

20th February 2023

Rights

**"Nothing can be permitted to the few;
rights and advantages were sent for all."**

Letitia Elizabeth Landon, *Ethel Churchill (or The Two Brides)* 1837

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10th December 1948 as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It set out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected. It's been translated into over 500 languages.

The UDHR has inspired, and paved the way for, the adoption of more than seventy human rights treaties, applied today on a permanent basis at global and regional levels. It has 30 articles, and enshrines the rights to education, health provision, work, democracy, freedom of expression, religious practice, freedom of movement, privacy, and much more besides.

Each of us could make a list of these rights in what we might consider an order of priority. We could easily point an accusing finger at this country or that where one or more of these rights is not available to the population. But I want to suggest today that it is the responsibility of all of us to play our part in the application of rights in our own sphere of influence, and not leave it to "the authorities" to enhance the protections these rights bestow.

In the *Young India* magazine in 1931, Mohandas Gandhi said:

If inequalities stare us in the face, the essential equality too is not to be missed. [Everyone] has an equal right to the necessities of life even as birds and beasts have. And since every right carries with it a corresponding duty and the corresponding remedy for resisting any attack upon it, it is merely a matter of finding out the corresponding duties and remedies to vindicate the elementary fundamental equality.

It is, therefore, incumbent on all of us to uphold the rights of everyone else, to call out bullying, misogyny, homophobia, racial bias, cruelty, injustice in any form when we see it. To do and say nothing, is tacitly to condone the threatening of the rights we all value. After all, we would expect others to uphold and enhance *our* human rights, wouldn't we?

A prayer for today

Made in your image, loving God, everyone has the right to be treated ... like you. Amen

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