

Eradicating Human Misery: Its causes and Liberative Action

By

Jimmy Dabhi

Human beings are competent enough to create wellbeing for self and others but at the same time they are capable of engineering misery for others. People spend a lot of time, energy, resources and money placating god/s to eradicate human misery as if these god/s are responsible and as if they have the power to do so. One cannot hold the divine and natural powers responsible unless one believes in fatalism and blind religious faith. If human misery could be ended by prayers, fasting and worship it would have ended long back. Human misery is a creation of human beings like us and has to be addressed by us. To eradicate human misery, it is imperative that we understand the complexity of this concept. In this paper, I would like to discuss the concept of human misery, the actors and factors responsible and some ways and means of addressing it.

Defining human misery

A simple understanding of human misery can be presented as - the state of suffering and want associated with poverty or affliction. Some people would also understand misery as a thing, place or a circumstance which is associated with suffering or discomfort. Some may even define human misery as unhappiness, emotional strain and stress. The Buddhist may speak of misery as *dukkh* which originates within us as a result of our desires for pleasure. While the terms are often used interchangeably, bereavement often refers to the state of loss and grief refers to the reaction to loss. In Buddhist terminology, losses can range from loss of employment, livelihoods, animals, status, sense of safety, possessions and the loss of the people closest to us. Misery is also understood as a problem of human conduct or social relationships.

I would like to see human misery as being primarily structural and created and sustained by the elite (socially such as high castes, economically such as moneyed, landlords, big houses/industrialists and high class and politically as corrupt, opportunist and power crazy politicians/parties) to maintain a socio-economic and political order in their favour where suffering and inhuman living conditions maintain this unjust order. Human relationships at all levels are centred around power both in the private and public domains, to dominate and command subjugation from persons (women) and communities (Dalits, tribals, poor classes, minority religions).

Nature of human misery

Sometimes human misery can be statistically measured and quantified with the help of Poverty Line indicators, Human Rights fulfilment/violation and largely with Human Development Indicators. Some human beings are more miserable than the others. Both the creators and victims of human misery are dehumanised (see Freire, 1972). Some human beings cause more human misery than others by their greed for power and wealth and to maintain their caste, class, gender statutes and hegemony. The misery inflicted and misery caused can be broadly classified into three main categories - social misery, physical misery and political misery.

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Social misery has to do with the violation of people's self respect, dignity and fundamental human rights. Mehbub ul Haq once remarked "human security is not a concern with weapons. It is a concern with human dignity" (quoted in Chaturvedi, 2007:41). Gender biases in our dealing with women, men, homosexuals and children are part of human misery. Caste based untouchability and discrimination on religious lines cause misery for people through acts of omission by the State, profit making organisations and the civil society itself. A large section of civil society, especially the elite and the middle class of 'India Shining' contributes to human misery by their silent indifference about discrimination, exclusion and inequality faced by the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Muslims, women and other vulnerable groups. Mahatma Gandhi had once observed: "It has always been a mystery to me how men can feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow beings? (Quoted in Chaturvedi, 2007:41)".

The caste ridden society in India marginalizes children too. Caste based social exclusion affects parenting and contributes to mistreatment of children. Happenings and circumstances such as migration, single parent households and lack of a steady income loosen family ties. Globalisation, especially within the context of trafficking and child labour, has increased the number of children being exploited for commercial gains (Dabir and Nigudkar 2007).

The entire South Asian region and India within it are beds of socio-ethnic conflicts spilling over into political conflict and that adds to human misery. Kashmir and the North East have their historical baggage of conflicts rooted in the British Raj and the freedom struggle of India. Communal violence promoted and fuelled by fundamental forces and political parties divide society further, block human development and make life miserable for the poor and minorities. These conflicts have been escalated over the years by political parties, fundamental forces and the State's approach and policies to development and people's rights to self governance, development and citizenship.

