



SOCIAL WORK TRANSFORMATION, HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE INDIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract:-

One of the nations that has signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is India. Its written constitution offers a unique blend of legal and non-legal rights. Due to the unique intricacies of the political systems in the nation as well as the various historical, social, and cultural contexts in Indian states, the human rights movement and its intellectual discourse have been tested in India. Human rights are unable to become a widespread movement because to the persistent conventional norms of caste, class, and gender discrimination, poverty, a lack of education, and awareness. With the rise in social and economic inequality, poverty, racial and religious conflicts, natural catastrophes, and population relocation, there is a rising need for social workers to embrace the human rights approach. The authors of this article provide a succinct history of India's reaction to human rights conventions and treaties as well as an update on current human rights practices. The practice of human rights and the defense of the rights of the nation's most vulnerable citizens the impoverished, marginalized, and outcasts start with social work education. It is explored and argued how Indian social work school has modified its curriculum, research, and field practice to integrate the human rights approach. Although though there are many difficulties and disparities in social work views in the education of social workers in India, it is now widely accepted that collective analysis and solidarity would help change social work education in India into a useful field with a human rights perspective.

Keywords:- Education, human rights

Introduction

Human rights and social work are inextricably linked because both emphasize the inherent dignity of people and respect for their well-being through the defense of their rights, whether they are as fundamental as those to food, shelter, clean water, and sanitation, education, health, and a means of subsistence or their political rights as citizens. By recognizing that social work is a profession and academic discipline that is based on a human, the Indian Association of Schools of Social Work and International Federation of Social Workers, two international organizations of social workers, have emphasized the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

With rising social and economic inequality, poverty, religious and civil conflicts, catastrophes, and population displacements, social workers are being called on to embrace the human rights approach. Globalization, privatization, and liberalization that prioritize commerce and markets above human well-being have exacerbated human rights violations, especially in nations that have had to cut public spending on health, education, and social services. Addressing these concerns from a human rights perspective in social work education is undisputed (Nadkarni 2014: xi). Social work and human rights are related since both deal with marginalized, vulnerable, and discriminated persons whose rights are more fragile and harder to protect. Human rights work requires passion for justice and rage

against injustice and exploitation (Ife 2001).

Defining Human Rights

Human rights are a collection of ideas concerning equal and inalienable rights of all persons necessary for their well-being and dignity. Nationally, human rights concentrate on connections between people, organizations, and companies and society, particularly government, to ensure respect for all persons. Civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights are intertwined. The UDHR inspires millions of individuals seeking self-determination and serves as a universal norm (UN 1948:1).

Although the ideal of human rights values of dignity and equality for all human beings—can be found in practically every culture, civilization, religion, and intellectual tradition, rulers and governments have ignored them unless compelled to do so by the citizenry or international dynamics. It develops when individuals are diligent and courageous to defend their own and others' rights (Levin 1981). Our experience of the evolution of human society has revealed that social, economic, and political growth helps establish an acceptable framework for the notion of human rights, which is crucial to creating a human rights awareness.

A country's human rights environment relies on its decision makers' vision, society's strength, law's depth, institutions' vitality, and state's discretionary powers (Haragopal and Jagannatham 2009). Social workers undoubtedly create this climate.

Historical Moorings of Human Rights in India

Human rights activities in colonial and independent India differ. The British government established the Child Marriage Restriction Act in 1929 and banned Sati in British territory in 1829 at the request of Indian social reformers and leaders.

India proclaimed itself a secular, socialist, and democratic republic despite the inherent asymmetries between post-colonial India's ideals and the historically stratified civil society based on religion, race, language, tribe, caste, physical location, and gender (Ray, 2003).

India signed UDHR. Its written constitution grants distinct justiciable and non-justiciable rights. Under section III of the Indian Constitution, the first generation of human rights civil and political rights including life, religion, speech, press, association, and mobility were enforced. Most of the second generation of social, economic, and cultural human rights education, employment, livelihood, just and fair work conditions, food, housing, health, welfare, and social security measures for women, children, tribals, and minorities were placed in the non-justiciable directive principles of state policy in part IV of the constitution.

