

Discrimination

(Caste, Religion, Race, Language, Gender,
Place of Birth)

Students Module - Part III

Author

Dr.I.Devasahayam

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Institute of Human Rights Education

(A programme unit of People's Watch - TamilNadu)

6, Vallabai Road, Chokkikulam,

Madurai - 625 002

Phone: 0452-2539520 Fax : 0452-2531874

E.mail: ihre@pwn.org

Website: www.pwn.org

Title : **Human Rights Education - Module III
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Author : **Dr.I.Devasahayam**

Artists : **M.Kalaivanan, C.Sathyan**

Translation : **Dr. G. Joseph Panneer Selvam**

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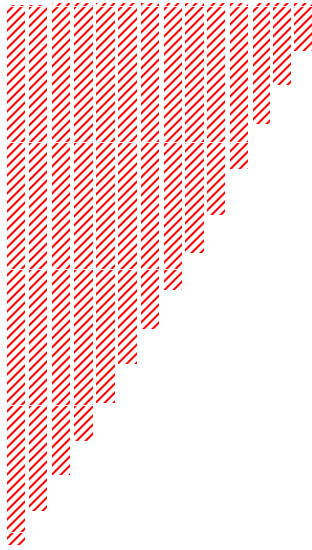
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■ *Acknowledgement*

History is witness to the fact that man has been discriminated against, by his fellow human beings. Although on one side there is the tendency of justifying discrimination, the perspective that discrimination is a sin also prevails. We can take pride in the fact that we are living in times when discrimination is considered not only as a sin but also as a violation of rights and a punishable offence. All the human rights laws that have been evolved in this world say that it is a violation of human rights to discriminate human beings on the basis of Religion, Race, Language, Nationality and Caste. Human Rights armours have been evolved to liberate man from discrimination. All human beings are being discriminated in one way or other. This subject comes with the intention of educating that discrimination is against humanity in the stage of childhood itself.

We do not claim that these modules of the Institute of Human Rights Education are complete in themselves. They have been prepared after taking into account, our social set up, the educational system that functions within this set up and the standard of the students. I assure that the module will be made better with suggestions that are received from the thousands of children who will use this as a text book, the teachers who are going to guide them and the readers who read it as a book.

This is not the effort of an individual but a team work led by Mr. Henri Tiphagne. Since it is the style of the Institute of Human Rights Education to write lessons using true life incidents, we have used incidents of various forms of discriminations that were reported in news papers. My heartfelt gratitude is due to the Social Work students of the American College, Ms. Bharathi, Ms.Sugabrintha and Ms. Sunitha, who compiled the

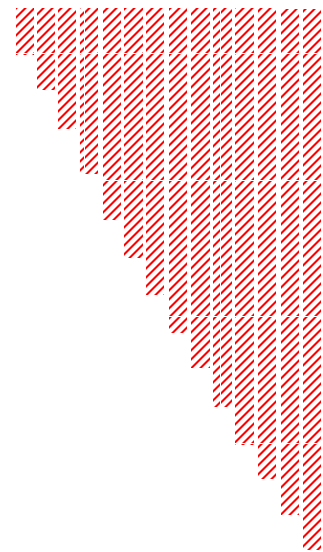
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My thanks are dueto the dailies, weeklies and monthlies, which helped us in enriching this book and the Documentation Centre which helped in compilation of the details.

Mr. Bernat worked tirelessly with me at every stage and has contributed to enrich every facet of this book. I thank him too.

Dr. I.Devasahayam

Associate Director,
Institute of Human Rights Education





A.K.Venkatasubramanian, I.A.S (Rtd.)
Former Secretary
Ministry of Consumer Affairs
Chennai - 600 090.

■ Foreword

Institute of Human Rights Education has already brought forth two text books, viz., “Human Rights Education” and “Children’s Rights”. These books have been prescribed for sixth and seventh standard children, with a view to introducing the basic concepts of human rights to them. This book, entitled “Discrimination” is meant for the eighth standard children.

The word ‘discrimination’ deserves attention. It is different from ‘difference’. Difference is natural, and is found in all creatures. We know how different plants of a particular area are, though they take the same water, breathe the same air and enjoy the same sun light! Same is the case with birds, animals and fish. Even among birds of a particular kind, there are differences. It is this difference that gives variety, and without this diversity, life may not be interesting.

