Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) Chapter 5: Rights - Notes, Important Questions and MCQs (2026-27)

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These Class 11 Political Theory Chapter 5 notes cover “Rights” from the NCERT textbook Political Theory (2026-27): what rights are, where rights come from – natural rights and human rights – legal rights and the state, kinds of rights (political, economic, cultural), Kant’s idea of human dignity, and the link between rights and responsibilities – with tables, Q&A, 10 MCQs and a free PDF.

Use the table of contents below to jump to the part you need, or read top to bottom for a complete revision of the chapter.

Table of Contents

- Chapter Overview
- Important Topics and Concepts
- Kinds of Rights
- Sources of Rights
- Important Definitions and Terms
- Short Answer Questions
- Long Answer Questions
- MCQs with Answers
- Quick Revision Points
- Chapter Summary
- Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Conclusion

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Chapter Overview

A right is a claim that we are entitled to – something we need to live with dignity and freedom, which society recognises as legitimate. Rights are not just personal wants; they must be justifiable for everyone and are usually protected by the state.

Ideas of natural rights developed into the modern idea of human rights, expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Rights are recognised in law, include political, economic and cultural rights, and come with responsibilities to respect others’ rights and the common good.

Important Topics and Concepts

What are Rights?

- A right is an entitlement or justified claim, recognised by society and usually by the state.
- Rights are needed for a life of dignity and for developing one's capacities.
- Not every want is a right: rights must be good for the individual and acceptable for all.
- Rights place obligations on others and on the state.

Where Do Rights Come From?

- Natural rights: 17th–18th century thinkers argued people have rights to life, liberty and property by nature, not given by rulers.
- The idea that rights belong to humans by virtue of being human led to human rights.
- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) lists rights for all people.
- Immanuel Kant argued every person has dignity and must be treated as an end, never merely as a means.

Legal Rights and the State

- Most rights are recognised in law – e.g. Fundamental Rights in the Constitution.
- The state is obliged to protect rights and refrain from violating them.
- Rights also limit the state – it cannot act arbitrarily.
- Courts enforce legal rights.

Kinds of Rights

- Political rights: vote, contest elections, form parties, freedom of expression.
- Civil liberties: fair trial, freedom of speech, protest.
- Economic rights: work, minimum wage, social security.
- Cultural rights: education in mother tongue, preserve one's culture.
- New claims: rights of children, environment, future generations.

Rights and Responsibilities

- Rights oblige us to respect the rights of others.
- We should protect the common good, e.g. clean environment.
- Rights may need to be balanced, e.g. free speech vs others' dignity.
- Citizens should be vigilant about restrictions on rights in the name of security.

Kinds of Rights

Most-asked table.

Kind	Examples
Political	Vote, contest elections, form parties
Civil	Fair trial, free speech, protest
Economic	Work, minimum wage, social security
Cultural	Mother-tongue education, preserve culture
Emerging	Clean environment, rights of children

Sources of Rights

Concept	Meaning
Natural rights	Rights by nature, not granted by rulers
Human rights	Rights of all humans as humans
UDHR (1948)	UN declaration listing universal rights
Legal rights	Rights recognised and enforced by law
Kant’s dignity	Every person to be treated as an end

Important Definitions and Terms

Term	Meaning
Right	Justified claim recognised by society
Natural rights	Rights people have by nature
Human rights	Universal rights of all humans
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)
Legal rights	Rights recognised by law
Political rights	Rights to participate in politics
Economic rights	Rights relating to livelihood
Cultural rights	Rights to culture and language
Dignity	Inherent worth of every person
Responsibility	Duty to respect others’ rights

Short Answer Questions

Q1. What is a right?

A justified claim recognised by society and usually protected by the state.

Q2. What are natural rights?

Rights people have by nature, such as life, liberty and property.

Q3. What is the UDHR?

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the UN in 1948.

Q4. What was Kant’s idea of dignity?

Every person has dignity and should be treated as an end, not merely a means.

