

Human Rights as an Academic Discipline: Challenges and Opportunities

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Human rights are often examined only within the scope of law. It is true that legal provisions are essential to claim any right, including human rights, but perhaps mere legal provisions are not enough to understand, protect and promote human rights in most societies. Even though the general framework, philosophy and perception of human rights should be universal, the crucial point is, can we really understand the scope and dimensions of human rights without considering the concerned society and culture? Can society, culture and economy be neutral? These questions bring out the issue of holistic understanding of human rights. Anthropology with its holistic approach can contribute significantly in understanding the causes and factors of human rights violations and strengthening the forces of struggle for promoting and protecting human rights at different levels of society.

Societal context

As an anthropologist I share some of the experiences and observations that have influenced the thinking and planning for an academic program on human rights in India.

Case 1. A man in South India felt very thirsty and tired at mid-day due to the oppressive heat of summer. He wanted to drink water from a well. He was however denied water and was severely beaten by the people in the community. His only fault was his low social status, a very low caste, the Dalit caste. The water of the well was only for the high castes.

Case 2. In remote rural villages in Bengal, feudal relations are quite strong. The more affluent landowners keep farm servants. Farm servants can get loans with high interest under the duni system. A loan of 10 Indian Rupees, for example, means a payment of 160 Indian

Rupees after one year. Considering the high interest rate, a borrower is generally unable to repay the loan and ends up working for the land-owner/money-lender just like a bonded laborer during his/her lifetime. In one case, a father who took loan for his son's marriage ended as a bonded laborer along with the newly married couple to the family of the lender. It repeated the same experience of the father when he got married. India has abolished by law the bonded labor system, but poverty perpetuates it in many places.

Case 3. Among the tribals in the Uttar Pradesh hill areas, the dowry custom (where the groom's family pays the bride's family) continues. As per their cultural tradition, the higher the amount (it may be cattle or money) paid, the higher is the social status. In most cases, people pay more even if it means taking huge loans. But poverty prevents loan payment after the

marriage. As a result, sending the newly married bride to nearby towns to work as a prostitute and earn money to repay the loan has become the general practice in the area.

Case 4. Great disparities in the number of boy students and girl students even at primary education level are very common in India particularly in rural areas. Girl students are usually much less in number. This is also true with regards to health facilities and in many other matters. A boy child is much better treated than a girl child in many families. The family is often noted for being more caring towards a boy child, giving him better food. The low status of women is also reflected in the gradual decline of sex ratio in many parts of India.

Case 5. Development projects are often causes of displacement and more poverty. These financially profitable projects, like planting of eucalyptus trees under the afforestation program of the government, adversely affect the indigenous peoples. They eventually suffer from loss of their homeland and livelihood. They are deprived of the forests, which are the primary and traditional sources of fuel, herbal medicines, and food. They therefore suffer from health, livelihood and other problems. Women are significantly affected because of their role in preparing the food for the family.

Case 6. Religion provides an identity but also often leads to communal tension and conflict in different parts of India. While one cannot blame religion for communal tension and the consequent human rights violations, as a traditional social cleavage that provides identity, vested interest groups have used it in a negative way leading to division among the people that facilitates human rights violations.

Case 7. A critical analysis of the population growth rate of indigenous people in India shows that the growth rate of certain indigenous communities is much higher than the national average. But then, negative growth rate is also noted in indigenous communities threatened with extinction. This is more common among small indigenous communities. Though births

in such communities are often reported in national newspapers, the reasons for the decline in population or negative growth rate were never seriously examined. Is it due to any genetic disorder? Since the survival of a community is involved, this issue should be examined from human rights perspective.

