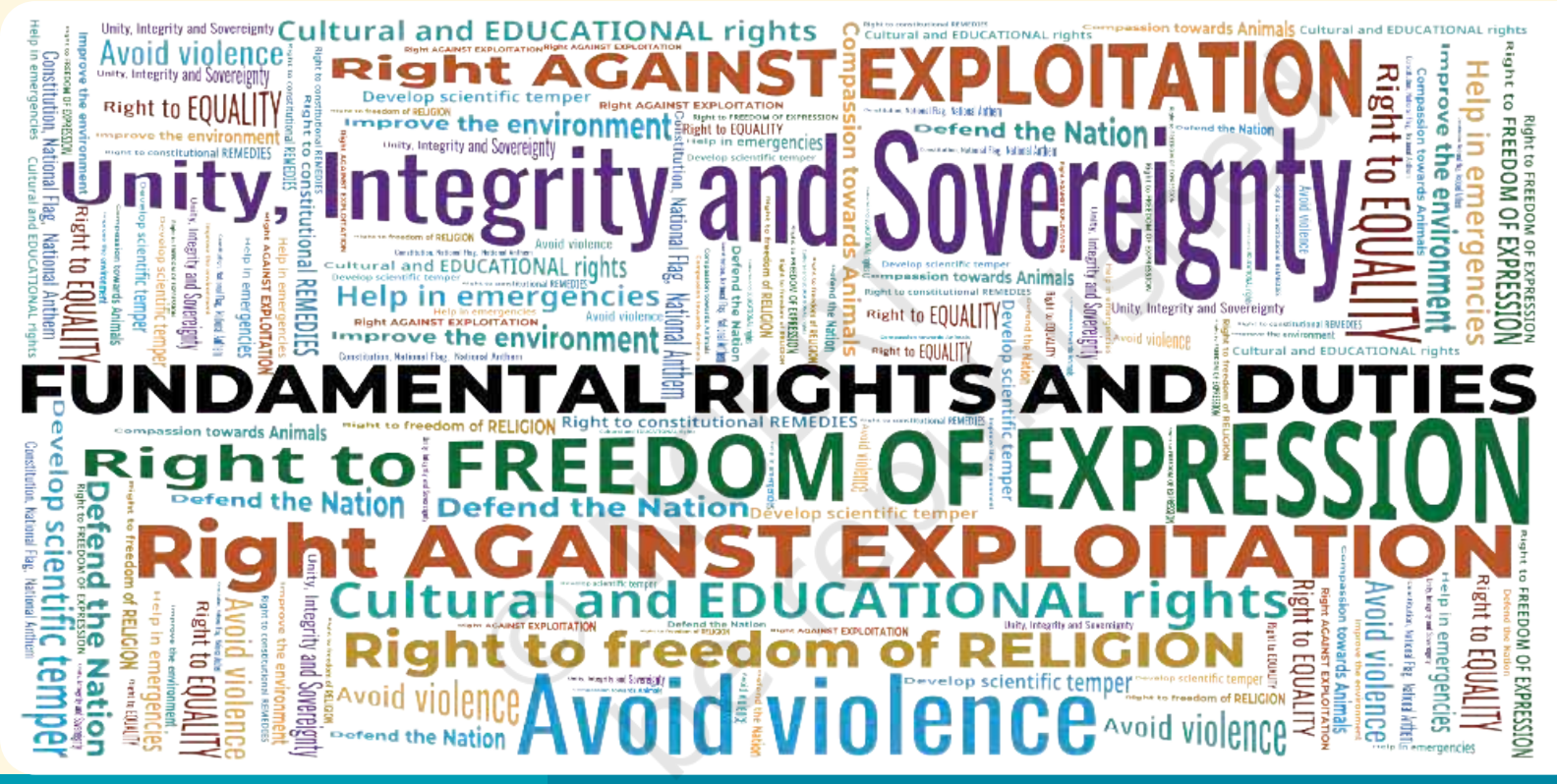
CHAPTER 5

Citizenship: Rights and Duties

The true source of rights is duty.

— Mahatma Gandhi



The Big Questions

1. *What does it mean to be a citizen, not just legally, but in everyday life?*
2. *Why are both rights and duties essential?*
3. *How can we help build a society where everyone is treated fairly, respected, and included?*

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The topics in this chapter — citizenship, rights, duties, discrimination, and inclusion — are complex. They have legal meanings too. However, we have simplified them here to help you understand them. You will delve deeper into them in higher grades.

Who Is a Citizen?

New student Kruti was being teased on the playground for her accent. Sonali and Harshada saw this happening and decided to help. They bravely told the bullies to stop teasing her. But they didn't just stop there. They also invited Kruti to join their badminton team so she would feel welcome and included. Kruti happily joined them and finally felt like she belonged. Sonali and Harshada showed what it means to be good citizens—they stood up for someone who needed help and made sure everyone felt included.

A citizen is someone who legally belongs to a country and is a member of its political community i. e. they can participate in the decision-making of the country. In a democracy, citizenship gives rights such as voting, free speech, and living and working safely, but these rights have limits. At the same time, citizens have duties like obeying the law, paying taxes, respecting others, and helping keep society safe. Citizenship is both a legal identity and a social responsibility. As a legal identity, it formally connects people to their country. As a social responsibility, it creates a sense of belonging, and unites them through shared values, rights, and duties.



