

Human Rights Education as a Tool for Social Justice and Social Change

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Abstract—*Education is the one and only one tool that can bring humankind from darkness to light — darkness in the sense that all the social evils that are existing in the society. In modern society, even after so many social revolutions, social reforms, and social movements, there exists several social evils and social injustice. So human right education is the need of the time, which makes the individual aware of their duties, rights, and responsibilities of their fellow beings too. Human rights education is the most important tool to fight against all the social evils and injustices that are existing in the society. This paper deals with the importance of human rights education and how it can be used as a tool to bring social justice and social change in society.*

Keywords: *Education, Human Rights, Human Rights Education, Social Justice.*

“1. Introduction”

Now the most crucial point of discussion in the current world is Human Rights, and it is a burning issue in the present world. Like, two sides of a coin from some point of view it is a good while from another point of view it is used for exploiting the people also. However, the proper implementation of human rights helps the individual to lead a happy, healthy, prosperous, and satisfying life on the earth. Human rights are the birthright of every single individual as a member of homo sapiens. A society cannot be considered as a civilized one unless or until it ensures human rights to all members of that society as these rights are fundamental for the existence of human being in society. The progress and development of a society or nation are directly related to the freedom, liberty, and rights of citizens in that society or nation. Therefore, we can say that human rights and the development of a society or nation are correlated to each other. Education is the only weapon that can be used to fight for one’s own freedom, rights, and liberty and that education should be human rights education. United Nations considers education as a fundamental human right and as a key for development as well as a vehicle for the promotion of human rights. Human Rights Education comprises of all types of learning environment that helps the individual to develop the knowledge, skills,

and values of human rights. The individual’s knowledge, skills, and values about human rights act as an instrument for social justice and social change in society.

“2. Education and Human Rights.”

Education is the fundamental asset of every individual, and it is the only wealth that will never leave us till and after death. The foremost motive of education is to mold the individual to fight with the evils that are existing in the society in which he lives. The ultimate aim of education is to make awareness among the individual about their responsibilities and rights and to build awareness among the individuals about the oppressive laws and unlawful traditions if existing in society. Education is stated as a fundamental right of every individual irrespective of their gender, nationality, caste, creed, religion, the wealth they possess, ethnicity, their position in the society, etc. According to Article 26 (1) of United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available, and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.” Education is one and only one tool to uplift the individual from darkness to light as it makes awareness among the people about their rights.

The individual’s rights related to life, liberty, equality, and dignity are integral to the ethos of a civilized society. The concept of ‘right’ varies from society to society; that is, different societies define the term ‘right’ differently. It varies according to their historical background, traditions, value system, and their current political and economic status in the modern world. Rights are social claims which presume the existence of a society, i.e., if there is no existence of society, there is no worth of talking about the rights. Rights are the social claims entitled to each individual as a member of the society, and they are received in the form of reward as a response to the duties that the individual have performed towards his society. Hobhouse defines, “Rights are what we may expect from others and others from us, and all genuine

rights are conditions of social welfare. Thus, the rights anyone may claim are partly those which are necessary for the fulfillment of the function that society expects from him. They are conditioned by, correlative to, his social responsibilities.” According to Laski, “Rights are those conditions of social life without which no man can seek, in general, to be himself at his best.” In short, rights are the basic need of the individual to lead a successful life in society.

Human beings are born free, and all are equal in dignity and rights. No one in the world has the right to distinguish human beings based on their language, region, caste, culture, sex, nationality, and so on. So human rights are the rights that every human being is entitled to enjoy freely, at its topmost irrespective of their language, region, caste, culture, sex, nationality, race, and so on. Human rights enable the individual to respect each other and live with others with full cooperation and tolerance. Human rights are the rights that are not only to be respected or demanded but they are the rights to be respected and responsible for. The denial of human rights not only creates individual problems, but it also sows the seeds of violence, conflicts, and imbalances in society. Human rights are rights, which plays an important role in the realization of the innate abilities that are in the individual as a human being. According to Ruhela and Raj Kumar Nayak (2011), human rights are defined as “those basic rights without which people cannot live in dignity as human being.” Human rights are the rights inherent to the individual as a member of society. Therefore, we can say that human rights are retained equally by all the individual simply because of being human; that goes beyond the basic rights of life and liberty and it includes cultural, economic, social, and political rights which are essential for the preservation of human dignity. 10th December of every year is celebrated as Human Rights Day. The human rights are classified into:

