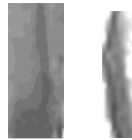


CIVICS



The Indian Constitution

Constitution

The Constitution is a set of rules and laws which the citizens and the Government have to follow. The Constitution is the supreme law of the country. It lays down the rights and the freedoms of the citizens and the power and the responsibilities of the Government.

Why Does a Country Need a Constitution?

A country needs a constitution because of the following reasons:

- A country is generally inhabited by people belonging to various religious and social backgrounds. It is difficult for all the people to agree on all issues. Under such circumstances, the Constitution serves as a set of laws and rules to which people in the country can agree upon.
- The Constitution lays down important guidelines on how the country has to be governed.
- The Constitution also lays down certain provisions which safeguard the people and the country against the misuse of powers by any political leader.
- The Constitution guarantees and safeguards basic rights and freedoms of the citizens.
- It also ensures that the majority community does not misuse its power against the minority communities.
- The Constitution helps to protect us against certain decisions which may go against the larger interests of society.

Main Features of the Indian Constitution

The Constitution of India was framed by the Constituent Assembly which consisted of eminent personalities. Because the members of the Constituent Assembly were nationalists, they advocated individual liberty and freedom which the Indians were denied under the British rule. The rift between the Hindus and the Muslims, the possibility of the princely states forming their own independent nations and the poor economic condition of the people of India influenced the members of the Constituent Assembly. This is the reason that they chose to declare India as a democratic nation where people could choose their own representatives and where the Government can also work towards eradicating poverty in the country.

Main features of the Indian Constitution are

Federalism

- Federalism is a system in which the responsibility of governing a country is divided between the Central Government and the State Governments. State Governments in India draw their powers from the Constitution of the country.
- While the State Governments function independently of the Central Government and looks after the maintenance of law and order in their own states, the Central Government looks after issues of national importance such as the defence and foreign affairs.

Parliamentary Form of Government

- India has a parliamentary form of government where the people of India elect their own representatives who then frame laws and regulations for the entire country.
- Our Constitution grants the principle of universal adult franchise which means that adults above the age of 18 are eligible to vote irrespective of their caste, religion, sect and gender. Because the Parliament consists of elected members, it is the supreme law-making authority in the country.

Separation of Powers

- In India, there are three branches of Government-legislature, executive and judiciary. The legislature makes the laws, the executive implements the laws and the judiciary punishes those who violate the laws.
- All three organs of the Government exercise different powers and keep a check on the other organ. This ensures a balance of power among all three organs of the Government.

Fundamental Rights

- Our Constitution guarantees fundamental rights to the citizens. These fundamental rights are
 - Right to equality
 - Right to freedom
 - Right against exploitation
 - Right to freedom of religion
 - Cultural and educational rights
 - Right to constitutional remedies
- These fundamental rights not only protect the liberty of the people but also safeguard their interests against the absolute exercise of power by the Government. For example, the right to constitutional remedies allows the citizens to approach the courts if any of their fundamental rights have been violated by the State.
- There is also Directive Principles of the State Policy which are the guidelines based on which the Government can reduce social and economic inequalities among the people.

Secularism

- Our Constitution has declared India to be a secular state. It means that India does not have any official religion. The Government neither encourages nor discourages the practice of any religion.
- No person in the country can be discriminated on the basis of religion. Every citizen is free to practise, profess and propagate his/her religion.