

Revision Notes
Chapter – 10
Struggles for Equality

- The Indian Constitution recognises all Indians are equal before the law such that no person is discriminated against because of their religion, sex, caste, or whether rich or poor.
- All adults in India have equal rights to vote during elections, and this ‘power over the ballot box’ has been used by people to elect or replace their representatives for many years.
- However the feeling of equality on the basis of ‘one vote one person’ in reality does not extend to all. Poor people face negligence and these people do not get justice in matters of health, education, etc.
- Domestic helpers, small farmers and many others are forced to work in hardships due to poverty and shortage of resources. There are inadequate laws and insufficient support systems to help them.
- People also face inequality on grounds of religion, caste and gender in India.

• **Struggles for Equality:**

- (i) Throughout the world, people are fighting for their rights and equality, trying to end the discrimination which they face.
- (ii) Women’s struggle and movements for equality were fighting for equal rights and justice.
- (iii) The Tawa Matsya Sangh in Madhya Pradesh is also an example of people coming together to fight for an issue.
- (iv) There are many other struggles such as those of beedi workers, fishfolk, agricultural labourers, slum dwellers, etc. who have been fighting for equality and justice.

• **Tawa Matsya Sangh (TMS):**

- (i) It is a federation of fisher-workers' cooperatives that fights for the rights of forest dwellers who have been displaced from Satpura forest located in Madhya Pradesh.
- (ii) When dams are built or forest areas declared sanctuaries for animals, thousands of people are displaced. Whole villages are uprooted and people are forced to go and build new homes, start new lives elsewhere.
- (iii) In urban areas too, bastis in which poor people live are often uprooted. Some of them are

relocated to areas outside the city. Their work as well as their children's schooling is severely disrupted because of the distance from the outskirts of the city to these locations.

(iv) With the beginning of the construction of Tawa Dam in 1958 till its completion in 1978, large parts of the forest and agricultural areas were submerged. Thus, the forest dwellers had to suffer a set back as they earned very little.

(v) The government gave rights for fishing in the Tawa reservoir but to only private contractors in 1994.

(vi) When the contractors started exploiting the poor villagers, they came together to form a union and set up an organization to protect their rights, which was called Tawa Matsya Sangh.

(vii) Rallies and Chakka jam were organized time and again. In response, the government granted fishing rights to the villagers in 1996. A five-year lease agreement was signed two months later. On January 2, 1997, people from 33 villages of Tawa started the new year with the first catch.

(viii) By managing to earn a higher wage as well as preserving the fish in the reservoir, the TMS has shown that when people's organizations get their rights to livelihood, they can be good managers.

• **The Indian Constitution as a Living Document:**

(i) The foundation of all movements for justice and the inspiration for all the poetry and songs on equality is the recognition that all people are equal.

(ii) Movements and struggle for equality in India promote equality.

(iii) Indian constitution is a living document recognizing greater equality on existing and other issues.

(iv) It guarantees dignity, self-respect and equality, all of which are required in a democracy.

(v) In a democracy, there are always communities and individuals trying to expand the idea of democracy and push for a greater recognition of equality on existing as well as new issues.

(vi) There are issues of inequality that are central to a democracy. These issues substantially affect poor and marginalized communities, and therefore, concern economic and social equality in the country.

(vii) The dignity and self-respect of each person and their community can only be realized if they have adequate resources to support and nurture their families and if they are not discriminated against.