

Introduction to Political Theory
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Lecture – 07
Equality of Opportunity; Preferential treatment

Hello and welcome friends. This is the second lecture on equality. Today, we are going to discuss very briefly, what we have left in the previous lecture about the idea of equity, egalitarianism and its relationship with equality.

We will focus on the idea of equality of opportunity and what we call preferential treatment or affirmative action. In Indian context, it is largely, known by the name of quota or reservation for the disadvantaged groups and communities. In the second part of today's lecture, we are going to discuss basically, the idea of preferential treatment and how, it is justified, in the name of creating a society which is more equal and egalitarian.

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Intro

- In the previous lecture on equality we have discussed different kinds of equality such as legal, political and socio-economic equality; equality of welfare; equality of resources; equality of capabilities and also complex equality. In the last part of that lecture we have briefly discussed equity and egalitarianism. This idea of equity and egalitarianism I will discuss in the second slide before moving on to discuss equality of opportunity and preferential treatment.
- Equality of opportunity is more desirable than equality of outcome. It is argued that equality of outcome in its attempts to equalize is unfair to those who are different because of their choices or hard-work. Therefore, many supporters of equality argue for equality of opportunity and do not consider inequality as necessarily bad if it is result of one's choice or hard work. However, if such inequalities are result of some natural endowments or socio economic conditions than such endowments or conditions of inequalities are bad and must be removed.
- Therefore, in many society there are provisions for preferential treatments or affirmative actions. In India it is also known as quota system or reservation. Such treatments are justified in the name of equality and are meant for those who are historically and in the socio-economic status from the disadvantaged backgrounds. However, this kind of preferential treatments raise a number of moral questions. Which I will discuss in the second part of this lecture.

In the previous lecture on equality, we have discussed different kinds of equality, such as legal and political equality, socio-economic equality, equality of welfare, equality of resources and equality of capabilities. These three major approaches talks about equality of what. So, question arises as equality of what? Thus, these three major approaches address this question- equality of what? Answer to this question would be equality of

welfare, equality of resources and equality of capabilities as Amartya Sen said which (Refer Time: 02:01) we have discussed. We have also, discussed the 'complex equality' as argued by Michael Walzer and different spheres which he was talking about. This ultimately, will lead to a kind of inbuilt mechanism, to counter or restrict any forms or sections of domination over other section.

In the last part of the introductory lecture on equality, we have also, discussed these ideas of equity and egalitarianism. These ideas again, we will discuss in today's lecture before we move on to discuss, what is equality of opportunity and also, the idea of preferential treatment or what we called reservation.

The equality of opportunity is more desirable than equality of outcome. These two terms are something, which we need to discuss. This idea of equality of opportunity in contemporary discourse, on equality is more desirable than the equality of outcome. The reason for equality of opportunity being more desirable, than equality of outcome is that, the equality of outcome in its attempt to equalise is unfair to those, who are different not from their natural or socio-economic circumstances, but because of their differences in status, socio-political situations or economy, choice or hard work.

So, inequality is the result out of the hard work or personal choices made by individuals in his or her life. But the equality of outcome approach tends to undermine or undervalue such hard works or the personal choices. Therefore, many theorists have argued, it is better to have equality of opportunity, rather than to focus more and more on equality of outcome which talks about the end results or making everyone equal. Thus, it is unfair for those who are different because of their choices or hard work. Therefore, many supporters of equality, argued for equality of opportunity and they do not consider inequality as necessarily, bad. For them, inequality in itself thus, is not bad.

The focus is on the idea of equality of opportunity. This idea of equality of opportunity, basically, talks about giving everyone equal opportunity to progress, to develop himself, and to make certain choices. Now, in doing that there is of course, the element of re-distribution of resources, especially, for those who are from disadvantageous section, but nonetheless, the idea is to give everyone, the same level of opportunity to excel and pursue his or her ambitions. In the pursuit of such ambitions or choices, if there is some inequality, than that inequality is acceptable and it is not bad in itself.

For the supporters of equality of opportunity, inequality is not necessarily bad, if it is the result of one's choice and hard work. However, if such inequalities are result of some natural endowments or socio-economic conditions, then such endowments or conditions of inequalities are bad and they must be rectified by the interventions of state. So, they also, argued for the re-distribution of resources, to ensure that everyone has the same level of playing field or equal opportunity, but that should not or determine the end results in the sense, due respect or acknowledgement should be given to individuals choices and hard work which creates inequality, and that inequality is thus, not bad in itself.

