
ON THE DAY OF THE COUNTING -

- AND IT HAS ALL BOILED DOWN TO THESE TWO CANDIDATES! MURARIJI HAS BEEN PERCEIVED AS A FAVOURITE HERE!

PLEASE! PLEASE! PLEASE!

WHAT AN UPSET! MURARIJI HAS LOST TO HIS OPPONENT! AND HE HAS LOST JUST BY ONE VOTE! UNBELIEVABLE!!

THIS LOOKS LIKE IT IS GOING TO BE A VERY VERY CLOSE CALL, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN!

OH NO... JUST ONE VOTE

MURARIJI, WOULD YOU LIKE TO SAY ANYTHING TO OUR VOTERS?

EVERY VOTE MAKES A DIFFERENCE. WHO KNOWS IT BETTER THAN ME!
On the day of polls, in our country itself there are a few who wonder how to find time from their hectic schedules to go out and vote.

Among those living outside India for work or studies, there must be many who might not even bother to give it a thought, as they could be suffering from the doubt whether Indian citizens who live outside India can vote at all in Indian elections?

Well, the answer is: Yes - they can!

Section 20A of Representation of The People Act 1950 says that overseas Indians can vote in the constituencies where their name appears in the voter’s list in India.

All they need as an identification document is their passport.

Illustration: Anish Daolagupu
Story: Kanan Dhru & Kelly Dhru
AT THE OFFICE OF AN INVESTMENT BANKING FIRM IN SINGAPORE

THIS MONDAY, WE FINALISE THE REPORT

SIR, I’LL BE GOING TO INDIA THIS WEEK. I HAVE AN URGENT EVENT TO ATTEND.

THEN YOU HAVE TO FINISH THE REPORT BY FRIDAY. THIS IS URGENT NIRAV!

OK SIR. IT WILL BE DONE.

BZZZ!! BZZZ!!

ABHAY: HEY NIRAV, YOU ARE JOINING US TONIGHT, RIGHT?
CAN'T. WORK DEADLINE. I WISH I COULD, NEXT WEEKEND FOR SURE.

DUDE IT'S MY BIRTHDAY! YOU HAVE TO COME PARTY AT LEAST FOR HALF AN HOUR.

OK! OK! - JUST BECAUSE IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY!

I'M SORRY BUT I HAVE TO LEAVE NOW.

YOU'RE SUCH A KILL-JOY NIRAV!

STILL, THANKS FOR COMING!

WE'LL MEET UP NEXT WEEK! PAKKA! I'LL CATCH YOU LATER!
SOMEBODY PARTIED HARD LAST NIGHT.

WAS WORKING

OH THE REPORT? BUT IT ISN'T DUE UNTIL MONDAY, RIGHT?

NO, I AM NOT IN TOWN ON MONDAY, SO HAVE TO FINISH IT NOW.

ARE YOU GETTING MARRIED OR SOMETHING?

HAHA, NO YAAR. JUST SOMETHING URGENT THAT I NEED TO TAKE CARE OF AT HOME.

MAY I COME IN SIR?
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DID IT

ALL RIGHT THEN, HAVE FUN IN INDIA.

AUTO!!
Entering the polling booth Nirav thought of his Dadaji.

KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA
WAHAAN PE KYA KARO GE?
AAJ TO SCHOOL SAB BANDH. VOTING HAI NA

AAPNE VOTE KIYA?

NAHIN RE. HUMAARA EK VOTE KYAA KAREGA.
BOLO, KIDHAR JAAYOSE?

VOTE KARNE.
KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA

ENTERING THE POLLING BOOTH NIRAV THOUGHT OF HIS DADAJI.
Dadaji, I remembered you and I voted.}

Nirav, you have to come with me today. Will you take me to KV?

Dadaji, I have to go play cricket.

This is for the nation, Nirav. We fought very hard to get us this right to decide the fate of the country.

Open the third drawer, my election card is there.

Every year I make sure our names are on the list. You will also have your name when you are 18.

How many years to go for you?

Seven years, Dadaji.

Come, let’s go.

