



UNIQUE STUDY POINT

Chapter 1 On Equality

Question 1: In a democracy why is universal adult franchise important?

Answer: Universal adult franchise is a very important aspect of democratic societies as:

- It promotes the idea of equality.
- It means that all adult (those who are 18 and above) citizens have the right to vote irrespective of their caste, religion, gender, and social and economic backgrounds. By voting, the citizens participate in creating their government.
- It makes the government more accountable towards people.

Question 2: Re-read the box on Article 15 and state two ways in which this Article addresses inequality?

Answer: Article 15 addresses inequality in terms of discrimination based on religion, race, caste, gender, place of birth etc. It also addresses the fact that the use of public places such as wells, tanks, bathing Ghats, roads under full or partial government funding are not subject to discrimination based on the criteria's mentioned above.

Question 3: In what ways was Omprakash Valmiki's experience similar to that of the Ansaris?

Answer: The experiences of Omprakash Valmiki and the Ansaris were similar.

- Both of them suffered unequal treatment and were discriminated at individual level because they belonged to different castes or religions. In both cases, the dignity of the persons was not respected.
- Both these incidents also show that though the law enforces equality, such inequalities exist within our society.

Question 4: What do you understand by the term "all persons are equal before the law"? Why do you think it is important in a democracy?

Answer: The term 'all persons are equal before the law' means every citizen is entitled to all the constitutional rights and freedom without being discriminated on the basis of caste, religion, race, place of birth, or gender.

It is a founding aspect of democracy. It ensures that the government will take care of the needs of the all the citizens and fulfill them. It safeguards the interests of people and ensures that all persons have access to all public resources.

Question 5: The Government of India passed the Disabilities Act in 1995. This law states that persons with disabilities have equal rights, and that the government should make possible their full participation in society. The government has to provide free education and integrate children with disabilities into mainstream schools. This law also states that all public places including buildings, schools, etc., should be accessible and provided with ramps.

Look at the photograph and think about the boy who is being carried down the stairs.



Do you think the above law is being implemented in his case? What needs to be done to make the building more accessible for him? How would his being carried down the stairs affect his dignity as well as his safety?

Answer: No, the Disabilities Act is not being followed here. This is also a violation of Article 15 because physically disabled persons should be able to access public places. Buildings must have proper ramps, guidelines and other accessibility measures. The way the boy is being carried

down the stairs affects his dignity. Moreover, the method is unsafe. It affects his dignity because every time he has to depend on others for mobility.

Carrying the wheel chair as shown in figure is dangerous. An imbalance can cause physical injury to the boy. This "charity based" approach has a negative impact on boy's mind and reduces his sense of independence.

It is important such needs be addressed through 'rights-based' approach i.e. all persons believe that they have equal share of the public resources. The government should ensure that disabled people are able to access public resources with ease.

Extra Questions

Very Short Answer Questions

1. What is Universal Adult Franchise (UAF)? Give an example from India.

Answer: In a democratic country like India, adult citizens, irrespective of their religion, caste, education, status, gender, race, colour or place, have the right to vote. This is called Universal Adult Franchise.

2. On what idea is UAF based?

Answer: The idea of UAF is based on the idea of equality as it states that every adult in the country, irrespective of his/her wealth, community, religion, race or colour has the right to vote.

3. Define constitution.

Answer: It is a document that lays down the basic rules and regulations for people and the government in the country to follow.

4. What was Civil Rights Movement?

Answer: It was a movement which began in USA in the late 1950s, in which African American people demanded equal rights that other Americans already had and an end to racial discrimination.

5. Name the two laws made by the government for promoting equality.

Answer: (i) The Disabilities Act 1996.
(ii) Universal Adult Franchise.

Short Answer Questions

1. What does the Indian Constitution provide on equality?

Answer: The Indian constitution recognises the right of every person to be equal. It means that every individual in the country, including male and female persons from all castes, religions, tribes, educational and economic backgrounds are recognised as equal.

2. How does Indian constitution provide equality?

Answer: The Indian constitution provides equality through four ways:

- Every person is equal before law.
- No one is discriminated on the basis of religion, race, caste, place of birth or gender.
- A person has access to all public places including playgrounds, hotels, shops and markets.
- Untouchability has been abolished.