To create equality of opportunity in many societies, there are provisions for preferential treatment or affirmative action. So, in India, it is also, known as quota system or reservation. Such treatments are justified in the name of equality and are meant for those who are both historically, and socio-economically belong to the disadvantageous sections of society. This difference from equal treatment or equality of opportunity to give some kind of preferential treatment or reservation or quota is justified, only, when it is for those who are historically, and in contemporary times, socio-economically come from the disadvantageous groups.

Thus, the overall objective, here, in the discourse on inequality is that everyone should be given free and equal opportunity. If there is some difference that needs to be made, then that difference is justified on the basis of historical disadvantage and also, on basis of socio- economic disadvantages, that alone can justify some kind of differences or preferential treatment or affirmative action that we will discuss.

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Equity, Egalitarianism and Equality contd... / > ~~###~~ ~~###~~

- Equity as a term is more related to terms like fairness or justness or impartiality. It is different from equality which focuses on treating every one equally. Egalitarianism is much broader a term. It regards equality as the central moral ideals by which it mean substantive equality in the conditions of people's lives that is much more than merely political or legal equality. In other words it means equality in the sense of having opportunities open to them, resources available to them, or the quality of life that is of equal moral worth to the rest of the members in the community. There are broadly speaking three kinds of egalitarianism – intrinsic, instrumental, and constitutive.
- For the intrinsic egalitarians equality is an intrinsic good in itself. In the instrumental egalitarianism ideal of equality is justified not because it is good in itself but it help in ensuring universal freedom, free development of human capacity and personality without coercion and domination, or for coherence in the society. And finally, constitutive equality focuses on creating an equal society because certain inequalities are unfair or unjust. In this sense it is based on higher values such as equal dignity and respect of each individual.
- We will discuss a form of egalitarianism- luck egalitarianism in the next lecture.

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Now, if we briefly, discuss this point on equity and egalitarianism, and its relationship with equality, it will be from the previous lecture we have had. So, equity, as a term is more related, as I have discussed in my previous lecture, in the contemporary discourse on equality, or the absolute equality as an ideal is neither desirable nor possible to realise. It is a gradual, progressive process which may lead to more and more kind of equal and egalitarian society. The rallying point is more about equity and egalitarianism, and equity in that sense, refers to terms like fairness or justness or impartiality. Thus, the other political value is intimately, connected with the ideals of equality like justice or liberty. Now, about the relationship between liberty and equality, we will discuss in the next lecture. But justice or the idea of fairness or just treatment, or equal treatment is something which is deeply, connected with the moral, political, legal and socio-economic conceptions of equality. We will again discuss this point, when we will discuss the idea of justice particularly 'justice as fairness' in John Rawls.

So, equity, as a term is more related to terms like fairness, justness or impartiality. It is different from equality, which focuses on treating everyone equally. That is a kind of broader and abstract ideal of equality which wants everyone to be treated equally, or more appropriately, absolute equality. We have discussed equality as not equal to uniformity, which means, same level of income, same kind of cause, same approach to

good life or regimentation of life.

The better approach to achieve equality is not the absolute equality or abstract equality, but the principle of equity, which is different from equality and egalitarianism. It is much broader. So, equity in that sense, include certain principles of having different approaches to diverse sections of society. Thus, may be one of the visuals, we have seen in the same cricket match or a football match, where different people are watching the match and there is some kind of obstruction there.

Now, if the same level of standing bench is provided to them, the outcome of it will not be really, just. Because those who are shorter or in the middle, and those who are taller, they have the same level of standing position, but their enjoyment or visuals of match varies depending upon their natural, physical, or biological body. So, the equality principle will provide the same level of standing position to everyone.

Moreover, equity, requires those who are shorter, those who are in the middle, they should be given or those who are too tall they should be little. The equity principle requires a kind of differential treatment, to ensure that everybody should have the same level of enjoyment, or same level of playing field. So, there is a slight difference between the idea of equality and idea of equity, to ensure equality in outcome and that everyone should have the same level of playing.

The egalitarian, in comparison to that is much broader term and it regards, equality as the central moral ideal, by which it means, substantive equality in conditions of people's life, that is, much more than merely, political or legal equality. So, egalitarianism is something, much broader than merely, a formal notion of equality in the sense of political and legal equality. It talks about the actual conditions of individuals living and how, those conditions of living are equal to the rest of the community.

