

Human Rights Education with special reference to Rights of Women

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It is proclaimed in the very first article of Indian constitution that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act toward each other in a spirit of brotherhood." It is also stated in Human Rights that "Every individual and every organ of society, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedom". The 26th article in its first part says that everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and preliminary stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. The second part of the same says that "education shall be directed to the full development of human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, social or religious groups and shall further the activities of the united nation for maintenance of peace."

As far as the introduction as well as idea for human rights and education for the same is concerned, it is introduced in our country through the enactment of the Human Rights Act and in turn, the establishment of the National Human Rights commission. As per its section 12(L), it is supposed to take measures to promote human rights awareness and to spread human rights literacy in the country. Here too the inclusion of human rights content in curriculum was suggested. It was also added that the human rights education should not be a mere intellectual exercise, that is to say, imparting of knowledge in classrooms, but should cover all the modalities which could sensitize a person, his conscience and develop an attitude of imbibing respect for human rights of others. (UGC IX).

Thus, it is evident from the above statement that human rights education is supposed to provide protection from discrimination, unfair treatment, undemocratic attitude, deterioration of cultural values, unawareness of society and environment, exploitation, bondage, human rights illiteracy and abuses of human rights at any level. On the contrary, it is supposed to make people aware about human rights, protect from any sort of discrimination, unfair treatment and provide democratic structure, human values as well as individual freedom (UNESCO International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy in Montreal in March, 1993). The article 15 (3) of the constitution of India expressly empowers the state to make special provision for the advancement of women and children. This clause indicates that it is not sufficient to give equal treatment to women as is given to men.

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It is beyond any doubt that the right to equality and all other human rights are all applicable to men and women equally. The ancient Bhartiya thinkers considered that right to be protected was of utmost importance to women. They also came to the conclusion that the ideal of respecting for womanhood is the best protection of rights of women.

Before suggesting any measure or providing any suggestions to make the women aware about their rights, let us have a look on the educational, social, political, administrative status and above all struggle for survival of women.

The 2001 census which has confirmed our worst fears where child ratio (0-6 years) has fallen very sharply in India. Some six million girls are missing in this age group. While the overall sex ratio has improved slightly from 927 to 933, the decline of sex ratio in the age group 0-6 during 1999-2001 is very sheer ie. from 945-927 for the country as a whole. In Punjab the sex ratio in 0-6 years has fallen from 875 to 793, a fall of 82 points, the decline in Haryana, Himachal and Chandigarh being 59 points each; 50 points each in Gujrat and Delhi; 42 in the newly formed state of Uttaranchal and 40 points in the union territory of Dadar & Nagar Haveli.

As far as women enrolment is concerned, the picture is that during the last five decades "the participation of girls increased in Primary, Middle and Secondary/Higher secondary stages and higher education from 28.1% (1950-51) to 43.7% (2000-2001), from 16.1% (1950-51) to 40.9% (2000-2001), from 3.3% (1950-51) to 38.6% (2000-2001) and from 10.0% (1950-51) to 36.9% (2000-2001) respectively.

As far as the admission of women in various professional courses is concerned, it is found that 35.2% girls took admission in Ph.D/D.Sc / D. Phil. Course, 36.2% were admitted in M.A, 44.5% in M.Sc., 37.7% in M.Com. 22.3% in B.E/B.Sc. B.Arch, 42.8% in B.Ed. / BT. and 40.6% in M.B.B.S.

Though the percentage of enrollment in various degrees as well as professional courses has increased a lot but still it is far behind the enrollment of Males in similar courses. The positive side of this trend is that girls now prefer to enter into B.E. B.Arch, M.B.B.S., B.Ed. and other such professional courses. The negative side of the same is that though the percentage of enrollment in M.B.B.S. and B.Ed. has increased a lot but the percentage of girls/women in various courses is still below 50%.

