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Meaning of Social Justice

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Abstract:

Social justice means the practice of liberty, equality, and fraternity in general and in present world. Similarly in religious world it means the practice of virtues, spirituality, liberation, equality, fraternity, peace, and etc. All is the notions of the social justice. It is a life style and considered as the ethic and virtue both in the history of moral philosophy of justice. Aim of my present research article to provide information regarding the meaning of social justice from various aspects. The scope of my article is to explain the importance of social justice.

1. Introduction

Term justice connotes with social. The Webster's Dictionary means 'social refers to a number of groups to the people living in communities and enjoyed or taken in company with mutual understanding'.ⁱ In simple words social means a number of people living in organized group or community with mutual friendship. On contrary Justice deals with liberty, equality, co-existence, love, righteousness etc. Everyman Dictionary of religion & Philosophy explains, 'justice is the virtue of the state the condition in which everyone is acting in such a way as not to interfere with the interests of another'.ⁱⁱ In any social order where a number of communities are residing there is justice required for liberty, equality, brotherhood, dignity of life and equal opportunity to earn. In very simple words we can say that social is the ground, where justice is practiced. That's why both terms used together and both are the sides of one coin. So, both are relevant of each-other. Social justice is a way of living in which every level of people of the society feels free to live a dignified life. Dignified life means everybody has his/her own prestigious of life.

The concept of social justice is known to be the best concept because this is directly related with the welfare of society. The main purpose of social justice is to bring a minimum common standard of living with fairness among the mass without any discrimination of culture, caste and creed, race, gender, rich and poor, etc. Society designed by individuals. But these individuals lead a variety of caste and creeds, races etc into society. Everywhere we can find such diversity. To bring social equality among the diversity and reducing these variations the concept of social justice propounded by religious seers in its very early stage of human life.ⁱⁱⁱ

The concept of social justice is regarded as very useful. This is virtue and ethics both. Everything in this world is relatively co-existing. Apart from this everything is having its different identity, in this way all things are not similar but dissimilar also. This dissimilarity of the thing leads to plurality^{iv}. It means we should accept both plurality and co-existence of others this is also considered as social justice. Social justice is an action. It is an action that upholds basic human rights, principles and seeks to break down the barriers that many people face. Upholding a social justice principle is displayed when equality and respect is promoted. It is advanced when the barriers that challenge inalienable rights are broken down and a sustainable environment is advocated. So social justice conceived as meant to lifestyle, not only an activity.

In Ambedkar,s view social justice is the essence of social democracy. According to his keynote address about democracy and social justice as a way of life is necessity for the participation of every human being in the formation of social, economic and political institutions and values that regulate the living men and keep them together. This view gives to democracy its justice towards humaneness, its youthfulness, eternally creating new dimensions of peace and social justice. The fundamentals of his democracy are equality, liberty, fraternity, reason, human experience, and rules of law, natural rights, social justice and an emphasis on the individual dignity in social relationships^v.

A famous political thinker John Rawls propounds the theory of social justice into two principles: (1) each person is to have an equal right the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others. (2) Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged; and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. An equal liberty has first priority, followed by the demand for fair equality of opportunity. He believes that moral theory must accorded with our moral judgments or at least with those intuitive judgments which we are not prepared to abandon in the light of the theory which is being offered^{vi}. On the contrary, Mahatma Gandhi in his Concept of *Sarvodaya* mentioned the fittest model for social justice in which the weakest of the weak person of the society is considered to be given opportunity to rise^{vii}. *Sarvodaya* means the welfare of all the spheres of people. This term derived from the ancient Indian thought and literature. Similarly in Sikhism a phrase '*Sarvatt Da Bhalla*' always uses it means also the welfare of all.

