

# 'We run the country'

More than ever, it is important to vote. *Vinay Somani* tells you why

## 1. No vote is a vote for the winner

It is critical to understand this. If you oppose a particular person, go and vote against that person; else you will be helping him / her to win. Hence the email that is doing the rounds regarding Article 49 (O) of the constitution — the Right to Vote for Nobody — (which is factually incorrect anyway) is a bad idea.

## 2. What information do you need to vote?

Indepth profiles of all candidates standing for election are available on the website of the Association for Democratic Reforms. There is no further information that you need to vote. Even if an ordinary Independent candidate wins, it is better for us and the system, as he / she will be able to work for the country without interference from a political party, and the bureaucrats are also able to work better without pressure and influence from political parties.

## 3. Voting encourages good candidates to stand

Good candidates must be supported, irrespective of whether they may win or not. It is essential that good candidates get a respectable number of votes, so that next time around, more good candidates are encouraged rather than embarrassed to stand for election.

## 4. Your vote is valuable because voting is voluntary

If voting was compulsory, you would have had to vote. But then your vote would have been even less relevant than now (when a lesser number of people are voting).

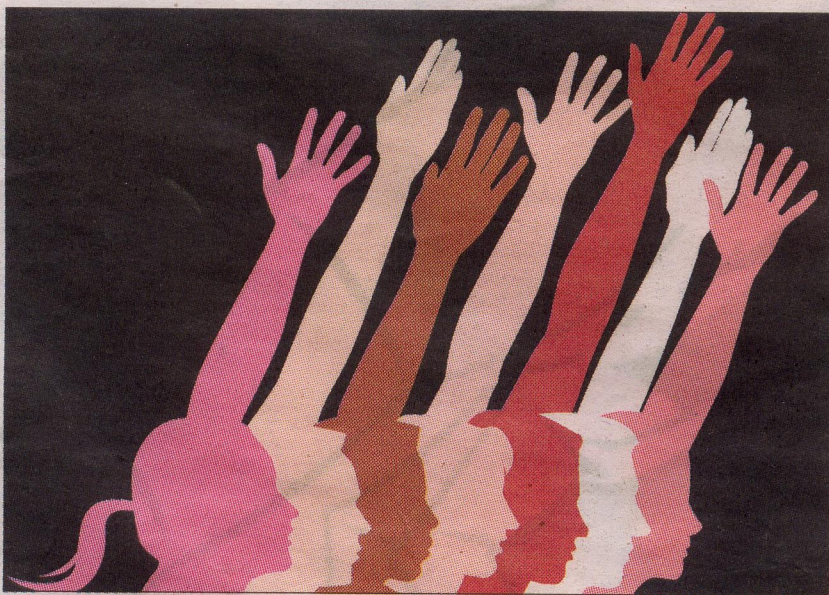
## 5. Your voting upsets political calculations

Political parties know how many votes they are going to get from their constituency, and they know how to get them. Hence they don't really want you to vote, as you can upset their calculations, being an unknown factor. Hence, politicians themselves perpetuate the myth that it makes no difference if you vote or not. It is simple arithmetic that the fewer the people who come out to vote, the fewer the votes that are needed to win an election.

## 6. Remember, we run the country

We run this country. We seem to have collectively forgotten this important point. If we chose not to vote and give up that role, it is taken up by default by those who do vote and elect their own representatives.

## 7. Rights and responsibilities go



## hand in hand

Not voting means wanting rights but not fulfilling responsibilities, which is the same thing we are saying about the politicians.

## 8. Voting connects you with all other citizens

At the Gateway of India peace rally on December 3, each of us individually were irrelevant, but the 1 lakh crowd was hugely relevant. It is the same with our vote: our single vote is not important, but collectively, all our votes make a huge impact. (In fact, it would be scary, if one vote made a difference!)

## 9. Your vote connects you with the country

It's only when you vote, that you will connect yourself with the community and the country. You need to vote to understand the change that will happen inside yourself and to feel the immediate connect with the larger picture around you.

## 10. Your vote will shape your own world

Every action you take everyday determines what sort of country you want to live in, and shapes you yourself. Voting is one such action; whether you vote or not, it is going to shape you and your country.

## 11. Vote with your voice and your wallet

Never lose the opportunity to vote with your voices and wallets. Express your views, choose the products and companies that deserve your support and money. In the same way, use your vote.

## 12. Think cricket to understand votes

Cricket is huge in our country because

of the crowds who go and watch it and increase the stakes, money, sponsorships involved. Even our country's reputation is linked to how we perform in cricket matches, because each one of us is out there voting for it.

## 13. Form a group around your vote

Get together your family and friends and go and together vote for the person you want. This will encourage others to also support you, and will encourage good candidates to continue standing for election, based on support from groups such as yours. This will also bring the group together for all other social and civic problems.

## 14. Why not pick your own candidate?

Try and think of who you want as your leader. Write to them now offering your support, and to help them to get votes. If you don't know the person directly, use the internet and media to voice your opinion and gather support for, or at least start discussions about, the candidate of your choice.

## 15. Why do people you admire not stand for election?

Seriously think of all the reasons why you would yourself not stand for elections. And if one of the reasons is that you won't get enough votes to win, then that itself should make you go out and vote.

I am going to vote for an Independent candidate. I invite all of you to do so. Let's actively organise support for Independent candidates.

We need to show the political parties that we mean business.

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*www.karmayog.org, a network of concerned citizens and a database for NGOs.*