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Q1(b)

Multicultural perspective on rights.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · PSIR GS 1 · 10 marks · Political Theory

Political Theory: meaning and approaches.

Core demand of the question

- **Comment on the following in about 150 words:** Multicultural perspective on rights. (10 marks)

Revision summary

Multicultural theory treats culture as a condition of using liberty, not as a private hobby.

Kymlicka, Taylor, Parekh, and **Walzer** argue for recognition and, in some cases, group rights.

Indian **Articles 25** to 30 and linguistic states are the constitutional form of that argument.

Ambedkar's Article 17 and sex-equality limits block a group veto over civil liberty.

The perspective fails if it either ignores minorities or traps persons inside the group.

Introduction

A multicultural perspective on rights holds that equal citizenship is not only the same list of individual liberties for every person. It also asks how language, religion, and culture structure who can use those liberties.

Body**The claim**

- Liberal rights, in **Locke**, **Mill**, and **Rawls**, attach first to individuals as free and equal persons.
- **Will Kymlicka** argued that some group-differentiated rights are needed so that minority cultures can supply the context of choice that liberals already value.
- **Charles Taylor** named recognition: misrecognition can injure dignity even when the civil code is formally equal.
- **Bhikhu Parekh** treated cultural diversity as a permanent feature of modern states, not as a temporary exception.
- **Michael Walzer** in *Spheres of Justice* held that goods should be distributed by the meanings a community already gives them, which resists a single nationwide metric of right.

Indian text

- **Articles 25** to 28 protect freedom of religion; **Articles 29 and 30** protect the cultural and educational rights of minorities.
- Personal law and linguistic federalism after the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956**, are institutional forms of this perspective.
- **Ambedkar** still insisted that group custom cannot cancel equal civil liberty, which is why **Article 17** abolishes untouchability.

Limits

- **Susan Moller Okin** asked whether multicultural accommodation can trap women inside group rules.
- A rights perspective that is only individual can erase minorities; a perspective that is only communal can erase dissenters inside the group.
- The workable line is individual basic liberties plus limited group rights that do not destroy exit, equality of sexes, and the secular public law of the state.

Flow diagram

Multicultural rights -> Individual liberties
Multicultural rights -> Group-differentiated rights
Multicultural rights -> Recognition
Individual liberties -> Mill Rawls
Group-differentiated rights -> Arts 29 and 30

Conclusion

The multicultural perspective adds recognition and group-differentiated rights to the liberal list of individual liberties. **Kymlicka**, Taylor, Parekh, and **Walzer** state the case. **Articles 25** to **30** show the Indian form, bounded by **Ambedkar**'s civil equality.

Facts & figures

Articles 29 and 30

Protect the right of minorities to conserve culture and to establish and administer educational institutions.

Kymlicka

Defended group-differentiated rights as supports for individual autonomy in a culturally structured society.

Walzer

Spheres of Justice (1983) rejected a single metric of justice detached from social meanings.

Article 17

Abolishes untouchability and forbids its practice in any form, a civil-liberty limit on group custom.