

Significance of Human Rights Education in the Present Scenario

Dr. P. Raja

Assistant Professor

Department of History

Annamalai University

(Deputed to)

D. G. Govt. Arts College (W)

Mayiladuthurai, Tamil Nadu.

Human rights are moral principles or norms that describe certain standards of human behaviour and are regularly protected as natural and legal rights in municipal and international law. They are commonly understood as inalienable, fundamental rights "to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being" and which are "inherent in all human beings", regardless of their age, ethnic origin, location, language, religion, ethnicity, or any other status. They are applicable everywhere and at every time in the sense of being universal, and they are egalitarian in the sense of being the same for everyone. They are regarded as requiring empathy and the rule of law and imposing an obligation on persons to respect the human rights of others, and it is generally considered that they should not be taken away except as a result of due process based on specific circumstances; for example, human rights may include freedom from unlawful imprisonment, torture, and execution.

The doctrine of human rights has been highly influential within international law and global and regional institutions. Actions by states and non-governmental organisations form a basis of public policy worldwide. The idea of human rights suggests that "if the public discourse of peacetime global society can be said to have a common moral language, it is that of human rights". The strong claims made by the doctrine of human rights continue to provoke considerable scepticism and debates about the content, nature and justifications of human rights

to this day. The precise meaning of the term right is controversial and is the subject of continued philosophical debate; while there is consensus that human rights encompasses a wide variety of rights such as the right to a fair trial, protection against enslavement, prohibition of genocide, free speech or a right to education, there is disagreement about which of these particular rights should be included within the general framework of human rights; some thinkers suggest that human rights should be a minimum requirement to avoid the worst-case abuses, while others see it as a higher standard.

Many of the basic ideas that animated the human rights movement developed in the aftermath of the Second World War and the events of the Holocaust, culminating in the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in Paris by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948. Ancient peoples did not have the same modern-day conception of universal human rights. The true forerunner of human rights discourse was the concept of natural rights which appeared as part of the medieval natural law tradition that became prominent during the European Enlightenment with such philosophers as John Locke, Francis Hutcheson and Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui and which featured prominently in the political discourse of the American Revolution and the French Revolution. From this foundation, the modern human rights arguments emerged over the latter half of the 20th century.

The concept of education in and for human rights appear in a number of international human rights instruments including the Universal Declaration of Human Right (Art 26), the international Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Art 13), the Convention of the Rights of the Child (Art 29) and most recently, the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (Sect. D, Paras 78-82). The United Nations also declared the decade for human rights education during 1994-2004. Human Rights Education may be defined as a training, dissemination and information efforts aimed at the building of a universal culture of human rights through the imparting of knowledge and skills and the moulding of attitudes and directed to strengthening

of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity; the promotion of understanding tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups; the enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free society and also the furtherance of the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

The need of Human Rights Education is that, the weak has to be informed of their rights in order to learn how to defend them, while the strong has to be informed of these rights in order to learn how to respect them. There is growing consensus that education for human rights is essential and can contribute to both the reduction of human rights violations and the building of free, just and peaceful societies.

Human Rights Education aims at fostering attitudes of tolerance, respect and goodwill towards fellow human beings. It provides knowledge of human rights in both national and international dimensions and develop among the individual's awareness of the ways and means by which human rights can be attained and which human rights can be translated into social and political reality at both national and international levels. This kind of education should not only make the individual aware of his own rights, but should also at the same time insist respect for the rights of others.

The scope and content of Human Rights Education should include peace, democracy, development and social justice, in order to achieve common understanding and awareness with a view to strengthening universal commitment to human rights. Human Rights Education cannot merely be an intellectual exercise leading to acquisition of knowledge in the classroom but it requires building linkages between what happens in the society and what is transmitted in the classes. It requires the field experience and action oriented programmes. Human rights

curriculum cannot have a fixed syllabus for an extremely expanding field. The human rights curriculum development ought to take into account the changing global, regional and the national regional and the national socio-economic and cultural context while determining the contents of such a curriculum.

Human Rights Education can be imparted through formal as well as informal set up, depending on the needs of the interested groups. The formal education should give in schools, colleges, universities and other post-secondary educational institutions. The existing formal educational system can add components of human rights education starting at the primary level. In this level teaching of human rights must arise out of student's daily experiences and living conditions. Perhaps a non-examination-oriented approach would help, because that permits flexibility and avoid artificial restraints or formalities. At the secondary level, children start noticing disparities and discriminations around them.

Topics of equality, liberty, freedom, choice of education, social, cultural and religious rights could be discussed with them. At higher educational levels the students have reached age wise, enough maturity to imbibe the meaning and evolution of the concept of human rights, norms and standards spelled out in various international installments, and also to discuss in depth specific human rights issues in the context of concrete socio economic, and political realities with emphasis on struggles, needs and aspirations of the people. Large sections of the community did not have the luxury of attending school. Informal human right training is necessary to them. Books used for adult literacy programme can include topics on human rights. Informal adult education techniques can be used for imparting information on human rights; (e.g.) group discussions, brain storming, street plays, role plays, etc. In India nearly 30% to 40% of the people study higher education under Open University System Human Rights Education also to the included in the curriculum of the open universities of all disciplines. Then it is easily reached in every nook and comer of the society.

Human rights of the people could be truly protected if the enforcement officials perform their functions effectively. Police have to be sensitive towards violation of human rights. They must realize and appreciate the situation of the persons who complain about violation of their rights. They could be battered women and women subjected to dowry harassment or suffering harassment at the hands of local leaders. Unless police are sensitized on different aspect of human rights, they cannot truly become protectors of law and people. Lawyers, whose job is to argue the case before a judge in order to seek justice must be aware of the human rights perspective also. It is essential to sharpen their sense of right and wrongs. Judges, whose impartiality and independence are the backbone of the justice system, too should be aware and sensitive towards human rights issues.

Government officials including administrative staff and officials belonging to the IAS cadre who in fact prioritize different human rights demands in introducing schemes like educational facilities to girls, rehabilitation of bonded labourers, social security schemes for the benefit of old and destitute women, etc. and made budget allocation for such schemes must be exposed to the human right norms and philosophy, so that they themselves do not violate the rights of people under their control. This is particularly relevant in cases of prison authorities and officials of remand homes, orphanages and destitute homes. Political leaders at the local, state and the national levels must be made aware of human rights norms and their commitment to the people and to the international forum protect the same. The laws they pass and policies they formulate must contain such awareness.

Considering the large population that has to be covered, the task of educating people on human rights becomes truly formidable. This can be considerably facilitated through mass media and the electronic media in particular. T. V. can be an effective tool to reach out to large sections of people by providing education through entertainment. In this way, the challenging task of spreading awareness human rights and making people sensitive to them has to be tackled by

adopting a multidimensional approach in a co-operative manner. Achievement of Human Rights Education would lead to a more enlightened society, of understanding the Human dignity, curiosity to develop an interest in issues related to living in a multi-cultural society aid an interdependent world, appreciation of different traditions, cultures and identities and also willing to account reasonable equitable procedures for resolving conflict development Finally, through Human Rights Education, society is ready for a more just world, and to challenge the instances of prejudice, intolerance, discrimination and cruelty.

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