

# HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Students Module - Part I

## **INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION**

(A program unit of Peoples Watch-Tamil Nadu)

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At this point, we specially remember the good souls, who enriched this module, 'Human Rights Education – An Introduction' with their suggestions while it was being prepared 5 years ago.

Mr. Henri Tiphagne has been the foremost person in promoting a culture of human rights through human rights education. Thanking him would seem like thanking ourselves. But the fact remains that this module would not have been possible without his prodding and solidarity. We owe him our gratitude.

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This is a module that has been tested already in classrooms. Many teachers have on occasion placed requests to simplify this module and bring about some changes. When we met in Chennai to review this module, people like Rev. Sr. Lima, HRE's III Phase's District Co-ordinator, Chennai, teachers, who shared their opinions and Dr. Saraswathy lent support to this attempt. We owe them our gratitude.

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This module is not the product of an individual's efforts. This is a team effort. Many people have co-operated with us at various levels in this team effort. Our thanks to all of them.

Thanks to FNST, which has granted funds to bring out this module in English.

This is a module that has been written keeping school-going students in mind. There may be and will be many mistakes. In the coming days they will be rectified. With the hope that your constructive criticisms will definitely help us to rectify the fallacies,

***Authors***

## **Foreword**

This is the age of rights. Human Rights have gained prominence to the extent that there is no Government and individual, who does not speak about human rights today. The perspective that human rights should be promoted not only in the legal aspect but also as a human value, has been strengthening the world over. The dimensions of human rights have undergone change by the fast changes in the social, economic, cultural and political structures globally. There are many differences in the global atmosphere that prevailed in 1948, when the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR) was made and that of today when fifty years have been completed since the declaration was made. Gone are the days when only civil and political rights focussing on the rights of an individual were spoken about. Today economic and cultural rights are also given prominence. Globalization, the singular economic policy that is being introduced the world over, has posed new challenges to human rights. Human Rights which had been viewed with a singular perspective is now being viewed with a plural perspective. These changes that history gives and the growth that these changes bring about, have paved the way to new laws, charters and covenants. At the same time, the question that has risen is, 'Are these declarations, covenants and laws sufficient to protect humanity, to guard their intrinsic honour and dignity and to promote equality, co-ordination and tolerance among people?', Will it be possible to protect human rights only through the laws that have been written and the institutions that have been formed to protect them? If protecting humanism is a culture, the reality that exists today is that there exists an opposite culture that justifies violation of this. Human Rights Education was a result of thinking of another dimension of sensitizing people beyond laws. Fifty years after the creation of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, after creation of covenants on the rights of sections like Women, Children, Refugees and Minorities, the Union Nations found that something had gone wrong somewhere and proposed the UN Decade for Human Rights Education.

I have been working in various levels in the field of human rights since the past 25 years. I do not find happiness by functioning only as an advocate, who knows law, a human rights activist and the person-in-charge of a human rights organization, in this day and age when human rights violations are on the rise. The UN Decade for Human Rights Education came as an answer to my longing that protection of human rights is possible only when human rights are promoted as a culture.

Along with me, all my friends working in the field of human rights also were of the same opinion. It is as a result of this unity of thought that human rights education has been

introduced in Schools of Tamil Nadu. This is not the work of an institution or an individual, it is a group effort. It was made possible by the co-operation of hundreds of volunteers, educationists, resource persons and teachers. It is the enthusiasm of thousands of students which has been driving us to function time and again.

Human Rights Education is neither a class-room oriented subject nor a syllabus oriented education. It is life oriented. Since definite lessons are necessary even for life's values, lessons have been created. The lessons have been fashioned in such a way that students and teachers do not become opposite poles but become partners in the quest for human rights. This is a new attempt in Tamil Nadu. So, there may be shortcomings in this small effort. We strive to find good aspects even within the shortcomings. Congratulations to everyone, who has contributed to this effort.

**Henri Tiphagne**  
Executive Director  
People's Watch – Tamil Nadu

# **UN DECADE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION (1995-2004)**

- ☞ **The Strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms**
- ☞ **The full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity**
- ☞ **The promotion of understanding, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among people**
- ☞ **The enabling of all persons to participate effectively in a free society**
- ☞ **The furtherance of activities for the maintenance of peace**

# Preface

## **Why Human Rights Education?**

Democracy is the most spectacular revolution among the changes that the long history of mankind has seen. Democracy is not just a political ideology, it is a praiseworthy value. It was in democracy that the focus was upon people. It is here that social history, which had been glorifying supernatural powers and supremacy of an individual, started to focus on people, respect their honour and dignity and place faith on them. This democracy made protection of people's honour and dignity, a right. Then charters were made to protect this right and institutions were made to protect the charters.

