

CHAPTER I: ON EQUALITY

CLASS:VII

SUBJECT:CIVICS

MODULE: 1/1

EQUALITY:

Equality is a concept that talks about an unbiased socio-economic status of people. In such a situation, people are not treated favorably based on any elements such as areas of race, religion or beliefs, and gender.

The idea of Universal adult franchise is based on the key concept of equality. **Universal Adult Franchise** (also called Universal suffrage), gives the right to vote for all adult citizens (above the age of 18) regardless of their race, ethnicity, caste, gender or social status.

Whilst there are several norms for keeping equality in order, people in India experience inequality in different ways. Caste is one of the common forms. When people are treated unequal, their dignity gets violated. According to the social historical theory, caste seems to have come in with the arrival of Aryans in India. The Aryans came in 1500 BC. Caste in India is an ethnographic example of caste system in general. It has known to have widely transformed during the Mughal empire and British raj rule in India. So, caste is a deeply rooted existing idea that existed from way before societies began to form.

EQUALITY IN INDIAN CONSTITUTION:

As we all know, the constitution is a body of laws according to which the country is governed. The Indian constitution recognises every individual as an equal. In order to promote equality among people the parliament made some provisions.

- I. All are equal before the law.
- II. None can be discriminated based on religion, caste, gender or race.
- III. Everyone has access to all public places.

The government has been trying to implement equality through several schemes and programmes. There are existing laws that protect everyone's interests and rights to be treated as equals.

The Preamble of the constitution talks about equality. The constitution has been written on many founding principles. One of them is equality and there are several provisions as to maintain it.

Article 15 of the Indian constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth

- (1)The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.
- (2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition regarding –
 - (a) access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment; or
 - (b) the use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of State funds or dedicated to the use of the public

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CASE STUDIES:

- ❖ Taking up the case of Om Prakash Valmiki, he, in his autobiography named **Joodhan**, recalls an incident he went through at his school. Valmiki talks about how he was made to sit outside his call and sweep the corridors of his school, where other students of his same age from upper castes enjoyed the privileges of sitting inside the classroom being taught lessons. Here, we see an educated person being reluctant to have a Dalit student in his classroom. He's being judged based on his caste and being considered unworthy to sit amongst the other students in the same classroom as the upper caste students.
- ❖ Another case is that of the **Ansari's**. They were denied the flat because they belonged to a different religion. Such a case shows inequality based on religion.
- ❖ Another case we shall look upon is that of **Kanta Devi**, who, as per our constitution and like any of us has the right to vote. But her conditions for voting are different from that of the family she works for. While they have it easy, people like Kanta Devi must wait in a long line, travel miles for voting. While the right to vote is equally distributed to every individual, inequality here occurs in the social status that is considered imperative. These incidents occur because their dignity is not respected. Another reason why such incidents occur is that attitudes change very slowly. Although discrimination is unethical, people still create a social divide between themselves based on caste, religion, ethnicity, gender etc. Establishing equality in a society is a continuous struggle.

SCHEMES:

Mid-day scheme was brought in to provide meals once for the students while at school. This was brought in so that the students could have proper meals during the day and to improve malnutrition in children. Mid-day meals were such an initiative. This scheme was introduced in Tamil Nadu and the Supreme Court of India extended the scheme to all the other states. This brought many advancements in the society.

CHANGES SEEN AFTER THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MID-DAY MEAL SCHEME

- Attendance has improved drastically.
- Many parents could go to work free of worries.
- It has played a pivotal role in reducing caste indifferences and prejudices.
- Poor children could get healthy and nutritious food at least once a day.
- This has also provided job opportunities to many people from lower castes.

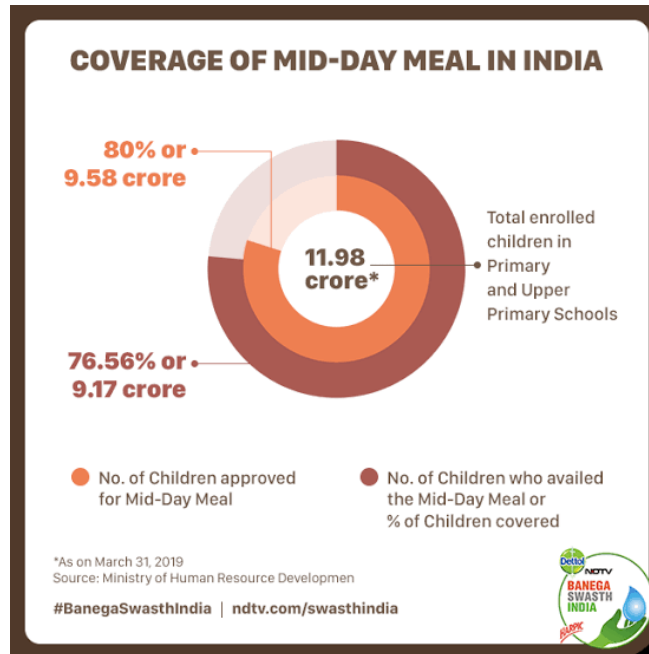
As of March 2019, schools saw a rise in the number of students enrolled for the mid-day meal programme.

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In other countries like United States of America, the African-Americans faced racial discrimination. People from Africa were brought in as slaves and they were denied equality through law. When Rosa Parks met with a similar incident while travelling in a bus, she started a riot for equality. She refused to give her seat to a white man on a bus and this led to the start of an agitation against the unequal ways.

The **Civil Rights Act of 1964**, prohibited discrimination based on race, religion, gender and origin. It also allowed African-American children to attend schools. They would no longer have to attend separate schools specially set up for them. However, the African-American students can only afford to attend government schools with fewer facilities and less qualifying teachers when compared to the American students who had private schools.

KEY POINTS:

- Equality is a concept that talks about an unbiased socio-economic status of people.
- Universal Adult Franchise (also called Universal suffrage), gives the right to vote for all adult citizens (above the age of 18) regardless of their race, ethnicity, caste, gender or social status.
- The constitution is a body of laws according to which the country is governed.
- Case studies of inequality in different aspects.
- Mid-day scheme was brought in to provide meals once for the students while at school.
- Civil Rights Act, 1964