

India - a country on the rise

## INDIANS ELECTIONS: CHANGE IS COMING

In our country, elections are very important for the population. As a matter of fact, elections are the symbol of democracy and freedom of expression. However, in India, the election of the new government is the biggest voting event in the world. Figures are telling: more than 800 million (100 million more than the last election in 2009). Besides, It's the first time Indian voters will have an option to reject all candidates, it's almost entirely a real democracy. Indians will elect this new government over 6 weeks. The first phase of polling starts on April 7th and the end will be on May 12th. Votes will be counted on May 16th. First, it's necessary to consider the number of problems which

exist in India. Above of all, corruption is the major issue. This problem is the tearing into India's foundation and economic wellbeing. Naturally, the poverty is a negative point which concerns 67% of the Indian population. Furthermore, there is no denying that 287 million adults are illiterate, and that natural disasters cause a lot of ravages. If the population

chooses the best ministers, India's situation will get better. Three candidates are trying to convince the people. The leader of the anti-corruption movement, Arvind Kejriwal, is attracting a lot of attention. But the main candidate is Narendra Modi the vice president of the governing Congress party who advocates economic prosperity.

### Smiles for children

In India, the question also raised is the place of children. Half of them, don't go to school and they live in the street without any parents. They are alone at an early age for some of them. Dreams, friends, school should be normal things in the life of a children. Luckily, some organizations receive the children and during one or two days, they can play, draw, and paint. A lot of sentiments can be read in

their drawings. For example, "smile for the poor children", is an association which promotes the education for vulnerable children. Children are the future of the nation. Everybody should consider the issue as being a top priority.

**Change is coming. "Desire and hope will push us on toward the future."**

Sarah Heilmer



## Long life to castes!

When someone says the word « cast », of course you think about India! Indeed, this system is representative of this big country. Casts were legally the social system of India from the birth of Hinduism, (approximately 1700 BC), to 1950, date of the abolishment of casts by Nehru, in the Indian Constitution. But the end of this "segregation" is not entirely enacted: it's still a way of life for Indian people. Indeed, the history of this system corresponds with a Hindu legend: casts came from the body of the Brahma, the creator of the world, from the Hindus' point of view. Those casts were: Brahmanes, Kshatriyas, Vainshyas, and Shudras. There was a fifth group, the Untouchables. They didn't come from the creator's body, they came from the earth: they were out of the social system. This method was based on purity, religiously and professionally speaking.

Laws and rules are still very harsh in this system. For example, a Brahmanes can't accept anything from a lower cast, because the level of purity is not respected. So, these casts have religious meaning. And Hinduism is the most practiced religion in India, with 73.1% of Hindus in its population. But, this religious organization is undermined by new technologies, and new mentalities, coming from the Western World. For example, membership of a cast is ruled by the

level of purity of a job but, what is the level of purity of a technician, or a computer scientist? It's hard to say. And some politicians come from Untouchables' cast. Those factors could make us think that India's way of life is changing, but it is very slow. Of course, this system isn't equal, in from the Westerner's point of view, but casts are complementary, and this makes a difference compared to "true segregation."

Ophélie Hédin



## Diwali, lights up Indian's life

No matter if Indians meet a few economic problems, Diwali, the festival of lights, lights up Indian life! This festival is celebrated during five days between October and mid-November. This year, it will start on November 3rd. Each day carries a legend of the country: the first one is Called "Dhanteras" which is related to the son of King Hima who was not allowed to sleep because his horoscope predicted his death by a snake bite. In order not to fall asleep, his wife dropped lamps and jewels all over the bedroom and she read stories to keep him up all night. The next day, the god of death and a snake arrived to the bedroom but because of the gold and the lamps which were too shiny, they couldn't come into the room. Finally the son of king Hima was saved. His return was celebrated by citizens of Ayodhi with oil lamps dropped in front of houses. The second day is "Chhoti Diwali". The most important day is called; **Laxmi Pujan**, it is dedicated to Laxmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. The fourth day of the festi-

val is "Goverdhan Puja" and the last day is "Bhai Dooj". Diwali is globally dedicated to Rama and his adventures when he was young. Rama represents goodness, youth and life. That's why Hindi people still celebrate Diwali with candles and lights which are just a small part of the festivities. Diwali is one of the happiest holidays where people decorate their home, and go shopping for themselves and their families to buy gifts, food (especially sweets, dry fruits) etc... At that time of the year, children hear ancient stories, legends, myths about battles between good and evil, light and darkness from their parents. Women create traditional items called rangoli: flower patterns made with powder on the floor. Each room of the home should have a candle. At night, families with neighbours are reunited to pray and to give some offerings for the goddess Laxmi. Children play with crackers while magnificent fireworks light up the night sky.

Laora Guillerm