

CIVICS

Chapter 2: ON EQUALITY



ON EQUALITY

Equality is an important principle which is enunciated in the Indian constitution. The Indian constitution guarantees equality to all citizens irrespective of their caste, class, creed and gender.

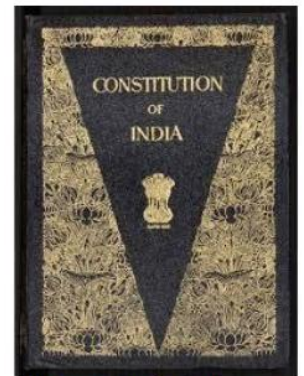
Equality and the Indian Constitution

Equality refers to the state of being equal. Several kinds of inequalities exist in our society today. One of the most striking inequalities which exist in our country is based on the caste system. Economic, religious and gender inequalities are some other forms of inequalities.

The Indian Constitution came into force on January 26, 1950. The Constitution of India grants the principles of equality, liberty and justice to all its citizens.

The principle of equality has been ensured by the Constitution to the people mainly in the following ways:

- Our Constitution declares every person to be equal before the law. This means that every citizen of the country, whether rich or poor has to obey the laws of the land.
- The Constitution prohibits discrimination among the people on the basis of caste, race, religion, gender or class.
- Every person has the right to access public places such as parks, wells, bathing ghats and roads.
- Untouchability has been abolished from the country.
- Every citizen in the country above the age of 18 years has the right to vote. This is called universal adult franchise. Every person irrespective of his caste, sect, gender and class has the right to choose his/ her representative.



The Constitution of India ensures equality, liberty and justice to all the people of the country

Article 15 of the Constitution

Article 15 of the Indian Constitution states that:

- The state shall not discriminate among people on the basis of religion, race, gender or place of birth.
- No citizen on the grounds of religion, caste, gender, or race can be barred from using –
 - Shops, restaurants, hotels and places of public



Every citizen of the country has the right to use wells, tanks and ghats maintained fully or partly out of the state funds

entertainment.

- Wells, tanks, bathing ghats or public resorts, maintained fully or partly out of the state funds, and which are for the use of the general public.

The government has made efforts to implement the principle of equality as laid down in the Constitution in the following two ways :

- By making and passing laws.
- By initiating various programmes or schemes which aim at helping the disadvantaged and the backward sections of society.

An example of one such scheme is the 'Midday Meal Scheme'. Under this scheme, the government has to provide children in elementary schools with cooked lunch. Tamil Nadu was the first state in India which introduced this scheme. In 2001, the Supreme Court directed all the state governments to implement the Midday Meal Scheme. This programme has proved beneficial in the following ways:

- Many poor children have not only been enrolled in the schools by their parents but also attend school regularly.
- Earlier, children would often go home to eat lunch and would often not return back for rest of the day. But with the implementation of the Midday Meal Scheme, the attendance has improved considerably.
- Working mothers of children now do not have to interrupt their work for feeding the children.
- This scheme has helped in reducing the caste prejudice as children belonging to all the castes eat their meals together.
- Many Dalit women have been employed for cooking the food for the children.
- This scheme has also enabled the poor children to concentrate on their studies as previously they were not able to do so due to hunger.



The Midday Meal Scheme has helped in reducing the caste inequalities as children belonging to different castes eat their meals together

While some people are treated unequally on the basis of the caste system, some are discriminated against on the basis of religion. In many cities, houses are not given on rent to people belonging to one particular religious community.

Passing laws is alone not sufficient to create equality in society. One needs to respect the dignity and individuality of a person. We need to remember that no person is inferior. Everyone has to participate in the struggle against every kind of inequality which exists in our society today.

Inequalities in Other Countries

India is not the only democratic country in which several inequalities exist. Inequalities exist in many other countries as well. One such country is the United States of America, where discrimination still exists on the basis of skin colour. Many African Americans, whose ancestors were brought to America as slaves, still feel that they are discriminated against.

