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## HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION AMONG WOMEN TEACHERS IN INDIA: AWARENESS, CHALLENGES, AND WELFARE IMPLICATIONS

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### ABSTRACT

Education plays a significant role in assimilating and disseminating knowledge, and it has become a powerful weapon in educating the human rights across the globe. Awareness among women teachers to access education plays a huge role in society. The Indian education system depends heavily on the role of the teachers in promoting the social inclusivity of the education for marginalized and depressed children in the society. The Indian education system relies heavily on its teachers who are central to the process of teaching and learning. More particularly, women teachers play an important role in educating the human rights to the student community, and making them to live more humane. Childhood has the paramount reciprocity, and they have the ability to become a productive adult, and a socially responsible citizen. Teachers' plays a crucial role in cultivating the social behaviour of the students in the schools, and their behaviour is largely influenced the social environment. In this context, Human Rights Education appears to be an effective means to impart human values in their attitudes and social behaviours. The ultimate agenda of establishing social solidarity, and social order can only be accomplished when the Teachers and students imbibe the spirit of Human Rights education. This article attempts to highlight the issues and challenges related to the awareness levels among the women teachers in Indian context. This article also argues for development of awareness among school teachers about Human rights in order to develop the moral, physical, social, economic and spiritual domains in the educational system.

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## INTRODUCTION

Human rights could be generally defined as those rights which are inherent in our nature and without which we cannot live as human beings. Human rights and fundamental freedoms allow us to fully develop and use our human qualities, our intelligence, our talents and our conscience and to satisfy our spiritual and other needs. They are based on mankind's increasing demand for a life in which the inherent dignity and worth of each human being will receive respect and protection (Adithi Thorat, 2011). Oxford Word Power Dictionary (1993) defines human rights as "the basic freedom that all people should have". Human rights possessed by human beings in their natural capacity as humans, and not because of any particular system of law in which they may happen to live. Human rights are generally understood as those rights which every human being is entitled to enjoy by and to have protected. In other words, these are the rights which every human being is entitled to. Some human rights are essentials of justice, but human rights are not synonym for justice. Human rights include universal suffrage to a democratic society but human rights are not the equivalent of democracy.

**Human Rights in Modern India:** Modern India is based on the ideals of democracy and socialism laid by the constitution of India. Human Rights as enumerated in the constitution as Fundamental Rights such as Equality before law, Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, Equal opportunity in matters of public employment, Abolition of untouchability, Abolition of titles, Protection in respect of conviction for offences, Protection of life and personal liberty, Prohibition of traffic in human beings and forced labour, Prohibition of employment of children in factories, Freedom to manage religious affairs, and Protection of interest of minorities. The philosophy of human rights in the modern sense took shape during the course of British rule as the fundamental freedoms were denied during this era. In fact, it was for the civil, political, economic, cultural and social rights of people of India the struggle for freedom started. The Constitution of India Bill-1895, The Commonwealth of India Bill, the Government of India Act 1935, the Principles of Panchsheel all laid down the strong foundations for human rights in the free India. Finally, the promulgation of the constitution of Independent India in 1950 is a watershed in the history of India. The Preamble, Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy together provide the basic Human Rights for the people of India.

**Nature and Universality of Human Rights:** Human rights are the moral claims which are inalienable and inherent in all human individuals by virtue of their humanity alone. These are necessary to ensure the dignity of every person so that he is fully able to develop and use his abilities and talents irrespective of their race, religion, nationality, language, sex or any other factor. The existence of these rights ensures the respect of the right of each other (Aggarwal, 1983). This means that the rights that apply to you also apply to others. They enable us to respect each other and to live with each other. The denial of human rights and fundamental freedoms is not only an individual and personal tragedy but also creates conditions of social and political unrest which results in violence and conflict within and between societies and nations. Human Rights are universal in the sense that these rights are so important that international community has deemed that everyone has them regardless of their social, political and economic situations. Human Rights are not a monopoly of any privileged class of people. Human Rights are the claims of the individuals for such conditions which are essential for the proper realization of the innate characteristics which nature has bestowed him/her as a human being and that they are necessary to ensure the dignity of every person as a human being irrespective of one's race, religion, nationality, language, sex or any other factor (Naseema, 2006).

