



Constitution of India and its Democratic Politics

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1. Introduction

We must have read about the Indian constitution. This article will acquaint you with details about the Constitution of India along with the fundamental rights, duties and directive principles as enshrined in it. The Part III of the Indian Constitution provides six fundamental rights which are guaranteed to all Indian citizens. These rights are basic in the sense that without these, no one can live in a democratic manner. Democracy cannot work if the people do not have these rights. By providing fundamental rights and remedies against their infringement, the Constitution of India prevents the government from becoming despotic. In addition, this article will introduce you to fundamental duties. These duties are enshrined in Part IV of the Constitution. These are some responsibilities or obligations of the citizens to perform for peace and prosperity of our country. It is very important that we need to be aware not only of our rights but also our duties so as to achieve the goals of national development. The teacher has a crucial and vital role in this context. As a prospective teacher, you must know and understand the ways and means of acquainting the school students with the essential components and dimensions of the Indian Constitution. The present article will throw light on different teaching-learning strategies, activities and assessment procedures that can be implemented for making students aware of the Indian Constitution and its various aspects.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this article are as under.

- Explain the values enshrined in the Indian Constitution;
- Classify Directive Principles of State Policy mentioned in the Indian Constitution;
- Describe Fundamental Rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution;
- Differentiate between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles
- Enumerate fundamental duties as enlisted in the Indian Constitution;
- Formulate learning objectives for the contents of the article;
- Organize suitable teaching-learning activities to teach the contents; and
- Prepare assessment questions to evaluate students' performance.

3. The Indian Constitution

The document containing laws and rules which determine and describe the form of the government, the relationship between the citizens and the government, is called a constitution. A constitution is the basic fundamental law of a State. It lays down the objectives of the State which it has to achieve. It also provides for the constitutional framework that is, various structures and organs of the governments at different levels. In addition, it describes the rights and duties of the citizens. It is, therefore, considered to be the basis for the governance of the country both in terms of goals and objectives as also their structures and functions.

The Constitution of India is a historic socio-legal document embracing the aspirations of the people belonging to a multifaceted heterogeneous society. The Indian Constitution's commitment to structures

informed by justice, liberty and dignity of the individual are reflected in the Preamble. The Preamble says: “WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, have solemnly resolved to constitute India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens: JUSTICE, social, economic and political; LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation; IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949, do HERE BY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.”

The Preamble, in brief, explains the objectives of the Constitution in two ways: one, about the structure of the governance and the other, about the ideals to be achieved in independent India. It is because of this; the Preamble is considered to be the key of the Constitution.

3.1 Values Enshrined in Indian Constitution: The Vision

The Constitution of any country serves several purposes. It lays down certain ideals that form the basis of the kind of society that we aspire to live in. A country is usually made up of different communities of people who share certain beliefs, but may not necessarily agree on all issues. A Constitution helps serve as a set of principles, rules and procedures on which there is a consensus. These form the basis according to which the people want the country to be governed and the society to move on. This includes not only an agreement on the type of government but also on certain ideals that the country should uphold. The Indian Constitution has certain core values that constitute its spirit and are expressed in various articles and provisions. The vision of the Indian Constitution is clearly reflected in its Preamble. This vision reflects the values enshrined in our Indian Constitution. But do you know what is the meaning of the word, ‘value’? You may immediately say that truth, non-violence, peace, cooperation, honesty, respect and kindness are values, and you may continue to count many such values. In fact, in a layman’s understanding, value is that which is very essential or ‘worth having and observing’ for the existence of human society as an entity. The Indian Constitution contains all such values, the values that are the universal, human and democratic. The values expressed in the Preamble are expressed as objectives of the Constitution. These are: sovereignty, socialism, secularism, democracy, republican character of Indian State, justice, equity, liberty, equality, fraternity, human dignity and the unity and integrity of the nation. A brief description of the values enshrined in our Constitution is provided here:

- 1. Sovereignty:** As we saw, the Preamble. declares India “a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic”. Being sovereign means having complete political freedom and being the supreme authority. It implies that India is internally all powerful and externally free. It is free to determine for itself without any external interference (either by any country or individual) and nobody is there within to challenge its authority. This feature of sovereignty gives us the dignity of existence as a nation in the international community. Though the Constitution does not specify where the sovereign authority lies but a mention of ‘We the People of India’ in the Preamble clearly indicates that sovereignty rests with the people of India. This means that the constitutional authorities and organs of government derive their power only from the people.
- 2. Socialism:** The word socialist was not there in the Preamble of the Constitution in its original form. In 1976, the 42nd Amendment to the Constitution incorporated ‘Socialist’ and ‘Secular’, in the Preamble. The word ‘Socialism’ had been used in the context of economic planning. It signifies major role in the economy. It also means commitment to attain ideals like removal of inequalities, provision of minimum basic necessities to all, equal pay for equal work.
- 3. Secularism:** In the context of secularism in India, it is said that ‘India is neither religious, nor irreligious nor anti-religious.’ Now what does this imply? It implies that in India there will be no ‘State’ religion – the ‘State’ will not support any particular religion out of public funds. This has two implications, a) every individual is free to believe in, and practice, any religion he/ she

belongs to, and, b) State will not discriminate against any individual or group on the basis of religion.

