



Role of Media in Protection of Human Rights (An analytical Study of Few Newspaper)

Abdullah

Research Scholar Department of Mass Communication Assam University, Silchar, Assam

Akhtar Hussain

Centre Manager Oil India Super 30, CSRL Guwahati.

ABSTRACT

Rights, freedom and privileges are such a basic part of human Nature these cannot be taken away. Every person by virtue of his humanity is entitled to certain natural rights is a recurring theme throughout the history of mankind.

Main functions of Mass Media are to inform, educate and entertain the readers, listeners and viewers. Mass Media can play a vital role in educating its readers on human rights subject by providing news stories and articles on violations, concerned details, importance, etc. in their medium and focus attention on people and areas in need of the protection of human rights and pursue their case till they achieve them. Gradually, this approach would develop as awareness and they would start behaving in the society with more maturity and with respect for others.

Media can also give publicity to the individuals and organisations, which are engaged in securing human rights. This will encourage as well as motivate others to do the similar work.

This paper attempt to present the role of Media (Newspaper) in protecting and promoting human rights in the society.

KEYWORDS : Human Rights, Media, Protection, Newspaper, Magna Carta, French Declaration, Fourth Estate, Communalism.

Full Paper:

Alexander Solzhenitsyn was rightly said that ***“Justice is conscience, not a personal conscience but the conscience of the whole of the Humanity.”*** The name of the justice should not be allowed to be invoked only for the prolongation of the pursuit of vindictive retaliation.

Men are born and remain free and equal in Rights. Social distinctions may be based only on common utility. The truth has to be holding self-evident, that all men are created equal, that their creator endows them with certain inalienable Rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Human Right is a birth right. Everyone born possesses such inherent Rights, irrespective of the sex, caste, creed, race and religion. It is an integral Right of the Human being and also it has been incorporated in almost all the constitutions across the globe. It is an immaterial that you call these Rights as inherent Rights, Fundamental Rights or by any other name.

Human Rights are generally defined as the Rights, which every Human being is entitled to enjoy and to have protected. It means the right relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the constitution or embodied in the international covenants and enforced by the courts in India. Rights, freedoms and privileges are such a basic part of human nature these cannot be taken away.

Human Rights can be traced back thousands of years from the Vedas to the Hammurabi Code to the Magna Carta, the French Declaration of Human Rights, and the American Bill of Rights. Time and history shows again that the existence of human rights has been recognised and accepted as a necessary component for the wellbeing of civilisation at any given time.

This is very unfortunate, that most of the people are still unaware about their rights. According to a recent survey conducted by Amnesty International, the largest human rights organisations in the world, only 8% of adults and 4% of youth in the United States are aware of “foundation stone for human rights”.

Human rights enable us to respect each other and live with each other peacefully. In other words, these are not only rights to be requested or demanded, but rights to be respected and be responsible for. It is obvious that the rights which apply to you also apply to others. Therefore these rights must be respected mutually.

The denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms is not only an individual and personal tragedy, but it also creates conditions of social and political unrest and disturbance in the country, sowing the seeds of violence and conflict within and between societies and nations.

There is a revolutionary change and growth in every sphere of life especially in the field of communication and media. Media today, plays a decisive role in the development of society. Thus the role of media in protection of human rights cannot be ignored or minimized.

There is no doubt that Media can play a vital role in promoting and protecting human rights within the society, country and in the universe. Because the fundamental objective of Media is to serve the people with news, views, comments and information on matters of public interest, in a fair, accurate, impartial, sober and decent manner.

Main functions of Mass Media are to inform, educate and entertain the readers, listeners and viewers. Mass Media can educate its readers on human rights subject by providing news stories and articles on violations, concerned details, importance, etc. in their medium. Gradually, this approach would be developed as awareness and people would start behaving in the society with more maturity and with respect for others.

The press has acquired the powerful and unique status of “Fourth Estate”. It is supposed to play a key role and a crucial role of a watchdog, to see that the other three institutions “Legislature, Executive and Judiciary” function fairly to serve the people for whose welfare they were created within the constitutional framework. Mass media as a watchdog and a fourth organ has also the responsibility to help in building the nation. It has also to promote social justice, equality, equity as well as unity and peace that bring overall happiness in the nation in general. Another important aspect to be considered as a main function of mass media is to implement objectives of the Constitution.

Media can perform its role in different ways. It can make people aware of their rights, expose its violations and focus attention on people and areas in need of the protection of human rights and pursue their case till they achieve them.

With the enormous power the press exercises it should take lead in the nation building activities. It can promote unity and fraternity, tolerance towards minorities and other religions, at the same crusading against communalism, corruption, casteism, violence and criminalization of politics.

As long as there exists social and economic inequalities within the society and between the nations, states, so long as vast sections of humanity continue to be deprived of their basic social and economic human rights, and so long as some sections in the society, and some nations in the world community, continue to possess surplus economic power with the help of which they can dominate, conflicts of one kind or the other will continue to crop up.

Media must have its fingers on the pulse of the people and has a pious obligation not to jeopardise or harm the welfare of the society. Mahatma Gandhi said "The news paper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges the whole country side and devastates crops even so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy".

