

REALISATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS-ROLE OF NGO

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“The 21st Century will be an era of NGOs.”-Kofi Annan, Former UN Secretary General.

Abstract:

“Human Rights have to be claimed and exercised. This is essential for mans self respectful life. But in some situations Human Rights pertaining to liberty, security etc cannot be exercised. They are suppressed and violated. Of course there are constitutional safeguards for the exercise and protection of Human Rights. It is the constitutional duty of the government to protect the Human Rights of people. There are several national and state commissions for the purpose of protecting the Human Rights. But these commissions have certain limitations in the protection of Human Rights. Non – Government organizations (NGO’S) work for the welfare of people. These organizations also fight for the protection of Human Rights. There is hundreds of NGO’s working at the national and international level for the cause of the protection of Human Rights. We are mainly concerned with the study of some prominent NGO’s in India that work for the protection of Human Rights.”

Keywords: Human, rights, respectful, life security, government, commissions.

Introduction:

Many organisations around the world dedicate their efforts to protecting human rights and ending human rights abuses. Public support and condemnation of abuses is important to their success, as human rights organisations are most effective when their calls for reform are backed by strong public advocacy. Non Governmental Organisation is one of the examples of such groups. In every part of the globe, there are ‘Non-Governmental Organizations’ (NGOs) working every hour of the day to document the injustices heaped upon women, children and the under-class, standing beneath the bottom rung of the society. By their active campaigning, they remind governments to keep their promise in order to give practical shape to goals set by various national and international conventions on human rights. India is estimated to have between 1 million and 2 million NGOs. The NGO are a necessary corollary to the democratic machinery of the government, they are means of democratic empowerment of those who are less powerful and less advantaged as the government machinery and its authorized institution are not always sufficient to guarantee the protection of human right.

SIGNIFICANCE OF NON – GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Non government Organizations (NGO's) are voluntary organizations. They are formed by people who want to work for the welfare of people in general and the less privilege and help less in particular. The Government, central or state has its limitations in providing welfare measures like means of livelihood, education and health services to people who need them. Lack of funds, lack of manpower, public protest and pressure from political parties are some of the problems faced by the government in providing welfare

measures to people. On the other hand, NGO's have better network of manpower. These organizations are financially supported by business organizations. And, above all, NGO's have personal contact at the grass root level. Activists in these organizations have health relations or rapport with general public. And, therefore, they can serve people better than government officials in the fields like educations, protection of human rights, health, Child welfare, environment a protection, rehabilitation of displaced people etc.

OBJECTIVES

- 1 To Know the various activities being done by NGO's.
- 2 To Understand the role of some NGO's in India in protecting Human Rights.
- 3 To learn new some renounced NGO's working at national level for protecting Human Rights.

Research Methodology:

Research Design: In view of the objectives of the study listed above, exploratory research design has been adopted. Exploratory research is one, which largely interprets the already available information, and it lays particular emphasis on analysis and interpretation of the existing and available information and it makes use of secondary data.

Sources of data: The study is based on secondary data. The data has been collected from various other reports like magazines, journals, published books and official websites.

NGO' activities for the welfare of people –

1. The Social Welfare Role- where relief and charity are key actions. NGOs in this role can be seen as initiating internal programs and projects.
2. The Mediatory Role- where communication as a skill is important for development and social action. NGO in this role can be seen as participating or taking up external programs and projects.
3. The Consultative Role- where support documentation and dissemination of information and expertise is critical. NGOs in this role can be seen as working in collaborative programs. Local experts/professionals/resource persons play major secondary
4. NGO's can run educational institutions for education of the masses. They can also provide professional training to people for producing experts and technicians by running training institutions.
5. The voluntary organizations fight for the protection of human rights of people. They can file petitions in law courts for safeguarding the fundamental rights of people.
6. NGO's can undertake various activities for protecting the physical environment. They can make people aware about environmental issues and the importance of environmental protection.
7. These voluntary movements can concentrate on bringing about rural development of the country. For this purpose they can plan and undertake different activities that will lead to development in agriculture and its allied fields.
8. NGO's can provide medical assistance and health services to the needy people.
9. Activists of NGO's can arrange child welfare activities especially for undernourished, physically handicapped, mentally disabled and street children.

