

EQUALITY

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Introduction:

- ▶ It is one of **the pillars of democracy** & an important concept of Political Science.
- ▶ Generally, **it means that all men are equal** and therefore, entitled to equality of treatment & income.
- ▶ However, **absolute equality is not possible** in the modern times because men are different in their capabilities & attributes.
- ▶ These differences among men created different idea of equality.(Laski)
- ▶ Here, equality does **not mean the identity of treatment** or sameness of the reward. But it means the absence of social privilege & adequate means of opportunities are laid open to all.
- ▶ Since, equality **is a multi- dimensional concept** with many meanings, it is difficult to define it precisely.

Definitions:

- ▶ “Undoubtedly equality implies fundamentally a leveling process.” – Prof. Laski.
- ▶ “Equality is equality among equals under equal circumstances.” – Zimmern.

Nature of Equality:

- ▶ Since equality has many facets, the nature of equality also varies.
- ▶ To some equality means **only political equality.**
- ▶ To others it includes **the social equality, civil equality and also economic equality.**
- ▶ To understand equality one has to understand inequality.
- ▶ Inequality indicates opportunities & privileges given to a favoured few on the basis of birth, religion, class, caste, wealth, education & race.

Features of Equality:

- ▶ **1. Liberty & Equality exist side by side** even though equality came later than liberty. The struggle for liberty became successful by eliminating the special rights & privileges of the few.
 - ▶ **2. Men are born unequal. So there is no concept equality given by nature.**
 - ▶ **3. The concept of equality is closely connected with the concept of social justice.**
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Features Contd.....

- ▶ **4. Equality has a positive and negative dimensions.**
- ▶ **Positive equality** stands for the provision of adequate opportunities to all for their development.
- ▶ And **negative equality** means the absence of any type of unjust & meaningless discrimination based on class, status, caste, religion & so on.

Features contd....

- ▶ **5. The desire for equality has led to many movements. For example, French revolution 1789.**
- ▶ **6. Equality cannot be absolute:**
- ▶ **7. The creation of a condition of equality ensures the creation of a good life. This good life is possible if there is the absence of discrimination.**

Kinds of Equality:

- ▶ According to Bryce, there are four types of equality– civil, political, social and natural.
- ▶ We can classify equality under the following heads, like–
- ▶ 1. **Civil Equality**: which means the equality before law & which is synonymous with **equal rights to all citizens**.
- ▶ The concept of civil equality emerged with democracy in the modern times.
- ▶ Greeks spoke of **equality before law**.
- ▶ Thus, it means that in the eyes of law, all citizens of the state shall be treated as of equal status.
- ▶ All citizens whether rich or poor, official or non–official of any religion or community shall be subject to the same kinds of laws.
- ▶ It also means **equal protection of law to all citizens** throughout the territory of the state.

2. Political Equality:

- ▶ It means the access of everyone to the avenues of power.
- ▶ It means all citizens should have an equal voice in the management of public affairs or in holding public offices.
- ▶ Thus, **every citizen should have the right to vote, to be elected, to hold a public office, to criticize the wrong acts of his government &so on.**
- ▶ As such there is no justification for holding of special rights by the nobility or any section of the community.
- ▶ **Political equality emerges from equal political rights** which are granted to all citizens in a democracy.

3. Natural Equality:

- ▶ It means that **the nature has made all men equal.**
- ▶ It argues **that all men are born equal & should be treated equally.**
- ▶ It is based upon the church principle of “Father of God and Brotherhood of man.”
- ▶ The ancient Greek & Roman thinkers advocated this idea.
- ▶ In the modern times, Rousseau also advocated this.
- ▶ But in reality men are born unequal. Men differ from each other in their physical & mental faculties (CDH Cole).
- ▶ **Natural Equality is also known as Moral Equality.**

4. Social Equality:

- ▶ While natural & moral equality is an Just idea but social & economic equality is a reality.
- ▶ Social equality is the equality one finds in man's social existence.
- ▶ Other kinds of equality are the branches of social equality.
- ▶ **Social equality means the absence of discrimination based on social origin, religion, sex, etc.,.**
- ▶ One has to be respected because of his qualities & not due to his birth or inherited property.
- ▶ **Discrimination on the basis of caste, race,, religion, sex ,etc violates social equality.**
- ▶ For example, practice of untouchability in India against SCs leads to absence of social equality.
- ▶ Social equality also includes equality of sexes– they should be granted equality in education, voting, wages & so on.
- ▶ **Without social equality political equality is an illusion.**

Social equality contd....

- ▶ Without social equality, equality before the law would remain an empty form.
- ▶ **Social equality implies that all the citizens are entitled to enjoy equal status in society.**
- ▶ **The UN Charter on human rights also emphasized on social equality.**
- ▶ **Thus, social equality believes in a classless & casteless society.**
- ▶ **It also believes in the absence of discrimination & special privileges to certain sections of the society.**

5. Economic Equality:

- ▶ It implies **the absence of inequalities of wealth.**
 - ▶ In other words, it means the availability of certain minimum property, wealth, & adequate opportunities to earn wealth.
 - ▶ **The creation of economic equality is possible if there is adequate scope for employment, reasonable wages, adequate leisure & other economic rights.**
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Economic equality Contd....

- ▶ Following conditions are necessary for the promotion of economic equality–
- ▶ 1. Non-concentration of wealth in fewer hands.
- ▶ Provision of safeguards to protect the interest of weaker sections of community.
- ▶ 3. Placing of private sector under public control.
- ▶ 4. Abolition of property as a fundamental right.
- ▶ 5. Guarantee of specific economic necessities to every citizen.
- ▶ **It is said that political equality without economic equality is meaningless.**
- ▶ “Political equality is never real unless it is accompanied by virtual economic equality” (H.J.Laski)
- ▶ **Marxists, Socialists strongly pleaded for economic equality and given greater importance to it over other kinds of equalities.**

IMPORTANCE OF EQUALITY:

- ▶ Importance of equality may be listed as follows–
- ▶ **1. Develops Individual self respect:** it raises the self-respect of an individual in society.
- ▶ Absence of discriminations creates self respect amongst citizens.
- ▶ **2. Ensures social justice:** concept of equality is the basis of democracy.
- ▶ The idea of positive equality is to realize the concept of welfare state.
- ▶ Positive discrimination is one of the techniques employed in India to bring about equality.
- ▶ The reservation policy for the SCs & STs is to bring them to the mainstream.

Importance of Equality

- ▶ **3. Promotes Brotherhood:**
- ▶ It helps in promoting fraternity or universal brotherhoodness among the people.
- ▶ Adequate opportunities available to all ensures contentment which in turn creates a better society
- ▶ **4. Prevents Revolts & violence:** Many social movements have taken place over the years to pull down the old structure of society based on injustice & inequality.
- ▶ **Inequality is the root cause for all movements and revolutions.**
- ▶ By state giving adequate attention to the concept of equality many a revolts and violence may be prevented.

Importance of Equality

- 5. Strengthens the Unity of the State:** Legal equality creates social equality which is necessary for the survival of a democratic state.
- ▶ **When the gap between the rich & the poor narrowed down, it creates harmony & contentment.**
 - ▶ Any kind of wide inequalities lead to frustration & unhappiness.
 - ▶ Equality is necessary to prevent any type of conflict or agitation.
 - ▶ **A state is strengthened when the people of the state are happy & contented. It promotes the unity of the nation.**