

Abstract

Human Dignity Through Human Security Perspective from India's North-East

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In contemporary discourse on human security right to dignity constitutes one of the core components of development apart from freedom from fear and freedom from want. The three components are so interconnected that lack of one reinforces the danger in other components too. Perceived in such a way, human security and for that matter human dignity is a political issue as much as a social and cultural issue and it is determined to great extent by the very nature of the state. This is evident from the post colonial experience of the Indian state, particularly from the manifestation of the Indian state vis-à-vis its people in India's North-East.

Indian state continues to be dependent on colonial apparatuses while enforcing law and order as well as 'development', particularly in India's North-East. Three apparatuses are significant in this regard: Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958; Indian Police Act, 1861 and Land Acquisition Act, 1894. All these apparatuses were perceived and brought into being by the colonial authority to deal with its 'subjects'. However, the same apparatuses are used by the independent state of India to deal with its 'citizens'. In such a situation the qualitative difference between 'subjects' and 'citizens' have remained very blurred inviting constant threat to the dignity of the citizens in the region. The normal mechanism of rule of law is being flouted by the state machinery both in the law and order/security and also development fronts. India's North-East is the homeland of hundreds of tribal communities who enjoy a special relationship with the land. Land-people relationship is unique and qualitatively different from the property relationship. Land remains a community resource rather than an individual property. This has also been threatened by the 'development paradigm' of the Indian state.

In such a situation the whole notion of human dignity needs to be located in the greater political context. The proposed paper argues that human security paradigm primarily proposed by UNDP has the potential to contest and convince the state to transcend its obsession with 'law and order/security' and also 'development' and to move towards a people-centred paradigm.

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