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**Dr. Nenavath Balu Naik**  
Department of Political  
Science, Osmania University,  
Telangana, India

## Human rights education in India: A study

**Dr. Nenavath Balu Naik**

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### Abstract

Education has a crucial role in acquiring and spreading knowledge, and it has emerged as a potent tool in promoting human rights worldwide. The Indian education system relies significantly on the teachers' role in fostering social inclusion in education for underprivileged children in society. The Indian education system is strongly dependent on its instructors, who play a major role in the process of teaching and learning. Teachers have a crucial role in imparting knowledge about human rights to students and encouraging them to lead more compassionate lives. Childhood possesses a crucial reciprocity, enabling individuals to develop into productive adults and socially responsible citizens. Teachers have a pivotal role in fostering the social behaviour of students in schools, and their behaviour is greatly influenced by the social environment. Human Rights Education, in this particular context, seems to serve as a potent method for instilling human ideals into individuals' attitudes and social conduct. The ultimate objective of fostering social cohesion and maintaining societal structure can only be achieved when both teachers and students embrace the principles of Human Rights education. This article aims to address the concerns and challenges surrounding the creation and implementation of the human rights education curriculum in the Indian setting. This article advocates for the cultivation of consciousness among school teachers about Human rights, to enhance the moral, physical, social, economic, and spiritual aspects of both students and the teachers' community in India.

**Keywords:** Marginalization, human rights education, students and teachers' community, human ideals, socio-political structure etc.

### Introduction

Human rights can be broadly described as the essential rights that are inherent to our nature and are necessary for us to live as human beings. Human rights and fundamental freedoms enable us to fully cultivate and utilize our inherent human attributes, our intellect, our abilities, and our moral compass, while also fulfilling our spiritual and other necessities. These principles are founded on the growing need of humanity for a life that upholds and safeguards the inherent dignity and value of every individual. The Oxford Word Power Dictionary (1993) provides the following definition of human rights: "the fundamental liberties that every individual should possess." Human rights are inherent to individuals by their humanity, rather than being dependent on any specific legal framework in which they reside. Human rights are commonly defined as the rights that every individual is inherently entitled to possess and have safeguarded. Put simply, these are the entitlements that every individual is granted. While certain human rights are fundamental aspects of justice, it is important to note that human rights and justice are not interchangeable terms. Human rights encompass the fundamental entitlement to participate in a democratic society through universal suffrage. However, it is important to note that human rights should not be conflated with the concept of democracy itself.

### Human rights in Indian context

The foundation of contemporary India is rooted in the principles of democracy and socialism as established by the Indian constitution. The constitution enumerates Human Rights as Fundamental Rights, including Equality before the law, Prohibition of discrimination based on religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, Equal opportunity in public employment, Abolition of untouchability, Abolition of titles, Protection about convictions for offences, Protection of life and personal liberty, Prohibition of human trafficking and forced labour, Prohibition of child labour in factories, Freedom to manage religious affairs, and Protection of the interests of minorities.

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Dr. Nenavath Balu Naik**  
Department of Political  
Science, Osmania University,  
Telangana, India

The concept of human rights, as understood in its contemporary form, developed during the period of British colonial control, as the basic liberties were systematically denied at this time. The struggle for freedom in India began with the aim of securing the civil, political, economic, cultural, and social rights of its people. The Constitution of India Bill-1895, The Commonwealth of India Bill, the Government of India Act 1935, and the Principles of Panchsheel all established the solid groundwork for human rights in independent India. The enactment of the constitution of Independent India in 1950 marks a significant turning point in the history of India. The Preamble, Fundamental Rights, and the Directive Principles of State Policy collectively establish the fundamental Human Rights for the citizens of India.

Human rights are moral entitlements that are innate and cannot be taken away from any individual solely based on their humanity. These are essential to guarantee the inherent worth of every individual, enabling them to properly cultivate and utilize their capabilities and aptitudes, regardless of their race, religion, nationality, language, gender, or any other determinant. The presence of these rights guarantees the adherence to the rights of one another. This implies that the rights that apply to you are equally applicable to others. They facilitate mutual respect and harmonious coexistence. The deprivation of human rights and essential liberties not only brings about personal and individual suffering but also fosters circumstances of societal and political instability, leading to acts of violence and war both within and among societies and nations.

