

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: AN INCISIVE OVERVIEW

Dr. Ajay Sonawane

Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

"Human rights education is key to addressing the underlying causes of injustice around the world. The more people know about their rights, and the rights of others in society, the better equipped they are to protect them."

- Salil Shetty
Secretary General, Amnesty International

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is an essential component to develop a brainchild mind into a common mind and towards the light mind which is an essential for professional and intellectual capacity building of any individual. The higher education maybe range from graduate to postgraduate or postgraduate to doctrinal qualification it enables the individuals to make a benchmark for known and unknown but the more useful contribution to his profession. Therefore it is high time to prosper the knowledge about the universal order and universal values to solve the problem of various dynamics through moral, ethical and value-based education. The higher education is an platform which can impart professional as well as knowledge based perspectives to learn as well as contribute for the society. In the post-independence era there are numerous instances where the need for improvement of quality education was felt by number of national leaders. in the 1948 under the chairmanship of Dr Radhakrishnan the Universal Education Commission was set up. In the year 1953 based on the recommendation of this commission the Universal Grants Commission was set up. However considering the diversity of India the promotion of education and especially value-based education was a complex challenge for Centre, State as well as private educational stakeholders.

Human resources is the most important asset for a society as well as the nation. The higher education is the important medium which develops the capacity, strengths, knowledge of these human resources to become efficient participants in the activities of public-private, scientific and value oriented practices. Considering the value oriented learnings is an integral art and part of every single individual. The values inculcated during education period within the mind of the child results into sustainable and enriching human resources. The pragmatic grounds as well as considering social structure, the value based education is need of the hour. The changing social structure has different angles which raised number of healthy as well as dangerous aspects in the society. The economic as well as social

structures has transformed due to process of economic liberalization, technologies, changing values esteemed and addition of materialistic hues.

Therefore, to achieve this objective, human rights education is of the most efficient tool which can be promoted in the higher education by introducing number of courses to develop and shape human minds not only knowledge-based but value oriented. United Nations organizations through its allied agencies have always promoted and protected human rights of all around the globe. UNESCO is one of the important factors which has boosted and promoted education across the world. India is a party to United Nations. Therefore, India is obligated to follow and implement human rights education which is worth to society, nation and humanity.

SIGNIFICANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Human right is considered as most important tool to develop one's social thinking, reasoning and behaviour in the contemporary society. It has power of all round development of the human person in concordance with that of his family, relatives in the entirety of the social relation in a society. Human rights are an integral part of human life. They are as old as human civilization. However, the degradation of ethical, moral, economic, social and cultural values among humankind and the holocaust of the two World Wars, led the nation-states to recognise human rights as a part of international law. The words human rights took birth in 1945 through the Charter of the United Nations. The Preamble of the Charter clearly recognised the human rights, appeals the humanity and the states to strive to achieve them at any cost. The history of concept of human rights is as old as existence of human being. It has paved way in the socio-political, economical, cultural and most importantly legal as well as scientific domain. It is, therefore, a accountable task for anyone to evaluate the state of implementation of human rights in a society. Human rights are those which are existence since the moment human being takes birth. They can be called as birth rights, fundamental rights, and basic rights etc. The essence of understanding and knowing philosophy of human rights helps to develop and enrich one's own personality in the changing world scenario.

From the above deliberations, it is clear that people living in any society have to discharge their duties with utmost sincerity at all times without any deviation. Such practices will promote the freedoms of all and could transform a society to achieve its objectives. This being the concern of human rights education, impartation of it results in, to achieving the principles of democracy, rule of law, and social justice. Further, it will help to establish peace and security. It further enables us to achieve an all round socio-economic, political, and cultural sustainability. Human rights can only be achieved through an informed and continued demand by people for their protection. Human rights education promotes values, beliefs and attitudes that encourage all individuals to uphold their own rights and

those of others. It develops an understanding of everyone's common responsibility to make human rights a reality in each community.¹

EVOLUTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The evolution of human rights has been a long process at national and international level. At the outset, human rights shall be considered as an integral part of human life and position of such rights distinguishes human beings from other animals. The concept of human rights has the nexus with the natural of philosophy. It means that the people in the society or people from primitive society have certain inherent, inalienable rights by birth and which are also called as birth rights. From the second phase of natural law state has a responsibility to protect and guarantee such rights these rights are such rights which are essential to the people for living a better and dignified life. Throughout all the ages, since the inception there was a huge struggle and tussle to understand and ask for these rights. In the historical Scriptures in the Eastern philosophy there are some references can be found on the evolution of human rights. The Rigveda, is considered as one of the oldest document of human civilization which provides that all human beings are equal and they are all brothers. Even the Atharva Veda provides that all human beings have equal right over food and water. The concept of dharma is one of the oldest and known term for all human rights and duties especially towards to discharge by human beings. The philosophy of Dharma was known to achieve peace and happiness to individual as well as society.