Speaking on the Indian concept of social justice, Justice K. Subba Rao, a former Chief Justice of India identified a two-fold meaning of social justice. He Said: "the expression 'Social Justice' has a limited as well as a wider meaning. In its limited sense it means the rectification of injustice in the personal relations of the people. In its larger sense it seeks to remove the imbalances in the political, social and economic life of the people. Social justice is to be understood in the latter sense mostly but less in the former sense. As the three activities are interconnected, there cannot be social justice even in its limited sense, unless the society progresses in all directions. In short, social justice helps to bring about a just society. Further he described social justice in a limited sense the right to social justice may be defined as the right of weak, aged, destitute, poor, women, children and other under-privileged persons, to the protection of the state against the ruthless competition of life. It seeks to give the necessary aids to the under-privileged sections of society, so that they may have the equal opportunity with the more advanced in the race of life. It is a balancing wheel between the haves and have-nots. It is not aimed to pull down the advanced sections of society but only to uplift the backward sections thereof without unduly and unreasonably affecting the interests of the former. Protection by state of the weaker sections against ruthless competition of life and the provision of equal opportunity for the under-privileged in the race of life with advanced sections are key proposition in the above exposition of social justice. It stands for the welfare ideology of capitalist theory and it subsumes the egalitarian goal of socialist systems. It talks about the total social upliftment and balanced development of every section of society. The constitution does not limit itself to a mere need-based theory of social justice. While food, shelter and clothing are admittedly the minimum needs for human survival, the constitutional theory of social justice is not the equivalent of distributive justice. Of course, equality is recognized as a master right in our socialist jurisprudence; but in its application and interpretation, the constitution itself provides for different standards which are strategically significant for unequal sections of the people. Personal liberty has emerged as a fountain head of social justice jurisprudence in the recent past. Right to livelihood, right to live with dignity and not merely to vegetable existence, right to privacy, right to access to justice and a series of other related rights were found involved in right to personal liberty. From this higher level of humanitarian jurisprudence, the Supreme Court developed imaginative legal remedies which manifested themselves in term of employment, rehabilitative justice, medical justice, housing justice, correctional justice, and gender justice. All these remedies strengthened the equality code of the constitution and the social justice mission of the laws. It is the Indian constitutional approach towards social justice^{viii}.

Social justice is a life-style. Where, everybody feels hale and hearty in the society which gives importance to social justice. On the contrary people feel suffocation and distressed where injustice prevails. The descending process of social values, laws, moral and spiritual values is considered as the declinement of social justice. *Dharma* was created to dispel ignorance and to lead righteous and leading for balanced life. *Dharma* occupies great position and contributing his important role to dispel social evils, ignorance and to spread righteousness, maintain peace and harmony and provide justice not only to human-kind but other living creatures also from the beginning of mankind's history. Such types of examples of *dharma* we can find in scriptures of every religious tradition. Man's faith emerged into polytheism from naturalism and polytheism to monotheism. This is the revolutionary idea of origin and development of religion^{ix}. On the contrary from theological point of view everything is ordained by the divine will so religion existing since the beginning of creation. In Vedic tradition '*Rta*' word constitutes the divine will through *dharma*^x. In Sikhism also claim about the justice since Lord Alone is true, His Justice also true.^{xi} In Sikhism a word used for divine will or order is '*Hukam*'.^{xii} Biblical seers also understand justice as a divine will, kindness, love etc. *Dharma* (realm of duty and action), *Artha* (realm of living hood), *Kāma* (realm of desires) and *Moksa* (realm of emancipation and eternal bliss) these are also the various dimensions of social justice. Love and respect both are the important parts of social justice. These two points if practiced hate and enmity, lower and higher, discrimination and so on things can be reduced surely, because everyone wants respect and love from others weather he/she rich or poor if they give respect and do love to every-body they can give equality on the behalf of humanness. Both elements are the part of every religio-philosophy. We can find its mentions in every religious tradition's Holy Texts but there must need of its practice in our daily life.

In Semitic religious tradition there are some Holy Texts which revealed on some Prophets as the commandments or law of God. The name of those scriptures are *Sahifa* (scroll revealed to Nuh), *Sahifa* (scroll revealed to Ibrahim), Taurat (the Holy text revealed to Musa), *Zabur* (the psalms revealed to Dawud), Injil (the goslap revealed to Isa) and Quran (the Quran revealed to Muhammad) these holy Texts for law, conduct, worship, welfare of the people and creating just society^{xiii}.

On the other hand in Indian religious tradition *Vedas* and *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* are known as revealed scriptures through the word of God on *Vedic rishies* and *gurus and bhagatas*. Buddhist Sacred Texts, Jain's Sacred *Agam* Texts are also the law and commandments of Lord Buddha and Mahavira for law, conduct, morals, worship acts, welfare of society and justice. Both ideas show the role of religions to provide social justice. Every religion in the world gives emphasis to the social justice. As far the meaning of religion is concerned it means to rebind or to unite people. So the religion and social justice both are related with each other.