Thus, it means, equality of having opportunities that are open to them, or resources which is available to them or the quality of life, that is, of equal moral worth to the rest of members in the community. Egalitarianism has a broader ideal which is not just about political and legal equality, but it talks about achieving or realising the conditions, where opportunities are available to everyone and resources are available to every section of the society and also, the quality of life that one leads is of same moral worth than rest of the members in the community. So, the egalitarianism is much broader a term, than equity or

equality. Nonetheless, these are also, overlapping and equality is at the centre of egalitarian or political philosophy.

There are broadly, speaking three kinds of egalitarianism which is intrinsic, instrumental and constitutive. So, intrinsic egalitarianism is an ideal which believes that equality is good in itself. There is no further justification for equality. For those, who believe in the intrinsic egalitarianism, for them, equality is good in itself. Thus, we can compare with the Kantian idea of categorical imperative. There are some course of actions which is good in itself.

It does not require any justification from outside or external justification, or achieving certain ends. Here, in the similar manner, the intrinsic egalitarianism believes that equality is something, which we must defend not because it leads to something else, but because it is good in itself. That is how, they want to construct society or transform society in order to build a future society.

Now, for the instrumental egalitarians, the ideal of equality is justified not because it is good in itself, but it help, in ensuring something. For example, universal freedom, free development of human capacity and personality, without coercion or domination, or for coherence in the society.

For the instrumental egalitarianism, equality is required not because equality is good in itself, but it helps in creating or realising some other ideals or values, such as universal freedom, free development of individual personality or individual growth without any coercion and domination in a society, which is more coherent and strong, again, when there is less inequality and more people have social ties which creates a society, that is, more coherent than a society with huge inequalities and disparities.

The final, constitutive egalitarianism focuses on creating an equal society. Here, it should be basically, egalitarianism. Constitutive egalitarianism focuses on creating an equal society because certain inequalities are unfair and unjust. There is moral value involved here. They want to create a society which should be equal because certain inequalities are morally, unfair or unjust. In this sense, it is based on higher values, such as, equal dignity and respect for each individual.

The other values are higher values which are very significant in this conception of

egalitarianism which talks about constitutive egalitarianism, where the dignity and respect of each individual is of the same moral worth or significance. Finally, there is one more form of egalitarianism that is, called luck egalitarianism. This is a form of egalitarianism which we will discuss in the next lecture.

Now, we come to today's topic of equality of opportunity. This equality of opportunity is in a way, an attempt to avoid excessive focus either on equality of welfare or equality of resources, and the inherent tensions or contestations, that is, involved in such conceptualisation of what is to be distributed or re-distributed? What should be the criteria for such re-distribution? Should, we have one, singular, or universal parameter for re-distribution? Or should we take into account different needs of different individuals or groups?

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Equality of Opportunity

- Equality of opportunity in a way is an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of both equality of welfare and equality of resources. It includes the aspect of choice or responsibility in its attempt to create equal society. It permits inequality in outcome if that is the result of individual autonomous choice or ambition. However, it argues for equalizing the outcomes in so far those are results of circumstances beyond individual controls. In such cases it argues for the role of state and public institutions to provide equal opportunity to everyone. So in equality of opportunity what matters is not the socio-economic and other kinds of background of the individuals but his or her talent or skill. In order to understand equality of opportunity we need to differentiate it from equal access on the one hand and equality of outcome on the other.
- Equal access imply that public offices, spheres, or positions are open or accessible to one and all without any discrimination based either on caste, class, gender, or religion.
- Whereas, equality of outcome focuses on the end result. In doing so it overlook or ignore the individual efforts or the choices that an individual makes in his/her life. In other words it tends to treat someone who values leisure at par with someone who believe in hard-work and diligence. This kind of equalizing treatment is regarded as morally arbitrary. And, therefore, we have more emphasis in the literature on equality of opportunity then either on equal access or equality of outcome.

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The equality of opportunity as a principle tries to avoid the pitfalls of both the equality of resources and equality of welfare. It includes the aspect of choice or responsibility. So, more than this distributional aspect of equality, the equality of opportunity bring in the value of individual choice and responsibility, in determining the status of the individual in the society. To create an equal society, the equality of opportunity includes the aspects of choice and individual responsibility. It permits inequality in outcome, if that is the result of an individual's autonomous choice or ambition. So, long, the inequality is the result of individuals choice or hard work or innovation, that is, perfectly, justified or

acceptable.

