

EFFECTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AMONG STUDENTS

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Abstract— Nelson Mandela said that education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. Human rights education is an education that empowers individuals, groups and communities to have respectful life on the earth. This particular study focuses on the students who study human rights. The objectives of the study are, (a) to find out the purpose of studying human rights subject, (b) to examine the levels of knowledge and practice of human rights, and (c) to suggest better practice of human rights among the students. Findings and suggestions of the study may be useful for the agencies which work on human rights. The study also provides suggestions to educational institutions to enhance and popularize the human rights education among students.

Index Terms— Human rights, human rights education, levels of knowledge, and levels of practice.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is a process of learning or gaining knowledge, skills, values, belief and habits. It facilitates a person to become a good citizen. It is a lifelong process of learning. It fulfills the intellectual need of human being. Education on human rights is need of the hour. Every day, there is news of violation on human being. It is for many reasons such as money, power, property, religion, caste, etc., every human being has right to live on this earth. Human being does not have any right to disturb the lives of others. To ensure this situation, there is a need for education on human rights. This particular paper attempts to know the implications of human rights education among the students who study human rights as one of their subjects. The study discusses two parts which are (a) knowledge and (b) practice. Knowledge part deals how far the students aware about human rights and the practice part deals how far they are practice their knowledge on human rights in their day-to-day life. The study carried out in the district of Vellore of Tamil Nadu State of India. In brief, the findings of this study could help to know how far the knowledge is being applied to protect the human lives.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Many of the colleges in the District are offering human rights as one of the subjects. The educational institutions are fulfilling one of their duties by imparting knowledge on human rights. But a question remains that in what way it has been taken by the students. (a) Are students studying the subject just for passing the exam to obtain their degree? or (b) Are students really studying the subject to have knowledge? or (c) Are students studying the subject to practice? If the students are studying the subject for knowledge and practice purpose, what is their level? Answers for these questions would add values to the existing body of the knowledge.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Human Rights: according to article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) defines, “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”. Human rights are basic and fundamental rights which cannot be denied by any individual or any government. Human rights are universal and same for everyone (Thilagavathy, 2016). The concept of present human rights has historical roots. Rousseau, Socrates, and Plato in the West, and Manu, Vyasadeva, Gandhi, Aurobindo, and others in India have articulated principles of human rights. Important milestones in making the dream of human rights to become possible are (a) the struggle between the British crown and Parliament, (b) the French revolution, (c) the struggle for American independence, (d) the Russian revolution, and (e) the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations on 10 December 1948 (Panda, 2003). UDHR spells out the various articles pertaining to human rights. The articles are Article 1 - Free and equal in dignity and right, Article 2 - Prohibition of discrimination, Article 3 - Right to Life, Liberty, and Security, Article 4 - Prohibition of Slavery, Article 5 - Prohibition of Torture, Article 6 - Right to Recognition as Person before the Law, Article 7 - Equality before the Law, Article 8 - Right to an Effective Remedy, Article 9 - Prohibition of Arbitrary Arrest, Article 10 - Right to a Fair Trial, Article 11 - Presumption of Innocence and no retroactive application of Penal Laws, Article 12 - Right to Privacy, Article 13 - Freedom of Movement exit and re-entry, Article 14 - Right to Asylum, Article 15 - Right to Nationality, Article 16 - Right to Marry and Family Life, Article 17 - Right to Property, Article 18 - Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion, Article 19 - Freedom of Opinion and Expression, Article - 20 Freedom of Assembly and Association, Article 21 - Participation in Government, Article 22 - Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Article 23 - Right to Work, Article 24 - Right to Rest and Leisure, Article 25 - Right to an Adequate Standard of Living and Health, Article 26 - Right to Education, Article 27 - Right to Culture, Article 28 - Social and International Order, Article 29 - Duties and Limitations, and Article 30 - No Abuse of Rights (Sastry, 2011).

Indian Laws and Policies Relating to Human Rights: there are few laws and policies that cover the human rights for certain extent. The laws are (a) protection of human rights act 1993, (b) national commission for minorities’ act 1992, (c) national commission for women act 1990, and (d) maternity benefit act 1961. Policies are (a) national policy on education 1986, and (b) programme of action 1992 (Rao & Mithilesh, 2003).

Human Rights Education: Human rights education is an integral part of the right to education and is increasingly gaining recognition as a human right in itself (University of Mumbai, 2011). Human rights education is all learning that develops the knowledge, skills, and values of human rights (Human Rights Resource Center of Minnesota University, 2000).