Physical misery: The impact of deprivation and exclusion also has a physical aspect when it comes to human beings. Not having access to basic human requirements such as food, water, shelter, health facilities, transport and adequate livelihood have adverse effects on human beings and their dependents. Privatisation of basic commodities adds to this physical suffering as people do not have the purchasing power. Therefore low and differential wages of different sexes, price rise and inflation have a direct impact on health. Violent conflicts both directly and indirectly cause physical misery to victims as well as others. Domestic violence, crime against women and children cause physical harm besides the psycho-social pain inflicted on the victims.

The development paradigm in our country and in the world which promotes mega projects, industry, mines and tourism at the cost of people and their habitat without their consent is violation of Human Rights. Political favours done to industries and multinationals (Indian and International) have often

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sold national assets and property at throwaway prices in the name of development (Dabhi, 2006b). Development displacing millions from their livelihoods, environment, culture and irreversibly damaging the natural resources in the area is violation of HRs of the indigenous people, the tribes, the Dalits and all those who live and survive on and around such common natural resources – land, water, forests and mountains.

Political misery: Right to citizenship, fulfilment of these rights and opportunities to carry out one's responsibilities are constitutional in India. Denial of these rights causes political misery for a large section of people, especially migrants and refugees. Zakia Jowher writes (2006:131), "The violation of the political and democratic rights continues through systematic subversion of justice and draconian acts like POTA. Out of 287 instances where POTA is invoked 286 happen to be on Muslims. The repeal of POTA was promised in the Common Minimum Programme by the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government led by the Congress Party. By not making the repeal as retrospective repeal the UPA in other words, put a stamp of approval on all those booked under POTA in Gujarat as 'terrorists'."

Violations of civil and political rights, undermining self governance and denial of autonomy and full citizenship of groups and communities have increased conflicts and violence. The people's demands and resistance against years of exploitation and injustice are projected as anti-social and subversive activities by the State, political parties, capitalists and business communities. Such demands are often branded as acts of terrorists, Naxalites and Maoists. Strangely those who get killed in these encounters are almost always tribals, Dalits, Muslims and the poor in particular. The State sponsored terrorism through the police, the armed forces, the party cadres and rogues is far greater than any terrorism we can think of (Dabhi, 2008a:27) – Nandigram, Chhattisgarh and Gujarat are cases in point.

There is no doubt that the democratic institutes globally and domestically have helped enhance human rights awareness and practice. But at the same time some of these institutions have betrayed people's trust and have violated people rights. The Judiciary, the parliament and the bureaucracy has often not only failed to protect people's rights but have also violated human rights by their inaction and also by some of their actions. High court proceedings and judgements in Gujarat carnage cases, the Supreme Court's stance to displacement of millions due to development projects, the police brutality, custodial deaths and encounter killings are some examples where the protectors turn violators. Democracy itself is hijacked by a few for their vested interests. Hitler is an example of the past and Bush and Modi are living examples (Dabhi, 2006).

Actors and factors contributing to human misery

One can broadly argue that social and economic factors play an important role in creating and prolonging human misery. The kind of human misery we are talking about is not a creation of an individual; though individuals have an important role to play. It comes from the structural nature of a group of

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individuals, the way they organise themselves, their businesses, their assets and their means of productions.

Let me broadly speak of these groups/communities who have collectively organised themselves with certain dominant values in such a way that can support wellbeing of a few and cause misery for many.

If we talk only about India and South Asia, the caste system clubbed with the *Varna* ideology is one such structural phenomenon which promotes, fosters and sustains inequality and exploitation contributing to human misery. It exists in a number of countries in south Asia in one form or the other. The social discriminatory caste hierarchy plagued with the *Varna* ideology of purity and pollution discriminates communities causing them to live an inhuman life and limiting their options for livelihoods (caste specific occupation as caste dharma) and social relationships (marriage). It gives privileges to high caste groups to subjugate the *avarnas* (the outcastes) and sometime the *shudras* (other backward castes with menial occupations as their dharma). Atrocities on Dalits like raping dalit women, burning their houses, preventing them from voting, prohibiting usage of public spaces are all part of the subjugation created by these high castes (Dabhi, 2004).