1. Civil and Political Rights
2. Economic Rights
3. Social Rights
4. Cultural Rights
5. Developmental Rights
6. Environmental Rights
7. Intellectual Rights
8. Educational Rights
9. Legal Rights
10. International Rights

“3. Social Justice and Social Change”

Social justice is an important characteristic of an egalitarian society. The basic concept of social justice is to remove all the imbalances in the social, political, economic, and cultural life of the individuals in society and to create a just society; therefore, we can say that social justice is an integral part of the society. Our society, the Indian Society, is a society with enormous inequalities such as gender gap, caste, religion, ethnicity, etc. Social justice means the sweeping out of all the

imbalance, social evils, ill traditions, inequalities, etc from society in order to bring peaceful co-existence, unity among the people and ensuring equal opportunity to all citizens in all aspects.

Change is the law of nature. Everything in this world is in constant flux. Change means any alteration, variation, difference, modification, or shift from one situation to another. Society is a web of social relationships so that social change can be defined as a change in the system, structure, interaction, and organization of social relationships. Social change is a continuous and endless process which happens with time. The social inequalities, imbalances, and problems are the sources for social change. According to Kingsley Davis, “By social change is meant only such alterations as occur in social organization, that is, structure and function of society.”

“4. Human Rights Education: Its Need and Importance”

Article 26 (2) of United Nation’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.” That is, in the view of the United Nations, education should aim at the full development of the individual’s personality and the strengthening of human rights and it should bring tolerance, peace and friendship among the individuals.

Human rights education deals not only with the theoretical knowledge about human rights, but it also deals with the learning and practice of human rights that are learned through the theory. Human rights education involves learning about one’s own rights along with the rights of fellow beings and understanding the shared responsibility. UNESCO’s International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy, 1993 adopted definition for human rights education as “Human Rights Education is a human right, a precondition for sustainable development, the civil, social, and democracy.” According to Koichiro Matsuura (2004), the Director-General of UNESCO, “Human rights education is indispensable for every individual to fully enjoy and claim a life of security and dignity. It is indispensable for public officials to give effect to human rights commitments by the State. Finally, it is indispensable for the entire society to develop and nurture a human rights culture as a prerequisite of harmonious and peaceful development.”

Human Rights Education can be perceived in three dimensions namely

1. To teach about human rights: It deals with informing the individual about their rights as a human being, imparting

knowledge about human rights: what are human rights and how they are protected.

2. To teach for human rights: It deals with learning how to implement and to protect human rights. It focuses on developing skills, attitude and among the individual to apply human rights values in their own lives and to take action alone or with others for promoting and defending human rights.
3. To teach in/ through human rights: It deals with learning within an environment and climate that would reflect a concern for the ideals and practices of human rights. It involves recognizing the context and the way human rights learning is organized and imparted. In human rights education, the process of learning is as much as important as the content of learning.

The human rights education aims at imparting knowledge, inculcating right attitudes and values and developing the skills of the student about human rights. Imparting knowledge includes understanding the concepts and development process of human right over the period. The knowledge about the human rights can be imparted through teaching concepts and scope of human rights, the historical development of human rights, the human rights violation within one's own country and other countries, the framework of international and national agencies for human rights. Inculcating right attitudes and values gave more importance to attitude and value formation such as respect, ecological concern, commitment to peace and justice, open-mindedness, empathy, solidarity, sympathy, tolerance, respect truth etc. rather than knowledge acquisition. Developing skills involving the nurturing of intellectual skills such as critical thinking, multi-disciplinary approach in solving problems, cooperation, imagination, assertiveness, conflict solution, controversial thinking, tolerance for ambiguity and action skills such as participation in human rights programme and communicative competence.