10. NGO's help the government to monitor the welfare activities undertaken by it. But when the government activities clash with the interests of people, NGO's oppose the government and pressurize it to act in the interests of people. Thus, these organizations work for the cause of people, help them to form favorable opinion about life, health, environmental, social and political issues. Because NGO's look towards everything from the point of common people they are, described as the eyes and ears of people.

Problems faced by NGO's.

While offering selfless services to people NGO's face the following problems.

1. NGO's find it very difficult in collecting the realistic information about the government plans policies and projects.
2. Though these voluntary organizations are fully supported by Business organizations, financial institutions etc, the funds thus raised are inadequate for managing diverse welfare activities by them.
3. Because of paucity of funds NGO's find difficulty in getting the services of experts and technicians.
4. Adequate infrastructures are not available to these voluntarily organisations.
5. Because of the involvement of people of diverse interests, NGO's find it rather difficult to define their objectives clearly.
6. It is not easy for these organizations to coordinate various activities undertaken by them.
7. NGO's cannot withstand the political interference in their day to day functioning.

In spite of all these difficulties NGO's are working tirelessly for the cause of less privileged people. Here we are mainly concerned with knowing and evaluating the role of NGO's in protecting Human rights such as civil, political, and economic, Socio-Cultural rights, Rights Of disadvantaged persons, Right to development and Environmental rights.

ROLE OF SOME PROMINENT NGO's IN INDIA IN THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS:

The Constitution of India has given some fundamental rights to the people of India. These rights have to be claimed and enjoyed by everyone. Again these basic human rights have to be protected against their violations. There are several national and state human rights commissions to protect the constitutional rights of people. The National Human Rights Commission, The State Human Rights Commission, The National Commission for Scheduled castes as well as for scheduled Tribes and Commissions for women at National and State levels are the main government mechanisms for protecting the fundamental rights of people. In this paper let us concentrate on the study of the work of some prominent NGO's in India at the national level. The Peoples Union for Civil Liberties, The Chipko movement and The Narmada Bachao Andolan are the most active NGO's in India. Their role in the protection of human rights is as follows.

1. People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL)

This is a Delhi – based NGO. At the outset it is necessary to know the situation in which the PUCL was founded in 1976 by Jayaprakash Narayan, the great Gandhian leader. In the beginning he formed a national group named, Citizens for Democracy (CFD) in 1974 along with similar groups in Delhi, Madras, Mumbai

and Calcutta for opposing the autocratic functioning of the government of India. Later on, emergency was declared by the government. During the emergency, fundamental rights and civil liberties of people were suppressed. Again the National Security Act was passed in 1980. This is a repressive law which introduced preventive Detention of people under the pretext of national security. In a response to this act, the PUCL was revitalized in 1980. It insisted that the civil liberties of people must be protected at any cost. It also pledged to work against any type of discrimination that encroaches civil liberties of the weaker sections of society like children, women etc. The PUCL organizes 'The JP Memorial Lecture' on 23rd March every year. This is the day on which the emergency in India was lifted in 1977. The PUCL also presents 'Journalism for Human Rights' Award. The award was instituted in 1980 to create awareness about civil liberties and human rights in the minds of journalists and common men. Though the PUCL is a Delhi-based NGO, it works on the National level. It has branches in different cities in India. It publishes a monthly bulletin both in English and Hindi. It is known as the PUCL bulletin and enlightens people about the legal ways and means of claiming, exercising and also fighting for protecting their human rights. People have Right to live. This also includes the Right to food and livelihood. On the basis of this, in 2001, the PUCL filed Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in the Supreme Court. The six states in India such as Orissa, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh were hit by acute drought. People in these states were starving. Still the state governments were not providing food to people. These drought hit people were not in a position to purchase food grains. On the basis of the PIL filed by the PUCL, the Supreme Court directed the respective state government to provide food to the drought affected people free of cost. Thus, the Right to life of people was protected. The Court also directed the state governments to devise a scheme so that no person will suffer from hunger. The PUCL is working for highlighting the instances of the violation of human rights. It also sees that the violations pertaining to human rights get redressed; the activities of the PUCL make it clear that weak democracy can be made strong only by protecting the civil liberties of people.

