
Chapter 4

Social Justice

❖ Introduction

- It is considered that all individuals share certain basic characteristics as human beings. Thus, they deserve equal rights and equal treatment.
- Apart from equal rights, the principle of equal treatment ensures that people are **not** discriminated against on the grounds of class, caste, race or gender.

❖ Proportionate Justice

- It is fair and just to reward different kinds of work to different people if we take into account factors such as the effort required, the skills required, the possible dangers involved in that work, etc.

❖ Recognition of Special Needs

- The principle of taking account of the special needs of people does **not** necessarily contradict the principle of equal treatment. Rather, it extends the principle as equal treatment implies that people who are **not** equal in certain respects should be treated differently.
- People with special needs or disabilities could be considered unequal in some particular respect and deserving of special help.
- It is believed that equal treatment of people who enjoy very different standard of living and opportunities with those who have been deprived of even the basic **minimum** needs to live a healthy and productive life would lead towards an unjust society.

❖ Just Distribution

- Social justice also concerns the just distribution of goods and services, whether it is between nations or between different groups and individuals within a society.
- Within a country, social justice would require **not** only equal treatment of people in terms of laws and policies of the society, but also a guarantee that they enjoy some basic equality of life conditions and opportunities.



❖ John Rawls Theory of Justice

- According to John Rawls, the only way to 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 organised although we do **not** know which position we would occupy in that society.
- Rawls argues that if we do **not** know our position and the options, which would be available to us in the future society, we would be likely to support a decision about the rules and organisation of that future society, which would be fair for all the members.
- He describes it as thinking under a 'veil of ignorance'.
- He concluded that rational thinking, **not** morality, could lead towards a fair society that impartially judges the distribution of benefits and burdens of a society.

❖ Pursuing Social Justice

- Justice does **not** require absolute equality and sameness in the way in which people live.
- A society would be considered unjust if the differences between rich and poor are vast and both seem to be living in a different world altogether.
- In other words, a just society should provide people with the basic **minimum** conditions to enable them to live healthy and secure lives and develop their talents as well as equal opportunities to pursue their chosen goals in society.

❖ Free Market versus State Intervention

- Supporters of free market maintain that as far as possible, individuals should be free to own property and enter into contracts and agreements with others regarding prices and wages.
- They should be free to compete with each other to gain the **greatest** amount of benefit.
- Supporters of the free market believe that if markets are left free of state interference, the sum of market transactions would ensure an overall just distribution of benefits and duties in society.



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- One of the arguments put forward in favour of market distribution is that it gives more choices and better quality of services to the consumer.
 - However, a private business operating in a free market is motivated by profit and does **not** bother about poor consumers who **cannot** afford to pay.
 - The government has to step in such situations to meet the requirements for the poorer sections of the society.

