Chapter 10: The Constitution of India: An Introduction

Questions — Questions and Activities

Q1 "The Constituent Assembly had representatives from diverse backgrounds in India." Why do you think it was important to have a diverse set of representatives from all over India?

SOLUTION

The Constituent Assembly was formed in 1946 initially with 389 members (later reduced to 299 after Partition), of which 15 were women. These members represented India's diverse regions, professions, and social groups.

Having diverse representatives was important for several reasons:

1. India is a large, culturally diverse and complex country with many languages, religions, castes, and regional identities. A Constitution that is to govern all these people must reflect their varied experiences, needs, and aspirations.

2. If only a narrow group drafted the Constitution, it might protect only the rights and interests of that group, leaving others vulnerable. Diverse representation helped ensure that the rights and concerns of all sections — including women, different castes, and different regions — were considered.

3. The Constitution needed legitimacy — for people across India to accept it as their own document. Representatives from different backgrounds ensured that many communities could see their values and concerns reflected in the document.

4. The freedom struggle itself was built on the values of equality, justice, and fraternity for all. Having diverse voices in the Constituent Assembly put these values into practice from the very start of Constitution-making.

Answer: Diverse representation ensured that the Constitution reflected the needs, rights, and aspirations of India's many regions, communities, castes, and genders — giving it legitimacy and making it truly a document for all citizens.

Q2 Read the statements below carefully and identify which key features / values in the Constitution of India are reflected in each statement.
a. Sheena, Rajat, and Harsh are standing in a line. They are excited to cast their first vote in the general elections.
b. Radha, Imon, and Harpreet study in the same class in the same school.
c. Parents must make arrangements to ensure their children's education.
d. People of all castes, genders, and religions can use the village well.

SOLUTION

Each statement reflects a specific constitutional value or feature:

a. Sheena, Rajat, and Harsh casting their first vote:
This reflects Universal Adult Franchise and the Democratic feature of the Constitution. Every adult citizen — regardless of caste, religion, or gender — has the right to vote and participate in elections. India provided universal adult franchise from the very beginning, which was a significant achievement.

b. Radha, Imon, and Harpreet studying in the same class in the same school:
This reflects the Right to Equality (Article 14 — Equality before law) and the Secular nature of the Constitution. Citizens of different backgrounds and religions have equal access to education and public institutions. It also connects to the Right to Education (Article 21-A).

c. Parents must make arrangements to ensure their children's education:
This reflects Fundamental Duties. The Constitution lists specific duties for citizens, including the duty of a parent or guardian to provide opportunities for education to their child between the ages of six and fourteen years.

d. People of all castes, genders, and religions can use the village well:
This reflects Right to Equality and Justice as stated in the Preamble — that citizens cannot be discriminated against on the grounds of caste, religion, and gender, and that social inequalities must be reduced.

Answer: a. Universal Adult Franchise / Democratic feature; b. Right to Equality and Secular character; c. Fundamental Duties (parent's duty for child's education); d. Right to Equality and Justice (no discrimination by caste, gender, religion).

Q3 It is said that 'All citizens in India are equal before the law'. Do you think this is a fact? If yes, why? If not, why not? Formulate your arguments.

SOLUTION

The Constitution of India guarantees equality before the law through Article 14 (Right to Equality). The Preamble also affirms that all citizens are equal and that social inequalities have to be ended, with the government providing equal opportunity for all.

Arguments in favour (constitutional guarantee):
The law itself does not distinguish between citizens on the basis of caste, religion, or gender. Every citizen has the same legal rights and can approach the same courts. The Supreme Court protects these rights. The Constitution was designed to be a tool to achieve equality, and the framers included Fundamental Rights precisely so that these could be enforced in a court of law.

Arguments for a more nuanced view (gap between law and practice):
In practice, achieving full equality remains a work in progress. Social and economic inequalities can affect access to justice — for example, those with fewer resources may find it harder to access the legal system. Historical inequalities linked to caste or gender have not been fully eliminated in society. The Constitution itself acknowledges this through the Directive Principles of State Policy, which set goals for reducing socio-economic inequalities over time.

