

1. Importance of Citizen's Duties

Context:

- The idea of citizenship has acquired a new meaning, content and purpose in the democratic world.
- While emphasising on rights, it very important that one is also sincere about his or her duties towards the society at large and the country, especially its safety and Security Imperatives.

Why Citizen's Duty is Important?

- Universally, great emphasis has been laid on citizens' duties. **Article 29(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states:** "Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible."
- Many nations across the world have transformed into developed economies by embodying **the principles of "responsible citizenship"**.
- The United States of America is a classic example in this respect. The Citizens' Almanac, issued by the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, details the responsibilities of its citizens.
- Another **example is Singapore**, whose growth story has been fuelled by its emphasis on the relentless pursuit of duties by its citizens. As a result, Singapore **has transformed from a less developed nation to a highly developed one** in a short span of time.

The concept of Duty in India:

- Since ancient times, people in India have had a tradition of performing their duties – even in partial disregard of their rights and privileges. Since time immemorial, **an individual's "kartavya"** – the performance of one's duties towards society, his/her country and his/her parents – was emphasised.
- Describing the role of a **king, Chanakya stated, "It is a king's utmost duty to look after the progress and welfare of the people of his country"**.
- Modern civilisations, sadly, do not offer many inducements for the performance of duties – they certainly don't teach people that the real reward for responsible citizenship is the preservation of a free society.
- Traditionally, the fundamental impulse to accept responsibilities and perform duties, in every society, has been religious. Performing one's duties with sincerity, is in fact, a worship mechanism.

- **The Bhagwad Gita and Ramayana also ask people to perform their duties.** In the Gita, Lord Krishna ordains, “One should do one’s duties without expectation of any fruits”.
- **Mahatma Gandhi once said, “I learnt my duties on my mother’s lap.** She was an unlettered village woman... She knew my dharma. Thus, if from my childhood we learn what our dharma is and try to follow it our rights look after themselves... The beauty of it is that the very performance of a duty secures us our right. Rights cannot be divorced from duties. This is how satyagraha was born, for I was always striving to decide what my duty was.”
- **Gandhiji further said that the true source of right is duty. He said, “If we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek”.**
- Swami Vivekananda rightly observed, “It is the duty of every person to contribute in the development and progress of India”.

Fundamental Duty under Indian Constitution:

- Ambedkar displayed utmost clarity on one point – the purpose of the Constitution. He stated, “The Constitution is not a mere lawyer’s document; it is a vehicle of life and its spirit is always the spirit of age”.
- A very significant feature of our **Constitution is that it balances citizens’ rights and duties.** These are social concepts that have grown through time, tradition and usage.
- The citizens’ duties as enshrined in the Constitution are essentially a codification of tasks integral to the Indian way of life – they focus on tolerance, peace and communal harmony.
- A close scrutiny of the clauses of **Article 51A of the Constitution, indicate** that a number of them refer to values, which have been part of Indian tradition, mythology, religion and practices.

Balance between Fundamental Rights and Duties:

- The chapter on Fundamental Rights in the Constitution itself recognises the essence of duties.
- One pertains to freedom of speech but Clause 2 to 6 of Article 19 permits reasonable restrictions on the exercise of such rights in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, and the security of the state, public order, decency and morality.
- This implies that while exercising one’s rights must remember one’s duties towards these constitutional concepts.

Way Forward:

- Today, it is important to emphasise the need to remember our constitutional duties for the progress our country. Democracy cannot establish deep roots in society until the citizens don't complement fundamental rights with their fundamental duties.
- Fundamental Duties must serve as a constant reminder of our National Goals as well as inculcate, in all of us, a profound sense of social responsibility. Let us **remember the sacrifices of our brave Jawans and officers of our security forces** who laid down their lives while performing their duties to keep the country safe and secure.
- The rationale for citizens' duties can be summarised in the words of **Mahatma Gandhi: "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."**
- Every citizen plays a key role in building a New India — a clean, healthy and prosperous nation.
- Everyone performing their duties, even mechanically, would pave the way for a better neighbourhood, better society, and ultimately, a better country. Let us all remember our fundamental duties in the same way as we remember our fundamental rights.

