MEDIA AS HUMAN RIGHT EDUCATOR: A CASE STUDY OF COVERAGE OF HUMAN RIGHT ISSUES IN SELECTED KANNADA LANGUAGE NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

Human rights are moral principles or norms which describe certain standards of human behavior, and are regularly protected as legal rights in municipal and international law. There are many substantive rights of human rights such as right to life, freedom from torture, freedom from slavery, right to a fair trial etc; but unfortunately most of the time people don’t know them. People should be aware of Human rights. Educating society on human rights is an essential task.

Media is a field which is doing this job very efficiently since long time. Media is like a mirror. Its main task is to gather the information and reflect it back in proper form. Media are the producers of information for general public. This information includes human rights issues most of the times. Human rights are compass for good journalism. Journalists have a moral obligation to promote human rights all the time and in every story. Media are like watch dogs, who warn the people about threats to their freedom, to their society, to their livelihood and to their culture.

The present research paper attempted to observe the coverage of human rights in five major Kannada newspapers of one month and also attempted to find out how people get educated through the news published about Human Rights.

Samples of 5 major newspapers have taken for the present study and made an analytical study of the content. We followed sample method.

Keywords: Media, Human rights, Kannada Newspapers, education, impact.

Introduction

“Recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family in the formation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world”

-Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948.
The concept of Human Rights has arisen from that of natural rights of all human. The belief that every person by virtue of his humanity is entitled to certain natural rights is a recurring theme throughout the history of mankind. It can be traced back thousands of years from the Vedas to the Hammurabai Code to the Magna Carta, the French Declaration of Human Rights, and the America Bill of Rights. Time and again history shows that the existence of human rights has been recognised and accepted as a necessary component for the wellbeing of civilisation at any given time.

In Ca.2050 BC, Ur Nammu, the king of Ur created the first legal codex: followed by several other sets of laws in Mesopotamia including the Code of Hammurabai (ca. 1780 BC); one of the best preserved example of the kind. Various rules and punishment on variety of matters including women’s rights, children’s rights and slave rights are mentioned in the code. The Persian Empire (Iran) established unprecedented principles of human rights in the 6th century BC under the reign of Cyrus. Three centuries later, the Mauryan Empire established principles of civil rights. Religious documents – the Vedas, the Bible, the Quran and Analects of Confucius also referred to the duties, rights and responsibilities of the citizens. In 1222, the Manden Charter of Mali was a declaration of essential human rights including the rights to life, and opposed the practice of slavery. Several 17th and 18th century European philosophers developed the concept of natural rights, the notion that people possess certain rights by virtue of being human. The United States Declaration of Independence includes concept of natural rights and states “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness”

The concept of human rights has undergone a revolutionary change since the Magna Charta of 1215 to the rights contained in the Unites Nation Convention. The charter of United Nations which came into force in October1945 begins with the determination of the people of member nations to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to reaffirm their faith in the fundamental human rights and the dignity of human being. The ‘World conference of Human Rights’ held in 1993 marks a crucial stage in United Nation’s policy in the field of human rights. The Vienna Declaration encouraged the United Nations to pursue and strengthen its activities to make respect for human rights a priority objective on the same level as development and democracy and to work for the concurrent achievements of these three objectives.

It is interesting to note that the United Nations ‘Commission on Human Rights’ also created in 1947, a sub commission on ‘Freedom of Information and of the Press’ to report to the ‘Commission on Human Rights’ on what rights, obligations and practices should constitute the freedom of information. This necessarily had to be juxtaposed with the human rights. Its report on the subject, including the draft code of ethics, was a copious contribution to the charter drawn up subsequently.

Bearing in mind the pace of technological advancement in the field of communication, there is needed to have a permanent sub-commission that could monitor the developments and their efficacy with the change of times.

However, years after the creation of the revolutionary document, most people are still unaware of their rights. According to poll conducted recently by Amnesty International, the largest human rights organisation in the world, only 48% of adults and 4% of youth in the Unites States are aware of “foundation stone for human rights”. It is here that the media can play a salutary role in creating larger awareness of the concept of human rights. Basic human rights that would constitute the right of every individual to his fundamental freedom without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion. Human society has developed from Stone Age to space age. But while some nations or societies have developed rapidly the others seem to be nowhere in the race. The rights which citizens enjoy vary depending upon the economic, social, political and cultural developments.
Media and Human Rights

In view of the fact that there is a revolutionary change and growth in every spheres of life and mainly in the communication and media world, 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. Media is a communicator of the public. Today its role extends not only to giving facts as news, it also analyses and comments on the facts and thus shapes the views of the people. The impact of media on society today is beyond doubt and debate.

