

Human Rights Education in Schools: The Indian Experience

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Human rights are equal and basic rights for all human beings that define and redefine their individual and collective identities and allow them independent choices in the specific as well as in the totality of human situations. They also encompass the equal right to informed participation in decision-making process in matters relating to access to, and management of, material bases of the life support system of individuals and collectivities. From time immemorial human beings have been struggling for such recognition of human dignity and worth which eventually culminated in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948. Since then there has been no looking back and today all but one of the six core covenants and conventions on civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights¹ have each been ratified by more than 140 countries including India, whose own 1949 Constitution incorporates many of the principles of the UDHR. Human rights education is about valuing, respecting, and advocacy of human rights. Every country has human rights problems, and thus different approaches to human rights education are employed to address these challenges.

Human Rights Instruments in the Indian State System

The Indian Constitution is probably one of the best written documents in the world in integrating various components and dimensions of human rights in its preamble, and two separate Chapters – Part III (Fundamental Rights) [FR] and Part IV (Directive Principles of State Policy) [DPSP]. The uniqueness of this Constitution lies in its sincere effort to bring structural changes in the highly heterogeneous and divided society of India due to caste, class, region, religion, gender, and other factors. Thus rights are tempered with the qualifying provisions of 'distributive justice' and 'protective discrimination' which provide the State the

freedom to enact socio-economic policies in such a manner as to protect and promote the welfare of those sections of society which have hitherto been victims of social injustice, exploitation and inequalities in the hierarchical and federal social structure of India. Clauses (1) and (2) of Article 38, under the DPSP, of the Constitution provide such mandate to the State in very clear tone.

Clause (1) Art. 38: The state shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and promoting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life.

Clause (2) Art. 38 (incorporated through 44th Constitutional Amendment Act) – The state shall, in particular, strive to minimize

the inequalities in income and endeavour to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities, and opportunities, not only amongst individuals but also amongst groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations.

Similar provisions have been made in six fundamental rights provided by the Constitution to its citizens. For instance, the first right includes *right to equality before the law*, prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth, etc. However, it permits at the same time the 'protective discrimination' for securing distributive justice and advancement of any 'socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.'² Likewise while it provides 'equality of opportunity in matter relating to appointment to any office under the State,' it also allows *reservation policy* in jobs for various disadvantaged and backward sections of society to ensure their adequate representation in the services under the state. The second category of FR, *Right to Freedom*, ensures with reasonable restriction the freedom of speech and expression, peaceful assembly, association or unions, movement, residence, and practice of any profession or occupation. This right also makes provision to prevent arbitrary arrest or detention of any person and provides for the right of detained person to seek legal advice in self-defence. Articles 23 and 24 under this chapter provide *Right Against Exploitation*, prohibit trafficking in human beings and forced labor, and prohibit employment of children below the age of fourteen years in factories. *Freedom of Religion*, freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion; freedom to manage one's religious affairs; and freedom to attend religious instruction or religious worship in certain educational institutions has been ensured through Articles 25, 26, 27 and 28 of the Constitution. But again it is subject to State intervention, if the

need arises, on various secular grounds. Articles 29 and 30 deal exclusively with the *Cultural and Educational Rights of Minorities* while ensuring equal opportunity for all citizens to take admission in any educational institution. The Article 29 (2) says "*No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them.*"

The sixth fundamental right provided by the Constitution relates to *Right to Constitutional Remedies*, i.e. right to move the Supreme Court by appropriate proceedings for the enforcement of the rights conferred by Part III of the document. The judiciary in India has generally shown special solicitude in protecting the rights of the citizens of the country from time to time.

