

- Equality in Indian Democracy
- Issues of Equality in Other Democracies
- Constitutional Provisions for Equality
- Government Initiatives for Promoting Equality
- Challenges in Achieving Equality
- Solved Examples
- Practice Set
- Answer Key
- Quick Reference
- Glossary

Equality in Indian Democracy

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. While inequality still exists in society, democratic India upholds the principle of equality of all persons. Earlier, no laws protected people from discrimination and ill-treatment, but now several laws ensure that people are treated with dignity and as equals.

Can you think of an incident in your life in which your dignity was violated? How did this make you feel?

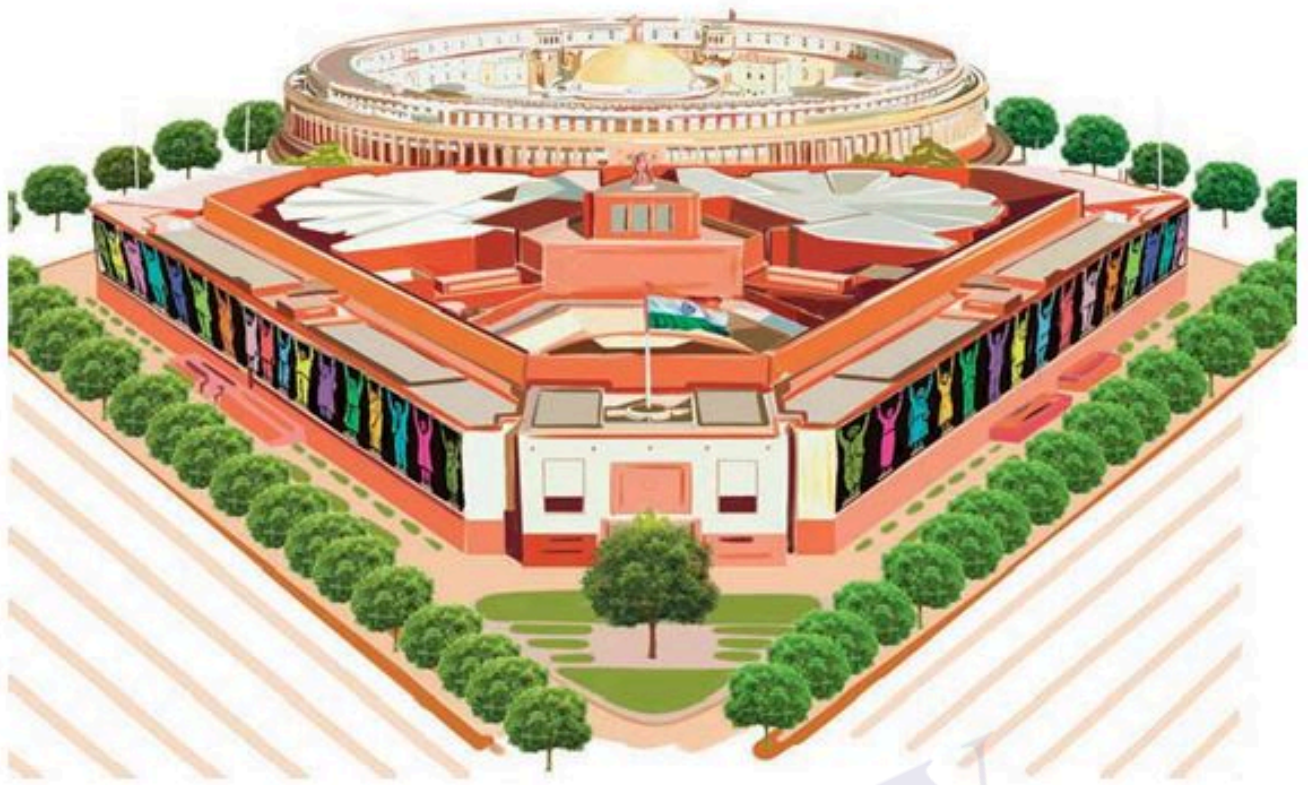




In the 1975 film, Deewar, a boy who works as a shoeshine refuses to pick up a coin thrown at him. He feels that there is dignity in the work that he does and insists that his fee be given respectfully.