Analysis of these cases makes it apparent that the existing socio-cultural system and economic conditions are mainly responsible for the violation of human rights. The Constitution of India provides that all should have equal access over natural resources and there should not be any deviation from this principle on the basis of caste, creed or sex. But the socio-cultural system facilitates not only the denial of water from the wells provided by the government but also severe beating of a person belonging to a very low caste (Dalit) who use them. Forced prostitution of women and bonded labor are either due to traditional customs or poverty in their respective communities. Women are discriminated because of their low status in certain cultures leading to general demographic imbalance. It has also been noted how the dominant development paradigm is responsible for displacement of indigenous people, affecting their access and control over natural resources and is responsible for health hazards. Thus mere legal provisions cannot prevent human rights violations because of the given social and economic systems. These are the emerging areas of human rights which no human rights scholar or activist can ignore. Survival is the most crucial aspect in human rights.

While some communities are facing extinction, we have not shown concern on this matter. Even though such communities may only constitute a very small percentage of the human population, can we ignore the possible extinction of a section of the human population because the number involved is small and they are all “backward” indigenous communities? Perhaps not, since everyone has the right to survive. It is true that such events and situations

may not exist in all the countries, particularly in the West, but that does not mean that such aspects should not be considered in the field of human rights. It again brings the importance of understanding the concerned society, culture and economy within the ambit of human rights.

Anthropological approach to human rights

As an anthropologist, I am not only interested in studying people but also equally concerned about their development and welfare. In fact, I am interested in making a bridge between academic knowledge and development theory and practice. In that process, I am also involved in the development and welfare of the people through government initiatives and non-governmental efforts. Through my participation in the activities of the different non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in South and Southeast Asia, I had the opportunity to understand the problems of the people at the micro-level in the countries in these subregions. In these countries, few NGOs work in the field of human rights but many more are working on broader areas of development and welfare of the people to help improve their quality of life and in the process contribute in the protection and promotion of human rights. Many NGO workers suggested to me the introduction of a course on human rights at the university level since I was also associated with the university system. I realized that it could not be a conventional subject and the conventional approach is not appropriate for the introduction of such a subject. Along with theoretical inputs, considerable emphasis should be given on empirical situations and experiences. The human rights activities involved refer to documentation or mobilization against powerful forces like the state, vested interest groups, political parties or the affluent dominant section of the society. So it would be a very challenging job.

Modification in the course structure and

teaching methods are also implied if the course is introduced as an academic discipline. One must have good knowledge about the legal provisions and at the same time aware of the socio-cultural and economic systems and realities. One must also have training on research methodology to collect and document cases of violation, protection and promotion of human rights and also to get good understanding of the human society. Generally in the university system there is some restriction about the background of the person who can deliver lectures in class. It is expected that one must have Post Graduate degree, if not higher degree, to deliver lectures. But I realized that a human rights activist may be a very appropriate person to deliver lecture and share certain experiences but may not have any formal higher degree. Inviting such persons to deliver regular lectures is rather difficult in any conventional-traditional university like the University of Calcutta. But it is really heartening that the university agreed to my suggestions and a Post Graduate Program on Human Rights was introduced in 2002.

Before starting the Post Graduate Program on Human Rights in the University of Calcutta, I organized a number of seminars and workshops on disadvantaged people, women and children, environment and development, health, religion-ethnicity-communalism and human rights and other related issues. A small workshop was organized in September 2001 inviting people from human rights organizations and human rights commissions, social activists and academicians to formulate a broad course structure incorporating the emerging situations and challenges of human rights. Though it was a small group, it represented the different countries of South and Southeast Asia and varied backgrounds. Finally a course structure was prepared and submitted to the University of Calcutta. It approved an International Post Graduate Program on Human Rights that started to be offered from 2002. In 2006, the Ph.D Program in Human Rights was introduced. The course structure is modified

and changed from time to time. In 2007, the course includes Information Technology-related and HIV/AIDS-related issues.

Program rationale

Human rights, though considered inherent and universal, suffer severe violations in various forms ranging from deprivation of basic needs to discrimination against women, children, Dalit, tribal, ethnic, linguistic and other minorities. These violations resulted in conflict, insurgency and general restiveness among people who have been evicted, forced to migrate, or experienced untold sufferings.