### SIGNIFICANCE AND OBJECTIVES OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Human Rights Education (HRE) can be defined as education, training and information aimed at building a universal culture of human rights through the sharing of knowledge, imparting of skills and moulding of attitudes directed to strengthen human rights and fundamental freedoms; towards development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity; towards promotion and understanding of tolerance, gender, equality and friendship among all nations, indigenous people and social, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups; to enable of all persons to participate effectively in a free and democratic society governed by the rule of law; towards building and maintenance of peace; towards promotion of people centered sustainable development and social justice (United Nations, 2006). Human rights education aims at teaching skills, offering knowledge and shaping attitudes that advance a universal culture of human rights. While human rights education is a global issue, it is effective primarily at the national and local levels. It is through human rights education that the standards established in international human rights law can take shape in the everyday life of the individuals and the local culture of nations. The 1993 Vienna Conference: A landmark in human rights education confirmed that human rights education, training and public information were essential for fastening mutual understanding tolerance and peace among communities. In this sense human rights education significantly contributes to promoting equality and sustainable development, preventing conflict and human rights violations and enhancing participation in democratic process. It has a vision of developing societies in which all human rights of all are valued and respected.

### Legal and Institutional Framework Supporting HRE in India:

Indian state has an obligation as laid down in Article 51 of the constitution. India is a signatory to Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) and has ratified Civil and Political Rights Convention and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Convention etc. Thus, Human Rights Education has become inescapable legal obligation in Indian democracy. In 1980 the University Grants Commission (UGC) constituted a committee under the Chairmanship of Justice S.M. Sikri to consider ways and means of promoting Human Rights education in India. The committee in its report entitled 'Human Rights Education at all levels' suggested different approaches at different levels of Education. The committee also felt that even graduate students in science, commerce, medicine and engineering should be exposed to certain prospective of human rights. National Policy on Education (1986) also laid stress on some of the objectives, which are an important part for the programme of Human Rights Education.

Commenting on the Human Rights Education courses Justice Rao (2007) remarked that the present generation of teaching professionals or those who are likely to join the teaching profession are hardly exposed to Human Rights Education philosophy or techniques. Therefore, the present Human Rights Education course is mainly for teaching professionals intended to help create the required knowledge base and provide an opportunity to have right mental attitude in the teaching professionals. He further states that the content of Human Rights in the existing subjects of social science have not been appropriately taught and most of those who are involved in teaching Human Rights may not have gone through the formal training of Human Rights because of the absence of an appropriate module in the teachers training. The commission attempted to formulate a syllabus on the issue leading to the development of teachers training modules on Human Rights Education. In this regard the commission constituted a Task Force consisting of eminent academicians' experts in school education, legal experts to look at the Human Rights education scenario at a school level across the country and to make Human Rights education at school level not only book oriented but to provide them a blend of theoretical and practical knowledge. The commission with this exercise has come up with the syllabus of Human Rights leading to the formulation of teachers training module, looking into account the national and international developments.

