

1. **count on** (phrasal verb) – rely/depend on, place one's trust in.
2. **heal** (verb) – correct, put right, set right, get better/resolve.
3. **bitter** (noun) – savage, hostile, ferocious/resentful.
4. **anxious** (adjective) – on edge, tense, nervous; eager/keen.
5. **consolidated** (adjective) – combined, merged, integrated.
6. **stretch** (verb) – lengthen, expand, extend.
7. **rationale** (noun) – reason/basis; principle.
8. **prolonged** (adjective) – continuous, constant, persistent.
9. **impartiality** (noun) – fairness; treating all people and groups equally.
10. **integrity** (noun) – honesty, good character, sincerity/fairness.
11. **come under** (phrasal verb) – be subjected to.
12. **lapse** (noun) – failure, mistake, blunder/oversight.
13. **accumulate** (verb) – gather, build up, collect.
14. **credibility** (noun) – trustworthiness, reliability, integrity.
15. **reluctant** (adjective) – unwilling, disinclined, opposed.
16. **hold someone to** (phrase) – cause someone to comply with/abide by.
17. **bruise** (verb) – hurt, upset, offend/insult.
18. **call into question** (phrase) – doubt, distrust, challenge.
19. **model code of conduct** (noun) – a set of guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India for conduct of political parties and candidates during elections.
20. **dissent** (noun) – disagreement, disapproval, opposition.
21. **in light of** (phrase) – considering, taking into account, bearing in mind.
22. **stakeholder** (noun) – a person with an interest in something.
23. **self-reflection** (noun) – serious thinking about one's own feelings.
24. **call for** (phrasal verb) – require, publicly ask/necessitate, demand.
25. **breach** (verb) – break, contravene, violate.
26. **unprecedented** (adjective) – not done or experienced before.
27. **inappropriate** (adjective) – improper, unseemly, lacking in propriety.
28. **preempt** (verb) – appropriate, take over, occupy.
29. **contaminate** (verb) – pollute, impair, spoil.
30. **electioneering** (noun) – campaign, canvass, doorstep.
31. **emotive** (adjective) – sensitive, emotional, touchy.
32. **divisive** (adjective) – alienating/isolating, disharmonious, discordant.
33. **double whammy** (noun) – (two fold) problem, difficulty, issue/setback.
34. **inclusive** (adjective) – all-embracing, extensive, overarching.
35. **secular** (adjective) – non-religious, worldly, earthly.
36. **take over** (phrasal verb) – gain control of, take charge of, assume responsibility for.

## Count on democracy

**With polling concluded, India needs to heal itself from the bitter, fact-free campaign**

With the seventh phase of **polling for the 17th general election over**, the anxious wait is now for counting day. The election dates were announced on March 10, and the first phase

of polling took place on April 11. The entire process will take 11 weeks to complete; polling itself was spread over six weeks. The consolidated turnout till the sixth phase was 67.37%, as against 66.4% in 2014, and there were 8,049 candidates. The compulsions on the Election Commission of India to stretch the exercise into a painfully long-drawn process are unclear. Given the absence of a rationale for such a prolonged schedule, doubts were raised whether it was designed to help Prime Minister Narendra Modi campaign in the widest possible manner. That was the first instance of the EC's impartiality and integrity coming under doubt during this election season, but not the last. A series of lapses that followed accumulated into a crisis of credibility for the commission. By being reluctant to hold Mr. Modi to standards set in the past, the EC has bruised its reputation. The process of decision-making in the three-member commission itself was called into question, with one member notifying the others that he would not participate in meetings on complaints regarding violations of the Model Code of Conduct unless his dissent, when made, is recorded in the final order. The wisdom of holding elections over stretched phases needs to be revisited in light of this year's experience and feedback from stakeholders. And restoring its reputation and integrity must be the commission's immediate priority.

Some self-reflection is called for as the country concludes a bitterly fought election during which boundaries of civil public debate have been crossed and norms breached. What makes 2019 unprecedented is not that inappropriate words were used and misinformation spread, but the fact that India witnessed an increasing tendency to normalise these. In the 2019 campaign, the leaders of the government preempted a fact-based debate on its performance of five years by blocking or contaminating official data on job generation and other parameters, and successfully pushed electioneering into a fact-free zone filled with emotive and divisive issues. This was a double whammy for **democracy**. On the one hand, informed discussions have become difficult, and on the other, social tensions have risen. The outcome on Thursday remains a suspense, but the incoming Prime Minister, whoever that will be, must take the initiative to rally all Indians around a truly inclusive and secular national agenda as soon he or she takes over.