

## On Equality

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

**Ans.** Universal adult franchise is an important aspect of a democratic set-up. It is based on the principle of equality. It authorises all adult citizens, who are 18 and above to cast one vote irrespective of their wealth and the communities they belong to. There shall be no discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth:

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

**Ans.** The two ways in which Article 15 addresses inequality are:

(i) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them.

(ii) 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 with regard to :

(a) access to shops, public restaurants, hotels, and places of public entertainment;

(b) the use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads, and places of public resort maintained by the funds of State or meant for public use.

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

**Ans.** Both Omprakash Valmiki and the Ansaris were victims of un- equal treatment. The dignity or self-respect of both of them was violated. The headmaster of Omprakash Valmiki compelled him to sweep the school simply because he belonged to the Dalit. The dignity of Omprakash was badly hurt. He was made to feel that he was less than equal to all other students in the school. The self-respect of the Ansaris was also hurt badly when they were refused to lease an apartment because of their religion. Omprakash and the Ansaris are also human beings and they too deserve the same dignity as anyone else.

**4. What do you understand by the term "all persons are equal before law"? Why do you think it is important in a democracy?**

**Ans.** One of the aims of our constitution was to remove all kinds of inequality from our society, then making all the citizens of India equal before law. It means that from the President of the country to an ordinary domestic worker has to obey the same laws. No one can be discriminated against on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. People committing the same crime are punished equally, regardless of status. The same right applies in matters of education and employment. Practice of untouchability has been made illegal. Those who follow this practice can be punished.

Equality before law is a sacred principle of our constitution which forms the backbone of democracy. It strengthens the root of a democratic set. In its absence there will be chaos everywhere.

**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 shown (see textbook page 15) 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.** I don't think that the above law is being implemented in the case of the boy who is being carried down the stairs as show in the picture (textbook page 15).

Public buildings like schools, hospitals, etc. should be constructed with the provisions of ramps in order to avoid the problems faced by the disabled persons. Disable persons like other human beings want to lead a life with dignity. They do not want to be assisted by others nor do they want to be sympathised by others. If such things happen, their self-respect or dignity is badly hurt. The dignity of the boy in the picture is affected on being carried down the stairs. It is because he may feel inferior for his dependency on other's help particularly in such places. His safety in also at stake. His life is in the hands of others. Their slight carelessness may take his life.