

Essay on fundamental rights and duties



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Rights and duties play an important part in the development of a nation or the growth of an organization. Rights on the one hand give an individual an opportunity to be a part of development process while duties on the other hand make an individual obliged to play a part in the development. As a citizen of a democratic country we all are privileged to have some fundamental rights. But, apart from these rights we also have fundamental duties which we rarely talk about. Moreover responsible citizenship is not just about enjoying the fundamental rights and performing the fundamental duties mentioned in our constitution but it is about going beyond those duties.

We always harp on our rights where ever we can and neglect the duties we generally have. As a citizen of our country we enjoy the rights of a privileged citizen and often we complain of the government's inability to provide services. Similarly in an organization, as an employee or a student in an institute we complain about the inadequacies of the system. But when it comes to our duty for the nation or institute, most of the times we are not aware at all. For instance as a responsible citizen, we have the duty of protecting the public properties, which we do not hesitate to destroy while protesting or demanding our rights. Destroying street lamps, burning tyres and vehicles, disrupting traffic are the common phenomena seen at the protest sites. Do we really need to do this? Have we ever realized the losses we cause to our country or organization in this manner? Do we ponder for a moment, how much effort it takes to build those structures?

As countrymen we also have a duty to be patriotic towards the country and be humanitarian towards our country men. We also have a social

responsibility as a good citizen. But do we perform all these duties? The answer is either a clear No, or partial Yes. We do not pay taxes in time and some of us also try to avoid taxes by questioning its worthiness while being more selfish. We expect government to do everything, without us contributing anything. Most of the unpaid electricity and telephone bills even by people who can well afford to pay those few bucks are a bit astonishing. When we feel our values to be endangered we draw in the attention by retaliating in a particular way. Take for instance, the case of attack on the girls in a pub in Bangalore by some self proclaimed flag bearers of Indian culture who thought that their (girls) presence in the pub was against the Indian culture. But they forgot that women have always been regarded and have a special place in Indian society and using force against them is not encouraged in Indian traditional culture. Respecting elders, honesty, veracity, non violence are some of the values of Indian Culture and these as such becomes a duty on the part of us to follow them if we really are conscious of our right to protect the Indian culture. The incident mentioned above just shows how careful we are about our rights and not our duties.

The topic is basically about being a responsible citizen; it's about deserving first and demanding later. The selection of this topic is slightly influenced by the speech made by our former president Mr. Abdul Kalam Azad –

“ YOU say that our government is inefficient. YOU say that our laws are too old. YOU say that the municipality does not pick up the garbage. YOU say that the phones don't work, the railways are a joke, the airline is the worst in the world, mails never reach their destination. YOU say that our country has been fed to the dogs and is the absolute pits. YOU say, say and say.

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What do YOU do about it? Take a person on his way to Singapore. Give him a name – YOURS. Give him a face – YOURS. YOU walk out of the airport and you are at your International best. In Singapore you don't throw cigarette butts on the roads or eat in the stores. YOU are as proud of their Underground Links as they are. You pay \$5 (approx. Rs. 60) to drive through Orchard Road (equivalent of Mahim Causeway or Pedder Road) between 5 PM and 8 PM.

YOU come back to the parking lot to punch your parking ticket if you have over stayed in a restaurant or a shopping mall irrespective of your status identity. In Singapore you don't say anything, DO YOU? YOU wouldn't dare to eat in public during Ramadan, in Dubai. .. YOU would not dare to speed beyond 55 mph (88 kph) in Washington and then tell the traffic cop, " Jaanta hai sala main kaun hoon (Do you know who I am?). I am so and so's son. Take your two bucks and get lost." YOU wouldn't chuck an empty coconut shell anywhere other than the garbage pail on the beaches in Australia and New Zealand. Why don't YOU spit Paan on the streets of Tokyo? Why don't YOU use examination jockeys or buy fake certificates in Boston? We are still talking of the same YOU. YOU who can respect and conform to a foreign system in other countries but cannot in your own. You who will throw papers and cigarettes on the road the moment you touch Indian ground. If you can be an involved and appreciative citizen in an alien country why cannot you be the same here in India"

So let's put a full stop in complaining about the system. This system is created by us what and we are the system. Let's look at what that can be done by us and what not.

Everyone has a duty to be a responsible citizen. But unfortunately, not everyone takes this responsibility seriously. There are plenty of people the world over who do not know what being a responsible citizen means and they are the people who destroy our communities. For being a responsible citizen results in a happy and harmonious community – if everyone else does the same.

2. Responsible Citizen

Being a responsible citizen covers many areas – some of them legal obligations, some social and some moral. So of course, because not all of them are legal obligations, being a responsible citizen is not as easy as staying within the law. In fact, to be a truly responsible citizen, we sometimes must go out of our way to do things which help our society – give a little of our time and effort for the greater good.

2.1 Legal Obligations

No one can be a responsible citizen without staying within the law. It is as simple as that. Criminals, by their very nature, are not behaving as responsible citizens. Laws exist to protect citizens, the communities they live in and their property. So to be a responsible citizen, we must respect these laws and abide by them. Harming others or others' property does not equate to being a good citizen.

