

THE SOCIO –ECONOMIC SECURITY THREATS AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN INDIA: A STUDY OF THE INTER – LINKAGES

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ABSTRACT

Economic security was always a vital and immediate concern of the developing countries. Following decolonization, the third world leaders have recognized economic development and consolidation of state legitimacy as the two primary concerns and India has been no exception to this. With the failure of the old strategy of autonomous development, the state today is in most cases undergoing a fundamental shift from a leader in a relatively controlled economy to manager in a relatively free market. The decreasing ability of the state to control the economic life within its jurisdiction, in turn pressurizes the states in attempting to meet its welfare goals. As economics go increasingly global, the state's control over economic activity declines. The economic fate of its people is determined ever more by forces outside its borders. The recession in the American economy, which began with the crash of the Lehman Brothers at the beginning of the year 2008, has adversely affected the world economy. The Indian economy has also been hard- hit by this global economic phenomenon rendering many Indians jobless.¹

KEYWORDS: *Decolonization, Economic Development and Consolidation, Primary Concerns*

INTRODUCTION

Apart from this, India, like all other South Asian states are still struggling to grapple with the twin consequences of the past experiences of colonial exploitation along with the new realities of globalization, which has led to the various economic security threats within the country. These threats in a chain reaction leading to various social security problems, thus, endangering Human Rights of the people within India. But, before we proceed further to analyze the various ways in which the socioeconomic security threat factors endanger Human Security within the country, let us attempt a definition of Human Security and Human Rights in order to trace its inter-linkages in theory.

The Concept of Human Security and Human Rights according to the Human Development Report

Conceptualization of human security and the nature of the debate on it actually depend on the views of a country, organization, individual, scholars and analysts of the state, society, power, the international system, security referents and the need for ameliorating people's plight. The Socio-Economic security falls under the larger ambit of Human Security which can be related, if not traced back to the growing dissatisfaction with the prevailing notions of security and development in the 1960s, 70s and 80s. In the middle of the 1970s in International Relations, the home of security studies and the Multi-National World Order Models Project (WOMP) drew attention to the problem of individual well – being and safety.²

Published in the same year as the Haq monograph was the UNDP's *Human Development Report* of 1994 which includes a section on human security. Called "Redefining Security: The Human Dimension" (hereafter "the Report"), it purports to offer a thoroughgoing alternative to traditional security and a necessary supplement to human development. The Report answers the question of "security for whom" by reference to traditional notions of security. Traditional notions of security were concerned with "security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy, or as global security from the threat of nuclear holocaust. It has been related more to nation-states than to people."³ Thus, the Report insists, as did Haq, that the referent object of human security is individual or people. In support of this contention, the Report cites the founding document of the UN and its original delineation of security as "freedom from fear" as also "freedom from want" and "the equal weight to territories and to the people" that that distinction implied. Beyond these generalities, the Report lists seven "components" or, in terms of our schema, seven specific values of human security: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security.⁴ Thus, economic security has been defined under this report as an individual's enjoyment of a basic income, either through gainful employment or from a social safety net. The report drew a distinction between Human Rights and socio-economic security by

Categorizing Protection of Human Rights under Political Security

Meaning of Human Rights

Human beings are born equal in dignity and rights. Therefore, the values such as divinity dignity and equality which form the basis of these rights are inherent in human nature. These are moral claims which are inalienable and inherent in all individuals by virtue of their humanity alone, irrespective of caste, color, creed, and place of birth, sex, cultural difference or any other consideration. These claims are articulated and formulated in what is today known as human rights. Human rights are sometimes referred to as fundamental rights, basic rights, inherent rights, natural rights and birthrights.⁵

Definition of Human Rights

Dr. Justice Durga Das Basu defines "Human rights are those minimal rights, which every individual must have against the State, or other public authority, by virtue of his being a member of the human family, irrespective of any consideration. Durga Das Basu's definition brings out the essence of human rights."⁶ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948, defines human rights as "rights derived from the inherent dignity of the human person." Human rights when they are guaranteed by a written constitution are known as "Fundamental Rights" because a written constitution is the fundamental law of the state. Section 2 (d) of the Act defines "human rights" as "rights relating to life, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the Constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by courts in India".⁷

All human rights are indivisible, whether they are civil and political rights, such as the right to life, equality before the law and freedom of expression; economic, social and cultural rights, such as the rights to work, social security and education, or collective rights, such as the rights to development and self-determination, are indivisible, interrelated and interdependent. The improvement of one right facilitates advancement of the others. Likewise, the deprivation of one right adversely affects the others.

