

CUET · POLITICAL SCIENCE · CLASS XI · CODE 323

Equality

CUET unit: Political Theory — Freedom, Equality, Social Justice, Rights, Citizenship, Nationalism, Secularism

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Snapshot

- Develops Equality as a moral and political ideal: every human being has equal worth and deserves equal consideration regardless of colour, gender, race or nationality.
- Distinguishes acceptable differences (talent, choice, rank) from unacceptable inequalities (birth, religion, caste, gender, race) and complicates the natural-vs-socially-produced distinction.
- Identifies three dimensions of equality — political, social, economic — and argues each requires its own strategy; political/legal equality alone is necessary but not sufficient.
- Surveys major ideologies: liberalism (competition + free and fair opportunity), socialism/Marxism (private ownership as root cause), feminism (sex/gender, patriarchy, double burden), plus Rammanohar Lohia's **Sapta Kranti** as the distinctively Indian socialist programme.
- Sets out the two routes to equality — formal equality (Constitution prohibiting discrimination, abolishing untouchability) and equality through differential treatment / affirmative action (reservations, ramps, maternity leave) — alongside the reservation debate.

Detailed Notes

2.1 Core concepts

Equality is "a powerful moral and political ideal that has inspired and guided human society for many centuries" (NCERT §3.1, p. 32). As an ideal it has two registers — moral, in the sense that all humans are entitled to equal consideration and respect simply because of their common humanity, and political, because this entitlement has been used to demand equal rights for hitherto excluded groups. NCERT links equality to faiths "which proclaim that all human beings are the creation of one God" (p. 32) and to the modern category of **crimes against humanity** and the universal human rights project. In the modern period, equality was the rallying slogan of the French Revolution alongside Liberty and Fraternity (against the landed aristocracy and monarchy), of anti-colonial struggles in Asia and Africa, and of contemporary struggles by women and dalits to overcome social discrimination (NCERT §3.1, pp. 32–33).

But inequality "is much more visible ... than equality" (p. 33). NCERT presents a fact sheet (drawn from UNDP's **Human Development Report 2005**, p. 33): the world's richest 50 individuals together earn more than the poorest 40 crore people; the poorest 40 per cent of the world's population receive 5 per cent of global income while the richest 10 per cent control 54 per cent; advanced industrial countries with 25 per cent of world population own 86 per cent of world industry; the lifetime risk of dying in pregnancy is 1 in 18 in Nigeria but 1 in 8700 in Canada. India's own Census 2011 (p. 34) shows the rural-urban divide: rural vs urban households have electricity (55 vs 93 per cent), tap-water (35 vs 71), bathroom (45 vs 87), TV (33 vs 77), two-wheeler (14 vs 35), car (2 vs 10).

§ 3.2 What is Equality? (pp. 35–38). Equal respect "does not mean that all people are identical" — every society needs a division of work, and people enjoy "different status and rewards" (p. 35); a prime minister, an army general or other officials accordingly enjoy facilities the ordinary citizen does not. What equality demands is that such status differences should not become entrenched privilege, and that no one should be treated worse because of their birth into a particular religion, race, caste or gender (NCERT §3.2, pp. 35–36). **Acceptable inequality** (differences arising from people's own choices, ambitions, talents and effort) differs from **unacceptable inequality** (differences imposed by birth or membership in a group).

Equality of Opportunities (p. 36) develops this further. What political theorists demand is "the absence of privilege" plus "the availability of adequate opportunity for all individuals to develop themselves". What is objectionable is not the inequality of personal property but the inequality of access to basic goods like education, health care and safe housing. **Natural and Social Inequalities** (pp. 36–38): natural inequalities are differences in capabilities and talents that people are born with; socially-produced inequalities are differences created by society — by unequal opportunity or by exploitation by some groups of others. NCERT however warns that the line is not fixed: women were long mis-labelled the "weaker sex" so as to deny them education; Black Africans were called less intelligent to justify slavery; and modern medicine has shown that what was thought natural (Stephen Hawking, for instance, would have been written off in earlier eras) can in fact be socially or technologically accommodated. The contemporary distinction modern theorists draw is therefore not natural vs social but **inequalities arising from our choices** vs **inequalities arising from birth or family circumstance**; the latter is what advocates of equality wish to minimise (p. 38).