However, it argues, for equalising the outcomes in so far, those are result of circumstances beyond individual control, in such cases, it argues for the role of a state and public institutions to provide equal opportunity to everyone. One of the issues which we have discussed in the previous lecture is about equality of capabilities. The equality of capabilities require the state, to ensure that individuals are not just given the resources, but also, their capabilities are enhanced, and to enhance their capability to primary goods or basic needs, they require to is the literacy or good literacy, or good health which ensures that they can enjoy or participate in a free or equal manner.

Here, in the similar way, when indifferences, inequalities or disparities are results of not individual choices or a hard work, or responsibilities, but because of their circumstances of living or the conditions of living, then in that case, equality of opportunity principles also, recognises or acknowledges the role of state and institutions, to ensure that everyone should have the equality of opportunity.

In equality of opportunity, what matters are not the socio-economic and other kinds of background of the individual, but his or her talent or skill. So, talent or skill, or individual innovation is something, which must be rewarded, and if, the inequalities are results of such individual talents and skills, that is perfectly, justifiable, for those who argue for equality of opportunity.

So, in order, to understand the concept of equality of opportunity, we also, need to differentiate between equal access on the one hand and equality of outcome, on the other. Equal access, imply, that public offices or public spheres, or public positions of power or responsibilities should be open or accessible to one and all. And that should be based on merit or their capability, and not on the basis of certain discriminative practices either on the basis of caste, class, gender, or race. Thus, the equal access, basically, focuses on this idea of public offices or spheres, or positions that would be made available for everyone and it should be based only, on the criteria of merit or qualification.

The equality of opportunity is thus, much more different than merely, equal access to public position. Equal access is about one's, or some individuals or for a group of individuals should compete with a public office, which is ideally, available for all of them depending upon their merits or qualifications. So, those who have the qualification

for that position will get that position. That means, the only criteria, to be accessible to a public office or public position is the merit or qualification and not the caste, class, gender or religion.

So, the equality of access principles, argues about making public offices accessible to everyone. Now, whether that ability or capability to access, office is available to every individual in the same way is not something, which equal access principles bothered about. However, the equal opportunity principles, argued, it is not just enough to keep public offices open or accessible for everyone, but also, to ensure that individuals get the opportunity, to develop or acquire capability or talent to access that office. In that sense, equal opportunity principle is much broader than merely, the equal access principle.

The second is equality of outcome that focuses on the end result. In doing so, it overlooks or ignores individual efforts, or the choices that an individual makes in his or her life. In other words, it tends to treat someone who value leisure at par with someone, who believes in the hard work or diligence. So, the equality of outcome tries to equalise between two set of individuals, one who believes in hard work or diligence and the other, who believes in the leisure or taking life easily, or taking life casually.

Thus, this equality of outcome principles is morally, arbitrary. Therefore, we have more emphasis in the literature on equality of opportunity, than either on equality of access or equality of outcome.

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- The basic ideal that defines equality of opportunity is that skills and talent matters and state and public institutions must ensure that equal chance to acquire the relevant competence, skills, and qualifications are available to everyone. So in this sense inequality per se is not seen as bad so long it is the result of one's talent or choices.
- However, this may result in the huge disparities in the society. In such a society talented elite dominate every sphere of life and disadvantaged or poor are deemed to have failed because of their own personal choices, deficiencies or lack of talent.
- Therefore, John Rawls argues that 'people no more deserve their native abilities, including their propensity to hard work, than they do those advantages gained from their family and social background'. And therefore, in his conception of justice he also focused on the difference principle. Which we shall discuss in a lecture on Justice as fairness.

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The basic ideal that defines, equality of opportunity is skills and talent matters. State and public institutions must ensure the equal chance, to acquire this relevant competence, skill, talents or qualifications, which are available to everyone. In this sense, inequality per se is not seen as bad, so, long, as it is the result of one's talent or choices.

So, the equality of opportunity principle gives reward or acknowledge, the principle of skills or talents which leads to some forms of inequalities in society. Those inequalities and disparities are the results of individual choices, merit or talent, and it is acceptable or permissible. But, if those disparities or inequalities are the result of certain conditions which is beyond individual control, such as caste based hierarchy or hierarchy on the basis of one's birth, or birth in a community which is the minority, ethnic or racial or religious minorities. In that sense, it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that they get to participate in the public life of the community at par, with other members, or other privileged members in society.