In the early 1940s and 1950s, the discrimination against the African Americans was at its highest. The Afro-American children could not study in the same schools in which the children of the White Americans studied. The Afro-Americans while travelling by bus had to either sit at the back of the bus or had to vacate their seat whenever a white person wanted to sit. On 1 December 1955, Rosa Parks an Afro-American woman while travelling in a bus, refused to give her seat to a white man. Her refusal led to the beginning of a movement against the treatment which was meted out to the Afro-Americans. This movement came to be known as the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Act was passed in 1961 and it prohibited discrimination based on race, religion or national origin. However, Afro-Americans are still being discriminated against. Since the larger part of the Afro-American community is poor, they are only able to afford government schools, which do not have many facilities.



Rosa Parks

Equal right to vote :

- In a democratic country, like India, all adults irrespective their religion, their education, caste, or rich or poor are allowed to vote. This is called Universal Adult Franchise.
- The idea of universal adult franchise is based on the idea of equality.

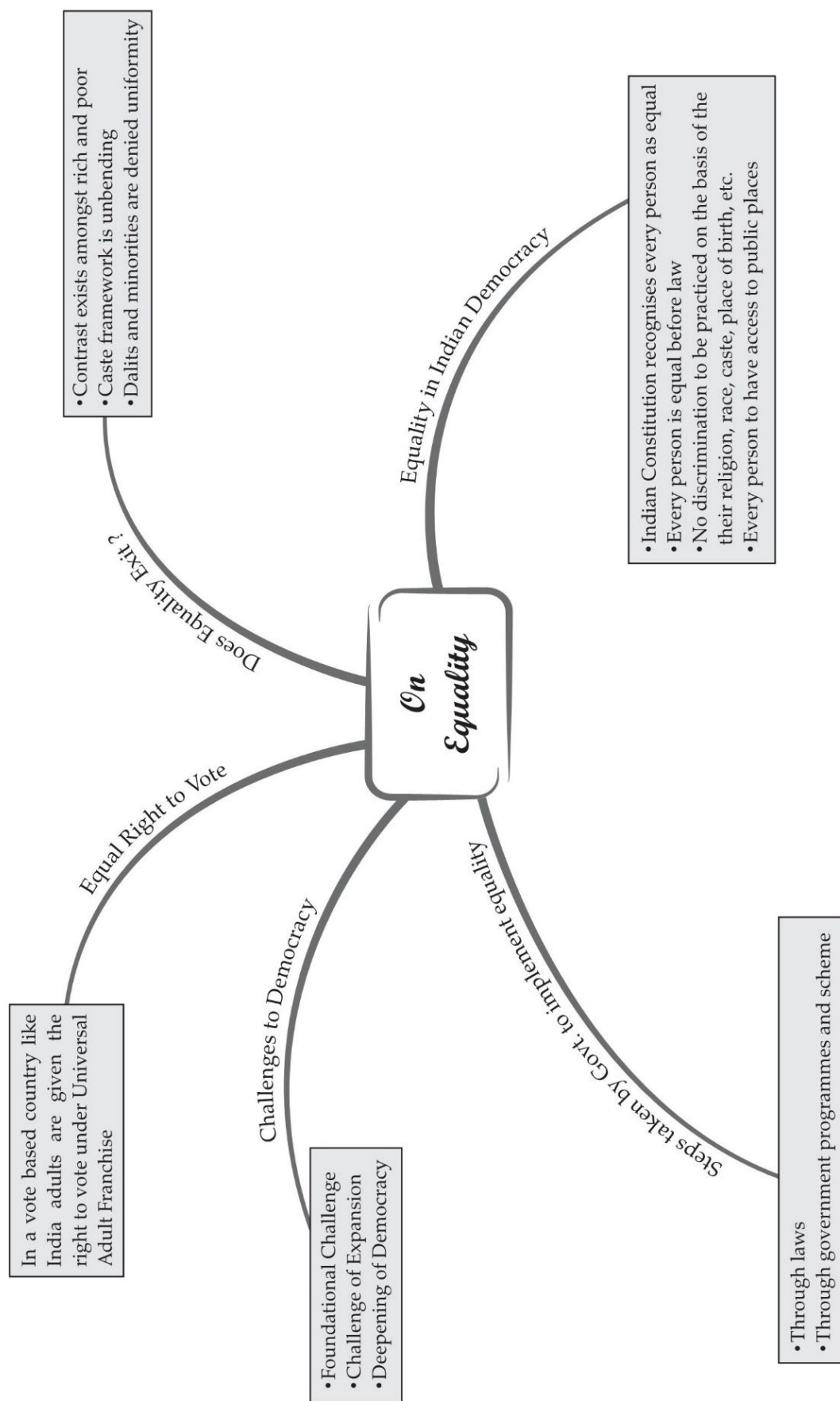
Other kinds of equality :