DON'T MISS OUT

Living in a place makes you a resident, but citizenship is a formal, legal membership in a country. Not every resident of a country is a citizen. A person can be a resident without being a citizen, and a citizen can even reside in another country.

Citizenship is about active participation. It involves fulfilling duties like paying taxes, helping others in need, and protecting the environment. Crucially, citizenship also grants you rights: the power to question unfair practices and stand up for what is right, shaping the future of your society.

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In India, all citizens are equal under the Constitution despite differences of language, religion, or culture. The Citizenship Act of 1955 and Citizenship (Amendment) Act of 2019 set the rules for gaining or losing citizenship.

In this chapter, we will explore what it truly means to be a citizen of India. We will focus on the following four concepts. 'Rights', 'duties' and 'discrimination' are specifically mentioned in our Constitution. 'Inclusion' is an affirmative way to ensure non-discrimination.

Rights: Freedoms like equality, free speech, religion, and education that let people live with dignity.

Duties: Responsibilities or duties such as obeying laws, paying taxes, keeping clean, and helping others.

Discrimination: Unfair treatment based on identity; citizens must stand against it.

Inclusion: Ensuring no one is left out because of language, religion, culture, ethnicity, caste, or gender.

Rights



Every year, a town held a big festival. Children looked forward to it, as there were plays, debates, food stalls, and prayers at different places of worship. This year, a few problems arose.



Meena was told she could not take part in the debate because "girls should not speak on stage."



Ravi, a street vendor's son, was not allowed inside the library stall, while a wealthy boy was welcomed in.



Near the fair ground, some children were kept busy cleaning instead of going to school.



Gaganjit, who used a wheelchair, found he could not enter the exhibition hall because there was no ramp.



Together, they went to their teacher, who explained that the Constitution of India gives every citizen fundamental rights. These include the right to equality, the right to freedom of speech and expression, the right to freedom of religion, the right to life and dignity, and the right to education. If any of these rights are denied, citizens have the right to approach the courts for justice.



Encouraged, the children spoke to the fair organisers. Slowly, changes were made.



Meena joined the debate.



Ravi entered the library stall.



Ramps were built for Gaganjit.



The children working outside were enrolled in school after volunteers stepped in.



At the closing ceremony, everyone clapped as the children came on stage together.

Fig. 5.1.

What are rights?

Rights are what we are all entitled to as human beings and members of society. But not everything we want can be called a right. Rights are what we need to live with dignity, safety, and respect, like the right to education, to earn a living, or to express our ideas. These help us grow, learn, and live freely. However, actions that cause harm to ourselves or others cannot be considered rights. True rights are those that support the wellbeing and dignity of all. Hence, rights are justified claims.

Fundamental Rights in the Indian Constitution

The Constitution gives us Fundamental Rights – these are basic rights that every Indian citizen has. It lists six broad categories of fundamental rights that protect people's freedom and dignity. These rights can be enforced by law, which means that if they are violated, people can approach the courts for justice.