However, this excessive focus on equality of opportunity, may result in huge disparities in the society. In such a society, talented elite dominates every sphere of life. So, those who are technocrats or good in some skills, they may create a group within the society which dominates every sphere of life and they also, made others relatively, not as advantageous or privileged as a kind of self pity or it may not serve the purpose of social cohesiveness or social equality, or egalitarianism. So, these talented elite dominate, every sphere of life and disadvantaged or poor are deemed to have failed because of their own personal choices, deficiencies or lack of talent.

So, this kind of excessive reliance on this equality of opportunity principle may create a society, where a few or minority of talented elites may dominate every sphere of life and those who are disadvantaged may be told or may be seen as, they are disadvantaged and not of the structural or the conditions of their existence which is beyond their control, but because, they lacked their own personal choices, personal talents or personal deficiencies.

Therefore, John Rawls, argued that people no more deserve their native abilities, including their propensity to hard work, then they do, those advantages are gained from their family and social backgrounds. Therefore, in his conception of justice, he focused on the difference principle. So, he wanted, equality of opportunity to be made available

to everyone, but also, there should be a difference principle, especially, if such differences are in the advantages of those who are worst off.

This principle of difference or difference principle of justice, we will discuss again, when we will discuss John Rawls conception of 'justice as fairness'. Here, it is important to note that equality of opportunity, if we focus exclusively, may create a society with huge disparities or inequalities, and in that society, only a few or minority of individuals with talent may dominate every spheres of life and the rest of society may be seen as lacking in talent or disadvantageous because of their personal deficiencies or lack of talent. That does not create a society which will be more cohesive. So, we need to balance this excessive reliance on equality of opportunity. It includes the principle of difference depending upon the requirements of especially, disadvantaged sections of society.

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- However, theorists like Ronald Dworkin or David Miller questions this premise of John Rawls, which according to them goes against the fundamental tenets of his theory that focuses on the desert, choice, and responsibility.
- Ronald Dworkin articulate a somewhat radical conception of equality of opportunity. He wants people to start with same level of or equal resources that 'may require state to compensate some people for their "natural" disabilities and lack of talent', and then they should be left with to pursue their choices or ambitions in the free market with minimum role of the state. Inequality thus generated is perfectly justified.
- Not all liberal theorist defend or justify equality of opportunity. For example defenders of free market liberal economy like Friedrich Hayek argues that some redistribution of wealth or resources is justified, however any attempts to completely remove the inequalities of opportunity is doomed to failure. Because, in their opinion too much of equality including the equality of opportunity tends to undermine the social and economic conditions for innovations and progress.

However, theorists like Ronald Dworkin and David Miller questions this premise of John Rawls, which according to them, goes against the fundamental tenets of John Rawls theory that focuses on desert, choice, and responsibility. So, Ronald Dworkin, articulates somewhat, a radical conception of equality of opportunity. He wants people to start with the same level of or equal resources.

The starting point should be of same level of or equal resources, and that same level or equal resources requires the intervention from state, to compensate those people who are naturally, disable or lack talent. And, then they should be left free, to pursue their choices

and ambitions in free-market with minimum role of the state. Ronald Dworkin further, conceptualise this principle of equality of opportunity, by arguing that individuals should start with the same level of resources and if, there is inequalities of resources, available to individuals, then state has a role to re-distribute the resources, so that everyone should start with the same level of resources.

Then, once they have the same level of resources, what they do? What choices they make and how, they pursue their ambitions, should be left with the individuals to participate in the free-market economy with minimal role of the state. If the disparities or inequalities are results of the individual choices, despite having same level of resources or same level of a starting point, those kinds of disparities and inequalities, are perfectly, justified according to, Dworkin.

Now, not all liberal theorists defend this principle of equality of opportunity. For example, defenders of free-market liberal economy, such as Friedrich Hayek, argued that some re-distribution of wealth or resources are desirable, or can be justified. However, any attempt to completely, remove the inequalities of opportunity is doomed to failure because in their opinion, too much of equality, including equality of opportunity tends to undermine the social and economic conditions, required for innovation and progress.

So, the motivation for individual to innovate, or to put extra efforts or to do hard work will be unavailable, if there is too much emphasis on creating equality or providing the same level of resources to everyone.