The Need and Importance of Human Rights Education are:

- To make the individual aware of their rights as a human being.
- To strengthen the respect for the right and freedom of fellow being.
- To foster an attitude of tolerance, respect, and interests in human rights.
- To occupy the individual with knowledge of human rights in both national and international dimensions.
- To make awareness among the individual how human rights education can be used as a tool for attaining social justice.
- To bring social changes in society.
- To create a peaceful society
- To create a sustainable democratic society
- To make an end to all social injustices and ill traditions that are existing in the society
- To achieve the goal of sustainable development

- To bring a sense of unity and diversity among the people
- To foster positive social and cultural values
- To teach the individuals about the universal language of humanity
- To recognize any flagrant violations in the world.
- To make the individual to raise their voice against all the exploitations.

“5. Human Rights Education as a Tool for Social Justice and Social Change”

Indian Society is the one which is jammed with several inequalities, ill traditions. and beliefs, misconceptions, etc. the inequalities are the fuel for social unrest and crime. Some of the inequalities that are existing in the Indian Society are:

Gender Gap: According to The Global Gender Gap Report 2018 by World Economic Forum, India ranks 108 out of 149 in terms of the global gender gap. The global gender gap examines the gap between the male and female on four sub-indices: Economic participation and opportunity (142), Educational attainment (114), Health and survival (147), Political empowerment (19).

Unbalanced distribution of wealth: According to the Davos report 2019, ‘Public Good or Private Wealth? The India Story’ shows that there exists an unequal and unfair distribution of national wealth among the people. The top 10% of the population holds 77.4% of the total national wealth while the top 1% holds 51.53% of the national wealth and the majority of the population, that is, the bottom 60% own merely 4.8% of the national wealth. Moreover, the other forms of inequalities that are existing in the Indian society are caste system, regionalism, ethnicity, poverty, gender discrimination, discrimination based on religion, etc. In order to solve all the inequalities that are existing in Indian society, more importance should be given to education, especially human rights education. Education is a powerful tool and medium to awaken the people about their rights as a human being. The individual those who are educated and aware about human rights can demand their rights, and it helps the individual to raise voice against the violation of their rights if any. Knowledge about human rights plays a vital role in the promotion of human rights and the creation of a just society in which all the human beings are considered as equal, and everyone gets dignity, freedom, and prosperity which they deserve. Human rights education helps to build a society with peace and harmony. Human rights education creates awareness about the individual's rights, so it plays a vital in fighting with the social evils of the society. Human rights education protects the individual from discrimination, unfair treatment, undemocratic attitude, deterioration of cultural and traditional values, unawareness of society and environment, exploitation, bondage, human right illiteracy, abuses of human rights and exploitation in the name of human rights. It also makes the individual to raise their voice against all social evils, unbalances, and ill traditions and beliefs; thereby, it

brings social change and social justice. Therefore, we can call the human right education as a catalyst for development and social change along with this it is an instrument to bring social justice.

“6. Conclusion”

Education is the process of converting an individual to a Social Being from a Social Animal, that is all the animalistic instincts are interchanged by humanistic instinct. Social justice and social change can be achieved by adopting necessary changes and reasonable measures, and human rights education is one of the methods for that. Human rights education is essential to build a sustainable democratic, and peaceful society. Human rights education act as a rod to measure the progress of society. Human rights education makes the individual to fight for their rights and to raise voice against the evils that are existing in the society. Thereby, it brings social change and social justice in the society in which he lives. School, the second-largest social institution after the family, which influences the life of the individual more than anything else. School not only provides basic education to lead a successful life but also it exposes the individual to the world in which they live. So human rights education should be enforced to the school curriculum in both explicitly and implicitly to promote human right, for the preparation for citizenship, social responsibility and to achieve the goals of sustainable development.

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