



Mains Practice Question

Q. “The individual is the one supreme consideration, but also, the good of the individual is contained in the good of all.” Comment. (150 words)

24 Oct, 2019 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Briefly give philosophical explanation of individual interest and collective interest.
- Explain with examples why welfare of individual is contained in the collective interest.

Answer

- Bentham’s **utilitarianism** is based on individualistic nature of man. The philosophy of **individualism** gives primacy to the individual and to the values of individual rights and freedoms, self-interest, competition, etc. over collective interest. It’s the idea that the individual is sovereign, an end in himself, and the fundamental unit of moral concern.
- On the other hand, **collectivism** gives primacy to the group or community and to the principles and values of collective responsibility, cooperation, economic equality, adherence to collective norms, public property, etc. According to collectivism, the group or society is the basic unit of moral concern, and the individual is of value only insofar as he serves the group.
 - The Indian philosophy of **‘Sarve bhavantu sukhinah’** also promotes happiness for all and an egalitarian society.
- **‘Reason’** in man suggests that individual must have liberty to work for his best interest, however it is also true that man is an ‘embedded self’ (communitarian philosophy) and cannot be isolated. Society can only grow when every member of society grows. Welfare must be inclusive.
 - For ex: the consequences of climate change will be faced by all of humanity and it is the duty of every individual to work towards sustainable development.
 - Similarly, working towards achieving open defecation free status under **Swachh Bharat Mission**, a person not only benefits his own health and hygiene but also of entire locality and nation.
 - Even though Gandhiji, in his concept of **‘oceanic circles of power’**, gives centrality to individual as means for democratic decentralization, but he clarifies through his philosophy of **‘Swaraj’** that service of mankind is the service of God, thereby placing emphasis on collective wellbeing rather than individual wellbeing.

Therefore, even though individual is one supreme being but his individual good is contained in the good of all or collective good.