One's economic status does not play a lesser role in contributing to human misery. Ginwalla (2003) argues that trafficking of women is the direct result of the articulation of patriarchal and capitalist economic structures and a growing consumerist culture. Julius Nyerere (1978) highlighted the class factor - "Poverty is not the problem of the modern world. For we have the knowledge and resource which would enable us to overcome poverty. The real problem – the thing which creates misery, wars and hatred among men – is the division of mankind into rich and poor".

In the context of south Asia, the high castes are also by and large financially rich owing to the wealth they have accumulated over the years using various means including some fraudulent ones. The reason because of which land reforms have largely failed in India and other countries is the caste and class hierarchy. Let me corroborate my argument with studies on land reforms. The land reforms can be described as "a reorganisation of rights, privileges and obligation in a system of production and distribution relations. They have been mere eye-wash to temporarily stop the voices of revolt" (Swaminathan and Chaudhary, 1995:291). They further argue that 60 % of India's smallest farmers own only 9 % of the total agricultural land while 10 % of the richest farmers own 53 % of agriculture land (1995:292). Shah and sah (2002) suggest that the marginalised groups such as the Dalits and some very backward castes hardly gain anything worthwhile out of land reforms (shah and sah, 2002).

The economist who left the WB has this to say, "Economic growth has taken place but this growth has been 'jobless growth' as well - for millions of people globalisation has not worked. Many have actually been made worse off as they have seen their jobs destroyed and their lives become more insecure" (Stiglitz, 2003:248).

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Human rights violators

Alam suggests, "To put it simply, human rights constitute those very rights which one has precisely because of being a human. They are inherent in our nature and without which we cannot live as human beings. Human rights pertain to all persons and are possessed by everybody in the world because they are human beings. They are not earned, bought or inherited nor are they created by any contractual authority. Differences of sex, race, language, colour, property, social origins, political ideals or religious beliefs do not change these rights" (2000:13). Human rights are violated in private and public domains by individuals, groups, the State, market and civil society members.

The financially poor and the religious minorities are the worst victims of human rights violation. The Human Rights Watch said, "The minorities of the Indian subcontinent, including, but not limited to, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs and Dalits have suffered intense discrimination, oppression and denial of basic human rights that are defined by both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Indian Constitution."¹ Other South Asian countries too face similar circumstances. "Minorities in Pakistan face varying degrees of discrimination and exclusion, and on occasions threat to life, property, dignity and freedom by organised majoritarian group with one agenda of exclusion and hate with complicity of the State" (Salim, 2006:3).

In many states the extra powers given to the police and army in the name of security and prevention of terrorism in fact foster terrorism. POTA was repealed by the centre but in Gujarat many young Muslims are condemned by the Modi government under POTA with the silent consent of the Central Government and left parties. The silence of the UPA coalition shows how the state and people in power don't always act in the interest of the people.

In practice, POTA has been used against political opponents, religious minorities, Dalits, tribals and even children. "In February 2003 alone, over three hundred people were arrested under the act" (Human Rights Watch). Human Rights Watch goes on to report, "The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janta Party that heads the state government has not charged any Hindus under POTA for violence against Muslims" (Human Rights Watch). "Fighting terrorism is central to the human rights cause," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. "But using illegal tactics against alleged terrorists is both wrong and counterproductive." Spending enormous amounts on defence to protect the country from so called 'security threats' from the equally poor neighbours and inadequate allocation to primary health and education is violation of human rights by the state.

The protectors of HRs often turn into violators. Most homeless people list abuse by police in the form of beatings, extortions and evictions as their biggest problems. Vulnerable groups like homeless people, women, children and the disabled are doubly cursed. Women and female children often face

¹ Human Rights watch: www.imc-usa.org/convention/human_rights_india.htm

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sexual abuse. Children are also exploited by those engaged in trafficking by getting them to do begging, child labour and organ trade (Dogra, 2008).

