

Chapter 1 - On Equality

Q.1 In a democracy why is universal adult franchise important?

Ans.: Democracy is a system of government in which the citizens exercise supreme power. Therefore, it is necessary to have a system which provides equality to the people in electing their representative. Thus, universal adult franchise plays an important role in a democracy because it states that every individual irrespective of their caste, colour, religion, gender, or status has right to vote and each vote has equal value i.e. "one vote one value".

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

Ans.: The principle of equality is ensured by the Indian Constitution through the following ways:

(1) No person can be discriminated against on the basis of their religion, race, caste, place of birth or their gender.

(2) Every person has access to public places including playgrounds, hotels, shops and markets. All persons can use publicly available wells, roads and bathing ghats. Untouchability is also abolished under the law.

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

Ans.: Both Omprakash Valmiki and the Ansaris were being discriminated on the grounds of their caste and religion.

In both the cases, their dignity was violated. Omprakash Valmiki was made to sweep the school grounds and looked down upon by his principal

and school teachers. On the other hand, the people were not ready to lease their apartment to the Ansaris. Both Valmiki and the Ansaris were treated unequally in the society, even though constitutionally everyone is equal.

Q.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?

Ans.: The term “all persons are equal before the law” recognizes the principle of equality under the Indian constitution. This term signifies that all citizens irrespective of their social or economic background has to obey the same laws. No person shall be discriminated in the eyes of the law on the grounds of race, religion, caste or whether they are male or female.

This provision promotes equality in the democracy. It gives strength to a democracy. In a sense, all citizens are treated equally and are provided with equal opportunity and dignity.

Q.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?



Ans.: No, the Disabilities Act (1995) is not being implemented in this case. According to the Disabilities Act, it is mandatory for all the public buildings, primary health centers to provide ramps for the easy access to the people with disabilities. The aim of the Disabilities Act is the “full participation and equality of the people with disabilities”. By not providing ramps, the dignity of this person is violated. He is not being provided with the opportunity to be self-independent. It is also an attack on his self-confidence. It might affect his safety in the sense, if the people who are carrying him lost their balance, it will cause him some serious injury.