Most countries in the world have experienced colonial, military, autocratic and chauvinistic majority regimes. Political repression in the form of arbitrary arrest, detention, torture, disappearances, summary execution and extra-judicial killings existed in these systems. In such settings, human rights issues and concerns have become highly sensitive topics for public discourse, much more for classroom discussion.

On the other hand, global political and economic regimes and dominant development model in this era of globalization have resulted in the massive depletion of natural resources and exploitation of human labor leading to further marginalization and impoverishment of the people.

Recent changes in global politics, however, ushered in changes that created democratic space for people's movements, NGOs, civil society and people's alliances to engage in human rights protection and promotion work. Some governments established national human rights institutions. These agencies face numerous challenges including changing perceptions and attitudes, bringing about reform in the bureaucracy and legal system, and democratization of institutions and governance through genuine people participation and empowerment. To meet these challenges there is a growing need to develop human resources for the establishment of a truly

democratic, just and peaceful society.

The new millennium ushered in new opportunities and yet the old questions and challenges remain. The tremendous leap in the field of pure sciences and technology has been great and unparalleled in the past century, yet the persistent scenario of massive poverty, rampant violence and lack of peace, blatant deprivation and social injustices point out the dire imbalance and gap. At the forefront of the quest for enlightenment and conquest of the unknown future is education. Unfortunately, the same civilizing system of education which we have created in the hope of delivering humankind from the dark clutches of ignorance and poverty has frequently lend itself to be the instrument of our continued enslavement and captivity into life systems that has long become obsolete. The system of governance riddled with much corruption, the economic system that promotes consumerism as model of development and a cultural set-up that does not recognize the traditional and indigenous values are the order of the day. All these have contributed in propping up an educational system that have bred passivity, competition and indifference, isolated from socio-cultural milieu and divorced from realities. This kind of education has not only failed in its mission of answering the questions but has also chosen to keep silent and alienated from the realities. Our challenge then is to evolve an educational system that is responsive to the call of the times. This is an education that is firmly rooted in the context and realities of the people - the educants and the educators themselves. This is where the significance of a humanistic and development-oriented approach to pedagogy come to fore. Aware of these challenges, the University of Calcutta realizes the crucial role it can play in developing and evolving an alternative educational program that molds not only the mind but the heart as well. It takes upon itself to respond by striving for an education that not only affirms the values of humanity but also empowers humankind to confront the challenges of modern times.

The University of Calcutta, one of the oldest universities in India, has played a significant role not only during the freedom struggle against the colonial rulers but also in initiating many progressive pro-people academic programs and actively supporting many democratic movements in its long colorful history. In the recent past, it has also been recognized as one of the outstanding universities in India securing the highest grade in the assessment of National Assessment and Accreditation Council. True to that spirit and tradition, the university has started a postgraduate course in human rights.

Program objectives

The program has the following objectives:

1. To develop a program that shall provide a holistic and comprehensive understanding of human rights as a concept that is interdependent with democracy, development and socio-cultural pluralism in an integrative and multi-disciplinary pedagogical approach.
2. To enable graduates to become not only knowledgeable persons but committed and have the conviction to work as human rights defenders and advocates.
3. To develop skills necessary for the effective implementation of national and international mechanisms for the monitoring, protection and promotion of human rights.
4. To provide a venue for the systematic analysis and understanding of the situation and problems of human rights in Asia in general and South Asia in particular.
5. To develop research endeavours in the field of human rights and to evolve research approaches, methodologies and techniques appropriate for such studies.

Admission

The program is designed for academicians, educators, practitioners, and general students interested in human rights issues and open to

all nationalities. Admission, decided by a Selection Committee, to the program requires the following qualifications:

- i. Bachelor Degree
- ii. Proficiency in English
- iii. Good experience/strong interest in human rights and social issues
- iv. Other qualifications related to human rights are additional considerations.

