Chapter 5: Citizenship: Rights and Duties

Exercise 5.1 — Questions and Activities

Q1 Why is it important to respect others' religions?

India is a diverse country where people follow many different religions. The Constitution guarantees every person the right to freedom of religion — to choose, practise, and share their faith freely, while ensuring no one is forced to follow or fund a particular religion. Respecting others' religions upholds this right and reflects the duty to promote harmony among all people. State-run schools are not allowed to promote any one religion, which helps keep all faiths equal in the eyes of the state. When citizens respect each other's religions, they strengthen India's unity in diversity and fulfil their constitutional duties as responsible citizens.

Q2 How would you feel if you were left out of something?

Being left out feels hurtful and discouraging. As the chapter shows through Mina's experience, when classmates ignored her because she could not afford a school trip, she felt hurt and excluded. Such exclusion is a form of discrimination that creates a social barrier and prevents a person from enjoying their fundamental rights. It also harms their sense of belonging and dignity. This is why the Constitution emphasises inclusion — ensuring everyone feels welcomed, respected, and supported, regardless of their social or economic background.

Q3 If rights are guaranteed, why do we still see discrimination in society?

Rights are guaranteed by the Constitution, but they cannot automatically change attitudes and behaviour in society. Discrimination can be visible — like calling Rohan 'Drummy' and excluding him from games — or invisible and indirect, such as ignoring someone because of their social background. Invisible discrimination is difficult to prove and hence difficult to penalise. The chapter notes that discrimination can be deeply rooted in historical inequalities of caste, gender, and economic status. While the law prohibits discrimination, it requires active and deliberate effort by citizens, schools, and communities to build truly inclusive spaces where no one is left out.

Q4 Can there ever be a conflict between rights and duties? Give an example.

Yes, rights and duties can sometimes appear to conflict. For example, a person's right to freedom of speech may clash with the duty to promote harmony among all people. The chapter gives the Sports Day example: students exercised their right to express opinions about wearing comfortable clothes, but the school's authority and uniform rules (a form of duty to follow institutional order) set boundaries on that freedom. The Constitution itself notes that rights come with reasonable restrictions so they are not misused or harmful to others. In such cases, citizens must balance their individual rights with their responsibilities towards the community and the nation.

Q5 How does respecting diversity strengthen democracy?

Democracy depends on the participation of all citizens, regardless of their language, religion, culture, caste, or gender. The chapter explains that the Constitution guarantees cultural and educational rights so that no student can be denied admission because of their background, and communities can preserve their own language and traditions. When citizens respect diversity, they remove social barriers and ensure everyone can participate freely in society. Inclusion — making sure no one is left out — is an affirmative way to prevent discrimination. As the chapter states, democracy is strengthened by enabling and facilitating the participation of all, and a peaceful society is built through everyday choices, words, and actions.

Q6 Do you think technology (social media, online platforms) makes it easier or harder to practise citizenship? Why?

Technology can both help and hinder active citizenship. It makes it easier because, as the chapter illustrates, even students in remote areas can join a mock youth parliament discussion online using a voting app, enabling broader participation. Online platforms expand access to information and allow citizens to voice opinions and connect across distances. However, technology can also make citizenship harder if it is used to spread hate speech, mock others, or engage in invisible discrimination through exclusion and cyberbullying — actions that violate the duty to respect others and promote harmony. Responsible use of technology requires practising the same citizenship values — equality, inclusion, and respect — in the digital space as in physical life.

Q7 Imagine everyone in society enjoyed rights but ignored their duties. What would life look like?

If everyone claimed rights but ignored duties, society would quickly break down. The chapter explains that rights and duties are two sides of the same coin — you cannot fulfil one while ignoring the other. Nobody would pay taxes, so the government could not provide schools, roads, or hospitals. Nobody would protect public property, respect the law, or help in emergencies. The environment would suffer because no one would fulfil the duty to protect it. As the chapter notes, fulfilling our duties helps protect everyone's rights and keeps society fair and peaceful. Without duties, the rights themselves would become meaningless because there would be no one willing to uphold them for others.

Q8 How can students your age practise inclusion in everyday school life?

The chapter describes inclusion as creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed, respected, valued, and included. Students can practise this by inviting classmates who are left out to join activities, as Sonali and Harshada did when they asked Kruti to join their badminton team. In group work, being patient with a classmate who needs more time to read or write and ensuring they get a chance to speak is inclusive behaviour. Students can also stand up against teasing or mockery, as seen when students stopped others from teasing a girl. Using books or discussions in regional languages, as Smt. Amita's reading club did, and removing barriers of caste, religion, or economic background are all ways to build a more inclusive classroom.

Q9 What can be done in the following situations?
a) A school does not allow girls to join a mathematics or science club.
b) A fellow student has dropped out of school because they are forced to work in a welding shop.

a) Denying girls entry to a maths or science club violates the right to equality (Article 14–16), which guarantees equal opportunity regardless of gender. Students and parents can approach the school management to demand that the club be open to all. If the school refuses, one can approach the education authorities or a court for justice. The Constitution's fundamental rights can be enforced by law — if denied, citizens have the right to approach courts. This also relates to the duty to promote harmony and respect for women (Fundamental Duty 5).

b) A child being forced to work in a welding shop violates the right against exploitation and the ban on child labour in hazardous places like factories (Articles 23–24). The appropriate step is to call Childline 1098, the national helpline for children, which is available all over the country. As the chapter describes, Childline teams can visit such places, rescue the child, provide medical care, and ensure the culprits are arrested. Teachers, parents, or concerned citizens can also alert local authorities and ensure the child is enrolled back in school.

Q10 Make a classroom charter that outlines rights and duties, and ensures inclusion and prevents discrimination.

Guidance — This is a creative activity to do as a class. Create a poster or written document titled 'Our Classroom Charter'. It should include: (1) Rights — every student's right to speak, learn, and be treated with respect, free from teasing or exclusion; (2) Duties — listening respectfully, including everyone in group activities, protecting school property, and standing up against bullying; (3) Inclusion commitments — welcoming students of all languages, backgrounds, abilities, and economic situations; providing support to those who need more time or help; (4) Anti-discrimination pledges — not judging anyone by appearance, caste, religion, gender, or economic status. The charter can be signed by all students and displayed in the classroom as a reminder of shared responsibilities.