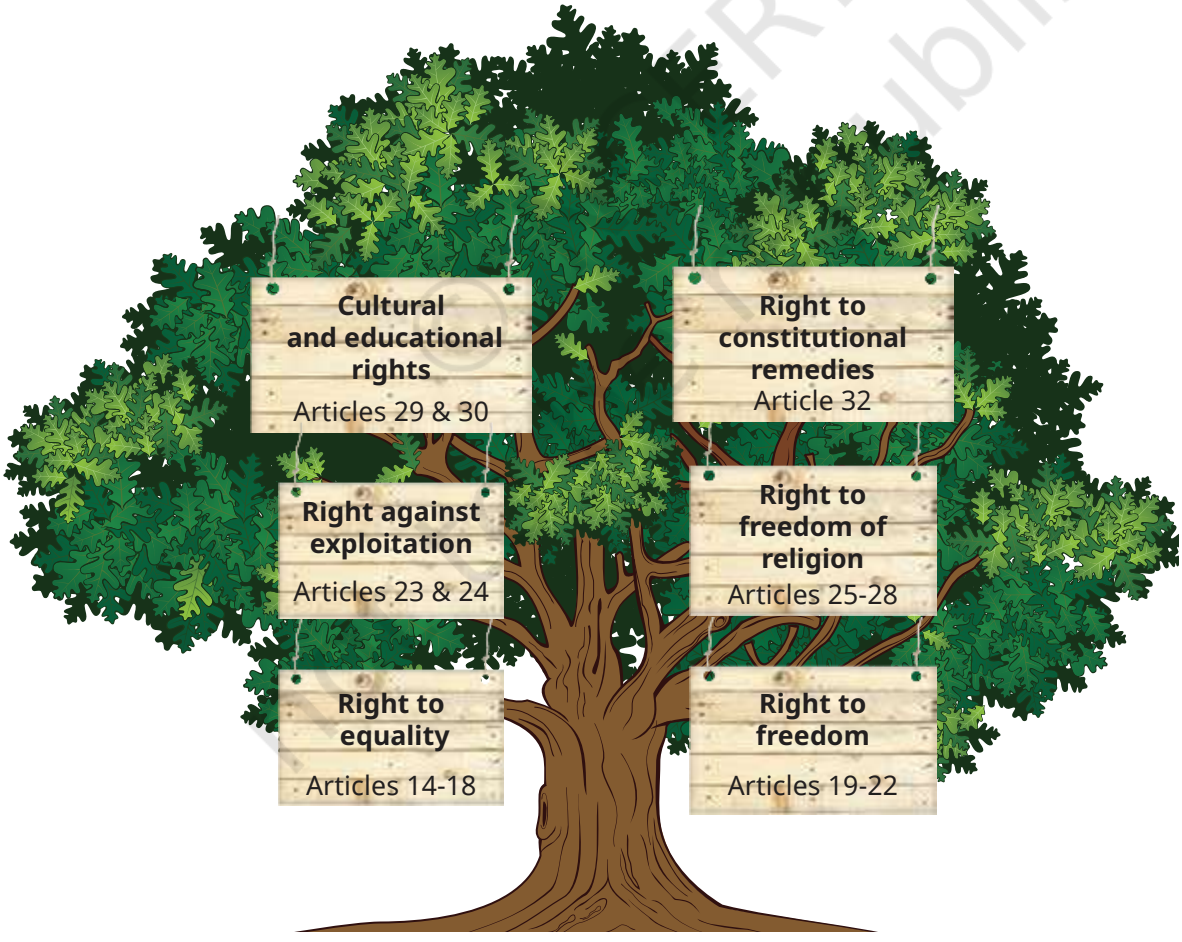


Fig. 5.2.

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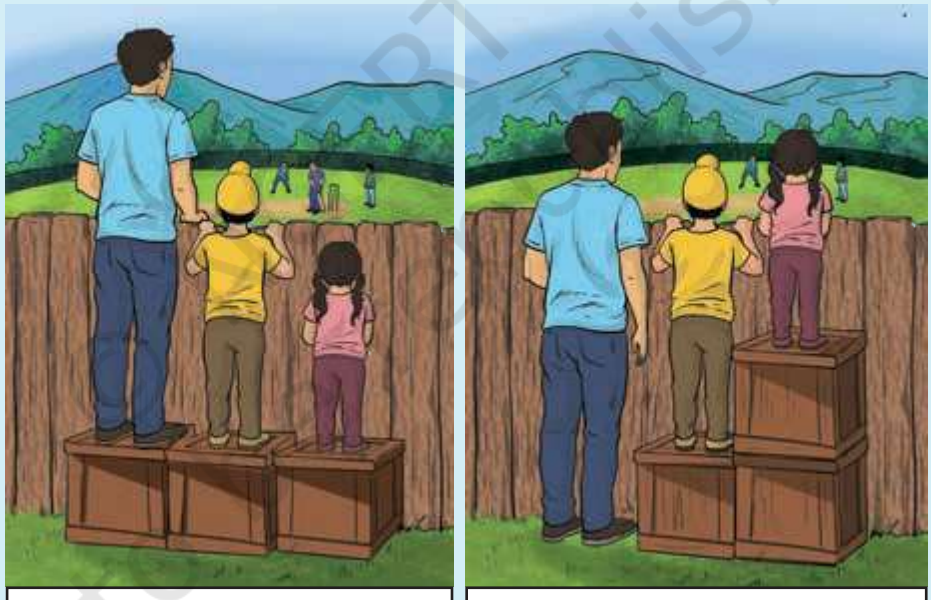
Fundamental rights protect people from unfair treatment by others; it also protects people from unfair actions by the government. Rights ensure that every person is treated fairly, and that power is not misused.

Right to equality

The right to equality ensures that every person is treated equally before the law, has equal opportunities in jobs and education, and cannot be discriminated against because of religion, race, caste, gender, or place of birth. It also ends practices like untouchability and prevents the government from giving out special titles to individuals (except for military or academic honours).



LET'S EXPLORE



EQUALITY
Everyone receives the exact same support.

EQUITY
Everyone gets the support they need, fairly.

Fig. 5.3.

What do you observe in the illustrations above? As you can see, sometimes providing the same thing to every individual does not provide the same benefits on account of differences among them. These differences can be due

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to inequality and discrimination which may have been carried historically too. To be able to ensure that everyone gets the support they need, we look at the principle of **equity** (as you can see in the figure on the right). There are many initiatives taken by the government as well as civil society organisations to ensure that equity is established in such cases. The *Beti Bachao Beti Padhao* campaign was to build awareness in society as well as to provide support to girls' education. Can you think of other such examples?

Equity: The quality of being fair and just, especially in a way that takes account of and seeks to address existing inequalities.

Right to freedom

The right to freedom is one of the most important rights of every Indian. It allows people to express themselves, move freely, and choose how they want to live and work. However, these freedoms are not unlimited; they come with reasonable restrictions so that they are not misused or harmful to others or the nation.

THINK ABOUT IT

It's Sports Day at school. The weather is very hot. Some students are told to wear full school uniforms with shoes, even though they will be running, playing games, and spending time outdoors. A few students feel uncomfortable and wonder why they can't wear lighter clothes like T-shirts and sports shoes for such activities. One student starts a discussion at break time. "Shouldn't we be allowed to wear comfortable sports clothes on Sports Day?" Some classmates agree, saying that comfort and safety are important while playing sports. Others feel that wearing the school uniform shows discipline and equality among all students. A couple of teachers overhear the conversation and remind everyone that school rules about uniforms must be followed. Was the student exercising freedom of speech? Could they have raised their concern differently? How should schools handle student opinions?

