

4 Social Justice

Q1. What does it mean to give each person his/her due? How has the meaning of “giving each his due” changed over time?

Answer:

To give each person his/her due assure the well being of the people or equal importance should be given to all people. Just as a doctor is concerned with the well being of her/his patients; similarly the just rules or just government ensures the well being of citizens also.

- (a) The ideas of justice has been continued to be an integral part of the present day understanding and has changed from the time of Plato.
- (b) Today, the debates have also been taken place of what is due to each person as a human being.
- (c) Human beings get the opportunities to develop one's own potential as well as to pursue their chosen goals.
- (d) Justice requires giving due and equal considerations to all individuals.

Q2. Briefly discuss the three principles of justice outlined in the chapter. Explain each with examples.

Answer:

Different principles have been put forward in the idea of equal importance to all people.

1. Principle of treating equals equally: Refers to equal rights and equal treatment to individuals who share certain characteristics as a human being, i.e. civil rights including right to life, liberty and property and political rights including right to vote, to enable rights to individuals to participate in political processes, etc. Apart from equal rights, the principle of treating equals equally would require that people should not be discriminated against on grounds of class, caste, race or gender. The individuals should be judged on the basis of their capabilities they perform, i.e. male teachers get higher salary than female teachers, the persons performing the same tasks but getting different amount due to case in unjust.

2. Proportionate Justice: Equal treatment is not the only principle of justice because some circumstances may appear to be unjust if equal treatment is given. Provided everybody starts from the same base line of equal rights, justice in such cases would mean rewarding people in proportion to the scale and quality of their effort. Most people would agree that although people should get the same reward for the same work, it would be fair and just to reward different kinds of work differently if we take into account factors such as the effort required, the skills required, the possible dangers involved in that work, and so on. For justice in society, the principle of equal treatment needs to be balanced with the principle of proportionality.

3. Recognition of Special Needs: A third principle of justice which we recognise is for a society to take into account special needs of people while distributing rewards or duties. This would be considered a way of promoting social justice. People with special needs or disabilities could be considered unequal in some particular respect and deserving of special help. But it is not always easy to get agreement regarding which inequalities of people should be recognised for providing

them special help. Physical disabilities, age or lack of

access to good education or health care, are some of the factors which are considered grounds for special treatment in many countries. In our country, lack of access to good education or health care and other such facilities is often found combined with social discrimination on grounds of caste. The Constitution therefore allowed for

reservations of government jobs. Different groups in the country might favour different policies depending upon which principle of justice they emphasise.

Q3. Does the principle of considering the special needs of people conflict with the principle of equal treatment for all?

Answer:

1. To promote social justice, principles of special needs are recognized. And people are required to be treated equally without any discrimination to reward proportionality.

2. The principle of taking account of special needs of people does not contradict with the principle of equal treatment because the people, who are not equal in certain important respect, may be treated differently to promote justice.

3. People with special needs may deserve special assistance and particular respect but it is difficult to recognize the people who require special assistance.

4. Some physical disabilities, age, lack of good education or healthcare facilities are considered of special treatment.

5. In India, lack of good education, healthcare, amenities, etc are generally combined with social discrimination on the basis of caste.

6. Constitution of India made the provisions for reservation in government jobs and quotas in educational institutions for the people who are deprived in the society. Hence, it can be considered that it is necessary to recognize the people who need the special considerations and if it is mandate for justice, it cannot contradict with the principle of equal treatment for all.

Q4. How does Rawls use the idea of a veil of ignorance to argue that fair and just distribution can be defended on rational grounds?

Answer:

1. John Rawls argue that the only way we can arrive at a fair and just rule is to imagine ourselves to be in a situation in which we have to make decisions about how society should be organized despite we do not know the position to be occupied by ourselves in society. That is, we don't know what type of family we would be born either in upper caste or lower caste, rich or poor, privileged or disadvantaged.

2. Rawls argue that if we don't know who we will be and what options would be available to us in future society. We would support to those rules and organization of future society to be fair for all

members.

3. Rawls under the concept of 'veil of ignorance' expects situation of complete ignorance, each person would decide in terms of their own interests only.

4. But since no one knows who would be and what is going to benefit him, each will envisage the future society from the point of view of the worst off, it will be dear to a person who can reason and think for himself that those who are born privileged will enjoy certain privileges.

5. If some people are born in a disadvantageous section, they will make sense to ensure reasonable opportunities to the weaker sections.

6. The efforts would be made to make important resources available (education, health, shelter) to all persons.

7. It is not easy to erase our identities and to imagine oneself about veil of ignorance. But then it is equally difficult to be self-sacrificing and to share good fortune with strangers.

8. Hence, given these human failings and limitations it would be better to think of a framework that does not need extraordinary actions.

9. Veil of ignorance expects the people to think for themselves and select what they considered to be in their interest.

Q5. What are generally considered to be the basic minimum requirements of people for living a healthy and productive life? What is the responsibility of governments in trying to ensure this minimum to all?

Answer:

1. A just society should ensure basic minimum requirements of people for living healthy and secure lives and provide equal opportunities to pursue their chosen goals.

2. A democratic government is responsible for a basic amount of nourishment to keep citizens healthy, education opportunities to pursue their chosen goals.

3. But, to provide all these basic requirements put a heavy burden on government especially in the countries where poor people are in large number.

4. If all of us agree that it is the responsibility of state, the conflicts may arise on choosing the methods to achieve these goals.

5. The various debates have taken place on adopting the methods to ensure well-off of disadvantaged sections either by promoting open competition or should be taken the responsibility by state or by a redistribution of resources.

6. In India, different approaches are being suggested by different political groups who debate the relative merits to help marginalized sections of peoples.

Q6. Which of the following arguments could be used to justify state action to provide basic minimum conditions of life to all citizens?

(a) Providing free services to the poor and needy can be justified as an act of charity.

(b) Providing all citizens with a basic minimum standard of living is one way of ensuring equality of opportunity.

(c) Some people are naturally lazy and we should be kind to them.

(d) Ensuring a basic facilities and a minimum standard of living to all is recognition of our shared humanity and a human right.

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