They somewhat, considered the excessive focus on creating the equality of opportunity or equality in the society in general. It may be detrimental to individual innovation and hard work. Therefore, we have many liberal free-market economy supporters who do not necessarily, justify the idea of creating freedom of equality or equality of opportunity, because, for them, the state and public institutions are to regulate, or interfere in individual lives excessively. That is, detrimental for individual motivation or individual efforts which is required for the society as a whole to move forward.

There will be some individuals, who will be more innovative than the rest and it is because of those individuals, society makes overall progress from one stage of development to the next, and if, we focus excessively, on equality than the chances are individuals may not be motivated enough, to take risk or to make certain innovations. To

reward the inequalities is somewhat, required also, for the overall progress of the society. So, basically, many liberals, and free-market economies do not necessarily, focus on the absolute eradication of inequality in opportunity.

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Preferential Treatment or Affirmative Action

- It is a mechanism which goes against the basic tenets of equality that want individuals to be treated equally. It is based on 'difference principle' especially for those who have been suffering from both historical as well as socio-economic inequalities such as ethnic or racial minorities, women, Dalits and so on.
- It is an umbrella terms and used interchangeably with many terms like 'reverse discrimination' or 'positive discrimination' or 'quota' or 'reservation' and so on.
- This whole conception operates 'somewhere between equality of opportunity and equality of outcome'.

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In the second part of our lecture, we will discuss on the idea of preferential treatment of affirmative action. So, this is the mechanism which basically, goes against the fundamental idea of equality which believes in treating everyone equally. It is based on this difference principle, especially, for those who have been suffering from both historical as well as the socio-economic inequalities, especially, such as ethnic, racial or religious minorities, women, or Dalits.

The term preferential treatment or affirmative action is used interchangeably, and there are many terms, related to this mechanism which is also, known as reverse discrimination or positive discriminations. In India, we call it as quota system or reservation.

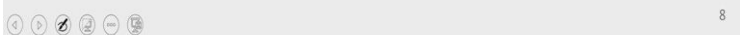
This whole conception of preferential treatment or affirmative action, operates somewhat, between the idea of equality of opportunity and equality of outcome. So, to create a society, which will not be absolutely equal, but it must be more equal and less unequal or there should be less disparities on the one hand, and all the individuals in the society should have same or equal opportunity to excel or to progress.

The idea of preferential treatment or affirmative action operates, somewhat in between these two kinds of approaches, to create an equal society, one which talks about equality of opportunity and the other which talks about equality of outcome. Preferential treatment thus, operates, somewhat in between these two approaches of creating an equal society.

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There are various types of affirmative actions or policies –

- a. Encouragement – for advertising in the newspapers read by disadvantage communities or ethnic minorities
- b. Tie-breaking – if two people are equally qualified then choosing the person from the less advantaged groups
- c. Handicapping – higher or more entry-points or grades for students from the wealthy backgrounds to enter into a university
- d. Quota system- A certain percentage of jobs reserved for the people from disadvantaged communities and groups



There are various types of affirmative actions. One is the encouragement. Through encouragement, one can also, create a society which will prefer, especially, those who are from the disadvantageous background. So, how, one can encourage those who are disadvantage? One of the examples is to make them aware by advertising in those newspapers which is read by disadvantageous groups or ethnic minorities. Thus, through encouragement, one can also, extend preferential treatment to certain communities, especially, if they are from the disadvantageous groups or communities.

The second is the tie-breaking, which is basically, when there are two individuals with same level of qualifications, then, we should choose the one who is from the less advantageous background. So, this tie-breaking is a form of reverse discrimination or affirmative action.

The third is handicapping. Handicapping is usually, practiced in educational institutions or clubs, where we increase the credit or points to access certain institutions, especially, for those who are from the well off or from the privileged background.

So, you keep the points or grades or credits a little higher for those who are coming from the privileged backgrounds, to ensure that the least advantaged should also, access and should have more chance, to enter into the public universities or so on, in comparison to those who are coming from relatively, better off or the privileged backgrounds. So, handicapping in that sense is also, one way of preferential treatment.

Finally, which is widely, known in India is the quota system or reservation, where we keep certain percentage of jobs or public jobs, reserved for people from disadvantaged communities and groups.