Human rights are considered universal because they are recognized as essential by the world community and are granted to all individuals, irrespective of their social, political, and economic circumstances. Human rights are not exclusively held by any privileged social group. Human rights are the entitlements of individuals to the necessary conditions for the full expression of their inherent qualities as human beings. These entitlements are crucial for upholding the dignity of every person, regardless of their race, religion, nationality, language, sex, or any other factor (Naseema, 2006) <sup>[22]</sup>. Human rights are innate and non-transferable entitlements that individuals are entitled to simply by their humanity. These rights are not bestowed by any individual or governing body. These rights are considered inalienable as they cannot be justifiably revoked from a free person, and they cannot be voluntarily relinquished or strengthened.

Nevertheless, not all the assertions made by an individual can be regarded as human rights. Rights are comprised solely of claims that are crucial for the advancement of an individual's character and are acknowledged as such by society. However, there remains the potential for these rights to lack legal enforcement or enforceability. It is important to differentiate between moral and universally acknowledged rights, and legal rights that are established via the law-making process and can be enforced by the judiciary in a certain culture.

Human rights are intrinsic rights that belong to all individuals, regardless of their nationality, gender, ethnic background, race, religion, language, or any other characteristic. Every individual is inherently entitled to the same human rights, free from any form of discrimination. These rights are interconnected, interdependent, and indivisible. Human rights that apply to all individuals are

frequently articulated and protected by legal means, such as treaties, customary international law, general principles, and other sources of international law. International human rights legislation establishes the duties of governments to behave in specific manners or abstain from certain actions, to advance and safeguard the human rights and basic liberties of persons within communities.

### **Significance of Human rights education**

Human Rights Education refers to the process of providing education, training, and information to foster a universal culture of human rights. This is achieved through the sharing of knowledge, the development of skills, and the shaping of attitudes that aim to strengthen human rights and fundamental freedoms. The ultimate objective is to promote the development of the human personality and a sense of dignity, as well as to foster tolerance, gender equality, friendship among nations, and respect for various social, national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic groups. Human Rights Education also aims to enable all individuals to actively participate in a free and democratic society governed by the rule of law, while also contributing to the establishment and maintenance of peace. Additionally, it seeks to promote sustainable development and social justice with a focus on the well-being and empowerment of individuals.

The objective of human rights education is to impart skills, provide knowledge, and cultivate attitudes that promote a global culture of human rights. Human rights education has a worldwide scope, although its effectiveness is mainly seen at the national and local levels. Human rights education is how the principles outlined in international human rights law can be implemented in the daily lives of individuals and the local customs of nations. The Vienna Conference of 1993: A prominent institution in the field of human rights education affirmed the crucial role of human rights education, training, and public information in fostering mutual understanding, tolerance, and peace among communities. Human rights education has a crucial role in advancing equality and sustainable development, preventing conflict and human rights abuses, and fostering participation in democratic processes. Its objective is to foster the creation of societies where the inherent rights of every individual are esteemed and upheld.

The Indian state is required, as specified in Article 51 of the constitution. India has signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR) and has also ratified conventions on Civil and Political Rights as well as Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Therefore, Human Rights Education has become an unavoidable legal requirement in the Indian democracy. In 1980, the University Grants Commission (UGC) established a committee led by Justice S.M. Sikri to examine methods of advancing Human Rights education in India. The committee's report, titled 'Human Rights Education at all levels', proposed various ways for different levels of education. The committee also believed that it is important for graduate students in science, commerce, medicine, and engineering to be familiarized with certain aspects of human rights. The National Policy on Education (1986) also emphasized several objectives that are integral to the Human Rights Education program.

Providing feedback on the Human Rights Education courses in 2007, Justice Rao observed that the current generation of teaching professionals, as well as those who are considering

a career in teaching, had very little exposure to the theory and methodology of Human Rights Education. Thus, the current Human Rights Education course primarily targets teaching professionals, aiming to cultivate a necessary knowledge foundation and foster a proper mindset among them. He asserts that the social science subjects currently lack proper instruction on Human Rights, and many of those who teach Human Rights may not have received formal training due to the lack of a suitable module in teacher training. The commission endeavoured to create a syllabus addressing the matter, which ultimately resulted in the creation of teachers' training modules focused on Human Rights Education.

