

6

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Rights are those claims of individuals which are recognised by society and enforced by the State. These rights are basic and essential in the life of an individual. They are, in other words, fundamental for every citizen's life. These rights which are mentioned in the Constitution of a country are known as "Fundamental Rights". We as citizens of India enjoy certain rights which are given to us by the Constitution of India. You have read about the Fundamental Rights while studying the salient features of our Constitution in the previous lesson. Let us study about these Fundamental Rights in detail in this lesson.

6.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through this lesson you will be able to :

- explain the meaning and importance of Fundamental Rights, the way they ensure the dignity of the individual and also their enforcement through the judiciary;
- recognise the Right to Equality and its different aspects like equality before law, prevention of discrimination and abolition of untouchability and titles;
- explain the principle of protective discrimination in favour of Schedule Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes;
- appreciate the right to freedom, protection from arbitrary detention, protection of life and liberty against unjust arrest and detention.
- explain the right against exploitation of labourers, women and children;
- understand the right to freedom of religion;
- appreciate the right of minorities for protection of their cultural and educational interest.
- identify the right to constitutional remedies and the power of higher courts to protect and enforce the Fundamental Rights.

6.3 MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

The Constitution is regarded as the 'Fundamental Law' of the land. The rights which are incorporated in chapter III of the Constitution of India are, therefore, called Fundamental Rights. These rights are also fundamental because without these rights the all-round development of the personality of an individual is not possible. These rights enable the citizen to lead a free and happy life. The Fundamental Rights generate a feeling of security amongst the minorities in the country. These rights ensure effective enjoyment of certain privileges which are essential in a free democratic society. No democracy can function in the absence of such basic rights like freedom of speech and expression and freedom of religion, etc. In a country like India, where we are facing various social, religious, economic and political problems, the importance of Fundamental Rights cannot be underestimated. The Fundamental Rights are helpful in retaining the secular character of our country as they ensure peace and harmony among various communities. Article 14 to 32 of the Constitution deals with Fundamental Rights and these are justiciable.

JUSTICIABLE : It means that an Indian citizen can ensure the enjoyment of his or her Fundamental Rights through the Supreme Court and the High Courts of India.

The Fundamental Rights, though justiciable, are not absolute. The framers of the Constitution felt the necessity of imposing certain restrictions upon the Fundamental Rights, so that the interests of the entire society is safeguarded. However, these restrictions are reasonable, so as to maintain a proper balance between the individual interest and the public welfare. The Constitution empowers the government to impose certain restrictions on the enjoyment of these rights in the interest of public good. The fundamental rights establish the rule of law and do not allow imposition of their will either by the State or the individual. Even our Constitution does not permit the legislature and the executive to curb the rights of the people either by law or by an executive order. The Supreme Court or the High Courts can set aside any law that is found to be interfering With the Fundamental Rights. You will read about it in detail in the lesson on 'Judicial Review'. Some Fundamental Rights are enjoyed by citizens and aliens alike. For example the Right to equality before law and the Right to freedom of Religion are enjoyed by the Citizens as well as the aliens.

RULE OF LAW : It means that all men and women are equal in the eyes of law and get equal protection of laws without any discrimination. In other words, no one is above law

There were seven Fundamental Rights enshrined in the Constitution of India. The 44th Amendment act 1978, removed the Right to Property from the list of Fundamental Rights. Since then it has been made a 'legal right'. There are now six Fundamental Rights. These are

1. Right to Equality
2. Right to Freedom

3. Right against Exploitation
4. Right to Freedom of Religion
5. Cultural & Educational Rights
6. Right to Constitutional Remedies.

