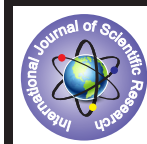


Human Rights: A Critical Perspective



Political Science

KEYWORDS :

Dr N. M. Sali

Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Karnatak University, Dharwad.

Introduction:

Rights are opportunities essential for development of human dignity, faculties and personality. In their negative aspect, rights protect one against arbitrary behavior of another person, and of the State machinery. In positive aspect, they promote human aspirations. Human Rights are categorized as political, civil, social, economic and cultural. These are rights to life, liberty, equality, employment, education, practice any faith, etc.

Some rights, particularly political and economic, are allowed to citizens only, the rest are for all to enjoy in a democracy. Rights enlarge the area of freedom, offer security from violence and discriminatory treatment and are expected to ensure general protection against all kinds of oppression. A right is a social concept. Without a society, conscious of common moral and social interests and obligations there may not be any right. There is likely to be display of power and might be comes rights, but rights do not become might. The Right to justice is among the foremost human right. As stated above to exercise a right there is need of power. Without power to exercise right, the right is meaningless.

Government's world over is today championing the cause of human rights. While doing so they are not only voicing their concern within their nations but are also showing concern for violations of Human Rights in nations outside their boundaries irrespective of how powerful the nations are. As America's influence wanes, others have taken on this mantle. China is hardly a leader on human rights. So also, Russia, Chechnya and European Union. If this is the situation, with the developed world the developing world seem to have changed their attitude and are looking forward to champion this cause.

Changes needed:

Today, as a growing number of governments stand for periodic election and speak for the aspirations of their people, they should be guided in their dealings with other governments by concern for the same rights that their own citizens embrace. All that one notice at this stage is that the status quo reflects an unacceptable abdication of leadership. However, it must be noted that there is no contention of serious variety to this question of the need for effective global leadership to human rights. September 2005 must be seen as a milestone in this direction because; the governments of the world in a historic declaration embraced the doctrine of responsibility to protect people facing mass atrocities.

If Latin America and other countries in Africa and Asia have actively welcomed human rights scrutiny, others have played an increasingly important role in promoting the application of international standards of Human Rights globally. In spite of this what is true is the fact that the world body like the United Nations is still far off in having the moral courage to insist upon nations to upgrade their credibility in matters of Human Rights, as they are still dependent on the nations, which are highly elusive.

Despite this, the usual political cowardice when it comes to military deployments to prevent mass murder accounts for some of the inaction bringing mass murders to justice, particularly in Uganda. The problems of Terrorism where civilians are madly murdered for political ends remains acceptable in too many parts of the world.

Every government these days seems to have a ready excuse for ignoring human rights. Highbrow pronouncements on every occasion possible come from capitals or from their ambassadors,

but without the sustained follow up. They seem to forget their own pronouncements and toy with the idea that all is well. This in my opinion is the scant respect the breed of leaders is having for the Human Rights. It is in this context that I would like to argue for a change in the leadership. Commitments are one thing but actions are the needed follow through. Therefore hoping for better leadership or for better understanding by the existing leadership of the magnitude of the Human rights problem is in fact the need of the hour.

The intergovernmental institution devoted to addressing these problems the new UN Human Rights Council has yet to show any real improvement over its ineffectual predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights. A central duty of the council is to pressure highly abusive governments to change. That requires a series of graduated steps that can lead to the deployment of human rights monitors or public condemnation. This failure threatens to call into question whether the United Nations is capable of upholding global human rights standards?

Dependency on Human Rights:

Women in state custody face sexual assault by their jailers. Husbands and other male family members obstruct or dictate women's access to reproductive health care. Doctors and government officials disproportionately target women from disadvantaged or marginalized communities for coercive family planning policies.

Most of these are done behind the iron curtains of culture/family reputation/society as standard setter and the like. Excuses that suits the male or the intended family or members of a society. All that is needed at this juncture is to expose and denounce these as human rights violations since these practices and policies silence and subordinate women. We live in a world in which women do not have basic control over what happens to their bodies. Millions of women and girls are forced to marry men they do not desire. Women are unable to depend on the government to protect them from physical violence in the home, with sometimes-fatal consequences, including increased risk of HIV/AIDS infection.

There is today a dire need to reject specific legal, cultural, or religious practices by which women are systematically discriminated against, excluded from political participation and public life, segregated in their daily lives, raped in armed conflict, beaten in their homes, denied equal divorce or inheritance rights, killed for having affairs, forced to marry, assaulted for not conforming to gender norms, and sold into forced labor. Substantiation for this however comes from the argument that these are not human rights abuses but are cultural norms. The need of the hour is to promote women's equal rights and human dignity.³ The realization of women's rights is a global struggle based on universal human rights and the rule of law. It requires all of us to unite in solidarity to end traditions, practices, and laws that harm women. It is a fight for freedom to be fully and completely human and equal without apology or permission. Ultimately, the struggle for women's human rights must be about making women's lives matter everywhere all the time. In practice, this means taking action to stop discrimination and violence against women.

One of the greatest challenges of governments today is to make societies across the globe respect for women's rights a more permanent and central part of the international human rights agenda. However, government's reluctance to promote respect for women's rights systematically and thoroughly undercut

these gains every day. Many governments commitment to women's human rights remained at best tenuous and at worst non-existent. The international women's rights community moved forward, pressing to protect women's bodily integrity and right to sexual autonomy, to examine the ways that race or ethnicity and gender intersect to deny women human rights, and to protect women from gender specific violations of the laws of war.

Conclusion:

The international women's human rights movement functioned as the antidote to government complacency and lack of commitment. In every arena, women's rights activists challenged governments cursory commitment to women's human rights.⁴ Toward the end of 2000, in part as a result of an ongoing campaign by women's rights and peace activists to highlight the particular insecurity of women in times of armed conflict, both the U.N. Security Council and the European parliament adopted resolutions on women and peace building, that explicitly called on governments to ensure that women participate both in peace negotiations and post conflict reconstruction planning. Women's rights activists in Peru caused the government to modify its domestic violence law in January 2001 so that conciliation sessions between abusers and victims were no longer mandatory. At the United Nations world Conference Against Racism*, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (WCAR*), women's rights activists successfully worked to have the final document reflect how sex and race intersected to render wom-

en vulnerable to sexual violence in armed conflict and to trafficking, and reinforced women's right to transfer their nationality, on an equal basis with men, to their children. In mid October 2001, activists rallied to press the Ethiopian government to lift a ban on the only women's rights organization advocating for women's rights in Ethiopia.

As states and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) throughout the world prepared for the WCAR, women's human rights activists explored the intersection between race, ethnicity, or religion and gender and the impact of this intersection on women's ability to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms. Likewise, women were vulnerable to trafficking into forced labor, not just, because they were poor and uneducated, (case of Hyderabad in focus) but also because in many counties their poverty and illiteracy was a function of discrimination against women of a particular race, ethnicity, or religion. But the impact of this convergence of racism and sexism did not end with women experiencing trafficking related human rights violations: it also affected how government officials, such as police and prosecutors, in both sending and receiving countries perceived them. Governments defended these discriminatory laws and practices as essential to maintaining the integrity of religion and culture. As an academic I deem it as my responsibility to; share my concerns with the larger population and those interested in specifics of Human Rights.

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