2.2 Social Obligations

Social obligations really form the bulk of being a responsible citizen and what this means. To be a responsible citizen, we should help our communities and those who live in them. So, being a responsible citizen can encompass things such as volunteering.

Volunteering, the third sector is worth billions to our economy and even more to those who are helped by volunteering. But in the interests of being a responsible citizen, this could include smaller things too. So, volunteering for the Samaritans is a noble job to do and one which is certainly needed. But the elderly lady who lives alone may need someone to do her shopping and this demonstrates responsible citizenship just as much as volunteering in an organisation.

Other social obligations of being a good citizen can include things such as helping local businesses. This may mean buying the meat for Sunday dinner from a local butcher rather than a supermarket, or using a small local bookstore rather than the internet. Being a responsible citizen also means being involved in our communities. This may be demonstrated by being on the school parent teacher association or the village hall committee. It may be as simple as attending events organised by these people.

2.3 Moral Obligations

Moral obligations of being a responsible citizen are harder to pin down because different people have different moral codes. But one place we can all start is in helping the environment.

The environmental problems society is facing are of our own making and we all have a moral obligation to do what we can to change this. So by living as environmentally friendly life as possible, we can help fulfill our moral obligations of being a responsible citizen. Taking recyclables to be recycled and using a compost bin are two easy ways and there are many more.

And they can be linked in with other obligations. For example, if you have a compost bin but no plants to use the compost on, you could give it to people who have plants but live alone, making them less likely to generate a huge amount of compost themselves.

Being a responsible citizen should not be a hard thing but it should be something which occasionally requires a little extra effort. This is because being a responsible citizen is, at its core, about being a less selfish person, and putting the needs of society before your own needs. It does not mean you have to sacrifice all your free time to volunteer or help others, but it does mean taking a little time to think about the impact of your actions on others.

“ A NATION IS HELD TOGETHER BY SHARED BELIEFS AND SHARED ATTITUDES. THAT IS WHAT ENABLES THEM TO RISE ABOVE THE CONFLICTS THAT PLAGUE ANY SOCIETY. THAT IS WHAT GIVES A NATION ITS TONE, ITS FIBER, ITS INTEGRITY, ITS MORAL STYLE, ITS CAPACITY TO ENDURE.”

-JHON GARDNER

3. Beyond Fundamentals:

3.1 Voting:

India as we know is one of the youngest country of the world. More than 50% of its total population is between 20 – 30 age group, so it has immense probabilities of becoming a global powerhouse. As a country of energy, a country of youthfulness as a country of vibrant young engineers, dynamic technocrats, promising scientists, enthusiastic sportspersons, India has become the cynosure of world.

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But this country of youths has another face as well. Imagine a case where we are sitting in our drawing room and watching the morning news .. the media persons showing some of our well known leaders taking money for supporting other party or for any other malicious reason. The first thing we do is we start blaming our political system, we never think even for a while that have we played any role in strengthening this system? Have we not contributed in establishing this system of power politics? Have we not chosen these cunning politicians? Weren't we influenced by the inflammatory speeches that were deliberately made to create some fire?

The modern political system is all about power and money. If we see the profile of a recently elected MPs we will find that almost 300 members are billionaires. Do they really represent the India who's 22% of population is still below poverty line? Aren't they the product of this power politics? Isn't the modern Indian politics driven by selfishness instead of the interest of social service? Don't we prefer going according our interest in spite of national interest?? According to a recent survey majority of the Indian youth especially those living in cities don't go for voting. They prefer going to cinema or watching television. instead of going to polling booths. This is certainly not going to change the scenario. If we really want to change the country, If we really want the tradition to change we have to participate in the elections or at least we have to make sure the person we are going to chose as our representative should be a person of will and a person having an intension to work for the society, for the country. So the youth of the country and the rich class need to show interest in voting and deciding the future of the country.

3. 2 Respecting National Emblems

Bertrand Russell once said, “ Love for your country should be of an extreme nature.”

Modern era is the era of cut throat competition, an era of hectic schedule, a lifestyle of burgers and pizzas, an age of pubs and discos. The young India is lost somewhere in this euphoric illusion. We hardly remember the martyrs, the independence or republic day is like a holiday for us, we don't even bother to stand up in respect of our national anthem. Our national tricolour doesn't make us feel proud any more. We boastfully talk about patriotism but when it comes to show it we deliver a little. Our attitude comes in between !!!

The time is to respect the national heritage, the pluralistic culture of our country and more importantly respecting the people of India.

3. 3 Cleanliness/Showing Right Attitude

We always cry about the prevailing sanitation problems in our cities. The piles of garbage around our houses and for this we doom the municipality, again comes the famous word “ system” that has been saving our faces to be unveiled and have saved us from disgrace. Do we ever think about the way we behave in our daily life? Do we ever evaluate our attitude? Most of us have the habit of spitting on road while walking, putting garbage on roads in stead of dustbins, we spit on the platforms, in the corners of our offices, classrooms, we don't look for a dustbin after having a coffee or after having a chocolate, we scribble on our benches in our classrooms, we make ourselves immortal by writing on our monuments and finally making them

dirty and ugly. We go to our pilgrimages with an immense sense of respect and make them dirty with sheer ignorance !!

