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RESEARCH ARTICLE

TOWARDS FEMINISM THROUGH HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Right means a legal entitlement to something or someone. Human Right is a birth right of individual men and women to basic freedom such as freedom of speech, association, education, etc... They are fundamental and non transferable for every human being and consideration as essential for a person living as a human being. Human Rights are possessed by Human Being irrespective of caste, creed, race, religion, nationality, sex, color, etc. Any right relating to life, liberty, equality, dignity and that is guaranteed by the provisions of Indian Constitution are Human Rights. Present Era focuses more on Gender Equality and initiates more Schemes and opportunities for women. It is made compulsory in colleges to study Human Rights as a Subject. The researcher conducted a study among the Post Graduate Students of Sacred Heart College who learn Human Rights as a Subject to know the impact of studying it as a subject and whether it contributes towards feminism. The study was done using Descriptive Research Design with thirty samples. Analysis was done using Statistical Package for Social Science in which Single frequency, Bivariate analysis, chi -square test and t- test was used.

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INTRODUCTION

Women constitute half of the population and their development reflects the progress of Society. The Status women in Society is measured in terms of level of income, employment, education, health as well as the role played in the family, community and society. They have a prominent role in all the spheres viz. agriculture industries, profession like medical, engineering, science & technology, research, etc. In past women were considered merely as home makers or child laborers. But the times have gone. Now the women have got equal rights in comparison to men. They take initiative to work and to earn money to survive their family. This is commonly called as Feminism. The term "Women rights" is perhaps better referred to as "Human Rights of women to emphasize the universality and indivisibility of all human rights and their application to women as human beings". According to Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by General Assembly in 1948 Article 1, All Human Beings are born free, equal in dignity and Rights and International Covenants of Civil and Political Rights which was adopted by General Assembly in 1996, Women Rights is one of the Rights in Human Rights and in which Article 3 says that Human Beings have right to life, liberty and security and Article 21 says no person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty, right to life with human dignity.

Apart from all these Rights again we create a forum for women and fight for their rights and opportunities in the name of Feminism. To bring in awareness of all these women rights and principles now Human Rights has been made as a compulsory subject for students in schools and college. So the Researcher carried out a mini research to find out whether there is any change or awareness among students regarding women rights and opportunities among the post graduate students (MSW) of Sacred Heart College. In this Study the researcher took College as the place of study since the female population was comparably equal to the population of male and moreover it was a Rural area where the college is situated, so that there was a chance of finding out whether even students from rural area and economically backward family are really aware of women rights.

METHODOLOGY

The Researcher used Descriptive Design so that the study topic can be described in brief. The Respondents were Girl Students of Sacred Heart College who learn Human Rights as a Subject, among them thirty samples were selected using convenient sampling method. The Data collected was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science and further test was used to find relationship between variables.

What is Feminism?

According to Oxford Dictionary, "Feminism is a collection of movements and ideologies that share a common goal: to

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define, establish, and achieve equal political, economic, cultural, personal, and social rights for women. This includes seeking to establish equal opportunities for women in education and employment". How much have women's lives really changed? If this question is answered then it will reveal the correct definition of Feminism. Feminism is the search of equality in regards to women's rights. It has manifested across centuries and continents through various movements, currents and ideologies. (What is Feminism according to you?)

Table 1. Feminism

Feminism	Frequency	Percent
Equal rights	4	13.3
Freedom	3	10.0
Equal opportunity	15	50.0
Personality liberty	8	26.7
Total	30	100.0

The above table says that half (50%) of the respondents have said that if there is equal opportunity provided to them equal to men then they call it as feminism and a little more than one fourth (26.7%) of the respondents had the opinion that if there comes personality liberty for women then it is feminism. It can be inferred that according to the present generation of women they feel when they get equal opportunity and personality liberty they will call it as feminism. Women in India face a lot of social inequalities ranging from gender specific abortions, mistreatment by their spouses, to eve teasing. There is a belief that normally in Educational Institutions girls face a lot of problems from the opposite sex and they also don't get equal rights and opportunities like men. To find out the situation of girls rights in the college where the study was done, the researcher used this variable. From the Data collected it was clearly known to the researcher that all (100%) of the respondents that is the girls in the college were given equal chance, opportunity and recognition for their work.