Q5. Give two political rights.

Right to vote and right to contest elections.

Q6. Give one economic right.

Right to work or minimum wage.

Q7. How do rights limit the state?

Q8. What responsibility comes with rights?

To respect the rights of others and protect the common good.

Long Answer Questions

Q1. Explain where rights come from.

Natural rights theory – by nature.

Development into human rights.

UDHR 1948 made them universal.

Kant’s idea of human dignity.

Legal recognition through constitutions.

Q2. Describe different kinds of rights.

Political – participation in government.

Civil – liberties like fair trial.

Economic – livelihood and security.

Cultural – language and culture.

Emerging rights – environment, children.

Q3. Explain the relationship between rights and responsibilities.

Rights require respecting others’ rights.

Protect common goods like environment.

Balance conflicting rights.

Be vigilant about unjust restrictions.

Rights and duties strengthen democracy together.

MCQs with Answers

1. UDHR was adopted in(a) 1945 (b) 1948 (c) 1950 (d) 1966Answer: (b) 1948

2. Rights by nature are called(a) legal rights (b) natural rights (c) cultural rights (d) dutiesAnswer: (b) natural rights

3. Treating every person as an end was argued by(a) Kant (b) Mill (c) Marx (d) PlatoAnswer: (a) Kant

4. Right to vote is a(a) political right (b) economic right (c) cultural right (d) natural dutyAnswer: (a) political right

5. Right to minimum wage is an(a) economic right (b) political right (c) cultural right (d) civil dutyAnswer: (a) economic right

6. Mother-tongue education is a(a) cultural right (b) political right (c) economic right (d) legal dutyAnswer: (a) cultural right

7. Rights place obligations on(a) only citizens (b) the state and others (c) no one (d) courts

8. A right must be(a) any want (b) justifiable for all (c) only for majority (d) temporaryAnswer: (b) justifiable for all

9. Legal rights are enforced by(a) courts (b) parties (c) media (d) religionAnswer: (a) courts

10. Human rights belong to(a) citizens only (b) all human beings (c) rich only (d) officialsAnswer: (b) all human beings

Quick Revision Points

- Right = justified claim.
- Natural rights → human rights; UDHR 1948.
- Kant: dignity.
- Legal rights and the state.
- Political, civil, economic, cultural rights.
- Rights and responsibilities.

Chapter Summary

Rights are justified claims needed for a life of dignity, recognised by society and protected by the state. The theory of natural rights developed into universal human rights, expressed in the UDHR of 1948, and Kant emphasised that every person has inherent dignity.

Most rights are recognised in law and include political, civil, economic and cultural rights, with new claims emerging. Rights come with responsibilities – respecting others' rights, protecting the common good and staying vigilant against unjust restrictions.

Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern

- Learn kinds of rights with examples.
- Mention UDHR and its year.
- Explain Kant's idea in one line.
- Link rights to Fundamental Rights in India.
- Write about responsibilities in long answers.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this chapter in the 2026-27 CBSE syllabus?

Yes. It is part of the NCERT Class 11 Political Science textbook "Political Theory", prescribed in the CBSE 2026-27 syllabus.

Can I download these notes as a PDF?

Yes. Use the free PDF link at the top of this page – no signup needed.

What are human rights?

Rights that belong to all human beings by virtue of being human, listed in the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

What are the kinds of rights?

Conclusion

Rights explains the claims that protect our dignity. Learn the kinds and sources tables, practise the Q&A here and save the free PDF for revision.

More Notes: Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) Chapter 4: Social Justice notes | Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) Chapter 6: Citizenship notes | All Class 11 Political Science notes

Author Bio: Written and reviewed by the Nextoper Editorial Team, a group of CBSE political science educators who build chapter notes directly from the NCERT textbook and past board paper patterns.

Freshness Note: These notes follow the NCERT Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) textbook, Political Theory (NCERT reprint 2026-27, rationalised syllabus), and the CBSE syllabus for the 2026-27 session. Last checked on 25 November 2026.