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Fig. 5.4. Making a tactile map available in a school for the blind helps facilitate the right to education.

Right to life

The right to life protects a person's life and liberty. It means that everyone has the right not only to live, but to live with dignity. This also includes the right to livelihood, education, health, a clean environment, and fair treatment under the law. These rights ensure that people can live safely, freely, and respectfully.

The right to life also protects children with disabilities, ensuring they receive the support they need to learn, play or participate fully in all aspects of life on an equal basis with others. It ensures that they can live with dignity, access education, healthcare, and a safe environment.



DON'T MISS OUT

- → Some countries have given rivers the same rights as people. Imagine if a tree could say, "Don't cut me down!" In New Zealand, the Whanganui River is legally treated as a living being. Costa Rica, too, protects Nature's rights in its Constitution.
- → In 2017, the Uttarakhand High Court declared the rivers Ganga and Yamuna as legal entities, giving them the rights of a living person. The Court also appointed legal guardians responsible for protecting and conserving the rivers. However, this decision was suspended and ultimately overturned by the Supreme Court of India, who called it 'legally unsustainable'. Why do you think some people want to give nature (like rivers and forests) legal rights, just like humans? How could this help protect the environment?

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Right against exploitation

Exploitation means taking unfair advantage of others, often by denying them basic respect, liberty and rights. It can happen in many ways: when people are forced to work without fair wages (bonded labour), when they are traded or sold for profit (human trafficking), when women or children are abused or treated unfairly, or when children are made to work instead of going to school, particularly in hazardous situations (child labour).

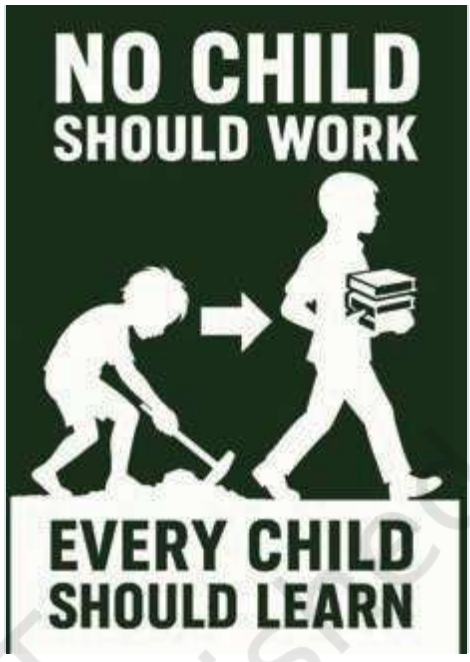


Fig. 5.5. Children have the right to education.

Children need special protection because they depend on adults for their safety and wellbeing. Children may not understand their rights or be able to stand up for themselves, or access help against unfair treatment or unsafe situations. When children are made to work, they lose out on education, play, and a healthy childhood – things that are essential for their growth and future.



DON'T MISS OUT

The government has a helpline for children called Childline 1098. (It is printed in your textbook too.) It is available all over the country and and is easy to remember; just count backwards from 10. It started as an action project at an educational institution in the late 1990s and soon became a national-level helpline.

To stop such unfair treatment, the right against exploitation protects every person's dignity and safety. It makes it illegal to force anyone to work against their will or under unsafe conditions. In general, children below the age of 14 are not allowed to be employed, though they can help out in non-hazardous family enterprises, and only during vacations or after school hours. There is a ban on work in places such as factories, mines, or restaurants. These protections ensure that

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everyone, especially children, can live and work with freedom and respect.

THINK ABOUT IT

What would you do if you saw a child working instead of being in school? Discuss in class, then write one step you could take:

→ Could you talk to your teacher or principal?

→ Could you write to a child helpline?

In 2015, the Childline 1098 received a call from a concerned citizen about 20 children being forced to work in a factory that embroidered clothes. Based on this call, a team visited the place and found the children. Not only were they being forced to work, but the room they worked in was congested and unhealthy, and the food they received once a day was not nourishing at all. The team rescued the children, provided them with medical care and ensured that they would be taken care of. The culprits were arrested.

Right to freedom of religion

India is a diverse country where people follow many different religions. The right to freedom of religion allows every person to choose, practise, and share their religion freely, while ensuring that no one is forced to follow, propagate or fund a particular religion.



Fig. 5.6. Teenagers of different religions praying

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At the same time, state-run or government-aided schools are not allowed to promote any particular religion. This helps protect India's diversity and keeps all faiths equal in the eyes of the state.

Cultural and educational rights

The cultural and educational rights protect India's rich cultural diversity and ensure equal access to education for all. Communities can preserve their language, script, and traditions, and no student can be denied admission to a government institution because of religion, caste, race, or language.

Religious and linguistic minorities also have the right to set up and manage their own schools. These rights help maintain cultural identity while supporting equality and non-discrimination.