2. People's Union for Democratic Rights (PUDR):

It came into existence in 1976-77 as the Delhi unit of a larger national forum, and became PUDR on 1 February, 1981. In the last two and a half decades of its existence the organisation has taken up hundreds of instances of violations of democratic rights, covering most parts of the country and involving the rights of many sections of society. PUDR also takes up issues of general importance that affect the rights of people through general campaigns, publications and legal interventions. These include: gender equality; rights of forest-dwellers and forest policy; working class rights; agrarian conflict; caste oppression; deaths, rapes and torture in police custody; and undemocratic legislation, in particular the various incarnations of the 'terrorist act' (TADA and POTA) etc.,

3. The Chipko Movement.

This movement was started by Sunderlal Bahuguna and Chandiprasad Bhat in 1970. It spread in Garhwal region of Himalayas which is the source of great rivers like the Ganga and the Yamuna. The Uttarakhand faced environmental problems like soil erosion, drying up of the sources of water due to clearing of forests. People started cutting of trees for commercial purposes. This also caused soil degradation. And it became

essential to protect the environment from its further degradation due to deforestation. The movement started for this purpose was named as the Chipko Movement. The term 'Chipko' literally means hugging or embracing trees. Shri Bahuguna started protecting the trees by embracing them. This is the mass movement of its kind started solely for protecting the trees and forests. S. Bahuguna started the tree protection movement when the timber contractors started felling the trees with commercial intentions. He opposed the woodcutters strongly. Local people supported Bahuguna a great environmentalist actively. They adopted the same technique of embracing the trees for preventing the cutting of trees. Because of the overwhelming response of the people the movement spread very widely. Initially the Chipko Movement was started in a town named Dasohli. The woodcutters were clearing the forests recklessly. This resulted in the loss of forest wealth and natural resources in the area reduced radically. Gaura Bai opposed the cutting of trees and clearing of forests. Under her leadership tribal women actively participated in the movement that was solely started for the preservation of forests. Hundreds of hectares of forests were saved. This unique agitation was appreciated all over the world. At present, the organization has over 4000 groups working for the protection of forest and environment.

Protection of Human Rights.

The Chipko movement is also working for the protection of human rights. Tribal people living in forests as well as in hilly areas earn their livelihood by extracting and selling forest products. They have Right to Life including the Right to Food, and livelihood. They also have Right to Unpolluted environment. And the Chipko agitation is consistently working for protecting mainly the economic and environmental rights of tribal people. Thus, the Chipko movement that started as a campaign for environmental protection has been also protecting human rights of people.

4. The Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA)

The Sardar Sarovar project is one of the mega development projects in India. It is also a multipurpose project. It was undertaken in 1946 for providing drinking water to people, supplying water for irrigation and also for the generation of energy. The project involved the construction of hundreds of small and large dams. This project is so big that it caused the submergence of lakhs of hectares of agricultural and forest land and hundreds of villages also. It displaced over a million of people. Most of them are tribal people. And the most unfortunate part of the project was that these displaced people were not given adequate compensation for the loss of their land, employment and property. They were not provided alternative means of livelihood and employment opportunities. Their rehabilitation was totally neglected and the most fundamental human right of people such as Right to life that includes the Right to food and livelihood was violated. Their civil liberties were suppressed. And when people protested against the forced acquisition of land by the government, they were denied civil liberties. Their rightful demands for compensation and rehabilitation were just neglected. The worst part is that several people were also killed.

5. The NBA: Protector of Human Rights.

It is on this background the NBA was started by Medha Patkar, a great social activist. She led the agitation and worked for the cause of people who were displaced by the project. She mobilized people for fighting

against the violation of human rights of project affected people. In 1994 she moved the Supreme Court for opposing the rise in the height of Narmada dam. She opposed it mainly on the ground of environmental damage caused by the dam and the neglect of rehabilitation of tribal people. The Supreme Court asked the authorities of the project to get clearance from environmental and rehabilitation authority for the continuation of the construction of the Narmada dam. Because the court was happy with the rehabilitation work of displaced people by the Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra Government, it ordered the construction of dam up to ninety meters. It is at this juncture, Baba Amte, a great social reformer and Arundhati Roy, a great literary figure joined the NBA. Baba Amte criticised the Supreme Court order and appealed K.R. Narayan, the then president of India to intervene the Supreme Court order in the interests of people. According to him it is a prerogative of the President of India to review the Supreme Court order when the fundamental rights of quite a large number of people are being violated. Thus, though in the beginning the NBA started as environment protection movement gradually it became the Human Rights protection movement.