Social justice gained new meanings with the dynamism of human thought. Social justice understands into many dimensions after the French revolution in A.D. 1789. Before the French revolution the term social justice understands in the sense of whole virtue of human behavior and Divine will mostly. In the present contexts when the secular, democratic, socialist policies adopted and practiced by maximum nations at that time social justice occupies important place. It is the need of every country. In the era of globalization we have to think humanist idea of social justice. The global understanding of social justice described by Grotius, Leibniz and their followers in elaborating a new concept of society as cooperation of beings endowed with reason defined justice as *custodia of societies*. Justice puts on end to the conflict between the macrocosm and the microcosm, individual and the universal and brings the synthesis between the whole and the parts. That's why justice is by its very essence a *justitia communis*, which reconciles in itself and transcendent the commutative, distributive and universal principles. They said that justice and morality both are combined. Justice is 'charity in conformance with wisdom'. It is moral charity intellectualized and logicalized.

Justice is intermediary between love and reason or logical calculation. This theory of social justice is known as the international idea of justice. The idea of social justice is the solution of every problem.^{xiv}

In addition, social justice is dynamic in its nature. Another important aspect of the social justice is it occupies numerous meaning according to nation, culture, time and situation. In England it may be differ from India regarding their social, political, economic, geographical and cultural conditions, because these conditions vary from country to country, culture to culture and region to region. Social justice in these days described into this slogan social, political and economic in other words equality, liberty and fraternity. These are the three gems of social justice. Mostly nations are practicing these gems now days. Social justice is working in a process. For example in India it is removing social evils, welfare of the weaker sections and down-trodden people provide equality, liberty and fraternity to all gradually.

2. Etymology Of Justice

Etymologically the English word "Justice" derives from the Latin word "Jus" meaning righteousness or equity. Greek word for justice is 'Just' has as many senses as the English word 'Right'.

3. Meaning Of Social Justice

While we are talking about the meaning of social justice, we have to talk about equality, impartiality, liberty, fairness and eradication of poverty, gender, caste and color discrimination. Thus the study on social justice has various meanings and these meanings described through many dimensions. It differs from society to society. But every country should not undermine the teachings of love and compassion, liberty and fraternity, plurality and co-existence of all inhabitants to which our religious scriptures understand essential. It is very difficult to consider the meaning of social justice in nutshell, but the various meanings of social justice have been considered as under:

- Intellectually it means the acceptance of every human being as he/she is deserved.
- In economic terms the meaning of social justice is the equal distribution of material goods. This term has been the interpretation of social justice in western civilizations from the days of the Bible to that of Marx. This means as Gandhi says, "We should wipe the tears from the face of poorest in the land" this is the Indian attitude regarding economics justice.
- In practical or political terms social justice means bringing together the fierce and meek, economically rich and poor, socially and politically high and low on equal food so far as governmental and non-governmental treatment is concerned.
- In the present context of India social justice has come to mean improving the lot of downtrodden and weaker sections of the community improving untouchability and the abolishing of social evils.
- In broader-sense social justice means equality, liberty and fraternity^{xv}.
- The spiritual dimension of social justice has been enumerated in the *Bhagavad-Gita* when it says that learned *Brahmins*, cows, elephants, dogs and chandals should all be treated as equally^{xvi}.
- The theological dimension of social justice is: according to the Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary One of God's attributes by virtues of which he will equal laws and make just awards^{xvii}.
- According to Oxford Dictionary the observance of the divine law, righteousness, states of being righteous or before God^{xviii}.
- Meaning of social justice from peace point of view: According to Oxford Dictionary an inferior magistrate appointed to preserve the peace in a country, town or other district and discharge other local magisterial functions^{xix}.
- According to Webster's Comprehensive Dictionary an inferior magistrate elected or appointed to prevent breaches of the peace within a country or township; to punish violators of the law, and to discharge various other local magisterial duties^{xx}.
- Meaning of social justice in administrative sense is in this sense the administrator of laws task to make the forms and process of justice effective^{xxi}.

We tried to explain the numerous meanings of social justice from various aspects. No single aspect of social justice can explain its meaning in complete sense. So, all the different aspects of social justice may represent the complete meaning of the term social justice. The above mentioned meanings such as the acceptance of everybody, distribution of marital, for earning to fulfill basic needs, give due respect and equal rights into the eyes of politics and law, provide equality, liberty and fraternity to all, treating every living creature equally, to punish violators of the law, the observance of the divine law, righteousness and before God, the task administrator to make the form of laws and process of justice effective and redeeming poverty, discrimination, inequalities, injustice and social evils is a meaning of the social justice. Social justice is a way of treating everybody with respect and love. Social justice is the end of law. In a just society where there to gives due respect and dignified life to everybody there is the end of law because everything going into a true systematic process. Social justice is the formation of sound, prestigious and meaningful life as well as society. Social justice provides a brave kind of life style. Social justice is generally a reflection of the principles of humanitarian equality and solidarity-principles that are based off of an understanding that values human rights and recognizes the self-worth of an individual. Now we give some important definitions of social justice which helps us to understand social justice.

