*Are women's rights universal? Universalism Vs. Cultural relativism*

Women's rights continue to be one of the most pressing issues in international human rights law, and in the time, that has passed since the development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Equality between women and men and the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women are fundamental to human rights.

However, historically, many of the rights that we now consider human rights belonged only to men, while women did not have equal rights with men.

In the modern world, women regularly suffer from human rights violations, and the realization of women's rights in the modern world is still often not considered a top priority.

Violations of women's rights that regularly occur in the countries of the "global south" (or conditionally non-Western societies) could be explained by traditions, religion, as well as the peculiarities of local legal systems.

So, are women's rights universal in today's world?

On one side - "Women's rights are human rights" is the slogan of the United Nations, the largest international organization whose mandate is to set standards in the field of human rights.

The entire second half of the 20th century passed for all humanity under the sign of a growing understanding that human rights are an absolute and unconditional value for each individual and for society as a whole, and they must belong to everyone equally regardless of gender, must be inalienable, should not be denied.

In order to achieve equality for women and men, it is necessary to fully understand how discrimination and inequality of women manifest themselves in practice and develop appropriate anti-discrimination strategies on this basis. This approach was used to develop international and regional standards, and a system of standards in the field of women's rights was created.

Partly such an approach was forced because it was not enough to declare the human right to belong to all people, it was necessary to specifically note that they belong to everyone, including women. They belong to women too.

We can now see a similar approach in relation to other groups. For example, the situation with the rights of migrants is the same - The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families secures migrants all the rights that have already been secured by other documents for all people without exception.

Under the universalist approach, states are held to be bound by the UN Charter to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the right to "be free from discrimination" is binding on all states.

On the other side - the theory of Cultural Relativism is the claim that ethical practices vary across cultures, and what is considered right in one culture may be considered wrong in another. The point of cultural relativism is that no society is superior to another, they are just different.

This approach has several implications; namely, that different societies not only have different moral codes, but also different legal standards.

In this context, the modern concept of human rights is perceived as a “Western” idea that does not take into account the specifics of other (non-Western) cultures and societies. And so universal human rights were embraced by many former colonial countries as a new form of Western imperialism.

For example, some countries have invoked the supremacy of their religious laws and, when ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, have entered reservations on points that affect social practices and marriage law. And many provisions of international treaties are formulated with a high degree of abstraction, which leaves room for their interpretation through the prism of local moral and cultural standards.

Moreover, some “Third World” feminists themselves express concerns about whether Western feminists have shown "aggressive persistence". They prefer a softer approach, trying to promote women's rights from within through the health and education systems.

Summing up, we can that cultural relativism has become a serious challenge to the idea of the universality of human rights.

Universalism presupposes the existence of the universal agreement on the interpretation and application of international human rights law, including women's rights.

Cultural relativism suggests that, up to a certain limit, states should have freedom of action regarding the interpretation of certain provisions of international treaties in accordance with the moral values of society.

When it comes to the rights and position of women, cultural relativists argue that internationally recognized human rights are not relevant to this area and that here it is necessary to adhere to the principles of cultural relativism, to be tolerant of a variety of social and cultural norms.

At the same time, the very idea of cultural relativism remains the subject of fierce debate, with women's rights at the center of it.

Thus, in my opinion, it is possible to say that there is a broad consensus that women's rights are universal.

But when we consider the problems in each particular society, we can see that this consensus, in theory, does not work in practice.

We can say that Women's rights are universal in theory, but still not always versatile in practice.

The idea of equality for all men and women is very new compared to human history, so we are still on the way to achieving equality.