The third generation of collective human rights includes new concerns like development, environment, refugees, displaced persons, and vulnerable groups that have been stated through many UN special covenants, such as civil and political rights (1966), economic, social, and cultural rights (1966), rights of development (1986), against torture (1984), against gender discrimination (1979), and rights of the child (1989). Ironically, free India maintained the civil and criminal process code, the penal code of 1860, and preventive detention laws from colonial authority. India's current human rights discourse framework includes these people' rights and legal restrictions.

People's Struggles for Protection of Human Rights and State Response

In 1936, famous freedom fighters created the All India Civil Liberties Union to establish



the right to challenge the government. This union paved the stage for citizen movements to investigate political incarceration, police brutality, authoritarian freedom limits, and consciousness-raising. The first Indian civil liberties organization, the Madras Civil Liberties Union, was founded in 1948 in free India, followed by a similar committee in West Bengal. The Communist Party of India started this phase for comrades persecuted by the authorities. Regrettably, the Party could not develop more comprehensive programs or expand its civil rights basis (Chakrabarti 2011).

The Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR) in West Bengal founded the first non-party human rights group in the 1970s, followed by the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Committee and others. These organizations demanded that the state halt all inhumane and undemocratic activities, release all political prisoners, and remove harsh legislation like the Preservation of Internal Security Act (Chakrabarti 2011). The People's Union for Civil Liberties and Democratic Rights was created during the Emergency (1975–1976) to preserve people's rights. Jayprakash Narayan's demand for Sampoorna Kraanti (Complete Revolution) rallied youth from throughout India together to fight the government's onslaught on people's rights and win the 1977 legislative elections.

Regional and national civil rights groups followed. Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and UN Committees supported these groups. Throughout time, institutions, procedures, and scholarly interest have turned the more or less crises-linked, political party-based organizations' fight into a citizen movement.

India's complicated political processes and varied historical, social, and cultural conditions have tested the human rights movement and its intellectual discourse. Popularizing and internalizing human rights into a broad movement is hampered by caste, class, and gender inequalities, poverty, and a lack of education and awareness. The Brights-giving constitution has failed the impoverished working masses and brutal laws have stripped away rights. The right to livelihood, food, health, and nutrition is still a fantasy in India, undermining human rights initiatives. Hence, people and organizations must defend the rights of the powerless.

Notwithstanding the National Human Rights Commission and national commissions for safeguarding, conserving, and promoting the rights of women, children, minorities, and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, these groups remain the most disadvantaged. Dalit and women are more visible in electoral politics than political democracy and human rights. An activist claimed that Dalit women are excluded from government welfare empowerment programs and the battle for equality is lengthy and hard (Devika 2014).

Due to uncontrolled industrialisation and mineral-based industries in tribal lands, state and non-state entities routinely violate the fundamental rights of indigenous Indians (Mehtar 2009). Liberalization, privatization, and globalization in agriculture have lowered subsidies, increased competition, and diminished social security, resulting in poverty, stress, and farmer suicides in the recent decade (Moffatt et al. 2011).

Human Rights Watch has also noted that government authorities designed to defend human rights have ignored the increased number of recorded incidents of violence against children, minorities, including LGBT people, persons with disabilities, HIV/AIDS victims, and human rights advocates (Human Rights Watch 2014). Maybe it's due to political



ambiguity about a group's fundamental rights. . India's rejection to co-sponsor a UNHRC resolution condemning early and coerced child marriages likely reflects the government's theoretical disagreement on women's and children's rights. Although NGOs and child marriage prohibition officers work to prevent child weddings and utilize multi-pronged tactics, their efforts would be more effective if the government recognized this issue as a human rights violation and found remedies.

Human Rights and the Indian Legal Framework

The Preventive Detention Act since independence, Punjab Security Act 1955, Assam Disturbed Areas Act 1955, and Armed Forces (Assam and Manipur) Special Powers Act 1958 have remained since the mid-1950s and appear to be anomalies in the democratic system. 20–30 central or state coercive activities maintain law enforcement above the law (Haragopal and Jagannatham 2009). To combat terrorism, the 2008 Illegal Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act grants the state unchecked authority. Terrorism has enhanced the government's extra-judicial capabilities.

Critics say law enforcement uses the same tactics as terrorists, making the state more undemocratic (Haragopal and Jagannatham 2009). NHRC received around 1600 extrajudicial death complaints in five years (Human Rights Watch 2014). Police have used the Information Technology Act and Foreign Contribution Control Act to target government critics and human rights advocates.