The media has been setting for the nation its social, political economic and even cultural agenda. With the advent of satellite channels its impact is even sharper and deeper. With twenty-four hours news-channels, people cannot remain neutral to and unaffected by what the channels are serving day and night. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that the media plays an important and ethical role at all levels and in all parts of the country and the world. In the 1990s in the State of Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir, when militancy was at its peak, the credibility of the media and threats to their free functioning also came under the scanner. Also inquired into by the Council were the reports of human rights violation by the Army and the Para military forces in Kashmir.

In Punjab, the press was under threat from militants who had imposed a crude form of censorship on the local press by enforcing publication of their dictates so as to perpetuate the fear psychosis, the mainstay of terrorists. In a double jeopardy, the government warned the press of use of rule of the law against publication of any 'objectionable advertisements or subversive writings.

The Press Council in its report of 1991 cautioned that it would not be desirable to shut out the point of view of the militants completely as the people in a democratic society have a right to know what the militants stand for and the basis of their arguments, but there is a point beyond which the state cannot abdicate. While it counseled the press to exercise due caution in disseminating the press notes of the militant groups, equal emphasis was laid on the need for the press to be vigilant against official plants to maintain its credibility. Soon thereafter in Kashmir, human rights excesses by army and the Para military forces had invited international concern and criticism. The role and the plight of the press also came under scanner. The Council found that the threat to the freedom of the press in Kashmir came primarily from the climate of fear that the militants had generated and caused the media to abandon their post. It was felt that the newspapers must be willing to accept the risks that go with their profession. Experienced hands should be posted who would report all sides and aspects of events fairly and objectively. The result of inquiry into the report of human rights excesses was astonishing. It was found that while some excesses had indeed taken place, been enquired into and processed, the most serious instances were without any foundation. Clearly, the psychological warfare by terrorists, orchestrating human rights violation needs careful, unbiased and thorough investigation to sift the chaff from the grain.

Objective of the study

- To understand and analyse the role of media in covering human right issues
- To study the major Kannada newspaper with reference to human right coverage
- To examine the scope of media in the coverage of HR issues

Research Methodology

We have analysed the copies of Five major newspapers of Kannada. We have randomly selected the newspapers of one month and studied the nature of stories and finalized the approximate percentage of human right issues related stories. Content analysis methodology and observation methodologies have been applied for the present study.
Role of Media in the coverage of Human Right issues

Media can play a major role in protecting and promoting human rights in the world. It can make people aware of the need to promote certain values in the cause of human rights which are of eternal value to the mankind. Peace, non-violence, disarmament, maintenance and promotion of ecological balances and unpolluted environment and ensuring human rights to all irrespective of caste, color and creed should be the minimum common agenda for the media.

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

Media can inform and educate the people of their rights and suggest ways and means by which they can solve their problems and thus empowering them to protect their rights. Since media plays the role of communication between the state and the public, it can also play an effective role of making the authorities aware of their duties. Media’s new role today is reporting, analysing and commenting. It faces a challenge in playing the role in protecting human rights in the world. While playing this new role, there is risk of its misuse. For that self-regulation is the need of the hour. Journalists should set ‘Lakshman Rekha’ while reporting human rights violations. The main aim before the journalists should be to give facts but not in a manner and with the purpose to create sensation and to arouse the sentiments of the people. Projection and language should be decent and civilized. Journalists should not add insult to inquiry. Media should refrain from giving statements and pictures that are flaring. Since media is the mirror of the society, care should be taken that the mirror is not hazy.

While reporting such violation media should not get influenced by authorities. It should look deep into the problem and provide solutions. Mere reporting of the facts is not enough. It should give reasons of the problem and the nature of the violations and then give solutions. Press has a sacred duty to focus human rights violations and then measures for protecting them. Freedom of expression is a sacred right well accepted over the globe and journalists should respect this freedom. In Indian constitution, it finds place as a guaranteed fundamental right. The Government of India in tune with constitutional mandate professes its anxiety to protect and safeguard this fundamental right. But no right and for that matter the right to freedom of expression is absolute and unfettered in all circumstances but bound by duty to maintain peace and harmony of the body polity by exercising prudence and restraint in the exercise of right to freedom of speech. If exercise of this right is likely to inflame passion, the right to freedom of expression needs circumspection and consequent restraint for greater good of the society.

The free press has often been considered to play a pivotal role in developing and sustaining human rights as well as being a watchdog network for human rights abuses.