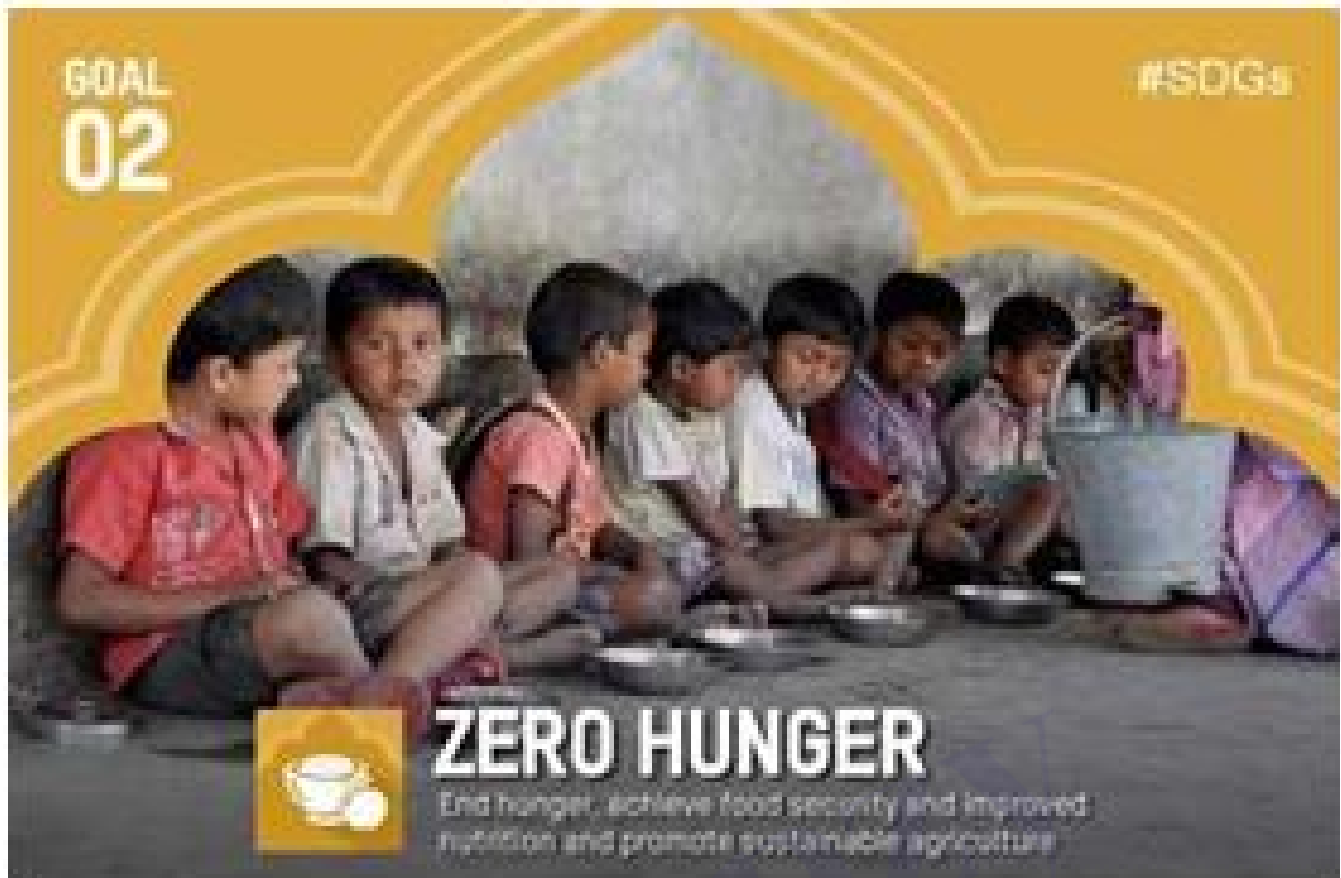
This image from the 1975 film *Deewar* shows a boy who works as a shoeshine refusing to pick up a coin thrown at him disrespectfully. He insists that his fee be given respectfully, highlighting the dignity in all work and the importance of respect in human interactions.

