

Human Rights Education in India

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Abstract:

Human Rights cannot be promoted without the promotion of human rights.

The philosophy of Human Rights is deeply-rooted in freedom of thought and the dignity of human being.

All human rights documents provides a prominent place to education and also emphasis on the importance of Education in promoting Human Rights.

In this research paper the integration of Human Rights and Education is discussed in five areas of practice and research as follows...

1. Teaching about and for Human Rights;
2. Education as a Human Right;
3. Human Rights in Education;
4. Education and Training of Teachers concern with Human Rights issues and
5. Curricular point of view of Human Rights Education.

Key-words: Human Rights, Education, human civilization,

Introduction:

Mankind has been witnessing a critical moment in its history. At the mid of the first decade of the 21st century, a thoughtful change in beliefs and attitudes is called for involving the rejection of forces and violence, the recognition of Human Rights for all and the contribution of all members of society thereby with the imperatives of universality. To be sure, Human Rights are a product of history; as such they should be in accordance with history, should evolve simultaneously with history and should give the peoples of global world a reflection of themselves that they recognize as their own. In this changing world, education has to be at the heart of change in maintaining its very essence, namely universality.

Human Rights as the term is most commonly used are the rights, which every human being is entitled to enjoy and to have protected. The underlying idea of such rights- fundamental principles that should be respected in the treatment of all men, women and children- exist in some form in all cultures and societies.

If we look back to Indian historical perspectives the first glimpse of Human Rights is seen in „Chanakya Neeti“ as “ the lifespan, deeds, property, education and death all are bestowed upon living human by almighty from its inception in the mother’s womb.” In this sense lifespan and death falls in the hands of nature, the human rights education remaining rights namely deed or action, right of property and right of education rest in the control of the state, hence special rights were declared from time to time for women, children etc., controlled by the state, at various occasions.

In this context it is important to recognize that Buddhist Philosophy not only emphasized freedom as a form of life but also gave it a supporting content. To give just one example, the Indian emperor Ashoka in the third century B.C. presented many political inscriptions in favour of tolerance and individual freedom, both as a part of state policy and in the relation of different people to each other. Thus the idea of Human Rights as an entitlement of every human being is not only a recent development, but can be found in our ancient tradition as an essential and indispensable component of human progress and human civilization.

The term Human Rights in a very narrow sense, referring only to the civil and political rights set out in the declaration. As a result the term Human Rights is often broadly misused to mean only civil and political rights and to exclude from consideration as a matter of rights- fundamental issues such as the right to food, health, education and social security.

Generalization of Human Rights and Education:

On December 10, 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was given a precious gift to the people of the world, affirming that all the people are born equal in dignity. The United Nations general assembly proclaimed the declaration „*as a standard achievement of all people and all nations, and to the end that every individual and every organ of society keeping this declaration constantly in mind shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms....*“ Yet after 55 years, most people of the world to whom this compelling declaration belongs and for whose empowerment it was intended, do not know of its existence and are not aware of the prophetic moral aspiration it contains for the promotion and protection of human dignity.

The oft-quoted scriptural words (Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye) emphasize the fact that learning is in fact the real learning that becomes the cause of liberation. Education being an embodiment of learning it is applicable to it as well. Education plays a key role in development of a nation. The education system in vogue in a country reflects the ethos, aspirations and expectations of a particular society. All human rights documents give a prominent place to education. They also stress the importance of Education in promoting Human Rights. The International Congress on Education adopted a world plan of action of Education and Human Rights and Democracy in 1993 for Rights and Democracy at Montreal (Canada). It emphasized that human rights

education must be viewed, as an exercise in democracy and teaching of Human Rights and democracy should be included in the curricula at all levels of the school system. The reports of various Education Commissions and statements of educational policies in India also have articulated the importance of rights to education in the Human Rights as a part of the effort for reform and development of education in India.

The National Policy on Education has laid considerable emphasis on Value Education by highlighting the need to make education a forceful tool for cultivation of social and moral values. The policy has stated that in our culturally plural society education should foster universal and eternal values oriented towards the unity and integration of our people. In 1985, the UGC prepared a blueprint for promotion of Human Rights teaching and research for students of all faculties at the under-graduate, graduate and post-graduate levels for both professional and non-professional education. This blueprint contained proposals for restructuring of existing syllabi, and introduction of new courses and/ or foundation courses in Human Rights.

