

# **The Role of Responsibility in Human Rights**

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## **Abstract**

Nowadays, "human rights and human responsibility" is one of the hot issues in society. The aim of this paper is to show that human responsibility must correlate to human rights. The research question of this paper is "why does responsibility play an important role in human rights?" To solve the research problem descriptive, evaluative and reflective methods will be used. It will be contributed that happy, peace and development of society is mainly based on the necessary harmony of human responsibility and human right.

Keywords: human responsibility, human rights, correlate, necessary harmony

## **Introduction**

In modern time, human rights and human responsibilities are intimately related with each other. In order to happy, peace and development of society both are essential for society. To become more develop social order not only nationally but also internationally, it cannot be gained by law and convention alone. In this respect, it needs a holistic or global ethics. Human rights are basic principle of justice and equality in society. When people more understand human rights, it is easier to them to promote justice, equality and well-being of society. But the understanding of human right alone is not enough. Here it is needed to exercise of human responsibility. The sense of responsibility is requirement for the implementation of human right. Human rights and human responsibilities have common purpose for society. This purpose is promoting and preventing human dignity. The preventing of rights and practicing of responsibility are of very important not only for personal consequences but also for the development of the society as a whole.

Nowadays, in the world most of the people demand rights in any field of society such as social, political, economic and moral activities. But they do not take responsibilities for their actions. Consequently, it will become unequal and even dangerous and discordant of society. That is why, this paper will show that the necessary and important role of responsibility in practicing of human rights in society. Moreover, to built peace and development of society, harmony of human responsibility and human rights are needed.

## **What Responsibility Is**

In this age, the role of responsibility is one of the controversial issues in society. The sense of responsibility is essential for social, moral, and political activities of human society. So, it is needed to know the concept of responsibility. Some define that responsibility is a personal duty. According to task and rank, one has to do his duty without exception. In this way, it become a human character, it means that a person have to respond for his action, take his responsibility whether the consequence is good or not.

The sense of responsibility becomes necessary traits of human character. So each and everyone should cultivate this attitude and behavior in his life. If someone lack of such

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character, never become a positive character. And then if one has a sense of responsibility, he will gain the respect of others in society.

“According to Macmillan Dictionary, the noun responsibility comes from the Latin verb, 'responder', and meaning 'to respond', via the past participle stem 'respon'.”<sup>2</sup>

Being responsible is an ability of man to make a decision for not only personal or individual interest but also the interest of other. Here, there are two parts, first of all, a person take responsible for oneself, after that he should be responsible for others. If a person takes responsibility for himself, one can gain good consequences and success in life. Thus, it may be said that personal responsibility means taking accountability for his own action.

When we study responsibility from the accountability point of view, it can be seen that responsibility is a personal duty and personal obligation. Here in order to perform his duty and obligation, one must take accountability for his own action and decision. In other words, human take responsible and accountable for his action what he do or what is cause to happen by a certain norms. That is why, it may be said that responsibility is personal accountability of human beings.

From the social point view, all human beings have always faced with the problem of their responsibility in society. In this sense, responsibility may be regarded as a social force. This force binds human actions as their obligation and duty.

In the history of thought, some philosophers discussed about the responsibility. In Western philosophical tradition, since the time of early Greek philosophers such as Socrates (469-399BC), Plato (428-348 BC) and Aristotle(384-322 BC) regarded that responsibility and social life can not be separated each other. Aristotle said that there were cases in which he fell, it was too difficult to find whether a person responsible or not for his actions. Therefore we need a structured set of characteristics to describe responsibility.

In Eastern thought, Confucius (511-479 BC), a famous Chinese philosopher, also discussed about the concept of responsibility. He said that there are mainly five relationships in society. These relations are between parents and children, husband and wife, elder and younger, friend and friend, and ruler and citizen. Each of position had responsibility for their actions. So each and every person has to fulfill their responsibilities and duties in their respective social relationships. They will develop their moral characters. In social life, each and every individual should perform according to his position. Confucius said that

“Let the ruler be a ruler, the subject a subject, the father a father, the son a son and etc. If everyone takes on the responsibility of acting in accord with the natural principle that defines his position in life, then there will be social harmony”<sup>3</sup>

Concerning the feature of responsibility there are various features of moral, social and political responsibility. Based on the feature or norm, one can decide whether or not should be taken accountable for his actions. In this sense, the norm or feature of responsibility is to take accountability for its results.

Here, some asked that what is a person responsible for? This question mainly concern with taking accountable for his or her obligation action. In a state, the government should provide and prevent for citizen as well as a citizen should obey the law. The parents are responsible for care and cultivate to their children. These are the basic facts of responsibility. And then most of the important theories of responsibility relate to legal concerns.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.macmillandictionary.com>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org.com>

Generally, the sense of responsibility may be regarded as inner power of a person. If one practice of his responsibility, he can encounter with the basic elements of responsibility. These, are 1. norms that can determine accountability, 2. Freedom or free will 3. Results may be either praiseworthy or blameworthy. These elements are necessary for human beings. If a person takes the responsibility for his actions one can manage his works and can gain success in life. Moreover, one has the ability to know rights from wrong.

