

Values Education and Human Rights

Suneel Kulkarni

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of Human Rights & IHL, Saurashtra University, Rajkot, India

Abstract

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a reminder of the fundamental human standards that we need to live by. The truths of this document constitute a basic plan for daily life. It reminds us of our rights and also the responsibilities toward our fellow human beings. Recognition of these rights and responsibilities is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world. However, despite its endorsement and actions to uphold it, human rights continue to be violated at all levels. We are unable to do what we want to do to implement clear aspirations that would give us a better quality of life. The aspirations of the Declaration are neither physically nor financially impossible. They give us a direction of a way of life, and values, which we all believe in. Values Education must be at the centre of our efforts along with various components of education. Effective Human Rights Education must help individuals identify and adopt personal and social values which they must respect to guide their decisions, relationships, work, and life as a whole. Human values and rights are universal in nature. Education can not limit itself by content, gender bias, or age cut-off. We cannot understand rights and responsibilities without understanding values on which they are based. Values such as respect, responsibility, love, honesty, tolerance, and cooperation must be role-modeled and practically experienced. A living Values Education Programme is prepared by a nonprofit partnership and endorsed by UNESCO and Brahma Kumaris. The programme identified 12 key personal and social values cooperation, freedom, happiness, honesty, humility, love, peace, respect, responsibility, simplicity, tolerance, and unity. The paper elaborates on the Results achieved by the programme. UGC in 1985 prepared a blueprint for promotion of Human Rights teaching and research at all levels of education. The paper elaborates on The National Policy on Education and its emphasis on Value Education. In the present times there is a universal concern in respect of erosion of values. It is important to educate our youth in Human Rights and Duties Education, The paper concludes with “All of us collectively determine the future of humanity. The more we accept the personal challenge and responsibility of bringing these values back into our daily lives, the more everyone’s rights will be observed and more certain and secure the future will be. The choice, and the consequences, are ours.”

Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, every time we look at it, offers us a reminder of the fundamental human standards that we need to live by. It is one of the most inspiring documents written in recent times and its simple truths constitute a basic plan for daily life. It reminds us of our rights and also the responsibilities that we have toward our fellow human beings. Recognition of these rights and responsibilities is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world. However, after more than 50 years of the Declaration by the United Nations General Assembly,

and despite its widespread endorsement and actions to uphold it, human rights continue to be violated on an international, social, professional, and interpersonal level.

The vision of what we want to achieve is clear from the UDHR. Universal observance of fundamental rights and freedoms. The Declaration is a vision that has now been endorsed by most governments, and claimed by individuals worldwide. And yet, notwithstanding its universality, its standards are often kept on the backseat of social progress, leaving exploitation, violence, and injustice to prevail in one form or another. It is as if the link between what we wish and action, between principle and practice, has been broken, leaving a wide gap between what we believe and accept as correct and what we actually do.

This brings up the question of why we are unable to do what we want to do to implement clear aspirations that would give us a better quality of life. The aspirations of the Declaration may be high, but are they really beyond our reach? They are certainly neither physically nor financially impossible and they have widespread political acceptance; they give us a direction of a way of life, and values, which we all believe in and identify with. So how can we implement the common standards of achievement set out in the Declaration.

Importance and Need for Values Education

Education must be at the centre of our efforts and, along with various components of education, we must focus on the value system which is the framework around which the Declaration has been made.

Effective Human Rights Education must help individuals identify and adopt personal and social values which they must respect to guide their decisions, relationships, work, and life as a whole. It must help them develop a depth of character and a clear sense of their own identity, integrity, and what they believe to be important in life.

As the human values and rights are universal in nature, it is clear that education can not limit itself by content, gender bias, or age cut-off. Education must become a universal, lifelong learning process for the family and community, as well as the classroom, as places of learning. In a world where rights are often abused, leading to poverty, deprivation, and insecurity of many kinds, the maximization of all inner personal resources is essential. A values-based and rights-based approach to education requires that all within society are engaged in learning, for themselves and others.

We must keep learning about the rights we have as individuals and also about the responsibilities which go with them. For this purpose, we must respect the values which are the building blocks and the very essence of rights and responsibilities. We cannot truly understand rights and responsibilities without first understanding the values on which they are based.

It is important how we learn about and teach these values. Young minds have energy, drive, and curiosity, but need guidance and road-markers if their journey toward responsible citizenship, maturity, and wisdom is to be secure and successful. Such guidance should respect and reflect the dignity, individuality, and freedom of the learner. Values such as respect, responsibility, love, honesty, tolerance, and cooperation must not just be thrown down at youth from on-high but role-modeled and practically experienced if they are to be freely inculcated and become part of the instinctive and spontaneous behavior of young people. In a suitable environment, youth can learn, acquire, and express such values and corresponding attitudes, habits,

and behavior. Indeed, young minds are often a more fertile ground within which such values may grow and flourish, and in preparing the world citizens of the 21st century, education must have human, moral, and spiritual principles and values at its heart, and the resulting expression of them as its aim.

The Living Values Programme

Addressing this need, a Living Values Education Programme was prepared by a nonprofit partnership among educators from around the world. It is endorsed by UNESCO and sponsored by the Spanish National Committee of UNICEF, the Planet Society of UNESCO, and the Brahma Kumaris, an international nongovernmental organization (NGO), in consultation with the Education Cluster of UNICEF (New York). The programme offers a package of materials containing practical methodologies and tools for use by teachers and parents to enable children to explore and develop 12 key personal and social values. These are, **cooperation, freedom, happiness, honesty, humility, love, peace, respect, responsibility, simplicity, tolerance, and unity.**

The program grew out of an international project which was started in 1995 by the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, an NGO in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and in consultative status with UNICEF, to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the UN. Called Sharing Our Values for a Better World, the project focused on 12 core values. Its theme—adopted from a tenet of the Preamble of the United Nations Charter—was to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person. Living Values: A Guidebook was published as part of this project. It provided value statements on the 12 core values and included activities and facilitated workshops for creating and sustaining positive change. It also contained a small section on values activities for students in the classroom. That sketchy classroom curriculum became the inspiration and impetus for Living Values: An Educational Initiative.