§ 3.3 Three Dimensions of Equality (pp. 38–44) — political, social and economic — each requiring a distinct strategy. **Political equality** in democracies means equal citizenship: the right to vote, freedom of expression, movement, association and belief; these legal rights are guaranteed by the Constitution and laws. NCERT is explicit that political/legal equality is necessary but "by itself may not be sufficient to build a just and egalitarian society" (p. 39). **Social equality** therefore requires that legal equality be supplemented with equality of opportunities — adequate health care, good education, adequate nourishment and a minimum wage. India faces a special problem in the form

of customs: women have been denied inheritance rights, prohibited from many activities, and discouraged from higher education (p. 40). The NSSO 55th round (1999-2000) table on urban India's caste-community inequalities in higher education (p. 40) records — per thousand — SC 47, Muslim 61, Hindu-OBC 86, ST 109, Christian 237, Sikh 250, Hindu Upper-Caste 253, against an all-India average of 155 graduates.

Economic equality concerns significant differences in wealth, property or income; the most common measures are the gap between richest and poorest and the proportion below the poverty line. NCERT warns that "**entrenched inequalities**" — those untouched over generations — are most dangerous because they can fuel resentment and violence (p. 41).

Three boxes present the major ideological positions on inequality. The **Feminism** box (p. 42) defines feminism as "a political doctrine of equal rights for women and men" and identifies **patriarchy** as the social, economic and cultural system that values men more than women and gives men power over women; it distinguishes **sex** (biological) from **gender** (social roles) and names the **double burden** — women in public/outside work AND remaining solely responsible for housework. **Marxism** (named in-text, p. 43) holds that "the root cause of entrenched inequality is private ownership" of important resources (oil, land, forests, minerals, property); ownership of productive resources gives wealth and political power; Marx therefore argued for **public control over essential resources**. **Liberalism** (p. 43) holds that competition is "the most efficient and fair way of distributing resources" — the state may intervene to provide minimum living standards but free and fair competition is the just method, and inequalities will not entrench so long as competition remains genuinely open. NCERT also notes that liberals "do not believe political, social and economic inequalities are necessarily linked"; each sphere needs its own strategy (p. 44). The **Socialism** box on Rammanohar Lohia (p. 44) lists **five inequalities** that must be fought simultaneously — (1) man and woman, (2) skin colour, (3) caste, (4) colonial rule, (5) economic — plus two further revolutions: (6) civil liberties and (7) non-violence (Satyagraha). Together they make Lohia's **Sapta Kranti** (seven revolutions). Lohia rejected the older socialist orthodoxy that class alone was the central inequality.

§ 3.4 How can we promote equality? (pp. 45–50) — two routes. **Step 1 — Establishing Formal Equality** (p. 45): the law and the Constitution must end the customary and legal systems of privileges and exclusions; the poor must vote, women must enter professions, lower castes must escape manual labour. The Indian Constitution prohibits discrimination on the **five grounds — religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth** — and abolishes untouchability. **Step 2 — Equality through Differential Treatment** (pp. 45–46): sometimes it is necessary to treat people differently in order to ensure equal rights — ramps for the disabled, special protection for women working in night call centres. NCERT explicitly says these "should not be seen as infringements of equality but as enhancement of equality" (p. 46). **Affirmative Action** (p. 47) — preferential spending, scholarships, hostels, special admissions consideration, and India's reservation/quota system — is designed to correct the cumulative effect of past inequalities; it is "expected to be a temporary or time-bound

measure". Critics call reservations **reverse discrimination**, arguing they arbitrarily deny other sections their right to equal treatment and reinforce caste/racial categories (p. 47). Supporters argue that historically excluded groups cannot immediately compete on equal terms. "Treating everyone in an identical manner" differs from "treating everyone as equal" — the latter may sometimes require differential treatment, but with caution lest it create new structures of dominance. The women's-movement example is cited — nineteenth-century demand for vote, college degrees and the right to work, followed by twentieth-century demand for maternity leave and crèches (p. 50).