Human Rights: Protection and Violations in India

Human rights in India is an issue which is further complicated by the country's large size, its tremendous diversity, its status of being a sovereign, secular, democratic republic. The Constitution of India provides for Fundamental rights, which include Freedom of Religion. Clauses also provide for Freedom of Speech, as well as separation of executive and judiciary and freedom of movement within the country and abroad. Human Rights watch stated India had "significant human rights problems". They identified lack of accountability for security forces and impunity for abusive policing, including "police brutality, extrajudicial killings, and torture" as major problems.⁸ A major cause of Human Rights violations in India can be attributed to the various socio-economic security threat factors, Poverty, unemployment, underdevelopment and the related social problems inherent in a developing country.

The Socio – Economic Security threats and Violations of Human Rights in India

Although attempts have been made for the protection of Human Rights in India Poverty, Unemployment, Underdevelopment and the related social problems have always undermined the Human Rights issues in India. Now let us discuss some of the major economic and the resultant social security threat problems and how they threaten Human Rights in India. Since both the economic and social security factors are interrelated, they have been referred to as socio--economic security threats.

Human Poverty in India

One of the most important socioeconomic security threats in India is Human Poverty. Poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities for living a tolerable life. A complete idea of poverty can be derived in terms of deprivations and not merely in terms of income, as it is only in the deprivations of the life that people lead, can poverty manifest itself. Here the choices and opportunities are those which are most basic to human development which are denied, i.e., to lead a long, healthy, creative life and to enjoy a decent standard of living, freedom, dignity, self respect and the respect of others. Thus, it can be said that Human Poverty is one of the major factors that lead to Human Rights violations in India.

The human poverty index introduced in *The Human Development Report 1997*, in an attempt to bring together in a composite index the different features of deprivation in the quality of life to arrive at an aggregate judgment on the extent of poverty in a community. Since the issues of poverty in the developing countries involve hunger, illiteracy, epidemics and the lack of health services or safe water, the Human Poverty Index constructed by the Human Development Report focuses on the deprivation on the three elements of human life- **longevity, knowledge indicators and a decent standard of living**. These major indicators have been used to measure human poverty, which have been found to be quite high in India.⁹ On analyzing these indicators in the context of India enables us to realize how poverty undermines Human Rights in India.

For example, *the first is deprivation which relates to survival* where the vulnerability to death at a relatively early age is observed. It is represented in the human poverty index by the percentage of people expected to die before 40 years of age. Dying before the age of 40 is a major deprivation. In India 15.5 per cent of the people are not expected to survive to this age.

The Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), which is a telling indicator of the level of mass well-being, showed a rise in IMR in many states of India like Rajasthan, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.¹⁰

The third aspect being a decent standard of living is represented by a composite of two variables-i.e., the percentage of the population not using improved water resources and ii. The percentage of children under five who are underweight. Deprivation in economic provisioning is also high in India. In recent years, though accessibility of people to improved water has somewhat increased, a little less than half of the children under five years of age remain underweight.¹¹ The World Bank's "*World Development Report 2011*" estimated that in the time-span of 2000-8, 43.5% of Indian children suffered from malnutrition. (The figure for China was 6.8).¹² The data in *WDR 2012*, updated to cover the period 2004-9, shows that the percentage for India remains exactly the same. (China's has dropped even more to 4.5%, establishing the real impact that growth there has had on the lives of the poor.)¹³

An assessment of the performance of the country's health – related indicators would suggest that significant gains have been made over the years but, despite the progress India fares poorly in most of the indicators in comparison to a number of developing countries like China and Srilanka.¹⁴

Food Security

Food Security can be regarded as one of the consequences of human poverty. The Indian Experience of 'economic liberalization, stabilization, and structural adjustment programmers', under the tutelage of the international lending agencies- the International lending agencies- the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, in order to pay their external payment deficits has been similar to that of dozens of other countries: reduction in growth and rise in poverty, especially rural poverty and the food security in particular of the concerned countries, and India is no exception to this phenomenon.¹⁵

The plight of the people and the spectre of food insecurity thus, depriving the people of their basic right to food and life continues even in the new millennium. It came to limelight with the death of five tribes due to starvation in July 2004, in Amlashole, in the Midnapore District of West Bengal. In June 2011 again death due to lack of food was reported in a Tumkashole village in West Midnapore, situated 25kms away from Amlashole. The villagers were facing starvation as they had no work or enough food in stock. Similar allegations also poured in from villages in Ranibandh (Bankura) and Joypur (Purulia), but the concerned authorities did not admit that these were starvation deaths.¹⁶