After more than fifty years of independence the percentage share of women is 7% in Central Government, 18% in the State Govt., 8% in National Parliament, between 1 to 7% in the State Legislatures (SC, 2000). However, only after the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the constitution reserving one third of the seats in Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIS) and the Urban local bodies. India has 1.2 million women as elected members in the grass root democratic institutions a number perhaps higher than all elected women in other countries of the world. Currently there are about 31% women at the Gram Panchayat level; 30% in Panchayat Samities and 32% at Zilla Parishad level (National profile on Women Health and Development, India, VHAI, 1999). From the data available from the 300 universities in India, there are about 11 women

Vice Chancellors, three women registrars, 66 women deans 13 women directors and 12 women librarians (Source AIU).

According to 1991 census the work participation rate for India is 22.69% for females and 51.52% for males. According to 2001 census work participation rate for females has been doubled but significant improvement in women's economic participation is yet to come about and there is a long way to go. Women, indeed, do a lot of work and often for more hours than their male counterparts do in a given time period. Major parts of the domestic and farm work are not counted and they carry the double burden and fatigue of all domestic work and child care in addition to paid, unpaid, underpaid, extra paid work.

Time News survey conducted in India from July 1998 to June 1999 over six selected states namely Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Orissa, Tamilnadu and Meghalaya by Central Statistical Organization (CSO) with the objective of collecting data for properly quantifying the economic contribution of women in national economy and to survey gender discrimination in household activities. According to this survey women's contribution worked out to 55% of the total workdone as compared to 45% by men. Women spent 30.71 hours per week on cooking; clearing and washing; care of children, sick and elderly; pets, guests and shopping against only 2.52 hours by men. Women spend only 97.60 hours on personal care including sleep, against 100.41 hours by men.

Crimes against women in the form of sexual violence, sexual harassment etc. are day by day increasing. There has been 29.2% increase of crimes against women in 1998 relative to 1994 and 92.25% increase relative to 1990. This trend is persisting with increase in the percentage.

As far as the social acceptance and status of women in this regard is concerned, according to the survey approximately 78000 female foeticide occurred during the period of 1978-1992. According to a non governmental source about twenty lacks female foeticide occur every year. In a nut-shell, population growth, female literacy and sex ratio according to 2001 Census is as follows: Decades growth rate is 21.30% in 1991-2001 as compared to 23.90 in 1981-1991. Female literacy rate has increased to 54.20% as compared to 39.29% (1981-1991). Percentage point increase during 1999-2001 is 14.84%. Sex ratio (females per 1000 male) in 2001 was 933 as compared to 927 in 1991. Child sex ratio (0-6% years) in 2001 was 927 as compared to 945 in 1991. Thus the decline in child sex ratio (0-6 years) during the period of 1991-2001 is 18 (Tinnari quarterly SAARC decade of the girl child 1991-2000).

After going through the data and survey reports, it can be inferred that despite increase in literacy rate, participation of women in politics, economic sector and various professional course women have to go miles and miles to prove themselves. Being human they have equal rights to take birth, live happily, to develop as a person and to enjoy the happiness. It is true that women enrollment registered a four fold increase

during the five decades and the effect of this increase in enrollment can be seen in the form of women participation in various sectors, the dark side of this enrollment is that despite this increase, women are still being denied of their rights. Therefore we have to think very seriously about what kind of education women should get to make themselves a self reliant, confident, rational, balanced and empowered woman having all the pride for the ideals of womanhood. For this, now let us have a review of the planning and views proposed by our policy planners and thinkers. Recommendations of National Committee on Education (1958-59) emphasized that the "education of women should be regarded as a major and a special problem in education for a good many years to come and bold and determined effort should be made to face its difficulties and magnitude and to close the existing gap between the education of women and men as soon as possible". Along with this, every state should be required to prepare comprehensive plans for the education of girls and women in this area. The recommendations given by the committee on the status of women (1971-74) are : increasing the social effectiveness of women through a continuous process and community involvement, development of libraries, active role of government and inculcation of value related with equality of sexes. "In the seventh five year plan the long term objective of the development programmes for women was to raise their economic and social status in order to bring them into main stream of national development. In the National Policy of Education (1986) it is believed that education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women. In the national perspective plan for women's education (1988-2000) the objectives like elimination of illiteracy, universalization of elementary education, minimization of dropout rate in the age group of 6-14 years and stagnation to negligible proportions, provision of non formal and part time courses to women to enable them to acquire knowledge and skills for their social, cultural and economic advancement were made. In order to achieve these objectives, important suggestions were also given in this perspective plan to enhance the educational as well as socio-economic status of the women. Along with these efforts, some new plans are also introduced for the empowerment of women through various modes of education. These are as follows:

- * Education is made free for all girls upto higher secondary level.
- * As per the recommendations of National policy of education, Government has opened special cells as well as women study centers in some of the universities of all the four zones.

