

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Human Rights

Human rights refer to freedoms and rights which should be available to all human beings irrespective of their caste, class, gender and religion. These rights include the right to life, the right to freedom of speech and expression, the right to equality, the right to education etc.

Main Features of Human Rights

- Human rights are inalienable which means that these rights cannot be taken away except under certain circumstances. For example, the right to liberty may be restricted only when a person is convicted of a crime by a court of law.
- Human rights are interdependent and indivisible. It means that to achieve one set of rights, other rights need to be asserted first. For example, without civil and political rights, people would not be able claim economic, social and cultural rights.
- Human rights are equal and non-discriminatory. All rights should be granted to each individual without making any discrimination on the basis of gender, caste, class and religion.
- Human rights involve certain obligations. States assume duties under international law to respect, to protect and to fulfil human rights. States also have to protect citizens against any human rights abuse.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- One of the main objectives of the United Nations was 'to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights'.
- In 1946, the UNO set up a commission for formulating important policies on human rights within the UN.
- Under the Chairmanship of Eleanor Roosevelt, the Commission took up the task of defining basic rights and freedoms. On 10 December 1948, the general assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Thus, 10 December is celebrated as Human Rights Day worldwide.
- The Declaration of Human Rights comprises a Preamble and 30 Articles.

The Covenants

- Two important legally binding human rights agreements under the UN are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.
- These two categories of rights along with the Universal Declaration form the International Bill of Rights.
- India has ratified almost all the major Covenants of the United Nations including those on human rights.

Categories of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes both civil and political rights. These rights can be divided under five main categories:

Civil Rights	Political Rights	Economic Rights	Social Rights	Cultural Rights
Every person has the right to life and liberty	To take part in the formation of the government of one's own country	To own property and to have social security	Right to get married and have a family	To freely participate in cultural life

All people are equal before the law	All people should have equal access to public services	To receive equal pay for equal work	Right to have protection for the family	To protect moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production
Every person has the right to freedom of movement and reside within his/her own country	Right to elect government of one's own choice	To form and join trade unions	To receive special care and help for the mother and child	
People have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion	Right to nationality	Right to have better standards of living	Right to education	

Articles 1 and 2—Basis of all Rights

Articles 1 and 2 are considered the basis of all rights.

Article 1: All human beings are born free and are equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2: Everyone has all rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

The above rights lay stress on the following aspects of freedom:

- All human beings are born free or we can say that rights belong to man by nature.
- Everyone should have the same rights.
- Because humans have the power of reasoning, they can differentiate between right and wrong. The duty of every person should be to promote harmony and the spirit of brotherhood.
- There should be prohibition of any kind of discrimination against any person on the basis of colour, caste, class, sex and religion.
- The rights are applicable to all territories and not only to self-governing states alone.

Importance of the Human Rights Declaration

- The Declaration of human rights serves as a Common Standard for all nations. They have to work towards removing all political and social disabilities and inequalities according to the provisions made in the declaration.
- All member nations need to ensure the enforcement of the Rights mentioned in the Declaration of Human Rights.
- Violation of human rights is a matter of international concern.
- The Constitutions of many countries which were written after the Second World War have been impacted by the Declaration of Human Rights.

The Constitution of India

The Constitution of India guarantees rights and equality to all its citizens. The Preamble to the Constitution of India contains objectives of the Constitution of India. It secures justice, social, economic

and political rights, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship. Equality and fraternity assure the dignity of individual and unity of the nation. Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of state policy make India the largest democracy in the world.

Human Rights and Monitoring Agencies

The Declaration of Human Rights has only moral authority. Many non-governmental organisations working within countries have played an important role in keeping a check on any abuses made to human rights. Amnesty International keeps a watch on the violation of human rights. Its headquarters is located in London.

Violation of Human Rights

- Violation of human rights refers to the denial of basic human rights to the people. Some examples of human rights violation include genocide, medical experimentation, forced labour, forcible relocations, torture, slavery, discriminations on the basis of religion, race, ethnicity, race or gender.
- Massacres and genocide are some gravest violations of the right to life. Genocide refers to the selective killing of the people belonging to particular racial, ethnic or religious groups.
- Many human rights violations take place during wars. War crimes include taking hostages, firing at civilians, hospitals and schools.
- Women and girls are most vulnerable to human rights violations. It includes rape, sexual assaults, humiliation, prostitution, domestic violence and denial of political rights.
- Children are also denied rights when they are used as soldiers, as well as when they are subject to child labour, child torture, inhuman conditions in juvenile homes and physical and sexual violence.

Human rights violation can be checked by building awareness among the people against human rights violation.