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Fundamental Duties And Civic Responsibilities Of Youth In India

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Introduction

India is a beautiful mosaic of various cultures and religions, caste and creed. This is the land of great warriors, reformers, socialist, scientist and politicians. This is the land of Rama¹, Buddha², of Razia Sultan³, of Akbar⁴, Rani of Jhansi⁵, and Gandhi⁶, Abdul Kalam⁷ and of Rajiv Gandhi⁸, they all achieved magnitude when they were young. India is symbol of unity, integrity, peace and nonviolence. In spite of differences of ideologies, belief, style of worship, languages⁹, customs we Indians live happily knitted with the thread of brotherhood, respect for each other and of course a lively democracy. No doubt it is one of the largest democracies in the world¹⁰. Fundamental Duties in the Indian Constitution are moral responsibilities for all citizens. Inspired by the USSR's Constitution, they were added later, as the framers initially left them out. During the Emergency (1975–1977), the Sardar Swaran Singh Committee suggested including them. As a result, Part IV-A was introduced through the 42nd Amendment in 1976, adding 10 duties under Article 51A. The 86th Amendment in 2002 added one more, making a total of 11 Fundamental Duties.

I- Fundamental Duties

The Fundamental Duties form a crucial part of the Indian Constitution, reflecting the ethics upheld by our forefathers and freedom fighters. The Constitution of India, earlier in 1950, did not include Fundamental duties; however through a Constitutional amendment in 1976 Indian constitution got new Article 51A. The

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¹ Lord Rama the deity of Hindu religion in India. He is considered as ideal king.

² Buddha the enlighten one, founder of the Buddhist religion. It is the major religion of East Asian countries.

³ First women to ascend the throne of Delhi.

⁴ Emperor of erstwhile Mughal India, symbol of national integration and secularism. Founder of Din-e-Elihi.

⁵ Great women warrior in national uprising of 1857.

⁶ Father of the nation. Practiced nonviolence and lead India in freedom struggle.

⁷ A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, former President of India. India's missile man, a rare blend of scientist and politician

⁸ The then Prime Minister of India (1985-1990). The youngest Prime Minister and youth icon, a visionary. The champion of decentralisation of power. The apostle of science and technology. His dream was to see India lead the world in 21st century. Unfortunately was assassinated by a human bomb while campaigning for general elections.

⁹ Eighteen (18) languages are recognized as official languages, Articles 344(1) and 351, Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India.

¹⁰ India adopted its constitution on 26th November 1949. India is Sovereign, Socialist, Secular, Democratic, Republic.

main aim was to encourage accountability among citizens public life. Fundamental Duties are similar to the Directive Principles. The Directive Principles guide government action whereas Fundamental duties are moral compass for citizens. People are reminded about their obligations towards mother land and fellow citizens. Though there is neither compulsion nor any provision about their enforcement, the fundamental duties test the moral turpitude of every citizen. Still, their inclusion lays the groundwork for potential Constitutional amendments that could further shape civic responsibility in India. The proud and patriotic youths can bring desirable changes by practicing these duties and building their moral character as we adore in Lord Ram.

Article 51A

It is every Indian citizen's duty to:

- (a) Respect the Constitution, National Flag, and National Anthem.
- (b) Cherish the ideals of our freedom struggle.
- (c) Protect India's sovereignty, unity, and integrity.
- (d) Defend the country and serve when needed.
- (e) Promote harmony, brotherhood, and dignity for all, especially women.
- (f) Preserve our rich cultural heritage.
- (g) Protect nature and show compassion for all living beings.
- (h) Foster scientific thinking, humanism, and a spirit of inquiry.
- (i) Protect public property and avoid violence.
- (j) Strive for excellence to help the nation progress.
- (k) Ensure children aged 6 to 14 get an education¹¹.

II- Challenges before the youth

Today's youth face a range of significant challenges that hinder their potential and their active participation in society. These issues are rooted in education, awareness, tolerance, insecurity, and difficult circumstances, all of which impact their role in driving positive social change and contributing to democratic governance.