Duration and academic requirements

The normal duration of the program is two years. However, each student may not be required to stay for the whole two years in the university. The first year consists of theoretical classes for two terms. The second year consists of work (either individually or as a group) with an organization (mostly working on human rights issues) and submission of report on it for the first term. The second term is devoted to work on a project related to human rights and submission of a thesis under the guidance of a teacher. In the second year, non-Indian students can go back to their own countries for these two programs and submit the report and thesis accordingly.

Scope and general course contents

Human rights education should preferably be inter-disciplinary and not compartmentalized into academic disciplines. It has to be conceptualized in their entirety. These are central to all social science studies. The contents of human rights courses should incorporate and reflect the concerns for democracy, development and peace. In particular, in a region like South Asia, they must include issues of social justice, distributive justice, bringing marginalized and historically deprived section to the mainstream of national life, protecting environment and ecological balance, and ensuring steady and meaningful progress and development in individual's as

well as national life.

To ensure comprehensiveness and incorporation of national, regional and international perspectives, the broad contents of courses on human rights cover the following:

- i. Philosophical and cultural bases and historical perspectives
- ii. Interdependence of and linkages between human rights and democracy, pluralism, development, ecological balance, peace and militarization at the national and international levels
- iii. National perspectives: The historical context; colonialism and post colonialism; post independence national development; protection of marginalized groups including minorities, women and children, dalits, tribals, etc.; the violation of rights by the state and its agencies, body of laws, by-laws and rules, etc. inconsistent with human rights norms; violation of rights by armed political groups and terrorists; intra-societal violation of rights of the poor and weak by the dominant groups including gender inequalities, exploitations and injustices; the role of the judiciary, National Human Rights Commission and the other Statutory Commissions; the role of the NGOs and the media in the context of promotion and protection of human rights
- iv. Regional Perspectives: Features of the region like pluralism, economic poverty, colonial past, rigid social structure and social inequalities, mass illiteracy, constant threat to political stability and democracy, growing consumerism and recently introduced globalization process in the context of protection and promotion of human rights
- v. International Perspectives: The study of the texts, treaties, arrangements and structures and instruments innovated by the international community in the post-world war period for the promotion and protection of human rights; Role of institutions like the United Nations Organization, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), UNESCO, World

Health Organization (WHO), International Labour Organization (ILO) in the context of human rights; Causes of success and failure of these institutions in protecting and promoting respect for human rights.

Faculty

The members of the faculty include:

- Academicians from different departments of various universities in India and abroad
- Researchers in India and abroad
- Chairpersons/ Members of Human Rights Commissions
- Senior members of different national/international organizations, particularly human rights organizations
- Social activists in India and abroad.

Besides academic or theoretical studies in anthropology, a strong and major sub-discipline in anthropology called applied or action anthropology (where studies are mostly focused on the dalits, indigenous peoples or ethnic minorities, children, women, refugees, etc.) forms part of the program. Incidentally, the main subjects of applied or action anthropology are mostly the groups where human rights violations are more evident.

The course focuses on the study and advocacy of human rights around the world not only from an anthropological perspective. Its aims include thinking critically about human rights—seeing them not as a given category, but as a set of conceptual frameworks through which rights or claims are made and socio-political transitions are accomplished. It considers ways in which human rights are constituted as a trans-national discourse and a field of action. It examines the rights of indigenous peoples, ethnic and religious minorities, the dalits, women, children, prisoners of war, refugees and populations assaulted by racism in varied cultural and trans-national settings. Incidentally,

anthropological-holistic understanding and methodology are very appropriate to study these communities or groups.

