



Mains Practice Question

Q. Critically examine the relationship between rights and duties in a democracy. How do individual rights sometimes come into conflict with societal duties? **(150 words)**

20 Jun, 2024 GS Paper 4 Theoretical Questions

Approach:

- Introduce the answer by defining rights and duties
- Highlight the relationship between rights and duties
- Delve into potential conflicts between rights and duties
- Conclude in a balanced manner.

Introduction:

Democracy thrives on a delicate balance between **individual rights and societal duties**. These concepts are not mutually exclusive; they are intertwined.

- **Rights** empower individuals, **fostering a sense of agency and participation** in the social fabric.
- **Duties**, on the other hand, **bind individuals to a collective good**, ensuring social order and progress

Body:

Relationship Between Rights and Duties:

- **Rights as Enablers of Civic Participation:** Individual rights in a democracy enable citizens to participate actively in the governance process, fostering a vibrant civil society.
 - **Example:** The **Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005** empowers Indian citizens to seek information from public authorities, promoting transparency and accountability.
- **Duties as Pillars of Social Responsibility:** Societal duties instill a sense of collective responsibility, ensuring the smooth functioning of democratic institutions and processes.
 - **Example:** The **duty to vote in elections**, though not legally mandated in India, is crucial for maintaining the democratic fabric of the nation
- **Symbiotic Relationship:** Rights and duties in a democracy are two sides of the same coin, existing in a symbiotic relationship.
 - **Example:** The Indian Constitution enshrines **Fundamental Rights (Part III) and Fundamental Duties (Part IV-A)**, highlighting their interconnected nature in the democratic framework.

Potential Conflicts between Rights and Duties:

- **Freedom of Expression vs. Public Order:** While the **right to free speech** allows for dissent, it can conflict with the duty to maintain public order.
 - **Hate speech** or incitement to violence can disrupt social peace. Striking a balance is crucial.

- **Property Rights vs. Development:** The **right to own property** is essential, but development projects often require land acquisition, potentially displacing individuals.
 - The government's duty to promote development for the larger good can clash with the rights of those displaced.
- **Religious Freedom vs. Gender Equality:** India's secular fabric allows for **freedom of religion**.
 - However, practices deemed detrimental, like **Sati (widow burning)**, have been outlawed despite religious ties.
 - The duty to uphold **gender equality** takes precedence over absolute religious freedom in such cases.
- **Privacy vs. National Security:** The **right to privacy** protects personal information. However, the state has a duty to maintain national security, potentially requiring data collection for investigations.
 - The **Aadhaar program** raises concerns about privacy vs. security benefits.
- **Environmental Rights vs. Livelihoods:** The right to a clean environment is crucial. However, regulations to protect the environment can sometimes **affect the livelihoods of those who depend on exploiting natural resources**.
 - Example: Regulations on **sand mining** to protect rivers can impact the livelihoods of sand miners.

Conclusion:

The relationship between individual rights and societal duties in a democracy is a **dynamic one**, constantly evolving alongside societal values and advancements. By fostering a culture of mutual respect and collective responsibility, **India's democracy can ensure that individual rights flourish alongside a strong sense of societal duty**, ultimately leading to a just and equitable society for all.

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