

Revision Notes

Chapter – 1

On Equality

Equality is a condition in which adequate opportunities are given to all.

Equal Right to Vote: In a democratic country like India, adults, irrespective of their religion, caste education, status, gender or place of birth, are given the right to vote under **Universal Adult Franchise**.

Does Equality in India Exist?

(i) In reality, differences exist between the citizens of our country. For example-

- The caste system divides people into castes based on their birth. It is followed in both rural and urban areas.
- Dalits or the so-called lower castes are treated badly and denied opportunities , even today.
- People are denied residential areas based on their caste and religion.
- When persons are treated unequally, their dignity is violated.

Equality in Indian Democracy:

(i) The Indian Constitution recognises every person as equal. This means that every individual in the country, including male and female persons from all castes, religions, tribes, educational and economic backgrounds are recognised as equal. However, it does not mean that inequality does not exist in India.

(ii) Four provisions provide equality in India; equality before the law; no discrimination on the basis of caste, colour, religion, race, gender; everyone has access to all public places and untouchability has been abolished.

(iii) The government has tried to implement equality firstly through laws and secondly through government programmes or schemes to help disadvantaged communities. These schemes are introduced and implemented to ensure greater opportunities for people who

have not had them in the past.

(iv) In addition, programmes like mid-day meal scheme have been launched to improve the attendance and enrolment ratio of children in schools. Dalit women have been employed to prepare the meals.

Reasons for the lack of acceptance of laws of equality:

(i) One of the main reasons for the existence of inequality is that attitudes change very slowly. Even though persons are aware that discrimination is against the law, they continue to treat people unequally on the basis of their caste, religion, disability, economic status and because they are women.

(ii) It is only when people begin to believe that no one is inferior, and that every person deserves to be treated with dignity, that present attitudes can change.

Issues of Equality in Other Democracies: In USA, the Civil Rights Movement of 1960's restored the dignity of African-Americans based on colour. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination on the basis of race, religion or national origin. It also stated that all schools would be open to African-American children and that they would no longer have to attend separate schools specially set up for them. However, despite this, a majority of African-Americans continue to be discriminated in the country.