Conclusion drawn from the chapter:
The Constitution makes India a nation where all are equal before the law by design, and it provides the tools (Fundamental Rights, independent judiciary, Directive Principles) to work towards real equality. However, the chapter also says the Constitution is a 'living document' that must be improved as per the country's needs, implying that the ideal has not yet been fully realised.

Answer: Constitutionally yes — Article 14 guarantees equality before the law and the Preamble commits to ending social inequalities. In practice, economic and social gaps can affect access to justice, but the Constitution provides Fundamental Rights and an independent judiciary as tools to work towards real equality.

Q4 You have learnt that 'India is the only country that provided universal adult franchise to its citizens from the beginning.' Can you explain why India did it?

SOLUTION

Universal adult franchise means every adult citizen — regardless of caste, religion, gender, or economic status — has the right to vote.

India's freedom struggle was a key reason. Many key ideals from the freedom movement were enshrined in the Constitution. The struggle for independence was fought in the name of all Indians, not just a privileged few. Leaders of the freedom movement were members of the Constituent Assembly and carried these values into the Constitution.

The core values of the freedom struggle — equality of all, justice for all, and freedom — made it natural to grant every adult citizen the right to vote from the very beginning. Denying some citizens the vote (as many countries did, based on property ownership, education, or gender) would have contradicted these fundamental values.

India's civilisational heritage also played a role. The tradition of emphasising the duties and role of the people in governance, and the idea of vasudhaiva kutumbakam (the world is one family), supported an inclusive approach.

Additionally, the framers asked: 'How do we make sure that every adult citizen has a right to vote?' — and the answer, shaped by the freedom struggle, was to make it universal from day one rather than introducing it gradually as some other countries had done.

Answer: India provided universal adult franchise from the beginning because the values of the freedom struggle — equality, justice, and freedom for all — demanded it. Restricting the vote by property, education, or gender would have contradicted the very ideals for which independence was won.

Q5 How did the freedom struggle inspire the making of the Constitution of India? How did India's civilisational heritage inspire some of the key features in the Constitution of India? Explain.

SOLUTION

Influence of the Freedom Struggle:

Many key ideals and values of the Indian freedom struggle were enshrined in the

Constitution. Leaders of the freedom movement were members of the Constituent Assembly and carried their experience and ideas into the document.

The values enshrined include: equality of all, justice for all, freedom, fraternity, preservation of India's cultural heritage, and the idea of using the Constitution as a tool and means of achieving these values.

The freedom struggle also shaped the 'how' questions: how to guarantee that every individual's fundamental rights are respected; how to ensure separation of powers; how to guarantee that every adult citizen has a right to vote; what the relationship between Central and State governments should be; and what the process for amending the Constitution should be.

Influence of India's Civilisational Heritage:

India's civilisational heritage contributed several principles to the Constitution.

The idea that India is one country with an underlying unity that embraces diversity (studied in Grade 6 as 'Unity in Diversity') is embedded in the Constitution.

Fundamental principles from Indian culture — acceptance of diverse points of view, Nature as sacred, pursuit of learning and knowledge, respect for women, vasudhaiva kutumbakam (the world is one family), and sarve bhavantu sukhinah (invocation for the well-being of all creatures) — all find a place in the Constitution.

India's long governance traditions — janapadas, sanghas, rulers and their councils, Kautilya's concept of saptanga, rajadharma — emphasised the duties and role of the people in governance. This naturally led the Constitution makers to incorporate 'Fundamental Duties' as part of the Constitution.

Additionally, following the Indian tradition of 'Let noble thoughts come to me from every side', the makers also studied constitutions of France, the USA, UK, Ireland, Australia and other democracies, adopting useful ideas (e.g., liberty, equality, fraternity from France; Directive Principles from Ireland; independent judiciary influenced by the USA).

Answer: The freedom struggle contributed values like equality, justice, fraternity, and universal franchise; its leaders shaped the Constitution directly as Constituent Assembly members. Civilisational heritage contributed concepts like Fundamental Duties (from rajadharma traditions), unity in diversity, and principles such as vasudhaiva kutumbakam.