Together, these rights safeguard cultural identity while promoting equal access to education. On one hand, the Constitution seeks to protect the rights of minorities, while on the other, it also upholds equality and non-discrimination on the basis of religion. At times, these two aims can seem to be in conflict. Some people feel that minority protections (the special rights and safeguards given to groups with a different religion, language, or culture) may go against the idea of secularism.

Right to constitutional remedies

The right to constitutional remedies allows citizens to approach the Supreme Court if their fundamental rights are violated. It ensures that these rights are not just promises on paper but can actually be protected and enforced.

LET'S EXPLORE



"If I was asked to name any particular article in this Constitution as the most important — an article without which this Constitution would be a nullity— I could not refer to any other article except this one [right to constitutional remedies]. It is the very soul of the Constitution and the very heart of it…", said Dr. B.R. Ambedkar during the Constituent Assembly Debates. Why is it important to have a way to protect rights?

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Key Constitutional Articles That Guide Our Rights

(Note: You need not memorise these, but as a citizen of India, you should be aware of them.)

Fundamental Rights (Articles 14–32)

Article No.	The Guarantee
14	Equality before the law for all persons
15	No discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth
16	Equal opportunity in public employment
17	Abolition of untouchability
18	End of titles (except military/academic distinctions)
19	Freedom of speech, movement, and peaceful assembly
21	Protection of life and personal liberty
21A	Right to free and compulsory education (6–14 years)
23–24	Ban on human trafficking, forced labour, and child labour
25–28	Freedom to practise, profess, and manage one's religion
29–30	Protection of language, script, and cultural rights; rights of minority institutions
32	Right to approach courts to protect Fundamental Rights

These articles help us understand how the Constitution and the Judiciary protect the dignity and equality of every citizen.

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Duties



Fig. 5.7. Duty to keep the environment clean

One pleasant Sunday morning, the residents of Green Park Colony decided to come together for a community clean-up and improvement drive. Families gathered in the park, armed with gloves, garbage bags, and tools. The air was filled with energy and excitement. Children collected plastic wrappers and papers lying around, while their parents swept the streets and cleared drains that had been clogged with leaves and plastic bags. Some residents planted saplings along the footpaths, hoping they would grow into tall, shady trees for the future. Others painted the walls with bright colours and positive messages, making the neighbourhood look cheerful and welcoming. Not stopping there, a group of older students went around placing bowls of water and food for the street dogs, showing kindness to the animals who shared their surroundings. A few mothers took the initiative to talk to younger children about saving water and electricity at home, while the senior citizens patiently guided everyone, sharing their wisdom and encouragement. When the work was nearly done, a local reporter who had come to cover the event asked the youngest participants why they were spending their Sunday morning like this instead of playing. A little girl, wiping the sweat from her forehead, replied confidently: "It's our duty to care for our neighbourhood." Her simple answer carried a deep truth. Duties are not only about obeying laws or following rules, they are about the responsibility each one of us has towards our family, our community, our country, and even the environment. That Sunday morning became more than just a clean-up; it turned into a reminder that when every citizen takes their duties seriously, society becomes a healthier, happier, and more harmonious place to live in.

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What are duties?

The Constitution not only gives us rights, it also tells us what we should do as responsible citizens. These responsibilities are called fundamental duties. The idea behind incorporating them was to remind citizens of their duties, along with enjoying their fundamental rights.



DON'T MISS OUT

When the Indian Constitution came into effect in 1950, it had no Fundamental Duties. They were added in 1976 by an amendment to the Constitution. At first, there were 10 duties listed in Article 51A (Part IV-A). In 2002, the 11th duty was added, which stated that parents or guardians must make sure children between ages 6 and 14 years get an education.

Understanding duties

Fundamental duties help citizens play an active role in keeping our democracy strong and society healthy. They remind us that being a citizen is not just about enjoying rights but also about contributing to the country's progress. They help maintain good governance, promote unity, protect nature, encourage learning, and build a society where everyone can live with dignity. In short, these duties guide us to be responsible, caring, and active citizens.



Fig. 5.8.

What the Constitution of India says about Duties (Article 51A)

1. Abide by and respect the Constitution, National Flag and National Anthem.
   Example: During the morning assembly, when the anthem plays, everyone stands silently. A student who laughed was reminded that respect is part of citizenship.

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2. Follow the ideals of the freedom struggle.

   Example: After watching a play on Bhagat Singh, students discussed how speaking against bullying in school is also fighting injustice.

3. Protect India's unity, integrity and sovereignty.

   Example: Two classmates argued over language differences. Their friends encouraged them to learn phrases from each other's languages, showing unity in diversity.

4. Defend the nation and help in emergencies.

   Example: In a flood-hit village, NCC cadets rescued stranded people and distributed food packets.

5. Promote harmony among all people and respect women.

   Example: When a group teased a girl, other students stopped them and told the teacher, showing respect for dignity.

6. Preserve culture and heritage.

   Example: On a school trip, a student stopped his friend from writing on a fort wall, reminding him that it is a part of India's heritage.

7. Protect and improve the environment and have compassion towards animals.

   Example: Students planted trees in their locality and kept water bowls for stray dogs in summer.



Fig. 5.9.

8. Develop scientific temper and the spirit of inquiry.
   Example: Not content with memorising notes on the purification of water, a group of students showed a disadvantaged community how to do basic filtering followed by boiling of water before drinking it.