DPSP, on the other hand, safeguards the welfare and developmental rights of citizens which includes equal justice and free legal aid; right to work, to education, to public assistance in certain cases like unemployment, old age, sickness, disability etc.; free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years; promotion of education and economic interest of Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and other weaker sections of society; and right to a minimum standard of public health, and nutrition, etc. Though the rights provided under DPSP are not justiciable in any court of law they are binding on the State in the form of duties of the State, and therefore, enjoins it to initiate such measures that can ensure achievement of these rights.³

The 86th Constitutional Amendment (2002) made education as a fundamental right of the child up to the age of 14 years, therefore, ensuring that each and every child of the country under the stipulated age group is provided free and compulsory education by the State. This is in keeping with the spirit of Article 26 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), which recommends free and

compulsory education for everyone in the elementary and fundamental stages.

Human Rights Education: the Policy Perspectives

The educational policies of country addresses the concerns reflected in the Constitution. The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 clearly says that

Education has continued to evolve, diversify, and extend its reach and coverage since the dawn of human history. Every country develops its system of education to express and promote its unique socio-cultural identity and also to meet the challenges of the time.

The policy as modified in 1992 seeks “to promote equality... to provide equal opportunity to all not only in access, but also in the conditions for success...”

It further reiterates that “[T]he Nation as a whole will assume the responsibility of providing resource support for implementing programs of educational transformation, reducing disparities, universalization of elementary education, adult literacy, scientific and technological research etc.” Aware of the disparities prevailing in the various sections of highly diversified Indian society and the Constitutional obligation to provide ‘protective discrimination’ to the weaker sections, the policy suggests various measures to bring equality through the system of education. Consequently, the NPE (1986) has devoted a complete chapter, Part IV, to ‘Education for equality’ wherein the policy outline has been provided for the educational development of various weaker and disadvantaged sections of society. This section lays emphasis on the removal of disparities by attending to the specific needs of these sections. For instance, the policy recommends redesigning the curriculums, textbooks, training and orientation of teachers, decisionmakers and administrators to remove

gender bias from schools and bring change in status of women through education. The policy also mentions educational development of SC and ST and their equalization with non-SC/ST population at all stages and levels of education. Several schemes by the Government and voluntary agencies over a period of time have opened the doors of education and knowledge to these sections of society who are also provided job reservations in various sectors of employment.

Since the Indian society is highly heterogeneous, the educational interest of the minority sections of society have not been neglected and the NPE (1986) maintains,

Some minority groups are educationally deprived and backward. Greater attention will be paid to the education of these groups in the interests of equality and social justice. This will naturally include the Constitutional guarantees given to them to establish and administer their own educational institutions, and protection of their languages and culture. Simultaneously, objectivity will be reflected in the preparation of textbooks and in all school activities, and all possible measures will be taken to promote an integration based on appreciation of common national goals and ideals, in conformity with the core curriculum.

Both the 1968 and 1986 Policy on Education lay stress on the combative role of education in eliminating obscurantism, religious fanaticism, violence, superstition, and fatalism and promote some core values such as India’s common cultural heritage, egalitarianism, democracy, secularism, equality of sexes, observance of small family norms and inculcation of scientific temper, etc. All these core values are integrated in the school curriculum. A common educational structure, popularly called as 10+2+3, has been accepted throughout the country. The first 10 years of schooling includes 5 years of primary education, 3 years of upper primary, and 2 years of secondary education. This is followed

by two years of senior secondary, and 3 years graduation course from a University.

Two new schemes are envisaged under the Programme of Action (POA) of NPE (1986): (i) Scheme of Area Intensive Programme for Educationally Backward Minorities; and (ii) Scheme of Financial Assistance for Modernization of Education System in Madrasa. The schemes were launched with the objective of providing basic educational infrastructure and facilities in areas of concentration of educationally backward minorities that do not have adequate provision for primary and secondary schools. These schemes reflect the government's resolve to reinforce social justice for all sections of society.