1. Teaching about and for Human Rights:

Every student and teacher needs to understand the universal elements of Human Rights as a basis for promoting social progress, better living conditions and greater freedom. Therefore human rights education becomes an integral part of the general education and be integrated into all subjects, in particular social science education. The Delors Commission report can form an important part of the educational discussion. The Four Pillars of Education that the Delor Commission presented in its report to UNESCO are as follows...

- A. **Learning to Know** - forms the base for cognitive learning and acquisition of Knowledge;
- B. **Learning to Do**- forms the base for categorizing Learning that is work related and action oriented;
- C. **Learning to Live Together**- forms the base for teaching acquisition of social and moral competencies;
- D. **Learning to be**- that is to say help in personality related and existential learning.

Within this emerging global educational philosophy Human Rights education proclaimed in various documents can be put to the operational action plan in two basic principles that can be formed in the spectrum of Human Rights Education as mentioned in the Table-1 which can be of immense help in forming the core curriculum for Human Rights Education (HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION).

Learning About Human Rights	Learning For Human Rights
Emphasis on:	Emphasis on:
Knowledge	Respect
Understanding	Responsibility
Valuing	Solidarity

<p>Contents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Genesis and history. • Relevance of human rights documents. • Controversies and conflict of human Rights in the Debates. • Content of the various declarations And conventions. • Realization and practice of human Rights 	<p>Contents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowerment. • Participation in the transformation of Community life and society. • Solidarity/ rights of the others. • Tension between adaptation to the established norms of society.
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Table-1 (Courtesy: <http://www.unhcr.org>)

Generally all Human Rights programmers demand first dimension of human rights education e.g. Learning about Human Rights, and most of them proceed further to the second Dimension that is learning for Human Rights. These directions of human rights education can only form a first step in the process of promoting a comprehensive understanding of human rights education. Besides the direct contents of teaching and learning about and for human rights, indirect components such as Learning environment and the existing structures in the organizational framework also are important to make the learning possible. Indirect learning through participation and democratic structures also can serve the best purpose.

2. Education as a Human Rights:

It has been long esteemed ideal of mankind to enjoy democracy, justice and human rights in the full sense of the term. In fact human rights cannot be thought in isolation with education. And on the other hand human rights in the field of education i.e. Education for All, lays sound foundation of Human Rights in all walks of life. The Human Right to Education was established after its first proclamation in the Universal declaration of Human Rights (1948) followed by agreements ratified by the 191 nation state of the world in different degrees. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration declares the right to education, sets the aims of all educational activities and defines the principle of free educational choice. The Dakar Framework of Action considers education as fundamental human rights as *“It is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, and thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the 21st century, which are affected by rapid globalization. Achieving EFA goals should be postponed no longer. The basic learning needs of all can and must be met as a matter of urgency”* (Dakar framework of Action 2000, art.6).

When our constitution was being drafted the universal declaration of Human Rights (1948) was proclaimed and the constituent assembly incorporated many Human Rights in the form of

fundamental rights of the citizen of our country. Modern era is the era of democracy. In fact democracy cannot be thought in isolation with education. According to University Education Commission, “education is a great instrument of social emancipation by which a democracy establishes, maintains and protects the spirit of equality among its members”. To develop the fundamentals of democracy, education only can serve as a booster for imposing Fundamental Human Rights.

3. Human Rights in Education:

Human Rights education is not just about Human Rights, i.e., acquiring knowledge. It is also education for Human Rights, helping people to feel the importance of Human Rights, to integrate them into the way they live, and to take action to promote and protect the rights of others on individual, local, national and international levels. Human Rights education contributes directly to improving the life of both individuals and the community. Together with the general human right to education, the requirements concerning the goals of education and the freedom of educational choice, as laid down in the education articles of the Human Rights conventions, from the standards for granting Human Rights in education. For all the member states of United Nations (UN), education has been considered as a constitutional right of all children and adults irrespective of their gender, ethnic, social, cultural, religious, linguistic or any other differences. As far as the education of minorities is considered the stark reality is that there are still too many groups who do not have access to education at least to the kind of education that is adjusted to their needs and is of sufficient quality. This group include: sexually exploited children, displaced children, refugees, victims of domestic violence, nomadic children, orphans, working children etc. In our country National Human Right Commission is supposed to take measures to promote human rights awareness and to spread Human Rights literacy in the country. Today school education envisages developing in a child respect for human rights as well as duties (National Curriculum Framework of Schools education 2000). Hence there is an urgent need to include human rights in the teacher’s education curriculum though University Grant Commission has proposed human rights education to be interdisciplinary in approach putting forth the point that it cannot be compartmentalized in to academic disciplines, It has to be conceptualized in its entirety. **Education and Training of Teachers with Human Rights issues**