Yet another case of HRs violation and State apathy to human misery is the judgment in the case of *National Human Rights Commission versus State of Arunachal Pradesh & Another*. On 9 January 1996, the Supreme Court of India directed the government of India and the state government of Arunachal Pradesh to process the citizenship applications of the Chakma and Hajong tribals. A total of 4,627 Chakmas and Hajongs who migrated from the Chittagong Hill Tracts of then East Pakistan submitted citizenship applications in 1997 and 1998. By the end of 2006, the government of India failed to process even a single application (The Indigenous World, 2007).

Development induced displacement

Development induced displacement is yet another factor which has caused suffering to millions, especially tribals, Dalits and other vulnerable groups in India. Under the created political and economic conditions beneficial to the ruling elite and their cronies, state legislation safeguards the interests of those in power. Camouflaging vocabulary is developed to disguise exploitation - mining is replaced by 'Sustainable Mining', logging by 'Integrated Forest Management', big dams by 'Multi Purpose Water Management' and parks by 'Integrated Protected Areas'. Cultural wounds are inflicted on Adivasis/Tribals by a cultural genocide in terms of assimilation of the Tribals (indigenous People) into national, so called main stream identity, language and meaning systems.

In the wake of new economic policy and land centred development model, the pressure on land has drastically increased. A vast track of land has been lost and thousands of people have already become landless and displaced through these development projects like big dams, mining, industrials units and infrastructure redevelopment. To add to people's misery, now we have Special Economic Zones (SEZ). People rightly call them special exploitation zones (Dabhi, 2008a). In principle the government has approved hundreds of SEZs which will acquire thousands of acres of cultivable agricultural land in the name of export promotion and economic growth. It will not be an exaggeration if we say that SEZ is nothing more than a ploy by the private sectors to grab and control the land resources of the country in collusion with the political parties in power. No surprise that economist Amit Bhaduri (EPW, 17th February, 2007) has called this 'development terrorism'.

The increase in migration cannot be de-linked from displacement. It is closely related to the lack of livelihood/employment opportunities. The increase in migration is considerable, from 1991 (23,21,12,973 persons) to 2001 (31,27,35,593 persons). There has been a 34.7 % increase, of which 14.7 % is for work and employment (Census of India 2001). Involuntary migration as a result of such development induced displacement forces people to live in inhuman conditions. The living conditions of the people who have migrated to

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towns and cities are appalling. The huts they live in do not protect them from rain, winter and heat leave alone providing privacy. Even the cows in the *gaushalas* (cowsheds) created by some religious and social organisations in MP, Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh stay in better conditions than many human beings in India.

Conflict induced displacement

Conflict induced displacement is yet another factor that contributes to human misery where people have to flee to save themselves from where they have lived for years.

Economic growth oriented development projects are resisted by the tribals, Dalits and Muslims who form a large section of the poor. The brutal force used by the government to suppress the resistance and people's determination to resist such anti-people projects have resulted in serious violent conflicts (Tapkara of Jharkhand in 2001, Kalinga Nagar of Orissa in 2006 and Nandigram of West Bengal in 2007) and displacing many people. Conflicts arise from culture due to a legitimization process through ideology and education. Social conflict is reinforced by the unjust caste structure and political conflict emerges due to an unholy nexus between the ruling elite, economy and military power leading to killing and internal displacement of the poor and marginalised. (Kujur, 2008)

The Indigenous World 2007 document states that there are millions who are displaced due to conflict within and along the national borders. Indigenous peoples constitute the majority of over 6,00,000 conflict-induced internally displaced persons (IDFs) in India (Nayak, 2008). The indigenous people have been displaced because of intra-indigenous peoples' conflicts, conflicts between different armed opposition groups as well as by state governments for counter-insurgency operations and other security measures such as the Indo-Bangladesh border fencing. Such people include 33,362 displaced Bodos and Santhals in Kokrajhar district and 74,123 displaced Bodos and Santhals in Gosaigaon district of Assam; about 35,000 Brus (also known as Reangs) from Mizoram who took refuge in Tripura in October 1997 and 43,740 displaced Adivasis living in the anti-Naxalite *Saliva Judum* camps (government sponsored relief camps under the garb of campaign for peace) in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh. The government in collusion with the elite classes and high castes has created such a situation where tribals are killing each other.