Dadaji, I remembered you and I voted.
Treasure Hunt

The Election Commission of India makes significant, well-planned and appropriately designed efforts to reach out to the remotest parts of the country to generate awareness, educate, motivate and encourage voting and electoral participation. This story will take you into the depths of forests and to the heights of mountains, across the length and breadth of the country, to capture how the spirit of democracy drives electors and electoral functionaries to contribute their bit to the democracy that is India.

It also salutes the future torch bearers of our country, our youth, for their enthusiastic democratic participation.

Illustration: Soumya Rao, Anish Daolagupu (Pg. 44,45,47,48)

Story: Kanan Dhru & Kelly Dhru
YES DADAJI?

TUTUL BETA, SINCE MANY DAYS, I HAVE BEEN WANTING TO TELL SOMETHING TO YOU

I HAVE LEFT A KEY TO A TREASURE IN JHARKHAND, A PLACE I USED TO WORK MANY YEARS AGO. THAT NEEDS TO BE BROUGHT BACK.

ME?

I WANT YOU TO GO MEET KADAR AND GET IT!

I THINK NOBODY IS BETTER SUITTED THAN YOU. YOU HAVE TRAVELLED TO A LOT OF PLACES BUT HAVE NEVER SEEN OUR ANCESTRAL VILLAGE.
BUT DADAJI - MY COLLEGE, MY CLASSES?

THIS IS WHAT I ASK OF YOU, BETA. I HAVE BECOME TOO OLD AND REALLY WANT THIS MATTER SORTED.

ERM...

I AM ASKING FOR YOUR TRAIN TICKETS TO BE BOOKED.

I CAN'T BELIEVE I AM HAVING TO GO THROUGH THIS!!

TUTUL FINALLY ARRIVES AT SERWA - ONLY TO FIND THAT HIS DESTINATION IS VERY FAR AWAY.

WHERE IS THIS PLACE?

YOU WILL HAVE TO WALK FOR 5 KILOMETERS. THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO GET THERE.
GOOD TO MEET YOU, KADAR UNCLE.

ARREY TUTUL-BABA.. WHAT A PLEASANT SURPRISE.

I HAVE COME TO GET THE KEY MY GRANDFATHER LEFT HERE.

WHAT! I HAVE COME ALL THE WAY FOR NOTHING?

BUT THERE IS NO KEY.

HMM.. THIS PLACE IS DOOMED ANYWAY.

WHY? WHAT’S WRONG?

OUR MUKHIYA IS DEPRIVING VILLAGERS OF BASIC AMENITIES.

HE DOESN’T ALLOW US TO VOTE.

THE ELECTION COMMISSION SENDS ITS PEOPLE TO GET US REGISTERED BUT THE CHIEF JUST WOULDN’T LISTEN.

WHAT? LET ME GO AND SPEAK TO HIM.
BABA - ARE YOU SURE?

YES - I AM A CAMPUS AMBASSADOR APPOINTED BY THE COMMISSION IN MY COLLEGE. I CAN HELP! LET'S GO.

ARREY KADAR-BHAI, WELCOME

THIS IS GANGULY SIR'S GRANDCHILD, TUTUL FROM CALCUTTA.

WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?

I AM JUST HERE TO MEET YOU ALL.

TUTULBABA SPREADS AWARENESS ABOUT ELECTIONS

ELECTIONS? WHAT ARE THEY?

IT SEEMS THAT CHILDREN WANT TO HEAR YOUR STORIES. COME, SIT!

ELECTIONS MEANS THAT WE VOTE TO FORM A GOVERNMENT IN OUR COUNTRY. THROUGH THE PROCESS OF VOTING, EVEN THE REMOTEST VOICE IS HEARD ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

HOW?
DEEP IN THE FORESTS IN JUNAGADH DISTRICT, THERE IS AN ANCIENT TEMPLE OF LORD SHIVA.

69 YEARS OLD GURU BHARAT DAS IS THE ONLY PERSON LOOKING AFTER IT.

EVEN THE NEAREST VILLAGE IS 20 KMS AWAY.

BEYOND BHARAT DAS, THE ONLY INHABITANTS OF THE FOREST ARE WILD ANIMALS LIKE DEER, LEOPARDS AND LIONS!