Human Rights Education

Human Rights are that which is inherent and inbuilt in a person or an individual just because he or she is a human being. It means that any claim of individual in order to safeguard and protect ones welfare can be called as Human Rights. Right means legal entitlement and enforceable. They are fundamental and not transferable. According to Protection of Human Rights Act, Section 2 – 1993 Human Rights are those rights relating to Life, Liberty, Equality and Dignity of the Individual guaranteed by the Indian Constitutions are embodied in the International Covenants and enforceable by Indian Courts. In other words, it asserts one's right to be human. The first sentence of the Declaration states that respect for human rights is the "foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world." The Declaration has influenced the constitutions and legal systems of various countries. It was followed by many other declarations issued at the International Congress on Human Rights (Teheran, 1968), the International Congress on the Teaching of Human Rights (Vienna, 1978) organized by UNESCO, the Seminar on the Teaching of Human Rights (Geneva, 1988), and the United Nations World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), which recommended the adoption of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). Human rights education is stressed in all human rights documents as "an

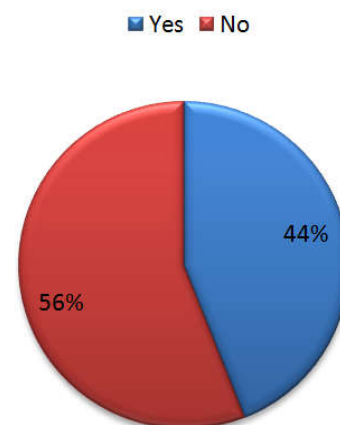
essential contribution to the development of a global human rights culture."

Human rights can only be achieved through an informed and continued demand by people for their protection. Human rights education promotes values, beliefs and attitudes that encourage all individuals to uphold their own rights and those of others. It develops an understanding of everyone's common responsibility to make human rights a reality in each community. Human rights education constitutes an essential contribution to the long-term prevention of human rights abuses and represents an important investment in the Endeavour to achieve a just society in which all human rights of all persons are valued and respected. "You have the right to know, seek and receive information about your human rights and have access to human rights education. Through education you can empower yourself and others to develop the skills and attitudes that promote equality, dignity and respect in your community, society and worldwide", this is why Human Rights Education plays a vital role in the curriculum on present Educational Institutions. (http) Human rights education is an integral part of the right to education and is increasingly gaining recognition as a human right in itself. Knowledge of rights and freedoms is considered a fundamental tool to guarantee respect for the rights of all. Education should encompass values such as peace, non-discrimination, equality, justice, non-violence, tolerance and respect for human dignity. Quality education based on a human rights approach means that rights are implemented throughout the whole education system and in all learning environments.

(Variable: Do you think educating students with human rights as a subject increases the awareness of Rights to be given to women among others?)

Table 2. Awareness through Human Rights Education

Awareness of Human Rights



From the above table it can be clearly said that more than half (56.7%) of the respondents have said that imparting Human Rights as a subject doesn't bring in a major change in men. It should not be educated after certain age but from their birth it should be impacted by their parents and society.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions related to Women

Most women aren't aware of women rights in India and other times their legal rights are not protected as they should be. Women empowerment plays a significant role in letting them

know their rights. Through this article I am going to share few legal and constitutional rights of a woman.

Constitutional Provisions

The Constitution of India not only grants equality to women but also empowers the State to adopt measures of positive discrimination in favour of women for neutralizing the cumulative socio economic, education and political disadvantages faced by them. Fundamental Rights, among others, ensure equality before the law and equal protection of law; prohibits discrimination against any citizen on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, and guarantee equality of opportunity to all citizens in matters relating to employment. Articles 14, 15, 15(3), 16, 39(a), 39(b), 39(c) and 42 of the Constitution are of specific importance in this regard.