9. Protect public property and avoid violence.

   Example: After losing a football match, some boys wanted to break benches. Others reminded them it was school property, and accept winning and losing as part of sports.

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Fig. 5.10.

10. Strive for excellence in all activities.

    After a class on waste segregation and a discussion with the school's director, a group of students implemented such practices in the school and made sure all teachers and students eventually followed them.

11. Ensure education for children (6–14 years).

    Example: A parent wanted to stop sending his daughter to school. A neighbour convinced him that it is every parent's duty to educate their child.



DON'T MISS OUT

- Are concepts of rights and duties entirely modern? In the case of India, scholars have often debated this question. 'Dharma', of course, is often translated as 'duty', although it has a much wider range of meaning, including that which is beneficial to people and to the society.
- Another important ancient concept related to duty is that of *ṛiṇa* or 'debt' — the debts we owe to *devatās*, ancestors and parents, gurus, fellow humans, and Nature, by the very fact of being born. The duty of 'repaying' those 'debts' naturally follows; but it is more than today's sense of duty, since this ancient concept also creates deep connections with family, the society, nature and beyond.
- 'Rights' is a more ambiguous concept. In many Indian languages, the word for rights is *adhikāra*. In ancient texts, however, *adhikāra* referred to capacity, competence or authority: if you were competent to perform a certain task in society, that gave you the right to do so. Rights, in other words, were not guaranteed universally, as they are now (in our Constitution, for instance), since they depended on one's capacity. There was one exception, though, as the concept of dharma implicitly gave everyone the right to justice — in theory at least.

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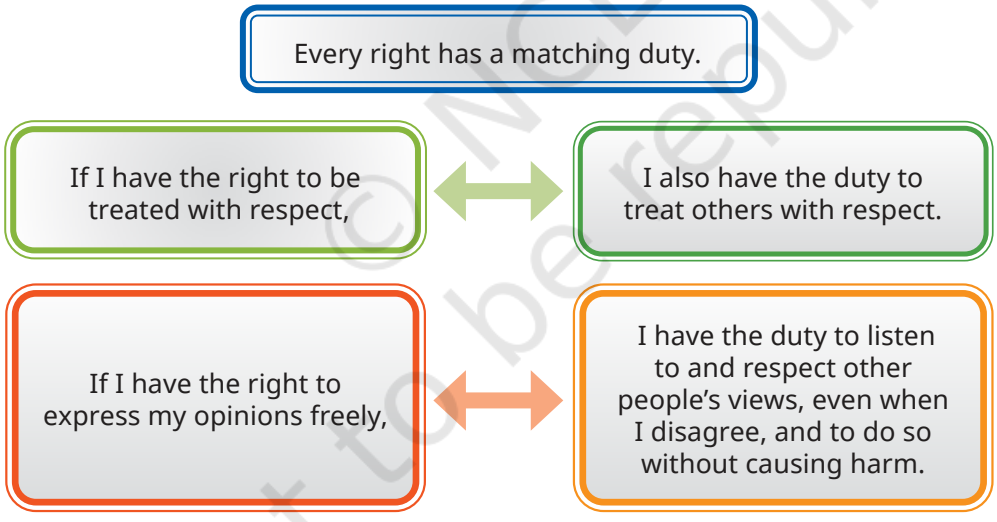
THINK ABOUT IT

Can you name a duty that matches your right to education?

Rights and Duties: Two Sides of the Same Coin

Rights are the freedoms and benefits that every citizen enjoys. Duties are the responsibilities that we must follow as members of a community. They are not opposites but go together. Rights allow us to live with dignity, while duties remind us to use our freedom wisely and respectfully.

Rights are protected by law. If someone's rights are violated, even by the government, they can go to court for help. Duties, on the other hand, are moral and social responsibilities. We are expected to follow them, but not doing so may not always lead to legal action. Fulfilling our duties helps protect everyone's rights and keeps society fair and peaceful.



LET'S EXPLORE



Here are some everyday situations for reflection. Which right or duty is involved?

→ Ravi decides not to join a protest march at school because he disagrees with it. Some classmates say they will exclude him from their group unless he joins.

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- → On School Culture Day, Rukmini wants to wear her family's traditional dress from her village. Some students laugh at her and say she should wear 'modern' clothes instead.
- → During the recess, some children were throwing chocolate wrappers on the playground, instead of the dustbin. The teacher then reminds them to keep their surroundings clean.
- → In a mock youth parliament activity, students use a voting app to share their ideas for improving school facilities. Even those who live in remote areas are able to join in the discussion online.

Can we demand rights without doing our duties?

Discrimination

Sanya was excited to audition for the school play. Some students whispered that she did not "fit the image" of a lead actor and suggested she should try for a smaller role instead. Sanya felt discouraged but decided to audition anyway. During the auditions, her expressive acting and confidence impressed the teachers, and she was chosen for an important role. The drama teacher later spoke to the class about how excluding someone or judging them because of their looks is unfair and a form of discrimination. The students realised that talent and effort matter far more than appearance.

Understanding discrimination



Fig. 5.11.

Discrimination is mistreating any person or group because of their caste, religion, ethnicity, disability, race, physical appearance, gender, sexuality, or economic background. This is not only unethical, but also legally prohibited. Discriminating against someone based on the above-mentioned backgrounds not only impacts the affected person or group (both psychologically and physically), but also the society as a whole.

