

HUMAN SECURITY IN SOUTH ASIAN COUNTRIES: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

Mohammad Uzair

Senior Research Fellow

Department of Political Science

West Bengal State University

Email: iammu000@gmail.com

Abstract

The topic of human security is very relevant today, not only to the global order, but this topic is also very relevant to address livelihood, economic status, health issues, education system, security, etc. The level of human security in a country can be understood based on individual freedom, economic security, health security, livelihood security, and dignity of the citizens of that country. South Asia is the southern sub-region of the Asian Continent. This region is formed by India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Maldives, with Afghanistan also often included. South Asia is one of the most populous continents in the world. In this paper, the human security of South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka has been critically analyzed. This paper discusses the problems and obstacles faced by citizens in these states in terms of human security. Apart from that, this paper also analyses the role of these states in protecting the human security of citizens.

Keywords

Human Security, South Asia, Food Security, Health Security, Underdevelopment, Internal conflict, Terrorism.

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Mohammad Uzair

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Introduction

The topic of human security is very relevant today, not only to the global order, but this topic is also very relevant to address livelihood, economic status, health issues, education system, security, etc. Human security depends on the role of the state in ensuring livelihood security, economic security, health security, economic development, etc. In other words, the level of human security in a country can be understood based on the individual freedom, livelihood security, and dignity of the citizens of that country (Nandy & Roy,2002). South Asia is one of the most populous continents in the world. The continent comprises a quarter of the world's population (Haq,1995). The region has a distinct importance in world politics due to its geographical location. A look at the history of South Asia shows that the existence of this region dates back to the ancient Indus civilization (Ashraf, Begum & Jathol,2016). This region is formed by Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, and, Maldives, with Afghanistan also often included. (South Asia, 2023). There are many states in South Asia that are unable to ensure minimum human security. Due to internal conflict, growing extremism, and terrorist activities, safeguarding human security in the South Asian States has become a major challenge. Terrorism, sectarianism, and suicide attacks have become threats and major obstacles to the progress and prosperity of the countries of this continent. Although the UNO has already declared in 2013 to ensure sustainable development and human security for all he world, there is no hesitation to say that human security in South Asian countries is very questionable. Due to the abundance of regional development and economic resources, this continent has huge potential for prosperity, but political, social, cultural, and religious conflict factors stand behind everything (Yousaf,2017).

The true meaning of security is freedom from various external and internal threats. Human security is a person's sense of freedom from the presence of physical and psychological threats. Human Security refers to people's freedom from personal, communal, and political oppression. Food security is one of the main aspects of human security. This means that all people will always have the right to nutritious food for their physical and mental development. In this concept, importance is given to people to become economically independent so that they can always get healthy, nutritious food. Another important aspect of human security is the security of human health. Health security refers not only to the absence of disease, but also to complete physical, social, and mental well-being. This health security is again closely related to the economic security of the individual. So, human security is never possible without the economic self-sufficiency of the individual. South Asia is the southern

sub–region of the Asian Continent. This continent is a geopolitically very important region in the world. In this paper, the human security of South Asian countries like India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka has been critically analyzed. This paper discusses the problems and obstacles faced by citizens in these states in terms of human security. Apart from that, this paper also analyses the role of these states in protecting the human security of citizens.

Even in the 21st century, there is no doubt that issues like poverty, epidemics, terrorism, illegal immigration, underdevelopment, etc. are threatening human security. Human security generally refers to all types of security including economic, political, social, and environmental security (UN,1994). States are mainly responsible for providing this security to citizens. India is one of the most important countries in South Asia. India is a diverse country consisting of different linguistic, religious, and ethnic groups. However, India has not yet become free from the inequality that still exists in society based on caste, group, community, etc. Ever since independence, India has faced various internal and external threats and challenges in maintaining its territorial integrity. Militant activities and sabotage by various insurgent groups in the bordering states have threatened the human security of the citizens and created an unstable environment in the country. The presence of ethnic and communal conflicts and intense violence in various parts of India has brought a big ominous signal to human security. For example, in Manipur, a state in the north-eastern region of India, the conflict and violent activities of two groups are violating the human security of the common people of that region. Dealing with such a situation and providing human security to the common citizens has become a major challenge for the Government of India. Suppressing the subversive activities of Maoists in various rural and tribal areas of India has long been a challenge for the Indian government. As a result of the destructive activities of the Maoists in various states of India including Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh, the human security of the common people of those regions is being repeatedly violated (Bardhan,2015). Besides, different types of serious crimes are seen to be committed in India at different times due to religious, ethnic, and gender reasons, which has become a big challenge for the Indian Government to deal with. Another aspect of human security is ensuring the economic security of citizens. Poverty is a problem that acts as a barrier to the overall development of the state. The central government and State governments have taken various measures for the common people in India to become economically independent. But all those measures cannot be said to be sufficient. Even in the 21st century, many people in India still live below the poverty line. One of the aspects of human security is to live in a healthy and pollution-free