### NEED AND AWARENESS OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Pathak (2007) confirmed that there is a great need for promoting Human Rights Awareness at the present juncture. This is not only to equip the victims of Human Rights violations to seek effective redress but also to make the redress mechanisms themselves efficient and Human Rights friendly. Thus, marshalling of human rights knowledge into a single discipline of study will, it is hoped, open the path of activism for the sake of greater public good (Alam, 2000). On account of diversity of Human Rights issues, the task of their analysis, understanding and education is beset with multiple problems, the foremost task being locating human rights education to single disciplinary bounds. Because Human Rights cut across traditional disciplines usually taught hitherto in colleges and Universities, it makes it impossible to keep Human Rights Education cabined within traditional boundaries (Akiri, 2013). The nature and magnitude of the areas of study are such as it may become necessary to sponsor and promote independent departments of Human Rights Education over a period of time. Sharma (2007) stated that one of the key issues which emerged in the analysis is that the Human Rights Education programme could not make a dent in the educational system largely owing to the programme being not marketable and, as such, hardly there is any taker of the students' scholars who pursue Human Rights Education. Besides, this the Human Rights Education has been seen in a more compartmentalized manner. As a result, this programme has become more of law discipline centric rather than society oriented which is the focus of the humanities and social science disciplines. Further by and large, if we look at the Human Rights Education from generic point of view, this subject needs to be taught at all levels of education, irrespective of discipline of study. In order to facilitate Human Rights Awareness and to nurture Human Right values in the young minds, it is essential that the Human Rights Education to be a part and parcel of the education programme right from primary to higher education.

**Education as a tool for Promoting HRA:** In the growing world of conflicts and tensions, the importance of Human Rights Education increases all the more. It encourages using human rights as a frame of reference in our relationship with others. It encourages inquiry, forming arguments, deciding, cooperating, evaluating, sharing and living according to values. Human Rights education encourages us to critically examine our own attitudes and behaviors and ultimately, to transform them in order to advance respect for the rights of all. Human Rights Education helps in reducing Human Rights violation and helps in building free, just and peaceful societies. It also contributes long term prevention of Human Rights abuses and an important investment towards a democratic society. Children's

attitudes, ideas and characters are formed at a young age and these are always influenced by their environment. Human Rights Education in schools is an effective means to assist children to incorporate human rights values into their attitudes and behaviors. The need of promoting and protecting all human rights is important in order to secure full and universal enjoyment of these rights and it cannot be fulfilled without mass awareness and sensitivity to human rights issues. The grand agenda of peace and prosperity is possible only with people understanding and imbibing the human rights values. This robust participation can be achieved only with human rights education. Naseema (2006) specified the need of Human Rights education. It is human rights education which may raise awareness about the human rights, protects from any sort of discrimination, unfair treatments and provide democratic structure of values as well as freedom to the individuals. It contributes towards the development of global and wide perspectives, insights into idea of international society and community. It helps to make all human beings, human rights literate. It ensures essential respect for human rights in a democratic and multicultural society where tolerance and patience are inevitable for all. It protects from infringement of rights of racial, ethnic and religious groups in any country or area through inculcation of global awareness and mutual understanding among the citizens. It ensures the probability of acceptance of global citizenship in all regions of the world to protect humanity-based culture and democratic responsibilities. It is possible to remove the fear of war in future through eradication of human rights abuses, social injustice, human selfishness and self-orientees. Narayan (2007) while focusing on the need of human rights education, he argued that there is a necessity to include the curriculum of human rights in the mainstream education, and it should be implemented through the local languages for effective implementation. Participatory learning methods, interactive techniques should be used in which students talk about their own experience to enrich the process and contribute to the promotion of universal human rights standard by utilizing the culture wealth of the region.

#### **ROLE OF EDUCATION IN HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENT**

Education is an important index of human development. It plays a great role in every field of life. It is a constructive process, which drags the person out of darkness, poverty and misery and leads him on the polls of enlightenment, prosperity and happiness by developing his individuality in all its aspects. That is possible when education must form an essential foundation for the realization and development of Human rights. Human rights education increases awareness about the basic concepts of human rights, including equality, discrimination, slavery and women exploitation. It focuses on instances of progress in the protection of Human rights in order to avoid the feeling of discouragement when confronted with the violations of human rights. One of the most important aims of education is to make the individual aware of his manual skills and intellectual abilities, which he may use for the good of his community. Another important purpose of education is to give people greater openness, the courage to question and perseverance in searching for solution is to equip one with basic minimum levels of knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to start one's life journey. The seeds of human rights must be sown through human rights education when the students' mind is young and most receptive. Human values need to develop from the young age and education is an indispensable asset with mankind in its attempt to inculcate the ideals of peace, freedom and social justice. Historically education is an instrument of development and factor for social change. According to Devi (2007) the purpose of all education is to sensitize, to humanize and to take humanity to higher levels of knowledge, awareness, freedom, and social responsibility. Thus, Human Rights Education is about acquiring not only knowledge but also skills and the ability to apply them, it is about developing values, attitudes and behaviour that uphold Human Rights but also about taking actions to defend and promote them. It involves learning about Human Rights through the practice of Human rights. Education is a fundamental human right and is essential for the exercise of all other human rights.