The 'Insider-Outsider' conflict in North-eastern India has inflicted pain on millions in the last few decades. Large numbers of migrants, i.e. Bengalis, Biharis, Marwadis, Punjabis and Tamilians are living in these regions. Indigenous Assamese and Tripuris have become minorities in their own states. The entire economy is under the control of the 'outsiders'. Influx of migrants not only increases labour supply leading to harsh competition for limited jobs but also poses a threat to their identity, culture and life (Prakash, 2008).

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The inter-state conflict influenced by tribal and ethnic identities is reflected in the demand for 'Greater Nagaland'. The demand for a separate 'Greater Nagaland/Nagalim' state implies that all Naga inhabited areas of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and even some parts of Myanmar come under a single administrative unit. The dream of Nagalim is opposed by the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur with the maximum resistance coming from Manipur. Increasing violent conflicts in Manipur between various ethnic groups, conflict between Nagas and Meities, conflict between the hilly tribes (90% of Manipur area) and those from the plains has added to the misery of people. The Hilly tribes feel left out of development projects and they feel exploited by people from the planes, mainly Meities and Meiteis Panghals and other 'outsiders' (Prakash, 2008).

Communal violence in India over the years has been a cause for internal displacement and a constant source of misery. The violence is instigated and sustained by social organisations (such as Hindu and Muslim Fundamentalists), political parties such as Bharatiya Janta Party (hardcore Hindutvavadis) and Congress (softer Hindutvavadis) causing thousands of deaths especially of Muslims and other minorities (1984 Sikh massacre, 1992 Babri Masjid demolition and killing of Muslims, 2002 Gujarat carnage and killing of over 2000 Muslims in Gujarat).

In the context of human misery, it is worth noting that there are over a billion Muslims in the world and roughly half are women. In an article 'In the shadow of inequality' it was suggested "When violence against women is viewed in a global context, startling facts emerge: the majority of the world's displaced persons and refugees, as a result of armed conflict and human rights violations, are women and children. A majority are Muslim women and children, increasingly subjected to the secondary horrors of war — rape, trafficking, hunger, homelessness, unemployment and malnutrition. A majority of the world's absolute poor are women and a majority of the world's illiterate are also women. Of them, Muslim women make up a substantial percentage (Ghandi, 2003).

Human Trafficking

There are discriminatory and gender oppressive laws (modern or customary) which puts women in a very vulnerable situation within a family and in society at large. Anti-women social customs and lack of social safety nets for widows, single mothers, landless and unorganized labourers affect the poor and women in particular.

The victims of trafficking often land up in towns and cities and "The trafficking of human beings has burgeoned into a multi-billion-dollar industry that is so widespread and damaging to its victims that it has become a cause of human security" (The Human Security Report, 2005:86). Most of those who are trafficked are women and children and many are forced into city brothels. Social and economic exploitation and dependency make women and children the worst victims of trafficking (Dabhi, 2008b).