The Indian education system has followed a *'Value and Awareness Model'* of human rights education, wherein, human rights are not taught as a separate subject, instead, various values related to human rights have been integrated in all subjects and in all stages of the school curriculum. Since the Indian society has traditionally been a value-based and spiritual society, inculcation of certain values through the process of education is considered as essential for promotion of respect for human dignity. This basic principle has been accepted and reflected through all the three Curriculum Frameworks for school education formulated so far in the country by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). *The National Curriculum Framework for School Education of 1975*, for instance, states,

The awakening of social consciousness, the development of democratic values and feeling for social injustice and national integration are extremely important. The promotion of national consciousness and the development of international understanding should be one simultaneous process. Tolerance, friendship, cooperation and peace between nations are possible only through a proper appreciation of each country's contribution to the world. National integration

can be achieved through a proper understanding and appreciation of different subcultures of India and the common bonds that hold them together. All subjects should be taught in such a manner so as to foster the spirit of scientific humanism.

The Curriculum Framework of 1988 advocates that "the curriculum as a whole should help in promoting development in the pupils of a profound sense of patriotism, non-sectarian attitudes, capacity for tolerating differences arising out of caste, religion, region, languages, sex, etc. and ability to choose between alternate value systems, all directed to the sustained pursuit of unity and integrity of the country." It further says that "[T]he Curriculum should reflect some of the major issues facing the world today such as disarmament, avoidance of nuclear war, prevention of violation of human rights, etc. The school curriculum while enabling the pupil to root oneself in the abiding national cultural traditions and value frame, should also enable him/her to learn and appreciate the richness and to see himself/herself as a member of the new and emerging international community of humankind." Both the Curriculum Frameworks of 1988 and 2000 reaffirm and included the core components identified by the NPE (1986). Adopting a more forward-looking approach The Curriculum Framework of 2000 considers education as an important instrument to:

- Fight against inequality and to respond to the social, cultural, emotional, and economic needs of the learners.
- Promote a cohesive society through eliminating biases and imbalances among caste, class, region, religion, ideology, and gender, etc.
- Ensure rights of the child for equality of access to quality education and opportunity including those of girls and children with special needs.
- Respond to the impact of globalization without losing the indigenous traditions and identity.

- Strengthen national identity and preserve India's cultural heritage while preparing learners for global citizenship with non-sectarian attitudes, capacity for tolerating differences arising out of caste, religion, ideology, region, language, sex, etc.

The Curriculum and textbooks at various school levels address these concerns. Graded information has been provided to develop values among students having bearing on human rights. An analysis of the syllabus and textbooks is presented below.

Lower Primary Level (I-V)

Lower Primary stage is the initial period of a child's education process, and effort at this stage is directed towards helping children to develop good habits, and values related to personal cleanliness as well as keeping their surroundings clean. Values such as truth, peaceful co-existence, cooperation, punctuality and sincerity, and respect for the elderly, etc. have been emphasized. Therefore, the scheme of studies at this stage includes the teaching of "One Language" (the mother tongue/the regional language), Mathematics, and Art of Healthy and Productive Living (AHPL). Environmental studies has been introduced from class III onwards as a separate subject. While the language textbooks at this stage try to develop the communication, and writing skills among learners, the Environmental Studies textbooks from class III to V help students develop an understanding about their body, immediate surroundings, natural resources, and their importance, their immediate neighborhood such as their village, municipal committee and school, their country and its glory, unity in diversity and interdependence between environment and natural calamities, etc. Besides, the ideational content on the life and history of some of great people like Gandhi, Jagdish Chand Basu, and Abdul Hameed etc. reflect the spirit of the Core Curriculum rec-

ommended by the NPE (1986), and built the base of democratic citizenship among children. A conscious effort has specifically been made at this level to remove gender stereotype and gender bias through the pictures and illustrations used in the textbooks.

The Art of Healthy and Productive Living (AHPL) has been introduced after the recommendations of NCFSE (2000) by merging earlier curricular areas – 'Art Education,' 'Work Experience' and 'Health and Physical Education.' It aims at developing awareness and sensitivity among children towards the immediate environment and interdependence between the human being and environment, respect for manual work and dignity of labor, development of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing through yoga and games, development of human values like honesty, truthfulness, respect for others, regularity, appreciation for cultural heritage-both local and national, patriotism and nationalism, etc. besides creating awareness among children about personal health and hygiene. *For this curricular area no textbook is prescribed*, only Teachers' Handbook containing exemplar activities for reference has been developed, and an integrated approach has been adopted to develop these values through the contents of other subject areas at this stage, which is clearly reflected in the analysis presented in the preceding paragraph. Besides, other activities such as music, dance, drawing, and painting, role play, puppetry, yoga and games, and health and physical activities are also directed towards developing these values. No formal evaluation is done for AHPL but continuous and comprehensive evaluation is done by the teacher of every child and a personal record is maintained for each and every child.