Unemployment

Most of the unemployment in India is definitely structural which is caused by structural changes in the economy like 1) decline in demand 2) disinvestment, 3) reduction in its manpower requirement. Structural unemployment is a natural concomitant of economic progress and innovation in a complex industrial economy of modern times.¹⁷ Employment and unemployment can be explained on the basis of input of labor in the production process which in turn depends on the use of technology. With the modernization of the economy share of the agricultural workforce reduces due to two factors: i. The slower pace with the growth of food demand at higher levels of income, thus moderating the demand for food grains. Secondly, technology used in agriculture at higher yield levels is much less labor absorbing than traditional agriculture. Thus, during the period between 1991 – 2001 the workforce participation in the agricultural sector at the all

India level only 65% to 70. The Eleventh Five Year Plan also identified that despite the healthy GDP growth, employment in the organized sector usually declined, leading to frustration among the educated youths who have rising expectations.¹⁸

On analyzing the NSS Report No. 554, of the unemployment rate at usual status adjusted as per education level of the age group of 15- 29 years, for the year 2011-2012, it was found that higher the level of education greater was the rate of unemployment. On analyzing the Fourth Annual Employment and Unemployment Survey Report (2013- 2014), this insecurity was observed to persist. Educated youth is facing the most of the unemployment problem that shows lack of skill based employment opportunities in India. Unemployment leads to various social problems which have been discussed below. Apart from this the above data also explains the one of the growing social security threats in the form of violence against women and children, drug and human trafficking, etc. is when these frustrated and disillusioned youths take recourse to illegal means to earn money.¹⁹ These activity results in violation of Human Rights which have been analyzed below:

First, Unemployment directly violates the right of the individual against unemployment (Article 23, Universal Declaration of Human Rights).²⁰ Apart from this it deprives an individual of the basic standards of living, access to health, education and a decent standard of living.

Secondly, according to the NSS Report No. 554 most of the unemployment in urban areas being open and undisguised, leads to social tensions, which often threatens the whole fabric of the existing society. These violence leads to deaths, injuries and loss of properties, thus violating an individual's right to life, liberty and security. (Art 3, Universal Declaration of Human Rights)²¹For example, one of the main reasons that led to the ethnic crisis in Assam in the 1990s was due to the increased rate of unemployment among the original ethnic inhabitants of the place.

Thirdly, apart from the financial impact, unemployment has many social impacts, which are manifested when the unemployed, frustrated youths resort to activities like theft, violence, drug taking, crime, and other petty crimes. These activities, thus depriving the people of social security. (Article 22, Universal Declaration of Human Rights)²²

Thirdly, Unemployment is directly linked with poverty which leads to inequality, thus violating Right to Equality, as envisaged in Article of the Constitution of India.

Female Employment Rate

India's position as far as women's participation rates are concerned is placed a little higher than that of Pakistan and Bangladesh, ranging at around 16% and 23% respectively, over 78 percent in Nepal. In India they remain close to 25 percent. Multivariate analysis at the household level, using NSS data from 1983 – 2000, point out to the various demographic variables such as age, childcare responsibilities, and marital status which is responsible for the low participation.²³

2011 census data show only half as many as urban women work as their rural counterparts. India's total female population that is economically active is among the lowest in the world. Karnataka, Gujarat and Kerala is recorded to have the lowest unemployment Rate among urban Females.²⁴ Moreover, in view of lower wages for women workers for the same work and sexual harassment at the workplace it can be said that, India in a way fails to secure the women the right to choice of employment, just and favorable conditions of work and protection against unemployment, as stated in Article

23 of the Universal Declaration Of Human Rights. This lack of financial independence makes the women vulnerable to various forms of domestic violence. Thus the low female employment rate is, in a way, responsible for the rising crimes against women, like domestic violence, dowry deaths, etc. which poses to be one of the major social security threats today, which endangers Human Security in various ways.

Development- Induced Displacement

In order to achieve rapid economic growth, India has vested in industrial projects, dams, roads, mines, power plants and new cities which have been made possible only through massive acquisition of land and subsequent displacement of people.

According to the figures provided by the Indian Social Institute, the 21.3 million development- induced IDPs include those displaced by dams (16.4 million), mines (2.55 million), industrial development (1.25 million) and wildlife sanctuaries and national parks (0.6 million). Tribals formed the majority of the development-induced displaced persons. As per the Action Aid and Indian Social Institute – over 1.4 million people have been displaced from their homes in the four states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Jharkhand. A total of 10.2 million acres of land has been acquired for setting up of development projects such as mines, industrial plants and dams in the last decade. Out of the 1.4 million displaced persons in these four states, 79% were tribes.²⁵

Displacement due to the above mentioned cause leads to Human Rights violations in many ways. The victims are denied access to their own land leading to poverty and deprivation. Displacement proves to be a security threat to the actual inhabitants of the land where these displaced people take refuge. In this case a two pronged Human Rights violation is witnessed: First, deprivation in terms of food, longevity, access to health, hygiene, good standards of living etc. faced by the victims of Displacement. These people are susceptible to economic exploitations of various kinds and the women and children are vulnerable to violence of various kinds ranging from molestation, sexual harassment, to rape etc.