We would now study these Fundamental Rights one by one.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.1

Fill in the blanks selecting appropriate words/figures given in the brackets:

1. The Constitution of India provides _____ kinds of Fundamental Rights. (5 / 6 / 7)
2. _____ help in the establishment of the rule of law. (Political rights / Economic Rights / Fundamental Rights)
3. Fundamental Rights guarantee _____. (equality / Fraternity / friendship)
4. The rights mentioned in Part III of the Indian Constitution are termed as _____ rights. (Legal / Political / Fundamental)
5. Fundamental Rights instil confidence in the _____ community. (majority / minority / business)

6.4 RIGHT TO EQUALITY

The Right to Equality means that all citizens enjoy equal privileges and opportunities. It protects the citizens against any discrimination by the State on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. The Right to Equality aims at eradicating social and economic disparities. In other words, it seeks to ensure to the citizens, legal, civic and social equality. The Right to Equality includes five types of equalities. These are (i) Equality before law, (ii) Prohibition of discrimination, (iii) Equality of opportunities, (iv) Abolition of untouchability and (v) Abolition of titles.

6.4.1 Equality before Law

According to the Constitution, "The State shall not deny to any person equality before law or equal protection of the laws within the territory of India".

Equality before law means that no person is above law and that every one has equal access to the Courts. Those who violate a law, will be given equal punishment. 'Equal protection of the law' means that equal protection or security will be given to all under similar circumstances in the enjoyment of their rights. Every law is equally applicable to citizens as well as aliens. This right protects the people against the discriminatory orders issued by the executive.

6.4.2 No Discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them

The Constitution provides that, 'The State shall not discriminate against any citi-

zen on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth or any of them with regards to access to shops, restaurants, places of public entertainment or in the use of wells, tanks, bathing-ghats, roads, etc. maintained wholly or partly out of State funds or dedicated to the use of general public." This helps in bringing about social equality

EXCEPTION : The State can, however, make special provision for the benefit of women and children. The State can also make special provisions for the advancement of socially and economically backward classes of citizens or for the Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes. The State can reserve seats in educational institutions, grant free concessions or arrange special coaching classes.

6.4.3 Equality of opportunity in matters of Public Employment

Under this provision equality of opportunity is guaranteed. The Constitution declares that all the citizens have equal opportunities in matters of employment or appointment to any office under the State. No body will be denied a job to any office under the State on the basis of caste, race, religion, Sex, place of birth or any of them. Employment will be given on the basis of merit and qualifications.

The Constitution provides that, "There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens and in matter relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State."

EXCEPTIONS : The Constitution has provided for certain exceptions to the enjoyment of these rights. Prominent among these are :

- (a) The President may fix qualifications of residence for certain jobs under the State.
- (b) The State may reserve certain jobs for any backward class which is not adequately represented in the services under the State.
- (c) Offices connected with religious institutions may be reserved for members belonging to the same religion. For example, the office of the Principal of a school maintained by minority community shall invariably be filled by a person of that community.

6.4.4 ABOLITION OF UNTOUCHABILITY

This provision of the Constitution is very significant. It guarantees social justice and dignity of man, the twin privileges which were being denied to a large section of Hindu society for centuries together. It abolishes untouchability. Its practice in any form is made an offence punishable under the law.

Our Constitution, "Abolishes untouchability and its practice in any form is forbidden and is made an offence punishable under the law."

According to this, certain actions of individuals are considered as offences when committed on the grounds of untouchability. For example :

- (a) refusing admission of any person to the public institutions;

- (b) preventing any person from worshipping in places of public worship;
- (c) insulting a member of Scheduled Caste on the grounds of untouchability;
- (d) preaching untouchability directly or indirectly.

6.4.5 Abolition of Titles

All titles, local or foreign, which create artificial distinctions in social status among the people have been abolished.

The Constitution provides that :

- (i) No title, not being a military or academic distinction, shall be conferred by the State."
- (ii) No citizen of India shall accept any title from any foreign State."