It promotes individual freedom and empowerment. If the future teachers are aware of human rights and develop a positive attitude towards these rights only then they will be able to implement the right to education in an effective and democratic manner.

#### **ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION**

Various studies have been attempted to study about the importance of human rights education among female teachers in Indian context. Dhand (2000) made an attempt to remove the various myths woven around the human rights and to understand human rights by locating them within a large social matrix. He not only provided the information regarding the human rights but also revealed the importance of its knowledge to common man to remain happy and to lead a peaceful life among women. (Pandey, 2005) threw light upon the institutional framework of the Indian constitution. He gave legal interpretation of the rights guaranteed in the fundamental rights. He presented the legal judicial pronouncement regarding the fundamental rights and also presented the various categories of human rights and duties related with them. (Flowers, 1998) discussed the conditions under which the international human rights norms internalized into domestic policies of the state. (Symonides, 2008) maintained the view that Human Rights are different things for different people at different point of time. The physical security and respect for human dignity are common expectations of everybody in all situations. The author argued that human rights education and its awareness play a huge difference for women to survive and shine in their professional and private lives (Anand, 2005). India's policy formulations should be drafted and prepared in the light of national necessity to maintain the rule of law and to protect human rights which are the foremost function of every state on human rights. (Chatrath, 1998) objectively analysed various constitutional and legal rights available to the people of India taking into consideration the provisions of Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and other international treaties on Human Rights. He also evaluated the role of Judiciary for implementation of Human Rights in India. Even though we all have rights, still there are so many problems in our country like child labour, bonded labour, rapes, molestations, etc. He suggested that in order to control all these problems it is necessary to provide education among them as well as legal system should be sensitized. More particularly, children and women must be sensitized. (Chelladurai, 2003) suggested that for promotion and protection of human rights, a free mass media can greatly facilitate the building of a culture of human rights, encouraging tolerant voices, national, ethnic, religious and linguistic groups exposing rights violations wherever they occur. (Mohanty, 2000) rightly pointed out that Human Rights have received recognition through universal instrument and national constitutions. The next important thing that he discussed was about the importance of Human Rights as no country is considered civilized unless it provides Human Rights. But still the condition of Human Rights in our country is worse. The working of Human Rights in actual practice in many countries including India. There is a need to improve the existing condition and one among them is to raise awareness among the masses (Ali, 2009; Anand, 2005).

Alam (2000) discussed in detail about many problems regarding human rights. He depicted insight into the condition of human rights in North East India. He unfolded the controversies gathering around human rights and its misuse by the west as a diplomatic tool for establishment of their hegemony over the third world. Rahman (2000) did a lucid study of situation of human rights implementation in India especially of women. In his view lack of understanding of human rights is the root cause of all the problems. Another cause is the lukewarm responses from the government regarding the implementation of human rights which leads towards the destruction of society. Shah and Gupta (2001) revealed the fact that human rights are equal for all and they are must for achieving peace and sustainable development in our world. (Narayana and Kavya, 2016) conducted a study on international human rights standard in high school textbooks. It further added that for better understanding of human rights, students must not only learn about international treaties but