environment. That is, health security is an important aspect of human security. Many rural areas of India still do not have enough primary health centers and most of the places that do have primary health centers do not have very good infrastructure (Narain, 2016). However, there is no hesitation in saying that the central and state governments have taken various steps to improve the infrastructure of the health system and provide free and better services to the poor people. Finally, it can be said that the responsibility of the state is to ensure the personal security of the citizens as one of the aspects of human security. In this regard, such protection is seen to be violated due to religious, ethnic, and gender reasons at various times in India which can be a big challenge in front of human security.

Another important country in South Asia is Pakistan. It is a populous multi-ethnic country in South Asia. Roughly three-fifths of the country's total area consists of rugged hilly terrain and plateaus. As one of the countries in South Asia, human security has become a challenging issue in Pakistan. Internal problems and conflicts in Pakistan have increasingly threatened human security. Because there are different linguistic groups and there are conflicts between them on different issues. Various ethnic organizations have created political chaos and a kind of unstable environment in society for their narrow interests. Not only that, there is an inter-religious conflict between the two ideologies of Islam i.e., Shia and Sunni. Besides, conflict can be observed between Islam and other religions. Various terrorist activities, extremism in the religious field, and an unstable environment in the political field have challenged human security (Ashraf, Begum & Jathol, 2016). Apart from this, an economic crisis can be observed due to the lack of industrialization in Pakistan. Pakistan is divided into two groups- have and have not i.e., rich people and poor people. The state as a whole is controlled and dominated by a few elite families. Fewer people in the population have access to nutritious food (Lodhi, 2001). The majority of people in Pakistan still do not have access to clean drinking water. The shortage of drinking water has led to protests at various times. Which is sometimes violent takes shape. Thus, the increasing scarcity of potable water has displaced people and pushed them into financial and social crises (Khalid & Khan 2018). For these reasons, the question mark has been raised about how much the human security of the citizens is being protected here. Here, linguistically or religiously minority people are still struggling for their identity. They are still living in insecurity. There is no government protection for them. Most of the public hospitals fail to provide adequate treatment for people. So, for these reasons, protecting human security in Pakistan has become a very challenging issue.

Afghanistan is located in Central Asia, with Iran in the West and Pakistan in the East. But Afghanistan is also often included in South Asia (South Asia, 2023). Afghanistan is a landlocked country. Afghanistan is a very economically weak country. It is an industrially backward and war-torn country. It is a multi-ethnic country and there are ethnic conflicts between different ethnic groups. Democratic culture has not yet been created here. This state has become the battlefield of foreign powers. The common people of Afghanistan have long been victims of protracted wars, conflicts, persistent instability, and humanitarian and economic crises. The recent seizure of power by the Taliban after a long war has created fear and despair among a large part of the country's population. After the seizure of power in 2021, Afghanistan was cut off from the international market, and foreign aid and investment stopped. As a result, the manufacturing activities of this country have suffered. According to the report of the World Food Program, 41 million people in Afghanistan have been suffering from food shortages for a long time. (The Times of India, 2023). There are not enough shelters and medication and there is still not an adequate education system. According to the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 50,000 people have lost their homes as a result of the long war (Sakhi, 2021). For all these reasons, there are so many questions about human security. The administrative system here is very weak. There is a lack of adequate leadership. The civil society here is not strong. It can be called very weak. For these reasons, providing human security to the people of Afghanistan has become a very challenging issue.

After a long movement, East Pakistan was separated from Pakistan in 1971 to form the state of Bangladesh. However, the massacre and torture carried out by the Pakistani military and government during the Bangladesh independence movement can be said to be one example of a violation of human security. At this time, the role of the Pakistani government against the then East Pakistan was harsh, inhumane, and barbaric (Salzberg, 1973). However, after independence, Bangladesh, which was built under the leadership of Mujibur Rahman, tried to treat all classes, all groups, and all religious people equally and give them equal rights. However, there were many problems in the field of human security. In independence, Bangladesh, law and order-related, financial-related problems were and can be observed today. One of the major sources of human insecurity in Bangladesh is poverty and unemployment. The government could not provide sufficient employment according to the needs of the people. The food security of the people here is also a matter of great concern. Many people in Bangladesh are still deprived of nutritious and healthy food. Moreover, Bangladesh is a country prone to natural