This provision has been included to do away with the privileged position of those Indians on whom the titles had been conferred by the British as a reward. Besides, the practice of conferring titles it is inconsistent with the doctrine of equality before law. The abolition of titles does not prevent the Universities from conferring honorary degrees. To recognise the meritorious services rendered by individual citizens to the country, the President of India can confer awards and distinctions as Bharat Ratna, Padma Vibhushan, Padma Sri, etc. Military distinctions can also be conferred for bravery, such as, Param Veer Chakra, Veer Chakra, Vishisht Sewa Medal, etc.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.2

Fill in the blanks selecting appropriate words/figures given in the brackets:

1. The Right to Equality tries to end _____ discrimination. (moral / social / political)
2. The Fundamental Right to Equality has _____ types of equalities. (3 / 4 / 5)
3. The State is debarred from awarding titles of _____ distinctions. (military / academic / social)
4. The Right to _____ provides for the abolition of untouchability. (Freedom/Equality/Fraternity)
5. The Right to Equality aims at establishing _____ equality. (social / political / moral)
6. _____ means that among equals, the law should be equally administered. (Equality before law/Equal protection of law).
7. The State can make _____ provisions for women and children against exploitation. (general/special/ordinary)

6.5 RIGHT TO FREEDOM

Freedom is the basic requirement of a true democracy. The Indian Constitution guarantees to the citizens of India a set of rights described as the 'Right to Freedom'. Inclusion of this right in the Constitution saves the individual from the oppressive acts of the executive. Originally, the Constitution had seven freedoms, but one of them, namely

the right to acquire, hold and dispose of property, has since been deleted by the 44th amendment, leaving only six freedoms under this category.

6.5.1 The Six Fundamental freedom

The Six Fundamental freedom are :

- (i) Freedom of speech and expression.
- (ii) Freedom to assemble peacefully and without arms.
- (iii) Freedom to form associations or unions.
- (iv) Freedom to move freely throughout the territory of India.
- (v) Freedom to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India
- (vi) Freedom to take up any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business.

Let us discuss these freedoms in detail one by one :

(i) Freedom of Speech and Expression : It is a very important Fundamental Right. Without this right, there cannot be free discussion and honest exchange of opinions. It implies the freedom of press, because the freedom of expression has no meaning without the freedom of the press.

It is evident that the freedom of speech and expression is not a license to commit illegal acts or to over-throw the government by unlawful means. The State is empowered to impose reasonable restrictions on the freedom of speech and expressions in the interest of

- (a) the security of the State
- (b) the maintenance of friendly relations with foreign States;
- (c) public order;
- (d) Contempt of Court;
- (e) maintenance of the sovereignty and integrity of India.

(ii) Freedom to Assemble Peacefully and without Arms : It provides freedom to the citizens to assemble peacefully. They can hold public meetings and rallies and take out processions to highlight and explain their point of view. But this right also has limitations. The State can impose reasonable restrictions in the interest of public order. The meetings should be peaceful and without arms.

(iii) Freedom to form Associations or Unions : All the citizens have the right to form associations or unions. This freedom is of great significance for the development of personality of the citizen. The term association includes trade unions, interest groups and political parties which are vital for democracy. The State may impose reasonable restrictions on this right in the interest of public order and morality. For instance, it cannot allow the formation of associations or unions for illegal, immoral or conspiratorial purposes.

(iv) Freedom to move freely throughout the Territory of India : Every citizen

of India has the freedom to move freely throughout the territory of India. This right is also subject to reasonable restrictions that may be imposed by the State in the interest of the security of the State or public good or for the protection of Scheduled Tribes.

(v) **Freedom to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India** : It guarantees to all the citizens the right to reside and settle in any part of the country.

The State can impose reasonable restrictions in the interest of general public, defence of the country or in the interest of scheduled tribes.

(vi) **Freedom to practise any profession or to carry on any occupation or trade or business** : It permits all the citizens the freedom to practise any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business, throughout the territory of India. However, it does not mean that people can claim the freedom to such trade as gambling or prostitution which are harmful to the society.

The State can impose reasonable restrictions in the interest of general public. No citizen can claim the right to any profession without fulfilling minimum qualifications. Thus, no body can claim to be a doctor or a lawyer unless he has the essential qualifications for the concerned profession.

Suspension of these Freedoms

Our Fundamental Rights are not absolute. They can be suspended during the State of Emergency. As soon as the National Emergency is declared under Article 352 (war or internal unrest and armed rebellion), the freedoms granted, except the right to life and liberty, automatically stand suspended. All these freedoms are restored as soon as the proclamation of National emergency is revoked.

