PREFACE

Up to the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, systematic human rights studies were few and far between. The next twenty years or so saw the proliferation of the institutes, publication of books, journals, articles, news items and commencement of the degree programmes, resulting in the commendable professionalization of the field of human rights. From the late 1980s to today, a third generation of scholars-activists earned degrees and became active in Human Rights Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), teaching, and publishing. The present researcher belongs to that third generation human rights activists, and present thesis is the culmination of more than five years of indepth study and research that has enabled the researcher to make a modest attempt to acquire some knowledge from the vast ocean of human rights.

Human rights are, undoubtedly, the cornerstone of social justice. Human rights mirror the social-environmental contexts of the time and the values that have more or less crystallized into rights which are often embedded in national constitutions and other ethical codes of conduct, thereby serving as the guiding principles for leading a just way of life.

The social justice-focused initiative lays emphasis upon the importance of a multi-pronged, inter-disciplinary approach that recognizes the interdependency and indivisibility of human rights. One cannot speak of freedom of expression and of assembly without stressing the importance of economic rights or the right to peace. The pursuit of comprehensive social justice, inevitably, is a long-term project, and one has to deal with the ravages of unjust social orders, while simultaneously trying to overcome their roots in the fabric of society.

Similarly human rights studies are an inherently multi-disciplinary subject area. Notwithstanding the fact there are a large number of studies available on the subject of human rights and civil liberties, the researcher has yet not come across any indepth study on the aforesaid subject that links history with the law and the one that traces the history of human rights in India systematically and comprehensively. I have, therefore, made a modest
attempt to do so and I have a reason to believe that my study being an inter-disciplinary one is going to be unique amongst the studies available in the field. I hope that it shall certainly be an addition to the existing literature on the subject and shall in all probability break new grounds in the field of human rights and history respectively.

The present study shall help the reader in understanding the evolution of human rights through various stages of the Indian history, that is, the Ancient, the Medieval and the Modern periods. Besides, the researcher has also tried to look at the growth and consolidation of the human rights movement in the Western World during the different periods of history and has tried to portray as to how the growth of this movement has helped in shaping the human rights movement in India. The researcher has also attempted to demonstrate as to how the social movement of human rights has helped making the society advanced and sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the unprivileged or the underprivileged constituents of the society. Finally, by evaluating the historical growth of the human rights movement, the researcher has tried to portray the future of human rights in India. The researcher believes that an in-depth analysis of human values made for understanding of human rights with a new orientation in the light of contemporary realities would certainly help in ameliorating the grim situation of human rights in India, thereby contributing something substantial to the society.

The present thesis is the combined outcome of the highly commendable contribution of my learned supervisor, the learned co-supervisor and a galaxy of other persons, who directly as well as indirectly contributed to its successful completion, besides my own modest efforts. I have, therefore, taken utmost care to duly acknowledge all of them in the Acknowledgment Section of the thesis. However, any person’s name, if omitted through error or an oversight, is deeply regretted. The law stated in this thesis is as it stood on 20 June 2013.

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