We need a new concept of security today ... reflected in the lives of the people, not in the weapon of their country ... one which is universal, global and indivisible.  

— Mahbub-ul Haq (1994)

Before embarking on the concept of human security, it would be appropriate to begin with the concept of security itself. It has two dimensions, psychological and empirical. “Security is both a feeling and a reality. We are secure when we feel protected from harm, free from dangers, and safe from attack. In this way, security is merely a state of mind. But there’s the reality of security as well, a reality that has nothing to do with how we feel. We are secure when we actually are protected” (Schneier, 2003:9). For understanding human security, one must also understand these two components.

Human security is a contested concept like any other significant social science concept. It is still in the process of evolution, development and maturation. This process is far from being complete. However, it has been reasonably successful in expanding its horizon within a short span of time among the social scientists and social activists throughout the globe. Admittedly, it has been successful in discarding the traditional ‘exclusive’ discourse on security and replacing it with an ‘all-inclusive’ alternative paradigm. It has led to rethinking and re-imagining the entire gamut of security thinking in recent past.

The contemporary discourse on human security is perhaps most inclusive in its character and most global in its space and scope. This apodictically reflects the beginning of a new post-national era for the global community. It obviously goes far beyond the horizons of state and its consequent notion of territoriality and the nation. The post-Cold War global community, particularly the western world, in the wake of sudden disappearance of its “all-pervasive threat of communism,” gradually realised the importance of fighting collectively against
certain common threats like poverty, terrorism, forced migration, environmental degradation, drug trafficking, civil violence, AIDS etc. Needless to say, these threats are essentially global in nature. If any of these threats afflicts any country very significantly anywhere in the world, then it is bound to have lesser or greater spillover effects in neighbouring countries or regions. At the initial stage, these threat perceptions made the emerging global community, particularly the western world, restless and insecure. Consequently, they started to rethink and re-imagine in order to construct/deconstruct/reconstruct a new structure of security to cover the entire global society. This new approach to global security has its origin in the west, but gradually it is percolating down to the entire global community; in other words, to humanity.

The concept of human security is essentially a response to a certain all-pervasive and universal threats to humanity. Therefore, it was an imperative to think afresh globally to neutralise such threats, and to ensure security for the people. In other words, human security discourse carries the idea of protection and prevention. Protection of humanity from threats and preventing humanity from disasters became the major concern of the emerging discourse. This qualitative, and undoubtedly, a drastic shift in thinking found reflections in the UN Security Council in 1992, which in no uncertain term, perhaps for the first time, accepted and recognised that various kinds of non-military threats to humanity needed urgent attention and concerted efforts just as much as conflicts between states and within the state draw attention. The United Nations played an important role in popularising the new notion of security. All this contributed towards emergence of a new all-inclusive security discourse, i.e., the human security discourse. Though this new human security discourse puts the human and societal security at the centre of its agenda, we must point out that it does not exclude the security of the state. State security is very much a part of it. However, the human security discourse as a whole may be regarded as a constructive critique of conventional state security discourse wherein the "state" virtually monopolised the entire space of security. It evolved, developed and refined the entire security discourse afresh and placed the people at the centre wherein the "state" is placed as one of the enabling agents of security.
1.1 DEFINING HUMAN SECURITY

In the absence of a universally acceptable definition of human security, scholars differed in their definition and emphasis on human security. Though largely broad and universal, human security as an idea or discourse has been successfully defined by the following two important definitions:

- Human security describes a condition of existence in which basic material needs are met, and in which human dignity, including meaningful participation in the life of the community, can be realised. Such human security is indivisible, it cannot be pursued by or for one group at the expense of another (Thomas and Wilkin, 1999:3).

- "While material sufficiency lies at the core of human security, in addition the concept encompasses non-material dimensions to form a qualitative whole" (Thomas, 2000).

- "The quantitative aspect refers to material sufficiency ... the pursuit of human security must have at its core the satisfaction of basic material needs of all humankind. At the most basic level, food, shelter, education and health care are essential for the survival of human beings" (Thomas, 2000).

The qualitative aspect of human security is about the achievement of human dignity, which incorporates personal autonomy, control over one's life, and unhindered participation in the life of the community. Emancipation from oppressive power structure, be they global, national or local in origin and scope, is necessary for human security. Human security is oriented towards an active and substantive notion of democracy, one that ensures the opportunity of all for participation in the decisions that affect their lives. Therefore, it is engaged directly with discussion of democracy at all levels, from local to the global. These definitions have also specified the quantitative as well as the qualitative part of human security and its application.