Pathak (2007) <sup>[45]</sup> verified that there is a significant requirement for raising awareness of Human Rights at the current moment. The purpose of this is twofold: to provide victims of Human Rights breaches with the necessary tools to seek proper compensation, and to ensure that the processes for obtaining such compensation are both efficient and respectful of Human Rights.

According to Sharma (2007) <sup>[35]</sup>, one of the main findings from the analysis is that the Human Rights Education program has not been successful in the educational system because it is not marketable. As a result, there are very few students who are interested in pursuing a scholarship in Human Rights Education.

### **Role of awareness about Human rights education**

Amidst the escalating global conflicts and tensions, the significance of Human Rights Education has become increasingly paramount. It promotes the utilization of human rights as a basis for our interactions with others. It promotes the act of questioning, constructing arguments, making decisions, collaborating, assessing, sharing, and adhering to principles. Human Rights education promotes the critical examination of our attitudes and behaviours, with the ultimate goal of transforming them to promote respect for the rights of all individuals.

Human Rights Education contributes to the mitigation of Human Rights violations and the establishment of an egalitarian and harmonious society. Furthermore, it plays a significant role in the sustained prevention of Human Rights violations and serves as a crucial investment in the development of a democratic society. The attitudes, thoughts, and characteristics of children are shaped during their early years and are consistently influenced by their surroundings. Integrating human rights education into schools is a highly successful method to help youngsters adopt human rights ideals and integrate them into their attitudes and behaviours. Ensuring the comprehensive and widespread enjoyment of all human rights necessitates the promotion and safeguarding of these rights, which in turn relies on raising knowledge and fostering sensitivity towards human rights concerns. The achievement of peace and prosperity on a large scale can only be realized if individuals comprehend and internalize the principles of human rights. Only through human rights education can we attain such strong and active involvement.

Naseema (2006) <sup>[22]</sup> emphasized the necessity of Human Rights education. Human rights education fosters understanding of human rights, safeguards against discrimination and unfair treatment, and promotes democratic values and individual freedom. It fosters the cultivation of global and broad viewpoints, providing

insights into the concept of a worldwide society and community. It is beneficial to ensure that all individuals possess a comprehensive understanding of human rights. It guarantees the fundamental observance of human rights in a democratic and multicultural society where tolerance and patience are unavoidable for everyone. It ensures the prevention of violations of the rights of racial, ethnic, and religious groups in any country or region by promoting global consciousness and fostering mutual understanding among citizens. It guarantees the likelihood of embracing global citizenship in all parts of the world to safeguard cultural diversity and democratic obligations. The dread of conflict in the future can be eliminated by eradicating human rights abuses, societal injustice, human greed, and self-centeredness.

Narayan (2007) <sup>[21]</sup> contends that human rights education is essential and advocates for the integration of human rights curriculum into mainstream education. Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of implementing this curriculum in local languages to ensure its effectiveness. Utilize participatory learning methods and interactive tactics to encourage students to share their personal experiences, enriching the learning process and contributing to the promotion of universal human rights standards. This approach also allows for the utilization of the cultural wealth specific to the region.

Education is a significant indicator of human development. It plays a significant part in all aspects of life. It is an enriching process that uplifts individuals from a state of ignorance, destitution, and suffering, guiding them towards enlightenment, prosperity, and happiness by nurturing their personality in all its dimensions. Education has a crucial role in establishing and advancing human rights. Human rights education enhances understanding of fundamental principles of human rights, such as equality, discrimination, slavery, and the exploitation of women. The purpose is to highlight examples of advancements in safeguarding human rights, to prevent feelings of discouragement when faced with human rights violations. An essential objective of education is to cultivate an individual's consciousness of their manual dexterity and intellectual capabilities, which may be utilized for the betterment of their community.

Education serves the crucial function of fostering individuals' receptiveness, the audacity to interrogate, and tenacity in seeking resolutions, to furnish them with fundamental levels of information, attitudes, values, and abilities to embark on their life's path. Human rights education should be implemented in the formative years of students to cultivate a strong foundation in human rights principles. The development of human values should begin at an early age, and education is an essential tool for humanity to instil the principles of peace, freedom, and social justice. Education has traditionally served as a tool for progress and a catalyst for societal transformation. Devi (2007) <sup>[8]</sup> asserts that the ultimate goal of education is to cultivate sensitivity, foster humanization, and elevate humanity to greater levels of knowledge, consciousness, autonomy, and social accountability. Human Rights Education thus encompasses the acquisition of both knowledge and skills, as well as the capacity to effectively apply them.

