

Revision Notes Class 8

Social Science - Civics

Chapter 1 - The Indian Constitution

Why does a country need a constitution?

1. INC in 1934 i.e Indian National Congress raised a demand of Constituent Assembly which gained momentum during Second World War and thus formed in December 1946 and then this assembly created from 1946 to 1949, the constitution of India which was adopted finally in Jan 26, 1950.
2. Unity was there amongst all the members and all the provisions and articles and important points were discussed first to reach the final conclusion.
3. All democracies of the world are likely to have a Constitution, but not all countries that have a Constitution are necessarily a democracy.
4. A Constitution serves as a set of rules and regulations that every citizen of a country should agree upon; the basis of how they wish to be governed.
5. The Constitution of a country states the fundamental nature of its society.
6. In a democratic country or society, the Constitution lays down the rules and regulations that safeguard us against the political leaders' abuse of authority and power.
7. The constitution makes sure that no dominant group uses its power against minority communities or it's less powerful citizens.
8. The constitution protects us against harmful decisions that can hurt the broader principles the country believes in.
9. It reflects our political system.
10. In a democracy, the leaders or representatives are chosen by the citizens who exercise their powers to run the government on their behalf.
11. No law of the country can change the basic structure of the Constitution.
12. Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as well as Dr. B.R. Ambedkar (Father of the constitution) was also part of the Constitution making body i.e Constituent Assembly.

The Indian Constitution: Key Features

1. Federalism

- It infers the presence of more than one level of government ie. in the center and the states in a country.
- In India, we have a central government, state-level governments, and Panchayati Raj in every village.
- The three tier division helps people in enjoying the autonomy in exercising powers in various issues.
- The Constitution provides a list of subjects for all the tiers that specifies the law making authority of each tier.
- The Constitution specifies the source of revenue for each tier of the government.
- The Constitution guides and provides authority to function to the states.
- Indian citizens are governed by the laws and regulations made by these levels of government.

2. Parliamentary Form of Government

- It refers to the presence of Parliament in the country which makes law and according to which the Prime Minister is considered as the Head of the Government.
- The Constitution of India guarantees Universal Adult Suffrage to all its citizens with respect to their roles in electing their representatives.
- Besides this, every citizen also has the right to contest elections.

3. Separation of Powers

There are three main organs of the government:

- **Legislature:** It refers to the elected representatives by the people. The legislature is entitled to make laws.
- **Executive:** The executive is that branch of government which exercises its authority in implementation of the laws enacted by the legislature.
- **Judiciary:** The judiciary is responsible for keeping a check on equitable and proper implementation of the laws. The Supreme Court (highest Judicial body) of India is considered as the final authority to interpret the provisions of the Constitution.

4. Fundamental Rights

Fundamental Rights are basic rights guaranteed by the Constitution to its people. This protects the people from the misuse of the powers of the state. The Constitution of India lists six fundamental rights for its citizens, namely:

1. Right to Equality
2. Right to Freedom
3. Right against Exploitation
4. Right to Freedom of Religion
5. Cultural and Educational Rights
6. Right to Constitutional Remedies

5. Secularism

A state is called secular when it doesn't promote any one religion as the official state religion. For example: India does not have any official state religion. People from different castes and religions reside together here.

Important Questions and Answers

1. What is the constitution?

Ans: The Constitution is a set of rules and regulations that governs the people of a country. It constitutes of various fundamentals that helps us to know the nature of society that exists in a country.

2. State three reasons why we need a Constitution

Ans: The three reasons that justifies the need of a Constitution are:

- It lays down the ideas that govern a country or society. It helps to serve as a set of rules that all the people of a country mutually agree upon to abide by.
- It defines the nature and features of the political system of a country. The constitution lays down the rules and regulations that safeguard us against the political leaders' abuse of authority and power. The constitution makes sure that no dominant group uses its power against minority communities or less powerful citizens.
- The constitution protects us against harmful decisions that can hurt the broader principles the country believes in.

3. When was the Indian Constitution written?

Ans: It took three long years i.e from December 1946 to November 1949 to complete the drafting of the Indian Constitution. The Constitution was adopted 26th November, 1949 and came into effect from 26th January, 1950.

4. Who was the Chairman of the Constitution drafting committee?

Ans: Dr. B. R. Ambedkar was the Chairman of the Constitution drafting committee.

5. Write a note on the freedom struggle in Nepal.

Ans: The freedom struggle in Nepal:

- The people's struggle for freedom started in 1990.
- Democracy was ascertained, but it only lasted 12 years.
- The Constitution adopted by Nepal in 1990 reflected that the final authority lies with the King.
- King Gyanendra, with the assistance of the army, began taking over the government in 2002. In 2005, he finally took over the government.
- In 2006, the movement of democracy started and the third parliament was restored in April.
- In 2008, Nepal abolished monarchy and adopted democracy.
- It takes time to form new rules and regulations, finally in 2015 Nepal adopted a new constitution.

6. What are the downsides of a democratic society?

Ans: The downsides of a democratic society are:

- In a democratic society, powers can easily be misused.
- The majority community can undermine the minority community.
- Without a set of rules, there is a strong possibility of making incorrect decisions that may harm the society as a whole or have serious adverse effects.

7. How does the constitution protect minority communities?

Ans: The Constitution protects the minority communities by:

- Assuring that the majority group doesn't abuse its power against the minorities.

- It contains a set of rules that ensure that the minorities are included in the society to the extent as that of the majority.

8. State the highlights of the text prepared by Dr. Ambedkar

Ans: The highlights of the text prepared by Dr. B. R. Ambedkar are:

- Federalism
- Separation of powers
- Parliamentary form of government
- Directive Principles of State Policy
- Freedom to practice any religion of one's choice
- Economic rights and social rights for women
- Constitutional assurances and safety of all citizens
- Prohibition of untouchability
- Outlawing any form of discrimination
- Reservation for STs and SCs in areas like civil service jobs and educational institutions.
- Exercise of Voting Rights.

9. What do you mean by universal adult franchise?

Ans: It refers to the right to vote given to all the citizens of a country who are more than a certain prescribed years of age regardless of their gender, caste, creed, financial, and educational status.

For example: In India, the legal age to cast a vote is 18 years. But for some other countries this may be different.

10. State the two-fold objectives of fundamental rights.

Ans: The two-fold objectives of fundamental rights are:

- That every person must be in a position to claim these rights.
- The Fundamental Rights must be binding upon the state or the authority that has the power to enact laws.

11. What does the term "State" mean?

Ans: The term "State" can refer to the authorities or the political institutions formed by the Constitution to enact laws for people living in a determined territory or place.