6.5.2 Protection in respect of Conviction for Offences

The provisions in the Constitution assure protection against arbitrary and excessive punishment to any person who commits an offence. It provides that no person :

- (a) may be convicted except by a law in force at the time of the commission of the offence;
- (b) can be subjected to a punishment greater than that permitted by law at the time of the commission of the offence;
- (c) can be prosecuted or punished for the same offence more than once;
- (d) accused of an offence can be compelled to be a witness against himself.

6.5.3 Protection of life and personal Liberty

The Constitution lays down that, "No person shall be deprived of his life and liberty except according to the procedure established by law." It guarantees freedom of life to every citizen against arbitrary interference by the State. It ensures that no person can be punished or imprisoned merely at the will of a person or whims of some authority. He may be punished only for the violation of the law.

6.5.4 Protection against arbitrary arrest and Detention

The Constitution guarantees certain constitutional rights to the arrested persons. According to the Constitution, no person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed of the grounds for detention. Such persons shall have the right to consult any lawyer of their choice for their protection.

It also provides that every person, who is arrested and detained, be produced before a magistrate within a period of 24 hours of arrest. He cannot be detained beyond 24 hours without the permission of a Magistrate. It means that a person can be kept under Police/Judicial custody for investigations only with the permission of a Magistrate. These safeguards however, are not available to aliens and to those citizens detained under Preventive Detention.

6.5.5 Preventive Detention

When the State feels that a person is likely to commit an offence or is a threat to the security of the State, he may be detained without trial for a limited period. However, no person can be kept under detention for more than three months until permitted by an Advisory Board consisting of persons who are qualified to be appointed as judges of the High Court. Such a board is presided over by a sitting judge of a High Court. In this respect, Acts like TADA and MISA are the examples.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.3

Fill in the blanks selecting appropriate words/figures given in the brackets:

1. The Constitution of India guarantees _____ Fundamental Freedoms under the right to freedom. (6, 7, 8)
 2. The freedom of speech and expression is not a license to "Commit _____ acts. (legal/illegal/non of the two)
 3. The freedom to assemble peacefully should not be directed against the _____ of India. (integrity/dignity/division).
 4. The freedom to move freely and reside in any part of the country helps in _____. (Nationalism/provincialism/regionalism)
 5. Any person arrested shall be produced before the nearest Magistrate within a period of _____ hours of arrest. (12/24/36).
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6.6 RIGHT AGAINST EXPLOITATION (ARTICLES 23,24)

The people of India were exploited by the British as well as by the Zamindars. The poor were compelled to do work without wages, for the Zamindars. This process was called forced labour or 'begar'. The Constitution of India prohibits all forms of forced labour, begar (unpaid labour) and traffic in human beings. The violation of this provision is an offence punishable under law. But, the State is allowed to impose compulsory service for public purposes. The State may, for instance, pass a law by which it may compel every university graduate to do some social service in the villages prior to the award of the university degree.

The Constitution also provides safeguards for children. It prohibits the employment of children below the age of fourteen years in any factory, mine or other hazardous

occupation. However, small children are still being employed as domestic servants. Their exploitation is not covered under the Constitution because 'domestic work' is not considered 'work in a factory'. The Mines Act of 1952 protects the children from hazardous jobs.

'Traffic in human beings' means sale and purchase of human beings as goods and commodities for immoral purposes like slavery and prostitution.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.4

Fill in the blanks :

1. Employment of children below the age of _____ is prohibited. (14/16/18)
2. The Mines Act of 1952 was passed to protect _____ from hazardous job. (men/women/children).

6.7 RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF RELIGION (ARTICLE 25-28)

India is a multi-religious State. Besides Hindus, there are Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and others. The Constitution makers were prompted to create a secular India. The State neither promotes nor interferes with any religion. The freedom of religion is available to all the citizens as well as aliens living in India. The Constitution confers the freedom of conscience and belief. It declares that all people are free to profess, practise and propagate any religion. But, there is a restriction attached to it, that this right will be exercised subject to the norms of public order, morality and health.

The State may make laws for throwing open Hindu religious institutions to all classes and sections of Hindus including Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists. The wearing and carrying of Kirpan is included in the profession of Sikh religion.