4. **Democratic Republic:** The Preamble reflects democracy as a value. As a form of government, it derives its authority from the will of the people. The people elect the rulers of the country and the elected representatives remain accountable to the people. The people of India elect them to be part of the government at different levels by a system of universal adult franchise, popularly known as 'one man one vote'. Democracy contributes to stability, continuous progress in the society and it secures peaceful political change. It allows dissent and encourages tolerance. And more importantly, it is based on the principles of rule of law, inalienable rights of citizens, independence of judiciary, free and fair elections and freedom of the press. Democracy is generally known as government of the people, by the people and for the people. The Preamble also declares India as a Republic. It means that the head of the State is elected and he/she is not a hereditary ruler as in case of the British Monarch. This value strengthens and substantiates democracy where every citizen of India is equally eligible to be elected as the Head of the State. Political equality is the chief message of this provision.
5. **Justice:** Justice promises to give people what they are entitled to in terms of basic rights to food, clothing, housing, participation in the decision making and living with dignity as human beings. The Preamble covers all these dimensions of justice – social, economic and political. "Social justice" has been defined in a variety of ways. Amongst them, they incorporate concepts of basic rights, the realisation of human potential, social benefit, an equitable distribution of resources, equal opportunities and obligations, security, and freedom from discrimination. Social justice means equal rights for all, regardless of gender, race, class, ethnicity, citizenship, religion, age or sexual orientation. It implies equal rights for women and girls in workplaces, homes and public life. It implies economic justice– which means governments must take active steps to alleviate poverty and redress past injustices. Economic justice really forms a part of social justice. It seeks the equitable distribution of natural and intellectual wealth so that everyone is able to gain a fair share.
6. **Equity:** Equity derives its spirit from the concept of social justice. It represents a belief that there are some things which people should have, that there are basic needs that should be fulfilled, that burdens and rewards should not be spread too divergently across the community, and that policy should be directed with impartiality, fairness and justice towards these ends. It is generally agreed that equity implies a need for fairness (not necessarily equality) in the distribution of gains and losses, and the entitlement of everyone to an acceptable quality and standard of living. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 states that the 'recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world'. Social equity refers to a set of standards which apply to our personal and social relationships with other individuals and/or groups. These standards consist of a bundle of rights and duties which apply to members of certain "deprived or disadvantaged sections" in society. These disadvantaged sections are defined by the Constitution and classified on the basis of caste, religion, creed, gender (sex), age and disability. These groups have been designated as deprived or disadvantaged because of certain injustices which have occurred against the members of these groups in the past and present. Social equity is the means used to help to redress these injuries. The term also covers the protection of certain fundamental rights which we all enjoy as citizens of a free society.
7. **Equality:** Equality is considered to be the essence of modern democratic ideology. The Constitution makers placed the ideals of equality in a place of pride in the Preamble. All kinds of inequality based on the concept of rulers and the ruled or on the basis of caste and gender, were to be eliminated. All citizens of India should be treated equally and extended equal protection of law without any discrimination based on caste, creed, birth, religion, sex etc. Similarly equality of opportunities implies that regardless of the socio-economic situations into which one is born,

he/she will have the same chance as everybody else to develop his/her talents and choose means of livelihood.

8. **Liberty:** The Preamble prescribes liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship as one of the core values. These have to be assured to every member of all the communities. It has been done so, because the ideals of democracy cannot be attained without the presence of certain minimal rights which are essential for a free and civilized existence of individuals. Though freedom from want has not been guaranteed in the fundamental rights, certain directives to the State have been mentioned in the Directive Principles.
9. **Fraternity:** There is also a commitment made in the Preamble to promote the value of fraternity that stands for the spirit of common brotherhood among all the people of India. In the absence of fraternity, a plural society like India stands divided. Therefore, to give meaning to all the ideals like justice, liberty and equality, the Preamble lays great emphasis on fraternity. In fact, fraternity can be realized not only by abolishing untouchability amongst different sects of the community, but also by abolishing all communal or sectarian or even local discriminatory feelings which stand in the way of unity of India.
10. **Dignity of the Individual:** Promotion of fraternity is essential to realize the dignity of the individual. It is essential to secure the dignity of every individual without which democracy cannot function. It ensures equal participation of every individual in all the processes of democratic governance.
11. **Unity and Integrity of the Nation:** As we have seen above, fraternity also promotes one of the critical values, i.e., unity and integrity of the nation. To maintain the independence of the country intact, the unity and integrity of the nation is very essential. Therefore, the stress has been given on fostering unity amongst all the inhabitants of the country. Our Constitution expects from all the citizens of India to uphold and protect the unity and integrity of India as a matter of duty.
12. **International Peace and a just International Order:** The value of international peace and a just international order, though not included in the Preamble is reflected in other provisions of the Constitution. The Indian Constitution directs the state (a) to promote international peace and security, (b) maintain just and honourable relations between nations, (c) foster respect for international law and treaty obligations, and (d) encourage settlement of international disputes. To uphold and observe these values is in the interest of India. The peace and just international order will definitely contribute to the development of India.
13. **Fundamental Duties:** Our Constitution prescribes some duties to be performed by the citizens. It is true that these duties are not enforceable in the court of law like the fundamental rights are, but these duties are to be performed by citizens. Fundamental duties have still greater importance because these reflect certain basic values like patriotism, nationalism, humanism, environmentalism, harmonious living, gender equality, scientific temper and inquiry, and individual and collective excellence.

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