2.2 Definitions to memorise

Term	Definition	Page
Equality (moral/political ideal)	Every human being has equal worth regardless of colour, gender, race or nationality and deserves equal consideration.	32
Common humanity	The basis on which equal consideration is owed; underlies "crimes against humanity" and universal human rights.	32
French Revolution slogan	"Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" — equality directed against feudal aristocracy and monarchy.	32–33
Acceptable inequality	Differences arising from people's own ambitions, choices and goals.	35–36
Unacceptable inequality	Differential treatment because of birth into a particular religion, race, caste or gender.	35–36
Equality of opportunities	Same rights and opportunities to develop skills/talents; access to basic goods (education, health, housing).	36
Natural inequalities	Differences in capabilities/talents that people are born with.	36
Socially-produced inequalities	Inequalities created by society — by unequal opportunity or by exploitation.	37
Political equality	Equal citizenship — right to vote, freedoms of expression, movement, association, belief.	38–39
Social equality	Legal equality + equality of opportunities — minimum conditions of life.	39
Economic equality	Equality of wealth/property/income; measured by rich-poor gap or numbers below poverty line.	40
Entrenched inequality	Inequality untouched over generations; most dangerous because it fuels resentment and violence.	41
Feminism	A political doctrine of equal rights for women and men.	42
Patriarchy	A social, economic and cultural system that values men more than women.	42

Term	Definition	Page
Sex	The biological difference between men and women.	42
Gender	The different social roles men and women play.	42
Double burden	Women's responsibility for both public/outside work and housework.	42
Marxist view	Private ownership of resources is the root cause of entrenched inequality.	43
Liberal view	Competition is the most efficient and fair way of distributing resources.	43
Sapta Kranti (Lohia)	Seven revolutions — five inequalities (man-woman, colour, caste, colonial, economic) + civil liberties + non-violence.	44
Formal equality	Equality before law — ending legal and customary privileges/exclusions.	45
Five constitutional grounds of non-discrimination	Religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth.	45
Differential treatment	Treating people differently (ramps, women in night call centres) to ensure they enjoy equal rights — enhances equality.	45–46
Affirmative action	Positive measures (scholarships, quotas, reservations) to correct cumulative effect of past inequalities — temporary/time-bound.	47
Reverse discrimination	Critics' label for reservation, alleging it denies other sections equal treatment.	47
Treating identically vs treating as equal	Equality may sometimes require differential treatment, but only as a means to a just society.	49

2.3 Diagrams / processes to remember

(a) Fact sheet on global inequalities (p. 33) — six numbered facts from UNDP HDR 2005: richest 50 individuals' income > poorest 40 crore people; poorest 40 per cent get 5 per cent of global income while richest 10 per cent control 54 per cent; advanced industrial countries (25 per cent of population) own 86 per cent of world industry; pregnancy-death risk 1 in 18 (Nigeria) vs 1 in 8700 (Canada).

(b) Census 2011 rural/urban household amenities table (p. 34) — Electricity 55/93, Tap water 35/71, Bathroom 45/87, TV 33/77, Two-wheeler 14/35, Car 2/10.

(c) NSSO 55th round (1999–2000) table — caste-community inequalities in higher education in urban India (p. 40) — graduates per 1000: SC 47, Muslim 61, Hindu-OBC 86, ST 109, Christian 237, Sikh 250, Hindu Upper-Caste 253, All-India avg 155.

(d) Three-dimensions schematic of equality (p. 38) — Political → Social → Economic, each with its own strategy; not necessarily linked (liberal view) vs always linked (Marxist/socialist view).

(e) Feminism diagram (p. 42) — Sex (biological) vs Gender (social roles) → patriarchy → public/private division of labour → double burden.

(f) Lohia's Sapta Kranti list (p. 44) — five inequalities + civil-liberties revolution + non-violence/Satyagraha revolution.

(g) "Let's Think" boxes — affirmative-action extension to private institutions (p. 48); differential treatment scenarios (maternity leave, equipment for visually challenged, basketball court for talented Geeta, turban/Friday prayer accommodation) on p. 49.

