

CIVICS CHAPTER-1

CLASS-7

ON EQUALITY

On Equality

- India is a democracy.
- Equality is a key feature of democracy and influences all aspects of its functioning.
- In this chapter you will read more about equality – what it is, why it is important in a democracy, and whether or not everyone is equal in India.

Equal right to vote

- Lets begin by looking at Kanta story who is standing in line to cast her vote on election day.
- In a democratic country, like India, all adults irrespective of what religion they belong to, how much education they have had, what caste they are, or whether they are rich or poor are allowed to vote.
- The idea of universal adult franchise is based on the idea of equality because it states that every adult in a country has one vote.

Equal right to vote(cont...)

- But as her day goes on, Kanta becomes less certain about what this equality really means.
- Her daughter is sick but she cannot take the day off from work because she needs to borrow money from her employers to take her child to the doctor.
- Her job as a domestic help tires her out, and finally she ends her day by again standing in a long line.
- This line, in front of the government hospital, is unlike the one in the morning because most of the people standing in it are poor.

Other kinds of equality

- Apart from being poor, people in India experience inequality in different ways.
- One of the more common forms of inequality in India is the caste system.
- Now let us read a story about the experiences of a Dalit child attending school.
- Dalit is a term that the so-called lower castes use to address themselves.

Other kinds of equality(cont...)

- Omprakash Valmiki is a famous Dalit writer. In his autobiography, Joothan, he talks about his experiences of growing up as a dalit boy.
- Omprakash was made to sweep the school and the playground and this only came to an end when his father, who happened to be passing by, saw his son sweeping.

Other kinds of equality(cont...)

- The second story is a story about Mr and Mrs Ansari who were looking to rent an apartment in the city. They had the money and so paying the rent was no problem.
- They visited the first apartment when the landlady found out their names, she made an excuse about how she could not rent the house to someone who ate meat because the building did not have any non-vegetarian residents.

Other kinds of equality(cont...)

- The same excuse was repeated in the second and the third apartments.
- Finally, the property dealer told them that they might want to change their names and call themselves Mr and Mrs Kumar. The Ansaris were reluctant to do this and decided to look some more.

Recognising dignity

- You have understood by now that the caste we are born into, the religion we practice, the class background we come from, whether we are male or female – these are often the things that determine why some people are treated unequally.
- When persons are treated unequally, their dignity is violated. The dignity of both Omprakash Valmiki and the Ansaris was violated because of the way in which they were treated.
- Omprakash and the Ansaris do not deserve to be treated like this. They deserve the same respect and dignity as anyone else.

Equality in Indian Democracy

- The Indian Constitution recognises every person as equal.
- This 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.
- This recognition of equality includes some of the following provisions in the Constitution: first that every person is equal before the law.

Equality in Indian Democracy(cont...)

- Second, no person can be discriminated against on the basis of their religion, race, caste, place of birth or whether they are female or male.
- Third, every person has access to all public places including playgrounds, hotels, shops and markets.
- Fourth, untouchability has been abolished.

Equality in Indian Democracy(cont...)

- The two ways in which the government has tried to implement the equality that is guaranteed in the Constitution is first through laws and second through government programmes or schemes to help disadvantaged communities.

Issues of Equality in other democracies

- in the United States of America, the African–Americans whose ancestors were the slaves who were brought over from Africa, continue to describe their lives today as largely unequal.
- This, despite the fact that there was a movement in the late 1950s to push for equal rights for African–Americans.
- Prior to this, African–Americans were treated extremely unequally in the United States and denied equality through law.
- Civil rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, religion or national origin.

Challenge of democracy

- There are always communities and individuals trying to expand the idea of democracy and push for a greater recognition of equality on existing as well as new issues.

Summary

- The Constitution of India guarantees equality to all citizens.
- This chapter discusses the need for equality through highlighting the inequalities that continued to be practised and experienced by various communities.
- The Government role in passing laws and instituting policies is discussed to show the commitment to the alleviation of existing inequalities is a major part of the work that government undertake.
- An issue of inequality in the United States of America to highlight that this is a global phenomenon.

Thank you