

## **RUPA AND THE MAGIC OF ELCS- A MODERN FAIRY TALE FROM TELANGANA**

Rupa lives in a small village called Adilabad in Telangana, in a remote area, far away from town. Yet it has a good government school in which Rupa is studying in class X. She is a bright, active student and is very interested in her studies and extracurricular activities.

One day while she was preparing for her examinations, the electricity failed and the village was plunged into darkness. She heaved a sigh of resignation. This was a regular feature in the village. Electricity failures were frequent and, in addition to this, there was a lack of essential supplies to the village. Rupa, keenly aware of these shortcomings in her village, was often upset by them.

One day, she asked her mother, Amma, why is our village like this? Why is there no regular supply of electricity, no ration supplies and those people who bully everyone, why are they not taken to task?

The mother looked sadly at Rupa and said, "Listen, child, the blame lies with us ourselves. We elected the wrong person this time. It is the fault of people like your father, who got lured and misled by the liquor and ELCS are run according to the guidelines and directives money distributed by the candidates and voted for them. Such a mistake! And now we are all suffering due to wrong voting decisions."

Rupa thought for a minute and glanced at her Mother, who looked quite unhappy. She said, 'Amma, you never had Voter Education and Electoral Literacy Clubs or ELCS during your childhood.'

'What is an ELC?' asked Rupa's mother.

Rupa explained, 'An ELC is a Electoral Literacy Club. So. just like "literacy" classes teach you how to read and write, this club helps you to learn how to understand the fair voting process and make a correct decision about voting. Amma, in these ELC meetings we are taught how to enroll and register as voters and to cast our vote in an honest and responsible way, and choose the right and deserving leader.'

The mother looked at her daughter in wonder. 'This is a really good way to teach people the right way to vote. How lucky you are! I wish we had such ELCS during our childhood. But then, as you know, I never went to school when I was your age.'

Rupa smiled confidently. She said, 'Amma, there is no need to feel you missed out on it all. You can even now learn all about voting and how to make the right decision- right here at the Chunav Pathshala in our village.'

You can become a member of the Chunav Pathshala set up at our polling station and learn all about ethical voting through interesting activities, games and films. It's even better than going to everyday school'

Amma cheered up hearing her daughter's words.

"Really? she exclaimed. 'I will become a member of Chunav Pathshala tomorrow itself. And not only that, I will encourage all my friends in our village to become members, too.' Rupa gave her mother a tight hug. Literate or not, Rupa's mother was always a bright spark, ready to better herself. No wonder Rupa had taken after her.

As promised, her mother became a member of the Chunav Pathshala and also helped many others in the village to become members. Soon, the village was well acquainted with the electoral process and the rules of voting.

Rupa is now soon to become a proud voter of India on completing 18 years. She recollects the day when she motivated her mother and started the process of voter awareness right in her own home. Thanks to the Electoral Literacy Club at her school she is well informed about elections and voting. Her mother, who also has social welfare and progress at heart, motivated several villagers to enroll in the Chunav Pathshala. Now the village is not ignorant about voting any more.

She is an aware future voter of India and knows that there are 9,376 ELCS in Telangana State now. These ELCs are run according to the guidelines and directives laid down by the Election Commission of India.

This was just one small step taken by a young girl to create awareness. It was a step towards a change which had the power to motivate a hundred footsteps in the right direction - to vote ethically; to vote responsibly as citizens of India. Finally, it upholds the democratic pledge that the right decision in casting the vote always leads to achievement of the desired change in society.

- ***Deepthi, Telangana (Published in My Voter Matters, Jan 2021)***