

Long Answer Questions

Q.1. How was 'apartheid' practised in South Africa?

Ans. (i) The system of apartheid divided the people and labelled them on the basis of their skin colour.

(ii) The natives of South Africa were the 'Blacks', the people of mixed races were 'Coloured' and the people who migrated from India, 'The Indians'.

(iii) All Non-Whites were treated as inferiors and were deprived of their right to vote.

(iv) They were forbidden from living in white areas.

(v) They could work in white areas only if they had a permit.

(vi) Trains, buses, taxis, hotels, hospitals, schools, colleges, libraries, cinema halls, beaches, swimming pools, public toilets were all separate for whites and blacks.

(vii) The Blacks could not visit the churches where the whites worshipped.

Q.2. How did South Africa get Independence?

Ans. (i) As protests and struggles against apartheid had increased, the government realised that they could no longer keep the blacks under their rule through repression.

(ii) The White regime changed its policies.

(iii) Discriminatory laws were repealed.

(iv) Ban on political parties and restrictions on the media were lifted.

(v) After 28 years of imprisonment, Nelson Mandela walked out of jail as a free man.

(vi) Finally at the midnight of 26th April, 1994, the new national flag of Republic of South Africa was unfurled marking the newly born democracy in the world.

(vii) The apartheid government came to an end, paving the way for the formation of a multi-racial government.

Q.3. What problems were faced by the South Africans before the formation of the constitution?

Ans. The oppressor and the oppressed in this new democracy were planning to live together as equals. It was not going to be easy for them to trust each other. They had their fears. They wanted to safeguard their interests. The black majority was keen to ensure that the democratic principle of majority rule was not compromised. They wanted substantial social and economic rights. The white minority was keen to protect its privileges and property.

Q.4. What steps were taken by the Constituent Assembly to form the Indian Constitution?

Ans. The Constituent Assembly worked in a systematic, open and consensual manner.

(i) Firstly some basic principles were decided or agreed upon.

(ii) Then a Drafting Committee chaired by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar prepared a draft constitution for discussion.

(iii) Several rounds of thorough discussion took place on the Draft Constitution, clause by clause. More than 2000 amendments were considered. The members deliberated for 114 days spread over three years. Every document presented and every word spoken in the Constituent Assembly has been recorded and preserved to form 12 bulky volumes of Constituent Assembly Debates.

Q.5. What is a constitution? Why do we need a constitution for a country?

OR

What are the main functions of a constitution?

Ans. The constitution of a country is a set of written rules that are accepted by all the people living together in a country. It is the supreme law that determines the relationship among people living in a territory and also the relationship between the people and the government.

Need of the constitution:

(i) It generates a degree of trust and coordination that is necessary for different kinds of people to live together.

(ii) It specifies how the government will be constituted and various powers to take various decisions will be allotted to whom.

(iii) It lays down limits on the powers of the government and tell us what the rights of the citizens are.

(iv) It also expresses the aspirations of the people about creating a good society.

(v) Constitution is the supreme law that determines the relationship among people living in a territory and also the relationship between the people and the government.

Q.6. “Most of the countries of the world keep changing their constitution as needed but the same Indian Constitution is accepted even today as it was at the time of preparation. Is it an unusual achievement for any constitution? Give reasons in support of your answer.

Ans. (i) The constitution does not reflect the views of its members alone. It expresses a broad consensus of its time.

(ii) Many countries of the world have had to rewrite their constitution afresh because the basic rules were not accepted to all major social groups or political parties.

(iii) The Constituent Assembly represented the people of India. There was no universal adult franchise at that time. So the Constituent Assembly could not have been chosen directly by all the people of India.

(iv) In social terms, the Assembly represented members from different language groups, castes, classes, religions and occupations. It was elected by the members of the existing provincial legislatures, ensuring a fair geographical share of members from all the regions of the country.

(v) The Constituent Assembly worked in a systematic, open and consensual manner. First, some basic principles were declared and agreed upon. Then a Drafting Committee chaired by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar prepared a draft constitution for discussion. These documents were thoroughly studied with several debates and then presented.

Over the last half a century, several groups have questioned some provisions of the constitution. But no large social group or political party has ever questioned the legitimacy of the constitution itself. This is an unusual achievement for any constitution.