STRUGGLES FOR EQUALITY

Q1 What does the constitution of India say in regard to equality?
Constitution recognises all Indians as equal before the law and states that no person can be discriminated against because of their religion, sex, caste or whether they are rich or poor.

Q2 What do you understand by the term ‘Ballot Box Equality’?
All adults in India have the equal right to vote during elections and this ‘power over the ballot box’ has been used by people to elect or replace their representatives.

Q3 Give some reasons for the displacement of people from one place to another.
- When dams are built or forest areas declared sanctuaries for animals, thousands of people are displaced. Whole villages are uprooted and people are forced to go and build new homes, start new lives elsewhere.
- In urban areas too, bastis in which poor people live are often uprooted and some of them are relocated to areas even outside the city.

Q4 State some of reasons for inequality in our society.
- Poverty
- Lack of resources
- Discrimination on the basis of a person’s religion, caste and sex

Q5 How did TMS helped people after the struggle?
With the TMS taking over the fish workers were able to increase their earnings substantially. This was because
- They set up the cooperative which would buy the catch from them at a fair price. The cooperative would then arrange to transport and sell this in markets where they would get a good price. They have now begun to earn three times more than they earned earlier.
- The TMS has also begun giving the fish workers loans for repair and the buying of new nets.
By managing to earn a higher wage as well as preserving the fish in the reservoir, the TMS has shown that when people’s organisations get their rights to livelihood, they can be good managers.

Q6 How can you say Indian constitution is a living document?
Referring to the Constitution as a living document means something that has real meaning in our lives. 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 and their struggle is inspired by the recognition of equality for all by the Indian constitution.
For E.g. The constitution of India gives an opportunity to amend its existing laws according to changing times.
Q7 What role does constitution play in people’s struggle for equality?  
The foundation of all movements for justice and the inspiration for all the poetry and songs on equality is the recognition that all people are equal by the constitution. The Indian 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.

Q8 With examples state how people in India live highly unequal lives.  
Even though there is equality among people in India yet poverty and the lack of resources continue to be a key reason why so many people’s lives in India are highly unequal.  
For example—  
- The increasing privatisation of health services and the neglect of government hospitals have made it difficult for most poor people to get good quality health care. These people do not have the resources to afford expensive private health services.  
- The man who sells juice does not have the resources to compete with all of the major companies who sell branded drinks through expensive advertising.

Discrimination on the basis of a person’s religion, caste and sex is another significant factor for why people are treated unequally in India.

Q9 What issue was TMS fighting for and why did the villagers set up this organisation?  
The Tawa Matsya Sangh is a federation of Fisher worker’s cooperatives – an organisation fighting for the rights of the displaced forest dwellers of the Satpura forest in Madhya Pradesh.  
- The government decided to build dam on river Tawa which began to be built in 1958 and was completed in 1978 which submerged large areas of forest and agricultural land. The forest dwellers were left with nothing.  
- In 1994, the government gave the rights for fishing in the Tawa reservoir to private contractors. These contractors drove the local people away and got cheap labour from outside. The contractors began to threaten the villagers, who did not want to leave, by bringing in hooligans. The villagers stood united and decided that it was time to set up an organisation and do something to protect their rights.  
- The newly formed Tawa Matsya Sangh (TMS) organised rallies and a chakka jam (road blockade), demanding their right to continue fishing for their livelihood.  
- In response to their protests, the government created a committee to assess the issue. The committee recommended that fishing rights be granted to the villagers for their livelihood. In 1996, the Madhya Pradesh government decided to give to the people displaced by the Tawa dam the fishing rights for the reservoir.