The doors of distance system and open universities are now open for training and education to the women who are for one or other reason could not get education as well as skill training. Provision of gender sensitive and gender friendly content and process of education to achieve justice, gender harmony and gender peace specially for women is also given. National vocational training institute is providing advanced skills in specialized trade with high employment potentials for women. For this, new

IIT's and women wings are being set up. Career counseling is being actively promoted to ensure that the skills acquired by girls and women are appropriately utilized by them.

After going through all the information related to the work done for the promotion of status of women, it can be concluded that after independence lots of efforts have been made to empower women by providing them educational facilities, social security and economic independence but the data gathered on the basis of surveys show that women are still socially and economically insecure and are still struggling for the basic rights ie the right to take birth, right to live happily like a human being.

Now the question arises here that what went wrong as far as the education of the women is concerned? Why have we failed in upbringing a girl child into a fully confident self reliant complete woman? Here a deep introspection is badly needed. The policy makers, planners and designers of curriculum for women have to rethink or reexamine the present day's education in this regard. The line of thinking have to be based on the available data related to the cases of foeticides, infanticides, sexual harassment, dowry deaths, deaths during pregnancy, exploitations, humiliations and ignorance of their contribution as a mother, daughter, wife and friend to the society. Here are some suggestions which may help policy makers in education to make them aware about their rights on the one hand and to use their rights in the righteous manner on the other hand:-

Ancient Bhartiya thinkers considered that the best method to protect the right of women was to inculcate the ideal of "Respect for woman-hood" in every individual and in particular, in men through moral education right from the inception and at all levels of education. It is unfortunate that this time honored, time tested right is undermined by those who consider woman-hood for commercial purposes or money making without realising its deleterious effect on the younger generation including their own children. The value related to respect for womanhood have to be given priority again in our curriculum.

The sex education has to be given to all the students from the very beginning. This will help in making woman aware that she is not responsible for the sex determination of a child. Similarly this education will help a girl or woman to protect herself from molestation, sexual harassment etc. as unawareness about the same is creating havoc in their lives. For this, relevant sex education, awareness about reproduction, knowledge of health and nutrition have to be given to women.

Through education, the ability to think in a critical manner, to take independent decision have to be developed in the women so that they may become self reliant.

The main problem of women is their emotional temperament. Emotionality is their weak point due to which they are being easily exploited. Therefore they have to be given proper training of skills to handle various stresses and conflicts that are being subjected at home, in the society, workplace etc. For this, emotional intelligence of

women has to be increased in order to make them emotionally stable and rational in taking important decisions as well as in overcoming their stresses and conflicts. Along with this, ability to communicate, to be assertive and to uphold their legal and other rights should also be developed in them through education. Women should be provided information and guidance about the wide choice available in the job market also. They have to be provided guidance to have balance between the demands of rapid social transformations on the one hand and cultural moorings of centuries on the other to minimize the stress and dilemmas and develop righteous Bhartiya values (sadguna). They have to be trained to play their role as a conscious, enlightened and strong Indian woman who possesses the capacity to protect, flourish and preserve the culture and humanity in its real sense.

For the implementation of all these suggestions, the whole structure, content and process of education have to be overhauled and also for restoring the age old regard to womanhood a specially planned education system has to be evolved with capacity to make such woman who can think rationally, can assert regarding her duties and rights in the right manner and who can live happily and confidently in this society as other human beings live. If it could be realized through education then women would again be proud of their womanhood in a true sense.

Reference:-

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