



## Human Rights Awareness in India

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### ABSTRACT

India has adopted multipronged strategy for ensuring human rights for its citizens. On the one hand, it incorporated into its Constitution as Fundamental Rights the various human rights provided for in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). On the other hand, keeping in view the ethnic diversity and highly divisive society of India, it also practices the policy of protective discrimination for certain traditionally deprived sections of society like the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), as well as girls and disabled persons. Indian education system from a human rights perspective, it 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 school curriculum. The NHRC is an embodiment of India's concern for the protection and promotion of human rights. It recommended that 10 December each year be observed as Human Rights Day in all schools across the country. Today more than 40 universities in the country have introduced certificate, diploma, under-graduate and post-graduate courses in Human Rights. India took positive steps in strengthening laws protecting women and children, and, in several important cases, prosecuting state security forces for extrajudicial killings.

### KEYWORDS

NHRC, National Policy on Education, women rights

We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. Government which paid more than lip service to human rights would certainly put the rights of human beings above the rights of capitalists to make profit. Human rights in India is an issue complicated by the country's large size. The constitution of India provides for the fundamental rights, which include freedom of religion. Clauses also provide for freedom of speech, as well as separation of executive and judiciary and freedom of movement within the country and abroad. In 1829 The practice of sati was formally abolished by governor general William Bentinck, after years of campaigning by Hindu reform movements such as the Brahmo samaj of Ram Mohan Roy against this orthodox Hindu funeral custom of self-immolation of widows after the death of their husbands. Child Marriage Restraint Act, prohibiting marriage of minors under 14 years of age is passed in 1929. In 1955 Reform of family law concerning Hindus gives more rights to Hindu women. The Shah Bano case, where the Supreme Court recognised the Muslim woman's right to maintenance upon divorce, sparks protests from Muslim clergy. To nullify the decision of the Supreme Court, the Rajiv Gandhi government enacted The Muslim Women Protection of Rights on Divorce Act 1986. Delhi High Court declares that section 377 of the India Penal Code, which outlaws a range of unspecified "unnatural" sex acts, is unconstitutional when applied to homosexual acts between private consenting individuals, effectively decriminalising homosexual relationships in India.

National human rights commission in India is mandated to "spread human rights literacy among various sections of society and promote awareness of the safeguards available for the protection of these rights through publications, the media, seminars and other available means" [Section 12(h)]. NHRC undertook a threefold strategy in pursuit of its responsibilities under Section 12(h) of its statute. **First**, it solicited the support of the leadership of all political parties represented in Parliament or the State Legislatures, to constitute Human Rights Cells at the Centre, State and District levels. **Second**, it wrote to Chief Ministers of all States/Union Territories, to sensitize and impart appropriate training in human rights matters, to all public servants in their respective areas. **Third**, it initiated a dialogue at the central level with the concerned educational authorities of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, and its associated institutions at the Centre and State levels, to pursue the matter of human rights education at various

levels of schooling. It recommended that 10 December each year be observed as Human Rights Day in all schools across the country. Brought out a Handbook entitled "Discrimination Based on Sex, Caste, Religion and Disability" for sensitizing teachers and teachers' educators. Urged all the Vice-Chancellors and Deans of Law Faculties to examine how best the subject of 'human rights' could be introduced at various stages of study at the university level. Set-up a Working Group to coordinate, oversee and monitor matters relating to human rights education at the university level. University Grants Commission (UGC) constituted a Standing Committee on Human Rights. This Committee prepared an Approach Paper to deal with several options including the need for basic courses for students of all disciplines. The Approach Paper suggested introduction of Diploma and Certificate Courses aimed at various target groups and emphasized the need for research, extension education and field action projects. The period 1995-2004 was declared as the UN Decade for Human Rights Education. The NHRC pursued with the Government to develop a National Action Plan focussing on strategies for raising mass awareness on human rights; sensitization of specific target groups law enforcement machinery like the judiciary, police, security forces and others; focus on secondary and higher education, including the establishment of a curriculum revision committee for revision of textbooks; development of training modules for teachers in English, Hindi and local languages the provision of financial assistance to universities and colleges for development of specific courses in Human Rights and establish a national resource centre that would develop human rights materials and focus on educational tools. During 2010-2011, it organized 65 training programmes in collaboration with 12 SHRCs, 27 Universities/Colleges, 3 ATIs, 3 PTIs, 18 NGOs/civil society organizations and 2 programmes at the national level. NHRC-India has communicated to UNOHCHR that it would like to focus on the identified children and teachers in schools and colleges as one possible target sector. The second target sector would be elected representatives of people and field level functionaries of government or organizations under the government. The third possible target group could be women, vulnerable groups, persons with disabilities and labourers, including migrant labourers. Global thematic areas could include climate change and environmental issues, which have a bearing on the right to food, water, clear air and life; and gender equality so as to empower women.

The 1986 educational policy of India and its program of action suggest various measures to bring equality through the system of education. A whole chapter of the 1986 National Policy on Education spells out measures to promote equality of educational opportunity by attending to the specific needs of the deprived sections of society. The NPE recommends the redesigning of the curriculum, textbooks, training and orientation of teachers, decision makers and administrators to remove gender bias from textbooks, and bring change in the status of women through education, educational development of the SC/ST population and their equalization with non-SC/ST population at all stages and levels of education. Certain core values have been identified at the national level and integrated into the entire syllabus of school education across the country. Some of these core values are equalization, democracy, secularism, equality of sexes, and inculcation of scientific temper, etc. the Indian education system relies heavily on its teachers who are central to the process of teaching and learning. These include five hundred District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), eighty-seven Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs), seventy-three Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASEs), more than 2,200 primary and secondary teacher education institutions, and approximately two hundred fifty university departments of education. The Curriculum Framework prescribed for various teacher preparation programs of the country promotes the inclusion of themes related to various human rights that the teachers are expected to integrate at the school level. For instance, the 1998 Framework of Teacher Education Curriculum developed by **National Council of Teacher Education** is anchored firmly on the view that the teachers themselves should internalize the values of justice, liberty, equality and secularism so that they can interpret them effectively to the students., it spells out certain competencies, commitments, and performance areas for the teachers to achieve that help them develop a humanistic perspective that is necessary in promoting consciousness towards human rights and their practice inside classroom. The vision of teacher education under the NCF (2005) is that the teacher education programs prepare the teachers for the role of being an "encouraging, supportive and humane facilitator in teaching-learning situations to enable learners to discover their talents, realize their physical and intellectual potentialities to the fullest, and to develop character and desirable social and human values to function as responsible citizens. As the result of the global challenges and the pressures on teacher education programs to prepare teachers to meet these challenges, a more focused attempt in recent past has been made to incorporate issues like human rights, peace education, international education.

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