



HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN INDIA: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The largest democracy country in the world, is India thus, faces many challenges of human rights. If violation of human rights takes place in India, the world's largest democracy comes in danger. Human rights education in India is vital for the sake of democracy and sustainable progress in India. The knowledge of human rights is the best defence against their violation.

Good governance and the alertness of its citizens plays significant role in the progress of any country, much depends on an alert society. The people have an important role to play in order to ensure transparency and an answerable administration, for this knowledge and information are the primary need. People can be expected to discharge their rights and responsibilities only when they are aware of the same. This wants basic education in the first place followed by Human Rights Education. In a nation like India, which is treated to be one of the leading democratic nations on the globe, with a huge size and vast population, providing human rights education, ensuring knowledge, skill and attitudinal change is considered very much crucial.

This paper will focus on the need for Human Rights Education in India and talks its requirements in changing and challenging society. It will conclude with some suggestive measures that should be taken as a part of educational programmes for making education an effective tool for elimination of human rights violations.

KEYWORDS: Education, Human Rights (HR), Human Rights Education (HRE)

INTRODUCTION

The rights which are created for human beings, all human beings are eligible to get basic rights and fundamental freedom, such basic rights taken as human rights. Human Rights gives person such constitutional or legal rights which impressions like a human right; (Human will feel as Human, not as an animal). It shall encourage peace, tolerance, friendship, and understanding among all countries. It shall encourage peace between religious and racial groups.

The primitive man did not have the clear notion of fundamental rights though he had a number of freedoms in the primitive society, which was not organized, and these freedoms had no meaning and relevance. In that society the social requirements for freedom and liberty didn't exist. In the modern society the need of social relevance emerges and thus effort has been made to conceptualize the HR in the perspective of social life. Concept of HR is closely related to human dignity. The principle of HR constitutes a strong device to ensure protection of dignity of each and every

individual in society. This also invites equal respect and development of human qualities such as intelligence, talent and conscience and satisfaction of spiritual and other needs.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are:

- Highlight the present scenario of human rights education.
- To find the challenges faced by the human rights education in India.
- Suggestions for improving human rights education in India.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper is descriptive in nature based on secondary data sourced from academic journals, magazines, relevant websites, pertinent paper presentations etc.



HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION (HRE)

Human rights education has turned into a burning topic for researcher, learners as well as teachers. Human right education has several varieties and continually altering the field and respond to the growth of the world society.

HRE is all learning that develops the knowledge, skills, and values of human rights. As per provisions with in world-wide declaration of human rights and other international treaties and documents, human rights education can be well-defined as education, training and information targeting at building a worldwide culture of human rights by the sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills, and moulding of attitudes directed to:

- The strengthening of respect for HR and fundamental freedoms
- The full growth of the human personality and the sense of its dignity
- The promotion of tolerance, understanding, gender equality and friendship among all countries, indigenous individuals, and racial, ethnic, national, religious, and linguistic groups
- The enabling of all individuals to participate effectively in a free and democratic society governed by the rule of law
- The building and maintenance of peace
- The promotion of people-centred sustainable development and social justice

Major aspects for the promotion of human rights education:

- Knowledge: provides information about human rights and the mechanisms that exist to defend those rights
- Values, beliefs and attitudes: encouraging a human rights culture through the development of these processes
- Action: inspiring people to defend human rights and prevent human rights abuses

HRE is the need of the hour and is very essential, as it can contribute to the reduction of human rights violation and the building of free, fair and nonviolent societies. HRE is an effective strategy to prevent human rights exploitations. This study will certainly contribute towards prevention of human rights violations in all possible forms. It will also be inclusive response to rapid social and economic changes that might otherwise result in chaos and dislocation.

Objects of HRE are many folded:

- What human rights are?
- The need to learn human right.

- The importance of human rights in day to day life.
- How human rights are to be safeguarded in one's own society?
- How human rights can be maintained/promoted in one's own society?

HRE is education about human rights. It implies the learning as well as practice of human rights. Educating public about international law or about human rights violation is teaching HR. HRE is all about helping people to develop to the point where they understand HR and where they feel that they are important and should be responsible and dependable. The concept underlying human rights education is that education should not only aim at contributing trained, professional workers, but also at contributing to the development of individuals who possess the skill to interact in a society.

HRE declares a commitment to those human rights expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 and United Nations Covenants. It asserts the responsibility to respect, protect, and promote the rights to all people. HRE encourages democratic principles and studies HR issues without bias and from diverse perspectives by a variety of education practices.

HRE helps development of the communication skills and critical thinking capacity essential to democracy. It offers historical and multicultural perspectives on the worldwide fight for dignity and justice. HRE engages the heart as well as the mind. It makes students curious to know what human rights mean to them personally and encourages them to play an important role in the process of alleviating human suffering through non-violent action.

