Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) Chapter 4: Social Justice - Notes, Important Questions and MCQs (2026-27)

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These Class 11 Political Theory Chapter 4 notes cover “Social Justice” from the NCERT textbook Political Theory (2026-27): what justice is, ideas of justice in different traditions, three principles of justice – equal treatment, proportionate justice and recognition of special needs – just distribution, John Rawls’ theory of justice and the veil of ignorance, pursuing social justice, and the debate between free markets and state intervention – with tables, Q&A, 10 MCQs and a free PDF.

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Chapter Overview

Justice concerns giving each person their due. Thinkers across cultures – Plato in ancient Greece, Confucius in China and Indian traditions of dharma – linked justice with a well-ordered society in which rulers act fairly.

In modern societies, social justice means fair distribution of goods and opportunities. Three principles guide this: equal treatment of equals, rewards proportionate to effort and skill, and extra help for those with special needs. John Rawls argued that fair principles are those we would choose behind a “veil of ignorance”, not knowing our own position in society.

Important Topics and Concepts

What is Justice?

- Justice means giving each person what is due to them.
- Plato's Republic linked justice with each person doing their proper role and the well-being of all.
- Confucius held that rulers should punish wrongdoers and reward the virtuous.
- In ancient India, justice was linked to dharma and the king's duty to maintain order.
- Modern view: equal consideration of every person's dignity and rights.

Principles of Justice

- Equal treatment for equals: people should not be discriminated against on the basis of caste, gender, religion etc.
- Proportionate justice: rewards in proportion to effort, skill and risk.
- Recognition of special needs: extra help for people with disabilities or historic disadvantage.
- Balancing these principles is the challenge of justice.

Just Distribution

- Social justice requires fair distribution of goods, services and opportunities.
- Policies like land reforms, reservations and welfare schemes aim at redistribution.
- Debate exists on how much redistribution is just and how to achieve it.

John Rawls' Theory of Justice

- Rawls asked what rules a rational person would choose if they did not know their future position – the veil of ignorance.
- Not knowing whether they would be rich or poor, people would choose rules that protect the worst-off.
- This leads to fair policies that improve opportunities for the least advantaged.
- Justice is thus the outcome of rational, impartial thinking, not altruism.

Pursuing Social Justice and Market Debate

- Minimum basic conditions: adequate nutrition, housing, clean water, education and minimum wage.
- Free market supporters: competition is efficient and rewards talent; the state should ensure only basic minimum.
- Critics: markets favour the already privileged; state intervention needed to ensure equal opportunity.
- Most democracies combine markets with welfare measures.

Three Principles of Justice

Most-asked table.

Principle	Meaning	Example
Equal treatment for equals	Same rights and treatment for similar people	Equal wages for equal work
Proportionate justice	Reward according to effort and skill	Higher pay for difficult work

Principle	Meaning	Example
Special needs	Extra help for disadvantaged	Reservations, facilities for disabled

Free Market vs State Intervention

Free market view	State intervention view
Competition is efficient	Markets favour the privileged
Rewards talent and effort	Equal opportunity needs public support
State should ensure only basic minimum	State should provide education, health, welfare
Private enterprise improves quality	Basic services must reach the poor

Important Definitions and Terms

Term	Meaning
Justice	Giving each person their due
Social justice	Fair distribution of goods and opportunities
Equal treatment	Treating equals equally
Proportionate justice	Reward according to contribution
Special needs	Extra consideration for disadvantaged
Distributive justice	Fair allocation of resources
Veil of ignorance	Rawls' device for impartial choice
Least advantaged	Worst-off members of society
Free market	Economy driven by competition
Welfare state	State providing social security

Short Answer Questions

Q1. What does justice mean?

Giving each person what is due to them.

Q2. What did Plato associate justice with?

Each person performing their proper role for the well-being of all.

Q3. Name the three principles of justice.

Equal treatment for equals, proportionate justice and recognition of special needs.

Q4. What is the veil of ignorance?

Rawls' idea of choosing rules without knowing one's own position in society.

Q5. Why would people behind the veil protect the worst-off?

Because they might themselves end up in that position.

Q6. Give two examples of policies for social justice.

Q7. What do free market supporters argue?

