



Mains Practice Question

Q. To achieve social justice in society, governments have to do more than just ensure that laws and policies treat individuals in a fair manner. Explain. (250 words)

07 Jan, 2020 GS Paper 2 Social Justice

Approach

- Explain how the government ensures social justice through fair and inclusive laws and policies.
- Mention some limitations of focussing only on policies and laws to ensure social justice.
- List the other steps to be taken by the government to ensure social justice.

Introduction

Through various laws and policies, the government puts in place a governance system that takes into account the possible exploitation of all the stakeholders in society. Through the implementation of just and fair laws, the government balances the exploitation of any member of society by those possessing power. Through making, enforcing and upholding these laws, the government can control the activities of individuals or companies so as to ensure social justice. Many of these laws have their basis in the Fundamental Rights (Right to equality, right against discrimination, etc) guaranteed by the Indian Constitution. Also, Directive Principles of State Policies puts the obligation on the government to ensure social justice in Indian society (maternity relief, living wages, good working conditions, etc).

For instance, the Right against Exploitation says that no one can be forced to work for low wages or under bondage. Similarly, the Constitution lays down that no child below the age of 14 shall be employed to work in any factory or mines or perform any other hazardous employment. However, merely putting in place just and fair laws do not ensure fair treatment of individuals in society.

Body

Fair laws are necessary in many situations, whether this be the market, office or factory so as to protect people from unfair practices. Private companies, contractors, business persons, in order to make higher profits, often resort to unfair practices such as ignoring the conditions of work, ignoring the damage to the environment (and hence to the people in the neighbourhood), etc. A major role of the government, therefore, is to control the activities of such entities by making, enforcing and upholding laws so as to prevent unfair practices and ensure social justice.

However, 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 to provide a level playing field for citizens.

This is seen as necessary for each person to be able to pursue his/her objectives and express himself. In our country, for instance, the Constitution abolished the practice of untouchability in order to promote social equality and ensure that people belonging to 'lower' castes have access to temples, jobs and basic necessities like water. Different state governments have also taken some measures to redistribute important resources like land in a fairer manner by instituting land reforms.

The government needs to focus on bringing in behavioural changes in society and addressing the means of exploitation by engaging more with the basic socio-cultural issues such as gender-based discrimination,

insensitivity towards disabled, etc. It needs to ensure that the dignity of individuals is not being trespassed by focussing on the marginalised sections like the poor, illiterates, marginal farmers, tribals, etc.

Conclusion

Therefore, within a country, social justice would require not only that people be treated equally in terms of the laws and policies of the society but also that they enjoy some basic equality of life-conditions and life-opportunities. 'Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas' approach of the government is a step in the right direction in this context and emphasises the focus on ensuring dignity and empowerment of all the sections of society for a better India.

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