1. Universality of Rights

The universality of rights means that all human beings are entitled to the same basic rights simply because they are human. This idea is based on human dignity, equality, and moral entitlement. According to this principle, no person can be deprived of rights on the basis of religion, caste, gender, language, nationality, or any other social identity. In modern times, this concept is closely associated with international human rights, especially the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)*, which recognized these rights at a global level. The main objective of universal rights is to establish a common standard so that every individual receives equal respect and protection.

One of the most important features of universality is equality. It means all citizens are equal before the law, and no discrimination is allowed. This idea forms a strong foundation for democratic systems. For example, the right to life, freedom of speech, right to education, and equality before the law are applicable to all individuals equally. These rights are also inalienable, meaning they cannot be easily taken away by any government.

The importance of universality is very significant. First, it helps establish justice and equality in society. Second, it acts as a strong safeguard against discrimination and exploitation. Third, it creates a common global standard of rights, allowing countries and organizations to raise their voices against injustice anywhere in the world. However, this concept is not free from criticism. Some scholars argue that universality is largely influenced by Western ideas and may not fully reflect the realities of all cultures. Moreover, although rights are given equally in theory, people are not equally placed in real life, so universality alone may fail to address actual inequalities.

2. Differentiated Rights

Differentiated rights refer to special rights or privileges given to certain groups in society so that they can enjoy equal opportunities. This idea is based on the principle of equity rather than mere equality. It recognizes that all people are not in the same social position; some groups have been historically oppressed, marginalized, or disadvantaged. Therefore, special measures are necessary to uplift them and ensure fairness.

In India, the reservation policy is an important example of differentiated rights. Special provisions are made for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) in education and employment. Similarly, cultural and educational rights for minorities, special laws for women such as maternity benefits, and rights of indigenous communities over land and self-governance also fall under differentiated rights. The main aim of these measures is to correct historical injustices and create equal opportunities in society.

The importance of differentiated rights is profound. It ensures substantive equality, meaning equality in real terms, not just on paper. Simply giving equal rights is not enough; people must also be in a position to exercise those rights. Differentiated rights help in uplifting disadvantaged groups, enhancing their dignity, and promoting inclusion in society. However, this concept also faces criticism. Some argue that it may lead to reverse discrimination against more privileged groups. It can also increase social divisions and, at times, be misused for political purposes.