Upper Primary Stage (classes VI-VIII)

At this stage the scheme of studies includes three languages (the mother tongue/regional language, modern Indian language, and English), Mathematics, Science and Technology,

Social Science, work education, Arts education; and Health and Physical education (including games and sports, yoga, National Cadet Core [NCC], scouting and guiding etc.). The common core components identified by NPE (1986) have been infused in the syllabuses of different subjects. The basic social, moral and spiritual values have been integrated in all subjects in both the scholastic and co-scholastic areas.

At the upper primary stage, integration of science and technology, bringing Mathematics closer to life, and introduction of integrated thematic approach to teaching of social sciences are some of the new elements of curriculum. A more focused attempt has been made at this stage to make students aware of various issues related to peace, national integration, international understanding and human rights. The Guidelines of Syllabi for this stage clearly recommends “relevant contents like human rights, conservation and improvement of environment, conservation of resources, population concerns, disaster management education, adolescence education, forestry, value inculcation, fundamental duties and rights, neighbourhood education, migration education, family life education, safety education, consumer education and education for sustainable development must be suitably incorporated in language materials.”

Analysis of the content of language textbooks at this stage (classes VI-VIII) reveals that the thematic range presented through stories, descriptions, dialogues, essays and poems is in line with learners’ life experiences, interests, and immediate environment and seeks to develop values such as respect for others especially for elders, love, honesty, peace, sincerity, sympathy, dignity of labor, sense of humor; promotes national identity and patriotism; generates awareness about our culture, traditions, festivals and diversity of the country, etc. Environment and social and interpersonal relationships are in focus in all the themes. Problem-solving, and critical thinking abilities have been encouraged through these themes. Efforts have been made to remove gender bias and gender

stereotype from textbooks, while including content from various religions in non-discriminatory manner, and content representing both rural and urban settings. The themes and activities have been selected in such a manner that they promote a sense of human worth and dignity and ‘we feeling’ among learners.

Social Sciences is an integral component of undifferentiated general education up to secondary level of school education in India. As indicated earlier, thematic approach has been followed at this stage, therefore, instead of teaching History, Geography, and Civics as separate subject areas, these are taught as a composite whole with the objective of helping learners understand the interdependence and interrelatedness of historical, geographical, political, and economic perspective of an issue. The course content at this stage tries to develop appreciation among learners for different ways of living in India and elsewhere. It includes the study of the growth and development of human civilization, India’s cultural heritage, the political system of the country, Fundamental Rights, Duties, and Directive Principles of State Policy, Citizenship and Civic life, India and the World in the twentieth century, and major religions, major historical developments in the world, etc. Some contemporary issues and challenges facing the world have also been included in class VIII Social sciences syllabus. These include natural disasters, environmental degradation, globalization, terrorism and its challenges, India’s foreign policy and relationship with its neighbors – Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, etc. A separate chapter has been devoted on United Nations, International Agencies and Human Rights. Issues such as Colonialism, apartheid, peace-keeping operations of India and disarmament, etc. help learners become well aware of the current social-economic and political realities as well as the historical backgrounds of various developments by the time they complete their eight years of elementary schooling. Students,

at this stage, are helped to develop into well-informed and intelligent citizens with appreciation and respect for values of democracy, secularism, socialism, and national integration, etc.

