

Hand out 1/2

Class VIII

Subject: Social Studies (civics)

Lesson No 1: The Indian Constitution

In this chapter we will discuss the Indian Constitution. In the beginning the chapter explain why we need a constitution and also states 3 reasons describing it in detail. By going through this chapter students will become families with the key feature of the Indian Constitution.

Students do you know the constitution of India is the longest Constitution in the world. It is a set of rules by which the government rules our country. It is the supreme law of the country. It came into effect on 26th January 1950. Our constitution is based on the principles of democracy, socialism and secularism.

DR. Bhim Rao Ambedkar is known as the “Father of Indian Constitution”.

As we all know the game of football or cricket has some rules and regulation. If we take the example of football, the name itself suggest this is a game which is played by feet. If the players touch the ball with his arm it is considered foul. In the same game if the players start holding the football in their hands and passing it around, they are no more playing football. They may be playing some other game.

In the same way in a society we have some set of rules to lead a smooth life. If we look for the people who live in the big colonies or apartments, they also have constitution rules so that people living there do not face any problems. Same way in a country were different communities of people live together, some rules are made. These rules are usually available in written form.

A written document in which we find such rules is called a Constitution.

If your previous classes you have also studied about Indian constitution. Children have you ever guessed why we need a Constitution? Or how the constitution got written? Or who wrote it and when?

To get the answers of all these questions we will study in details in this chapter.

Q. Why does a country need a constitution?

Today most of the countries in the world have constitution mostly all democratic countries are likely to have a constitution, but it is not necessary that a country having a constitution will be democratic country. for e.g. China.

Before going into detail let us know when the writing of our constitution started. Who were the people behind this? In 1934 The **Indian National Congress** made the demand for a constituent assembly and in 1946 the constituent assembly was formed only of Indian. This assembly drafted the constitution between December 1946 and November 1949 but **come into effect on 26th Jan, 1950**. India celebrates its constitution on 26 January as Republic day.

When a constitution is made it serves several purposes.

1. It creates a national government, consisting of legislative, an executive and a judicial branch
2. It divides its power between the federal govt. and the state.
3. Insure domestic tranquillity.

Now one by one we will try to see the purposes of the Indian Constitution.

- 1) It lays out certain ideals that form the basis of the kind of country i.e. it creates a national government consisting of legislative, executive and judicial branch or we can say a constitution tells us what is the fundamental nature of our society.

In our country we have different communities of people who share certain beliefs but may not agree on all issues. So, the constitution which help to serve as a set of rules and principles that all the people in the country can agree upon and on what basis the country to be governed.

It is not only the rules which the citizen has to agree upon or the type of government but they also have to agree upon certain ideals that they all believe the country should uphold.

- a) Let us see and try to understand this through two contrasting situations of our neighbouring country Nepal. The country was ruled by the Monarchy. The constitution of Nepal which had been adopted in 1990, reflected the fact that the final authority rested in the hands of the king. So, the people were unhappy they started with people movement, their struggle lasted for years

and in 2006 they finally succeeded in pulling an end to the powers of the king.

- b) Now the people of the Nepal had to write a new constitution to establish Nepal as a democracy. People of Nepal did not want to continue with the previous constitution because it did not reflect the ideals of the country what the people of Nepal wanted for which they fought for so many years.

In 2008 Nepal became a democracy after abolishing the Monarchy. So, after moving form monarchy to a democratic government Nepal needs to change all its constitutive rules in order to usher equality in a new society. The people of Nepal adopted a new constitution for the country in 2015.

- 2) Now we will see second purpose of the Indian constitution where it defines the nature of a country's political system i.e. it divides the power between the federal government and the state government.

Nepal's earlier constitution stated that the country was to be ruled by the king and his council of ministers but the countries which have adopted a democratic form of government there the constitution plays a crucial role in laying out certain important guideline that helps in the governance and decision making within the society.

In a democracy we choose our leaders so that they can exercise power responsibly on our behalf, but sometimes this does not happen, the leaders misuse their authority or power. So, constitution usually safeguards against this. The misuse of power generally results in gross injustice among the people.

Let us try understand with the given story board on page no-7 there the class teacher goes out from the class and ask the monitor to take care of the class, but the class monitor is bully, he is not linked by other students the tries to bully on of his classmate Anil and when the class teacher returns back the monitor complains against Anil telling that " Anil kept talking loudly and disturbing the class and would not listen to me". As a result, the teacher gave him punishment to stay back after school and write 100 times that I will not disobey the class monitor.

So, in this way we can see when the power is given to someone how they misuse it. That is why the constitution often lays down rules that guard against this misuse of power by our political leaders.

In the Indian Constitution many of these laws are contained in the section on fundamental rights. Last class you read out the Dalit writer Omprakash Valmiki, how he faced discrimination in the school. That is why the Indian constitution guarantees the right to equality to all people irrespective of their caste, creed, gender, religion and place of birth.

Another Important function of the constitution is to ensure that a dominate group does not use its power against less powerful group. If this happens there is unhealthy situation in the society. That is why constitution usually contain rules that ensure that minorities are not excluded in our daily routine. This kind of domination can be seen in Inter community domination where the majority tries to dominate the minority where the members of the same community dominate others.

3) The third significant purpose why we need a constitution is to save us from ourselves. Though it sounds strange but this is what we might at times feel strongly about an issue that might go against our larger interest.

Let us try understand it through the story board given in page 9.

Here a girl Shabnam in Dilemma, she has last two chapters for revision for the next days exam, but its time for her favourite T.V show. Her mothers asked her why she is so worried? She replies that, if you all see the T.V, she will also be tempted to watch her favourite show, but if no one watches T.V tonight then she not be tempted.

Next day when she got the question paper she was relaxed, as there where many questions from the last two chapters, who's revision she did last night. So, in this way constitution protect us against certain decision that we might take that could have an adverse effect on the larger principle that the country believes in.

A good constitution does not allow these whims to change its basis structure. it does not allow for the easy overthrow of provision that guarantees right of citizens and protect their freedom.

So now I think it is clear why a country needs a constitution. In our next module we will discuss the key features of Indian Constitution.