

Human Rights

Human Rights refers to those rights of a man which are inalienable and which are assigned to him by the virtue of being a human personality. These rights are universal and are based on the inherent dignity of human beings. These rights are considered to be above all the national or legal consideration of world and are same for all human beings irrespective of their class, creed or colour. The genesis of the concept of human rights in the contemporary sense is the belief in the sacredness of human personality. This sacredness is supposed to be universal and absolute at ideal and conceptual levels at least. It has some consequences which mean that certain choices should be made for all human beings and certain choices should be rejected for all human beings. It refers to human dignity as something which should be respected in its own right.

Human rights refers to some of the basic rights of individual as of life, freedom from slavery, poverty, oppression, of choice, expression and assembly. Some philosophers as Karel Vasak divide them in three generations. First generation refers to civil and political rights, second generation refers to economic, social and cultural rights, third generation deals with solidarity rights as of peace and to clean our environment. However some philosophers do not agree with this division and assert that these all rights are interconnected for example the right of political participation is connected with the education. Philosophers like John Lock developed the concept of natural rights, the notion that people possess certain rights by virtue of being human. Lock's natural rights did not rely on citizenship nor any law of state, nor were necessarily limited to one particular ethnic, culture or religious groups.

United Nations approved its Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, appalled by the violence and atrocities of world wars. The declaration is a detail document that clearly enumerates the rights of an individual. Though the document has no legal bounding but still it emphasizes on the basic rights which states should protect. These rights include equality as all human beings are equal. No discrimination can be, and should made on the base of nation, religion, sex or colour. The declaration recognizes the freedom of individual in all respect. It ascertain his political participation and provide security against poverty, unemployment, corruption and violence of all sorts. In short

declaration clearly exhibits all rights that should be provided to a person in a respectable and liberal society. The declaration has 30 articles and it also assigns some duties to individuals to abide by their respective domestic laws for the welfare and peace in any society.

UDHR is not the only declaration that emphasizes the dignity and worth of an individual and recognizes his rights. Several other declarations were adopted by UN for example, The International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. These declarations came into force in 1961 and 1976 respectively. Many states have included some of these rights in their laws and there are numerous IGOs and NGOs working both on national and international levels to safeguard the rights of man.

The discussion on human rights is not new but is also found in history in different ages. Ur-Nammu the king of Ur created the first legal code in 2050 BC. Cyrus Cylinder the Persian king in 6th century BC established the unprecedented principles of human rights. After his conquest of Babylon in 539 BC the king issued a declaration which is recognized by many today as the first document on Human rights. It provides freedom of religion and freedom from slavery. The most modern examples are seen in the American Revolution in the eighteenth century of United States Revolution of 1776 and of France in 1789. The US declaration of independence includes concepts of national rights and famously states, "All men are created equal, they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among them are life, liberty and pursuit of happiness". French constituent Assembly passed a declaration of Rights of Man and Citizens which was indeed a revolutionary step at that time. Rights of equality, security, property, freedom and participation in politics were recognized and stressed.

Human Rights and religion, is a much discussed debate. Some link the early recognitions of human rights with religion as every religion teaches its followers certain values and principles to respect certain rights and uphold them. On the other hand some averred that religions have played a part in curtailing the rights of man and has divided the humanity in different sects and nations. Both arguments carry weight as religions do inculcate respect of human rights to some extent but it has also given rise to discriminations of different sort. It is evident as some religion do teach to discriminate

on the base of caste system. Perhaps that is the reason why western world was forced to restrict the religions to churches and was made a private affair as its all provisions were not applicable to the notion of human rights in modern world.

Islam is also criticized by some ignorant forces as limiting the human rights though the presumption is made on of lack of knowledge. Islam in fact professed the same Rights of man about fourteen centuries ago which modern west has retrieved just a century or two ago. Human rights have been given a special place in Islamic teachings. Islam with its universal teachings also gives rights to man that can be applicable in all ages and all countries. Besides It has also assign some responsibilities and duties to an individual that ensure the rights of other people.