6. Ramakrishna Mission: It is an Indian non-governmental organization established in Varanasi, established in 1900 and became a branch of Ramakrishna Mission in 1902. It manages an education program on essential health problems in schools, slums and villages of Uttar Pradesh.

7. Child Rights and You: Rights and you (formerly child Relief and You, till 2005), commonly abbreviated as CRY is a non-profit organisation in India that aims to restore children's rights in India. The organisation was established in 1979. The organisation partners with grass-roots Nongovernmental organisations to uplift thousands of Indian children denied basic children's rights. In 2007, its media campaign showing "smiling Kids" and asking citizens to partner instead of simply donate, was seen as a departure from stereotypical NGO sector advertising in India.

8. Bandhua Mukti Morcha: Bandhua Mukti Morcha (BMM) or Bonded Labour Liberation Front (BLLF) is a nongovernmental organisation in India working to end bonded labour. Based in New Delhi, it was founded in 1981 by Swami Agnivesh who continues as its chairman. Bonded Labour was legally abolished in India in 1976 but it remains prevalent, with weak enforcement of the law by state governments. Estimates of the problem vary. Official figures include a 1993 estimate of only 251,000 bonded labourers while BMM says there are 65 million bonded child labourers, and a larger number of adults. A 2003 project by Human Rights Watch has reported a major problem with bonded child labour in the silk industry, BMM's efforts are credited with the passing of legislation to abolish child labour in India (the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986).

9. Sulabh Movement: It is a major social movement in the country for the betterment and welfare of Dalits, in a generic sense, and in particular for the liberation and social mainstreaming of scavengers.

10. Campaign Against Child Labour (CACL): The campaign against child labour is a joint initiative of Youth for Voluntary Action (YUVA,) Pune and Terre des Hommes (Germany) India Programme. The Campaign is currently supported by ILO and is actively working for progressive eradication of child labour

through provision of education, lorganisation of awareness programmes, promotion of legislative changes and rescuing children in bondage or victims of abuse.

11. Saheli and Chetna Organisations: Saheli and Chetna are actively involved in the protection of Women’s Rights. They provide free legal aid to women to fight for their rights against gender bias and discrimination.

The list of NGO is by no means exhaustive. There are many other organisations working for the cause of human rights. The work of 11 organisations is reported here by way of illustration only.

Role of NGOs in protecting Human Rights through Judiciary and NHRC:

NGOs have played an important role in the protection of human rights. They cannot succeed in their role unless there is help from the judiciary. The NGOs help the victim of human right violation by providing them assistance and advice. The NGOs have filed cases, writ petitions and public interest litigations on behalf of victims and public at large for protection of human rights. The NGOs have fought against the system of bonded labour, fake encounters by police, protection of women children’s rights, custodial violence and custodial death, prevention of torture and other in human practices. The judiciary has passed appropriate order and given compensation to the victims on a petition by the NGOs. The NHRC encourages NGOs in the of human rights. The NGOs also take up cases of violation to the NHRC and state human rights commissions.

SUMMARY:

Peace, development and human rights are essentially inter-related, inter-dependent and indivisible.” – Theo van Boven. The NGO play important role to become a concrete expression of international, national and regional and local level voice to assist and stand up for those who can’t speak themselves. Every human being is entitled to certain basic human rights which are available to them without discrimination of any sort human rights are protected by the United Nations and its specialized agencies. In India human rights are protected by the judiciary human rights commissions, apart from these organization the Non Governmental organisations also have an important role in protection of human rights. The Non Governmental organisations work from grass roots level to the national and international level in the protection of human rights. In this paper we have briefly dealt with what the NGO are doing for the welfare of people. NGO’s also had to face some problems. In spite of these problems NGO’s work for the protection of the physical environment and Human Rights. We have also seen how the twelve prominent NGO' s in India, The peoples Union for Civil Liberties, The Chipko Movement and the Narmada Bachao Andolan are playing a pivotal role in the protection of Human Rights in India. NGOs play a pivotal, role in many fields, such as in prevention of HIV/AIDS, to educate to teach and train vulnerable groups, child care, child exploitation, child labour, bonded labour, in sex tourism, and providing counseling in number of matters including domestic disputes, subject relating to rights of women and children and so on.

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