Human Rights Education in India: early stage of independent India, the content of Human rights education had selective focus. Possibly it was existed in the subjects like Law and Political Sciences. Even in this limited focus, human rights were not taught in a comprehensive, holistic fashion. During 1970’s, importance was given to add socialism and secularism at the political level with some impact on the

educational institutions. At this juncture, UNESCO made efforts to increase the role of NGO's, and open up the higher education curricula to accommodate human rights concerns for some extent. Subjects like sociology, anthropology, population studies, community medicine, international organizations, regional development, political geography and education, started dealing with issues of human rights. Special courses on human rights slowly started appearing on the horizon of university education. India becomes a party to the e-International Covenants on Human Rights in 1979. Following the UNESCO's Vienna Congress 1978, the University Grants Commission (UGC) slowly started taking steps to promote human rights teaching and research in the higher educational institutions. Now UGC has become more proactive in the field of human rights education. UGC implements human rights education through its five year plans. UGC supports financial assistance for human rights courses, seminars and workshops to eligible colleges (Mani, 2003). As a result of its effort, many colleges introduced human rights education as one the subjects for their students. Colleges are introducing the human rights education at various levels such as certificate, diploma, under graduate, post graduate and research degree levels. Even some of the colleges have made it as compulsory and optional subject.

IV. OBJECTIVES

Reviewing of exciting literatures on the subject helped the present study to arrive following objectives.

- To find out the purpose of studying human rights subject
- To examine the levels of knowledge and practice of human rights
- To suggest better practice of human rights

V. METHODOLOGY

It is an empirical study. It follows descriptive design. Data have been collected from 97 postgraduate students who study human rights as one of their subjects. They were identified through convenience sampling technique. The field of the study was Vellore District. Samples were identified from the colleges which offer human rights as one of the subjects. Questionnaire was admitted to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire had four parts which were personal details, purpose of studying human rights subject, levels of knowledge and practice, and suggestion. The questionnaire had open ended, close ended questions.

VI. FINDINGS

Purpose of Studying Human Rights Subject: the respondents were asked the purpose of studying human rights subject. Close to one tenth (8.7%) of the respondents said that they use human rights as tool to protect them and support the human being. Wherever the human right is violated, they are fighting against the violation. Though the fighting is not a greater extent, they try their level best. These respondents expressed that the human rights subject gives knowledge which is very important to fight for human rights. Therefore they say human rights education is mandatory to all in order to have respectful livings in the society. More than half (61%) of the respondents expressed that the human rights subject helps to gain knowledge about human rights. The application of knowledge is to utilize it in the day to day life for getting benefits. But respondents expressed that when they speak about their right, it is not ended with positive manner. They are left isolated and no people support them in the situation. People know that it is injustice / not fair, still they will not come forward to fight because they say that it is usual and nothing doing for common men. So they assume that it is waste of time to involve in these kinds of activities. For time being, authority may involve and look for solution which is usually temporally. Actions of authority for human rights violation may differ based on the social status of the affected person. The officials may act promptly for people who socially popular. Therefore it is ineffective to speak and practice of human rights for common man. Less than one third (30.3%) of the respondents said that they study human rights education to obtain their degree. They consider it is one of their subjects to study. So they study the subject, write the exam and passing it out, like other subjects. With this it is over, thereafter no discussion, action, and nothing is to be done related to human rights. In their view, effective practice of human rights may depends on various aspects such as value system of individual and society, political situation, government administration, etc., If all these systems are not in order, how human rights alone will work effectively. Therefore they study it for only examination purpose. To confirm all these assumptions, further studies could be conducted with various settings and samples.

Level of Knowledge on Human Rights: less than one fifth (17.8%) of the respondents had low level knowledge on human rights. More than half (63.5%) of the respondents had moderate level of knowledge on human rights. It is more when comparing with low and high level of knowledge. This is similar to the findings of Padmavathy & Pratima Pallai (2015). They said that the human rights awareness of post graduate students is in average level. Therefore it is need of the hour to develop their human rights awareness level through various programmes which would help them to understand the human dignity, values and rights. Less than one fifth (18.7%) of the respondents had high level of knowledge on human rights.

Level of Practice on Human Rights: Only smaller portion of the samples is utilizing the knowledge into practice level. An analysis was made among the (8.7%) respondents who expressed that they practice human rights in their daily life. Two fifth (40%) of the respondents are at high level in utilizing the human rights education in their daily life effectively. Three fifth (60%) of the respondents are at moderate level in utilizing the human rights education in their daily life.

VII. SUGGESTIONS

Practical exposure could be arranged to bring interest among the students. Hands on experience can be given to the students. Conference, seminars and workshops could be organized on human rights and making the students to participate in the events related to human rights. Habit of reading newspapers could be inculcated among students that may help them in gaining knowledge on human rights and it violations. Students may be encouraged to become a member local human rights council or organization. Students may be encouraged to involve in human right agitation in order to change the exploitative structure of the society. Proper orientation on human rights could be organized to human rights educator. Competent teachers may be appointed for effective education on human rights. Manual on human rights may be prepared and distributed among the students.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Education is useful for proper living. Education is mostly for gaining knowledge, skill and values. Education helps to distinguish the right and wrong. Understanding the human right is needed for proper society. The study fulfills the purpose for which it was carried out. Findings and suggestions of the study may be useful for the people who fight against human rights violation. The study would be eye opener to an

extent for organizations which works on human rights. The study also provides suggestions to educational institutions to enhance and popularize the human rights education among their students.

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