After migration Holy Prophet (PBUH) introduced a charter in Madina which guarantees protection of Religion, life and safeguard property. After the conquest of Makkah Holy Prophet (PBUH), setting an excellent example, showed forbearance and statmanship by forgiving every one and providing general amnesty. Human rights as recognized by Islam are mentioned clearly in Holy Quran, the constitutional source of Islam. Islam clearly protect the right of life of everyone whether be a muslim or non-muslim. Holy Quran tells, "Do not kill a soul which Allah has made sacred expect through due process of law" . Here the guarantee of life is not just given to muslims but to all humanity regardless of religion. At another place it is stated , "If anyone slew a person unless it be for murder or spreading mischief on land it would be as if he had slain the whole humanity" . Rights of property of an individual is recognized and is given safeguard. Holy Prophet (PBUH) said, "your lives and properties are forbidden to one another---". Islam asks its followers to adopt fair dealing and justice, "Be just it is next to piety and fear Allah". Holy Prophet (PBUH) directs muslims to be just to everyone to, muslims non-muslims, relatives, pors and orphans. Islam recognizes the right of men to be equal it clearly tells everyone, "No Arab has superiority over a non-Arab nor does a white man have any superiority over a black man. You all are children of Adam and Adam is created from clay". Islam give political rights to man and recognizes his right to protest against a ruler. Holy Prophet (PBUH) has regarded the protest against a tyrant to be the best form of Jihad. Islam also ensures the rights of poor and needy. It advises the distribution of wealth. The system of zakat is in fact to a way to fulfill the needs of pors and unprivileged people as a share of needy people is fixed in one's income and property. This helps alleviating the

poverty in a society. Islam safeguard the rights of slaves, freeing slave is regarded as very pious act which will save one from the fire of hell and freeing slave also means to get rid of sins. Masters are urged to treat them compassionately "You should feed them on what you eat, clothe them as you clothe yourself". Women are given special respect and rights. Islam raised the status of women by the assertion that heaven lies beneath the feet of mother. Women are given security and have right of education, property and of doing business. They are required to cover their bodies so that they may be saved from many vices in society. Islam protects the rights of minorities without any discriminations. Holy Quran clearly states "There is no compulsion in religion". Rulers are answerable before their subjects and to God too for their subjects. Minorities are allowed to follow their religions and to spend their lives as according to their religions. So Islam present universal values that are applicable in all ages and also in all societies. So a religion like Islam helps to understand the human rights and ensure their providence in all circumstances.

Despite of high sounding words of different declarations, IGOs and NGOs the current situation of human rights is far from satisfactory in this modern age. There has been great violations of human rights from time to time in different parts of the world. No country or society can claim that it is protecting human rights. Human being have been made subject to different persecutions in even this advance age.

Poverty, corruption, unemployment, illiteracy and crimes against women are the problem of each and every country. Some asserts that the condition of human rights is even bitter in third world, in the under-developing and developing countries. The assertion seems correct if we take a look at these societies. At the some places the living standard is awfully low. Poverty is a curse on these countries. People are living worst kind of life full of wants. Moreover all other institutions are not working properly because of several reasons. Poverty is not just a problem but it may be called the mother of many problems. Corruption, crimes, illiteracy, child labour and discrimination against women all these problems to some extent are linked with the poverty. So how can be the human rights be upheld and protected when the ground realities are so bleak. Literacy rates of these countries are very low. Though the different IGOs and NGOs are working to improve the situation but the scale of problem is so immense that it is just not making very little difference.

Pakistan like many other developing countries is suffering from human rights violations at different levels. Its poverty level is very high and people are unable to fulfill their very basic needs of food, clothing and shelter. The situation of unemployment is disheartening. There are a large number of educated young men deprived of their rights to earn a respectable living for themselves and their family. Corruption is the order of day. The basic right of justice is beyond the reach of a common man. The law courts and judicial system is slow and fail to provide the justice to general public. The curtailment of the rights of expression and other freedoms under military rules have been frequent in history. Even the question of democracy is doubtful.