The guidelines for the course in *Science and Technology* stresses the objective of inculcating rational outlook and scientific temper, thereby help in combating ‘obscurantism and prejudices based on narrow considerations of caste, sex and religion.’ It also aims at generating awareness among learners of their immediate environment and the need for its protection, besides promoting scientific and technological literacy among them. Themes like air pollution, acid rain, green house effect and changes around us both desirable and undesirable, etc. have been included to develop critical thinking, scientific temper, and objectivity among students. Negative impact of various scientific developments on physical environment have also been made explicit to learners, for instance, the theme on ‘sources of energy’ taught in class VIII clarifies that... “the development of cities and industries has a negative impact on our natural environment. These have resulted in release of several pollutants in air, such as carbon monoxide, sulphur dioxide, hydrocarbons, oxides of nitrogen, lead, arsenic, asbestos, radioactive materials and dust... Indiscriminate cutting of trees and clearing of forests had led to increase in the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere... Therefore there should be judicious use of various sources of energy.” Various ways of energy conservation has been explained through day-to-day activities like switching off lights and fans, and other appliances when not in use, closing the water taps, soaking pulses in water in advance before cooking, etc. These examples make students aware about energy conservation, and sensitize them about their duties also.

Secondary Stage (Classes IX–X)

The secondary stage is the terminal stage of ten years of undifferentiated school education

pattern. It is also the stage that prepares students for various streams of education available at the higher secondary level. The scheme of studies for this stage at present is as follows:

1. Three Languages – the Mother-Tongue/ the regional Language, Modern Indian Language and English.
2. Mathematics
3. Science and Technology
4. Social Sciences
5. Work Education
6. Art Education-Fine Arts: Visual and Performing
7. Health and Physical Education (including Games and Sports, Yoga, NCC, Scouting and Guiding).

The analysis of current textbooks on language, social sciences, and science and technology reveal a number of themes that bear on human rights education. The selection of thematic and ideational content in *Language Courses* emphasized the objective of inculcating human values and attitudes, promoting an awareness of human rights, international understanding and related issues of global significance. The selection of content in both Hindi and English textbooks (which have been analyzed for the present purpose) was done with due care to introduce the students to the literary heritage of their own language as well as of other languages and regions of the country and the world.

The *social sciences textbook* contains a number of themes that directly address various concerns of human rights. For instance, while the class IX Social Sciences book includes themes such as India’s freedom struggle, Constitutional Obligations, Fundamental Rights and Fundamental Duties, Directive Principles of State Policy and population growth, etc., the class X book addresses a number of important contemporary issues such as economic liberalization and globalization, major challenges facing the Indian economy, consumer awareness, challenges of communalism and casteism, in-

surgency and terrorism, and India's peace initiatives etc. Themes like legal literacy, rights of citizens, child rights, child labor, protecting elders and people with disability, phenomena of growing corruption, problems of terrorism in Punjab and Kashmir, insurgency in the northeast region, Naxalite terrorism in various states like West Bengal and Bihar, etc. help students to be fully exposed to the socio-political realities of the country and the world, their own duties as productive members of society, while understanding the values enshrined in the Constitution and the Curriculum Framework of 2000. A sincere attempt has been made to modernize the syllabuses without losing sight of India's rich cultural traditions and values.

The *Science and Technology* syllabus and textbooks also reflect this integration of tradition versus modernity, and local versus global concerns through the context. Another significant observation, which can be made on the basis of analysis of the themes included in the courses of studies in classes IX and X, is that, these themes not only discuss various scientific phenomenon, but, also very explicitly make clear the harmful effects of misuse of science and technology. For instance, the devastating effect of nuclear energy, if not utilized in the right perspective, on human life and environment has been discussed in detail in a separate subsection 'Nuclear Hazards and Safety Measures' under the theme '*Nuclear Fission and Fusion*' included in the textbook of class X. The accident in the nuclear plant of Chernobyl in 1986 has been discussed to generate awareness among students about the miseries which an irresponsible nuclear experiment or use may cause to human beings. Environmental pollution, water pollution and interrelationship between pollution, environment and sustainable development have been made explicit at this stage.

It is clear that the syllabus at this stage lays stress on development of objectivity, scientific temper, cultivation of social, ethical, moral, and

aesthetic values and development of sensitivity of possible misuse of science and technology and its devastating effect on human and environmental survival, etc.

