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8. Human Rights & Corporate Social Responsibility

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Abstract

Human rights are the basic rights which are applicable to all human beings regardless of any discriminative criterias like caste, sect, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or any other status. Basically it highlights the rights like right to life & liberty.

Corporate Social responsibility is a unique social concept, which can be used for the upliftment of the socially or economically deprived peoples in the society. Corporation ethics are moral rules and principles that focused on how business ought to behave. It refers to the application of ethical values in business environment.

Key words: Human Rights, CSR, Social Responsibility, Corporate Ethics, Corporate Accountability, Corporate Reporting.

Definition and meaning of Human Rights

Human rights is such a crucial area which cannot be afford to ignore by any governmental as well as non-governmental organization in modern world. This concept itself has covered & spreaded not only in the domestic affairs of the states but also it an international level due to its due concern for being human.

Human rights are the basic rights which are applicable to all human beings regardless of any discriminative criterias like caste, sect, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or any other status. Basically it highlights the rights like right to life & liberty. According to international human rights law it is the duty & responsibility of the government to act in certain ways for the protection & promotions of human rights. Welson Mandela said "To deny people their human rights is to challenge their very humanity."

Though the concept carried important weigh since some recent decades, it had evolved over a period of time way back in centuries old. The modern human rights evolved during the era of enlightenment followed by the records of the United State Declaration of Independence in 1776 & French Declaration Rights of Man in 1789 in which the liberty & equality were the main tenets. And in today's world these two components constitutes the fundamentals of modern

democracy. However, with the changing time & circumstances there are modifications in IIR concepts. "Although all human beings are now defined as being equal, their equality is relative, since some are more equal than others." In the contemporary world they are moulded from different perspective with the more human touch without making any differences for all human beings.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a major milestone document in the history of human rights. "since its adoption in 1948, the UDHR has been translated into more than 501 languages – The most translated document in the world – & has inspired the constitutions of the many newly independent states & many new democracies." Broadly it guarantees economic, social, cultural, civil & political rights through various organs like Human Rights Council, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility:

In the globalized world especially since 1991 this concept flourished with the spreading of waves of privatization & liberalization. "Corporate Social Responsibility is a management concept whereby companies integrate social & environmental concerns in their business operations & interactions with their stakeholders." CSR is a good initiative or a positive step in corporate world which not only just focus on earning more & more profit but also it tries to fulfill the goal of sustainable global development & protection of human rights by setting up of more comprehensive working objectives.

Ethics, Transparency and Accountability are the most important factors in the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility. Corporation should not engage in abusive, unfair, corrupt, anti-competitive or any other mal practices. It includes corporate responsibility, corporate accountability, corporate ethics, corporate citizenship and responsible entrepreneurship. CSR is linked with the principle of sustainability. It means that corporation or business should make decisions based not only on financial factors such as profit and dividends but also based on immediate and long term social and environmental consequences of their actions and decisions. CSR involved in economic, legal, ethical and discretionary responsibility towards society. CSR means a corporation that work along with the NGOs or govt. organizations to solve various societal problems.

Corporate Social responsibility is a very important, unique and social concept, which can be used for the upliftment of the socially deprived citizens in the society. If Corporates or

Industry can utilise the CSR funds in a proper way, they can change the un-even social-economic environment, which exists everywhere in our country.

Linkages between the Human Rights & CSR: Differences & Similarities:

The concept of corporate social responsibility has wide implications & it has been discussed from diverse angles. "The notion of CSR has been extended from the economic concept of maximizing profit of company to the improvement of social welfare & the benefit of organisations."

The study of human rights & CSR is a newly emerging area where earlier very less attention was paid. Various scholars are taking initiatives to understand the interface of HR & CSR. According to them it is a need of international setting to inculcate the HR area within CSR.

The concept of human rights & CSR has both differences & similarities. Although, both concepts emerged from the social impacts still both of these are two distinctive disciplines with several differences. The CSR developed from business scholars while study of human rights has roots in the law. As far as similarities are concerned there is an intersection point. "Both concepts point to the same direction for organisations to be 'corporate citizens' i.e. to act in a socially responsible way & the role of firms in society."

The obligatory nature of human rights protection may strengthen the role of CSR voluntarily.

Human Rights Policies & Corporate Reporting

With the conduct of business practices it has been a matter of great care & priority for the companies to maintain human rights of people. Mostly in well developed countries like US & UK & Europe most of the firms have set principles and management practices with regard to human rights. "Measures have been taken by some states, and in the European case, regionally, to encourage or require corporate reporting on human rights & supply chain transparency as an evolution in line with the concepts of sustainability & the 'triple bottom line.'"

Recently corporate sectors are taking one more positive step towards the human rights in terms of social & environmental reporting.

Conclusion

Human rights & corporate responsibility are two inter-related concepts. Though they have separate disciplines, they are not apart. As far as recent studies of international business are concerned, there exists high possibility to link human rights protection to CSR. In the changing

global scenario the nature of conflicts have also changed. They are becoming more general in terms of common threats rather than limited to a particular state. So human rights have received an immense importance. In private sector under the purview of CSR it has preserved the basic rights of people.

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