The solution is that we should always try to change our habit in a positive way. Instead of waiting for the municipality to work we should take the responsibility to make our neighborhoods clean. It's all about changing our attitude. As William James has rightly said

“ The greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitude of minds”

So what if the municipality is not working properly, it's our neighborhood and finally it's our responsibility. if we become sincere about our duty everything will be fine. A famous quote goes like this.

You improve, the world will get improved.

So if we want this world around us to improve, if we want the system to be perfect and smooth we have to take the responsibility.

3. 4 Following Traffic Rules

One of the common instances in our daily life we see or we do as well is that not following the traffic rules. We don't stop for the red lights and when we are caught we try to settle it down by bribing the policeman. If we have been in Germany we would have stopped for the red light even at the mid night. If we follow the rules in Germany cant we do it in our country? We need to respect the signals. If one starts before the green signal, others will automatically follow him, saying “ no one is following the rules”. Why can't we be the one to follow it?

We complain that the traffic police always ask for bribe, why do we allow ourselves to be caught in such a scenario (Exceptions apart)? Few easy things that one can follow

- Stop for Red signal
- Start only when Green signal is on
- Using seat belts while driving
- Parking our cars only in the designated area
- Not overtaking on bridges or wherever it is mentioned not to.
- Wear a helmet when we drive a two wheeler.
- Don't use mobile phone while driving
- Don't drink and drive(so that you save your life and other's life as well)
- Avoid overloading or riding three persons on bikes

3. 5 Pirated CDs and Books

We always cry for the prevalent adulteration in the food stuffs and other daily use stuffs, we often complain about the duplicity of the products available in the market. But we hardly bother when it comes to buy a CD cassette or a book and what is the reason? “ it is cheap” in the veil of this statement we hide our crime. Don't we support crime when we go for this kind of shopping? So make sure when you go to buy a CD cassette or a book doesn't buy a pirated one. By this you are contributing in nation building and at the same time you are paralyzing the system of duplicity and cheating and finally you motivate creativity buying a pirated edition of a book is a kind of insult to the author, so make sure we don't insult the creativity when we buy any book next time.

3. 6 Respecting Values

The one thing every Indian is proud of is Indian culture, Indian values. We boastfully talk about the culture of sacrifice and forgiveness, respecting elders, honesty and truth, non violence etc. we proudly talk about our ethics but sadly gone are the days . we no more respect our so called Indian heritage of honesty and truth and these are being derided in this culture of i-pods and 3g technology the cut throat competition and our willingness to succeed provokes us to use short cuts and we call it “ smartness” so what exactly we need to do? We need to stand firm for a cause; we need to compromise with the compromise this time we need to kill the devil inside that motivates us to use shortcuts for success.

As Henry Fielding has rightly said

“ Let no man be sorry he has done well; because others have done evil! If a man has acted right, he has done well, though alone; if wrong the sanction of all mankind will not justify him.

3. 7 Corruption and its birth:

Now take a glance on our view on Corruption. We might have at some part of time or other complained of corruption all around and talked in great detail in a board room. But in reality do we really fight against this evil in society. Mostly the politicians are blamed for corruption and using unfair advantage of their position. But it is not just the politicians the evil is rooted deeper in the society. A tree cannot nurture without the roots and the roots of this corruption are we the common man. Firstly, we are allowing it to grow. As Edmund Burke says- “ For evil to flourish, good people have to do nothing and evil shall flourish.” Secondly we are ourselves involved in corruption to

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get an unfair advantage or as a shortcut to our path. For instance, when we are caught for first time in a traffic violation we offer the police person on duty a lesser amount in lieu of a greater official fine according to traffic rules. As responsible citizens, do we not have the right to fight against and root out corruption? If these politicians are blamed are we not responsible for their election? The question then arises why we elect such people. May be we are not interested in nation building or we might be looking for our narrow minded goals or short term advantages. The leaders if not responsible will lead to failure of the team as whole. So why not be good leaders and enter politics and make a difference in the society? Why not show the way to others.

Thomas Carlyle says-“ Make yourself an honest man and then you may be sure there is one”

4. Conclusion:

Rights and duties go hand in hand. Before we complain of the inadequacies of the system and claim our rights we must also consider our responsibility and fulfill the duties.

As the famous saying goes- “ Great power brings great responsibilities.”

Change has to happen but might take some time and we have to wait for it. Change in an organization’s or nation’s culture is a continuous process, it will happen over a period of time and it will take a consistent effort on the part of individuals.

Beginning is always tough, we can elaborate it by this example; imagine a case when you are following two way traffic, one fine day this road becomes one way. It will be very difficult to get accustomed to this new change. Later it becomes part of our life; we are not going to think about this option and we become habitual of it. This applies to all these soft duties as well.