



HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION IN INDIA (2000). By R.M. Pal and Somen Chakraborty (Eds.). Indian Social Institute, New Delhi. Pp. 337. Price Rs. 300 (paper back) & Rs. 450 (hard cover).

UNIVERSITIES IN India started the programme of teaching human rights as a separate subject a few years ago. At the school level the NCERT has prepared textbooks with human rights perspective. This is one of the processes that has taken off in early nineties with setting up of the National Human Rights Commission, National Commission for Women and other human rights institutions in order to strengthen a human rights culture in our society. A review of this policy decision and its impact with regard to promotion of its stated objectives has long been overdue.

With this end in view the Indian Social Institute organised a two-day national workshop. The volume under review is the outcome of this workshop. The contributors are a select group of social scientists, social researchers and renowned academicians. Twenty-six authors have analysed human rights teaching from their respective areas of expertise and experience. It provides readers with valuable insight on methodologies and contents of human rights education programme in schools and universities.

The contents of the book are arranged in four sections. The first section containing seven papers deals with perspective and pedagogy of human rights education. Renowned scholars including Rajni Kothari, Ambrose Pinto, Imtyaz Ahmad, R.M. Pal and Pandav Nayak have elaborately discussed about pedagogies of human rights education from their respective ideological premises and raised certain perennial questions on this subject, as for example, how to effectuate social engineering through human rights education programmes. One common thing comes out from this discussion is that human rights education cannot be degree-centric. This, on the contrary, needs to be life-centric. This is possible if the entire framework of a human rights education programme is formulated on the issue of human rights violations. The process must start early, to say, may be at the primary level itself. Taking slightly different track Jean Dreze argues that the right to education itself is a subject of human rights. Therefore, one must be clear about its meaning when making human rights education a distinct academic subject. Virendra Dayal's paper is a summary of various activities carried out by the NHRC to make human rights education effective and meaningful.

The second section makes a brief account of the role of educational institutions in promoting human rights education. Based on field studies



two papers, one by Professor Arjun Dev and other by NIEPA conclude that students generally understand about human rights and they are informed of human rights violations. However, many of them are not very clear about various complexities involved in the subject. In his paper Professor Mool Chand Sharma reminds us that human rights education has to be multi-disciplinary. The editor-duo of the volume R.M. Pal and Somen Chakraborty's notes on University Grants Commission's approach on human rights education and human rights curriculum of a few universities are highly informative. Their analysis and views on NCERT's guidelines on human rights and the contents of a select number of their school textbooks are eye opening.

The third section deals with seven different societal violations and their relevance in human rights education programme. Two papers, one by Iqbal Ansari and another by Abdulrahim P. Vijapur remind us that there has been a tendency by a section of social scientists to project Muslims as invaders and not an integral part of the Indian polity. With historical details Vijapur reinforces the fact that during the entire medieval period India had never witnessed hostility and, distrust between Hindus and Muslims. In fact, a harmonious and healthy relationship between these two communities prevailed throughout that period. The authors apprehend that after the communal forces have taken the centre stage in Indian political life there is a renewed threat to vitiate this relationship. With support of substantive cases Arul Aram convincingly argues that predomination of upper caste Hindus restrains media to become human rights friendly. D.K. Giri and Irish Ruebel find dowry not only a symbol of gender discrimination but instrumental to perpetuate violations of women's rights. In the light of international conventions and statutes Joseph Gathia makes a case that human rights education must aim towards changing an individual first and eventually it should transform the entire society.

Five papers in the penultimate section of the volume throw light on various challenges that the human rights education faces today. It is argued that no human rights culture can be promoted unless the present socio-political system, which is by nature violative of human rights, is not replaced by a new socio-economic system. While addressing the human rights violations of specific target groups is important, it is essential that macro understanding on this subject be emanated through the classroom teaching. Mahi Pal finds that democratic decentralisation through *Panchayati Raj* institutions can be a powerful instrument in promoting and protecting human rights.

The purpose of the book is to give readers ideas and reflections that may help in accelerating the process of generating a human rights culture. In that respect the volume under review can be said largely successful. The editors deserve appreciation because they have dealt the subject with



due professionalism, proficiency and masterly command over the subject. Little more care in proof reading would have reduced the number of spelling mistakes, which in a few cases have distorted crucial constructions of phrases and terminologies. The volume will be an important reference material for those who are engaged in teaching of human rights, policy makers and human rights activists. For the libraries and human rights documentation centres the volume will be a worthy collection.

*Furqan Ahmad**

* Associate Research Professor, Indian Law Institute, New Delhi.



BOOKS RECEIVED FOR REVIEW

K.S.R.G. PRASAD, *Why the Bar Protests against Recent Amendments to Civil Procedure Code? A Critique of Amendment Act, 46 to 1999* (2000). Asia Law House, Opp. High Court, Hyderabad – 2 & Warangal Law House, Advocates Colony, Hanamakonda. Pp. 110. Price Rs. 60/-.

N. MAHESHWARA SWAMY, *Law relating to Limitation* (2001). Asia Law House, Opp. High Court, Hyderabad – 2. Pp. (Vol. 1 & 2) liv+lxviii+2039+S19. Price Rs. 1395/-.

JANAK RAJ JAI, *Bail Law and Procedures with tips to avoid police harassment* (2001). Universal Law Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd. C-FF, -IA, Ansal's Dilkhush Industrial Estate, G.T. Karnal Road, Delhi – 110033. Pp. xxiii+348. Price Rs. 225/-.

HARNAM BHAYANA, *International Law in the Regime of Outer Space* (2001). R. Cambray & Co. Pvt. Ltd., Kent House, P-33, Mission Row Extension, Calcutta - 700013. Pp. xxiii+357. Price Rs. 400/-.

S.R. MYNENI, *Jurisprudence (Legal Theory)* (2001). Asia Law House, Opp. High Court, Hyderabad – 2. Pp. xxxii+592. Price Rs. 225/-.