In the case of Jessica Lal, the press ended up being more productive than the judicial system in bringing out the truth behind rumors of bribery committed by Sharma’s father. By taking it upon themselves to gather that evidence, the magazines and television stations involved were directly picking up where the police left off. The press then fanned the flames of fervor against what was perceived as injustice in that society and directly called upon the public to act out against what they revealed as a flawed and dangerous system. NDTV, for example, encouraged its viewers to send emails and texts to the station about their opinions of the trial. They also promoted the Indian Gate vigil and other protests nation-wide regarding the trial. The police and judicial system in a sense were less able to take avenues like the Tehelka magazine took in its sting operation. The term “media” has cultivated an expanded definition in recent decades, rather than simply television, radio, and print
information. With the dot.com boom in the nineties and the rise of the digitalized age in the beginning of this millennium, the platform of sharing information and news has become that much more relevant to human rights. Social media and wireless communications have become increasingly prominent as tools for engaging in political and social dialogue and organizing civic action, especially for youth. The term “media” has cultivated an expanded definition in recent decades, rather than simply television, radio, and print information. With the dot.com boom in the nineties and the rise of the digitalized age in the beginning of this millennium, the platform of sharing information and news has become that much more relevant to human rights. Social media and wireless communications have become increasingly prominent as tools for engaging in political and social dialogue and organizing civic action, especially for youth. While these communication platforms influenced the Justice for Jessica protests, other clear examples were made regarding the power of social media in 2011’s “Arab Spring”, and the United States' August “Occupy Wall Street” movements, where pages on social networks like Facebook and mobile device capabilities such as text messaging were used to help create an unprecedented explosion of grassroots protests in the Middle East, United States, and eventually worldwide.

**Very common Human rights violations in Karnataka**

- Custodial death
- Encounter killings
- Arbitrary arrest, illegal detention and torture
- Violation of human rights of women and children
- Violation of human rights against minority groups

**Major Kannada newspapers**

The era of Kannada newspapers in Karnataka started in 1843 when Hermann Mögling, a missionary from Basel Mission published the first Kannada newspaper called Mangalooru Samachara from Mangalore. The first Kannada magazine, Mysuru Vrittanta Bodhini was started by Bhashyam Bhashyacharya in Mysore. Shortly after Indian Independence in 1948, K N Guruswamy started the company, The Printers (Mysore Private Limited) and started publishing two newspapers Deccan Herald (in English) and Prajavani (in Kannada). Times Of India is the largest selling English newspaper in Karnataka. Tabloids including Lankesh Patrike and Hai Bangalore Adi Jambava Jagruti emphasize controversial topics. At present there many more number of daily newspapers. In the early of 20th century Kannada Journalism saw a tremendous change with the new publication of Vijaya Karnataka and Vijayavani. Competition in circulation changed the trend of Kannada Journalism as a whole. At present there 7 seven major Kannada newspapers which have good circulation in the state of Karnataka.

- Udayavani
- Kannadaprabha
- Vijayavani
- Vijaya Karnataka
- Prajavani
- Hosadigantha
- Samyuktha Karnataka
Coverage of Human Right Issues in Five Major Kannada Newspapers

For the present study we have taken five major newspapers that are: Udayavani, Prajavani, Vijayavani, Vijaya Karnataka and Kannadaprabha. The one month issues of these newspapers have been taken randomly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of the newspaper</th>
<th>Number of reports on human right issues from January 18th to Feb 9th</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Udayavani</td>
<td>14</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Vijayavani</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Vijaya Karnataka</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Prajavani</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Kannadaprabha</td>
<td>28</td>
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The human right issues which have been reported on the above days are included:

- Acid case
- Suicide case of a revenue inspector
- Dalit issue
- Endosulfan
- Child marriage
- Jallikattu issue
- Problems of techies
- Soldiers issue
- Draught
- Extra marital affairs
- Tribal issues
- Farmer’s problem
- Terrorism
- Health issues
- National education policy
- Girl child issues
- Prabha murder case at Sidney
- Dress code
- Lock up death

Conclusion

The general perception on the coverage of human right issues is that, the media is the one most powerful tool through which people can get educated. In the present study Vijaya Karnataka and Prajavani gave maximum importance to the human right issue. But there are certain problems with the coverage. The reports are just the answers for 5w’s and 1 H questions. We could not find any analysis of the reported stories. Few stories and discussions made in the form of columns. But comparatively columns are less in number. As per the general observation more than the newspapers TV channels do serious discussions on the human right issues. As the TV channels are more interested in crisis stories they show much more interest in the human right issues. And many a time human right issues become the talk of political party or the government. So it is obvious that channels show more interest on such stories.
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