The experience so far

When the program was introduced, there was no undergraduate course on human rights. Since the program has an inter-disciplinary perspective, it goes beyond the usual perception of rights as relevant to law. Thus apart from students of law, students from social science backgrounds (anthropology, sociology, psychology, political science, economics, geography, philosophy and history) apply for admission. There are even students with computer science background applying for admission. In the admission interview, they pointed out that in the context of globalization process, computers and the Internet could play an important role for the protection and promotion of human rights. Such students were also selected. It should be noted that people with background in human rights activity, working in human rights organizations or NGOs with welfare and development activities are given preference over other applicants. Two to three students with such backgrounds are selected each year.

The large number of students applying for admission to the program each year is an encouraging aspect. The fifteen available seats in the program attract as many as two hundred applicants. In many cases, students who did very well (second place among university students) in examinations for Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees joined the program instead of their own field for the post-graduate level. This reflects genuine interest of the students in human rights. In each year around 50% of the students belong to this category.

The program, implemented as a distinct, separate discipline for the first time in Asia and not as part of law or sociology or anthropology or political science disciplines, has created considerable interest among academicians and

NGOs. On a number of occasions, the activities or scope of the program were reported in many national newspapers. It benefits from fruitful contacts with NGOs in Asia working on human rights issues. Students have participated in seminars/workshops or training programs of different human rights organizations in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand before completing their course. The students have participated on fifteen occasions in training programs/seminars or workshops outside India within the last two to three years. Three students were selected as Interns in UNICEF in 2006 and as Intern in Thailand in 2003. At present, three students of the first batch are studying outside India, in the United States of America, United Kingdom and Thailand. One completed a specialization course on Gender and Development at the Asian Institute on Technology. The course was also introduced in the undergraduate level in two good colleges affiliated to the University of Calcutta. Four former students of the program work as lecturers in these colleges. Some former students are also working in the different national/ international NGOs. One is attached to the Human Rights desk of Reuters.

In spite of limited resources, the students are provided with national and international exposure. We also organize regular lectures, seminars and workshops independently or in collaboration with other organizations. During the last five years, we have organized five international workshops/seminars on different human rights issues where all our students got the opportunity to interact with national/ international participants.

The students also conduct fieldwork, document cases and prepare dissertation works on different aspects of human rights. For fieldwork, all students generally focus on a particular area, whereas for documentation and dissertation work, they separately work on their respective issues. During the last four years, the fieldwork was on indigenous communities (focusing on their displacement) and child labor. For dis-

sertation and documentation, studies focused on women and children, environment and development, prison situation, old age problem, dalit issue, refugee and displaced population, HIV/AIDs, religion-communalism and human rights, indigenous peoples, beggars and urban poor, minority rights, media and human rights, information technology and human rights, health and human rights, etc. It is also encouraging that students obtain jobs in different national and international organizations related to the issues they focused on for their dissertation work. There are at least four cases of students getting such jobs in different organizations. The students are also involved as research staff in different research projects in the university.

There is a plan to start an e-newsletter and publish the studies made by the students. There is now a search for funds for these plans. They will provide a good opportunity for student involvement. They will also encourage the students to make good research since there is the possibility of publication. Some students have published a number of articles in different journals or edited books. There are around twelve research publications of the students published in national/ international journals and edited books. They have also regularly contributed in national newspapers.

The students have performed quite well, in competition with other graduate students, in participating in international activities. A student was selected as one of the fourteen participants from all over the world in a United Nations-supported workshop on human rights. She was selected on the basis of an article submitted for this purpose. The students have also participated in regional programs organized by the South Asia Forum for Peace and Human Rights, ODHIKAR, FORUM Asia, Asian Resource Foundation/Asian Muslim Action Network, etc., again in competition with other graduate students.

Conclusion

Human rights are now a topic of pressing concern in a world of conflict, competition and seemingly relentless globalization. Anthropology, with its rich understanding of local cultures, has developed the theoretical and practical skills for analyzing human rights issues in context. It equips students with a reflective understanding of their own cultural and professional practices, whether they work in organizations that increasingly concern themselves with human rights issues, or are seeking a socially aware approach to a pressing topic of our time.

