



## Human Rights Education – Need of the Hour

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**Abstract:** An attempt is made in this paper to analyse the importance of human rights education in the present scenario. It brings out the experts views such as Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary General in this regards. The analysis focus and justified why the analysis is taken up with help of violations taken place even sixty years after its issue, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is still more a dream than reality. Regarding India, as illiteracy rate is more, people who do not go to educational institutions are remained unaware of their rights as born as human beings, and they should be educated at such places where they work.

**Key words:** Human rights, Universal Declaration, Violation, gender equality, fundamental freedom

### 1. Introduction

It is rightly quoted that “Without education, we cannot see beyond ourselves and our narrow surroundings to the reality of global interdependence. Without education, we cannot realize how peoples of other races and religions share the same dreams, the same hopes. Without education, we cannot recognize the universality of human aims and aspirations”. -United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Human rights advocates agree that, sixty years after its issue, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is still more a dream than reality. Violations exist in every part of the world. For example, Amnesty International's 2009 World Report and other sources show that individuals are:

- Tortured or abused in at least 81 countries
- Face unfair trials in at least 54 countries



- Restricted in their freedom of expression in at least 77 countries  
([www.humanrights.com](http://www.humanrights.com))

These are the few human rights violations. Not only is that, but women and children in particular marginalized in numerous ways. As, only a few violation cases are coming to notice there are many other cases which have to be notices. Most of the people do not come forward because of unawareness of their rights which are protected.

In such a situation Human rights education is essential to active citizenship in a democratic and pluralistic civil society. Citizens need to be able to think critically, make moral choices, take principled positions on issues, and devise democratic courses of action. Human rights are highly inspirational and also highly practical, embodying the hopes and ideals of most human beings and also empowering people to achieve them. Human rights education shares those inspirational and practical aspects. It sets standards but also produces change. ([www1.umn.edu/](http://www1.umn.edu/)).

Learning is also essential to human rights activism. Only people who understand human rights will work to secure and defend them for themselves and others. Peter Benenson, who first envisioned Amnesty International, believed that if people knew about "the forgotten prisoners," they would be moved to action and that publicity campaigns based on accurate evidence would serve as the most effective means of embarrassing repressive governments and thus protecting their citizens. This idea has proved one of the great mobilizing forces of the late twentieth century. Educating the public through reliable, objective, and timely information is a principal strategy of organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

## 2. Analysis of the paper:

According to section 2(1) (d) of the protection of the Human Rights Act, 1993, 'human rights mean "the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual guaranteed by the constitution or embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by Courts in India".



The need for human rights education has been emphasized in the universal Declaration of Human rights and other international documents and treaties. Provisions from these instruments state that human rights education consists of efforts to build a universal culture of human rights through the imparting of knowledge and skills and the moulding of attitudes. Such education should be directed towards.

- Strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- Fully developing the human personality and its sense of dignity;
- Promoting understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups;
- Enabling everyone to participate effectively in a free society;
- Furthering United Nations activities for maintaining peace.

The UN's message is: ***Know your human rights***. People who know their rights stand the best chance of realizing them. Knowledge of human rights is the best defence against their violation. Learning about one's rights builds respect for the rights of others and points the way to more tolerant and peaceful societies ([www.hurights.or.jp](http://www.hurights.or.jp))

Vast numbers of people are still unaware of their rights. While laws and institutions could in many cases defend them, people must first know where they may turn for help.

### **3. National Human Rights**

**Commission of India:** The National Human Rights Commission of India; the Indian Institute for Peace, Disarmament and Environmental Protection (IIPDEP); and many NGOs have launched a countrywide public information campaign for human rights. It aims to make everyone more conscious of human rights and fundamental freedoms and better equipped to stand up for them. At the same time, the campaign spreads knowledge of the means which exist at the international and national levels to promote and protect



human rights and fundamental freedoms.

IIPDEP and many NGOs work to make school authorities and the general public aware of civic education. They focus on developing knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to apply fundamental human rights and freedom and, consequently, the non violent resolution of conflict.

#### **4. The Right to Know Your Rights**

The mandate for human rights education is unequivocal: you have a human right to know your rights. The Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) exhorts "every individual and every organ of society" to "strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms." Article 30 of the UDHR declares that one goal of education should be "the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms." According to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a government "may not stand in the

way of people's learning about [their rights]."

**Who needs human rights education?** The simple answer is, of course, everyone. However, human rights education is especially critical for some groups such as -

**5. Especially vulnerable populations:** Human rights education must not be limited to formal schooling. Many people never attend school. Many live far from administrative centres. Yet they, as well as refugees, minorities, migrant workers, indigenous peoples, the disabled, and the poor, are often among the most powerless and vulnerable to abuse. Such people have no less right to know their rights and far greater need.

Only by working in collaboration with these vulnerable groups can human rights educators develop programs that accommodate their needs and situations. The techniques of popular education—music, street theatre, comic books, alternative media, and itinerant storytellers—can help to connect human rights to people's lived experience.



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.

Human rights education constitutes an essential contribution to the long-term prevention of human rights abuses and represents an important investment in the endeavour to achieve a just society in which all human rights of all persons are valued and respected.

A number of models are developed to impart the 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.

These being the core concepts of human rights education, the UN have framed guidelines to propagate human rights through various methods and means both in the International and the National levels.

## **6. Human Rights Education in India**

Education is a powerful means of influencing people and changing their attitudes. Unfortunately, the Indian education system has only recently begun to promote human rights.

Human rights studies in India became more important as increasing violations of human rights, cases of custodial violence, mass detentions without trial, bonded and child



labour, and environmental degradation and the like were brought to the public's attention by NGOs, the media, and public interest litigators.

The work of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) became more high-profile contributing to this new ethos. The National Human Rights Commission of India; the Indian Institute for Peace, Disarmament and Environmental Protection (IIPDEP); and many NGOs have launched a countrywide public information campaign for human rights. It aims to make everyone more conscious of human rights and fundamental freedoms and better equipped to stand up for them. At the same time, the campaign spreads knowledge of the means which exist at the international and national levels to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms. Human rights educators believe that a grassroots and indigenous orientation and a focus on local human rights problems are more important than projecting international human rights conventions and norms.

## 7. Conclusion

As many people do not know about their rights as human beings, they are in need of education and awareness of their rights and how they are abusing, how they can be protected and the authority to be approached when such rights are violated. In India there are many NGO's working for promotion of human rights. Human rights are introduced as an optional subject for many academic courses. As illiteracy rate is more in India, people who do not go to educational institutions are remained unaware of their rights as born as human beings. Such people should be educated at such places where they work.

- For prisoners, a human rights camp should be conducted in prisons giving awareness of human rights.
- For women, there are Self Help Groups (SHG) like DWCRA (Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas), APWCFC (Andhra Pradesh Women's Cooperative Finance Corporation Ltd), SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) Velugu, Integrated Child development scheme (ICDS) etc. where large number of women



- gathers for some specific purpose and such place should be made as a platform at which the education of human rights can be given.
- Human rights education can be promoted through multi media like short films, news reels, television ads, through advertisement in daily news papers.

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