Constitutional Privileges

- Equality before law for women (Article 14)
- The State not to discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them (Article 15 (i))
- The State to make any special provision in favor of women and children (Article 15 (3))
- Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State (Article 16)
- The State to direct its policy towards securing for men and women equally the right to an adequate means of livelihood (Article 39(a)); and equal pay for equal work for both men and women (Article 39(d))
- To promote justice, on a basis of equal opportunity and to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or scheme or in any other way to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities (Article 39 A)
- The State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work and for maternity relief (Article 42)
- The State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46)
- The State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people (Article 47)
- To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India and to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women (Article 51(A) (e))
- Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in every Panchayat to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat (Article 243 D(3))
- Not less than one- third of the total number of offices of Chairpersons in the Panchayats at each level to be reserved for women (Article 243 D (4))
- (ix) Not less than one-third (including the number of seats reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes) of the total number of

seats to be filled by direct election in every Municipality to be reserved for women and such seats to be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Municipality (Article 243 T (3))

- (x) Reservation of offices of Chairpersons in Municipalities for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and women in such manner as the legislature of a State may by law provide (Article 243 T (4))

Legal Provisions

To uphold the Constitutional mandate, the State has enacted various legislative measures intended to ensure equal rights, to counter social discrimination and various forms of violence and atrocities and to provide support services especially to working women. Although women may be victims of any of the crimes such as 'Murder', 'Robbery', 'Cheating' etc, the crimes, which are directed specifically against women, are characterized as 'Crime against Women'. These are broadly classified under two categories.

The Crimes Identified Under the Indian Penal Code (IPC)

- Rape (Sec. 376 IPC)
- Kidnapping & Abduction for different purposes (Sec. 363-373)
- Homicide for Dowry, Dowry Deaths or their attempts (Sec. 302/304-B IPC)
- Torture, both mental and physical (Sec. 498-A IPC)
- Molestation (Sec. 354 IPC)
- Sexual Harassment (Sec. 509 IPC)
- Importation of girls (up to 21 years of age)

The Crimes identified under the Special Laws (SLL)

Although all laws are not gender specific, the provisions of law affecting women significantly have been reviewed periodically and amendments carried out to keep pace with the emerging requirements. Some acts which have special provisions to safeguard women and their interests are:

- The Employees State Insurance Act, 1948
- The Plantation Labour Act, 1951
- The Family Courts Act, 1954
- The Special Marriage Act, 1954
- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 with amendment in 2005
- Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956
- The Maternity Benefit Act, 1961 (Amended in 1995)
- Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961
- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971
- The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1976
- The Equal Remuneration Act, 1976
- The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006
- The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983
- The Factories (Amendment) Act, 1986
- Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986
- Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987
- The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

SPECIAL INITIATIVES FOR WOMEN

1. National Commission for Women

In January 1992, the Government set-up this statutory body with a specific mandate to study and monitor all matters relating to the constitutional and legal safeguards provided for women, review the existing legislation to suggest amendments wherever necessary, etc.

2. Reservation for Women in Local Self -Government

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Acts passed in 1992 by Parliament ensure one-third of the total seats for women in all elected offices in local bodies whether in rural areas or urban areas.

3. The National Plan of Action for the Girl Child (1991-2000)

The plan of Action is to ensure survival, protection and development of the girl child with the ultimate objective of building up a better future for the girl child.

4. National Policy for the Empowerment of Women, 2001

The Department of Women & Child Development in the Ministry of Human Resource Development has prepared a "National Policy for the Empowerment of Women" in the year 2001. The goal of this policy is to bring about the advancement, development and empowerment of women. Presently Indian women are facing toughest time as far as their routine personal and life is concerned. Mental and physical torture of women has become quite common and their safety is at stake. One of the problems behind this situation is lack of knowledge of legal and constitutional rights of a woman. Most unfortunate part of this is even women are not fully aware about their rights. This variable was used to find out whether girls doing their higher studies in college are aware of the constitutional provisions to safeguard their rights. (Are you aware of Acts & articles provided for women, Do you think these acts and articles contributes for the change?)