3. How has the government tried to implement equality in India?

Answer: The government has tried to implement equality in India through two methods:

Laws: Several laws have been made by the government to treat every person equally.

Programmes: The government has organised programmes for giving greater opportunities to those who have been treated unequally for centuries.

4. Has equality been really established in India?

Answer: (i) Even though the Indian constitution provides equality, people are still discriminated on the basis of their castes, religion, disability, economic status and gender.

(ii) Change in attitude to treat everyone equally and with dignity is a continuous struggle which has to ensure provision of dignity and equality for all.

5. What sparked Civil Rights Movement in USA?

Answer: (i) An African-American woman called Rosa Parks after a tiring day refused to give up her seat to a white man on 1 December, 1955.

(ii) This incident started a huge agitation against the unequal ways in which African-Americans were treated.

(iii) This movement came to be known as a Civil Rights Movement.

6. How is equality a big challenge for democracy?

Answer: (i) No country can be called totally democratic.

(ii) There are always individuals and communities who try to expand the idea of democracy and push for a greater recognition of equality.

(iii) To control this struggle in a democracy, the idea is to treat all persons as equal with dignity.

Long Answer Questions

1. How is Kanta's life different from her owners?

Answer: (i) Kanta works as a maid for the Jain family. While they vote together, they are different in other situations.

(ii) Kanta lives in slum, while Jain family lives in a bungalow.

(iii) If Kanta's daughter falls sick, she has to visit a government hospital and stand in a long queue, while the Jain family goes to a private clinic and doesn't have to stand in queues.

(iv) So, Kanta has a political equality, but whose daily wages and working conditions are far from equal.

2. How is casteism or common forms of inequality in India? Explain with the help of an example.

Answer: (i) Caste identity is a very common form of inequality in India.

(ii) One such example is of Omprakash Valmiki, a Dalit writer who in his autobiography 'Joothan' writes that in school, he had to sit separately from others.

(iii) In Class IV, he was asked by the headmaster to sweep the entire school and the playground, while other children used to study.

(iv) It was not Omprakash who told his father about it, but one day his father walked in and saw him sweeping. He warned the teacher against this type of discrimination.

3. How are minorities denied equality in India? Explain with an example.

Answer: (i) Minorities of different religions are denied equality in India.

(ii) Over here, we can give the example of Mr and Mrs Ansari who went to look for a house in a big city of India with a property dealer.

(iii) To their surprise, most of the landlords gave lame excuses like they could not allow non-vegetarians in their building.

(iv) The property dealer asked Mr and Mrs Ansari to change their names to Mr and Mrs Kumar but they refused.

(v) It took them a month before they could find a house. This shows the type of discrimination against minorities in India.

4. How is dignity and respect of people hurt?

Answer: (i) When persons are treated unequally, their dignity is violated. In a school, a child was maltreated on the grounds of casteism.

(ii) He was treated as an unequal as he belonged to a low caste.

(iii) It was an inhuman way of hurting his dignity.

(iv) Likewise, if a Muslim or Christian or any other religious minority is denied rights, his dignity is hurt.

Hots (Higher Order Thinking Skills)

1. What was Civil Rights Act of 1964?

Answer: (i) The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, religion or national origin.

(ii) It also stated that all schools would be open to African-American children and they would no longer have to study in separate schools.

2. What is the present status condition of African-Americans in the country?

Answer: (i) A majority of African-Americans still continue to be among the poorest in the country.

(ii) Most African-American children can afford to attend only government schools which have fewer facilities and poorly qualified teachers as compared to white students who go to private schools or live in areas where the government schools are as good as private schools.

3. How has mid-day meal scheme helped the country to progress?

Answer: (i) The mid-day meal scheme was launched for the first time in Tamil Nadu. In 2001, the Supreme Court asked all state governments to begin this programme in their schools within six months.

(ii) It has improved the attendance ratio of children in schools.

(iii) It had been reported earlier that children would often go home for lunch and not return back to school.

(iv) Mid-day meal scheme has improved the enrolment and attendance ratio of poor children in schools.

(v) Further, it has even led to Dalit empowerment since Dalit women are employed in quite a few places to cook the meal.

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