also examine various domestic and international challenges in the light of international protection of human rights. Gupta and Singh (2004) discussed about the importance of human rights in our day-to-day life and the fact that since the formation of United States the concept of civil liberties has been both institutionalized and universalized but with the expansion of scope of human rights the violation of human rights is also increasing. (Pavan, 2009) discussed about the various issues concerning human rights. He tried to depict the inter relationship between social work practice and human rights. (Singh, 2014) depicted the importance of Human Rights knowledge as this is the need of era. In the beginning part the historical background of Human Rights from Vedic Period till modern Period is given, and then the movements regarding Human Rights in India are given. He provided the information about the various laws related to inhuman treatment and the list of legal procedures to get the benefits of these laws. Rao (2005) stated that a sustainable comprehensive and effective strategy for infusing human rights education into education system may include various course of action, which included the incorporation of human rights education in national legislation regulating education in schools and to provide a school culture that values human rights. (Venkatanarayana, 2004) presented numerous issues concerning the protection and promotion of Human Rights related diversely to individual groups, society, law and constitution providing deep insight into the concept of social justice affecting schedule castes and other weaker sections and other minorities. He not only discussed about the problems but also about the ideal solutions of the problems and also the ways to tackle them successfully. (Symonides, 2008) enabled the reader to get a clear view of what human rights are and how they are necessary for the development of civilization and mankind but these are still moulded and ignored to meet the vested interests of administrators. (Sharma, 2001) discussed that Rights have besieged political theory for too long. He said that constitutional law has taken a turn to it rejecting the core rights of the private spheres, property, religion and privacy; we should turn our attention away from individuals and group focusing on the polity's rationale for acting. (Mirza, 2004) depicted the relationship between Human Rights and Justice keeping in view the progress of social justice. He depicted that over the years we came across slow and steady transformation of moral clause into positive rights. All the problems existing in the society like violence, inequality and various forms of intolerance is all because of lack of awareness. The transformation is required involving structural changes, education development, growth in awareness motivation and attitude of weaker section of society. Archana (2011) in a research paper presented that the question of human rights has become a matter of serious consideration for International Politics. Bajaj (2011) revealed that a variety of factors contribute to the successful implementation of Human Rights programmes in government school. The ideology, location and other variables offer a means of schematizing varying approaches to human rights development.

Danish Institute for Human Rights (2014) revealed that human rights education must be strengthened significantly to prepare students to be able to participate, demonstrate and understand their rights and duties in a free and democratic society throughout the schooling period. The aim for human rights education is to provide education on a professional and informed basis. Palai (1998) presented the importance of Human Rights and it is the duty of government to protect and promote Human Rights, for this government has established various institutions and National Human Rights Commission is one of them. Anand (2005) described the importance of Human Rights Education and also the importance of inculcating a culture of Human Rights in the impressionable minds of children. Sen (1998) presented a number of Human Rights problems of developing country. As the developing countries are still facing many problems like violation of Human Rights by police, bad condition of prisoners, exploitation of women and children etc. It also presents the clear picture of disempowered and disadvantaged victims of Human Rights. Then he emphasized upon Human Rights Education which should be made compulsory at all the levels and the only solution to all the problems.

## IMPACT OF WOMEN TEACHERS IN HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Chelladurai (2003) remarked that Human Rights Education is not treated as a separate area of the curriculum in India but is integrated into various subjects at different stages of school education. It helps to strengthen the women empowerment in India. Saxsena (1999) discussed in detail about Human Rights issues in our country and also helped in developing better understanding, advocacy and policy making in regard to Human Rights problems confronting us. It covers various facets of Human Rights including Human Rights Education. He also discussed about the role of institutions of Human Rights related to the role of Human Rights. He discussed about the importance of Human Rights Education to students. His work helped to find out the present condition of Human Right Education in India. Chakraborty (2000) presented the ideas and reflections that may help in accelerating the process of generating a Human Rights culture. His work was quite helpful in understanding Human Rights in detail as it consisted of all the dimensions of Human Rights as Human Rights Education its problem, contributions of NHRC, promotion of Human Rights Education for Human Rights etc. It revealed the real importance of Human Rights Education and insisted upon to inculcate this subject in curriculum as Human Rights are ideals in which liberal democracy flourish and at the same time helpful in improving the quality of life in society. National Human Rights Commission (NHRC 2007) report regarding the importance of Human Rights Education especially for university students is also presented. According to it, this education helps in inculcating and imbibing human rights values and setting up a culture of respect towards human rights in society. The education at higher level should be more practical and helpful in setting Human Rights culture. Katoch (2001) in her research found that male secondary teacher trainees possess more awareness regarding human rights education than their counterparts. Moreover, urban trainees are more aware than the rural ones and the students of science stream are more aware than the arts stream trainees.