Competition is efficient and the state should only ensure a basic minimum.

Q8. What are minimum basic conditions of life?

Nutrition, housing, clean water, education and minimum wages.

Long Answer Questions

Q1. Explain the three principles of justice.

Equal treatment for equals – no discrimination.

Proportionate justice – reward effort and skill.

Special needs – extra help for disadvantaged.

Principles may conflict; balance needed.

Together they guide fair policies.

Q2. Explain Rawls' theory of justice.

Imagine choosing rules behind a veil of ignorance.

We do not know our class, caste, abilities or gender.

Rational people would protect the worst-off.

Leads to fair distribution and equal opportunity.

Justice through impartial reasoning.

Q3. Discuss the debate between free markets and state intervention.

Free markets: efficiency, choice, reward for talent.

Critics: markets ignore the poor and widen gaps.

State provides education, health and welfare.

Mixed approach in most democracies.

Goal: equal opportunity and basic minimum for all.

MCQs with Answers

1. Veil of ignorance was proposed by(a) Plato (b) John Rawls (c) Marx (d) MillAnswer: (b) John Rawls

2. The Republic was written by(a) Aristotle (b) Plato (c) Confucius (d) RousseauAnswer: (b) Plato

3. Reward according to effort is(a) equal treatment (b) proportionate justice (c) special needs (d) charityAnswer: (b) proportionate justice

4. Reservations reflect the principle of(a) proportionality (b) special needs (c) free market (d) uniformityAnswer: (b) special needs

5. Behind the veil people would protect(a) the richest (b) the worst-off (c) rulers (d) majority onlyAnswer: (b) the worst-off

7. Social justice is concerned with(a) fair distribution (b) military power (c) religion (d) sportsAnswer: (a) fair distribution

8. Free market supporters favour(a) heavy state control (b) competition (c) abolition of property (d) fixed pricesAnswer: (b) competition

9. A minimum basic condition of life(a) luxury car (b) clean drinking water (c) foreign travel (d) smartphoneAnswer: (b) clean drinking water

10. Justice means giving each person(a) the same (b) their due (c) nothing (d) what rulers decideAnswer: (b) their due

Quick Revision Points

- Justice = giving each their due.
- Plato, Confucius, dharma.
- Three principles: equality, proportionality, special needs.
- Just distribution; reservations, land reforms.
- Rawls: veil of ignorance, least advantaged.
- Market vs state; basic minimum.

Chapter Summary

Justice means giving each person their due, and traditions from Plato and Confucius to Indian dharma have linked it with a fair social order. Modern social justice involves equal treatment of equals, rewards proportionate to effort and special consideration for those in need.

John Rawls argued that impartial people behind a veil of ignorance would choose rules that protect the worst-off. Pursuing social justice requires ensuring basic minimum conditions of life, with ongoing debate about the roles of free markets and state intervention.

Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern

- Learn the three principles with examples.
- Explain the veil of ignorance step by step.
- Use Indian policies as examples of social justice.
- Present both sides of the market debate.
- Quote Plato and Confucius briefly in introductions.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this chapter in the 2026-27 CBSE syllabus?

Yes. It is part of the NCERT Class 11 Political Science textbook “Political Theory”, prescribed in the CBSE 2026-27 syllabus.

Can I download these notes as a PDF?

Yes. Use the free PDF link at the top of this page – no signup needed.

A thought experiment where people choose rules of society without knowing their own future position, leading them to protect the worst-off.

What are the principles of justice?

Equal treatment for equals, proportionate justice and recognition of special needs.

Conclusion

Social Justice explains how societies can be fair to everyone. Learn the principles and market debate tables, practise the Q&A here and save the free PDF for revision.

More Notes: Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) Chapter 3: Equality notes | Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) Chapter 5: Rights notes | All Class 11 Political Science notes

Author Bio: Written and reviewed by the Nextoper Editorial Team, a group of CBSE political science educators who build chapter notes directly from the NCERT textbook and past board paper patterns.

Freshness Note: These notes follow the NCERT Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) textbook, Political Theory (NCERT reprint 2026-27, rationalised syllabus), and the CBSE syllabus for the 2026-27 session. Last checked on 25 November 2026.