- The poverty is one of main basis of inequality in India.
- A part from poverty, people in India experience inequality in different ways.
- Caste is one of the more common forms of inequality in India.

Dalits (lower castes) still face discrimination in various ways.

MIND MAP : LEARNING MADE SIMPLE

CHAPTER-21



Important Questions

➤ Multiple Choice Questions :

Question 1. Universal adult franchise provides:

- (a) Right to vote to citizens above 18 years
- (b) Right to study
- (c) Right to stand in election

Question 2. In the late 1950s, a movement took place in USA for the equal rights of African-American. It was:

- (a) Civil movements
- (b) Rights movement
- (c) Civil rights movement

Question 3. Dalit means:

- (a) Low
- (b) High
- (c) Broken

Question 4. Universal Adult Franchise gives:

- (a) Political equality
- (b) Social equality
- (c) Economic equality

Question 5. In the late 1950s Civil Right Movement takes place in

- (a) USA
- (b) Canada
- (c) India

Question 6. In the United States of America _____ were discriminated.

- (a) Indian-American
- (b) African-American
- (c) American

Question 7. When was the Civil Rights Act was passed?

- (a) 1965
- (b) 1963
- (c) 1964

(d) 1967

Question 8. what was the benefits of the mid-day meal programs?

(a) Attendance

(b) Enrolment

(c) Entertainment

(d) Both (a) and (b)

Question 9. when was the Mid-day meal scheme was started?

(a) 1999

(b) 2003

(c) 2001

(d) 2000

Question 10. when persons are treated unequally what is violated for them?

(a) Caste

(b) Religion

(c) Dignity

(d) Practice

Question 11. what does democracy mean?

(a) Unequal right to vote

(b) Equal right to vote

(c) Discrimination

(d) None of these

Question 12. what do you mean by Civil Rights Movement?

(a) African American demanded equal rights

(b) Indian freedom struggle

(c) British war with Mughals

(d) None of these

Question 13. what is the mid-day meal programs?

(a) Program to provide children with raw food

(b) Program to provide rations to parents

(c) Program to provide children with cooked lunch

(d) None of these

Question 14. what are the ways in which the Government has tried to implement the

equality that guaranteed in the constitution?

- (a) Through laws
- (b) Through government schemes
- (c) Both a and b
- (d) None of these

Question 15. what is Joothan about?

- (a) Rich girl
- (b) Dalit boy
- (c) upper caste boy
- (d) None of these

➤ **Fill in the blanks :**

1. _____ is the soul of Indian democracy.
2. The _____ caste people and Dalits are exploited the most.
3. The Civil Rights Movement was started in the late 1950s for equal rights for _____.
4. Joothan is an autobiography by _____.
5. _____ is the first state in India to introduce the midday meal scheme.