Higher Secondary Stage (XI–XII)

The students offer a common scheme of studies up to ten years of general education. At the Higher Secondary Stage (i.e. classes XI and XII) different specialized courses or job-oriented vocational courses are available in the country. This is a crucial stage as it is the terminal stage for a large number of students before they enter the world of work, and for others it is a bridge to the tertiary stage of education – academic or professional. The curriculum at this stage for the academic stream includes foundation courses and elective courses; while for the vocational stream includes Language, General Foundation Courses, Health and Physical Education, and Vocational electives. The contents that are important from a human rights perspective have been included in the language and elective courses. The syllabus and textbooks of language course have integrated the core components, and efforts have been made to develop among the students a sense of patriotism, pride of being Indian, and promote international understanding. Relevant contemporary concerns like conservation and improvement of the environment, conservation of resources, population explosion, disaster management education, adolescence education, forestry, human rights and fundamental duties, safety education, migration education, consumer education and education for sustainable development, etc. have been suitably integrated in themes for various academic and vocational courses.

Co-scholastic Activities: A large number of co-scholastic activities are undertaken by the schools to develop values related to human rights. Besides the traditional activities like

educational excursions, community singing, dramas, debate and symposiums, conscious efforts are made to generate awareness among students about environmental pollution, population explosion, apartheid, literacy, AIDS, etc. through the celebration of international days for these concerns. Many schools adopted the system of community service and organization of 'school parliament' as compulsory activities for students at the secondary and higher secondary levels. Human rights day is also celebrated in majority of schools. Few schools have 'cultural exchange scheme' where students are provided an opportunity to visit a foreign country and interact with students of host country to learn about their lifestyle and culture. Over the years, it has been observed that schools have become increasingly aware of their social responsibility at the time of natural calamities, and the two major disasters of 20th century (the earthquake of Gujarat, and the super cyclone in Orissa) stand witness to the social services provided to the victims by the students from different parts of the country.

The analysis of syllabus and text books at various levels of school education from a human rights perspective reveals the constant coverage of different components of human rights, and values which may promote awareness among students about human rights. However, the quantitative and qualitative treatment of the issues related to human rights differ from one stage of school education to another, as well as from one subject to the other. Few major trends identified in the coverage may be classified as follows:

1. *Planned and best-fit*: The analysis of themes of text books reveals that there are certain themes and topics that have been evidently planned to educate students on human rights. These topics and themes directly deal with various human rights, and are included predominantly in the social sciences textbooks at upper primary and secondary level, and civics books at the higher secondary level.

2. *Incidental but best-fit*: This category includes themes where the goals and objectives of a particular discipline (e.g. social sciences and civics) incidentally fit in well with one or the other aspects of human rights. Few themes of language textbooks, and Science and Technology textbooks are important from human rights perspective, though these themes do not intend to teach about human rights.

3. *Differential Coverage*: The treatment of human rights varies from one level to another due to the graded and integrated approach adopted in the curriculum and syllabus. Consequently, while at the lower primary level the efforts are focused toward developing certain values, and social, and environmental consciousness among students which help in promoting human rights through the themes included in language and environmental studies textbooks, more direct approach has been adopted at the higher levels of school education. Especially themes related to geography and science subjects teach students, not only, about various climatic, physical or scientific phenomenon, but, also make explicit to students the harmful effect of over-exploitation of nature or misuse of scientific knowledge etc. Besides, issues such as gender inequality, bonded labor, child labor, discrimination against SC, ST, and other religious minorities have not been addressed effectively.

4. *Stretched-to-fit*: There are certain themes where the ideas related to human rights have been stretched to fit. Consequently at many places the focus is not very sharp on human rights and since often the teachers themselves are not well equipped with the methodologies of teaching human rights, they fail to make the desired impact.