THE PRIEST SURVIVES ON WHAT THE DEVOTEES TO THE TEMPLE BRING TO HIM.
ON THE UNPAVED ROAD LEADING TO THE TEMPLE, THERE IS A SMALL ROOM MADE BY THE FOREST DEPARTMENT — THE ONLY OTHER CONSTRUCTION IN THAT AREA.

DURING ELECTIONS, THIS BUILDING TURNS INTO A POLLING STATION FOR THE LONE VOTER IN THAT AREA — GURU BHARAT DAS.

ELECTRONIC VOTING MACHINE, SECRET VOTING COMPARTMENT ALL SET UP HERE!

THE POLLING STAFF FOLLOWS ALL THE PROCEDURES FOR THIS SINGLE VOTER POLLING STATION.

OF COURSE, THE PRIEST SHOWS HIS GRATITUDE BY NEVER MISSING TO CAST HIS VOTE ELECTION COMMISSION HAS TAKEN CARE OF ME. I WILL TAKE CARE OF MY DEMOCRACY.
Sadhu Guru Nath is a living example of one person changing the society for the better.

Can I meet Guru Nath?

Of course you can!

We do not believe in elections!

Elections can take our village to new heights.

Can I know a story about the big mountains?

That's what my second story is all about. It's set in Himalayas!

Himalayas!! The land of snow!!

Yes, indeed!
In Jammu and Kashmir the towns of Ralakling and Phema have a total of only 37 voters.

The polling stations for these villages are situated at around 13,500 feet above sea level.

In 1999 when the parliamentary elections were taking place, adverse weather effects grounded the helicopters that were supposed to transport the polling team.

Two teams of total twelve polling personnel from Election Commission set out on a historic journey – to cover 45 Kms by trekking – to reach the polling station at Phema and Ralakling.
This probably was the voters’ way of expressing their appreciation for the dedication of the poll personnel towards their national duty.
TUTUL BABA HAS NO RIGHT TO TELL US WHAT TO DO

OURS IS A BEAUTIFUL VILLAGE, AND WE ALL WORK VERY HARD

WE DO AGRICULTURE AND FARMING, AND TOIL EVERYDAY

I AGREE, BUT I AM ONLY TRYING TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH

BUT WE ARE HAPPY

SADLY, THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE VILLAGE HAS SUFFERED BECAUSE OF THIS

NO! OUR VILLAGE IS NOT A PART OF THE DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM

THE VILLAGERS ARE ALWAYS AFRAID AND DON’T HAVE ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES LIKE EDUCATION, WATER AND HEALTHCARE

THE LEADERS MUST REALISE THAT THEY SHOULDN’T LET THE VILLAGE SUFFER FOR THEIR PERSONAL GAIN
But I have been the best leader this village can get.

Maybe, but everyone has a right to choose how they want to be governed.

Next time the Election Commission sends its people, you must all register as voters.

It's all very simple. All you have to do is to fill Form Number 6.

How can we do that?

Tutul's journey got covered in a prominent newspaper.

My real treasure has been found.
This story is dedicated to the hundreds of thousands of Booth Level Officers (BLOs), who take up the colossal and painstaking exercise of identifying all eligible persons (citizen residents, above 18 years of age) and ensure that they get registered as voters.

This is the inspiring story of a female Booth Level Officer and a young and aspiring voter; this story will also serve as an illustrated guide to the process of registration and voting.

**Illustration:** Sandhya Prabhat, Anish Daolagupu (Pg. 56,57)

**Story:** Prateek Thomas, Kanan Dhru & Kelly Dhru
ARJUN, AMMA HAS TO GO A LITTLE EARLY TODAY. WE'LL READ THE REST WHEN I'M BACK, OKAY?

AMMA, CAN YOU MAKE POORI-CHANNA FOR DINNER TODAY?

AMMA WILL BE LATE TODAY, BUT I'LL MAKE IT TOMORROW. I PROMISE.

BE A GOOD BOY AND DON'T GIVE PAAJI ANY TROUBLE!
AMMA, I'M LEAVING WITH SURESH. I'LL BE BACK BY SIX.

YOU'RE LEAVING EARLY AND COMING LATE? ARE YOU ON ELECTION DUTY, AGAIN?

MA, YOU KNOW I HAVE TO, ALL TEACHERS DO!

BUT I HAVE MY DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENT AT FIVE THIRTY. HOW WILL I GO FOR THAT?