It also permits every religious group, the right to manage its own affairs in matters of religion. Subject to public order and morality, every religious group has the right to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes. Each religious group is also free to purchase and manage immovable property and administer such property in accordance with law.

It further lays down that no person shall be compelled to pay any taxes which are specifically to be spent for promotion or maintenance of any particular religion. The State will not impose any tax for the promotion of any particular religion.

The Constitution lays down that no religious instruction can be imparted in any educational institution which is wholly maintained out of the State funds. This restriction does not apply to the educational institutions which are not wholly maintained out of the State funds. But even in these institutions, no child can be compelled to receive religious instruction. However, institutions which do not receive any financial aid from the State may make religious education compulsory.

All these rights and freedoms relating to religion and conscience are not absolute. Such rights can be restricted on the grounds of public order, morality and health. The State shall not impose restriction arbitrarily and excessively.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.5

1. Religion is not a concern of the State in a _____ State. (religions/irreligious/secular)
2. No _____ shall be compelled to pay taxes specifically for the maintenance of a religion. (alien/citizen/person).
3. Students cannot be compelled to attend _____ instruction in institutions maintained by the State. (religious/moral/none of the two)
4. Religion is the concern of the _____. (State/Individual/society).

6.8 CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS

India is a large country full of diverse languages, culture and scripts. The people take pride in their language and culture. Each group strives to preserve its culture and language, especially the minority groups.

Our Constitution provides necessary guarantees to various groups to preserve, maintain and promote their culture and language. No citizen shall be denied admission to any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on the grounds of religion, race, caste, language or any of them. The State can make special provisions in this regard for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes. Not only that, they have been given some concession of marks also for purposes of admission to educational institutions. The Constitution allows the minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. It also provides that the State cannot discriminate against any educational institution while granting financial aid on the grounds that it is being managed by a minority community.

These rights ensure that minorities will be assisted by the State in the preservation of their language and culture. The ideal before the State is to develop the composite culture of the Country.

6.9 RIGHT TO CONSTITUTIONAL REMEDIES (ARTICLE 32)

After reading about all the rights, a question may arise in your mind - what can an individual do if one or more of his or her Fundamental Rights are encroached upon by the State? These rights in order to be effective need some mechanism for their protection and implementation.

Our Constitution within its part III, provides for legal remedies for protection of these rights against their violation. This is known as Right to Constitutional Remedies. The State is forbidden from making any law that may be in conflict with the Fundamental Rights. The people can knock at the doors of the Supreme Court and the High Courts to issue orders or writs for the enforcement of these rights. The following writs can be issued by the judiciary while safeguarding the Fundamental Rights :

- (a) **HABEAS CORPUS** - The Court directs the detaining authority to produce the person physically before it and justify the confinement or release of the person.

- (b) **MANDAMUS** : The Court orders the executive authority to perform its duty in case it is not doing so.
- (c) **PROHIBITION** : It means to prohibit or forbid. This is an order issued by any High Court or the Supreme Court asking a lower Court not to proceed with a case where it does not have any jurisdiction.
- (d) **QUO WARRANTO** : This writ is issued to restrain a person from acting in a public office to which he/she is not entitled.
- (e) **CERTIORARI** : This is an order to a lower Court to transfer the matter to it or to another court for deciding the matter.

These writs go a long way in protecting the rights of the individuals against encroachment by the legislature, the executive or any other authority. If the Fundamental Rights are the corner-stone of our democracy, then the Right to Constitutional Remedies is the soul of the Constitution. You will study these writs in detail in the lesson on 'Judicial Review'.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 6.6

Fill in the blanks :

1. Religious and linguistic _____ can establish and run educational institutions of their choice. (majorities/minorities/none of the two).
 2. In India writs are not issued by the _____ Court. (Supreme/High/Subordinate)
 3. The direction of the Court to the detaining authority to produce the person before it is the writ of _____. (Mandamus/Prohibition/Habeas Corpus).
 4. An order to a lower court to transfer the case to another court for its proper consideration is called the write-off _____. (Prohibition/Certiorari/Quo-Warranto).
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WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