So it may be regarded that sense of responsibility is the way of life of human beings who live in society. That is why, by practicing of sense of responsibility may endow human with value and nobility of his life.

### **The Concept of Human Rights**

Every person has his own dignity, value and freedom. The fundamental value of human beings is to acknowledge their rights. In order to understand the concept of human rights, one needs to define the concept of right. The word 'right' which use in the modern English terminology has its origin from the old English 'reht'. From the historical point of view, 'right' in its objective sense is described as right or just actions that individuals have to discharge to maintain harmonious relationships between themselves. In the early period, it has been used with different nomenclatures in various languages around the world.<sup>4</sup> Consequently, it has gained different meaning, based on the conditions. According to various expression and interpretation, there arise many controversial issues in practical life.

Thus issues of human rights become a great challenge of twenty first century. Human rights are basic to be humanity. Each and every person has own freedom, dignity and value as existence of human beings since he was born. In this respect, each and every individual can apply their right everywhere and any time. But in order to practice human rights, one needs to understand that human rights are an essential for personal value and dignity.

In Greek period, some philosophers discussed about the human rights as fundamental rights. They belief human rights are natural right which is given by God for human beings. Some believe that human rights are rights inherent to all human beings. So each and every person, in the world, can possess his rights from birth to death. Moreover, it can use any person without references such as where are you born?, what is your believe, how you choose to live your life and so on. The basic rights are primarily concerned with equality, justice, respect, fairness, dignity, etc. In the history of thought, some thinkers regarded human rights as a principle deal with equality, justice and so on. They also believed that human freedom and free will can choice their way of living and make to develop their personality as human beings. The basic rights of human are right to live, right to freedom, right to education, right to believe, right to health and so on. In this sense, some said that rights of human are abstract but human right is not just abstract. It is defined and protected by law and regulation.

For these reasons, it can be assumed that human rights virtually cover any areas of human activities such as social, moral, political, legal, business, education and so on. The basic elements of human rights are justice, fairness, freedom without discrimination and oppression in any fields of society. That is why, in present age, human rights become norms or principles for society. These norms or principles can provide to prevent all human beings anywhere serve political, social and legal abuses.

4. T. N. Dr.Sastry. (2011). "Introduction to Human Rights and Duties." GaneshKhind: University of Pune Press.

## Democracy and Human Rights

According to Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), 16<sup>th</sup> president of United States, Democracy is the 'Government of the people, by the people and for the people'. It means that democracy must be for its citizens. Larry Diamond (1951- ), a political scientist, said that democracy has basic elements such as the election of government must be free and fair election, the people or citizen must be active participation in political, civil life and so on, the protection of human rights, the procedures and laws must be applied equally to all citizens as a rule of law.

Thus it may be said that democracy permits equal liberty and equal right for all citizens. If one wants democracy, one must be prepared to live by the basic principles of democracy. In this sense, since human desire to gain human rights, it may imply that human wants democracy. Human right is the value that impacts on human life and human dignity. It involves freedom such as freedom to vote, freedom to expression, freedom to association, freedom to speech and so on. Democracy mainly focuses on the value and well-being of its citizen. Democracy tries to protect and respect the human rights of its citizens. Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that

"The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government, this will be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures."<sup>5</sup>

This article recognizes the connection between human rights and democracy. In the present age, the relation of human rights and democracy can be seen clearly. It means that if a state or society respects human rights, it may be considered as democracy and which automatically respects human rights. In order to be 'democratic', all kinds of rights, i.e. political, social, economic, cultural rights would have to be respected. In this respect, sometimes, some problems will appear in social life. For instance, according to geographical conditions and cultural conditions, all nations do not accept all kinds of rights to be legally binding upon them. Consequently, the consideration of implementation and interpretation may change from one country to another.

## Human Rights and Human Responsibilities

In society, human rights and human responsibilities are interdependent and interrelated with each other. They are two aspects of the same coin, to perform and regulate of the human value and dignity. Moreover it can be said that these are behavioral patterns of individual. From the right perspective, it is essential in developing the human behavior and personality. On the other hand, i.e. responsibility, it guides the individuals to contribute to the development of human affairs such as social, political, legal, economic, moral, etc. Responsibility aims at the realization of rights.

Generally, the word responsibility is commonly used as a synonym of the word duty and obligation. Some regard that sense of responsibility concerns with one's position, status, role, etc. This means that there is a connection between responsibility and position of individual. The concept of responsibility occurs from fulfillment of a requirement of human actions.