What more is the human rights violations against women. The inhuman and un-Islamic practices such as "karokaree", "vanni", marriages with Quran and honour killing are prevalent in different parts of the country. Despite some efforts of government and private sector such crimes against humanity are still uncontrollable. The treatment of women in lower classes is worse than animals. Domestic violence against women is frequently reported. Although many cases are not even publicized or known to general public. Child labour is another very important problem. Children of very tender age are seen to be working for their large families. The very age of education and personality building is wasted. Thus the literacy rate is very low. Many children are deprived of their very basic right of education. The conditions of jail are even worst. Torture and degrading behaviour of Police is also a menace. The worst example of this is the very recent incident of stitching the lips of a prisoner by jail authorities. Freedom of press as well as of expression, though better than past, still is far from satisfactory.

So we see the human rights situation is very discouraging in the third world and developing countries but to say that human rights are just violated in these areas and that the so called modern countries are exempt from it is a big lie. Here in modern world if we do not see the worst kinds of poverty or other such problems (though these are present here too) but here many other violations are committed. Here we see the racial discriminations. In fact west is more involved in human rights violations than any other country.

Seen from a historical point of view the whole history of colonialization and of western empires tells the story of racial, colour and religious discrimination. Moreover West has on its credit the two bloody world wars which must have caused much human rights violations than can be

imagined. Their economic, social and cultural repercussions are numerous. Holocaust (if it is true), the genocide of Bosnia and Rwanda are the worst examples of human rights violations. But this is the only picture of past. Today the situation is not better. Discriminations of different sorts are seen here. Blacks complain of the colour and racial discriminations are still in practice. Muslims living in those western countries also have to suffer with this kind of discrimination. The bans on scarfs of muslim is a flagrant violation of human rights. They are not allowed to spend their lives according to their religious teachings. The occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan are also worst examples. On the other hand muslims are also persecuted in other parts of world like Kashmire and Palistine.

We are here confronting a very contradictory situation here. India which claims to be the largest democracy of the world is committing worst kind of human rights violations in Kashmire. On the other hand United states also claims to be one of the largest democracies of the world but abroad it is encroaching the liberty rights of Afghanies and Iraqies. In fact she has been subjected to the criticism of many human rights organizations for this behaviour.

Perhaps the worst examples of human right violation are the prisons of Abu Grab in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. The inhuman treatment to the prisoners of these jails is not a secret any more. Press and media has revealed the atrocities and degrading behaviour that these prisoners have to suffer by US troops. The so called democratic values of US troops have been seen by the entire world. So the situation of human rights in modren world is not better .

To improve the situation on the International level need stern efforts by Goverments and also by the International organizations is needed. What is all the more important is the collective will to improve the situation. The International Organizations like United Nations need be made more potent so that the international decisions can not be made arbitrarily by some powers. Equality of countries in all these forums is very important for the equality of manking. The developing countries should be helped to tackle the problems like proverty, unemployment and illiteracy without. Goverments on the other hands should ensure the human rights conditions in their respective countries. Democratic values in true sense need to be make prevalent in many countries. States should provide special care to children and take some important measures to eradicate child labour. Education

should be made free and for all. Governments should take steps to give special place to the awareness of human rights in curriculums. Educational systems should inculcate these values and human rights in young minds. Discriminations of all kind whether be of racial, religious or sex should be eliminated. The international situation of human rights can not be improved unless the burning issues like Kashmir and Palestine are solved according to the wishes of their people. US should also be urged to withdraw their troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. Contradictions of all sorts should be revealed and ended.

So human rights are based on man's dignity and civilized nations should provide the assurance of these rights to its civilians. Mankind in this age of reason and technology need to be freed from the racial and religious discriminations. International bodies, Governments as well the learned scholars of world should play their active role in this regard only then mankind claims to be civilized.

Woods are lovely dark and deep
But i have promises to keep
And miles to go before i sleep
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