The UN Perspective

The former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan defines human security thus:

Human security, in its broadest sense, embraces for more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care, and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her potential. Every step in this
direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth
and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear and the
freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment—
these are the interrelated building blocks of human, and therefore, national
security. (Annan, 2001)

Another important functionary of the United Nations defines this way:

What do we mean by human security? We mean, in its most simple
expression, all those things that man and women anywhere in the world
cherish most: enough food for family, adequate shelter, good health,
schooling for children, protection from violence whether inflicted by man or
nature; and a state which does not oppress its citizens but rules with their
consent. (Frechette, 1999)

Various agencies of the United Nations have successfully popularised
the idea of human security as a compass of human development. The
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), through its Human
Development Reports published annually since 1990, has encouraged
meaningful discourse on development and democracy. This serious
involvement of the UNDP has a qualitative bearing on the concept of
security in two fundamental ways:

1. From exclusive stress on security of the state to a much greater
   people's security.

2. From security through armament to security through sustainable
   human development (UNDP, 1994).

The very idea of security is inseparable from the idea of insecurity.
One needs the other as fundamental analytical referent. Hence, the
UNDP (1994) emphatically observed “For most people, a feeling of
insecurity arises more from the worries about daily life than from the
dread of a cataclysmic world event. Will they and their families have
enough to eat? Will they lose their jobs? Will their street and neighbourhood
be safe from crime? Will they be tortured by a repressive state? Will
they become a victim of violence because of their gender? Will their
religion or ethnic origin target them for persecution?” (UNDP, 1994) All
these reflect the concern for (in)security of common people. Concern for
security affects each and every individual and all human collectivities.

According to the UNDP, human security is a “legitimate concern of
the ordinary people in their daily lives, for whom security symbolises
protection from threat of disease, hunger, unemployment, crime, social
conflict, political repression and environmental hazards” (UNDP,
1994:22). To be specific, human security is a child who did not die, a
disease that did not spread, a job that was not cut, an ethnic tension that did not explode in violence, a dissident who was not silenced. Human security is not a concern for weapon—it is a concern with human life and dignity (UNDP, 1994:22).

UNDP (1994) categorises this whole range of human security into broad seven areas:

• economic security,
• environmental security,
• food security,
• health security,
• personal security,
• community security, and
• political security.

Broadly speaking economic security refers to assured basic income; food security refers to physical and economic access to food; health security refers to relative freedom from disease and infection; environmental security refers to access to sanitary facilities, water supply, clean air and non-degraded land system; personal security refers to security from physical violence and threats; community security refers to cultural identity; and lastly, political security refers to protection of basic human rights and freedom (Lodgaard, 2000; Acharya, 2001:442-59). Needless to say, all these (in)securities are interrelated and interdependent on one another in a complex way. All these securities are essential to ensure and enhance human dignity globally.

In addition to the above threats, the UNDP further adds the following threats to human security which cuts across nations and are in reality global threats (UNDP, 1995:234-36).

• Unchecked Population Growth,
• Disparities in Economic Opportunities,
• Migration Pressures,
• Environmental Degradation,
• Drug Trafficking,
• International Terrorism.

All these threats have global ramifications. If any country or region is affected by any of these problems, it will have spillover effects in
other neighbouring countries or regions. Hence what needs to be done is that a global agenda of action, aimed at arresting such global threats, must be carefully planned out.

Along with the UNDP, one must also appreciate the brain behind the project of popularising the human development discourse, i.e., well-known development economist Mahbub-ul Haq who was deeply concerned with the enhancement of human security through human development. Additionally, it must also be remembered that this new discourse has its roots in the debate on development and disarmament. Besides, reports of several independent commissions like the Brandt Commission, the Bruntland Commission and the Commission on Global Governance etc. paved the way for new thinking on the question of security (Bajpai, 2000). This was followed by a growing recognition of non-military threats to global security debates (Acharya, 2001). The UNDP approach to human development represented a synthesis of earlier formulations on human security. While adopting a people oriented notion of security, it also invoked the “guns versus butter” debate in critiquing states such as India and Pakistan for spending heavily on military at the expense of development efforts (Acharya, 2001). However, human security discourse does not stop here, it is continuing, evolving and consolidating gradually.

The Canadian Perspective

The Canadian government has developed officially its own human security perspective. It defines human security as “freedom from pervasive threats to people's rights, safety or lives. (Govt. of Canada, 2000) Canada has further identified five foreign policy priorities for advancing human securities:

1. Protection of civilians, concerned with building international will and strengthening norms and capacity to reduce the human cost of armed conflicts.

2. Peace support operation, concerned with building UN capacities and addressing the demanding and increasingly complex requirements for deployment of skilled personnel including the Canadians to these missions.

3. Conflict prevention, with strengthening the capacity of the international community to prevent or resolve conflict, and building local indigenous capacity to manage conflict without violence.
4. Governance and accountability, concerned with fostering improved accountability of public and private sector institutions in terms of established norms of democracy and human rights.

5. Public safety, concerned with building international expertise, capacities and instruments to counter the growing threats posed by the transnationally organised crimes.

