

The Preamble in the Classroom

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The Indian Constitution as a framework of life exists for all of us and, we, the citizens, young or old must use it. Its first few words – *We, The People of India* – hold deeply significant meaning with respect to citizenship. It is we, the citizens who need to ensure that we live by this vision of our Constitution in our day-to-day life. The Preamble, being the essence of the Constitution, paves the way to do this. It is a vision statement for all Indians.

This sentence, which is one page-long, has at its basis core human values that bind us together as the people of India. These values are a part of our daily life and our experiences are shaped around these values. But how many of us read the *Preamble* printed on the first page of our textbooks?

We must attempt to make it come alive and connect it with the everyday experiences of the young citizens, our students. Our aim at *We, The People Abhiyan* is to enable each citizen to understand their role as citizens and act with power and responsibility. We believe that within one's sphere of influence, however small or large that may be, it is important for citizens to take actions that are based on the human values of justice, liberty, equality,

and fraternity as enshrined in the Preamble to the Constitution of India.

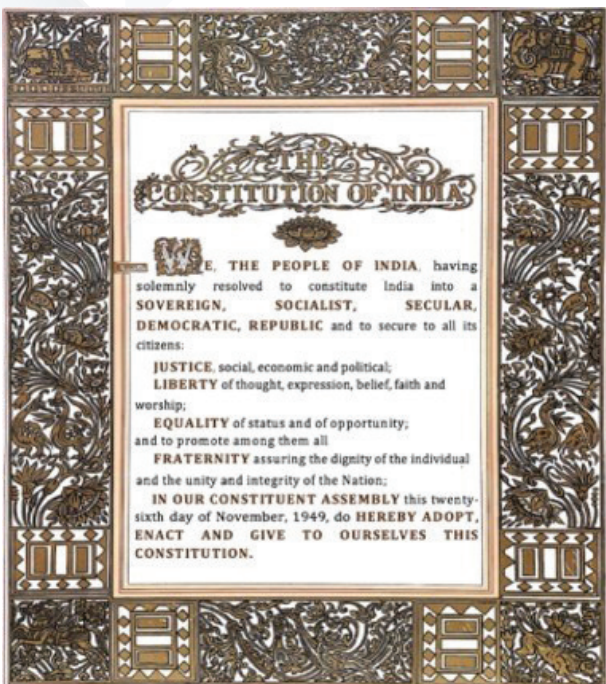
The National Council of Educational Research and Training's (NCERT's) Social and Political Life (SPL) textbook for class IX talks about the Preamble in detail. In line with it, over the last few years, our work with teachers and students across different regions in India has enabled us to unpack the Preamble with them and has provided all of us with a way to look at the one-page document from a citizen's point of view and connect the values to our daily life.

Mode and approach

In 2019, a three-month campaign, the *Constitution at 70* was organised in collaboration with the Directorate of Education, New Delhi. It was an opportunity to engage with the teachers and over one lakh students from classes VI to IX and XI from all the 1,200 Delhi government schools. The purpose of the campaign was to spread awareness and develop consciousness of the Preamble in such a way that the students would be able to connect the human values of liberty, equality, and fraternity to their everyday lives.

This need arose from the perception of students in classes VIII to X that the SPL curriculum is not only 'boring' but also 'not relevant' and 'not practical'. These responses signalled the necessity to connect the teaching-learning material to one's lived experiences. Lived experiences play a major role in one's growth and development and enable a smooth connection with the source of learning. Learning through reflection on one's actions leads to richer learning experiences. As a part of this campaign, tap-on experiences were designed to connect young citizens to those in their sphere of influence: friends, family and people in the neighbourhood. The purpose was to enable them to acknowledge and imbibe Constitutional values in their everyday life and become empowered citizens.

Based on this plan, month-wise teaching and learning materials were developed for teachers



and students. This included both textual and audio material for the teachers and textual material for students. At the end of every month, the schools organised *Samvidhan Melas* (Constitution Fests), in which various activities, such as street plays, panel discussions and debates on topics like gender and class discrimination, were conducted to promote collaborative learning. Engaging, experiential, reflective, thought-provoking bilingual content was created. It was divided into short sessions to aid in disseminating widespread awareness about Constitutional values.

Teachers received content for each value every month. Audio material included podcasts based on the explanation of each value with reference to everyday experiences. The textual material included Lesson Plans and Teacher Companion Sheets (TCS). The TCS comprised the concept map for a deeper understanding of one value and guidelines for executing the activities in the classroom.