Indian courts have defended human rights in real ways. Public interest litigation (PIL) in the early 1980s empowered the court to promote human rights. The people's human rights movement is also encouraged by the NHRC's recent official and informal partnerships with civil rights organisations. Accountability and openness in state-run institutions have begun with legal changes in prisons, elections, police, and judiciary. Reviewing restrictive laws helps decriminalize institutions that promote democracy and human rights. The Right to Information Act, 2005, which resulted from civil society pressure, has brought transparency to governance and ensured citizens' right to know about the real-time functioning of governments and their agencies, to access data on government programs, and to know the rationale for decisions (Economic & Political Weekly 2015). .

Human Rights in Social Work Education

Human rights may help students cross social, cultural, and economic borders and understand global interdependencies, therefore many social sciences study them (Hornberg 2002). Sustainability and human rights education intersect. It may also give values for multicultural and multi-faith communities like India (Ian Lister, Cited In Ryszard Pachocinski 1993).

Throughout the last two decades, as arguments regarding procedure, content, and how to assess human rights education have grown more serious, social work education has integrated the human rights viewpoint and strategy more intentionally. .

Three approaches are most popular for teaching human rights: values and awareness, accountability, and transformative. HRE's key goal under the values and awareness model is to spread human rights knowledge, integrate it into public values, and relate it to democratic principles and practice. The accountability approach is legal/political and emphasizes leadership and professional training and networking on human rights legislation and codes, court case monitoring, codes of ethics, media relations, and public



awareness.

HRE programming under the transformational model empowers individuals and communities to notice and prevent human rights violations (Tibbitts 2002). Suarez warns that teaching human rights extends beyond the three models since it's about human life (Suárez 2007). The UN provides a vision for everybody to follow, but local academic communities may design and construct a human rights education model that takes into account the country's reaction to economic, social, and cultural globalization and policies enforced by lending agencies, governments, or political elites.

The International Association of Schools of Social Work and International Federation of Social Workers released A Handbook for Schools of Social Work and the Social Work Profession in 1992 under the UN Centre for Human Rights. The goal was to increase human rights awareness and build international institutions to defend them. Its stated goal was to enable social workers apply human rights principles to individual, community, national, and international participation. The handbook might be used for social worker continuing education, infusing human rights information into foundation or elective courses, or starting new courses to improve it (United Nations Centre for Human Rights 1994). The latest IFSW guidebook references a UN 1994 document: Article 1.4.3: Human rights are integral to social work philosophy, ethics, and practice. Hence, Social Work must advocate for such rights, especially in authoritarian contexts where such advocacy might be dangerous. The 2014 Global Definition of Social Work and the Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development guide social workers in theory, practice, and knowledge growth.

The Indian Scenario of Social Work Education

India's extensive heritage of philanthropy and community service, guided by religious scriptures, social and religious reformers, and Gandhian thinking, predates established social work organizations (Gore 1988). Social workers and non-social workers have contributed to civil and political rights, women's empowerment, and labor rights battles. They've helped each other.

Human rights were important in 1960s social work literature. In his 1968 address at the World Conference on Social Welfare, Gore (1969) connected social work to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights because both recognize the value and dignity of every person, regardless of their material or social status. Phadke (1968) examined structural concerns that perpetuate poverty, child labor, and a lack of a healthy environment and stressed the significance of social workers in human rights work. She noted that food, clothes, and shelter are the foundation for other rights (p. 22). She believed social workers should be more active in tackling systemic inequality and building an egalitarian society for everyone (Phadke 1968, p. 26). Sarvodaya was Gandhian.

Indian social work has been sluggish to adopt the human rights approach, despite the insights of senior social workers and academics. During the last two decades, official social work education in India has changed from the remedial, rehabilitative western model of the mid-1940s to an indigenous model that promotes social development and transformation. The University Grants Commission (UGC) developed the 2001 UGC



Model Curriculum for social work education programs in the late 1980s and 1990s (Nadkarni, 2014). On behalf of the National Assessment and Accreditation Council, Indian social work school representatives developed basic requirements in 2004. They set national social work education goals, addressing gender, age, race, caste, and creed discrimination. Democratizing socio-economic and political institutions by enabling individuals to demand fundamental rights and resources. Culturally sensitive problem-solving, research, lobbying, disaster management, conflict resolution, policy formation, and organizational management training (NAAC 2005: 7-11).