It seems that Canada emphasises on freedom from fear as the hallmark of human security. Significantly, Canada made it a part of their foreign policy guidelines.

The Japanese Perspective

Very similar to the Canadian position, the Government of Japan too has taken an official position in supporting and enhancing human security globally. It has defined human security as "the preservation and protection of the life and dignity of individual human beings. Japan holds the view, as do many other countries, that the human security can be ensured only when the individual is confident of a life free from fear and free from want" (Takasu, 2000). A Japanese Government document goes on to say:

Japan emphasises "Human Security" from the perspective of strengthening efforts to cope with threats to human lives, livelihood and dignity as poverty, environmental degradation, illicit drugs, transnational organised crimes, infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, the outflow of refugees and anti-personnel mines. It has taken various initiatives in this context. To ensure "Human Freedom and Potential," a range of issues needs to be addressed from the perspective of "Human Security" focused on individual, requiring cooperation among the various actors in international community, including governments, international organisations and civil society (Government of Japan, 1999).

The Japanese perspective gave more importance to freedom from want than freedom from fear. Japan has also funded the Human Security Fund in order to enhance the human security particularly among the developing countries.

Both the Canadian and the Japanese initiatives, along with the middle power countries of Europe and the UNDP initiative, have significantly contributed towards enhancement of human security discourse.
Human Security in South Asia: India in Perspective

South Asia is undoubtedly a human security deficit region. Sabur has rightly observed that the human security situation in South Asia is one of the worst in the world characterised by a high degree of both want and fear (Sabur, 2003:47). Since the region entered into its post-colonial phase, its different nation-states have emphasised more on conventional security than on human security and human development. Hence, all the states, including the nuclear ones, have failed to address adequately the fundamentals of human security and development issues.

India too is no exception, notwithstanding its remarkable democratic credentials and military power. Excessive engagement with the traditional security approach based on military build-up has resulted in substantial reduction of its achievement in the social and economic fields. Here, in this study, we propose to take up the reality of human security in India. The process of structural adjustment as a part of globalisation has made the Indian situation much more complex, somewhat unpredictable today in the wake of the “retreat of the state.” Until, the 1990s, the Indian state was the most decisive instrument for security and development.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

This project is a part of the larger collaborative project on ‘Human security in South Asia,’ taken up by a group of scholars together from different countries of the region. As such, we are doing a part thereof. In that sense, this is apparently a smaller constitutive component of a much larger study. Nevertheless, we have made an attempt to see that this not only becomes a part of the larger study, it has also been deliberately structured and planned in such a way so as to make it an autonomous if not fully independent study. Hence, one may read it as a part of a larger study and also as an autonomous study simultaneously.

In this project, we have taken up two major issues of human security i.e., security of health and security of shelter in India. These two issues are very crucial for a developing country like India. Perhaps, these two issues deserve more attention in the wake of globalisation of Indian economy through the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank dictated Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). Of course, these are not the only important issues; there are other, if not more, equally important issues like security against poverty, food
security, energy security and security against terrorism and violence in India. Our fellow colleagues from India, Mahendra Lama and Ajay Darshan Behara, have taken up these issues for study (Lama, 2009; Behara, 2008). While the latter takes a thematic and comparative perspective, the former takes a country perspective. On the whole, all these three studies may be said to have covered a broad spectrum of areas and issues in the context of human security in India.

In order to understand the human security in India or elsewhere, the issues that we have taken up are not adequate enough for a comprehensive understanding. Equally important are also the groups for whom security is an overriding concern. Hence, we have also taken up the problem of certain specific disadvantaged, marginalised and excluded groups like women, children, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), and disabled persons. Hence, issue wise we have taken up two issues i.e., security of health and security of shelter and four marginalised groups in India for our study. It would be pertinent to point out that the issues and the groups are not mutually exclusive—rather they are interlinked and somewhat overlapped. And both have the same overarching context, i.e., human security.

As the study aims at understanding the human security situation in India by examining two major issues and four marginal groups, this is more of a situational report. Through this, we are trying to comprehend the reality of human security situation in India. Obviously our area of research is quite vast, that too in a vast universe of the Indian society. We are trying to understand the issues and the groups at the macro level. And at certain level, we have tried to embark upon the micro level situation also. But the over all focus is on the macro level, i.e., country level. Needless to say, India is a vast country with bewildering varieties of diversities, inequalities and complexities. In religious, racial and linguistic sense, India is a multicultural country. We assume that there is nothing like a ‘mainstream’ India. In fact, many streams join together in the making of India. Also, India’s present strength is substantially weakened by the burden of past. India is struggling to negotiate with its past historical baggage while facing the challenges of present and future. Like any society in transition, it has its own baggage of pains, dualities, trajectories and contradictions wherein ideal is not always real and vice-versa. It is a complex mixture of ideal and real. In such an overlapping situation, it is difficult to understand the Indian society in its totality and hence in its reality.
1.3 APPROACH AND METHODS