The analysis of *pictures and illustrations* included in these textbooks also reveal that con-

scious efforts have been made to remove gender bias and gender stereotype from textbooks at all the levels, but, more so from the lower primary textbooks, since, these books include more pictures and illustrations. Similarly, keeping in view the pluralistic nature of Indian society, efforts have been made to include content from both rural-urban contexts of various regions of the country, and show people of different ethnic groups as well. However, these are the hidden agenda to bring home the principle of equality of all in the minds of students and their success depends on the skill and efficiency of teachers to present and highlight this in the class in a right perspective.

Other Educational Initiatives

Besides the government's efforts a large number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are involved in generating awareness in the general public as well as among students about human rights. The Anekal Rehabilitation Education and Development (READ) Centre, one among the many NGOs involved in such activities, is working in Karnataka, South India. READ conducted a survey in 1999 in 30 villages in Hulyiar and Handankere blocks of Karnataka on the feasibility of teaching human rights in schools, covering 12 schools. The results of survey indicated the lack of awareness among the general public about human rights education. Based on these results READ initiated the orientation of teachers on human rights education as the first step, and then implemented a human rights education program for students covering four themes, i.e.:

- i) right to education;
- ii) basic rights of students relating to clean environment, privacy for girls, freedom of expression of opinions, selection of subjects;
- iii) punishment of students;
- iv) roles and responsibilities of parents and teachers.

Under this program, monthly reflection meetings are held regularly and human rights education is given special attention by the school authorities. The program has been successfully implemented in a number of other districts of Karnataka since its initiation in 1999.

OUTREACH, another NGO, has been working in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka and a number of other states. It provides training to empower various disadvantaged sections of society on their human rights. This organization, in association with the 'Peoples Initiative Networks (PIN) another NGO in Hyderabad, initiated a pilot project on human rights education for class VIII and IX standard students of 10 schools in Hyderabad. Encouraged by the responses of pilot schools, the project was also implemented in 136 schools in Tamil Nadu. Under a 1999-2001 project, the teachers in participating schools were trained on themes such as (i) introduction to human rights (ii) child rights (iii) women's rights (iv) refugee rights (v) environmental rights (vi) dalit rights (deprived sections of society) and minority rights, etc. The strategy of this NGO with regard to human rights education programs, launched for school students in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, includes enrollment of schools on a voluntary basis, selection and training of teachers, translation and publication of already available syllabus, implementation of the project, monitoring its implementation, periodic evaluation, and year-end impact assessment.

Inspired by the keen interest shown by the students of 136 schools of Tamil Nadu which participated in the human rights education project, OUTREACH organized a special training for selected students on the theme "Young citizens for Human Right" during the summer vacation in 1999, and special human rights training program for school teachers.

A number of other NGOs are working tirelessly to generate awareness among students and teachers on issues related to human rights.

Human Rights Violations in Schools: Some Ground Realities

The modern society all over the world is characterized by tremendous growth in information and communication technology, liberalization of the economy and relentless pursuit of gross materialism with insufficient concern for eternal human values, where rights of an individual are limited by his/her duty towards others. India is no exception to this general worldwide trend, and materialistic values are slowly overcoming the spiritual and moral values of the society. Parents today have more wealth and material comfort to give to their children, than time to devote with them. Easy access to various informations through print and non print media etc. often influences the impressionistic minds of students. Consequently violence inspired by media images are on the rise in Indian schools. Incidents of WWF inspired bullying in schools or a movie inspired crime and sexual harassment etc. often rock the newspapers of the country. Three recent incidents involving the school students, as well as teacher themselves, have been presented below which indicate towards the seriousness of the human rights violation in Indian schools in different forms.

Incident 1 – Recently two class XI students of a reputed public school of New Delhi took pornographic pictures of themselves and distributed to other students through the cell-phone. Taking cognizance of the incident, and public criticism which followed, the students were expelled from the school, and the school principal had to issue a letter to parents describing a series of don'ts which includes ban on bringing cellphones to school, using abusive language, scribbling on uniform, rude behaviour and the use of violence in any form. The principal further accepted that “one of the most pressing problems facing the school is the lack of proper sense of decorum and discipline” among students.

