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Concept of Human Rights: A Poser

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Human rights in the todays world present a common moral language applicable universally. It seeks to bring a value of freedom with equality and dignity among all human beings and strives to emphasise that all human beings should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. It is an outcome of the secularisation process started by the renaissance Europe and an attempt to liberate society from the clutches of religious priests and bigots putting obstacle in the socio-economic development process of the society. It was an endeavour to start a new moral process free from the old religious moralism. Now it is an effort of the fast globalizing society to commit itself back to the human values like peace, freedom and justice otherwise eroding in the stride.

Right from the ancient times while some societies like India have emphasized the role of 'duties' in social life rather than that of 'rights', some societies like western societies emphasised the role of human 'rights'. This difference into emphasis is due to the fact that while western society had the centrality of 'normative individualism' as their way of life, Indian society believed in the concept of 'cosmocentric man' where the concept of individual rights is minimal and duties are more emphasised. Western society largely has grown in unilinear thought systems emanating from Aristotelian reasoning where the totality of human existence is split into the categories of 'individual' and 'social'. Mostly these thought and moral systems oscillate between

these two categories viz., 'individual' and 'social', or sometimes emphasizing the former and sometimes the latter. While Marxist thought seeks to emphasise social structure over the individual freedom sometimes, like in the liberal individualistic tradition, freedom of individual and his dignity gains emphasis. The entire notion of 'humanism' strives to redress the injustices caused to the individual by the society. On the contrary communist societies take individual merely as an 'economic category' whose task is to serve the social system where individual freedom to its minimum. A tug of war between the two ideologies and the countries subscribing to these ideologies is fairly visible. China does not subscribe to the prevalent notion of 'human rights', and Americans complain of the human rights violation by China. From this it ensues that it is very difficult to adopt the concept of human rights universally due to differences in political ideologies.

I beg to submit here that this tug of war is not merely due to ideological differences but the roots are much deeper:

In fact on account of the fast changing scenario of the modern world under the impact of utilitarian values industrialization and consumerism etc the realities of life have outgrown their comprehension through traditional ideologies and thought systems. In order to face new realities of the world and life what is required now is to evolve new thinking and paradigms of analysis and understanding.

Social sciences in their over infatuation with the traditional scientific thinking have mostly confined themselves to the outer objective facts of social life, neglecting thereby many other facets of the reality. A proper understanding of the working of human consciousness and self awareness traditionally expressed through religious myths and moralism has been very largely misconstrued and left out. What is required now is to adopt a holistic and existential approach to understand the human situation which includes a proper understanding of the working of human consciousness and its manifestation in social life. Rechar Lannoy while trying to explain the working of the concept of 'Satyagraha' has very deftly shown as to how the power of 'transcendence' represented by the symbol 'zero'-state of

egolessness and peace within-worked efficaciously to solve the conflicts emerging in a social system and restore the equilibrium back. The concept of 'transcendence' works at the level of 'consciousness' where the outer contradictions are zeroed in i.e., transcended out. 'Transcendence' is defined here as '**coincidentia oppositorum**' i.e., the meeting of the opposites in compatibility rather than in conflict. To bring in such a state of consciousness requires disciplining of mind i.e., a little dose of 'spiritual literacy' obtained through the practice of contemplation, meditation, vipassana, zen etc. Indian mind and its 'philosophia-perennis' from the ages has been ingenious in this field. Ancient China too had the philosophy of 'Taoism' believing in the dictum, 'water is more powerful than the rock' and Japan practiced 'zen' to enrich life

aesthetically. Through such practiced one learns to experience the reality of 'inner life' i.e., states of peace, love and bliss immanent within one's own'm'being' obfuscated by the temptations and dilemmas of material world. This should become apart of todays education system which suffers from excessive dose of rationality, scienceticism, competitiveness and technicalism. In fact the role of 'heart' has been overpowered by the 'head' and the anchor of sensitivity is lost. Feeling of love, Ahimsa, truthfulness etc can not be taught merely through books and reasoning alone, and without the realisation of such positive values the meaning of human existence remains incomplete and unfulfilled. Without forming a base of such a consciousness charged with positive values and commensurate sensibility 'Human Rights' can not become a reality-they are likely to exist merely in the text books of history and the works of law rather than in the hearts and minds of mankind. under the influence of Judaeo-Christian and Greek thought Western thinking has mostly been rational and unilinear in nature unable to understand reality beyond logical reasoning i.e., unable to comprehend the 'complimentorities of contradiction' which prevented them to appreciate religious and soulful experiences of mankind, expressed through myths and folk traditions. Mostly subtler religious experiences were interpreted as non-sensical and fantasies, thus alienating from the existential riches of the man-kind and constricting oneself to the secularized thinking of mundane utility. This existential

shrinking of the western mind has brought the World to an anticlimax of 'one dimensional man' 'clash of civilizations' 'and perils of war.

Notion of 'human rights' in its present form to my mind seems to be quite incompetent unless it is powered by the experience of 'Ahimsa', positive 'peace' and 'inner contentment' of the 'being'. A correspondence between 'being' and 'becoming', is a must to derive a proper understanding and remedy for the today's strife torn society. Human rights' merely as secular tenets shall prove to be superfluous and ineffective unless they are buttressed and supported by the mechanisms to bring in commensurate transformation in the mind-set and attitudes of mankind and for this fresh approach to education and thought processes is necessary. In nutshell as Karl Jaspers puts 'ours is the axial age' and the time has come to introspect deeply if this planet Earth has to survive.

References:

1. See Richard Lenoy: The speaking Tree, Oxford 1976.

