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THE TWO SIDES OF COINS: UNDERSTANDING THE RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF INDIAN CITIZEN

~ *Shubham Yadav*

INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of India is one of the most comprehensive legal documents in the world. It provides the foundation for the world's largest democracy, balancing individual freedoms with collective responsibilities. As citizens of India, we are granted specific privileges that protect our dignity and freedom. However, these privileges do not exist in a vacuum. Every right we enjoy comes with a corresponding duty toward our nation and fellow citizens.

To understand our role in the country, we must look closely at the two pillars of Indian citizenship: **Fundamental Rights** and **Fundamental Duties**.

1. The Pillars of Freedom: Fundamental Rights

Contained in Part III of the Indian Constitution (Articles 12 to 35), Fundamental Rights are the essential privileges guaranteed to every citizen. They act as a shield against arbitrary state power and ensure that every individual can live with liberty and equality.

Right to Equality (Articles 14–18)

The law treats every citizen equally. The state cannot discriminate against anyone based on race, religion, caste, sex, or place of birth. This right ensures equal opportunities in public employment and completely abolishes the practice of untouchability.

Right to Freedom (Articles 19–22)

This right provides citizens with the freedom of speech and expression, the right to assemble peacefully without arms, and the freedom to move and reside anywhere within India. It also guarantees the protection of life and personal liberty, which is the core of human existence.

Right Against Exploitation (Articles 23–24)

This right protects weak and vulnerable groups from unfair treatment. It strictly bans human trafficking, forced labour (beggar), and prohibits the employment of children under the age of 14 in hazardous industries like factories and mines.

Right to Freedom of Religion (Articles 25–28)

India is a secular country, meaning the state has no official religion. Every citizen has the freedom to practice, profess, and spread any religion they choose, or follow no religion at all.

Cultural and Educational Rights (Articles 29–30)

This right protects the unique identity of minority groups. It allows cultural, religious, and linguistic minorities to preserve their heritage and establish their own educational institutions.

Right to Constitutional Remedies (Article 32)

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar called this right the "heart and soul" of the Constitution. If a citizen's fundamental rights are violated, they can directly approach the Supreme Court or High Courts to seek justice through legal orders called writs.

2. The Anchor of Responsibility: Fundamental Duties

Rights cannot exist without duties. To remind citizens of their social and national obligations, the **Fundamental Duties** were added to Part IV-A (Article 51-A) of the Constitution by the 42nd Amendment in 1976.

While rights are enforceable by courts, duties are moral obligations. They ask us to build a disciplined and patriotic society. The 11 core duties require every citizen to:

- **Abide by the Constitution** and respect its ideals, the National Flag, and the National Anthem.
- **Cherish noble ideals** of the freedom struggle that inspired our fight for independence.
- **Uphold and protect the sovereignty**, unity, and integrity of India.
- **Defend the country** and render national service when called upon to do so.
- **Promote harmony** and brotherhood among all religions, and renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.
- **Value and preserve** the rich heritage of our composite culture.
- **Protect the environment**, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife, while showing compassion for living creatures.
- **Develop scientific temper**, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform.
- **Safeguard public property** and abjure violence entirely.
- **Strive for excellence** in all spheres of individual and collective activity to lift the nation higher.

- **Provide education opportunities** to children between the ages of 6 and 14 (added by the 86th Amendment in 2002).

3. The Delicate Balance: Why Both Matter

Imagine a traffic intersection. The right to drive gives you the freedom to move on the road. However, that right only works if every driver accepts the duty to stop at the red light. If everyone demands the right to go whenever they want, traffic jams and accidents happen.

Similarly, a healthy democracy requires a careful balance between rights and duties.

Feature	Fundamental Rights	Fundamental Duties
Source	Part III, Articles 12-35	Part IV-A, Article 51-A
Enforceability	Legal (Courts can punish violations)	Moral (Self-discipline and civic awareness)
Focus	Individual freedom and protection	National growth and community harmony

When we demand freedom of speech (Right), we must also respect the dignity of others and avoid spreading hate speech (Duty). When we demand clean public infrastructure (Right), we must actively avoid littering or damaging public assets (Duty).

Conclusion

The Constitution of India provides every citizen with valuable rights to ensure equality, liberty, justice, and dignity. However, these rights are meaningful only when accompanied by a sincere commitment to constitutional duties. A strong democracy depends not only on laws and institutions but also on responsible and informed citizens.

By respecting constitutional values, protecting national unity, preserving the environment, and exercising our rights responsibly, each of us contributes to building a stronger, more inclusive, and progressive India. Rights give us the freedom to grow, while duties guide us in using that freedom for the welfare of society and the nation.