Fundamental Rights protect and safeguard the dignity and status of the Indian citizens. They have been mentioned in Part III of the Constitution from Article 14 to 32. These rights are enforceable by the court of law. There are at present six Fundamental Rights. These rights are not absolute. Certain reasonable restrictions can be imposed on these rights in the interest of national defence, good relations with other countries, peace, morality and common good. The Right to Equality as guaranteed by the Constitution provides Equality before law. All are equal before law and the State cannot discriminate on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. Merit is the main criterion in matters of public appointments. Untouchability has been abolished and made an offence punishable by law. The State cannot confer titles on citizens, which create social disparities.

The Right to Freedom has been granted for the fullest development of the body, mind and spirit of the individuals. These freedoms help the Indian citizens to lead a civilised life. It also provides for 'Protection of life and personal liberty'. It protects the

individual from arbitrary arrest and detentions.

Our Constitution prohibits traffic in human beings and forced labour like "begar". Employment of children below 14 years of age in mines and factories is banned.

India is a multi-religious country. Hence it neither promotes nor interferes in religious affairs. India believes in secularism. Every religion is free to establish and maintain its religious institutions. The State cannot levy tax on citizens for religious purposes. Educational institutions wholly maintained by the State are prohibited from imparting compulsory religious instruction. Every individual is free to profess and propagate his/her own religion. But the right to religion can be curtailed on the grounds of public order, morality and health.

Our Constitution further provides the right to conserve our culture. Admission to educational institutions maintained by the State or receiving aid from the State cannot be refused on the grounds of religion, race, caste, language, or any of them. The minorities have been given the right to establish and manage institutions of their choice for the preservation of their language and culture. While giving aid to any institution, the State does not discriminate on the basis of religion or language.

Lastly, the Constitution guarantees enjoyment of Fundamental Rights by the citizens. The Supreme Court and the High Courts have been given powers to issue orders, directions and writs for the enforcement of the Fundamental Rights. These are known as Constitutional Remedies. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar has rightly called the writs as the "Soul of the Constitution".

TERMINAL EXERCISES

1. What is the importance of Fundamental Rights given in our Constitution ?
2. Explain any three aspects of Right to Equality.
3. Explain the six freedoms guaranteed under Article 19 of the Constitution.
4. Explain the Right against Exploitation.
5. How does the Right to Freedom of Religion establish secular polity in India ?
6. Mention three restrictions imposed by the State that relate to the Freedom of Speech and Expression.
7. Analyse various restrictions imposed by the State on the Right to Freedom of Religion.
8. What do you mean by the term writ ? Who issues the writs, and for what purpose ?
9. Examine the provisions which protect the interest of minorities in India.

KEY TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

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|--|---|
| <p>6.1 (1) 6</p> <p>(2) Fundamental Rights</p> <p>(3) Equality</p> <p>(4) Fundamental</p> <p>(5) Minority</p> | <p>6.2 (1) Social</p> <p>(2) 5</p> <p>(3) Social</p> <p>(4) Equality</p> <p>(5) Social</p> <p>(6) Equality before law</p> <p>(7) Special</p> |
| <p>6.3 (1) 6</p> <p>(2) Illegal</p> <p>(3) Integrity</p> <p>(4) Nationalism</p> <p>(5) 24</p> | <p>6.5 (1) Secular</p> <p>(2) Person</p> <p>(3) Religious</p> <p>(4) Individual</p> |
| <p>6.4 (1) 14</p> <p>(2) Children</p> | <p>6.6 (1) Minorities</p> <p>(2) Subordinate Courts</p> <p>(3) Habeas Corpus</p> <p>(4) Certiorari</p> |

HINTS FOR TERMINAL EXERCISES

1. Please refer to Section 6.3
2. Please refer to Section 6.4
3. Please refer to Section 6.5
4. Please refer to Section 6.6
5. Please refer to Section 6.7
6. Please refer to Section 6.5.1
7. Please refer to Section 6.7
8. Please refer to Section 6.9
9. Please refer to Section 6.8