There are various kinds of responsibility in society. There are moral responsibility, social responsibility, political responsibility, legal responsibility and so on. For example, from the legal point of view, responsibility comes from legal norms or principles as a requirement. They have to be discharged the way it was prescribed. So the actions perform as right or wrong

<sup>5</sup> T. N. Dr. Sastry. (2011). "Introduction to Human Rights and Duties." Ganesh Khind: University of Pune Press. P-

based on the discharge of responsibility. If one acts contrary to responsibility, it will become a wrong action.

In 1998, the celebrating of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted that

“Declaration on the rights and responsibility of individuals, groups and organs of society to promote and protect universally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is also known Valencia Declaration of responsibilities and Human responsibilities”<sup>6</sup>

According to the declaration, government has a responsibility to respect all the provisions of the Declaration. Therefore each and every state or government has a responsibility for its citizen. Some primary responsibilities are

- To build, prevent and implement of all human rights
- To ensure that all persons under its jurisdiction are able to enjoy all social, economic, political and other rights and freedom in practice
- To provide for the development of natural institutions for protection and promotion of human rights
- To promote public understanding of civil, political, social and cultural rights

According to mention above facts, the declaration point out that every individual of society has responsibility towards others. There is the responsibility of every person of us to promote human rights, to prevent democracy and its institutions and not to violate the rights of others.

From the individual perspective, each and every person has responsibility towards the society or state. For the Universal Declaration of Human rights, the responsibilities of citizen towards the state are

- To obey rule and regulation and law of state or society
- To associate with society and the state for social security and well-beings of society
- To maintain and preserve culture and property of the state

Moreover there is social responsibility towards society. These are

- To respect responsibilities and rights of others
- Not to misuse the regulations and laws
- Not to discriminate or advocate anything on communal, linguistic and religious or any other ground that impact on the liberty of others person
- To obey and respect ethical value of society

Nowadays, some people think of their rights without acknowledging of their responsibilities although they have a duty to protect the right of others. This lack of responsibility may appear a number of upheavals in society. If people have sense of responsibility, automatically the state and its institutions will follow the duties without any deviance. That is why, the harmonious practice of responsibilities and exercise of rights can create a peaceful and developing society or state.

### **Conclusion**

This paper is to discuss the role of responsibility in human rights. In present age, the issue of responsibility is very hot in most of the fields of human activities such as social, moral, administration, political and so on in society. On the other hand, the issue of human rights is also very controversial in the world.

In practical life, most of the people seek happiness and peace. They endeavor to reduce misery without consideration of nationality, political, social status, belief etc. Actually, any human beings have the right to pursue peace, freedom and happiness in their live as human

6 T. N. Dr.Sastry. (2011). “Introduction to Human Rights and Duties.” GaneshKhind University of Pune Press. P-

beings. And then they can apply their intelligence to understand human beings and their world. Now, human would directed towards become one community or a global village. Human beings faced with great problems such as decrease of natural resources, increase population and degradation of environment and its crisis and soon at threaten the foundation of human existence on the planet earth. So, each and every person has a responsibility to provide global family for the right direction and all human beings have to take their responsibility for society.

"If we aim to be happy, we should acknowledge that others also desire to achieve happiness. If we believe that we should have the same right. If we wish that other help us achieve happiness, we must be committed to helping others achieve their own happiness"<sup>7</sup>

In a state, each and every citizen has responsibility to respect, uphold and defend their nation's sovereignty. This responsibility may be regarded as correlative to rights. In present age, people more demand their rights from various points of view. But they ignore their responsibility. Accordingly, the world become damage, more conflict occurs among different culture, religion, politic and so on.

So, one should exercises his rights for the promotion of social good as well as he should take his responsibility for his action and decision. If a person tries to misuse the rights which will impact the right of himself and others and society or state, the government has a responsibility to take appropriate legal action to prevents such acts.

And then one right implies one's duty to recognize similar of rights of others. This means that one has freedom of speech and expression. At the same time, every person has to bear in mind that the exercise of free speech and expression in no way affects the right of others or their life, liberty or dignity of others.

For these reasons, human responsibility plays an important role in any field, of human activities as well as the sense of human rights are necessary for society. If one violates the basic principle of human rights, it can appear many social, economic, political problems, etc. Due to these problems the society will face with many misery and difficulty. So, it may be said that to promote justice and well-beings of society, such as to happy, peace and develop the society, each and every individual should practice the basic principle of human rights and take responsibility of his activities. That is why, to built a peace and develop community or society or a state, it is essential to balance, (it means harmony) between the exercise of human rights and the responsibility of human beings.

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5. ကိုထွေးနှင့်အခြား(၂၀၁၃) "ခေတ်ပြိုင်လူ့အခွင့်အရေးအတွေးအခေါ်များ"၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့၊ ဩစတေးလျံ ဩယူနီဗာစတီ၊ ဩစတေးလျံ ဩယူနီဗာစတီ၊ ဩစတေးလျံ ဩယူနီဗာစတီ။
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