

Best for an individual is not necessarily best for society

“Shared joy is a double joy and shared sorrow is half sorrow”.

According to McGee, society is the largest indistinguishable unit of interacting individuals who share a pattern of social organization that regulates their interaction. No human being is known to have developed in isolation because man is a social being. Society always provides an opportunity and a chance for individual's growth, vis-à-vis the individual must contribute for upbringing the society in all spheres.

In the arena of Egoism in philosophy, we come across a saying that human being is inherently selfish in nature. He can do anything to get self-satisfaction and self pleasure. In an act of alms also they try to please themselves. This egoism is in a way not bad but excessive egoism will definitely lead to conflict within the society.

Logically the best for an individual lies in his interests. Generally wealth forms the individual's best interest in the present world. In Baltic countries individuals contribute to the nation's prosperity and the state provides enough opportunities for individual growth. In such societies, both individuals and societal interests go hand in hand and it will definitely lead to an ideal and prosperous society.

Contrasting to this, according to Oxfam Report 1% of world's billionaires have more wealth than collective wealth of 7 billion global populations. This remains same in the Indian context too, because top 10% of rich people possess more wealth than 70% of Indians. This data reveals to us the fact that individualism has negative impact on inclusive society.

Other individualistic acts like tax evasion by high net worth individuals, corrupt practices in public offices, industrialists dumping the factory waste without treating it, terrorism, naxalism and extremism, unethical advertisements in television will definitely yield best for an individual but, they result in chaos in the society and promote negativity in an organization.

Society has implicit balancing mechanisms whenever an imbalance arises due to individualism. According to Marxism, whenever there is inequality between haves and have-nots, the haves dominate and have-nots revolt. The primary law of the land also contains Directive Principles of State Policy as social and economic justice instructions to the state.

Can best for individual lead to best for society?

Our civilizations have the crux of this idea that we are social beings and our society must progress and prosper. Haves must always contribute for welfare of have-nots. Best for society is in inclusive, sustainable and prosperous growth of all.

Great individuals like Mahatma Gandhi and Subhash Chandra Bose, always strived towards welfare of the society. Sarvodaya model of Jayprakash Narayan revealed the idea behind a stable society. We can reckon the work of billionaires around the world contributing a part of their huge capital for benefit of the poorest.

The difficult times like COVID-19 pandemic have shown us the reason why one should not always be individually focused. Having empathy towards other individuals will actually make us societal beings. Few enthusiastic and principle driven individuals like Ratan Tata, Sonu Sood, Armstrong Pame, Baba Amte, Sudha Murthy and others revolutionized the art of helping the weaker sections of the society. They share their benefits to all sections of the society from which they get profits. This act of repayment is vital.

Since we are living in an economy where values of products are decided by market forces, some individuals exploit the weaker classes by taking illegitimate and unethical way. This creates social inequality which will definitely affect the moral fabric of the society, further resulting in class conflicts and rebellions as rightly noticed by Karl Marx.

However, from the society point of view having common vision and charter for its members is vital. Members should honestly contribute for the welfare of all. Society will thereby create the best opportunities for all and is a win-win situation for both individual interests and interest of society at large.

In this way we can conclude that the best for an individual is not necessarily best for the society. We must always strive to achieve equitable, inclusive, just and humane society by optimizing and orienting our individual interests for welfare of society. Utilitarian approach suggests us that society must always strive for maximum good for maximum number of people.

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