

# Human Rights Education: An International Perspective

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## Abstract

*Human Rights Education is an indispensable part of the right to education and has of late gained larger recognition as a human right itself. The knowledge of the rights and freedoms, of oneself as much as of the others, is considered as a fundamental tool to guarantee the respect of all rights for every person. The key stone of human rights education is that the education should not only aim at producing trained professional workers but also inculcating in them a sense of higher purpose. Human rights education aims at providing people and students with the abilities to accomplish and produce societal changes. Education is widely acknowledged and seen as a way to empower people to improve their quality of life and increase their capacity to participate in the decision making process, leading to desired transformation in the social, cultural and economic policies. This is the responsibility of society and all its stakeholders to develop awareness about Human Rights Education among citizens.*

**Key Words: Egalitarianism, Secularism, Materialism, Humanism, Communism, Social Reforms Movements**

Human Rights, intrinsic to all humans as members of humanity, are the modern and secular version of the natural rights. All humans, being born equal are equally entitled to the Human Rights without any distinction of birth, sex, race, status, religion, language or nationality. Standing above the ideologies of the capitalism or communism, Human Rights reflect the concern for democracy, development and peace. The national awakening and social reform movements were for the equality, democracy and social progress. During the freedom movement, the people of India fought against colonial rule for their rights and liberties. Freedom fighter Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak proclaimed, "Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it." Throughout the freedom struggle, the demand for fundamental rights was always in the forefront.

## Meaning of Human Rights Education

The term human rights denote all rights that are present in our society and without it; one cannot live as human beings. Human rights are the basic rights that a person irrespective of race, gender or any other background cannot be denied anywhere or at any condition. Using the older, schools-only conception, many countries established human rights as an essential component of the school curriculum decades ago. As a result their current populations have a high level of understanding about human rights. In 1991 the Human Rights Educators' Network of Amnesty

International USA published a defining rationale for human rights education that reflected the expanding definition of the field:

**Human Rights Education** declares a commitment to those human rights expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the UN Covenants, and the United States Bill of Rights. It asserts the responsibility to respect, protect, and promote the rights of all people.

**Human Rights Education** promotes democratic principles. It examines human rights issues without bias and from diverse perspectives through a variety of educational practices.

**Human Rights Education** helps to develop the communication skills and informed critical thinking essential to a democracy. It provides multicultural and historical perspectives on the universal struggle for justice and dignity.

**Human Rights Education** engages the heart as well as the mind. It challenges students to ask what human rights mean to them personally and encourages them to translate caring into informed, nonviolent action.

**Human Rights Education** affirms the interdependence of the human family. It promotes understanding of the complex global forces that create abuses, as well as the ways in which abuses can be abolished and avoided.

### **Objectives of Human Rights Education**

Human rights education aims to do the following:

- Enhance the knowledge and understanding of human rights.
- Foster attitudes of tolerance, respect, solidarity, and responsibility.
- Develop awareness of how human rights can be translated into social and political reality.
- Develop skills for protecting human rights.

### **Human Rights Education in United States**

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) brought human rights education to national attention for the first time in September 1985 with a groundbreaking issue of its periodical *Social Education* dedicated to the topic of human rights. In 1986 David Shiman had published the first human rights curriculum in the United States, *Teaching about Human Rights*, which has been followed by a steady stream of new resources in the field, notably Betty Reardon's *Teaching for Human Dignity* (1995) and the establishment of the University of Minnesota Human Rights Education Series in 1998.

Another significant stimulus was the 1992 meeting of human rights educators sponsored by the Columbia University Center for the Study of Human Rights with the support of the Organizing Committee of the People's Decade of Human Rights.

Because of such efforts, human rights education in the United States has become a recognized educational force. However, it remains to find an established place in the mainstream educational system. Instead, it has flourished in

alternative settings: non-profit organizations, extracurricular groups like Amnesty International's campus chapters, alternative educational settings, and communities of faith.

### **Human Rights Education in India**

The first National Curriculum Framework formulated by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in 1975 states: “The awakening of social consciousness, the development of democratic values and of a feeling for social injustice and national integration are extremely important.... All subjects should be taught in such a manner so as to foster the spirit of scientific humanism.” The National Curriculum Framework for primary and secondary education (NCERT 1988) identifies and addresses some of these concerns such as promoting values of egalitarianism, democracy, secularism, equality, removal of social barriers, and creating a sense of common citizenship.

It proposes that the school curriculum reflects some world issues and helps make children become aware of and appreciate different world cultures. Highlighting the need to strengthen national identity, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCERT 2000) reaffirms the 10 core components identified in the National Policy on Education (1986):

- The history of India’s freedom movement;
- Constitutional obligations;
- The content essential to nurture national identity;
- India’s common cultural heritage;
- Egalitarianism;
- Democracy and secularism;
- Equality of the sexes;
- Protection of the environment;
- Removal of social barriers;
- Observance of small-family norms; and
- Inculcation of scientific temper.

It further emphasizes the need to include the fundamental duties as laid down in Article 51 A of Part IV A of the Constitution as common core components of the curriculum: “These core components need to be integrated in school curriculum in a suitable manner. It is envisaged that they would help in instilling a nationally shared perception and values and creating an ethos and value system in which a common Indian identity could be strengthened.”

## Challenges before Human Rights Education in India

1. Lack of proper value education in school and society.
2. Lack of proper awareness about human rights.
3. Scarcity of skillful teachers, who can teach the importance of Human Rights.
4. Moral and ethical values exist in name only.
5. No practices of values.
6. Materialism is causing the violation of human rights.
7. Enforcement machinery is dilatory and lacks the desired powers.
8. Lack of knowledge and implications of Human rights.
9. Universities, colleges and other institutions not involved in the education of Human rights.
10. Politicians of whatever political parties they belong do not adhere to Human rights and Duties.

## Responsibilities of Teaching Fraternity to Promote Human Rights Education

Human Rights education is a difficult and challenging task. Teachers have to create in students a spirit of providing extension education to the people. That is why Kothari Commission (1964-66) has forcefully stated that the destiny of a nation is shaped in her classrooms.

Rights and duties must be pursued simultaneously.

Need of Genuine leadership to support rights of common men.

Need of sensitizing police personnel through education and training.

Need to inculcate ethical and moral value.

Emphasis on Human rights Education in Universities.

Research and Documentation in human right.

Introducing human rights topics in school education at different levels.

Arranging seminar on different areas of human rights through experts from different discipline by engaging in interdisciplinary Approach.

Discussion with opinion leaders in country.

Student's involvement is must.

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