Q. *Analyse the growth/development of human rights in India.*

Ans. <u>Introduction</u>: Human Rights is the basis of any civilized society. The concept has found wide acceptance in India besides other countries of the world. Though the term human rights is new, emphasis on human dignity and worth was there in Indian tradition. Let us examine the growth/ development of human rights in India.

<u>Human rights during ancient period</u>: The concept of Dharma influenced both the rulers and the ruled in ancient period. Dharma emphasizes on human dignity and a society free from injustice and exploitation. The concept of natural law was reflected in Vedas, Puranas and epics like Ramayana, Mahabharata etc.

The famous Sanskrit words 'Vashudhaiva Kutumbakam' express faith in universal brotherhood and dignity. Rigveda also mentioned three rights of individuals- right of Tana, Skridhi and Jibhasi. The writings of several thinkers like Panini, Manu, Kautilya etc. also influenced human rights tradition in India.

Gradually the caste system became very rigid and there was decline in rich tradition of dharma and dignity of human beings in the post-Vedic period. As a reaction against the injustice, Buddhism and Jainism emerged. Both these religions uphold egalitarianism and emphasized on human dignity and worth.
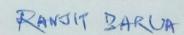
<u>Human rights during medieval period</u>: Influence of Islam increased in India during medieval period. It preached universal brotherhood, justice, compassion and equality. Many rulers were influenced by the teachings of Islam. The Bhakti and Sufi movements emerged towards the later years of this period. These also popularized the values of truth, justice, morality, equality etc. All these, in their own ways, contributed to the growth of human rights in India.

<u>Human rights during British period</u>: The philosophy of human rights in modern sense emerged during British period. The birth of Indian National Congress in 1885 was a landmark in the growth of human rights. It explicitly demanded fundamental rights for Indians on several occasions and documents like Constitution of India Bill, 1895 and Commonwealth of India Bill, 1925. Nehru Report of 1928 also included demand of rights for all. The Karachi Congress (1931) adopted a long list of rights proposed for the people. The Sapru Committee of 1945 stressed on the need for a written code of fundamental rights. All these strengthened the human rights discourse in India.

<u>Human rights since independence</u>: The Constituent Assembly also recognized the importance of rights for the people. Accordingly various rights were included in different parts of the Constitution. The Preamble, the chapters on Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles include many human rights recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). While rights included in Part III of the Constitution are justiciable, those included in Part IV are non-justiciable in nature.

Besides these constitutional provisions, many laws have also been enacted in the post-independent period for protection of human rights. Many such laws provide

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safeguard to various sections of the society like women, children, minority etc. Protection of Civil Rights Act (1955), Dowry Prohibition Act (1961), Sati Prevention Act (1987), SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act (1989) etc. are some such examples.

The Protection of Human Rights Act of 1993 is another milestone in the field of human rights in India. On the basis of this act, National Human Rights Commission and several state human rights commissions have been formed for protection and promotion of human rights.

Conclusion: Thus from above discussion, it is clear that human rights ethos were there in India since ancient times. It has manifested in various forms in different times. Various constitutional and legal safeguards are there in India now. Many institutional mechanisms have also been created in recent times to protect and promote human rights in India.