Society & Social Justice · GS - II

“Development and welfare schemes for the vulnerable, by its nature, are discriminatory in approach.” Do you agree? Give reasons for your answer.

EXAM YEAR	PAPER	SUBJECT
2023	GS - II	Society & Social Justice

MARKS	WORD LIMIT
15	~250 words

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Answer Hint

Targeted welfare differentiates among citizens to correct historically unequal capabilities and opportunities; such differential treatment is justified when it pursues substantive equality, remains constitutionally reasonable and avoids arbitrary exclusion.

Model Answer

Introduction

Development and welfare programmes often target vulnerable groups such as women, children, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, persons with disabilities and economically disadvantaged populations. Such targeting may appear discriminatory, but its constitutional and developmental purpose is usually to achieve substantive equality.

Body

Why Such Schemes are Justified

Historical disadvantage: Marginalised communities may face structural exclusion that cannot be corrected through formal equality alone.

Substantive equality: Article 15(3), 15(4), 15(5) and other constitutional provisions explicitly permit special measures for disadvantaged groups.

Capability enhancement: Nutrition, education, healthcare, housing and livelihood interventions enable vulnerable groups to acquire capabilities necessary for equal participation.

Inter-generational justice: Welfare programmes for children, women and disadvantaged communities can break cycles of poverty and deprivation.

Social justice: Targeted interventions help address inequalities created by caste, gender, disability and geographical disadvantage.

Why Discrimination Must Still Be Guarded Against

Targeting can become arbitrary if beneficiary identification is inaccurate. Exclusion errors, leakages, political patronage and excessive dependence on identity-based categories can undermine fairness.

Further, poorly designed welfare may create dependency rather than long-term empowerment.

Way Forward

The State should adopt **evidence-based targeting**, transparent eligibility criteria, periodic review, social audits and portable benefits. Welfare should be combined with education, skills, employment and capability-building.

Conclusion

I agree only in the sense that welfare schemes necessarily involve **differential treatment**. However, constitutional equality does not demand identical treatment of unequals. When reasonable, transparent and empowerment-oriented, such differentiation is an instrument of **substantive equality rather than discrimination**.

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