The program provides a lively and stimulating look at key human rights issues and the way anthropology's unique cross-cultural perspective has contributed to their understanding and debate. Particular attention is given to case studies of Asian situations, in order to explore how rights operate in social life and are shaped by wider cultural forces. We explore important topics relevant to the critical study of human rights. Students gain grounding in the anthropology of law, power and rights and consider how globalization is linked with the rise of human rights and other rights-based concerns, including: indigenous rights; environmental and land rights; child, health and medical rights; war, violence and social justice; and, cultural and intellectual property rights. The program offers a broad-based approach, with options on public health, children, international human rights law, as well as intensive training in ethnographic research methods.

Anthropology's cumulative knowledge of human cultures, and of human mental and physical capacities across all populations, types, and social groups, attests to the universality of the human capacity for culture. This knowledge entails an ethical commitment to the equal opportunity of all cultures, societies, and persons to realize this capacity in their cultural identities and social lives. However, the global environment is fraught with violence, which is perpetrated by states and their

representatives, corporations, and other actors. This violence limits the humanity of individuals and collectives.

Anthropology as a profession is committed to the promotion and protection of the rights of peoples everywhere. When a culture or society denies or permits the denial of such opportunity to any of its own members or others, an anthropologist has an ethical responsibility to protest and oppose such deprivation. This is implied in the basic document, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and other international human rights instruments, but based also on the expanding definition of human rights that include areas not necessarily addressed by international law. These areas include collective as well as individual rights, cultural, social, and economic development, and a clean and safe environment.

Anthropology as an academic discipline studies the bases and the forms of human diversity and unity; anthropology as a practice seeks to apply this knowledge to the solution of human problems. Anthropology is concerned whenever human difference is made the basis for a denial of basic human rights, where “human” is understood in its full range of cultural, social, linguistic, psychological, and biological senses.

An anthropologist recognizes and respects human differences, both collective and individual, rather than the abstract legal uniformity of Western tradition. In practical terms, however, its working definition builds on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the conventions on torture, genocide, and discrimination against women, and other treaties which bring basic human rights within the parameters of international written and customary law and practice. It may be emphasized that the concept of human rights is consistent with international principles but not limited by them. Human rights are not a static concept. Our understanding of human

rights is constantly evolving as we come to know more about the human condition. It is therefore incumbent on anthropologists to be involved in the debate on enlarging our understanding of human rights on the basis of anthropological knowledge and research.

While anthropology can contribute significantly in the study of human rights, human rights can in turn enlarge the scope of anthropological study and research. As it involves rights, the legal parameters are obviously there. Without legal provisions, the rights cannot be claimed. But there are also traditional or customary rights in many societies. Naturally, if we consider the issue of human rights, we cannot confine our attention only within the framework of Western nation states. Thus it is equally important to consider the concerned society, culture and economy. Again, it is also important to critically examine the development paradigm that often creates environmental problems affecting certain sections of the human population. Thus, for human rights study and research, an interdisciplinary study and research is needed. There are also interesting emerging areas like environment, HIV/AIDS, Information Technology and Human Rights. In fact, the understanding of human rights is constantly evolving with the change and development of human society.

Annex A

Human Rights Program

Course Structure:

- I. Theoretical Courses: Paper I to Paper V
(Each paper-100 marks)
- II. Practical Courses: Paper VI to Paper X
(Each paper-100 marks)

Paper I to Paper V: First year
 Paper VI to Paper X: Second year

Paper I

- 1st Half
 - (a) Introduction to Human Rights
 - (b) Philosophy, History and Development of Human Rights
- 2nd Half
 - (c) Social Theories

Paper II

- 1st Half
 - (a) Human Rights Laws, Mechanism and Instruments
- 2nd Half
 - (b) Human Rights Methodology - Social Action and Solidarity