disasters. Every year the people here are affected by various floods and storms. Many's lives were lost and property damaged. A large amount of agricultural produce and food is lost as a result of these natural disasters. Bangladeshi people have not only economic problems but also, do not have health security. People's residential security, educational security, and religious security are very questionable. The security of minorities is a major concern here. The political situation here is becoming intolerant and violent day by day (Hassan & Kamruzzaman,2019). It is getting difficult day by day for ordinary people to vote properly and participate in politics. Although the government of Bangladesh is adopting various policies for the common people, due to the corruption of the administrative system, those benefits are not reaching the common people. As a result, services in various areas, including education and health, do not reach people in real terms. Not only that, the radical forces here are anti-minorities. The people of the minority communities here are almost victims of the violence of the majority of people. So, there is a question mark about the extent of human security of the Bangladeshi people.

Here, Sri Lanka is an island nation located in the Indian Ocean off the southeastern coast of India. About twenty million people live here (Asia Society, 2023). The issue of human security from Sri Lanka's perspective can be said to be very complicated. Sri Lanka is a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-cultural country. The two main ethnic groups here are Sinhalese and Tamils. So, it is hoped that all cultural groups, religious groups, and linguistic groups will be treated and protected equally by the state. However, the Sri Lankan government has completely failed in this regard. Not only that, but Sri Lankan society is also ethnically and religiously divided. The Sri Lankan government never wants to recognize the Tamils and other minority ethnic groups. Rather, the government has always taken the policy of repressing in this regard. The government has not only used police and military forces against minority ethnic and religious groups but also used Buddhist monks (Gunatilleke,2018). Moreover, no economic opportunities are given to the minorities. Besides, they are not given any facilities in the fields of education, health, accommodation, etc. Apart from this long-standing ethnic conflict, Sri Lanka's human security is more vulnerable in view of epidemics like COVID-19 and recent anti-government mass protests. There is no doubt that the economic, political, environmental security, health, and food security of the common people in Sri Lanka are at the bottom of the current situation. In 2022, Sri Lanka's citizens began mass protests against the Rajapaksa government in protest against the economic crisis, administrative corruption, and maladministration which continued for several months. At this time, a civil war

situation arose in Sri Lanka. The government repressed the protesters and even brutally attacked them. In this civil war situation, the human security of citizens is seen to be grossly violated. Even though Ranil Wickremesinghe assured the citizens of the right of peaceful non-violent assembly and protest after becoming the new head of state of Sri Lanka, no positive steps have been observed by the new government to allow the citizens to protest in a democratic manner (Salikuddin, 2022). Not only the political situation, but the economic situation of Sri Lanka is also going through a very deplorable situation. According to the Global Hunger Index in 2022, Sri Lanka is ranked 68 out of 131 countries. Here, people's daily income is decreasing day by day while food prices are increasing day by day. The impact of this economic crisis is having a profound impact on the food and health of citizens. Sri Lanka's health and security have steadily deteriorated since the outbreak of COVID-19. There is no hesitation in saying that Sri Lanka's human security is very questionable in view of these overall circumstances.

Conclusion

Finally, it can be said that protecting human rights has become a very important issue all over the world. Because the concept of human rights is universal. Irrespective of the country in which a person is born, all the rights he is entitled to enjoy as a human being are his human rights. These human rights are generally regarded as natural and fundamental. In the context of the above discussion on the question of the role of states in protecting the human rights of citizens, it can be said that human rights violations are increasing day by day in South Asian states. Due to terrorism, human trafficking, murder, disappearance, political revenge, torture, rape, death in police custody, crossfire, border killing, minority rights, etc., the protection of human rights in South Asian countries is very questionable. Besides, most of the states in the region are suffering from an economic crisis. The population of the states in this region is increasing day by day but the per capita income of the people is not increasing. As a result, people are facing daily problems and the normal life of people is getting disrupted. In these countries, the government, law and order forces, and in some cases the judiciary are not able to play the expected role in protecting the human rights of the citizens. After the above discussion, there is no hesitation to say that human security in South Asian countries is not good. Therefore, to protect the human rights of citizens, South Asian countries have to take a concerted initiative on the issue of various human rights violations. States should ensure all kinds of security and rights for linguistic or religious minorities. Heads of state in the region should take an active role in resolving bilateral and multilateral disputes between states. The states should extend cooperation to each other to solve various socio-

economic and political problems. Because there is more need for integrated regional initiatives and cooperation in the establishment of human rights. For the sake of greater democracy, and for the sake of protecting human rights, the states of South Asia need to bond with each other. Only then will the region become prosperous and the human security of its citizens assured.

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