

Relevance of Fundamental duties

Citizenship is the validation of the **social contract** between the people of the country and the government elected by them, which is legitimized by the Constitution of a country. Rights of the citizens is the basis of this contract.

While emphasizing on rights, it is very important that the citizens are also sincere about their duties towards the society at large and the country, especially its safety and security imperatives.

Close scrutiny of the Fundamental duties indicates that a number of them refer to values, which have been part of Indian tradition, mythology, religion and practices.

Concept of Duties in India

India is one of the few countries in the world with a glorious tradition of democracy since **ancient times**, where people have had a tradition of performing their duties. Since time immemorial, an individual's "**kartavya**" — the performance of one's duties towards society, his/her country and his/her parents, was emphasised.

Note

- The concept of the republic in ancient India is older than the Roman or Greek republican system.
- The ancient republics or janapadas such as Vaishali, Kapilavastu and Mithila — and their constitutions — date back to 600 BC.
- The **Bhagwad Gita and Ramayana** also ask people to perform their duties. In the Gita, Lord Krishna ordains, "**One should do one's duties without expectation of any fruits**".
- According to **Mahatma Gandhi** the very performance of a duty secures us our right. Rights cannot be divorced from duties.
Mahatma Gandhi held that "**Satyagraha was born, for I was always striving to decide what my duty was.**"
- Also, **Swami Vivekananda** observed, "it is the duty of every person to contribute in the development and progress of India".
- A very significant feature of the Indian Constitution is that it balances citizens' rights and duties.

- Fundamental duties were added by the **42nd Amendment Act 1976** upon the recommendation of the **Swaran Singh Committee**.
- According to Indira Gandhi, “the moral value of fundamental duties would not be to smother rights but to establish a democratic balance by making people conscious of their duties equally as they are conscious of their rights”.

Fundamental Duties

- The idea of Fundamental Duties has been borrowed from the Constitution of erstwhile USSR. Till then, Japan was only the democratic state that contains the duties of the citizen.
- Fundamental Duties are embedded in Part IV of the Indian Constitution under Article 51A. originally the duties were ten in number, later on by 86th Amendment in 2002, they levelled up to eleven.

Importance of Duties

- Many nations across the world have transformed into developed economies by embodying the principles of “**Responsible Citizenship**”
- **Responsible Citizenship:** All the responsibilities and duties that citizens of a nation should exercise and respect.
 - The USA is a classic example in this respect. The Citizens’ Almanac, issued by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, details the responsibilities of its citizens.
 - Another example is Singapore, whose growth story has been fuelled by its emphasis on the relentless pursuit of duties by its citizens. As a result, Singapore has transformed from a less developed nation to a highly developed one in a short span of time.

Relevance of Fundamental Duties in Present Times

- Even three decades after the fundamental duties were incorporated, there’s no adequate awareness among citizens.

In 1998, Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s government had appointed the **Justice J.S. Verma Committee** to operationalise the suggestions to teach fundamental duties to the citizens of the country.
- Today, it is important to emphasise the need to remember fundamental duties for the progress of India.

- Fundamental duty enshrined **under Article 51A(e)** seeks to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood, transcending the barriers of religion, language, etc.

However, India's democratic setup, over six decades has **not fully able to forge this common brotherhood.**

- Similarly, there is a duty **under Article 51A(g)** to protect and improve the environment, but India has been severely affected by air & water pollution and the impact of climate change.
- Fundamental duty envisaged **under Article 51A(h)** developing a sense of oneness, a scientific temper and the spirit of inquiry, nor a healthy, secular attitude

On the contrary, the school environment and social milieu are such that children learn all the wrong things about each other and become victims of social prejudices.

- India has a composite culture (**under Article 51A(f)**), "**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**" sums up that perspective.

However, presently there is growing intolerance in Indian society, reflected by cases of cow vigilantism, mob lynching, etc.

- Democracy cannot establish deep roots in society until the citizens don't complement fundamental rights with their fundamental duties. For a polity to survive, citizens should have a high sense of duty.
- Universally, great emphasis has been laid on citizens' duties. **Article 29(1)** of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** states:

It states that "Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible."

Way Forward

- Recently, Prime Minister of India has rightly said that our children should be taught the Constitution.
- Incorporating the essential aspects of fundamental duties in all oaths and pledges.
- The Supreme Court has said that since duties are obligatory for citizens, the state should strive to achieve the same goal.

Rights and duties have to exist together. Rights without duties will lead to anarchy. In this context, the **Fundamental Duties** serve as a constant reminder of national goals as well as inculcate a profound sense of social responsibility.

Question

Rights without duties will lead to anarchy. Analyse the statement in context of the relevance of fundamental duties in present times.