Human Rights Education centres on the principles and beliefs that differ among societies, typically influenced by religion and culture within a particular civilization. Human

rights Education is distinct, serving a certain purpose. It has a forward-looking perspective rather than a backward-looking one. Its objective is to facilitate societal transformation. The concept of Human Rights is progressing in a society that has recognized the need for universal principles to coexist peacefully and guarantee justice and fairness for marginalized individuals, particularly those who face persecution.

Human Rights Education is deeply rooted in the diverse principles and beliefs that characterize various societies, often shaped by the rich tapestry of religion and culture within a particular civilization. It is a dynamic field that transcends mere cultural relativism, aiming to instill a universal understanding of fundamental rights and freedoms. Unlike historical perspectives that may be backward-looking, Human Rights Education adopts a forward-looking approach, driven by the overarching goal of fostering societal transformation.

The essence of Human Rights Education lies in its commitment to cultivating a collective consciousness that transcends cultural and religious boundaries. It seeks to promote a shared understanding of human rights that can serve as a common ground for diverse communities to coexist harmoniously. This education is not confined to a narrow, parochial view; instead, it aspires to build bridges of understanding and empathy across societies.

At its core, Human Rights Education is a proactive endeavor with a vision for the future. It strives to create a society that recognizes the necessity of universal principles to ensure peaceful coexistence and to safeguard justice and fairness, particularly for those who are marginalized or subjected to persecution. By emphasizing the forward-looking perspective, this form of education encourages individuals to envision and actively contribute to a world where human dignity is paramount.

The evolving nature of the concept of Human Rights within societies indicates a growing awareness of the imperative to establish a framework that guarantees justice, equality, and fairness for all individuals. This is especially crucial for those who have historically faced discrimination and persecution. Human Rights Education emerges as a crucial instrument in this process, empowering individuals to champion the cause of human rights and contribute to the creation of a more just and inclusive world.

### Conclusion

Education is crucial for acquiring and spreading knowledge, and it has emerged as a potent tool for promoting human rights worldwide. The Indian education system relies significantly on the teachers' role in fostering social inclusion in education for underprivileged children in society. The Indian education system is strongly dependent on its instructors, who play a major role in the process of teaching and learning. The country boasts a workforce of over five million educators who operate throughout various tiers of the education system. Additionally, there exists an extensive network of teacher education institutes to cater to the nation's demand for teacher preparation. The curricular structure for teacher preparation programs in the country encourages the incorporation of themes about different human rights, which instructors are encouraged to incorporate at the classroom level. Teachers have a crucial role in imparting knowledge about human rights to students and encouraging them to live more compassionately and

ethically. Childhood possesses a crucial reciprocity, enabling individuals to develop into productive adults and socially responsible citizens.

Teachers have a pivotal role in fostering the social conduct of students in schools, and their behaviour is greatly influenced by the social environment. Human Rights Education, in this particular context, seems to be a very efficient method for instilling human principles into individuals' attitudes and social behaviours. The ultimate objective of fostering social cohesion and maintaining societal structure can only be achieved when both teachers and students embrace the principles of Human Rights education.

School teachers must have a strong understanding of Human rights to foster the growth of the moral, physical, social, economic, and spiritual aspects of the student community. They create favourable circumstances for the advancement of material conditions inside marginalized communities. Human Rights education is essential for equipping individuals with the required skills to actively engage in the development process. It advocates for the equitable advancement of underprivileged populations and the long-term preservation of resources. It offers a political platform for marginalized populations to assert their constitutional rights and advocate for their fair participation in the benefits of societal progress. The fundamental principle of Human Rights education is to foster comprehension of cultural tolerance and mutual respect across many religious groups and caste societies. This fosters social cohesion and promotes harmony and social stability within the community. Therefore, it offers a safeguard against exploitation and unjust discrimination. Human Rights education plays a crucial part in the advancement of societies that prioritize and uphold human rights. It is imperative to foster and enhance awareness of human rights in education among school teachers. This is necessary not only to establish a democratic environment in schools but also because their awareness plays a vital role in addressing the educational needs of students from marginalized castes and communities in India.

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