

# Why is social justice important in religion?

## Key facts

- Humans are entitled to certain rights because they are human. These are called Human Rights.
- Human Rights were established by the United Nations shortly after the World War II and include such things as a right to an education, the right to freedom of speech and the right to practice a religion.
- With these rights come certain responsibilities e.g. whilst we have the right to freedom of speech it is important that what we are saying is not going to cause offence or insight hatred towards others.
- Over the last 40 years, there have been numerous laws designed to deal with discrimination such as the Race Relations Act and the Equality Act.
- Discrimination can happen when people are deliberately treated different because of a protected characteristic – this can be race, religion, age, gender, disability etc.
- Whilst people would believe that they have a duty to follow the law, there are instances when people feel that these laws are not fair and therefore they believe that they have a duty to stand up against them e.g. people who campaigned against slavery. Throughout history there have been numerous people who have stood up to authority that they deemed were unjust or unfair.
- The poor are often exploited by others in terms of things like being paid low wages, working in unsuitable or dangerous conditions and by being susceptible to quick lending like pay-day loans.
- Most religions have teachings about money. They believe that things should be done to help those that are less fortunate than themselves. This can be through charity work or giving donations.
- Religions also view how you earn your money as just as important as what you do with it. It would be wrong to earn money by means of exploiting or taking advantage of others, or by illegal means.
- Many religions have religious affiliated charities that have been set up to help those that are experiencing misfortune and offer help through either short-term projects or long-term aid. A key message of all religions is that of The Golden Rule. That it is important to 'treat others as you would like to be treated'.

## Key Vocabulary

- Authority** – a person or organisation that has power and control over others.
- Disability** – a physical or mental impairment which has an adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- Duty** – Something that a person should or ought to do.
- Discrimination** – actions or behaviour that result from prejudice.
- Emergency aid** – also known as short term aid; help given to communities in time of disaster or crisis.
- Equality** – the state of being equal, especially in status, rights, and opportunities.
- Exploitation** – misuse of power or money to get others to do things for little or unfair reward.
- Freedom of religion** – the right to practise whatever religion one chooses.
- Freedom of religious expression** – the right to worship, preach and practise one's faith in whatever way one chooses.
- Human rights** – the basic rights and freedoms to which all humans beings should be entitled.
- Human trafficking** – the illegal movement of people, typically for the purposes of forced labour or commercial sexual exploitation.
- Long-term aid** – assistance given to a poor country over a long period of time that has a lasting effect.
- Personal conviction** – Is something that a person feels strongly about that can be at odds with the law.
- Positive discrimination** – treating people more favourably because they have been discriminated against in the past or have disabilities.
- Poverty** – being without money, food or other basic needs of life (being poor)
- Prejudice** – unfairly judging someone before the facts are known; holding biased opinions about an individual or group.
- Social justice** – ensuring that society treats people fairly whether they are poor or wealthy and protects people's human rights.
- Tithe** – one tenth of annual produce or earnings.

## Key people

**Malala Yusuf** – Islamic human rights campaigner. Wanted girls to have access to education.

**Martin Luther King** – Baptist minister who fought racism and discrimination in the US.

**Oscar Romero** – Born in El Salvador. Spoke out against corruption of the government and the rich.