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ALAKH DRISHTI

(भाषा, दर्शन, साहित्य, संस्कृति एवं मानविकी की संवाहिका त्रैमासिक शोध पत्रिका)

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Promotion of Human Rights in Higher Education

Prof. Anil Dhar

Human Rights Education is acquiring greater importance in the changing national and global scenario in the wake of globalization. While it is opening up new possibilities for realization of creative human potential, there are very disturbing trends in the forms of violence including terrorism within and across the world. The Governments are finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the complexity and magnitude of the problems. This new context may give rise to arbitrary exercise of power by organs of the State resulting in legitimacy crisis. The society should have enough of democratic potential where people, particularly the youth, would play a positive role in facing the new challenges. This is possible only when the people, the younger people in particular, in all walks of life are sensitized and humanized so that they will be a part of the solution and not of the problem. HRE can create the necessary moral, intellectual, and democratic resources for this purpose. The ultimate overall vision of building a humane, participatory and democratic society has to be promoted and sustained. There is a serious attempt to structure the syllabi, introduction of foundation courses and fresh initiatives in the form of new courses in human right. In Education the decade of nineties there was considerable fillip given to this initiative. As part of this endeavour a number of universities and colleges came forward to participate in this programme. There was a slight shift in the emphasis during late nineties when values and duties were added as important components of Human Rights Education (HRE).

HRE has three dimensions: moral, legal and contextual. The ethical terrain of the humankind lies in its sensitivities and sensibilities which are rooted in the moral potential which reminds the people that the world can be a better place than what it is at a given point of time, The standard-setting exercise that international agencies like the UN took up from 1948

However, the inter-linkages between human rights and human development seem to be stronger than disconnects. One of the most significant examples includes the prevalence of causal relationship between rights of participation and expression on the one hand, and freedom from discrimination and poverty on the other. Another illustration is that the existence of patriarchy results in lower access to resources, greater poverty among female-headed households, gender-based work and wage differentials, lower literacy, lack of nutrition and health. So also, that those displaced by 'development' projects are the most vulnerable and marginalized sections of society who are additionally the most 'voiceless'.

Some issues of Human Rights Education in University Curricula

Human rights education should be imparted keeping in mind rainbow politics and multi-cultural ethos. Unlearning castes, racism and religious and ethnic chauvinism can be done only by supplementing lecture method of teaching with direct exposure to realities of field situations. Liberating aspects of each and every political philosophy and theology have place in the human rights discourse. Curriculum development of human rights courses a need indigenous base. Valuable literature from regional languages should be part of the syllabi. There is a need for change in the approach of the early childhood education; authoritarian style of teaching breeds a narrow and sectarian outlook towards life situations. Curriculum Should make conscious effort to inculcate healthy curiosity towards the unknown, instead of fear of the unknown. Textbooks of human rights courses should include contributions of writers from all ideological backgrounds. Knowledge and sensitivity gap between the English-speaking and non-English speaking teachers and students can be bridged only by multilingual teaching and learning. Learning a new language it self is an

act of democratization of one's mind. There is a need to go beyond a number game and treat each and every human being as an individual in his or her right.

The developmental experience of most countries reveals that human development cannot be achieved unless human rights are guaranteed not merely in terms but in reality. Political and civil rights empower people to not only to claim their economic and extra-economic rights such as employment, housing, education, etc, but also ensure more equitable distribution of resources, improved implementation of macroeconomic policies particularly of poverty alleviation programmes, greater accountability, more transparency, and a higher level of participation in the developmental process. Integration of the Human Rights Approach into the Human Development Approach thus has the potential to strengthen the fulfillment of human needs and capabilities, as well as fundamental .

Global Initiative for Human Rights Education

The rise of militarism, the challenges of global economic and political dominance and the increase in ethnic and religious conflicts have resulted in human rights violations across the world. The UN General Assembly declaration of the decade for human rights education is a call for upholding the dignity and equality of every person. Human rights education builds on solidarities and social networking among participants in the global movement for the promotion and protection of human rights. It focuses on respect for human dignity and the principles of democracy. The aim is to foster a climate of justice and peace through an understanding of human rights and related issues.

All governments have a duty under international human rights law to teach regularly about human rights and provide a learning environment where human rights are respected and acknowledged. Amnesty International is