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Monsanto is the first multinational in India to get a licence for the production of BT cotton, a genetically modified crop. Monsanto in turn gives licences to Indian companies to produce the BT seeds and they in turn sub-contract the production of seeds to the farmers. Seed pollination is a labour intensive process. Gujarat is the largest producer of BT seeds and almost 20,000 acres in north Gujarat districts of Sabarkantha and Banaskantha are centres of cotton seed production. Around two-lakh workers are required from August to October and most of them are brought from the tribal areas of Rajasthan. It is said that more than one lakh tribal adolescents and children are transported during the rainy season to north Gujarat. This is said to be the largest instance of child trafficking in the country. The farmers say that they use children because of the low prices paid by the companies. Though the farmers get paid Rs 240 per kg, Monsanto would sell these seeds at the rate of Rs 1,700 for a 450 gm packet, earning Rs 2,000 per kg against the farmer's Rs 240. After the farmers complained to the MRTP, Monsanto brought down the selling price to Rs 950 per 450 gm, but it still makes huge profits. For the last 18 months, the union has been informing the government, the labour department and also the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights about the child labour used, but none of those indulging in trafficking and exploitation of children have been punished (The Asian Age, November 20, 2007: Editorial).

While trafficking of girls is low compared to the total number of victims of trafficking, it recorded an increase of 93.5 % in 2004 as compared to 2003 (Rajalakshmi, 2008). Rajalakshmi further argues that the increased trafficking in girls are trends that point to a connection between the declining child sex ratio and the increase in crimes against women and children. Young girls continue to be trafficked regularly from the poorer parts of several states to the "women deficit" states of Punjab and Haryana where in many cases, they are made sex slaves. Evidence suggests that in some Jharkhand districts, the number of adolescent girls is less because girls are now being 'exported' to Haryana. Trafficking from areas with a large number of girls to areas with lesser numbers is what goes on in the guise of inter-state marriage (Abbasi, 2006).

Professor Paula Banerjee, who talked about problems faced by displaced women in Assam said that ethnic conflicts all over the world result in massive displacement of women and that gives rise to heavy trafficking - the situation in Assam is no different (Bhaumik, 2007).

Stephanie Holmes reported in a news story 'Trafficking: A very modern slavery' in BBC News of February 15th 2008, "The UN estimates that some 2.5 million people are in forced labour at any given time, as a result of trafficking. "We don't know much about the size of the iceberg that lies beneath," admitted Antonio Mario Costa, head of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). "Like any other market - and it is a perverse kind of market - there is a supply in terms of people who are duped, coerced or tricked, and a demand, people who may be buying the sort of commodities

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we are talking about. And there is the act of connecting the supply and demand - those who do the trafficking," he said. While 116 out of 192 UN member states have ratified an Anti-Trafficking Protocol, which came into force in 2005, some governments still do not have any legislation in place. A few of the member states who have not yet even signed the convention include countries identified by UNODC as having a high number of people trafficked from them - such as India and Pakistan (<http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7243612.stm>).

Unpaid work and women

Economic statistics acknowledge paid work but do not highlight the contribution made by unpaid work, especially by women. The work conditions attached to this unpaid work is part of human misery particularly for women. Gosh (2007) argues that under the social structural adjustment policies the government has happily reduced public spending of goods and services including water, health, education, cooking fuel, shelter etc. In south Asia where most men still consider women domestic beings responsible for bearing, rearing children, taking care of the old and sick and 'housekeeping', these women bear the brunt as the additional burden normally falls on them. Gosh further argues that quite apart from reducing their own access to health facilities, the cuts in public health increase the burden of labour on women in poor households as the responsibility for caring for the sick who cannot be hospitalised usually falls on them.

Often more hands are required to meet the demand of the increase in unpaid work at home and obviously the patriarchal system of south Asia demands girl children to be engaged in the household unpaid labour at the cost of their education and fun-filled childhood (also see Dabhi, 2008b). The International Convention on the Rights of the Child is often violated and the State should be held responsible for it and not poor parents. Gosh also argues that there are numerous micro studies that indicate this tendency, in both rural and urban areas. In addition, even the 2004-05 NSS round found that 52 % of rural females and 63 % of urban females (age 15 years or more) are dominantly engaged in domestic work. Shockingly, a dominant proportion of females who were engaged in domestic duties were constrained to spend most of their days doing the domestic work in addition to other economic activities. The NSS data records that 16 % of rural women and 25 % of urban women who are dominantly engaged in household work also engage in some other "economic" activity on a subsidiary basis. Similarly, around half of the women usually involved in recognised economic activities also have to perform domestic duties, implying a "double burden" of work for such women.

