

CBSE Class-12 Sociology Test Paper-02
Story of Indian Democracy

General Instruction:

- Question 1-5 carries two marks each.
 - Question 6-8 carries four marks each.
 - Question 9-10 carries six marks each.
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1. Define 'direct democracy'.
2. What is 'representative democracy'?
3. What do you mean by decentralised governance?
4. Explain 'Panchayati Raj'?
5. What was Ambedkar's opinion on the local self-government?
6. Differentiate between law and justice.
7. The Constitution is not just a ready referencer of do's and don'ts for social justice. Explain.
8. What were the challenges of rural social transformation in terms grassroots democracy?
9. Competing interests do not always reflect a clear class divide. Discuss.
10. How has the Supreme Court enhanced the substance of Fundamental Rights in the Constitution?

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Story of Indian Democracy

1. In a direct democracy, all citizens, without the intermediary of elected or appointed officials, can participate in making public decisions. Such a system is clearly only practical with relatively small numbers of people – in a community organisation or tribal council, for example, the local unit of a trade union, where members can meet in a single room to discuss issues and arrive at decisions by consensus or majority vote.
2. In a representative democracy, citizens elect officials to make political decisions, formulate laws, and administer programmes for the public good. Every citizen has the important right to vote her/his representative. People elect their representatives to all levels from Panchayats, Municipal Boards, State Assemblies and Parliament.
3. Decentralisation is the process of transferring powers, authority, functions, responsibilities and the requisite from central government to local government. The Panchayat Raj system is based on decentralised governance.
4. Panchayati Raj translates literally to ‘Governance by five individuals’. The idea is to ensure at the village or grass root level a functioning and vibrant democracy. It is a three tier system and the structure is like a pyramid.
5. Dr. Ambedkar argued that local elites and upper castes were so well entrenched in society that local self- government only meant a continuing exploitation of the downtrodden masses of Indian society. The upper castes would no doubt silence this segment of the population further.
6. The essence of law is its force. Law is law because it carries the means to coerce or force obedience. The power of the state is behind it. Any system of laws functions through a hierarchy of authorities.

The essence of justice on the other hand is fairness. The basic norm from which all other rules and authorities flow is called the Constitution. It is the document that constitutes a nation’s tenets. The Indian Constitution is India’s basic norm. It emphasises that the Courts and authorities should interpret rights and principles in keeping with contemporary understanding of social justice.

All other laws are made as per the procedures the Constitution prescribes. These laws are made and implemented by the authorities specified by the Constitution. A hierarchy of courts (which too are authorities created by the Constitution) interpret the laws when

there is a dispute. The Supreme Court is the highest court and the ultimate interpreter of the Constitution.

7. The Constitution is not just a ready referencer of do's and don'ts for social justice.
 - i. It has the potential for the meaning of social justice to be extended.
 - ii. Social movements have also aided the Courts and authorities to interpret the contents of rights and principles in keeping with the contemporary understanding on social justice.
 - iii. Law and Courts are sites where competing views are debated. The Constitution remains a means to channelise and civilise political power towards social welfare.
 - iv. The Constitution has the capacity to help people because it is based on basic norms of social justice. For instance, the Directive Principle on village panchayats was moved as an amendment in the Constituent assembly by K. Santhanam.
8. While the idea of grassroot democracy is not an alien import to our country, in a society where there are sharp inequalities democratic participation is hindered on grounds of gender, caste and class.

Traditionally there has been caste Panchayats in villages. But they have usually represented dominant groups.

Furthermore, they often held conservative views and often have, and continue to take decisions that go against both democratic norms and procedures.

When the constitution was being drafted Panchayats did not find a mention in it. At this juncture, a number of members expressed their sorrow, anger and disappointment over this issue.

9. India exists at so many levels. Many divides classify the Indian people. The impact that culture, religion, and caste have on the urban-rural divide, rich-poor divide and the literate-illiterate divide is varied.

Deeply stratified by caste and poverty, there are groupings and sub-groupings among the rural poor. The urban working class comprises a very wide range.

Then, there is the well-organised domestic business class as also the professional and commercial class. The urban professional class is highly vocal. Competing interests operate on the Indian social scene and clamour for control of the State's resources.

However, such competing interests do not always reflect a clear class divide. Take the issue of the close down of a factory because it emits toxic waste and affects the health of those around. This is a matter of life, which the Constitution protects. The flipside is that

the closure will render people jobless. Livelihood again, is a matter of life that the Constitution protects.

It is interesting that at the time of drawing up the Constitution, the Constituent Assembly was fully aware of this complexity and plurality but was intent on securing social justice as a guarantee.

10. The Supreme Court is the highest court and the ultimate interpreter of the Constitution. The Supreme Court has enhanced the substance of Fundamental Rights in the Constitution in many important ways.
 - i. A Fundamental Right includes all that is incidental to it. The terse words of Article 21 recognising the right to life and liberty have been interpreted as including all that goes into a life of quality, including livelihood, health, shelter, education and dignity.
 - ii. In various pronouncements, different attributes of 'life' have been expanded and 'life' has been explained to mean more than mere animal existence.
 - iii. These interpretations have been used to provide relief to prisoners subjected to torture and deprivation, release and rehabilitation of bonded labourers, against environmentally degrading activities, to provide primary health care and primary education.
 - iv. In 1993 the Supreme Court held that Right to Information is part of / and incidental to the Right to Expression under Article 19(1) (a).
 - v. Reading Directive Principles into the content of Fundamental Rights. The Supreme Court read the Directive Principle of "equal pay for equal work" into the Fundamental Right to Equality under Article 14 and has provided relief to many plantation and agricultural labourers and to others.