The Constitution guarantees equality through several provisions: every person is equal before the law; no discrimination is allowed on grounds of religion, race, caste, place of birth, or gender; all persons have access to public places; and untouchability has been abolished.



The Parliament House of India symbolizes democracy, unity, and sovereignty. It represents the diverse population governed by democratic principles.

The government implements equality through laws and programmes aimed at helping disadvantaged communities. Laws protect rights to equality, while schemes improve opportunities for historically marginalized groups.



Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)

www.in.undp.org

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 2, Zero Hunger, aims to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. This goal supports the well-being of children and communities worldwide.

One important government programme is the Midday Meal Scheme, introduced in government elementary schools to provide cooked lunch to children. Tamil Nadu was the first state to implement it, and in 2001 the Supreme Court mandated all states to adopt it. The scheme has increased school enrolment and attendance, reduced caste prejudices, and helped poor children concentrate better by reducing hunger.



Children being served their midday meal at a government school in

Uttarakhand.

This image shows children receiving midday meals at a government school in Uttarakhand, illustrating the scheme's role in improving nutrition and education.

Despite these efforts, inequalities persist in India. Differences remain between schools attended by rich and poor children, and discrimination against Dalit children continues in some places. Changing attitudes is a slow process, and the struggle for equality and dignity is ongoing.

Exam Questions

Q1: What does equality before the law mean in the Indian Constitution?

Answer: It means every person, from the President to a domestic worker, must obey the same laws and be treated equally by the law.

Q2: How has the Midday Meal Scheme helped promote equality?

Answer: It has increased school enrolment and attendance among poor children, reduced caste prejudices by having children eat together, and helped children concentrate by reducing hunger.

Q3: Why is dignity important in the context of work?

Answer: Dignity means self-respect and pride in one's work. Respecting dignity ensures that all work is valued and people are treated fairly regardless of their job.

Issues of Equality in Other Democracies

Many democratic countries face ongoing struggles for equality. In the United States, African-Americans, descendants of slaves, have historically faced discrimination and inequality despite legal reforms. For example, before the Civil Rights Movement, African-Americans were forced to sit at the back of buses or give up their seats to white passengers.

Rosa Parks, an African-American woman, refused to give up her bus seat in 1955, sparking the Civil Rights Movement. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination based on race, religion, or national origin and mandated desegregation of schools. However, economic and educational inequalities persist.



This historic photograph shows Rosa Parks on a bus, symbolizing peaceful protest against racial segregation and injustice.

Democracy is a continuous struggle to expand equality and dignity for all. Attitudes and social practices take time to change, and individuals and communities contribute to this ongoing effort.

Exam Questions

Q1: Who was Rosa Parks and why is she important?

Answer: Rosa Parks was an African-American woman whose refusal to give up her bus seat in 1955 sparked the Civil Rights Movement, leading to laws against racial discrimination.

Q2: What was the significance of the Civil Rights Act of 1964?

Answer: It prohibited discrimination based on race, religion, or national origin and required schools to be open to all children regardless of race.

Q3: Why does inequality continue in democracies?

Answer: Because social attitudes and prejudices change slowly, and economic and educational disparities persist despite legal protections.

Constitutional Provisions for Equality

The Indian Constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. Article 15 states:

- The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on these grounds.
- No citizen shall be subject to any disability or restriction regarding access to shops, public restaurants, hotels, places of public entertainment, wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads, or public resorts maintained by the State.

Exam Questions

Q1: What does Article 15 of the Indian Constitution prohibit?

Answer: It prohibits discrimination by the State on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.

Q2: What public places are citizens guaranteed access to under Article 15?

Answer: Shops, public restaurants, hotels, places of public entertainment, wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads, and public resorts maintained by the State.

