

Public Awareness of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Constitutional Rights in India

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Abstract:

Human rights are ethical principles or norms that establish standards of human behavior, which must be upheld both nationally and internationally. Human rights can also be defined as fundamental rights inherent to every individual simply because they are human, irrespective of age, ethnic origin, place, or language. Violations of human rights are a global crisis as these rights are universal. Various actions have been taken regarding human rights violations, and a detailed discussion on this topic is included in this paper.

Keywords: Human Rights, Public Awareness, Human Behavior, Civil Rights, Constitutional Rights, Violation of Human Rights.

Introduction:

The quality of a nation can be measured by its commitment to human rights. A nation provides its citizens with a set of rights to help them realize their potential and enhance their dignity. Individuals who fully enjoy and exercise these rights contribute to national development. There is a mutual relationship between human rights and national progress. A civilized society cannot exist without ensuring human rights for all, as these rights are fundamental to human existence.

The essence of human rights lies in the recognition that all individuals are born equal in dignity and rights. These rights are inalienable and belong to all humans, regardless of their differences. They uphold the dignity of individuals and are essential for self-realization. Human rights enable individuals to lead dignified and fulfilling lives. If deprived of these rights, life becomes unbearable and miserable. Human rights encompass the right to life, liberty, equality, and dignity, regardless of caste, class, creed, color, sex, religion, language, or place of birth. Denial of these rights equates to a loss of individual freedom and is detrimental to any lasting government. These rights are broadly categorized as:

Civil and Political Rights:

These include the right to life, integrity, liberty, security, justice, and privacy, freedom of religion, opinion, expression, movement, assembly, association, and political participation.

Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights: These encompass the right to work, healthcare, education, an adequate standard of living (including food, clothing, and housing), participation in cultural life, and trade union freedoms.

Group Rights:

These protect vulnerable groups, including children, women, juveniles, workers, and minorities.

In the context of India, the world's largest democracy, human rights have been a fundamental concern. The Constitution of independent India enshrines numerous human rights in its preamble. While Fundamental Rights emphasize existing rights, Directive Principles of State Policy guide efforts to ensure human rights for all. The Government of India has established various national institutions to promote and protect the interests of the most vulnerable sections of society.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was established in response to

the atrocities of World War II, including the Holocaust. It enshrines key rights such as freedom from torture, freedom of expression, and the right to seek asylum. When these rights are not protected or are blatantly ignored, they constitute human rights violations.

Human Rights Violations:

Human rights violations can be committed directly or indirectly by the state. Violations may be intentional, involving state actors such as the police, judges, prosecutors, and government officials, or they may result from the state's failure to prevent such violations. Violations can be physically violent, such as police brutality, or non-violent, such as denial of a fair trial.

A second type of violation occurs when the government fails to protect individuals in conflict situations. If the government does not intervene to safeguard vulnerable groups, it becomes complicit in these violations.

Examples of Human Rights Violations:

Civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights can all be violated in various ways. While all rights are essential under the UDHR and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), some violations are considered more severe.

Civil and Political Rights Violations:

Genocide, torture, and arbitrary arrests, particularly during wars. If a human rights violation occurs alongside a breach of wartime rules, it is classified as a war crime.

Suppression of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, often by governments attempting to maintain control during civil unrest.

Human trafficking, forcing millions into labor and sexual exploitation.

Religious discrimination, often caused by state failures to protect vulnerable groups.

Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Violations:

- Pollution of water by government-owned facilities (violating the right to health).

- Forcible eviction of people (violating the right to adequate housing).
- Denial of healthcare services and information (violating the right to health).
- Workplace discrimination based on race, gender, or sexual orientation (violating the right to work).
- Failure to grant maternity leave (violating family safety and assistance rights).
- Non-payment of an adequate minimum wage (violating labor rights).
- Segregation of students based on disability (violating the right to education).
- Prohibition of minority or indigenous languages (violating cultural rights).

Measurement of Human Rights Violations (Temporal and Spatial):

From 2006 to 2014, human rights violations were measured on a scale of 0 to 10 (with 10 being the worst). This assessment considered multiple factors, including media freedom, civil liberties, political freedom, human trafficking, imprisonment, religious persecution, torture, and the death penalty.

Major Findings:

- 50% of respondents (n=200) were male, and 50% were female.
- 58.2% (n=233) were unmarried.
- 50% (n=200) lived in nuclear families, while 50% lived in joint families.
- 74.5% (n=298) were aware that the UDHR was adopted by the UN on December 10, 1948.
- 72.7% knew about the provision for free and compulsory elementary education in the Indian Constitution.
- 56.0% were aware that the UDHR contains 30 Articles.
- 66.0% knew that the Indian Constitution's Preamble includes human rights.

- 75.7% understood that human rights are included in the Indian Constitution as Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of State Policy.

Recommendations:

- **Gender Representation:** Maintain balanced gender representation in future surveys to ensure diverse perspectives.
- **Marital Status Segmentation:** Future studies should analyze how marital status affects human rights awareness.
- **Family Structure Impact:** Investigate how family structures influence perceptions of human rights.
- **Enhancing Awareness:** Awareness campaigns should focus on specific rights and their practical implications.
- **Educational Reforms:** Public campaigns should address knowledge gaps about human rights provisions in the Indian Constitution.
- **Community-Based Programs:** Implement workshops tailored to different demographic groups to increase human rights awareness.

Conclusion:

Human rights remain a fundamental goal of every society. Despite governmental efforts, violations persist due to various causes. While awareness is increasing, many individuals still lack knowledge of basic human rights principles. Addressing these gaps through education, policy implementation, and community initiatives is essential to fostering a culture that respects and upholds human rights.

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