CAN'T WE RESCHEDULE IT FOR ANOTHER DAY?

THAT'S VERY EASY FOR YOU TO SAY, ISN'T IT?

I'LL FIGURE OUT SOMETHING, AMMA.
AMMA IS ANGRY AT ME.

SHE HAS HER DOCTOR’S APPOINTMENT TODAY, BUT I DON’T THINK I’LL BE BACK BY THEN.

HMMM, MAYBE YOU COULD CALL THE CLINIC AND MOVE HER APPOINTMENT.

SHE WASN’T VERY PLEASED WHEN I SUGGESTED THAT.

OH!

TRY TO GET HOME EARLY IF YOU CAN. IF NOT, WE’LL SEE.

I WILL.
Miss, why are you and the other teachers going out to houses in the evenings?

Who can answer Rajiv’s question?

All of you are going on election duty.

It is one of the biggest and most complex exercises done anywhere in the world.

That’s right.

Do you know what makes the elections in our country special?
India has 7 recognized national political parties, 42 recognized state political parties, and more than 2000 unrecognized political parties.

Election Commission of India used more than 1.4 million electronic voting machines.

4.6 million polling staff and about 2.5 million security personnel were deployed in more than 800,000 polling stations.

Over 2000 observers, 140,000 micro-observers, 4.5 million supervisory staff, and about 75,000 videographers in the same general election.

40,599 digital cameras, 119 special trains comprising 3060 coaches for transporting central police forces all over the country.

55 helicopters to do more than 600 sorties and airlift 6,800 security personnel and innumerable election materials.
COUNTLESS BUSES AND JEEPS, TRACTORS, MOTORCYCLES, BULLOCK CARRTS, MULES, AND CAMELS HELP WITH THE TRANSPORTATION OF MEN AND MATERIAL

NOT TO FORGET THE HUGE EXERCISES DONE IN THE PRE-POLL PERIOD

YOU ARE TRYING TO LOCATE ELIGIBLE OR MISSING VOTERS FROM WITHIN A POPULATION OF 1,210,193,422

SPREAD OVER A GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OF 3,287,240 SQ. KMS

DISTRIBUTED OVER 640 ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICTS, 5924 SUB-DISTRICTS, 7,935 TOWNS AND 640,867 VILLAGES

IT IS NO MEAN TASK, AND ALL EFFORTS HAVE TO BE MAMMOTH, NAY GIANTIC OR JUST INFINITELY COLOSSAL TO MATCH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE TASK AT HAND.
LAST DAY OF ELECTION DUTIES! SHALL WE LEAVE?

SAAB GHAR PE NAHIN HAIN.

YOU'RE BACK AGAIN? COME TOMORROW.

PLEASE COME! MY DAUGHTER HAS JUST TURNED EIGHTEEN, SHE'S BEEN WAITING TO ENROLL AS A VOTER.

I GOT MY VOTERS ID YEARS BACK... BUT I'M NOT SURE WHAT THE PROCESS IS NOW.

I'LL BE GLAD TO HELP HER WITH EVERYTHING.
SALMA, THIS IS KAMALA MISS. SHE'S A TEACHER AT THE HSS VIDYAPEETH AND IS WORKING AS A BOOTH LEVEL OFFICER.

HI, AKKA.

HELLO, SALMA.

SALMA, BECAUSE YOU COMPLETED 18 YEARS OF AGE ON FIRST JANUARY, YOU ARE ELIGIBLE AS A VOTER.

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED

AGE PROOF
1. BIRTH CERTIFICATE ISSUED BY MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY OR COMPETENT OFFICE
2. SCHOOL LEAVING CERTIFICATE
3. COPY OF CERTIFICATE OF CLASS 10 WITH DATE OF BIRTH
4. CERTIFICATE BY PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRES (PHC)
5. FOR VOTERS ABOVE 25 YEARS, GRAM PANCHAYAT CAN CERTIFY AGE

PROOF OF ORDINARY RESIDENCE
1. COPY OF EPIC OF PARENTS
2. BIRTH CERTIFICATE ISSUED BY THE MUNICIPAL AUTHORITY
3. PASSPORT
Your name will be added to the voter’s list.

