



Mains Practice Question

Q. Prejudice can exist without discrimination. Comment. (150 Words)

13 May, 2022 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach

- Define what is prejudice and discrimination
- Explain how prejudice often accompanies discrimination
- Discuss how prejudice can be independent of discrimination

Introduction

Prejudice is a preconceived notion that is not based on reason or personal experience. It is based solely on the individual's association with a social group. It deals with the inflexible and irrational attitudes and opinions held by members of one group towards another. Being prejudiced usually means having preconceived beliefs about groups of people or cultural practices.

For example, a person may hold prejudiced views towards a certain race or gender etc. (e.g. apartheid).

Body

Discrimination is the behaviour or actions, usually negative towards an individual or group of people, especially on the basis of sex/race/social class, etc. The negative form of prejudice can lead to discrimination. On the other hand it is possible to be prejudiced and not act upon the attitudes. For example, the genocide committed by the Nazis in Germany against Jewish people is an extreme example of how prejudice can lead to discrimination, hatred and mass killing of innocent people.

Prejudice may not translate into discrimination if it meets the following conditions:

- Deterrence of society plays an important role in limiting the discriminatory behaviour to only a cognitive aspect.
- Fear of law also prevents an attitude from resulting into behaviour. For eg. Indian society since a very long time, discriminated against the lower castes, however, with the passage of Prevention of Atrocities Act, such behaviour has been curbed to a large extent, given the quantum of punishment associated with the Act.
- With the evolution of societies and increasing awareness, discriminatory behaviour dies and limits itself to only at cognitive level. E.g. In early times, women were discriminated on the basis of their gender, however this attitude has declined with awareness and education.
- Self-regulation, self-reflection and experience also plays an important role in regulating behaviour as often we have prejudice against something but we question those prejudices.
- Increasing intergroup contact allows for direct communication and removal of mistrust between the groups. For example schools and colleges bring together people from different strata of the society and thus dissuading age old prejudices held by them.

Conclusion

Prejudices are formed by societies and are held by them for a long period based on illogical and irrational norms. However, they can only be curbed or eradicated through individual measures where everyone strives for eliminating discrimination and achieving a just and inclusive society.

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