Process map: Equality as moral/political ideal (§3.1) → fact sheets show inequality is the rule (§3.1) → acceptable vs unacceptable inequality and the natural-vs-social distinction reconsidered (§3.2) → three dimensions political/social/economic (§3.3) → ideological responses: Feminism, Marxism, Liberalism, Lohia's Sapta Kranti (§3.3) → routes to equality: formal equality + differential treatment + affirmative action (§3.4) → identical-treatment vs equal-treatment caution (§3.4).

2.5 Key Articles / Treaties / Events

Reference	Source / Subject	NCERT cite
French Revolution slogan	"Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" — directed against feudal aristocracy and monarchy	pp. 32–33
UNDP Human Development Report 2005	Source of the six-fact global inequality sheet	p. 33
Census of India 2011	Source of rural-urban household amenities data	p. 34
NSSO 55th round (1999–2000)	Caste-community higher-education table	p. 40
Rammanohar Lohia	Indian socialist who formulated the Sapta Kranti (seven revolutions)	p. 44
Karl Marx (19th century)	Identified private ownership as root cause of entrenched inequality	p. 43
Indian Constitution — five grounds	Prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Art. 15, identified by NCERT only as "the Constitution prohibits discrimination on grounds of ...")	p. 45
Indian Constitution — Untouchability	Abolished by the Constitution (Art. 17, identified by NCERT only as "abolishes the practice of untouchability")	p. 45
Women's right to vote	Nineteenth-century demand of the women's movement	p. 50

Reference	Source / Subject	NCERT cite
Apartheid (South Africa)	Cited as an example of caste-like differential treatment liberals are wary of	p. 49
Reservations/quotas	India's main affirmative-action instrument, called "reverse discrimination" by critics	p. 47
Maternity leave / crèches at workplace	Twentieth-century women's-movement demand cited as differential treatment	p. 50

2.4 Common confusions / NTA trap points

1. **"Equality means identical treatment"** — WRONG. NCERT explicitly says equal respect does not require identical treatment; differential treatment (ramps, maternity leave) can enhance equality (pp. 35, 49).
2. **Natural vs Social inequality is not a fixed line** — women called "weaker sex", Black Africans called less intelligent, Hawking — distractors often present the line as biological and fixed (pp. 37–38).
3. **Lohia's Sapta Kranti — count and list** — five inequalities (man-woman, colour, caste, colonial, economic) **plus** civil liberties **plus** non-violence/Satyagraha = SEVEN (p. 44). NTA traps drop or duplicate items.
4. **Marxism vs Liberalism** — Marx names **private ownership** of resources as the root cause; liberals defend **competition** as the fair method. Liberals do NOT believe the three dimensions are necessarily linked; Marxists/socialists do (pp. 43–44).
5. **Affirmative action is TEMPORARY/time-bound** — not permanent (p. 47). Critics call it "reverse discrimination" (p. 47).
6. **Five constitutional grounds of non-discrimination** — religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth (p. 45). Trap options add "language" or "economic status" — NOT in NCERT's list.
7. **Sex vs Gender** — feminist distinction; only women bear children (sex) but it doesn't follow that only women should rear them (gender) (p. 42).
8. **Political equality is necessary but NOT sufficient** — NCERT explicitly flags this on p. 39. Trap options claim formal equality alone is enough.
9. **Patriarchy is a system, not a personal attitude** — it is "a social, economic and cultural system that values men more than women" (p. 42). NTA tests this exact phrasing.
10. **UNDP HDR 2005 is the source** of the global inequality fact sheet on p. 33; trap options swap for "World Bank Report" or "Oxfam Report".
11. **NSSO data refers to URBAN India** higher education (p. 40), not all-India higher education. Distractors drop the "urban".

12. "Treating everyone in an identical manner" \neq "treating everyone as equal" (p. 49) — the latter may require differential treatment, but with caution against creating new structures of dominance.

Practice MCQs

PYQ Alignment

Equality is one of the highest-frequency chapters in CUET Political Theory papers — roughly 6–8 MCQs per year between direct factual recall (definitions of patriarchy, sex/gender, Sapta Kranti, affirmative action), statement-based questions on the three dimensions of equality, and match-the-following on Lohia/feminism/Marxism/liberalism. Case-based items on reservations and on differential treatment (ramps, maternity leave) recur in CUET 2023–25 patterns. For full chapter-wise PYQ mapping see [/pyq/political-science](#).

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