Purpose and Aims of the Programme

The purpose of the program is to provide guiding principles and tools for the development of the whole person, recognizing that the individual is composed of physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. Its aims are the following:

Help individuals think about and reflect on different values and the practical implications of expressing them in relation to themselves, others, the community, and the world at large.

Deepen understanding, motivation, and responsibility with regard to making positive personal and social choices.

Inspire individuals to choose their own personal, social, moral, and spiritual values and be aware of practical methods for developing and deepening them.

Encourage educators and caregivers to look at education as providing students with a philosophy of living, thereby facilitating their overall growth, development, and choices so they may integrate themselves into the community with respect, confidence, and purpose.

The objective of the program is to integrate universal core values in existing school curriculums. From this there may be built an enabling environment in which students can explore their innate values. This, in turn, can lead to the development of an ethos of peace and nonviolence within the classroom and school community. The program

offers practical skills and tools to promote these core values and encourages its users to adapt them according to their cultural, religious, social, and other circumstances. The program aims at building an environment in which youth can be assisted in developing their self-identity from early childhood development, pre, primary, and secondary-school levels.

Results achieved by the programme

1. Behavior changes positively.
2. Student-teacher relations improve.
3. Students are more self-confident, focused.
4. They are more interested in the moral-education class.
5. They have respect for peers.
6. The classroom atmosphere is more peaceful. Students are cooperative.
7. Students' ability to concentrate is increased.
8. Students love the activities and look forward to more.
9. They are more creative, have their own ideas, and want to be heard.
10. Teachers feel more confident of their grasp of the subject and how to teach it as they experience its value and better understand it.
11. Students are proactive.
12. They are able to relate to a situation, their behavior, and the value of the subject.
13. They know how to handle difficult situations.

UGC Guidelines for Human Rights and Values in Education

In 1985, the UGC prepared a blueprint for promotion of Human Rights teaching and research at all levels of education. This blueprint contained proposals for restructuring of existing syllabi, and introduction of new courses and/ or foundation courses in Human Rights. This was for students of all faculties at the under-graduate, graduate and post-graduate levels for both professional and non-professional education. The UGC has been promoting and supporting Human Rights and Duties Education in universities and colleges since the IX Plan and the UGC would continue to strengthen this programme in the X Plan, also.

The National Policy on Education has laid considerable emphasis on Value Education by highlighting the need to make education a forceful tool for cultivation of social and moral values. The policy has stated that in our culturally plural society education should foster universal and eternal values oriented towards the unity and integration of our people.

In the present times of unprecedented changes dislocating traditional values and creating conflict between traditional and new values there is a universal concern in respect of erosion of values, promoting values and culture which fit in with the needs of the modern times. This concern is universal but is more acute for our country

which has led its own distinct culture, worked view and a living value tradition. The process of developing in to a modern nation, with new social, political and economic institutions, and with emphasis on science and technology, has thrown up many new values challenges in all areas of our national life. It is important that we examine these challenges and prepare our youth to face and resolve them.

This scheme has two components

- A. Human Rights and Duties Education
- B. Promotion of Ethics and Human Values

Objectives

- A. Human Rights and Duties Education

The main objectives are as follows:

- a. to develop interaction between society and educational institutions;
- b. to sensitize the citizens so that the norms and values of human rights and duties education programme are realized;
- c. to encourage research activities;
- d. to encourage research studies concerning the relationship between Human Rights and Duties Education and International Humanitarian Law;

- B. Promotion of Ethics and Human Values

The main objectives are as follows:

- i. To create awareness, conviction & commitment to values for improving the quality of life through education, and for advancing social and human well being.
- ii. To encourage universities and colleges to undertake academic and other activities pertaining to teaching, research and extension programmes in respect of values and culture like extramural lectures, seminars, conferences, workshops and orientation programmes for teachers and students.
- iii. To encourage universities to undertake preparation and production of requisite material including books, handbooks, Journals, teaching materials, video CD and films relating to values.

Conclusion

Recent years have seen an erosion of some of the political and geographical walls behind which human rights have been abused, but in their place we often encounter cultural and ethnic differences that are exploited to justify abuses. Awareness of shared values can help us recognize and respect the universality of human rights. To reaffirm faith in the dignity and worth of the human person, we must first understand why we have such worth and then experience it. Human rights are derived from the worth of the individual and that worth can be seen in the exercise of reason and conscience and the expression by the individual of values such as respect, freedom,

and responsibility. We must bring those human values back into our personal, professional, and societal relationships to reaffirm the worth of the individual. When we do so, human rights will be the unwritten laws that will be upheld and followed naturally by everyone, everywhere, as a way of life. It is only when we have such a values-based or even spiritual perspective that we can be free and equal and can truly act toward one another in a spirit of brotherhood as urged by the Declaration. All of us collectively determine the future of humanity. The more we accept the personal challenge and responsibility of bringing these values back into our daily lives, the more everyone's rights will be observed and more certain and secure the future will be. The choice, and the consequences, are ours.

References :

1. Values Education and Human Rights, Living Values Education in Asia by Christopher Drake, Published in Human Rights Education in Asian Schools, Volume Four, March 2001, by Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center, Japan
2. UGC Guidelines for Human Rights and Values in Education

*Paper presented by
Suneel Kulkarni, BE (Mech), LL.M.
Ph.D. research scholar,
Saushtra University.*