Table 3. Awareness of Legal Provisions

Awareness	Frequency	Percent
Yes	25	83.3
No	5	16.7
Total	30	100.0

From the above table it is clear that most (83.3%) of the respondents were aware of the legal provisions provided to safeguard their rights and only few respondents have said that they generally know that there are certain provisions legally but not aware totally in making use of it.

Feminism and Human Rights Education

The universal declaration for Human Rights Education began in 1995 and since that many programs and activities have been initiated by Government and other organizations to promote Human Rights Education. Human Right Education promotes democratic principles. It examines human rights issues without bias and from diverse perspectives through a variety of educational practices. Human Right Education helps to

develop the communication skills and informed critical thinking essential to a democracy. It provides multicultural and historical perspectives on the universal struggle for justice and dignity. Human right is being taught as a subject to bring in awareness among the children about their Rights and others Rights. In this educating students with the rights related to women both to the girls and boys will bring in some amount of change in the opinion and opportunities related to women. It is clearly believed by the Government that education can bring in vast changes among the future generation. To find out this, the researcher used a variable and found out the impact of Human Rights Education among the college students who study Human Rights as a Subject. (Do you think Human Rights Education will bring change in all aspects, especially in case of women?)

Table 4. Change through Human Rights Education

Bring in Change	Frequency	Percent
Yes	17	56.7
No	13	43.3
Total	30	100.0

From the Study it was known that a little more than half (56.7%) of the respondents have said that by Human Rights education there is a increase in awareness about women and a little less than half (43.3%) of the respondents have said that Human Rights education doesn't bring in change still. It can be inferred that though the education system introduces certain provisions still there is no equal rights and opportunities provided to women even in case of educated people.

Suggestion

The researcher used a variable to find out the suggestions to bring in the awareness of women rights among women and men and came out few suggestions.

Table 5. Suggestion to increase the awareness of women rights

Suggestions	Frequency	Percent
Can create more awareness from schooling	6	20.0
Parents should not compare between boys and girls	3	10.0
Boys they themselves should realize	6	20.0
Treat as a human being	3	10.0
Equal chance in education and employment	5	16.7
Following Acts and Articles more Strictly	7	23.3
Total	30	100.0

From the above table it is said that if the Government follows the Rules and Regulations more strictly and if the parents educate their children from childhood about all these rights and opportunities then there can come in a change in the image of women among women themselves and men in the society.

Conclusion

To conclude I would like to say that Indian women has come a long way and prove that they are capable of doing anything and equal partner in the growth and prosperity of the nation. Women are one of the pillars of the society and it would be very difficult to imagine society without the presence of women. Now it is high time for all of us to understand the power of women. Even our judiciary and legislature has also accepted the fact that women are one of the most important elements of society and their exploitation would not be

accepted at any cost. There is one saying that behind every successful man there is a woman. This saying is enough to prove that man and women both are necessary element of society. Women plays different role in her life which is not an easy task. During her life she acts as daughter, wife, sister and mother at different stages of life. So we must give them due care and respect and understand their efforts towards welfare of the society at large. Through this article I tried my best to cover all the constitutional, judiciary and legislative rights of women against the crimes which they are facing from quite some time now. I hope this article will help us to understand that rights of women are very necessary and Indian law is strong enough to protect her from any kind of harassment. The Study done as also proved that women now a day to some extent enjoy their rights. So it can be inferred that creating more awareness and initiating more activities to increase the awareness through Human Rights Education and also by

following the Acts and Principles Strictly there can be change brought in the Society about the Rights and Opportunities to be provided for Women.

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