In fact, everybody should know about ones rights and the rights of the others. Teacher as a torchbearer must keep always in mind the human rights aspect in their usual practice of teaching and learning. Any education hard work loses its strength, if it does not give sufficient attention and importance to the teacher, one of the most important pillars of education. The role of teachers has been held sacred from time immemorial. The NPE 1986 while defining the role of teachers says that their principle role is and will always be teaching and guidance of their pupils,

not only through classroom teaching and tutorials but also, by personal contact and many other ways. The Kothari Commission way back in 1966 had said that no nation could rise above the level of its teachers. A teacher has to perform two roles simultaneously: a conservator in order to conserve and preserve the continuity of traditions and secondly as an advocate for change towards desirable objectives- national and humane. The teachers therefore should be sensitized towards the constitutional goals of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity assuring dignity of an individual and integration of nation.

The other way is to make it multidisciplinary i.e. incorporating human rights concept in all subjects at teacher education curriculum covering philosophy, psychology, sociology, history and all other school subjects. Yet another approach that can be followed in reorientation of all courses so that the human rights component is not seen as an add-on to the existing syllabi, but instead the academic packages should be so offered as to have people as the central theme. The focus and issues should be regional, national and international. Only an integrated approach of these human rights education levels will solve the problems of human rights education. For example today especially the life science face severe moral questions from gene manipulation to cloning, which cannot be answered without knowing what the ethics and international community as well as national consensus upon the human rights pacts, another example is of traditional practices such as female genital mutilation which are deeply entrenched across generations due to certain religious beliefs cannot be treated as intentional forms of child abuse. One more example is that soldiers have a duty to fight and permission to kill in a legal battle. This legal task of their mission makes them especially susceptible to perpetrating human rights violations. The examples envisage that human rights aspects must be included with the due stress on the ethical consciousness. Hence the framework for research and teaching should be in Indian Social Context. It is my belief that in order for human rights education – and human rights teaching- to be a lasting contribution to human rights culture in our country we need to truly understand our teacher education programmers with the bent of mind towards enshrined constitutional provisions. The idea that the human rights education should be included in teacher-training institutions was also emphasized by the third world congress on human rights in New Delhi in 1990.

4. Curricular Aspects of Human Rights Education:

Teaching about human rights should go hand in hand with a greater democratization of school life and be supplemented by a broad range of extracurricular activities. Human Rights Education to be taught effectively calls for participatory teaching and learning which leads to the acquisition of human rights skills. Along with this school social milieu should encourage pupils to recognize the rights of other people to express their personalities and to tolerate other people's

ideas and conceptions- that is, to practice human rights. The school efforts should be reinforced, strengthened by the other forces operating in the environment, particularly, state agencies, community institutions, the home, family and the mass media.

Before introducing the curricular aspects for human rights, we will have to address certain pertinent questions regarding the present state of educational scenario. Rather than teaching human rights as a separate subject at the school level it should be incorporated in general syllabus. Different aspects of human rights issues can be highlighted in different subjects. The foundation course with aim of making the learners acquire conceptual clarity and develop respect for norms and values of freedom, equality, fraternity and justice with their philosophical, ethical, social, economic and political dimensions is prerequisite for any course on human right. A full understanding of UDHR and the relevant Constitutional-legal provisions and institutional mechanism for realization and enforcement of rights in the country also must constitute an objective. It should include awareness of civil society organizations and movements promoting human rights.

Methodology of the Study:

The paper is mainly conceptual and descriptive in nature and it is based on the different Research papers, journals, articles related to Human Rights Education available over internet based sources. Various other related books and journals which are available in physical form are also accessed to develop the foundation of the paper.

Conclusion:

Human Rights Education offers us the opportunity to acquire competencies, which put us into a position that allows us to respect and to campaign for the promotion of Human Rights in the daily life context.

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