Need of human rights education are to:

- Strengthen respect for HR and fundamental freedoms.
- Grow fully the human personality and the sense of its dignity.
- Develop behavior and attitude to encourage the respect for each other.
- Promote understanding and tolerance among diverse national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups.
- Empower people to participate actively in social activities.

The concept of HR is as old as the doctrine of natural rights founded on natural law, based on mankind's demand for a life in which the dignity of the human being will receive respect and protection. It comprises of those minimal right, which every individual must have by virtue of his being a member of the human family irrespective of any other



consideration. The most valuable legacy of contemporary and classical human thought to civilization and culture has been the human dignity, which has changed into the present day.

HRE IN PRESENT SCENARIO

Human rights are a prerequisite for peace, development and democracy. India is the largest democracy in the world and a big country too with lot of HR challenges. The major population of India lives in villages and suffers to get sufficient education support. About twenty three percent of the population is illiterate. Problems like religious violations, trafficking, exploitation of women commercially and sexually, caste related problems are the few examples leading to HR violations. Prisoners in our country are also deprived of their human rights. If human rights are dishonored in India the biggest democracy on the globe will be in threat. HRE is essential for the sake of democracy and sustainable development in India. Knowledge of HR is the best defence against their violation. Learning about one's rights builds respect for the rights of other and points the way to be more tolerant and peaceful societies. The necessity of promoting and protecting all HR is significant in order to achieve full and universal enjoyment of these rights cannot be fulfilled without mass awareness and sensitivity to HR issues. The global peace and prosperity are possible only with people understanding and imbibing the HR values. Awareness is important in order to resolve the HR conflicts. This matured participation can be achieved only with HRE. Education imparts the skills needed to promote, defend, and apply HR in daily life. Education is a tool for creating the real idea of HR and making people know its importance in their daily life. An educated civilization can only recognize its rights and hence the knowledge to defend it.

Article 51A (1) of the Indian Constitution 1950, imposes a duty on all citizens to develop scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform. The effective discharge of this duty will require HRE to give people enhanced awareness and greater openness.

To consider and report on the different ways and means for promoting HRE in India, University Grants Commission (UGC) appointed Sikri Committee in 1980. At school level, the committee recommended inculcating values without marks weightage. At college level it was felt that all disciplines should be including human rights topics at least which are directly relevant to their disciplines. Now Human Right Education is a part of several university programmes. Remarkably certificates, diplomas, post graduate diploma and even master's programmes in HR are available today. At the

undergraduate level, HRE is generally conducted as international law and Indian constitutional law (fundamental rights). The National Law School of India in Bengaluru offers a full course on human rights for the Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.). In political science departments, HRE is still a limited part of the course on the constitutional and political development of India (fundamental rights) and international politics (United Nations). In some universities HRE is a part of sociology, economics, and modern Indian history. At the master's level specialized HRE is given in some departments of law as an optional course.

Recently, Central University, Hyderabad, and the National Law School of India University (Bangalore) introduced a master's course on human rights. Some universities are also presenting a one-year postgraduate diploma course in human rights. IGNOU also included HR as a subject in its curriculum. Only some doctoral dissertations have been printed on human rights. More advanced- degree theses are written on constitutionally certain fundamental rights, their judicial understandings and enforcement. Only at the Nascent centre for the Promotion of Human Rights Education and Research, Jawaharlal Nehru University, there is full course on human rights devoted exclusively to human rights studies. The UGC also made provisions of financial assistance to universities and colleges for the development of specific Courses in human rights.

The National Human Rights Commission of India; the Indian Institute for Peace, Disarmament and Environmental Protection (IIPDEP); and many NGOs have launched a public information campaign for human rights countrywide. Its main purposes to make everybody more aware of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and better prepared to stand up for them. At the same time, the campaign gives knowledge of the means which exist at the national and international levels to encourage and guard human rights and fundamental freedoms.

IIPDEP and many NGOs work to make school authorities and the general public aware of civic education and to know about their birth rights. They concentrate on evolving knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to apply fundamental human rights and freedom and, consequently, the non-violent resolution of conflict.

HRE: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

The biggest challenge of today is creating awareness about Human Rights and their Education. The society in general is attracted towards the news of violation of Human Rights and the incidents are treated as passing phase by the citizens usually. The education



of Human Rights to the masses should be given serious thoughts. Awareness of Human Rights must be created. To accomplish this India faces a peculiar situation where the country is having 70 percent rural population-tribal and farmers and with the high percentage of illiteracy. Thus, it is imperative to search for such agencies which are involved with the masses, and can educate people about human rights.

All human beings great or small, virtuous or vicious, should be respected and cared for simply by the virtue of the fact that they are human beings. The recognition of human rights under international law is relatively recent but the philosophy underlying the concept is ancient.