I’ll submit your documents within the next few days.

How can I find out if my name has been enrolled?

You can go to the official website of the Election Commission and check there. It will have the electoral rolls of Assembly constituencies in India.

The address for the Election Commission’s website is www.ecilnic.in

But what about voters who are from a smaller city or town? How can they find this information?

The Booth Level Officer / Assistant Electoral Registration Officer in every area and e-gram centres provide this service, so voters can enquire there and find out too. The helpline number 1950 can also be used for the inquiry.
No person can register in more than one constituency.

OF COURSE, ALL SHE NEEDS TO DO IS TO FILE CLAIM APPLICATION IN THE NEW PLACE OF RESIDENT WITH EPIC NUMBER IN PART IV OF THE FORM NO 6. NO PERSON CAN REGISTER IN MORE THAN ONE CONSTITUENCY.

IS THERE A WAY TO TRANSFER HER NAME IN THE ELECTORAL ROLLS?

OF COURSE, ALL SHE NEEDS TO DO IS TO FILE CLAIM APPLICATION IN THE NEW PLACE OF RESIDENT WITH EPIC NUMBER IN PART IV OF THE FORM NO 6. NO PERSON CAN REGISTER IN MORE THAN ONE CONSTITUENCY.

BUT HOW WILL MY NAME BE REGISTERED IN THE VOTERS LIST? ISN’T IT FINALIZED?

THE ELECTORAL ROLLS ARE PREPARED THROUGH A PROCESS OF MULTIPLE REVISIONS.

LIKE ME, HUNDREDS OF OTHER OFFICERS GO FROM DOOR-TO-DOOR AND COLLECT INFORMATION ABOUT ELECTORS.

SO WHAT YOU’RE SAYING IS THAT THE ELECTORAL ROLLS ARE BEING CONTINUOUSLY UPDATED?

Indeed, and you can file any application for the addition, deletion, correction or transposition with the booth level officer/assistant electoral officer or electoral registration officer.

WOW, AND I USED TO THINK THIS WAS A ONCE-IN-FIVE-YEARS PROCESS!
Akka, in order to vote, I will need my voters ID, isn’t it?

First of all, your name must be in the voters list. Then, you can have either ‘electoral photo identity card’, ‘voters slip’, ‘passport’, ‘driver’s license’, as the proof of identity, to vote.

Once your name is added to the voters list, the election commission will issue an electoral photo identity card, like this, also called as EPIC.

But, when I go to college, will I have to get a new EPIC card there?

No. Once issued, EPIC remains valid for electoral identification throughout the country, even if you change base.
Salma, your vote is your invaluable right. Always remember this.

Never let anyone influence your vote by offer of money or a gift of any kind, and nor should you try to influence anyone’s vote.

Oh, it’s past five! I should be leaving.

Thank you so much for coming, akka.

It’s nothing, my dear. I was only doing my duty.

23
GOOD EVENING, DR. SRIHARAN’S CLINIC.

HELLO, MY MOTHER-IN-LAW, VASANTHI HAS AN APPOINTMENT WITH DR. SRIHARAN FOR 5:30. CAN WE RESCHEDULE IT FOR 6:30 TODAY?

AMMA, I’VE RESCHEDULED YOUR APPOINTMENT TO 6:30.

LET ME QUICKLY FRESHEN UP, AND WE’LL LEAVE.
HOW COME YOU'RE HOME SO EARLY?

AND WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THE KITCHEN?

I HAVE MADE CHANA PURI FOR ARJUN!

YOU KNOW YOU DON'T HAVE TO RESTRICT YOURSELF TO JUST THIS TIME. THE KITCHEN DOOR IS ALWAYS OPEN!
The law allows you to cast a tendered vote, a tendered ballot paper will be given to you and you will be required to sign your name on the list of tendered votes.
YOU CAN GO IN NOW.
DID YOU NOTICE THAT TWO WOMEN WERE ALLOWED FOR EVERY ONE MALE VOTER?

I THOUGHT THAT WAS REALLY COOL!

FINALLY I AM HAPPY I AM BORN A WOMAN!

WE HAD SO MUCH FUN VOTING TOGETHER!

LET'S MAKE A PACT TO VOTE EVERYTIME!