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- The basic justification for affirmative action is that it intends to 'compensate a group for past injustices'.
- One of the major objection against affirmative action is that it undermines respects – even for talented individuals from the disadvantaged groups – and unleashes resentments among those who are discriminated against. Support and resentments against the reservation in India is a case in point to understand some of the moral issues involved in the issue related to affirmative action.
- Thus, these policies involve certain costs and instead of temporary measure may very well turn into a self-perpetuating mechanisms where material equality may be achieved to some extent but ethnic or caste consciousness may even become stronger.

Now, the basic justification for affirmative action is that it intends to compensate a group which is historically, disadvantaged or had suffered past injustices. It is a kind of measure to rectify, the past or sufferings or past mistakes or past injustices.

The justification for affirmative action or preferential treatment is that it intends to compensate a group for the past injustices or the past sufferings, they have suffered. However, in society, one of the major objections against the affirmative action is that it undermines respects. So, the equality, if we recall, starts with the assumption that all individuals are equal in the sense of their moral worth and their respect for themselves or the other.

Now, the preferential treatment as it is practised, create a situation where the respect

even among those who are from disadvantageous groups, but are talented, are seen to be beneficiary of a preferential treatment and hence, although, he or she may have the talent is seen somewhat differently, and not due respect is given to them. The affirmative action, thus, runs this risk of dividing, even the talented individuals from their due respect or due acknowledgement on the one hand, and it also, creates resentments among those against whom these discriminatory practices are practiced.

First, this affirmative action undermines respect even for the talented individuals from the disadvantageous groups and unleashes resentments among those who are discriminated against. In India, support and resentments against the reservation is a case in point, to understand some of the moral issues involved in the question or issues related to affirmative action. So, on the issue of reservation and its extension to OBC in 1990's and the support and opposition to such mechanism is something, which is a reminder to some of the moral issues, that is, involved in this practice of affirmative action.

Thus, these policies involve certain costs which are present. So, those even with the talent are discriminated against not because, they committed some past mistakes or they were involved in some past injustices, against certain communities, but because they are seen from contemporary perspectives, belonging to a group which committed certain injustices against certain community.

So, first, the moral question, that is involved here is an individual is made to pay for the mistakes which he or she has not committed in the past. In the name of group, the individual member in contemporary time is subjected to certain discrimination for the past mistakes or injustices, that is committed by the other community. So, there are certain costs and the moral issue, which is involved in the practices of affirmative action.

The other point that we need to take into account is the temporary measures. Overall objective is to create a society which will be more equal and just. Now, the tendency with the affirmative actions are it may turn out to become a kind of self perpetuating mechanism, where material equality may be achieved to some extent, but ethnic or caste consciousness among individuals becomes, even more stronger.

The whole idea of eradicating the caste or ethnic consciousness gets reinforced by this mechanism, instead of eradication or creating a society which will be more equal, treating people with the respect or general equality in the society. Thus, there are some of

the issues which we need to take into account, when we argue about this preferential treatment or affirmative action.

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Conclusion

- Equality of opportunity can be seen as a remedy to the pitfalls of the equality of welfare or equality of resources approach. It also tend to create a society which may be more equal. -
- In such a society inequality per se is not regarded as bad if it is the result of individual's innovation or talent. However, if such equalities are result of capacities beyond individual controls then state has a role to ensure that every one has equal opportunity to progress.
- Affirmative action or preferential treatments must be seen as a temporary measures to create a level playing field for everyone in the society particularly the disadvantaged groups and communities. However, it should not become a self-perpetuating mechanism and the moral issues and cost involved in such measures must be duly considered.

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In conclusion, equality of opportunity can be seen as a remedy, to the pitfalls of equality of welfare and equality of resources approach. It also, tends to create a society which may be more equal. In such a society, inequality per se is not regarded as bad, if it is the result of individual innovations or talent. However, if such inequalities are result of capacities beyond individual control than the state has a role to ensure that everyone has equal opportunity, to progress or to excel.

Affirmative action or preferential treatment must be seen as a temporary measure, to create a level playing field for everyone in the society, particularly the disadvantage groups and communities. However, it should not become a self perpetuating mechanism and the moral issues, and cost involved in such measures must be duly considered before we embark upon this policy of affirmative action or discriminatory practices. This is all on the idea of equality of opportunity and preferential treatment.

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Some of the texts, you can refer to are these which you can read to understand some of the questions which we have discussed in this lecture or some of the moral concerns which is associated with the idea of equality as an opportunity or the preferential treatment. And how, preferential treatment is justified. So, for that you can refer to some of these texts. Thanks for listening.

Thank you all.