Many of the unpaid household-based activities of women are not limited to social reproduction alone but are very clearly economic in nature. Some such as collection of fuel wood, husking and grinding grain, maintaining kitchen gardens, looking after livestock and poultry are activities that continue and have become even more significant because of the invisibility of and lack of

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attention to the unpaid labour of women (Gosh, 2007). These are all economic activities, which in developed societies are often recognised as such because they are increasingly being delegated by women and performed through paid contracts. It is disturbing to note that the way in which labour is organised and performed in India is centred on girl children. It is observed that even among girls who attend school as their principal activity, a significant proportion also engages in unpaid labour, usually at home. And more than 75 % of such girls say that they are forced to do this because of the absence of anyone else to do this work.

Actions for eradication of human misery

No one takes pain, suffering and misery just for the sake of it. Deeply spiritual people (not religious people) may take on pain and hardship on themselves, not as a sacrifice but in solidarity. No one sacrifices anything for no one. In a sense, sacrifice is just a political and religious term used to emotionally manipulate people to show how great 'i/we are'. Although a few humans have a desire to enhance themselves in terms of potentials, quality of life, quality of relationships, human growth and the sense of contentment and fulfilment, we also have the instincts and developed attitudes to hurt, humiliate, destroy, avenge, possess, compete and compare.

Human beings don't live in isolation. We live in the company of other human beings – family, neighbourhood, places of learning and work, places of worship, recreation and socialization. Our actions and inaction not only have implications on ourselves but for others as well. These implications often take the form of rights – one's own rights and other's rights.

A society becomes more human and humane if it promotes a mere existence into actually living. Therefore promotion of human rights must begin from the primary social unit of a family, neighbourhood, education and places of learning, religious places, work place and society at large. Individual efforts are necessary and relevant but collective action and organised and organisation endeavours are equally important. Some of the civil society organisations and NGOs have the organised and organisational strength as their development strategy (see Dabhi, 2008c). The efforts to promote and protect HRs must come from individuals as well as collectively from all the sections of people proactively, as a way of life - "It is the Human rights movements more than the agencies formulating human rights that are in touch with reality – national, regional and international" (Bakshi, 2002:vi). It is the people's movements that can and will induce change in the HR situation.

The need of the hour is to labour for a new social order in the world where the State works for the interests of all and not just the elite and politically mighty. The civil society, market and the State will have to ensure that the rights of all citizens are protected and promoted so that people do not take up arms out of frustration. Meanwhile, instead of being selective in condemning terrorism and terrorists, all acts of terrorism should be resisted including acts of terrorising the Dalits by our *varna* loaded caste system, terrorising millions of tribals through development induced displacement carried out by

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the State and the multinationals, terror of domestic violence and gender discrimination through patriarchal practices. The need of the hour is to join hands to curb any kind of State sponsored terrorism because that is the most dangerous of all, whether in Gujarat, India, Iraq, Lebanon or anywhere in the world (Dabhi, 2007).

There is need for wide spread gender awareness and implementation of gender socialisation, education and work in private and public domains. The armed conflict and militarization bring about misery to society but more so to women and therefore working for political, participatory and just settlement of conflicting interests will reduce human misery. Spending on education, health and promoting employment oriented economic growth will go a long way in addressing human misery in India and in south Asia.

The state and the civil society will have to ensure that the minorities feel secure and have equal opportunities to develop and enjoy full citizenship of India. Any peace initiative without justice will be suspect.

It is only after having accomplished all of these that we can meaningfully sing the song Tagore composed – into that heaven of freedom my father/mother (my addition) let my country/my south Asia and World (my addition) awake.

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