Mass media has an imperative role to play in crisis situations. Religious and communal harmony should never get disturbed in a society wedded to the concept of welfare state and secularism. The conflicts within a society arise mainly on account of social and economic inequalities, class and caste antagonism, religious and ethnic fanaticism, regional and language chauvinism, racial prejudices and intolerance.

Newspapers are not to be expected to publish anything which has a tendency to malign or hurt the sentiments of any community or section of society. Journalists are an important wing of Fourth Estate because they shape the opinion and attitude of many citizens regarding religion, race, caste etc. They can also like wise whip up their feelings either by design or inadvertently which lead to disturbance and disrupts public order. Reporting or commenting on communal or religious issues particularly of inflammatory nature should be with utmost restraint and responsibility.

Justice P.B. Sawant (Chairman PCI of that time) has emphasised the need for the media to focus on issues related to human rights violations. In an interview to the "Times of India" Justice Swant said, "Newspaper usually do not report these issue because this kind of news does not sell and therefore, does not help in increasing circulation"

The role of legislators and the courts in their efforts to maintain "rule of law", usher in "economic and social justice" and administrative apparatus needed for securing the advantages and benefits to weaker sections have been described at length. However, the media in the country has been playing a very significant role to the cause of social justice in a variety of ways. Despite the criticism that the media is not playing its rightful role and engaging himself in politics of the day to the neglect of portraying the good work done by all the sectors concerned with the task of promoting social justice, it is necessary to point out the good work done by the media and its potentialities and capabilities to play a more vital role in future.

Here researcher would like to present some extracts from different newspaper of the country which prove that newspapers are playing very significant role in promoting and protecting of Human Rights.

Deccan Herald in its issue of 28th Nov. 2002 reported that "A 65- year old man is suspected to have died of hunger at Chamarajapet police station limits in Bangalore. The identity of the deceased is yet to be established. This report is related to economic and social rights which beautifully rose by Deccan Herald.

The Hindu in its issue of 20th Nov. 2002, published a news which is related to "Women's Rights" that "Karnataka might be emerging as progressive state but certain urban areas in the state are gaining an unsavoury reputation for having very low child sex ratio (female per 1000 males in the age group of 0-06) according to the census 2001 report the child sex ratio (CSR) in urban areas of six districts in the state is less than 930 female per 1000 males, which is alarmingly low compared to districts. They include urban pockets of Belgaum (921) Bijapur (915) Gulbarga (920) Bidar (923) Bagalkot (910) and Bangalore rural (926) districts.

An important report related to Indian's Health was published in Times of India (15th Nov. 2002) was "of India One billion populations, 30 million suffer from diabetes. By 2025 this number might well increase to 60 million and sadly only a fraction of these are diagnosed and given proper treatment.

The New Indian Express in its issue of 3rd Nov. 2002 reported under the Headline "Children of a lesser God" There are an estimated 60000 street kids in Vijayawada. Every day hundreds board trains bound for all corners of the country and a few hundred reach the station as cleaners and beggars. At least 10000 of them indulge in unsafe sex and have one or the venereal disease, according to the study done by a NGO, Andhra Pradesh State Aids control society says 3.6 percent of HIV cases are children under 14 years.

Apart from these thousands of examples can be presented about different issue related to Human Right from the different newspaper of the country.

Conclusion:

However, there is no full fledge perfection in observing humanrights all over the world, but most developed countries have achieved higher level of protection of human rights followed by developing countries. Thus, citizens have been able to achieve a better quality of life – a life with dignity and respect. It is also a fact that the nations having democracy and more democratic values have a better level of understanding and protection of their human rights. Another important solid factor that can be considered in regards to higher spread of human rights is in nations where journalism is wide spread and particularly newspapers and other mass media are enjoying more freedom of expression and free press environment has definitely helped in creating more awareness about human rights.

The media and human rights NGOs are helpful to each other in the fight against human rights violations. These NGOs serve as „monitors“ and „sources of information“ for human rights stories. The NGOs can use the global media to highlight abuses, which in turn will „shame“ abusers to put an end to their attitude, while information released by them could be used by the media as news stories. In Nigeria, an NGO- Prisoners Rehabilitation and Welfare Action (PRAWA), with the help of a donor organisation, produced a film titled: „The rights of Prisoners“. The film was „aimed at increasing awareness on the condition of Nigerian prisons and the plights of inmates“

REFERENCES

Charter of the United Nations, Art. 55(c) | David Wolman, The Instigators, at location 400 (Kindle ed. 2011). | Journalism, Media and the Challenge of Human Rights Reporting, 2002 ISBN 2-940259-23-2 | Preamble, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948. | Sarah Joseph: Social Media, Political Change, and Human Rights Volume 35 | Issue 1 | Syed M.H. Human Rights: The New Era, 2003 pg. 53 | Yasin, Adil-ul and Archana Upadhyay, Human Rights, (New Delhi, 2004), p. VIII | http://eeas.europa.eu/human_rights/guidelines/index_en.htm | www.mediatrust.org (REPORTING human rights A practical guide for journalists | www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/GC34.pdf | www.presswise.org.uk |