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It could be as subtle as not talking or including a classmate in a group project because of their social or economic background, or even not letting someone sit next to you in a school bus, because of their social or economic background. Discrimination creates a social barrier on those subjected to it, hampering them from enjoying their fundamental rights. Additionally, if someone is discriminating against a person or a group, the person discriminating ethically ceases to be an active citizen of India, because they have breached the very core of the Indian Constitution, i.e., respect and unity.



DON'T MISS OUT!

→ In the mid-19th century, Savitribai Phule established a school for girls. This was a time when girls' education was at a low ebb; people believed girls should not go to school. What appalled them even more was that she was from a so-called lower caste, the Mali community. She was abused, and mud was thrown at her on her way to school, yet she remained steadfast in her commitment to educating girls. Together with her husband, Jyotiba Phule, she worked to ensure that girls and children from all backgrounds had access to education.



Fig. 5.12. Savitribai Phule

→ In 1874, nine-year-old Anandibai Joshi was married. By 15 she had become a mother but her baby died soon after due to lack of medical care. Anandi decided to study medicine and become a doctor so that she could serve mothers and children. People were aghast when she decided to go the Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania. But she was determined and fought discrimination and sustained considerable hardship to realise her dream. Unfortunately, she succumbed to an illness soon after she graduated, leaving her dream unfulfilled.



Fig. 5.13. Anandibai Joshi

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Visible and invisible discrimination



LET'S EXPLORE

The following are two caselets. Read them individually and discuss the questions at the end in small groups.

- A group of students makes fun of Rohan's weight; they nickname him 'Drummy'. They make it difficult for him to join their football game, joking that he would be competing with the football. Everyone around notices this behaviour of the group.
- Mina's school announced an overnight educational trip to a historical site. Many of her classmates were excited and enrolled immediately. Mina, however, did not; she knew that her family would not able to afford paying for it. When her friends found out, some started ignoring her, whispering to each other that she "wasn't fun", "never joined anything", or "was not of their status". Mina felt hurt and left out.

What are the types of discrimination you can identify in the examples given above? What would you do if you were part of the groups? Have you faced discrimination yourself? What did you do about it?

Discrimination may not always be visible. It may even be indirect, through taking a jibe at somebody, excluding someone or being unwilling to include someone in a project or a celebration just because of their social background, physical appearance, or perception of intellectual ability. The major issue with invisible discrimination is that it is difficult to prove, and hence difficult to penalise.

Inclusion

Smt. Amita noticed the number of books being borrowed from the library had dropped. She decided to start a reading club to get students back into the habit of reading. She found that only a few confident readers of English joined the club. So she expanded the

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scope of the reading club to include books in the regional language. Soon the club's membership increased and its activities included storytelling and puppetry from the region. All children began to participate irrespective of their fluency in a particular language.

Understanding inclusion

Inclusion means creating an environment where everyone feels welcomed, respected, valued, and included, with equal access to opportunities. This is especially important for groups that have historically been excluded because of their social or economic background. Inclusion goes beyond just giving reservations; it means making sure everyone feels accepted and supported. In our Constitution, fundamental rights and duties together support inclusion. For example, it can mean finding ways for people speaking different languages to communicate, welcoming students from all castes, religions, or backgrounds into schools, and giving extra help like braille books, ramps, or classroom support to children with special needs. It also means removing barriers to participation.

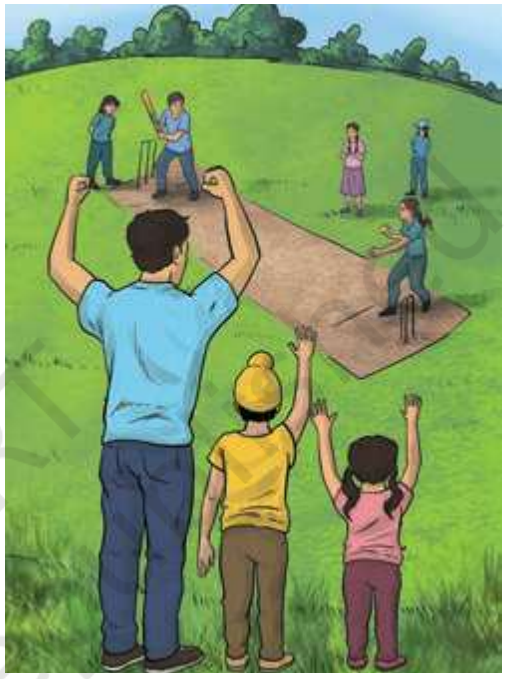


Fig. 5.14. Compare this illustration with Fig. 5.3 that illustrates equality and equity. What difference do you observe?

THINK ABOUT IT

Imagine there is a student in your class who takes a little longer to read or write because they have a different way of learning. Sometimes during group work, others do not wait for them or forget to include them. What would you do in this situation? Could you support them by being patient, explaining something clearly, or making sure they get a chance to speak? What steps can you take to make your classroom more inclusive?