BUT I STILL WON'T TELL YOU WHO I VOTED FOR!
HI KAMALA AKKA! HOW ARE YOU?

I’M GOOD, SALMA. ARE YOU COMING FROM THE POLLING STATION?

I’M SO HAPPY TO HEAR THAT!

ARE YOU ON ELECTION DUTY TODAY TOO?

ARCHANA AND I JUST FINISHED VOTING. IT WAS HER FIRST TIME TOO.

I AM. MY MOTHER-IN-LAW HAS COME TO CAST HER VOTE.

IT WAS GOOD TO MEET BOTH OF YOU.

IT’S LOVELY TO SEE SUCH YOUNG GIRLS CHOOSING TO VOTE.

I’M GLAD YOU ARE WORKING WITH THE ELECTION COMMISSION.

THANK YOU, AMMA!
Father’s Devotion

The dedication of the team of the Election Commission of India as well as the commitment of the people of India make the elections very special!

This story, set in the North East region of India, tells one such tale of devotion of a father in adhering to his duty to cast a vote in spite of trying times at home. It also shows the way the EC team goes out of their way in facilitating voting, the highest citizenry duty, for each individual of the country.

Illustration: Treibor Mawlong

Story: Kelly Dhru & Tina Thomas

Courtesy: Belief In The Ballot
A VILLAGE IN MIZORAM

WE NEED THE MEDICINES FOR LALMAUANPUI TODAY ITSELF.

BUT IF I GO TO THE PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRE, I MAY NOT RETURN IN TIME FOR VOTING. VOTE CAN ONLY BE CAST TILL 4 PM.
HOW MANY MORE ARE WAITING OUTSIDE?
WE ARE CLOSING THE VOTING SOON. WE NEED TO INFORM THE VILLAGERS. ASK EVERYONE WHO HASN’T VOTED TO COME SOON.

SIR! THERE IS ONLY ONE PERSON LEFT - LAURINILIANA, BUT HE HAS GONE TO THE NEIGHBOURING VILLAGE TO GET MEDICINE FOR HIS DAUGHTER.

LET’S HOPE THAT HE COMES BEFORE 4 P.M.

NO, HE HASN’T CARRIED HIS MOBILE PHONE.

I DON’T KNOW WHEN HE WILL BE BACK.

BUT HE SAID HE WILL COME TO VOTE.
DO YOU THINK HE WILL COME?

I DON'T KNOW SIR. CAN YOU WAIT FOR SOME MORE TIME?

SORRY, WE CANNOT WAIT BEYOND 4 P.M. WE HAVE TO CLOSE THE POLLING AT 4 P.M.
HE IS COMING! HE IS COMING!

WHY ARE YOU CARRYING THESE MEDICINES? DIDN'T YOU GO HOME?

NO, SIR. I CAME HERE DIRECTLY.

OH!

I WILL SEND SOMEONE TO YOUR HOUSE WITH THESE MEDICINES WHILE YOU CAST YOUR VOTE.

NO, SIR. I WILL GO AFTER I HAVE VOTED.

IT'S OKAY. GIVE IT TO ME.
THANK YOU SO MUCH, SIR!

WE REALLY APPRECIATE YOUR DEDICATION AND SATISFIED THAT EVERY ELECTOR IN THE VILLAGE HAS VOTED.
When we got the opportunity to create Lawtoons on electoral awareness for Election Commission, we were thrilled! We have always believed that important laws and policies affecting us all need to be made simple and interesting and were so honoured to be associated with the Commission for this purpose.

'Sentinels of Democracy' is very close to our hearts! After each meeting with the Commission, both of us would come back inspired from the amazing incidents, statistics and nuances that the officials would share with us. We wanted to make sure we do our best to capture the amazing feats of the Commission and represent them more adequately. We created characters that were relatable and realistic, developed stories that were from all across our country – unique and diverse as its geography. That was also the reason why even while looking for an artist who could illustrate the stories, we brought together artists from across the country – such that they could capture the nuances of the places and the characters.

We sincerely hope that this compendium successfully reaches the cross section of our country and aids the work of the Commission in spreading awareness about elections and democracy while encouraging citizens to go out and vote.

Kanan Dhru & Kelly Dhru
Curators' Corner