4. Definitions of Social Justice

- According to Aristotle, "It is a virtue of the soul distributing that which person deserved".
- According to Sydney Smith, "It is the brightest emanation from the gospel: it is attributing of God".
- According to Benjamin Disraeli, "It is truth in action".

- According to Cicero, “It is to be sought in the divine law of eternal and immutable morality, Holiness towards god and justice towards men usually to go together. It is equally said to be the sum of moral duty”.
- According to J.B. Basnquet, “If justice prevails, good faith found in treaties, truth in transactions, order in government, and the earth is at peace, and heaven itself sheds over us its beneficent light and radiates down to us its blessed influence”^{xxii}.
- Mo Ti (575-525 B.C.) described the essence of social justice in these words “The big state shall not oppress the small one. The crowd of group shall not crush the individual member. The stronger or wealthy man shall not grind down the poor. Social justice prevails when all are affectionate and filial”.
- Confucius (551-478 B.C.) who appreciated the importance of just government and a just ruler, He said that the business of the government is “to rectify”. He argued that a good ruler would be apparent to his people and maintain their confidence^{xxiii}.
- According to Kant, “Every man has a worth and a dignity, which forbids his exploitation by any purposes whatever”^{xxiv}.
- According to Conceptual Encyclopedia of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, “Social justice is truth and truth is God, His justice is also true. His justice is in accordance with His universal and natural Law”^{xxv}.

The above mentioned definitions provide us knowledge about the social justice. These definitions tell us social justice is the code of moral values, attribute of god, truth in actions, sum of moral duties, divine law, order of government transaction towards truth it leads peace and heaven of the earth, equally treating every sphere of people, demand of just government and a justified king or ruler who establish justice among his public, to provide dignified life and protect from any type of exploitation etc. All these definitions explain the meaning and nature of the social justice from numerous aspects. Here I would like to sum up social justice with few words such as; social justice is considered as the recognition of human worth, the awareness of the preciousness of all life, and the deep longing of one’s being to be able to share and alleviate the other’s burden.

5. Importance of Social Justice

Social justice is the need of every society and its demand is always founded. Considering social justice no single country cannot undermine the value and place of social justice. Social justice playing important role to establishing peace, harmony, love, honesty, obedient, fraternity etc among nations, states, cities, villages and family. Social justice binds people into a well formed society like a rosary beads. Social justice provides dignify life and due respect to every sphere of people in same society and to make it possible for every individual to enjoy freedom from want and freedom from fear. Social justice is a kind of life style which leads happy and justified life. Social justice conceived as to maintain the basics rights of every person to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness to free speech and the exercise of religion. On the other hand where social justice prevails there is no fear of crime, rapes and robberies. Because, every-body receiving minimum felicities to fulfill their basic needs and its practice is must to secure to all the blessings of both of self-government and good government. Social justice provides everyone liberty, equality and equal rights on the contrary to remove social, political, economic inequalities by providing better opportunities to all members in a society. Social justice is a practice more than a theory. Social justice considered as non-violence in its true sense. There is social justice there is no violence. Tolstoy said about social justice is a kind of service. According to him, “only those who love can serve to others”. So hate do not cease by hate, but cease by love.^{xxvi}

6. Conclusion

Social justice is a life style which gives every sphere of life is due respect, love, friendship, equality, liberty, fraternity, social, economic, political rights, peace, truth in action, speech and mind, ethical values, duties and responsibilities and honesty. Social justice contains no legal and ethical recorded history. Its mentions only founded in religious scriptures and the writings of ancient philosophers. It was understood as a complete virtue of the human conduct and divine will. But with the passage of time social justice gained new meanings into dynamics of thought, practice and written forms. There were some equal words of justice such as righteous, religion in west and dharma in east especially in Indian sub-continent, code of conduct, virtue, peace truth. So, social justice is considered as a truthful way of life everywhere on the earth. With hope that you understand by now that social justice is an action and lifestyle that upholds basic human right principles and seeks to break down the barriers of inequality, discrimination and unfairness that many people face.

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