Government Initiatives for Promoting Equality

The government promotes equality through laws and schemes aimed at disadvantaged communities. The Midday Meal Scheme provides cooked lunches in government elementary schools, improving nutrition, attendance, and social integration. Other schemes focus on education, employment, and social welfare for marginalized groups.

Exam Questions

Q1: Name one government scheme that promotes equality and describe its benefits.

Answer: The Midday Meal Scheme provides cooked lunches to school children, increasing enrolment, reducing hunger, and promoting social equality.

Q2: How do government schemes help disadvantaged communities?

Answer: They provide opportunities and support to improve education, health, and economic status, helping to reduce historical inequalities.

Challenges in Achieving Equality

Despite constitutional guarantees and government programmes, challenges remain. Discrimination based on caste, religion, gender, disability, and economic status persists. Attitudes change slowly, and inequalities in education and social treatment continue. Achieving equality is a continuous struggle requiring societal change and individual commitment.

Exam Questions

Q1: Why does discrimination continue despite laws against it?

Answer: Because social attitudes and prejudices take time to change, and people may continue discriminatory practices despite legal prohibitions.

Q2: What is needed to establish equality in a democratic society?

Answer: A continuous struggle involving individuals and communities to change attitudes and ensure dignity and equal treatment for all.

Solved Examples

Example 1: Explain how the Midday Meal Scheme promotes equality.

Solution: The scheme provides free cooked meals to children in government schools, encouraging poor children to attend regularly. It reduces hunger, improves concentration, and fosters social integration by having children from different castes eat together.

Example 2: Describe the significance of Rosa Parks' action in the United States.

Solution: Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her bus seat was a peaceful protest against racial segregation. It sparked the Civil Rights Movement, leading to laws that prohibited racial discrimination and promoted equality.

Practice Set

Easy

- What does equality before the law mean?
- Who was Rosa Parks?
- What is the Midday Meal Scheme?

Moderate

- Explain the importance of dignity in work.
- List two constitutional provisions that promote equality.
- How did the Civil Rights Act of 1964 impact American society?

Challenging

- Discuss the challenges in achieving equality in democratic societies.
- Analyze the role of government schemes in reducing social inequalities.
- Compare the struggle for equality in India and the United States.

Answer Key

Easy:

- Equality before the law means all persons are subject to the same laws and treated equally by the law.
- Rosa Parks was an African-American woman who refused to give up her bus seat, sparking the Civil Rights Movement.
- The Midday Meal Scheme provides free cooked meals to children in government schools.

Moderate:

- Dignity in work means respecting oneself and others regardless of the job, ensuring fair treatment.
- Constitutional provisions include no discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, and access to public places.
- The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited racial discrimination and desegregated schools.

Challenging:

- Challenges include slow change in social attitudes, persistent prejudices, and economic disparities.
- Government schemes provide education, nutrition, and social support to marginalized groups, helping reduce inequalities.
- Both India and the USA have legal frameworks for equality but face ongoing social challenges and struggles for dignity.

Quick Reference

- **Equality:** Principle that all individuals are treated fairly and have the same rights.
- **Dignity:** Self-respect and pride in oneself and one's work.
- **Constitution:** The supreme law of the land that guarantees rights and duties.
- **Midday Meal Scheme:** Government programme providing free cooked meals to school children.
- **Civil Rights Movement:** Movement in the USA to end racial discrimination and promote equality.
- **Article 15:** Constitutional provision prohibiting discrimination on specified grounds.

Glossary

- **Universal adult franchise:** The right of all adult citizens (18 years and above) to vote regardless of social or economic background.
- **Dignity:** The quality of being worthy of respect; self-respect.
- **Constitution:** A document that lays down the basic rules and regulations for the government and citizens.
- **Civil Rights Movement:** A movement in the USA during the 1950s and 1960s aimed at ending racial discrimination and securing equal rights for African-Americans.

Year	Event	Significance
1955	Rosa Parks refuses to give up bus seat	Started the Civil Rights Movement in the USA
1964	Civil Rights Act passed in the USA	Prohibited racial discrimination and desegregated schools
2001	Supreme Court mandates Midday Meal Scheme in India	Improved school attendance and nutrition for poor children