

# 10..... Struggles for Equality

## Lesson at a Glance

- India is a **democracy** and the soul of democracy is **equality**. But we do not see equality at any place except on the polling day on which every adult citizen of India enjoys the **equal right to vote**.
- Right from the beginning of the chapter we have been introduced to persons like Kanta, Ansaris, Swapna, Melani, and so on. These people have to face **discriminations** because they lack resources.
- Under such circumstances, some people take initiative and start struggles for equality. Others extend their support for the cause.
- In India, there are several struggles in which people have come together to fight for issues that they believe are important. The methods used by the women's movement to raise issues of equality can be mentioned here. Another example can be given of the Tawa Matsya Sangh in which people came together to fight for an issue.
- The Tawa Matsya Sangh is an organisation fighting for the rights of the displaced forest dwellers of Salpura forest in Madhya Pradesh.
- The Tawa dam began to be built in 1958 and was completed in 1978. It submerged large areas of forest and agricultural land. The forest dwellers were left with nothing. Some of the displaced people began fishing in the reservoir.
- In 1994, the government gave the rights for fishing in the Tawa reservoir to private contractors. These contractors were not friendly. They began to push out the local people.
- The villagers now stood united and set up Tawa Matsya Sangh (TMS) to protect their rights.
- The TMS organised rallies and a chakka jam demanding their right to continue fishing for livelihood.
- Finally the government accepted their demand and from Jan. 2, 1997 they began fishing.
- Later on the TMS set up a cooperative which would buy the catch from the fishworkers at a fair price. Now, they were able to earn three times more than they earned earlier.

- The TMS has also begun giving the Fishworkers loans for repair and the buying of new nets.
- In a democracy, there are always communities and individuals trying to expand the idea of democracy and push for a greater recognition of equality on existing as well as new issues. Thus, issues of equality are central to a democracy.
- The dignity and self-respect of each person can only be realised if he/she has adequate resources.

## ■ IN-TEXT QUESTIONS SOLVED ■

**Q. 1.** *Can you think of one person in your family, community, village, town or city whom you respect because of their fight for equality and justice?*

(NCERT Textbook, page 116)

**Ans.** Do it yourself with the help of your parents.

**Q. 2.** *What issue is the Tawa Matsya Sangh (TMS) fighting for?*

(NCERT Textbook, page 118)

**Ans.** The Tawa Matsya Sangh is fighting the issue of equality.

**Q. 3.** *Why did the villagers set up this organization?*

(NCERT Textbook, page 118)

**Ans.** The villagers set up this organisation to protect their rights.

**Q. 4.** *Do you think that the large scale participation of villagers has contributed to the success of the TMS? Write two lines on why you think so.* (NCERT Textbook, page 118)

**Ans.** Yes, I think so because whenever people stand together to fight an issue, no one can come in their way. Unity gives strength and finally success.

**Q. 5.** *Read the following lines of the poem and answer the questions that follow :*

### The Right To Know

My dreams have the right to know

Why for centuries they have been breaking

Why don't they ever come true

My hands have the right to know

Why do they remain without work all along

Why do they have nothing to do

My feet have the right to know

Why from village to village they walk on their own  
Why are there no signs of a bus yet  
My hunger has the right to know  
Why grain rots in godowns  
While I don't even get a fistful of rice  
My old mother has the right to know  
Why are there no medicines  
Needles, dispensaries or bandages  
My children have the right to know  
Why do they labour day and night  
Why is there no school in sight

1. *What is your favourite line in the above song?*
2. *What does the poet mean when he says, "My hunger has the right to know"? (NCERT Textbook, page 120)*

**Ans.** 1. My hunger has the right to know.  
2. What the poet means is that a sufferer must have a right to know the cause of his suffering. If he is victimised for any reason he must know who is responsible for that.

**Q. 6.** *What role does the constitution play in people's struggles for equality? (NCERT Textbook, page 121)*

**Ans.** Our constitution recognises the equality of all persons. Movements and struggles for equality in India continuously refer to the Indian constitution to make their point about equality and justice for all. The fishworkers in the Tawa Matsya Sangh hope the provisions of the constitution will become a reality through their participation in this movement. By constantly referring to the constitution they use it as a 'luring document' i.e. something that has real meaning in our lives.

**Note:** Please note that there is no Textual Exercise in the NCERT Textbook.