**Yes ! Democracy is an armour that protects people's rights**

**The greatness of democracy lies in protection of rights.**

In order to protect human rights through democracy, Democratic states created constitutions. Not only the states but also at international level charters, conventions and laws were made to protect human rights. And the member states of United Nations Organisation (UNO) also accepted these and agreed to implement them.

## **Still, why?**

Did the laws and charters that were created in written form for protection of human rights really protect human honour? Did they safeguard human rights? Today, all over the world, human rights are being violated each day. Not only are the oppressed deprived of their right but they are also unaware that they have certain rights. What is the state of Human Rights in India, which has celebrated a golden jubilee of the constitution? The UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004) is the answer that the United Nations found for this question. Laws alone cannot protect rights. Since Rights are values of high stature that need to be protected, the United Nations felt the need to promote it as a value, progressing beyond laws. It formulated plans in such a way that various sections of the society attain rights perspective. Human Rights Education that is being implemented in schools and colleges today is a part of this program. The Government of India, which is a member nation of the UN has acknowledged this program of the United Nations and has embarked on efforts to implement it.

## **Human Rights Education in Schools**

The UN Decade for Human Rights Education insists on taking Human Rights Education to schools. Although awareness on human rights education is being created among various sections of people in the country, human rights education has been introduced in schools for the first time in Tamil Nadu.

This program is reviewed at the end of each year. Through this review, the impacts that this education has created among students, teachers, inside the school campus and families have been documented. Because of the tremendous growth of human rights education, the 'Institute of Human Rights Education' now functions as an independent unit of People's Watch – Tamil Nadu.

## **Syllabus and Modules**

- ☞ Human Rights Education – An Introduction.
- ☞ Child Rights
- ☞ Women’s Rights

The above-mentioned 3 modules have already been prepared and introduced in schools.

- ☞ Environmental Rights
- ☞ Caste and Religion based discriminations.
- ☞ Rights of Refugees

The above-mentioned three modules are under preparation. Although these modules were prepared by a small team of educationists, they have been enriched by the suggestions of experts in the field. Since this is the first effort in the direction of creating a module of human rights education in Tamil Nadu, there might be many flaws in the creation. If the flaws are pointed out, the team of educationists will be happy to correct them.

### **Module 1. Human Rights Education – An Introduction**

This module which is to be introduced this year to the students of the 6<sup>th</sup> standard has been a text book for the past five years in schools of Tamil Nadu. After 5 years, opinions of experts and teachers, who taught the lessons, were sought, some necessary changes were made in the module and now the revised module is being re-introduced. Since this module is the introductory text book for human rights education, it has been prepared in a simple style, bearing in mind, the status and age of the students, who will be studying this, so that they can easily imbibe what human honour and dignity are. Humanism is worthy of exaltation. Destruction of humanism and how it can be protected from being destructed, forms the content of this module. Instead of talking of rights, charters and laws alone, they have been given in a new form, by which students can understand them as values.

This module consists of 4 sections.

1. In quest of humanism
2. Destruction of humanism
3. Growth in humanism
4. Promotion and Protection.

Each section is further divided into smaller sections.

### **Syllabus Structure and method of teaching**

Human Rights Education is education for life. So this is life education. Lessons and method of teaching for life education cannot be like that of other subjects. Human Rights Education is education through experience. It is an education that gives opportunities to teachers

and students to share their experience. Conversation is the focus of this education. So, the lessons and method of teaching them have been formulated in such a way that through these conversations, the value of democracy is inculcated. This is not an evaluatory course nor is it a classroom oriented subject. Lessons have been created in such a way that the students do not consider them a burden and instead learn them with joy.

Every lesson is introduced by way of stories, dialogues, historic incidents, experiences, speech of a character or through interviews. At the end of each lesson, selected portions from the constitution of India, the UN's Universal Declaration on Human Rights and other Conventions related to human rights are given.

In order to make the students imbibe the essence of the lesson, classroom exercises and home exercises are given. The exercises are in such a way that the students' human rights perspective is strengthened. They are :

1. Questions
2. Group Study
3. Sharing in class
4. Drawing
5. Essay and Poem writing
6. Letter Writing
7. Sharing experiences of others
8. Sharing with identification – articles
9. Interviewing
10. Marking true or false
11. Games
12. Inspecting Places
13. Submitting petition.

These exercises create awareness in students about themselves and their society. They question the wrong values of subjugation that have been prevailing among people since ages and help to promote human rights values. The exercises also help them to function on this basis.

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