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Q1(c)

Equality of outcome as a political idea.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · PSIR GS 1 · 10 marks · Equality

Equality: Social, political and economic; relationship between equality and freedom; Affirmative action.

Core demand of the question

- **Comment on the following in about 150 words:** Equality of outcome as a political idea. (10 marks)

Revision summary

Equality of outcome is a political test of actual conditions, not of legal form alone.

Marx's classless society is a strong version; **Ambedkar's** status equality is a civic version.

Rawls allows unequal outcomes under the **difference principle**.

Hayek and **Nozick** reject patterned end-states as unfreedom.

Indian Parts III and IV mix rights with a drive toward less unequal results.

Introduction

Equality of outcome is the idea that a just order is judged by how alike people's actual conditions are, not only by equal legal status or equal starting gates. It is a political claim about end-states, not a census slogan.

Body**Meanings**

- Liberal equality of opportunity, in **J. S. Mill** and a thin **Rawls**, equalises chances and then accepts unequal results if the procedure was fair.
- **Rawls's difference principle** is not identical incomes. It permits inequality that helps the least advantaged.
- **Marx** aimed beyond bourgeois right at a classless condition of need, which is a strong outcome idea.
- **Ambedkar** wanted annihilation of graded status, which is equality of civic outcome, not sameness of every holding.

Politics and limit

- **Hayek** and **Nozick** treat patterned outcomes as a threat to liberty of transfer.
- Indian Directive Principles, land reform, and reservations chase more equal results in status and access, not a command economy of identical pay.
- **Easton** would say the idea is a demand that the political system must allocate as an authoritative value.
- As a political idea it is powerful as a test of who remains last. It is dangerous if it erases liberty of thought and opposition.

Flow diagram

Equality of outcome -> Marx classless need
Equality of outcome -> Ambedkar status equality
Equal opportunity -> Rawls difference principle
Hayek Nozick -> Reject patterned ends

Conclusion

Equality of outcome judges justice by actual conditions, against mere legal sameness. **Marx** and **Ambedkar** push it; **Rawls** limits it; Hayek rejects patterned results. Indian social-revolution clauses pursue more equal outcomes without promising identical lives.

Facts & figures

Difference principle

Rawls allows inequality only if it improves the position of the least advantaged.

Article 38

Directs the state to minimise inequalities of income, status, and opportunity.

Marx

Critique of the Gotha Programme looks past equal right toward 'to each according to need'.

Nozick

Entitlement theory treats patterned equality of holdings as a violation of just transfer.