Values Diaries and Game Booklets

Values Diaries contained survey questions for self-exploration. The reflection questions guided students' thought process to build an understanding of each value based on their interaction and experiences within their immediate circle. The students selected a member within their immediate circle, who they look up to with regard to the practice of these values.

The Values Diaries were complemented by *Game Booklets*. These were action-oriented and included activities for the recommended values to come alive. These motivated students towards self-exploration and guided experiential learning based on learning by doing. Students could choose four activities every month to experience and understand the relevance of each value.

According to *Erik Erikson's Theory of Psychological Development*, during the adolescent stage, a sense of identity is developed as adolescents begin to associate themselves with a social and cultural group. Erikson termed this a crisis, which does not mean adversity: it implies a point of important change. This change is dependent on a person's exposure to his or her social and cultural environment. At such a stage of physiological and cognitive development, an orientation towards the values of equality, liberty and fraternity guides the development of an individual.

In my interactions with students during this campaign, several episodes of sharing highlighted

their incredible experience with values. I grouped these episodes into three themes:

- power of freedom
- consciousness of one's actions that are fair
- consciousness of one's actions that are unfair

These reflect the powerful impact of teaching the Preamble to students and bring to the fore the experience that they have had with the values and connecting these with their day-to-day life. Some responses were as follows:

Power of freedom

- The power to vote and to choose one's own government is a fruit of the value of freedom and liberty. I have learned about the freedom to choose.
- My parents gave me the freedom to choose the stream [of study] of my choice. Education is more important than dictating which stream to choose.
- My friends and I went to a restaurant recently to celebrate my birthday. It was a little expensive place but did not feel like we were not meant to be there - no one questioned us on why we were there. We enjoyed spending time and celebrating my birthday there.

Consciousness of one's actions which are fair

- मैंने कभी किसी की पसंद या स्वतंत्रता को बाधित नहीं किया क्योंकि हमारा कोई अधिकार नहीं है की हम दूसरों को रोक-टोक करें। हम सब स्वतंत्र हैं। (I never restricted anyone's actions because it is not our right to limit others' freedom. We all are free.)

Consciousness of one's actions which are unfair

- हाँ, मैंने दूसरों को बाधित किया और पहले मुझे अच्छा लगा पर अब मुझे अच्छा नहीं लग रहा है क्योंकि मेरा अधिकार नहीं है कि मैं दूसरों की स्वतंत्रता बाधित करूँ। (Yes, I have restricted others' freedom and earlier I used to enjoy it, but now I don't because I have no right to restrict others).
- कोई अगर SC है या general है तो उसे ऐसा नहीं करना चाहिए कि बस SC का दोस्त रहे या general का। उसे दूसरे लोगों के साथ भी रहना चाहिए। (If someone belongs either to the SC or the general category, then they should not be friends only with people from their own group. They must be with people from other categories too.)

Building on these experiences has enabled us to create more such experiences in active citizenship for young citizens. Although they were involved with concepts in their SPL curriculum, engaging in



self-reflection, interactions with family and people in the neighbourhood gave them a chance to experience human and constitutional values come alive. This way, they did not see the Constitution and the Preamble as a thing distant from them. The supplementary material shared with them during the campaign made them live these values. They realised that the Preamble is not just a remote idea printed in their books but something that they deal with regularly in various situations.

Other uses

This campaign is evidence that this method can also serve as another approach to delivering the content of SPL curriculum. Also, while using this campaign as a methodology, it is essential for us as teachers or facilitators to become more involved

in constitutional perspectives. It can aid in the facilitation of such methods in our classrooms.

The values in the Preamble to our Constitution lie at the core of citizenship. Today, even the National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP 2020), states the values mentioned in the Preamble to be, 'one of the fundamental principles that will guide both the education system at large, as well as the individual institutions within it.'

Seen in this light, it is vital that we read, learn and recite the Preamble in our classrooms and start unpacking it through interactive and experiential methodologies. It is through actively engaging with the surroundings and experiences of young citizens in different settings that the Preamble and its values can be brought alive.

Resources

A short film on the campaign – Constitution at 70 campaign: <https://youtu.be/jXxQYZ9KayA>
 Find more resource materials here: <https://www.wethepeople.ooo/resource-center>



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