## IMPACT OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION ON STUDENTS AND SOCIETY

Srilatha, G. (2016) in her s study concluded that there is clear evidence that the students who went through Human Rights Education changed something in them. Even though these students still have a lot to learn more things they can do, they have been doing many things for their own and others right to make the world a better place. Haragopal (2011) stated that there are ample evidences that the students of Law and Political Sciences study the rights as a part of their academic courses but they hardly possess any Human Rights consciousness. Human Rights Education is peculiar in education with a special purpose. It is also prospective rather than retrospective. It seeks to bring about social change. Human Rights are evolving in a world which has come to realize that common standards are necessary, if we are to live together with a reasonable degree of peace and to ensure justice and fairness for these without power, especially those subject to persecution. Education leads to individual freedom and empowerment which yields significant societal development gains and makes an individual self-reliant. It is seen as the foundation of society, enabling economic wealth, social prosperity and political stability. Education is, therefore, increasingly being viewed as a Fundamental Right across the globe and essential for the exercise of all human Rights. Thus, the awareness about human rights education, and providing accessibility to it plays a huge role in empowering the women (Pandey, 2005; Pavan Agarwarl, 2009; Rao, 2000).

## CONCLUSION

Education plays a significant role in assimilating and disseminating knowledge, and it has become a powerful weapon in educating the human rights across the globe. The Indian education system depends heavily on the role of the women teachers in promoting the social

inclusivity of the education for marginalized and depressed children in the society. The Indian education system relies heavily on its women teachers who are central to the process of teaching and learning. The country has more than five million women teachers working of different levels of school education and an equally huge network of women teacher education institutions to meet the needs of women teacher training for the country. The curriculum framework prescribed for various women teacher preparation programmes of the country promotes the inclusion of themes related to various human rights that the women teachers are expected to integrate at the school level. Women teachers play an important role in educating the human rights to the student community, and making them to live more humane. Childhood has the paramount reciprocity, and they have the ability to become a productive adult, and a socially responsible citizen. Women teachers' play a crucial role in cultivating the social behaviour of the students in the schools, and their behaviour is largely influenced the social environment. In this context, Human Rights Education appears to be an effective means to impart human values in their attitudes and social behaviours. The ultimate agenda of establishing social solidarity, and social order can only be accomplished when the Women teachers and students imbibe the spirit of Human Rights education.

The awareness among school women teachers about Human rights is quite essential for the development of moral, physical, social, economic and spiritual domains of the student community. They provide desirable conditions for the development of material conditions among the deprived communities. Human Rights education is necessary for imparting capability skills towards participating effectively in the development process. It promotes the sustainable development and social justice for the disadvantaged groups. It provides a political platform for the marginalized communities in the society to recognize their constitutional rights, and to fight for their rights and rightful share in the fruits of the development process. The basic premise of the Human Rights education is to develop an understanding about cultural tolerance and mutual respect between different religious groups, and caste communities. This is in a way brings social solidarity and maintains peace and social order in the society. Thus, it provides a protective shield from exploitation and unfair discrimination. Human Rights education has a phenomenal role in developing societies in which human rights are valued and respected. There is a need to cultivate and strengthen Human rights awareness about the education among school women teachers is very much needed to not only establish a democratic ambience in the schools but also their awareness plays a crucial role in addressing the needs of education for the students belonging to the marginalized castes and communities in India.

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