➤ **Write true (T) or false (F) :**

1. One of the more common forms of inequality in India is the caste system.
2. Every person should not be treated with dignity.
3. Establishing equality in a democratic society is a continuous struggle.

➤ **Very Short Questions :**

1. What is Joothan about?
2. What suggestion was given to Ansaris by the property dealer?
3. On what basis were the Ansaris treated unequally?
4. What do you mean by 'dignity'?
5. What are the two ways in which the government has tried to implement the equality that guaranteed in the constitution?
6. Who have been employed to cook the meal under midday meal scheme?
7. How did B.R. Ambedkar view self-respect?
8. What was the condition of the African-Americans in the United States of America prior to 1950s?

9. What is known as the Civil Rights Movements?
10. Give an example to show all people are equal according to Indian constitution.

➤ Short Questions :

1. Why universal adult franchise is important in a democracy?
2. What is one of the main reasons which is responsible for continuance of discrimination?
3. What is the position of equality in India, a democratic country?
4. List the provision in the constitution for recognition of equality.
5. Does Kanta has enough reason to doubt the equality level of citizens?

➤ Long Questions :

1. What are the provision made in the constitution for the recognition of equality?
2. How can you say that establishment of equality in society is a continuous struggle?
3. When persons are treated unequally, their dignity is violated. How?
4. List four benefits of midday meal programme.
5. Mention two different kinds of inequalities that exist in our country. Give examples.

ANSWER KEY –

➤ Multiple Choice Answer :

1. (a) Right to vote to citizens above 18 years
2. (c) Civil rights movement
3. (c) Broken
4. (a) Political equality
5. (b) Canada
6. (b) African-American
7. (c) 1964
8. (d) Both (a) and (b)
9. (c) 2001
10. (c) Dignity
11. (b) Equal right to vote
12. (a) African American demanded equal rights

13. (c) Program to provide children with cooked lunch
14. (c) Both a and b
15. (b) Dalit boy

➤ **Fill in the blanks :**

1. Equality
2. lower
3. African-American
4. Omprakash Valmiki
5. Tamil Nadu

➤ **Write true (T) or false (F) :**

1. True
2. False
3. True

➤ **Very Short Answer :**

1. It is about the bitter experiences of growing up of a dalit boy.
2. They were suggested to change their names and call themselves Mr and Mrs kumar.
3. The Ansaris were treated unequally on the basis of religion.
4. Dignity means thinking of one self and others as worthy of self-respect.
5. (i) Through laws
(ii) Through government programmes or schemes to help unprivileged groups.
6. Dalit women have been employed for this purpose.
7. B.R. Ambedkar viewed self-respect as the most vital factor in life, without which man was cipher.
8. Prior to 1950's, the African-Americans were treated extremely unequally in the USA and denied equality through law.
9. A movement took place in the USA in the late 1950's to push for equal rights for African-Americans. This movement later came to be known as Civil Rights Movement.
10. Right to vote given to all adult irrespective of their gender, caste, creed or socio-economic status.

➤ **Short Answer :**

- 1. In a democracy, universal adult franchise is important because of the following reasons:**
 - i. Democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people.
 - ii. Every adult irrespective of caste, creed, religion, region, sex, rich or poor people are allowed to vote. This is called universal adult franchise.
 - iii. Concept of universal adult franchise is based on equality.
 - iv. In democracy every citizen is equal.
- 2. One of the main reasons for continuance of discrimination is that attitudes change very slowly:**
 - i. Persons are aware that discrimination is against the law. Still they continue to treat people unequally on the basis of their caste, religion, disability, economic status and sex.
 - ii. It is only when people begin to believe that no one is inferior and that every person deserves to be treated with dignity, that attitudes change.
 - iii. Establishing equality in a democratic society is a continuous struggle.
 - iv. Persons 12321s well as various communities in India contribute to remove inequalities.
- 3.**
 - i. The Indian Constitution recognises every person as equal.
 - ii. This means that every person in the country, both male and female from all castes, religions, tribes, educational and economic backgrounds is equal.
 - iii. Inequality still exists. But at least, in democratic India, the principle of the equality of all persons is recognised.
 - iv. Earlier no law existed to protect people from discrimination and, ill-treatment.
 - v. Now there are several laws that work to see that people are treated with dignity and as equals.
- 4.**
 - i. Every person, right from president to a domestic worker is equal before the law.
 - ii. No person can be discriminated on the basis of caste, colour, race, religion, place of birth and gender.
 - iii. Each and every person has access to all public place like park, market, hotel etc.