We are aware of the limitations of our study. Keeping these limitations in mind, we are embarking on a modest objective of presenting a collage of overall human security situations in India vis-à-vis two important issues and four marginalised groups living within the Indian society. We are calling it a collage, where one has to look into it in its totality not in its fragments. But the whole set of fragments would give us a larger picture in its totality. The way an artist makes a collage, we too are trying in the similar manner; bringing in many issues, groups, problems, threats, insecurities and fears etc. in the context of human security in such a way that it helps us to describe and analyse the problem at hand. We are aware of the assiduous task ahead of us in this study. We hope to present a modest map of the human security situation in India.

Obviously, our approach is simple. We are neither adopting any sophisticated method to understand the empirical situation nor attempting to generate new data ourselves. We do not think that it is needed at this stage of our exploration. We have deliberately and selectively used only the existing data that are available to us. Most of the data that we have presented here have been taken from the census of India, various other reports of the government, several other international bodies, NGOs, existing academic literature, internet and newspaper information etc. Through this, we have tried to present an overall report on human security situation in India today. This, we hope would enable us to locate the human security situation in India in its totality. Once we understand the situation, i.e., where we are standing now and what we all are confronting with, through the first seven interrelated chapters, we can perhaps explore as to where we want to go from here in the last chapter. In this way, we are attempting to understand the human security situation first and then exploring the journey ahead towards enhancement of human security in India.

1.4 SCHEME OF CHAPTERISATION

In order to study the issues and groups in more specific context, we propose to devote one chapter each for the issues and groups that we are aiming at understanding in the context of larger human security concern in India. Accordingly, we have adopted the following chapterisation scheme to systematically understand the problem at hand.

- The first chapter deals with the conceptual understanding of human security. Then it attempts to link the question of human
security in the specific context of India. It also points out the objectives, chapterisation scheme, methodology and limitations of the study.

- Second chapter deals with the issue of health security in India.
- Third chapter deals with the issue of security of shelter in India. This is relatively a new area of exploration.
- Fourth chapter deals with the problem of gender security in India. In other words, it deals with the question of security of women in India. We propose to study here the freedom from fear and security of dignity as a part of the study of security of women.
- Fifth chapter deals with the security of children in India. The study of children as a part of larger human security issues, is yet to become visible. Understanding the present insecurity of children is crucial in understanding the future of human security in India. This is also crucial for formulating policies in order to expand the horizon of human security. Any agenda for enhancement of human security in future must begin with the children now.
- Sixth chapter deals with the security of two highly marginalised and excluded groups i.e., the refugees and the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Though each of these groups is a distinct legal-political entity, the situation under which they emerge and the series of insecurities in which they are entrapped are very similar. Hence, we have combined the refugees and IDPs into one chapter. The first part of this chapter deals with the question of refugees in South Asia, in general and India, in particular. The second part deals with the IDPs.
- Seventh chapter deals with the question of security and insecurity of the Disabled People in India. We feel this is largely an unexplored area. Not much work has been done on this area till now. Hence, the study is basically exploratory in nature.
- By the time we complete the seventh chapter, we hope to draw a large picture of human security scenario in India. This would enable us to understand as to where we stand on the question of human security. In addition to summing up the study and drawing some conclusions from the study, the eighth chapter also deals with the policy implications of human security in India. It would endeavour to make certain recommendations for
enhancement and consolidation of human security in South Asia in general, and India in particular on the basis of this study.

1.5 LIMITATIONS

This study has its own inherent structural limitations like any other sociological studies on multiple issues and groups on a complex single theme. Besides, it has a probability to raise the same question again and again, which may result in reader’s fatigue. This project perhaps will land up in raising more questions than answering the questions that have been raised. On the other hand, at certain points, one may find certain events described here as a part of human experience as highly distressing and disturbing experience. This, we feel is somewhat unavoidable particularly when one embarks deeper on contextualising insecurity and fear of certain groups in the face of some counter heinous human behaviour.

We also must point out that this study on human security is fundamentally a study of human insecurity in a vast and highly diverse country. After all, to understand security of any kind, understanding of insecurity is a must, a precondition. Obviously, in studying human security, one is obliged to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach; we also tried to do the same here. However, since the author of this report is a professionally trained sociologist and is engaged in teaching at a political science department, his analysis is perhaps tilted more towards political sociology. Notwithstanding these limitations, we hope to present a comprehensive collage of the human security situation in India vis-à-vis the issues and groups that we have taken up for scrutiny. Once we complete the collage, we should be in a position to explore ways and means to enhance human security in India. In order to erase the human security deficit, we must know the situation in its totality.

References


Introduction


