

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2019 · 15 marks

Examine communitarian perspectives on justice.

• FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes R1 reject liberal abstract self → justice from the situated self → good over right

R2 liberalism = individual + right prior → communitarian turn = community + good prior → justice must be socially grounded

Body flow **Sandel:** self constituted by ends, "wholly without character," identity discovered in community → **MacIntyre:** virtues / obligations within traditions, no society-less morality, justice needs social conception of good → **Walzer:** positive account, goods carry social meanings, complex equality (no sphere dominates another)

Counter-view corrective real (identity social, state not neutral) vs community norms preserve hierarchy / patriarchy / caste; recognition must still answer liberty + equality (Shah Bano)

Conclusion routes R1 communitarianism restores culture + common good to justice
R2 defensible justice holds community + individual freedom together, neither silencing the other

Communitarianism approaches justice by rejecting the abstract, choosing individual of liberal theory. The self, it argues, is shaped by language, history, religion and culture, not prior to society. Justice must begin from this situated self and give the good priority over the right.

Michael Sandel turns this against the liberal self. The self is not prior to its ends but constituted by them; a person stripped of such attachments is "wholly without character."

Alasdair MacIntyre extends this to morality. Virtues and obligations grow within traditions; a morality belonging to no particular society exists nowhere. Justice therefore needs a social conception of the good.

Michael Walzer, in *Spheres of Justice*, offers a positive account. Goods carry social meanings, and his idea of complex equality holds that dominance in one sphere, like money, must not invade another, like office, health or politics.

The corrective is real: identity is socially formed and no state is fully neutral. But community norms can preserve hierarchy, patriarchy and caste. Cultural recognition must still answer liberty and equality, as the Shah Bano debate shows.

Communitarianism restores culture and the common good to justice. A defensible conception, though, must hold community and individual freedom together, letting neither silence the other.