

## Chapter – 1: On Equality

### Equality in Indian democracy

- Indian Constitution – recognize every person – equal
  - Every individual – male or female – including all castes, religions, tribes, educational and economic backgrounds – equal
- Inequality – still exists
- Earlier – no laws against discrimination – now – a lot of laws – ensure – people treated with dignity
- Recognition of equality – provisions in Constitution –
  - Every person is equal before law
    - Every person – be it President or a domestic help – obey the same law
  - No discrimination – basis – religion, race, caste, place of birth, gender
  - Every person – access to all public places
    - All playgrounds, hotels, shops, markets, public wells, roads, bathing ghats
  - Untouchability – abolished
- Two ways – government – ensure equality –
  - Through laws
  - Through government programmes and schemes
- Many laws – protect every person's right to equality
- Government – set up schemes – improve lives of communities – treated unequally – ensure greater opportunity
- One of the steps – mid-day meal scheme
- Programme introduced in all government elementary schools – provide children with cooked meal
- Tamil Nadu – 1<sup>st</sup> state to introduce
- 2001 – Supreme Court – asked all states to introduce it – within 6 months
- Effect – many poor students – started enrolling and attending schools
- Teachers reported – children – go home for lunch – never return – attendance improved
- Mothers – interrupted work – feed children – no longer needed to do so
- Programme – reduce caste prejudice – all children eat together – some places *Dalit* women – prepare food
- Solved – hunger issues with children – do not study with hungry stomachs
- Government programmes – imp. role – increase equality – YET – lot to be done
- Schools that rich attend – AND – schools that poor attend – huge difference
- Many schools – *Dalit* children – treated unequally – people refuse to accept equality – although – law requires it
- Main reason – attitude changes very slowly
- People – aware – discrimination – against the law – still do it – basis – caste, religion, disability, economic status, gender
- Establishing equality – democratic society – continuous struggle

### Issues of equality in other countries

- Whether – India – democratic country – struggle for equality
- Many countries – democracies – struggle for equality – concerning issue

- America – African-Americans – ancestors – slaves – brought from Africa – still treated unequally
- Movement – late 1950s – push for equal rights for African-Americans
- Prior to (before) this – African-Americans – treated unequally – denied equality by law
  - Travelling by bus – sit at back or give up seat when white people ask for it
- Rosa Parks (1913 – 2005) – African-American – tired from work – refused to give seat to white men – 1<sup>st</sup> December 1955
- Refusal – started agitation (anger) against inequality – **Civil Rights Movement**
- Civil Rights Act, 1964 – prohibited discrimination – basis – race, religion, national origin
- All schools – open for African-Americans – no longer – separate schools
- Majority of African-Americans – face discrimination
  - Afford to attend – government schools – poor facilities
  - White students – go to private schools or live in areas – government schools – equal to private schools

## Challenge of democracy

- No country – complete democracy
- Communities and people – trying to expand – idea of democracy – recognition of equality
- Following chapters – read about – equality affecting daily lives

## Excerpt (part) from Article 15 of Indian Constitution

Prohibition of 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, gender, and place of birth or any of them.

(2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, gender, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to –

(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 general public.