The Global Agenda for Social Work and Social Development focused social workers on four main issues: social and economic inequality, dignity of individuals, environmental sustainability, and human connections. Implementing this vision is difficult.

Consequently, Indian social work education has been able to adapt to new needs and difficulties, indigenizing and internationalizing its curriculum virtually simultaneously. Social work schools in India are gradually adding the human rights viewpoint into their curricula and pioneering initiatives and policy reforms to safeguard children, girls, women, and their rights to education, health, and livelihood (Nadkarni 2013, p. 4). Several NGOs and social workers have embraced these fields since they use social work and human rights expertise. LGBT, HIV/AIDS, and disability rights are new social worker concerns. Social workers have worked alongside social, legal, community, development, and health activists on grassroots human rights issues. Human rights-based social work, especially when it involves community rights, requires structural changes and root cause eradication. This requires passion, tenacity, patience, and hope for societal change. Social workers seek these via advocacy.

Human Rights Practice at the Grassroots

Indian social workers have advocated for indigenous land and forest rights, dam-displaced people's rights, and other causes. Social workers started movements against major dams, for the rights of displaced people, and for Dalit women. Civil society and community-based environmental, forest, land, and water organizations supported this. Surveys by well-established social work institutes and other social research organizations were used to mobilize worldwide opinion and petition the government for policy change (Essential Thinkers 2013).

Social workers helped pass the 2005 Right to Information Act. They joined the activists who fought the government for transparency in the allotment of employment and salaries to impoverished farmers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which led to the Right to Information Bill. The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan, a non-party people's organization founded in 1990 to provide minimum salaries to drought-affected rural labor, chronicled the process. Evidence collection, communicating study results with the people, and positioning them to pose questions to the local government via open public hearings (called jan sunwais) concerning program expenditures and beneficiaries were the techniques used (Roy Aruna and Dey Nikhil undated). Indian social professionals head international human rights groups like Amnesty International.

Social work-based universities strive for equality and social justice. The university may be a paradigm for social change in many sectors where skilled individuals are needed to work

on mental illness rights, senior care, adolescent and youth care, livelihoods and environmental sustainability, and more. The Tata Institute of Social Sciences and College of Social Work, Nirmala Niketan in Mumbai have taught and practiced human rights. Faculty and students use field activity to uncover issues and exhibit local innovations. These practices are studied and incorporated into policy.

Rita Panicker, director of Butterflies, a child rights Group, examined child rights in the Indian Journal of Social Work (Panicker 1998). She stressed the need for academics to collaborate with NGOs on research and documentation and to see child rights holistically since children are part of families and wider systems that require societal change. Social work has guided child rights initiatives via child protection statutes and child welfare commissions over the last two decades. These commissions and child welfare committees include social workers. Social workers working with non-governmental organizations have mobilized and trained rural poor communities to monitor primary health care clinics to guarantee excellent health care, which is essential to their right to health.

Community-based monitoring encourages people and their representatives, such as community-based groups, people's movements, volunteer organizations, and Panchayati Raj Institution representatives, to provide feedback on public health services and demand excellent services. Healthcare professionals, management, the community, community-based groups, NGOs, and Panchayati Raj Institutions work together in this process. Instead of "fault finding," "fact-seeking" and "learning lessons" are emphasized (Garg and Laskar, 2010). This "letting people talk" approach represents a more equal client-provider relationship in professional social work.

The aforementioned examples show the extent of human rights activity at the field level by practitioners and social work colleges/schools/departments and the necessity to investigate and record these experiences and generate social work knowledge for social work education. . The last segment will discuss possibilities and problems.

Opportunities and Challenges

Social work theory and practice are more human rights-oriented than other social sciences. As social work trainees learn best from field experiences, the first step in educating social workers in human rights is creating social work educational institutions real models for protecting and developing human rights. They must become empowered learning institutions. What do we tell our students when they know about their human rights but can't find meaningful means to achieve them?

This framework shows that many Indian social work schools and departments are founded on compassion, liberal welfarism, and religion. They may not be anti-human rights, but their vision-mission statements do not support human rights as forcefully as those that do. The rights approach shifts from needs fulfillment to safeguarding rights via empowerment and authority accountability.

Human rights education is a critical pedagogy that requires major structural changes in schools. Due to the need to minimize the inescapable power structure in formal educational institutions, social work professors may lose respect (Suárez, 2007).

