Equality is a vital democratic ideal like liberty. If liberty is one pillar of democracy, equality is its second pillar. But what is equality? Just as liberty is sometimes understood in the sense of unrestrained freedom, equality is interpreted as identity of treatment and of reward. Some claimants of equality assert that all men are born equal and should be treated equally. The ‘American Declaration of Independence (1776) asserts: “We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal.....” But nature has not created all men equal. All men are not born equal and equality does not imply identical treatment. Men differ in their health, intelligence, capacities and aptitudes. Some persons may be interested in science, while others may have an aptitude for literature. Some may like to be engineers, while others may desire to be manual workers. Then, how can all of them be treated in the same manner? They need different conditions for the development of their potentialities.

Again, equality does not mean that every person is entitled to equality of income. It is, for example, unthinkable that an engineer and a manual worker should be paid the
same remuneration. The quality of their work is not the same. If an engineer is given the same reward as an ordinary worker, it will be the injustice. In short, absolute equality is an impossible ideal.

The principle of equality implies things—(a) No citizen or a section of citizens must be allowed to enjoy special privileges. Rights and duties must extend to all. There should be no distinction between man and the man on grounds of race, color, religion and the liked to be the State should provide adequate opportunities to all so that every individual may be able to develop his creative faculties. This means that the State must so arrange the social order as to enable each citizen to develop his personality to the fullest extent possible. This is the positive connotation of the ideal of equality.

Equality, like liberty, has different aspects

- civil equality;
- political equality;
- social equality and
- economic equality.

Civil equality implies equal civil rights for every citizen. The rights to equality before law, the right to speech and thought, the right to association and assembly, the right to education, the right to freedom of movement, etc., must be conferred on all. Political equality means that the same political rights, such as the right to vote, the right to stand for election, the right to hold public office, etc, are enjoyed by all citizens of the State. Discrimination in the political sphere on grounds of sex, race, etc. is against the principle of equality. Social equality implies that in society no person should be regarded as high or low on the basis of his caste, religion, colour or race and no person should be given special privileges.

Economics equality does not mean that all citizens should possess equal wealth. It, however, does mean that every person must have an economic minimum. The primary needs (food, clothing, shelter, etc.) of everybody are the same. The principle of equality implies that such needs of all citizens must be satisfied before any inequality of wealth is allowed, Laski rightly says. “I have no right to cake if my neighbor, because of that right, is compelled to go without bread.” Everyone must have a fair start in life. Excessive inequalities of wealth must be reduced and economic minimum guaranteed
to all. Beyond the economic “minimum. inequality is justified, provided it is capable of explanation in terms of social good. This means that inequalities of income must be based on the service which every individual renders to the community as a whole.

You can get PDF Copy of this article for offline purposes by using above PDF Download option.