- iv. All persons can use publicly available well, roads, swimming pools, markets etc.

5. Yes, Kanta has enough reasons to doubt whether she is really equal.

The reasons behind it are:

- i. She cannot skip work when her daughter is ill.
- ii. She does not have enough money to take her to doctor.
- iii. She has to stand in a line in the government hospital for her turn to show her daughter to then doctor.

➤ Long Answer :

1. **The provisions made in the constitution for the recognition of equality are as follow:**

- i. Every person is equal before the law. What this means is that every person, from the President of India to a domestic worker like Kanta, has to obey the same laws.
- ii. No person can be discriminated against on the basis of their religion, caste, race place of birth or whether they are male or female.
- iii. Every person has access to all public places including playgrounds, hotels, shops and markets. All persons can use publicly available wells, roads and bathing ghats.
- iv. Untouchability has been abolished.

2. In spite of several efforts made by the government inequalities still exist in our society. Even today low caste people are being discriminated against and treated unequally. The reason behind it is that people refuse to think of them as equal even though the law requires it. This attitude of the people is so deeply rooted that it cannot change all of a sudden. It will take a lot of time. Even though people are aware that discrimination is against the law, they continue to treat others unequally on the basis of caste and religion. People are also discriminated against on the basis of economic status, disability and gender.

Unless people believe that every person deserves to be treated equally and with dignity, the present attitude cannot be rooted out. Changing people's attitude is a very slow process and hence establishment of equality in society is a continuous struggle.

3.

- i. When persons are treated unequally their dignity is violated because they feel humiliated.
- ii. The dignity of both Omprakash Valmiki and the Ansaris was violated because of the way in which they were treated.

- iii. By picking on him and making him sweep the school, because of his caste, Omprakash Valmiki's schoolmates and teachers badly hurt his dignity and made him feel as if he was less than equal to all other students in the school.
- iv. Being a child Omprakash Valmiki could do very little about the situation that he was in. It was his father who felt angry by this unequal treatment. He confronted the teachers.
- v. The Ansaris' dignity was also hurt when persons refused to lease their apartments to them.
- vi. The suggestion of the property dealer to change their name also violated their dignity or self-respect. Hence, they refused this suggestion.
- vii. Omprakash and the Ansaris do not deserve to be treated like this. They deserve the same respect and dignity as others.

4. Following are the benefits of mid-day meal programme:

- i. It has helped increase the enrolment and attendance of poor children in school.
- ii. Students earlier used to go home for lunch and never returned after that. This practice has been stopped.
- iii. It has also helped reduce caste prejudices because both lower and upper caste children in the school eat this meal together, and in quite a few places, Dalit women have been employed to cook the meal.
- iv. The midday meal programme also helps reduce the hunger of poor students who often come to school and cannot concentrate because their stomachs are empty.
- v. This lead to increase in literacy rate of a state and removal of inequality among rich and poor children from schools.

5. Two different kinds of inequalities that exist in our country are—inequalities based on the caste system and that based on the religion. Omprakash Valmiki was treated extremely unequally because he was a dalit. In school, his headmaster made him sweep the school and the playground. The Ansaris were treated unequally on the basis differences of religion. They were looking to rent an apartment in the city. They were about to take an apartment at the first sight. But the moment the land lady knew their names she declined to rent the house.