Among natural differences, nothing is considered superior or inferior; but discrimination is man-made and artificial. The origin of this discrimination can be traced to the distant past when people were discriminated on the basis of religion, community, language, gender and place of birth. In the course of time, people started accepting this and thus, the lower caste-upper caste and ruler-ruled divide got fossilized.

Discrimination amounts to denial of rights and hence, unjust. So, the children need to be educated on the problems associated with discrimination, and the need and the ways to put an end to it and to establish an egalitarian society. This book, I believe, will definitely serve this purpose. Written in simple language, profound ideas have been explained using different teaching techniques. The Student’s Charter of an Egalitarian Society has also been prepared and this, I would say, is a great attempt.

My best wishes to the Institute of Human Rights Education.

A.K.Venkatasubramanian



About this book

Institute of Human Rights Education takes pleasure in presenting this text book - “Discrimination” - to be prescribed to the students of Human Rights this year. We have already brought forth two text books - “Human Rights Education - An Introduction” and “Children’s Rights”. Believing that these two books would have created an impact on the students, however little it may be, we present this text book.

The title - Discrimination

Should we have a negative term, viz., discrimination, as the title of the book? Many a person associated with our Organization raised this question. Even some of the members of the Organization who held the view that discrimination should be the subject-matter of the text raised the same question. Yet we decided to keep the title. It is not without reason. Human Rights Education is only an instrument to inculcate the ethos of universal human rights, and we believe, making the children chant “human rights” is the first step towards inculcating this ethos. At the same time, the students must also know about discrimination, the very antithesis of human rights, human liberty and human dignity.

We also aim at inculcating the attitude to fight against injustice in the students. Our intention is to familiarize the word ‘discrimination’ so much that it buzzes around their head. Hence the choice.

DISCRIMINATION - Meaning

Why ‘discrimination’? In a society where discrimination prevails, there can be no equality, democracy, fraternity and justice. These human values are not man-made. They are inherent in the people. Discrimination shatters these inherent qualities and, consequently, humanness. We live in a world when discrimination is institutionalised, legitimised and ingrained. Discriminations based on race, colour, caste, gender and place of birth are presented as if they are justifiable, as if there is nothing wrong in them. The different manifestations of discrimination are acclaimed

in our society. For example, as per law, untouchability, the manifestation of discrimination based on caste has been abolished for about 54 years. At the same time, the ideology that untouchability is a principle to be followed, and if it is not followed the whole structure of the society will fall, is also dominant. We can cite so many examples. We have to break all such falsehood at the childhood itself. Our aim is to drive home the idea that equality is inherent and natural and so the word, 'discrimination', though a negative word has been used, to effect a direct impact upon the students.

Discrimination and Difference

Each and every Human Rights Charter, Act and Covenant, at the national as well as international levels, fall foul of discrimination based on race, gender, language, place of birth, religion etc. They have also set the standards for the abolition of discrimination legally. In our country, starting from the Constitution, many Acts have been passed to abolish discrimination. These Acts aim at eradicating discrimination but not difference. Difference is natural whereas discrimination is artificial. Difference has to be appreciated. Difference is the manifestation of plurality; it is a symbol of plurality. Human rights protect plurality whereas discrimination is a violation of human rights. Both are not the same. Both are associated with human rights but are antithetical to each other. Appreciating this plurality, appreciating democracy and promoting equality are the same. Difference is inherent in plurality. We must understand this.

Lessons

Not a day passes without talking about discrimination. Newspapers carry news about various manifestations of discrimination, and television telecasts news about it. All these news items raise different kinds of feelings in us - pity or anger, and we stop with that. If we want to put an end to discrimination, the value called natural equality must be kindled in our mind. But equality is not just a value; it is a right. This view has to be inculcated in the mind of the students in order to put an end to discrimination. The lessons have been written with a view to realise this aim. Only when we started writing the lessons we realised the difficulties. We could not present everything that we know in this book. Having the middle school students as the

target audience, the lessons have been written.

Explaining the deep concept of discrimination in simple Tamil without diluting the concept was really challenging. There may be weak patches in our maiden attempt. But we believe, we have prepared the lessons in such a way that the students understand what discrimination is.

1.Discrimination - An introduction:

This lesson explains what discrimination is. We have tried to make students understand what discrimination is, using simple stories.