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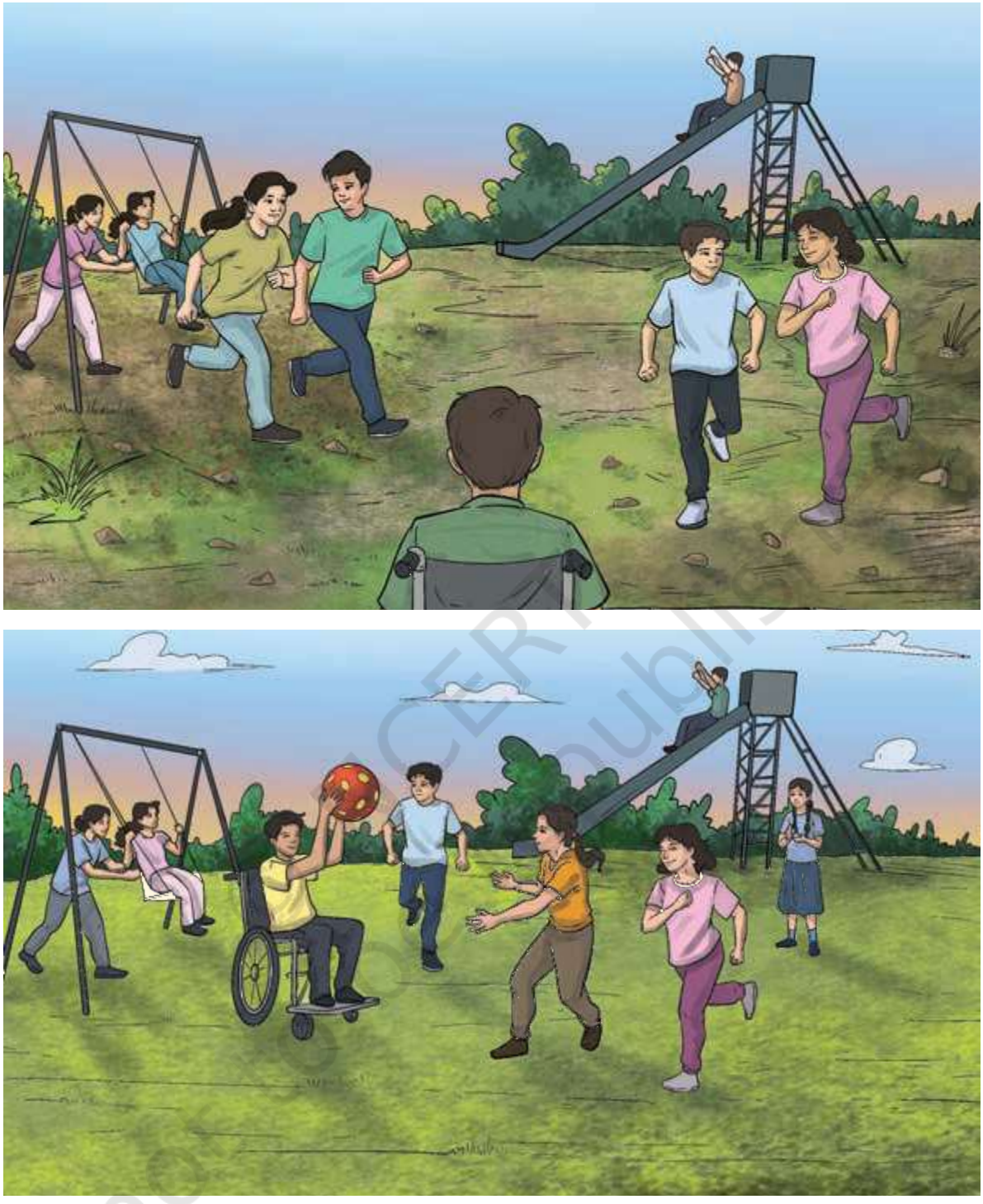


Fig. 5.15. Designing and creating facilities that are inclusive

Before we move on ...



- Being a responsible, empathetic and active citizen means living your rights while respecting others' rights.
- The Constitution guarantees fundamental rights. One can go to court and seek remedies if they are violated.
- Discrimination based on caste, religion, gender, personal preferences like choice of clothing, etc., is against fundamental rights.
- Rights and duties work together — you cannot fulfil one while ignoring the other.
- Deliberate actions need to be taken to prevent discrimination and ensure inclusion.
- Actions matter: speak up against unfairness, follow the law, and help others feel respected and included.
- Democracy is strengthened through enabling and facilitating participation of all.
- A peaceful society is built through everyday choices, words, and actions.
- Listening with empathy and acting with responsibility helps everyone feel valued and safe.

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Questions and activities

1. Why is it important to respect others' religions?
2. How would you feel if you were left out of something?
3. If rights are guaranteed, why do we still see discrimination in society?
4. Can there ever be a conflict between rights and duties? Give an example.
5. How does respecting diversity strengthen democracy?
6. Do you think technology (social media, online platforms) makes it easier or harder to practise citizenship? Why?

7. Imagine everyone in society enjoyed rights but ignored their duties. What would life look like?
8. How can students your age practise inclusion in everyday school life?
9. What can be done in the following situations?
    a) A school does not allow girls to join a mathematics or science club.
    b) A fellow student has dropped out of school because they are forced to work in a welding shop.
10. Make a classroom charter that outlines rights and duties, and ensures inclusion and prevents discrimination.

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