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Comprehension story 5

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

The principle of equality is a basic principle of democratic ethic. Those who appeal to it in a society that professes to be democratic, yet often is not indict the disparity between democratic ideals and actual deeds. No individual can be free if he is denied certain elementary human rights. An unjust society is one in which there are obstacles placed in the path of human realization. When this condition exists, the only recourse may be social reform.

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A paradox of the moral life is that the equality principle, like the libertarian principle, can be misused. There is often great confusion as to what the principle of equality implies and how it should be interpreted. If it is abused, individual liberty may be destroyed. The principle of equality should not be equated with egalitarianism. It does not maintain that all men are born equal in talent and capacity. Rather it recognizes the existence of biological and cultural inequalities and it admits differences in individual ability. The principle is not descriptive of what men are but prescriptive and normative of how they should be treated in the future.

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The principle of equality involves at least three ancillary principles: first, that we should grant all human beings, who are equal in dignity and value. Equality of consideration and equality of treatment; second that we grant equality of opportunity by removing all false barriers impeding individual and group advancement; and third, wherever possible, that we satisfy the minimum basic economic and cultural needs of all human beings.

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The principle of equality should not necessarily imply a leveling down. It should be sensitive to the plurality of human needs and to the diverse means that

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may be required for their satisfaction. Nor should the principle mean the
destruction of standards of excellence. Thus, for example, while all men should
have equal opportunity to apply for admittance to a university or college (and, in
my judgment, receive free scholarship tuition if they so qualify), this does not
guarantee their admission if they lack talent, nor does it ensure everyone the
'right' to graduate – unless, that is, they demonstrate their competence in
performance. The danger of the equalitarian principle is that it will be
indiscriminately misapplied by well-meaning moralists, and in the process destroy
other meaningful moral principles and values. If properly understood and used,
however, the principle can contribute immeasurably to the humanization of life
and the development of a genuine community based on trust and cooperation.

Another important principle that has powerful appeal today is participatory
democracy. According to this principle, individuals ought to have some decision
over their lives, that is, power ought to be extended to those who are affected by
it. "Power to the people" is a slogan that has usually been applied to a political
democracy; it has meant that governments ought not to govern without the
consent of the governed. The moral revolution has now extended the democratic
ethic and the ideal of participation to other institutions of all kinds. It claims that
we need to democratize our institutions, to make them amenable and responsive
to the views of those with in them. Participatory democracy has thus become a
new frontier for social reforms.

The principle of participatory democracy was perhaps the most significant
contribution to come out of the early Port Huron Statement (1962 of the SDS) –
often degenerate into mere rhetorical slogans; and participatory democracy has
suffered this fate. The demand for participation needs to be balanced against the
need to maintain standards of excellence. Democracy should not be construed as
preventing those who have talent and competence from exercising leadership. To
say this does not commit one to an anti-democratic "elitist" position. How
participation works out – in the university, the hospital, the corporation – must
be determined in each separate institution, in its own way, so as not to destroy
the ability of the institution to function.

Participatory democracy, like liberty and equality is a vital moral principle. It recognizes that the more human beings can take part in their own institutions, the better their quality of life experience and the less their chance of alienation.

A word of caution: moral principles when first enunciated may give way to uncritical fervor and passion. There is a tendency for men to be misled or trapped by their moral commitments, to reconstruct the moral conceptions we have inherited from a previous age ... But we must guard our new moral principles to prevent their degeneration into forms of moral mysticism or absolutism.....

Accordingly, moral principles should be treated as hypotheses tested by how they work out in practice and judged by their actual consequences. They need to be hammered out on the anvil of reason, not fed by the fires of neo-primitive passion. If so approached, the moral revolution can truly help to create a better life for all men

Questions

- (a) Suggest a suitable title for the passage (02 marks)
 - (b) How different is egalitarianism from the principle of equality? (04 marks)
 - (c) What are the components of the principle of equality? (04 marks)
 - (d) In not more than 100 words, summarize the author's view of participatory democracy? (10marks)
 - (e) Explain the meaning of the following words and phrases as used in the passage, using you own words wherever possible
 - (i) Democratic ethic (line 01) (02 marks)
 - (ii) Paradox (line 07.) (02 marks)
 - (iii) False barriers (line 19) (02 marks)
 - (iv) Plurality of human needs (line 23) (02 marks)
 - (v) Well-meaning moralists (line 31) (02 marks)
 - (vi) amenable (line 43) (02 marks)
 - (vii) humanistic idealism (line 48) (02 marks)
 - (viii) construed (line 52) (02 marks)
 - (ix) Moral mysticism (line 65) (02 marks)
 - (x) Anvil of reason (line 68) (02 marks)
- (20 marks)

Spellings, Punctuation and Grammatical Expression (SPGE) (10 marks)

Suggested answers

(a) Suggest a suitable title for the passage (02 marks)

Democratic principles

Or

Principles of equality

Or

Participatory democracy

(b) How different is egalitarianism from the principle of equality? (04 marks)

Egalitarian is different from the principle of equality because it prescribes a greater degree of equality of ability, freedom, income and wealth across persons than in reality can exist.

(c) What are the components of the principle of equality? (04 marks)

The components of the principle of equality are equality of dignity, value and equal treatment; equality of opportunity and; equality to satisfy the minimum basic economic and cultural needs.

(d) In not more than 100 words, summarize the author's view of participatory democracy? (10marks)

THE AUTHOR'S VIEW OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

The author's view of participatory democracy is that the governed individuals should have an opportunity to decide over their lives through democratic process; although this should not eliminate persons of talent and competence from exercising leadership. This principle ought to be extended to institutions like schools, churches and other organizations as well. The principle of participatory democracy should not be taken advantage of by people for the sake of winning elections nor the principles of equality radically enforced.

(e) Explain the meaning of the following words and phrases as used in the passage, using your own words wherever possible

(i) Democratic ethic (line 01) (02 marks)

Democratic principle

(ii) Paradox (line 07.) (02 marks)

Puzzle /dilemma

(iii) False barriers (line 19) (02 marks)

Obstacles

- | | | |
|--------|---|------------|
| (iv) | Plurality of human needs (line 23)
Variety of human desires
Multitude of human wants | (02 marks) |
| (v) | Well-meaning moralists (line 31)
People of good intentions to force or teach other people to behave in ways they consider to be most correct and honest. | (02 marks) |
| (vi) | amenable (line 43)
Willing to accept/willing to agree with | (02 marks) |
| (vii) | humanistic idealism (line 48)
Human safety, belongingness, self-esteem, and freedom | (02 marks) |
| (viii) | construed (line 52)
Interpreted /taken | (02 marks) |
| (ix) | Moral mysticism (line 65)
Moral fundamentalism/radicalism | (02 marks) |
| (x) | Anvil of reason (line 68)
Flexible goal to withstand challenges and trials | (02 marks) |
| | | (20 marks) |

Spellings, Punctuation and Grammatical Expression (SPGE) (10 marks)

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Thanks

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