In the 12th century, the great document known as Magna Carta, (1215) introduced the interest of individuals in the line of human rights. Though there was no terminology called human rights was used in this document but the philosophy delivered by this document was a benchmark in the development of human rights. In the United States declaration of Independence in 1776 used the term human rights first time and thereafter it became an integral part of bill of rights in the U.S. Constitution. And thereafter there are number of instances such as French Revolution (declaration of rights of man and Citizen 1789), Declaration of Human Rights And Duties, 1929 etc.

The actual realisation of human beings was noticed in 1945 after the repercussion of World War II. There were crimes committed against humanity and there was a total suppression and operation of fundamental human rights. This hilarious situation laid the foundation to consider human beings as one of the important subjects of international law of human rights. Therefore, in the year 1945 the United Nations was established to maintain lives and property rights of the state. The universal declaration of human rights is one of the important components of International Bill of human rights which was introducing the year 1948. This document basically covers the civil and political as well as economic social and cultural rights for strengthening the values and dignity of an individual and also put

¹Human Rights Education and Training,
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Pages/HREducationTrainingIndex.aspx>
visited on 21/11/2017

obligations upon the state for the realisation of human rights. The International Bill of rights consists of

1. universal declaration of human rights, 1948
2. the International: covenant of economic social and cultural rights 1966
3. the International: covenant on civil and political rights 1966
4. and their optional protocols

In the contemporary scenario, the human rights developed into four generations.

The first generation of human rights is concerned about civil and political rights of individuals. the second generation of human rights deals with security oriented which includes social economic and cultural security. The third generation of human rights was emerged in the consideration of new developments and international consensus in the contemporary era it includes the right to clean environment cultural and all round development of rights. Therefore these rights are mainly focused towards the strengthening of group rights. The fourth generation of human rights is also called as the future generation rights which include the rights of humanity which can treat whole community with humane approach. These rights basically revolve around human body in the sense of medical science, genetic dynamics

HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Education is the platform wherein individual develops his/her personality, ideas, thinking and controls of behaviour in the social structure. The values embibed during education reflects throughout the life of individuals. The sustainability of any matured society based upon values such as peace, non-discrimination, equality, justice, non-violence, tolerance, to live in peace and security and respect for human dignity. Such goals can be achieved inculcating the principles of human rights education. At the stage of higher education when age of student well-capable to nourish, cherish knowledge of social realities for betterment of society as well as individual. The awareness knowledge of Human Rights and Duties Education will help in achieving a all-inclusive development of every society. According to the UN decade document for human rights education (1995-2004), human rights education means, “a lifelong process by which people at all levels of development and in all strata of society learn respect for the dignity of others and the means and methods of ensuring that respect in all societies.”²

Tibbitts (2002) describes three models of human rights education: Values and Awareness Model, Accountability Model and Transformational Model, which are the tools for classifying educational programmes, clarifying their target groups and requiring us to consider their link with the overall goal of human development and social change. Each

² A/RES/49/184 94th plenary meeting, 23 December 1994, United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education

model is associated with particular target groups, contents and strategies. ³A number of models are developed to impart the above values of human rights education.

Among the various models, the following three considered as the vital ones, to achieve the aims and objectives of human rights.

1. Values and Awareness Model: This model focuses on transmitting basic knowledge of human rights and to foster the integration into public values through a curriculum of educational institutions.
2. Accountability Model: This model focuses on the ways in which professional responsibilities to inculcate directly monitoring human rights violations and advocating the authorities to protect the rights of the people.
3. Transformational Model: This model aims to empower the individuals in order to recognize the abuses of human rights and their prevention.⁴

The culture of philosophy of human rights can be widened with the help of its understanding, knowledge and essence. "Human rights education is all learnedness that germinates the knowledge, skills, and values of human rights."

As per provisions in Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international documents and treaties, human rights education can be defined as education, training and information aiming at building a universal culture of human rights through the exchanging ideas and sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills and moulding of attitudes directed to:

- (a) The strengthening and transformation the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- (b) The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity;
- (c) The promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship within all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious And linguistic groups;
- (d) The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free and democratic society governed by the rule of law;
- (e) The building and maintenance of peace;
- (f) The promotion of people-centred sustainable development and social justice.

There are three attributes to the promotion of human rights education:

- (a) Knowledge - providing information about human rights and the mechanisms that exist to protect those rights;
- (b) Values, beliefs and attitudes - promoting a human rights culture through the development of these processes; and

³Marina Diković, Integration Of Values And Awareness Model Of Human Rights Education In Primary School Curricula, *Metodički obzori* 11 (2016)1 p. 64

⁴T.S.N. Sastry, Introduction to Human Rights and Duties, University of Pune Press, P. 9, 2012

(c) Action - encouraging people to defend human rights and prevent human rights abuses.⁵

Further, the Encyclopedia of Peace Education (2008) also offers a clear explanation of the concept of HRE as “an international movement to promote awareness about the rights accorded by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and related human rights conventions, and the procedures that exist for the redress of violations of these rights.”⁶ This definition calls upon equally serious responsibilities on individuals as well as national and international political obligations.