Paper III

- 1st Half
 - (a) Research Methodology and Human Rights
- 2nd Half
 - (b) The Emergence of Civil Society
 - (c) Human Rights in the context of Terrorism and Militarization, Democracy and Peace

Paper IV

- 1st Half Globalization and Human Rights
 - (a) Consumer Rights
- 2nd Half Ethnicity, Communalism and Human Rights
 - (b) Torture and Human Rights

Paper V

- 1st Half Human Rights and Disadvantaged People
 - (a) Women, Children and Human Rights
- 2nd Half
 - (c) Human Rights and Environment, Education and Health

Paper VI

- (a) Status Report/Report Writing & Viva

Paper VII

- (a) Field-Work / Report Writing & Viva

Paper VIII

- 1st Half
 - (a) Documentation, Reporting & Appeal with reference to Human Rights Issues (At least 3 case studies)
- 2nd Half
 - (b) Comprehensive Viva

Paper IX & X

Dissertation Paper and Viva

Course Description:

1. **Introduction to Human Rights:** The course emphasizes the historical development of human rights in the context of universal experience of humankind, ideological and philosophical foundations of human rights as well as modern concepts of human rights. It pays special attention to developing students' understanding and analytical capabilities of problems and policies in addressing current human rights situations.

Ethical and moral bases of human rights; Indigenous and traditional concepts of human rights; Social, cultural, economic, political and civil rights.

2. **Philosophy, History and Development of Human Rights:** This is a study and analysis

of economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights on the basis of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It encourages the analysis of economic development and human rights practice, human rights and religion. It involves comparative studies of human rights in societies with different political, economic, social and cultural systems.

Human rights situations; Comparative study of South Asian constitutions with respect to provisions on Human Rights; Evolution and development of human rights.

3. **Social Theories:** The study of sociological theories, concepts, determinants, and related issues of human rights, particularly Eastern concepts and ideologies in order to develop analytical ability and applicability to the process of social changes, and social interactions related to human rights and democracy.

Cultural relativism - Ethnicity, pluralism and nationalism; Democracy and governance Peace and militarization; Theories of Development.

4. **Human Rights Laws, Mechanism and Instruments:** This emphasizes the evolution and conception of human rights, the attempt to make human rights as natural rights become legal rights, problems and constraints to enforcing legal instruments on human rights. It also studies the legal dimension of human rights, the human rights protection system of the United Nations and its specialized agencies as well as comparative international norms as expressed in international instruments and domestic laws. It promote an understanding of evaluation of the humanitarian thoughts and practice, the latest developments in humanitarian law,

role of international humanitarian organizations and the law of war, status of prisoners of war, protection of civilians and the rules for the conduct of hostilities.

International Humanitarian Laws, Constitution, and National laws; Mechanisms and instruments for protection, monitoring and promotion of human rights-the United Nations bodies, international institutions for human rights.

5. **Human Rights Methodology - Social Action and Solidarity:** This unit concentrates on the implementation of professional ethics. It identifies and analyzes the context of human right issues. This will be done through the study of ethics and the practical applications of ethics in professions such as health, education and research, mass media, business, judicial process, and military. It discusses the relationship between legal norms and professional norms as well as ethical problems posed by contemporary development. It covers a comparative study of constitutional law concerning human rights of various countries. It compares other laws dealing with human rights. It considers factors limiting the effectiveness of law enforcement in various countries, such as problems in organizing public agencies and in criminal justice administration as well as administrative law.

Monitoring, promotion and protection human rights; informational and educational campaign, planning and management. Awareness building, community organizing and social action. International solidarity and networking.