2.Gender discrimination:

An attempt has been made to view violation of women's rights as discrimination. This discrimination against women is a violence. This view has been established by pointing out that women are discriminated against at every stage of their life, from the dream stage to the tomb. We have abridged the text book on Women's Rights that has been published already. The lesson is lengthy; yet it has been done with the aim to educate the future generation.

Gender equality is possible only when women are considered rightful citizens. This is dealt with under the sub-title 'Woman- as a Citizen'. Moreover, a few women fighters who fought for women's rights have also been introduced.

3.Discrimination based on Religion:

Everybody is aware of the need for creating goodwill and tolerance among religions in a multi-religious country like ours. As the majority of our people have faith in God, they will be associated with some religion.

While talking about religious discrimination, no particular religion has been mentioned. Care has been taken not to complicate things in the present situation. In stead of giving importance to religion in politics, religious harmony and unity have been stressed.

4.Racial discrimination:

Racial discrimination is alien to us. Yet this kind of discrimination exists in

foreign countries and the students must know about this and the similarities between racial discrimination and caste discrimination prevalent in our country.

5.Caste discrimination:

Casteism segregates people as higher and lower, based on their birth. Those who are considered lower are discriminated. The discrimination against the Dalits manifests itself as untouchability. Untouchability makes a mockery of human dignity and so the different manifestations of it have been explained through real life stories. Of course, it is not exhaustive, and not all the manifestations have been presented. But, within limits, we have tried to bring out the seriousness of the problem. Periyar, Mahatma Gandhi, Ambedkar and Narayana Guru have also been introduced as the fighters against untouchability.

6.Discrimination based on place of birth:

India is a sub-continent. Plurality is its asset. In spite of the attempts to have unity in diversity, we find, here and there, enmity being sown, in the name of place of birth and language, and thus, unity is endangered. We have explained, giving a few examples, the discrimination based on place of birth is a human rights violation, and real unity is respecting diversity.

7.Discrimination against Tribes:

The downtrodden are denied all kinds of rights. To make matters worse, there is no awareness among people about this denial. To crown it all, even those who are denied their rights do not know about it. Among the downtrodden, the condition of the tribes is the worst. They are called Adivasis, Tribes and Natives. The objective of this lesson is to show how these people are discriminated against. The modern society sidelines them; or, in the pretext of modernization, tries to alienate these people from themselves. All these are discriminations.

8.Discrimination against Refugees:

Refugees belong to other countries. They have been forced to leave their motherland to settle in other countries. Some say they should be treated sympathetically. Some others hold the view that they are simply unwanted burden and will drain our

resources. Yet others suspect them to be infiltrators. The objective of this lesson is to teach the children that such people have the right to settle in foreign countries and to be treated with equality.

9. Poverty and discrimination:

It is true that neither the International Human Rights Charters nor the Indian Constitution considers poverty a unit of discrimination. They ban discrimination based on race, language, place of birth, caste, colour and gender. Can we consider poverty a reason for discrimination? As the poor are weak, they can be exploited and discriminated against easily. It is a fact that powerless, poor people will be discriminated against at every stage.

Another reason may also be given. In our society, we find, poverty and caste are interlinked and we find people belonging to lower castes are poor, and as a result, exploited. That is why poverty has been considered a unit of discrimination.

10. Students charter:

Protection of human rights ensures an egalitarian society. Where there is discrimination, there can be no human rights. In such a society, human dignity has no value, and in such a conditions, people can not live as people. The future generation should be concerned, if the same condition were to prevail. The students as pillars of future generation must do something about this. Being aware of what human rights are and how an egalitarian society where man can live as man can be created, the students have the right to demand a particular kind of social set up. They express their rights in the form of this Charter. Though this Charter has not been prepared by students themselves, we believe, this will serve as a model and prompt them to prepare their own Charter and to submit them to the authorities concerned.