Initially, it has underlined the need for a fundamental transformation in the direction and approach to the curricula for teaching basic duties in schools and teacher education institutions in the country. Secondly, it has drawn attention to the work of non-governmental organisations in the related fields and how that work can be utilised to optimise benefits. Thirdly, it advocates the need to create an awareness of the fundamental duties among citizens through various programmes of sensitising the public mind. It has also been suggested that the Preamble to the Constitution and ten clauses of Article 51A "Fundamental Duties" should be widely discussed in the assemblies of schools and through seminars, debates, competitions and through suitable display in the school text books, supplementary materials and general publications, which would be used by the students all over the country.

The need of the hour is to spread tolerance, understanding and respect for the views of others. The realization of this objective should be the primary aim of human rights education, particularly so in our country which has a Chapter on Fundamental Duties. According to Article 51-A of our Constitution, one of the fundamental duties of every citizen is "to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the peoples of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory of women." This Article gives the essence, core, and content of human rights education. Human rights education should begin with the children but should not end when the child grows up. It should be a continuous process. The curriculum will vary in content at different stages in human rights course in school or college. The quintessential message of human rights, namely, the dignity and worth of every human being should be loud and clear and must be vividly brought out. The Articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is a must in the school, college and university curriculum.

Violation of the basic human rights of life and liberty occur most frequently on account of the acts and omissions of those who are supposed to uphold and enforce the law. Regular courses in human rights are most essential for them. It is only by the human rights education we sensitize every citizen, more so the law enforcement officials to the value of human personality and the fact that the human rights are the natural birth right of every human being whatever his or her status.

It should be the concern of human rights education to expose all kinds of exploitation not only at the hands of the State but also by the members of the civil society. It should expose abominable practices like bonded labour, untouchability, sati, legal, social and economic discrimination against women and her exploitation, child labour in hazardous industries, child abuse and child prostitution.

Human rights education (HRE) has to be catalyst to expose these practices and lacunae and weaknesses in law and its enforcement and bringing about attitudinal and social change. Thus, human rights education should cover not only the rights relating to physical well-being of an individual, but must also expand to comprehend all those conditions in a society that makes human existence possible with dignity, honour and spirituality.

HRE cannot remain an intellectual exercise by merely imparting knowledge in the class-rooms. It has to cover all modalities, formal, non-formal and informal; which could sensitise a person, awaken their conscience and develop an attitude of mind imbuing respect for human rights of others. It has to build strong linkages between what happens in the society and what is taught in the class rooms.

It has to build strong linkages and networking between colleges/universities and various NGOs and other social service groups working in the field and community to give HRE a grass root orientation. HRE must be backed by a strong research component; by strong multi-disciplinary research on various aspects of human rights and their complexities.

Human rights education should be inter-disciplinary. The content of the course should incorporate and reflect the concerns for democracy, development, peace, social justice, distributive justice, individual development, national development, environment protection and ecological balance.

Human rights are an extremely expanding field. Curriculum development in human rights has, therefore, to be a continuous exercise through workshops, seminars, training courses and academic discussions.



CONCLUSION

According to the theoretical and empirical research done so far, we can summarize the following key points:

- There is no doubt that some initiative has been taken by educational organisations like UGC, NCERT and NCTE for promoting HRE in India. These initiatives are directed in the direction of formal education on human rights. In our country where less than one fourth of the population is illiterate, hence, HRE must not be linked to formal schooling only but essential for everyone.
- All people have every right to know their rights. Therefore, such programmes should be developed to accommodate their needs and situations. The techniques of popular education music, documentary films, street theatre, alternative media, cosmic books, and itinerant story tellers can help much more for creating them conscious of their rights.
- In formal schooling teaching students about human rights in their own mother language will make them quicker about their values and ways to use them in their everyday life.
- A human rights cell or centre should be set up in the UGC to create a reference database on human rights education, disseminate information, oversee execution of programs and projects, and organize workshops and other meetings.
- More funds and resources should be made available to universities and colleges for the growth of definite courses in human rights.
- HRE should find its rightful place in the school curriculum, teacher training courses (prior to service and within the service too), textbooks, supplementary reading materials, educational policies, and school curriculum.
- Students should be motivated to write poetry, drama, and essays on human rights. Poster making competition, debates, elocution or contests, etc.
- The schools should celebrate the “World Human Rights Day” which can go a long way to create wariness among students, parents and the neighborhood community.
- Initiatives should be taken to enrich the school library and personal collection with books and materials on human rights.

At present the time is suitable for the HRE to come to the forefront of worldwide awareness, and to satisfy its proposed role as a preventive tool for the abolition of

human rights violations. The education of human rights must be relevant and meaningful to our cultural conditioning and to add value to our society and it must be used in a way which will bring about the desired effect - the awareness of human rights and their achievement for bringing about a new social order.

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