Social work training institutes may be hesitant to include human rights in their curriculum



since it typically involves opposing government policy, particularly if they receive government subsidies. Social work training programs must include human rights teaching without being accused by their government of subverting its authority and creating unrest in young minds. How do you explain the government's argument for delaying some rights till the country's political economy is robust when students are studying universality and inalienability of human rights? When the government fails to promote human rights, these issues arise.

A written HR policy may prevent discrimination against disadvantaged students and workers. . The school's structure, rules, and procedures must reflect its respect for human rights to ensure fair admissions, assessments, hiring, firing, and promotions of professors and staff. The IASSW Global Standards for Social Work Education and Training also states this.

Social protection strategies to implement affirmative action and assist underprivileged students and employees may help the institution respect human rights ideals. Gay organizations are demanding college admission. A non-biased LGBT youth admittance policy would demonstrate the institution's appreciation for LGBT rights. Integrating the RTI document into the institution's system increases openness. The school's dedication to human rights penetrates its structure and stimulates study.

Second, student-faculty interactions must be open and transparent, striving for equality, mutual collaboration, reducing hierarchy, protecting students' rights, and confronting all types of oppression. HRE, which is motivating, humanizing, and practical, demands an interactive, participatory educational method to transform attitudes and behaviors (Tibbitts, 2002). Working in repressive systems may lead to being part of the system, which can only be fixed by regularly identifying and addressing issues. Employing teaching that supports students to fight for social justice and student rights is vital. The hierarchical power of teaching in formal education systems necessitates ongoing reflection and readiness to overcome problems. Hence, social work institutions should develop democratic staff-student associations, complaint redressal committees, and sexual harassment committees to facilitate faculty-student contact. Social workers must learn to protect their own rights and oppose unfair and unjust institutions that deny others their human rights. They need the rights perspective and abilities to make human rights a reality in their communities. Social work should encourage human rights. Field visits, field work practicums, and internships with rights-based groups and campaigns have improved Indian social work education (Ejaz 1991, p. 301). Due to the lack of human rights-oriented local Organizations and government entities, field practicum locations are few.

As said, creative field action projects have helped certain social work schools fill the gap. They may expand by becoming independent Organizations. Such initiatives teach research and advocacy.

A human rights-based pan-Indian social work curriculum is difficult to achieve because of social work college diversity. . During a 1990s Tata Institute of Social Sciences alumni convention, there was a distinct disagreement over social work's future: conscientization of the excluded, remedial orientation, and clinical social work (Desai 1991 referenced in Nadkarni 2013). This problem is difficult to solve. Faculty unwillingness to try new things is a barrier to fully incorporating human rights into social work curricula. Due to a shortage

of curriculum-ready resources. Social work textbooks in regional languages are rare. Many students, especially English-medium graduates, don't properly grasp this second language (Sajitha 2015). Building suitable human rights resources for social work schools in 29 states and seven union territories in India is difficult due to language, educational development, and local human rights challenges. Teach behavior, attitude, and empowerment skills. Consequently, human rights instructors must be both theoretical and practical. This is still a serious issue, particularly for rural universities.

The contrast between conventional social work, which emphasizes needs-based help, and social work that promotes human rights, which has strengthened with globalization, is a fundamental issue. In this environment, policymakers, service providers, and many social workers emphasize the need to reconcile needs-based support with human rights.

Conclusion

To documentation, and sharing of success stories and best practices; (b) to identify clear goals for learners, develop a pedagogy built on sound knowledge of learner, learning theory, and developmental theory; and (c) prepare trainers by defining standards for theoretical and practical training, theoretical perspective, skills, and expertise (Tibbitts, 2002).

Indian social work education struggles to get societal and governmental legitimacy while assuring basic requirements of quality in newly established social work colleges. Support for a central body for professional social work that monitors and regulates social work education and practice and provides curricular direction is likely to advance social work recognition. UGC and social work associations may improve things. They might also ask agencies like IASSW's Committee on Human Rights, which has been practically active, for help arranging human rights seminars and training. IASSW funding helped Indian social workers establish a solid social work education organization in December 2013. The organization might also prevent private social work institutions from sprouting without appropriate facilities for excellent social work education.

Social work educators and curriculum experts today recognize that collaborative analysis and solidarity will help convert Indian social work education into a human rights-based field.

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