Lesson plan:

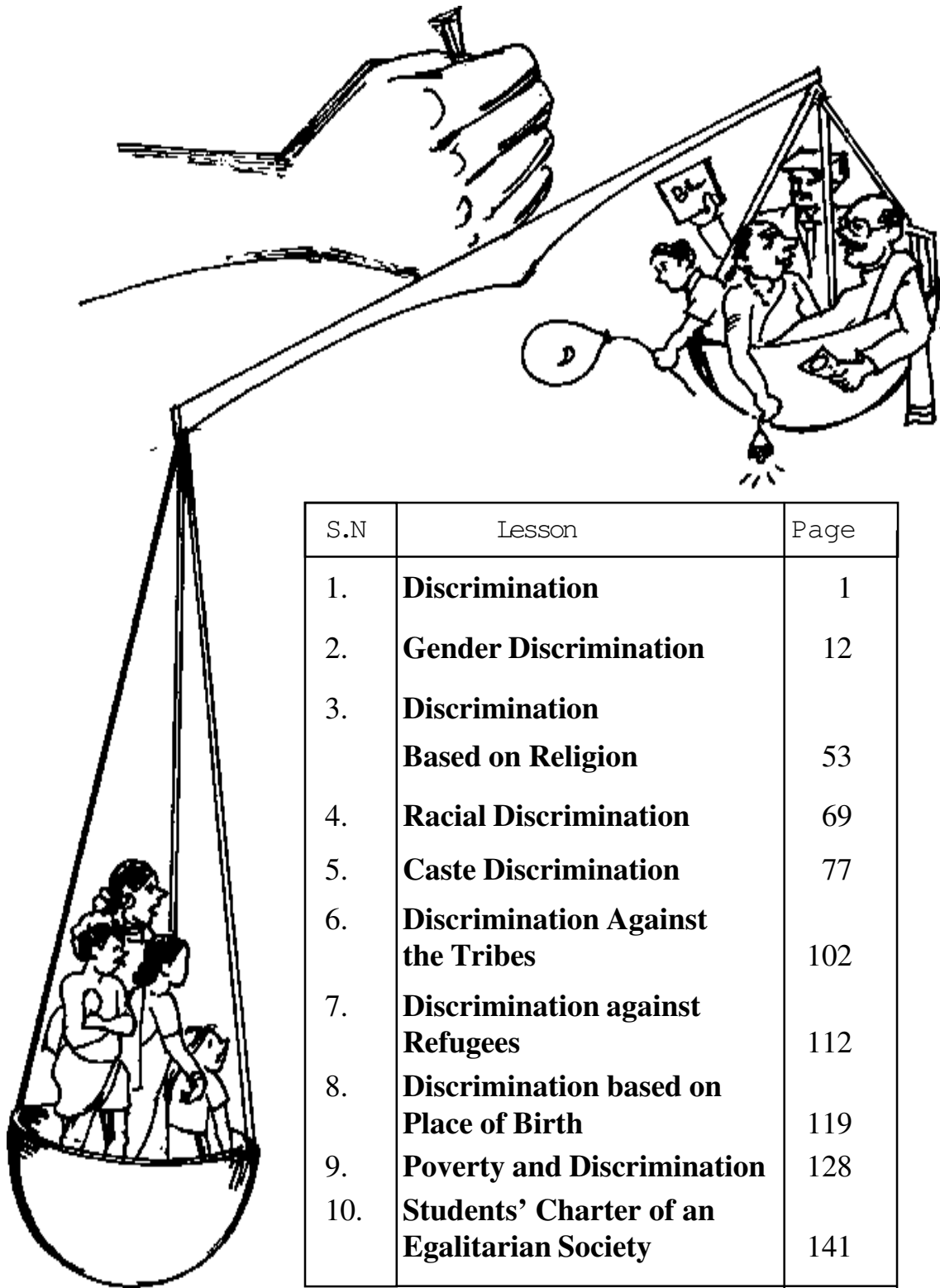
We know Human Rights Education cannot be text-book-based, and so, as far as possible, we have structured the lessons in such a way as to encourage student participation. As the text is prescribed for the students who have completed two years of Human Rights Education, the course content is heavy. But we have tried to present it in a very simple language.

Many teaching techniques like the following are used in each lesson.

- *Objectives of the lesson*
- *Teacher's activity*
- *Stories*
- *Real life stories*
- *Poems*
- *Quotations*
- *Reflections*
- *Question-answer*
- *Speech*
- *Home work*
- *Class work*
- *Writing essays and poems*
- *Dialogue*
- *Discussion*
- *Human Rights Conventions and Charters etc.,*
- *Indian Constitution*
- *Protection of Human Rights Acts*
- *Visiting places*
- *Statistics*
- *Pictures*
- *Letter writing / Interviewing*
- *Group discussion etc*

We believe that the dedication of the teachers and their teaching methodology will ensure the participation of the students and thus, fulfil our aim.





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