Lack of Education: Despite the value placed on knowledge and skill, many young people lack access to quality education. Financial barriers prevent some who are genuinely interested in learning from pursuing higher studies, while others attain it more for social status than intellectual growth. This has led to a dilution of educational values. Teaching, once regarded as a noble calling, is now often treated as merely a means of livelihood, with less emphasis on societal contribution. The focus has shifted to achieving high marks rather than fostering genuine intellect or talent. Consequently, educational achievements are often reduced to grades and numbers, with little regard for creativity or critical thinking. This has sidelined gifted individuals whose talents go unrecognized, overshadowed by a system that values rote learning over original ideas. This loss to society is substantial, as these underutilized talents could have greatly contributed to national progress.

¹¹ added by the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002

Lack of Awareness: Modern education is often directionless, producing youth with limited understanding of their civic roles and responsibilities. Many are unaware of their rights, duties, and the workings of democracy, which limits their engagement in public affairs. Laws like the Right to Information Act and the right to approach the Supreme Court to defend fundamental rights offer platforms for civic involvement, yet they are underutilized due to limited awareness. Educational institutions often prioritize profit over enlightenment, focusing more on financial gain than fostering knowledgeable citizens. This leaves the youth without a comprehensive understanding of social, economic, and political dynamics, impairing their ability to contribute meaningfully to democratic processes.

Lack of Tolerance and Rise of Religious Fundamentalism: Today's youth are often marked by impatience and unwillingness to compromise. This lack of tolerance is coupled with the growth of religious fundamentalism, which can stifle independent thought and encourage radical views. Many youth seek quick solutions and may lack empathy or a broader perspective. Institutions offering religious education sometimes reinforce narrow-minded ideologies, which do not promote unity or societal development. Consequently, students from such institutions may emerge with rigid viewpoints that alienate them from others. Fundamentalism creates a divide, discouraging constructive debate and marginalizing intellectuals who could offer alternative interpretations. This not only wastes young talent but also harms national cohesion.

Fear of Insecurity: Young people with fresh, progressive ideas may hesitate to express themselves openly due to fear of insecurity. In societies where certain ideas are censored or labelled as rebellious, young intellectuals may be pressured into silence. While the privileged may find protection, those who voice their opinions against prevailing norms, particularly against fundamentalism, face risks. They may face social ostracism or even threats to their personal security. Consequently, youth who could otherwise drive positive change are often suppressed, leading to a loss of valuable perspectives in public discourse.

Circumstantial Hindrances: Circumstances such as economic instability, social strife, and natural disasters can also stifle the youth's potential. Productive ideas are frequently overshadowed by pressing survival needs. In regions affected by war, famine, drought, or other calamities, young people may struggle to find peace and stability to pursue their goals. These circumstances create additional burdens for governments and divert resources from developmental projects, hindering overall progress.

The compounded effect of these issues results in youth feeling disconnected from their societal role. With proper guidance, supportive policies, and targeted educational reforms, these challenges can be alleviated, empowering youth to emerge as agents of positive change in society.

Conclusion and suggestions

Young people are a nation's asset, and addressing their needs should be a top government priority. Key areas for improvement include:

- a) Providing quality education to break poverty cycles,
- b) Ensuring smooth and secure infrastructure,
- c) Creating employment in a corruption-free environment, and

d) Fostering participation of young people in governance.

Additionally, press freedom is essential, as a vibrant, independent media can inform and inspire youth, as seen with Gandhi's 'Young India' and Tilak's 'Kesari'. Health initiatives are also crucial, especially for protecting youth from diseases like AIDS, drug addiction, online gaming and life threatening challenges. These steps collectively empower young people to contribute positively to society and democracy. A proper execution of the plan for teaching Fundamental Duties in schools and training programs, as suggested by Justice Verma Committee¹² must be executed. Also other suggestions like amending Article 51A to include duties like voting, participating in democracy, and paying taxes must also be considered.



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