Q6 Do you think we, as a society, have achieved all the ideals of the Constitution? If not, what can we each do as citizens to move our country closer to these ideals?

SOLUTION

The Constitution sets out ideals in its Preamble: Justice, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic.

A chapter-grounded assessment:
The chapter acknowledges that the Constitution is a 'living document' that 'can be improved as per the country's needs'. This itself suggests that the journey is ongoing and the ideals have not yet been fully achieved. The Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) set goals — like social, political, and economic justice, and a good standard of living for all — that the government is expected to work towards over time. Their very nature as guidelines rather than enforceable rights shows that these ideals are aspirational goals.

What citizens can do:

1. Uphold Fundamental Duties: Citizens are expected to abide by the Constitution, respect its institutions, defend the country, value our composite cultural heritage, protect the natural environment, strive towards excellence, and ensure children's education — all duties listed in the Constitution.

2. Exercise democratic rights responsibly: Vote in elections, hold elected representatives accountable, and participate in public consultations when the government seeks feedback on proposed laws.

3. Practise the values of the Preamble in daily life: Treat fellow citizens as equals regardless of caste, religion, or gender (Equality and Fraternity); oppose discrimination (Justice); respect freedom of thought and expression (Liberty); respect all religions (Secular values).

4. Use legal mechanisms when rights are violated: The Constitution provides Fundamental Rights that can be enforced in court. Citizens can approach the judiciary if their rights are denied.

5. Stay informed and engage: As the chapter notes, popular movements have contributed to constitutional changes. Informed, engaged citizens are essential for democracy to work.

Answer: The ideals are not yet fully achieved — the Constitution itself is a living document that continues to evolve. Citizens can contribute by upholding their Fundamental Duties, practising the Preamble's values (equality, fraternity, justice, liberty) in daily life, voting responsibly, and approaching courts when Fundamental Rights are violated.

Q7 Read the clues carefully to solve the crossword to uncover important concepts from the Indian Constitution.
Across: 2. The branch of government that makes laws. 7. The part of the Constitution that outlines the duties of citizens towards the country. 8. The highest court in India that protects the Constitution. 9. A system where the head of state is elected, not hereditary. 10. The process by which the Constitution can be changed over time.
Down: 1. The group of people who wrote the Indian Constitution. 3. The statement at the beginning of the Constitution that tells us the values it upholds. 4. The document that lays out the rules and laws of a country. 5. The gas used to preserve the original Constitution safely. 6. Basic rights given to every citizen, like freedom and equality.

SOLUTION

Crossword answers:

Across:
2. LEGISLATURE — The branch of government that makes laws (Parliament at the centre, State Legislatures in the states).
7. FUNDAMENTAL DUTIES — The part of the Constitution listing citizens' duties towards the country (added by the 42nd Amendment; a later addition, not in the original Constitution).
8. SUPREME COURT — The highest court in India, which protects the Constitution and can strike down laws that violate it.
9. REPUBLIC — A system where the head of state is elected, not hereditary. India is a republic because its President is elected.
10. AMENDMENT — The process by which the Constitution can be changed over time. India's Constitution is a living document that has been amended many times.

Down:
1. CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY — The group of people (389 members, later 299

after Partition) who wrote the Indian Constitution between 1946 and 1949.

3. PREAMBLE — The statement at the beginning of the Constitution that declares the values it upholds: Justice, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, and the nature of India as a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic Republic.

4. CONSTITUTION — The document that lays out the rules, laws, and fundamental principles of a country.

5. HELIUM — The gas used to preserve the original handwritten Constitution. It is carefully kept in a helium-filled glass case in Parliament.

6. FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS — Basic rights guaranteed to every citizen, such as the right to equality, freedom, and protection from exploitation.

Answer: Across: 2. Legislature 7. Fundamental Duties 8. Supreme Court 9. Republic 10. Amendment. Down: 1. Constituent Assembly 3. Preamble 4. Constitution 5. Helium 6. Fundamental Rights.