Human rights education constitutes an essential contribution to the long-term prevention of human rights abuses and represents an important investment in the endeavor to achieve a just society in which all human rights of all persons are valued and respected. The High Commissioner is the coordinator of United Nations education and public information programmes in the field of human rights.⁷

OHCHR is working to promote human rights education by:

- Supporting national and local capacities for human rights education in the context of its technical cooperation programme and through the ACT Project, which provides financial assistance to grass-roots initiatives;
- Developing selected human rights education and training materials;
- Developing selected resource tools, such as a Database on Human Rights Education and Training, a Resource Collection on Human Rights Education and Training and a Web section on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- Globally coordinating the World Programme for Human Rights Education.

In 1985, the UGC prepared a blueprint for promotion of Human Rights teaching and research at all levels of education.⁸ This blueprint contained proposals for restructuring of existing syllabi, and introduction of new courses and/ or foundation courses in Human Rights. This was for students of all faculties at the under-graduate, graduate and post-graduate levels for both professional and non-professional education. The UGC has been promoting and supporting Human Rights and Duties Education in universities and colleges since the IX Plan and the UGC would continue to strengthen this programme in the X Plan, also.⁹

SUMMATION

⁵ Human Rights, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rights-human/> visited on 01/12/2017

⁶ Monisha Bajaj, Encyclopaedia of Peace Education, IAP, 2008, P.99

⁷ GA/A/RES/48/141, <https://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/6605402.82726288.html> visited on 10/12/2017

⁸ Guidelines For Human Rights & Values In Education, <https://www.ugc.ac.in/oldpdf/xplanpdf/humanrights.pdf>, visited on 06/01/2018.

⁹ Ibid.

It is affirmative sign that, in today's context number of universities, institutions have come forward and structured curriculum on human rights education in India. But their serious implementations need to be widened with true spirit and aspirations for all students. In India, the illiteracy these initiatives are directed towards formal education on human rights. Nevertheless, India has big challenge of illiteracy but human rights education has to be promoted through education, so that people have every right to know their rights. Higher education enables individuals to expand their knowledge and skills, clearly express their thoughts both orally and in writing, grasp abstract concepts and theories, and increase their understanding of the world and their community.

It has also been shown to improve an individual's quality of life; studies show that compared to high school graduates, college graduates have longer life spans, better access to health care, better dietary and health practices, greater economic stability and security, more stable employment and greater job satisfaction, less dependency on government assistance, greater understanding of government, increased community service and leadership, more self-confidence, and less criminal activity and incarceration. In addition, college graduates have higher rates of access to the internet, more time to devote to leisure and artistic activities, and higher voting rates.¹⁰ Human rights education lies at the heart of all efforts to develop a culture of human rights and a society that embraces dignity, inclusion, and equality.¹¹ Human rights education contributes to social cohesion, democracy, conflict prevention and resolution, and understanding of diversity. It is a means to develop societies where the human rights of all are respected, protected and fulfilled. The provision of human rights education is a legal obligation on States under international human rights law, and one which is essential for the enjoyment of all other rights in a pluralistic democracy.¹² Human rights education can be entirely consistent with the broader agenda of governments to produce an economically viable workforce. Measures to promote universal access to education and overcome discrimination against girls, children with disabilities, working children, children in rural communities, and minority and indigenous children will serve to widen the economic base of society, thus strengthening a country's economic capability.¹³ Therefore such value based programmes should be developed that meet needs and situations. The pattern of curriculum and method of teaching would be as per suitability of the institutions such as lecture method, plays, audio-visual mode, street theatre, working with community, documentary films, media, etc..

¹⁰ Higher Education, <https://academicimpact.un.org/content/higher-education>, visited on 06/01/2018

¹¹ Human Rights And Values In Education, https://download.eiie.org/Docs/WebDepot/2016_RigaSymposium_BackgroundPaper_EN.pdf, visited on 06/01/2018.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Human Rights And Education: Human Rights Education, Concept, Types And Need, Government's Legislation To Ensure Human Rights Education http://results.mu.ac.in/myweb_test/MA%20Education-Philosophy/Chapter-17.pdf visited on 12/12/2017

This brings to the more evidently the element of active citizenship and its connection to Human Rights Education: '*Human rights education is a deliberate, participatory practice aimed at empowering individuals, groups and communities ... Its goal is to build a culture of respect for and action in the defense and promotion of human rights for all (...) Human rights education can also play a vital role in building social structures that support participatory democracies and the resolution of conflict, and can provide a common understanding of how to address political and social differences equitably and celebrate cultural diversity.*'¹⁴

¹⁴<http://www.amnestymena.org/en/WhoWeAre/HumanRightsEducation.aspx?media=print>
visited on 12/12/2017