Secondly, the displaced people cause pressure on natural and financial resources in the place where they take refuge. Denial of basic rights, especially of the employment facilities, faced by the actual inhabitants of the land (The Bhumiputras) rise in rebellion against the displaced people, leading to ethnic strifes and violence which leads to a fresh cycle of Human Rights violation. For example the demand for a separate state of Jharkhand was led by the actual inhabitants of the land called the Dikus is a case to the point.

Terrorism, Regionalism, Insurgent, Militant Movements and Human Rights violations

Economic deprivations are one of the most important underlying causes for the vast number of cases of militancy, terrorism, regionalism against the state. The Indian Government has been plagued by terrorist activities from various quarters, ranging from its neighbor, Pakistan's Cross- border terrorism to the rise of international Jihadi Movements and the problem of Maoist insurgency. These movements, although directed against the states have resulted in gross violation of Human Rights in the form of loss of life, property and violence against women and children. The Ethnic strifes especially in the North East and in Kashmir have challenged India's role in the context of protection of Human Rights issues in India on the following grounds:

First, in each of the terrorist attacks or insurgent movement results in loss of life and property.

Secondly, the victims of this violence, like orphaned children and families of the deceased plunge into a situation of poverty, leading to the deprivation from the basic standards of living, i.e., food, clothing, shelter, education and health facilities.

Thirdly, the ethnic clashes and strifes result in a large number of displaced persons, who take refuge in refugee camps, where they live under acute poverty and unhygienic living conditions.

Fourthly, violence against women and children in striving and clashes of these types are very common. Women and children are exposed to physical and sexual harassments and assaults of various kinds, ranging from rape, torture and molestation and exploitation in all the above cases.

Fifthly, communal violence which has erupted in India now and again, has also deprived the people of their Right to Religion as guaranteed by the Constitution of India. Apart from this such violence also endangers one's Right to Life, Property and Security as mentioned earlier.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it can be said that there is an inherent link between the socioeconomic security threats and Human Rights violations in India. Rather the three moves in a vicious cycle. The absence of economic security leads to various social security problems which in turn leads to Human Rights violations. Long-term denial of Human Rights urges these hapless

People to undertake certain actions: i. in the form of rebellion against the state, ii. Ethnic upsurges and communal violence, iii. Violence against women and children like rape and molestation, iv. Kidnappings and Petty crimes, etc. thus, leading to various social security problems which in turn, jeopardize the economic security of the land, which in turn again leads to Human Rights Violations.

Thus, dealing with these socio-economic threats is a prerequisite for the protection of Human Rights in India. Therefore, steps have to be taken to combat poverty which is the main reason for most of the socio-economic problems. Keeping this in mind The Government has undertaken twenty one poverty alleviation programmes so far, like National Rural Employment programme (NREP), Drought Area Development Program (DADP), Food for Work Programme etc.²⁶

Various Employment generation programmes have been adopted by the Government so far, like, **Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY)**, Urban Self-Employment Programme (USEP) and the Urban Wage Employment which are the two special components of the SJSRY to name a few.²⁷ Recently the adoption of the 100 days work program is also an important step taken by the Government to tackle poverty, unemployment and other related socioeconomic problems. With regard to the educated urban youths, the Government must try to generate employment in accordance to one's capability and educational qualifications, or else it will lead to frustration among educated youths.

Apart from this large amount of money has been disbursed and utilized for the development of the North East regions, which are prone to ethnic violence.

For example, In 2003-04, the central allocation of Rs. 94.50 crore plus Rs. 10.50 crore for North-Eastern Region including Sikkim was fully utilized. Even 2004-05 saw the release of the entire budgetary allocation of Rs. 122.00 crore. In 2005-06, out of an allocation of Rs. 160.00 crore, Rs. 84.52 crore had been utilized until November 30, 2005.

Social Security has to be ensured by the Government, which has been adopted by the present Government in the form of The Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, The Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana, Atal Pension Yojana etc. After the success of the Jan Dhan Scheme, the Government would soon adopt the 'Jan Suraksha' social security schemes.²⁸

Apart from the Government programs the active participation of the civil society, local police stations and NGOs can make significant contributions in controlling social security threat factors which are one of the major reasons for endangering Human Rights in India.

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