6. **Research Methodology and Human Rights:** The course covers the basic theory of statistics for research, the utilization of packaged program, computer system and Internet as well as applied program for the

management and searching of data relating to human rights. In addition, the students will study social science research methodology, definition and research process. The course studies the introduction to inquiry, how to formulate research problems, conceptual frameworks and hypotheses, research designs, data collection, data analysis, interpretation and writing of research reports and the ethics of social science researchers. It covers studying multiple classification analysis, analysis of covariance, multiple correlation, path analysis, discriminant analysis, factor analysis, developing an index for human rights, democracy and peace.

Special emphasis on social action research, participatory approaches, techniques, campaign building, advocacy and networking.

7. **The Emergence of Civil Society:** This covers the spectrum of socio-political forces, human rights movements and achievements.
8. **Human Rights in the context of terrorism and Militarization, Democracy and Peace:** This pays special attention to new challenges to the realization of human rights and democracy as well as human rights development and democracy in South Asia.
9. **Globalization and Human Rights:** This examines human rights and a new international economic and social order, rights to development and the relationship between development, democracy and universal enjoyment of all human rights.
10. **Consumer Rights:** This examines the background of principles and concepts of the necessity to proclaim consumer protection law, legal measures for the protection of consumer rights, methods of law enforcement and solutions to the problems relating to consumer rights. The comparative studies of the principles of consumer protection

law in various issues in Thailand and other countries will be also conducted.

11. **Ethnicity, Communalism and Human Rights**

12. **Torture and Human Rights**

13. **Human Rights and Disadvantaged People:**

This studies the rights of the groups particularly exposed to discrimination such as national ethnics, immigrants, and the fundamental rights of refugees. It investigates the implementation or enforcement of agreements and measurements. It studies the basic rights of persons with disabilities as important members of the human community. It explores the various situations or conditions such as socio-economic, political and cultural factors both positively and negatively affecting their quality of life particularly rights of these people at local, national, regional and global levels. It also investigate the process of the struggles for the rights of disabled persons, their roles and participation of the people and organizations involved in the promotion of the rights of / for persons with disabilities.

- i) Minorities
- ii) Ethnic minorities (Indigenous People)
- iii) Dalit
- iv) Refugees, Migrants and Stateless Population
- v) Disabled Persons
- vi) Landless and Urban Poor.

14. **Women, Children and Human Rights:**

The study is divided into two major parts, namely women's rights and rights of the child. Concerning women's rights, the study emphasizes global and regional standards of human rights, policy and directions of the country to address women issues, women's rights in legal framework, and discrimination against women and political, economic and social rights of women in light of the

Beijing Conference. For the rights of the child, the attention is paid to the protection system of the rights of the child, the administrative system in child-courts and the legislation regarding minors.

15. Human Rights and Environment, Education and Health

16. Status Report/Report Writing and Viva:

[Each student will be required to write a report/status report on human rights situation in general or on a specific topic analyzing secondary data.]

17. Field-Work/Report Writing and Viva:

[Each student will submit a report on the socio-cultural, economic and political situation of an area based on empirical data. This would train student to understand the socio-cultural, economic and political reality and background that are often responsible/instrumental for human rights violation. This field-work can be conducted in a group in a particular area or individually.]

18. Documentation, Reporting and Appeal with reference to Human Rights Issues - (Minimum of three case studies):

a) The students will be required to document and report cases of human rights violation, problems related to human rights

issues and cases of protection of human rights including appeal.

b) Comprehensive Viva of the whole course.

19. Dissertation Paper and Viva:

[Each student will be required to submit a thesis on a specific topic related to any area of human rights mainly based on empirical data. This would be different with respect to each student in term of region and/or topic. It is expected that considerable secondary data would also be analyzed to prepare the report. This would be more critical and analytical compared to Paper VI]

The following programs will also be organized in which each student is expected to participate:

1. One seminar in each month
2. Lectures on issues related to human rights
3. One/two special lectures by distinguished scholars/human rights activists
4. One international seminar in a year.

One/two visits to organizations working on issues related to human rights in a year.

Note:

Viva - oral examination by experts mainly on the basis of report/thesis submitted earlier.