Incident 2 – Corporal punishment in school is prohibited, yet every now and then teachers themselves do it. Recently, a government school teacher was arrested for physically assaulting a 10-year old student who suffered a wound on his left knee, hand and back. The teacher allegedly did the assault simply because of a complaint about a fight involving the child. In another school, a student had to be administered first-aid after being beaten by a teacher. These teachers have been arrested by the police.

Incident 3 – Two primary school teachers from two different government primary schools in New Delhi were recently arrested for molesting class III girls in two separate incidents.

All these incidents were reported in national newspapers during the first week of December 2004 showing violation of human dignity and respect by the teachers themselves who are given the charge of protecting, transmitting, and teaching about human rights to students.

Besides, India has the dubious distinction of having the largest number of child workers in the world. Estimates of the number of child workers in the country vary from 120 to 140 million. Poor parents, hard pressed by the economic problems prefer to avail themselves of the services of their children than sending them to schools. Therefore, a large number of child workers remain deprived of their basic right to education. According to a recent UNICEF report (*State of the World's Children – 2004*),³ approximately 33 million children in India have never been to school, while millions of children in India are denied access to proper shelter, clean drinking water, toilet, immunization, nutrition, education, and information. The report concludes that “children living in poverty are deprived of their rights to survival, health, nutrition, education, participation, and protection from harm, exploitation, and discrimination.”

Conclusion

It is clear from the analysis presented in this article that efforts have been made through the curriculum to develop cognitive skills and awareness, clarify and develop values, and bring attitudinal change among students on various issues from a human rights perspective. Both integrated and direct teaching approaches have been adopted for various human rights concerns. However, the ‘values and awareness model’ of human right education seems to have failed to penetrate the affective domain of students. Therefore, we often find that even if the students are well aware of their as well as others’ human rights, they could not practice it in their behavior. Besides, due to the examination-oriented approach practiced in majority of Indian schools, students are more keen to obtain higher marks than practice these concerns in their actual behavior. Hence, human rights are often forgotten immediately after passing the examination. The celebration of important days like Human Rights Day, Population Day, AIDS Day, or Anti-Apartheid Day etc. have only temporary effect on students. Teachers themselves are often unaware of human rights issues and methodologies of teaching them. Consequently, they themselves violate the human rights of students, and at times, are unable to make explicit the hidden curriculums of values development among students through the different subjects in school. The ‘accountability’ and ‘transformational’ models of human rights education, which ensure that learners do not themselves violate human rights and empower them to both recognize human rights abuses and commit to their protection are important in this context and may be followed along with the values and awareness model. Teachers, therefore, need to be prepared through the pre-service and in-service teacher education programs in utilizing multiple models and transactional strategies in their classrooms to provide a more effective human rights education than it is today.

To conclude, I would like to submit that no matter what transactional strategy is adopted, the most effective education comes from ‘modeling.’ If respect for human rights and fulfillment of human responsibilities are effectively modeled by parents, teachers, politicians, celebrities, religious leaders, opinion leaders, and other role models then human rights education becomes relatively easier and effective. Therefore, creating a culture of respect for human rights and sensitivity towards human responsibilities should become the primary focus of human rights education whether at home, in the community, or in school.

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Endnotes

1. The six international human rights instruments are the following:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966)
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)

- Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1984).

- Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).

2. “Scheduled Castes” means such castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within such castes, races or tribes as are deemed under article 341 to be Scheduled Castes for the purposes of this Constitution”

“Scheduled Tribes” means such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this Constitution”

(Paragraphs 24 and 25, Article 366, Part XIX, Miscellaneous, The Constitution of India). Groups (castes and tribes) may be included in or excluded from the respective lists or schedules by the President or the Parliament.

3. This is based on Article 37 of the Constitution: “Application of the Principles contained in this Part. The provisions of this Part shall not be enforceable by any court, but the principles therein laid down are nevertheless fundamental in the governance of the country and it shall be the duty of the State to apply these principles in making laws.”