

Human Rights Education: Key Role of N.G.O. and Media

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INTRODUCTION

Human rights are those rights which belong to an individual as a consequence of being a human. For a layman, the concept of human rights covers all possible rights or needs which are essential for proper growth of all human beings. But unfortunately in spite of availability of human rights and strict provisions for violators of human rights, number of people even after violation of their human rights not in a position to save themselves from these violations owing to ignorance about their rights. Due to their ignorance their rights violated time and again only because of lack of awareness and education of human rights. Issue of concern is that unless and until proper education relating to the human rights is not there these rights will be violated continuously and the victims remain only the mere spectators of these violations. It is the dire need of time that human rights education and awareness should be given to the individuals to protect them from unwanted problems.

The emphasis on Human Rights Education began in 1995 with the beginning of the UN Decade for Human Rights Education, though previously addressed in 1953 with the UNESCO Associated Schools Program, which served as an “initial attempt to teach human rights in formal school settings”. The first formal request for the need to educate students about human rights came about in UNESCO’s 1974 article Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Cooperation and Peace, and Education Relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Human Rights Education became an official central concern internationally after the World Conference on Human Rights in 1993. This conference brought the issue of educating formally to the top of many countries’ priority lists and was brought to the attention of the United Nations. It was two years later that the United Nations approved the Decade for Human Rights Education, which reformed the aims of application once again. Apart from these mechanisms the two most important institutes which can play a vital role in imparting education and awareness of human rights are N.G.O. and media. These two by their active involvement make human rights a reality in true sense by connecting people through their machinery and by enlightening them about their human rights.

GENERAL

A non-governmental organisation (NGO) is a non profit group or association that acts outside of institutionalized political structures and pursues matters of interest to its members by lobbying, persuasion, or direct action. Non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, were first called such by the newly formed United Nations in 1945. While NGOs have no fixed or formal definition, they are generally defined as non profit entities independent of governmental influence (although they may receive government funding). The number of NGOs operating in the United States is estimated at 1.5 million. Russia has 277,000 NGOs. India is estimated to have had around 3.3 million NGOs in 2009, just over one NGO per 400 Indians, and many times the number of primary schools and primary health centres in India.

ROLE OF N.G.O.

1. By providing information and advice to legislatures and legislators:

N.G.O. can play an important role in promoting and enforcing economic, social and cultural rights. These organisations can promote human rights by sharing information and opinion with members legislatures. N.G.O. can support and cooperate with individual politicians who share concern for human rights. N.G.O. can offer advice to legislative committees that monitor human rights and social issues. N.G.O. can teach the public about economic, social and cultural rights and about related duties and obligations.

2. By asking courts, tribunals and national human rights commissions to help, prevent and remedy violations of human rights:

When economic, social and cultural rights are guaranteed in a state, constitution or in other law, they can be claimed in court. In some countries, there is no specific mention of these rights in the legislation that establishes a national human

rights commission or ombudsman office. N.G.O can encourage the staff and managers of such agencies to interpret and apply their roles in such a way that rights of the individuals can be properly protected.

3. By working with members of media and educating the people:

When a case is being argued in front of judges or a commission N.G.O can inform the media about the human rights problems involved and about the local laws and international treaties, that guarantees these rights. N.G.O can encourage and assist knowledgeable journalists to be present when an important case has to be decided by the court, which can draw attention of the masses so that awareness of human rights can be increased. To stop and prevent human rights violations, it is important to provide education and information at the community level and this can be possible through working with media.

4. Education of the legal profession:

When economic, social and cultural rights are part of the law of a nation, politicians and judges still need to be educated concerning the importance of honouring these human rights. Many lawyers and judges think that right to good health care and education for everyone are not rights at all, but desirable goals that depend on the generosity of the government. N.G.O can try to ensure that training of lawyers and judges includes education about covenant rights.

ROLE OF MEDIA

Around the world, the media is the most effective avenue for spreading human rights awareness and acceptance. While spreading messages through schools and community forums can be effective at reaching dozens or even hundreds of people at the time, they can't match the reach and scope of the media. For instance, one radio station in the Congo can reach hundreds of thousands of people simultaneously with information about women's rights. A website featuring photographs of rights abuses in North American Aboriginal communities may get millions of hits a day. Media playing a vital role with regard to addressing human rights issues. "It helps us know what is happening in a remote corner of a village if there is discrimination or violation of human rights. Globalisation and the advent of information technology and its penetration on a large scale have helped us receive more information.

Media creates opinion of public at large, and we are experiencing and learning the difficulties of men and the community through the media. It helps us work towards abolishing those difficulties." Karl Marx started his career as a journalist and Mahatma Gandhi also published journals to spread ideas of non-violence and ahimsa Campaigning is always the first step to a noble cause and aims at building awareness among the masses. In a great country like ours, the largest democracy of the world, campaign is the authentic way to social change. The mass media can be an instrument for educators, educational institutions and Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations for the emancipation of Human Rights.

Information systems are increasingly becoming important in the dissemination of knowledge. Electronic media like Radio and TV have impact on young people, and, as such has the ability to shape values, attitudes and perceptions of issues pertaining to human rights. For example, in 1994, UNICEF made an effective use of media to advocate the human rights of the victims of war and natural calamities at global level. It organised Press Conferences and media briefs, issued press releases, kept National Committees informed of the latest developments, arranged media interviews and provided strong local information. UNICEF efforts in mass communications and social mobilisation during 1994 have led to a popular demand of raising the age limit from 15 to 18 years for military recruitment. Effective use of the media has also shown encouraging results in tackling issues related to women and child health, in general and HIV/AIDS prevention in particular. In India, between 5% and 30% of the 340 million children under the age of sixteen are estimated to fall under the definition of child labour. Burning issues like dowry deaths, where so many women have been sacrificed on the altar of greed of their in-laws and some evil practices like human sacrifice, Sati Pratha with special reference to Roop Kanwar Case; dilemma of Muslim Personal Law with special reference to Shah Bano Case have been highlighted so strongly by the media that government has been forced to take corrective measures.

CONCLUSION

It is the irony of the country that in spite of number of provisions in universal declaration of human rights and provisions in our constitution people are still suffering from human rights violation only because of their ignorance. But it is said that ignorance of law is no excuse so in the case of human rights. Unless and until people will remain unaware and ignorant no one can save them from torture and sufferings in various facets of their life. So, it is the high time to come forward and know about their rights and remedies in case of violation. N.G.O and media two very influential organisations are there to help and sort out various problems with their active involvement by providing human rights education and make the masses aware and vigilant about their basic rights without which individuals could not survive.

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