MASS AWARENESS
THROUGH
DIFFERENT MEANS
CHAPTER - IV

MASS AWARENESS THROUGH DIFFERENT MEANS

Human Rights means the right relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual. The concept of Human Rights centers around the individual whose survival and existence would be the main concern of all categories of rights, be they social, political, economic or cultural.

For centuries past, the weaker sections of people all over the world have been denied justice—social, economic and political. History is a mute witness to the most inhuman sufferings that man has inflicted on man.¹

In the ancient times law and rights, as understood by the

¹ Law Relating to Protection of Human Rights by Awasthi and Kataria, Dr. S.K. and R.P. p. 2
Hindus, are a branch of Dharma, an expression which signifies ‘duty’. They had not known anything like human rights. "In its earliest development during the Rig Vedic period, law was looked upon as symbolical of not only legal provisions but also of social order."¹ Originally, the ancient society was very simple and the people were very virtuous and God fearing.

"In India, specially in the ancient as well as the medieval age, the society itself used to make and formulate laws for its own governance in its various aspects".³ Former Justice P.N. Bhagawati, Supreme Court of India, in the Seminar on Human Rights organized by I.L.A. Allahabad, submitted in his inaugural address that protection of rights of man was deeply inserted in the Babylonian Laws, Hittite Laws and Dharma of Vedic times in India. Yet people of those days were not serious and conscious about their rights. Though protection of rights was widely and wisely discussed by Greek and Roman philosophers like Plato, it could not percolate into the common mass. Their discussions, were based on religious foundation. Right to vote, Right to trade, Right to access to justice to their citizen etc were given by the city states of Greece.⁴

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¹ Modern Hindu Law – Kesari, Dr. U.P.D. p. 1
² Legal Research Essays by Sarkar DR. U.C. p. 228
³ Supra No.1, p. 3
There were no genuine human rights agencies in that period to educate the people about their rights, because in that age “Human Rights had no meaning for persons with empty stomachs, with no shelter on their head and nothing, practically nothing, on their body to cover their shame.” For the poor people the sky is the roof and the ground is their bed and for them there is no value for human rights. Even sometimes they were unable to think of themselves as human beings; but things were changing with the passage of time and the changing needs and demands of the society. With the growth of the society, people began to feel for their existence as well as for the enjoyment of their right. “It was the golden rays of sun enlightening the world of Nineteenth century to human being to know about Human Right they possess Worth of human personality began to be realized”. “India today is like an experimental ground for the relentless pursuit of all forms of violence – separatist, cessationist, ethnic, religious and so on. There are instances of inhuman attacks on innocent lives in the most inhuman way and by most inhuman methods”. This is high time to make the people of India particularly of Assam aware of their rights. Opinion has to be mobilised in favour of

6. Supra No.1, p. 3
peace and stability. Group communication has now been extended by the tools of mass communication, books, the press, the cinema, radio, television, video and the Internet. Mass Communication is generally identified with these modern mass media. These media are only processes. But newspapers, transistors, films and television are still beyond the economic reach of the majority of our people. So government or non-government organizations have to make an attempt to make the people aware of their basic rights.8

**Education as means of human development for awareness:**

Along with the economic factors, the basic factor for unawareness is the lack of education. Without education people cannot stand to fight for protection of human rights although they may be aware of them. Education is the most strong agency by which the people can be made conscious about their existence. Education can play a very effective role in making the people aware of their rights. Education in democracy can perform creative functions by modifying the behaviour of the young and by developing suitable habits in them in order to enable them to be useful citizens in future.

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"So the key to human malady is education – the right to that kind of education which is creative, not destructive, soulful not soulless, never the obscurantist, obsolescent, negative, informational exercise or other dastardly treachery and corrupt hypocrisy palmed off as ‘enlightenments’ through years of consuming courses in collegiate campuses which produce, at worst, anarchical and amoral animals and, at best, brilliant baboons with anti-social passions in their bosoms – both dangerous". 9

The development of any nation is totally dependent on the enlightenment of its citizens. Education and enlightenment are two intrinsically linked words. Education is the most powerful agency in moulding the character and determining the future of individuals and of nations. The entire world today has acknowledged the importance of education for the growth and development of a nation and there is an all out effort to remove the stigma of illiteracy. Education as the backbone of the nation provides the individual with the major means for personal enrichment and social and economic advancement. Education aims at enabling the people at large to live a fuller life in all its aspects – social, cultural, moral and also economic.

"Education in its most comprehensive sense should aim at storing the mind of its recipient with useful knowledge, and training his powers of mind and body to healthful and harmonious action."¹⁰

Education is the most important prime mover of economic development and social change. The problem of unemployment or underemployment was serious and allied to this was the colossal poverty of the masses. "Mass illiteracy was correlated with mass poverty. It was a blemish on the face of India which takes pride in being the largest democracy in the world. But more than seventy percent of the population were found to be illiterate as well as below the poverty line. It was therefore concluded that unless illiteracy was eradicated, not only mass poverty would not be abolished, but also democracy could not be a success."¹¹

The constitution of India declared the nation to be a sovereign democratic republic. The 42nd Amendment of the Constitution, 1976 put education in the concurrent list and the Central Government is now in a position to implement National Policies in

education properly and satisfactorily, particularly as regards universalisation of elementary education, eradication of mass illiteracy, education of women and weaker section of society, maintenance of standards and uniformity in educational structure and contents.

Like nature, human society also keeps on changing. It is a continuous process. It implies changes both in the social structure and functions of the various social units which make up the society. "When the entire structure of the society or of any organization is changed by a political, religious, or any kind of national revolution, it is called structural change." A change which occurring in man's behaviour, ways of living, dress and food habits due to educational or cultural impact is a functional change. In this process of change, education plays an important role, which is also known as a powerful medium of bringing change in the society. Invasions, revolution or any of the abrupt occasion may bring change in society but the impact of these changes is not permanent. Permanent, steady changes are very necessary for this modern world. Education affects changes slowly but steadily. With the help of new communication media, modern methodology and latest instructional materials education brings about changes in the society. Every effort of a society to reconstruct its

12. Ibid.
structure and its way of life and thought, requires better techniques and more determination of educating its members. No social development is possible unless its members are educated to appreciate its ideological aspects and learn the techniques of their realization. It is for this reason that all social scientists, politicians, educationists and educational planners consider education as a very important instrument for social change.

For the common people, there were vernacular schools in every village and town, which taught mainly reading and writing. These schools also imparted religious instruction to the pupils. Women, lower caste people and the agriculturists hardly received any education. Thus education among the Hindus in pre-British India was only for the chosen few: The Brahmins enjoyed the monopoly of all higher education.

Neither an individual nor a nationalist outlook could develop among the pupils in these schools in the pre-British India. The introduction of modern education was an event of great historical significance for India which is known as a progressive act of the British rule. And for this spread of modern education in India three agencies were responsible. They were the foreign Christian Missionaries, the British Government, and the progressive Indians.
For imparting modern secular education, the educational institutions started by them also gave religious instruction. Though their principal aim in starting these institutions was religious, these missionary organizations played an important role in spreading modern education.

The British government, however, established a network of schools and colleges in India, where modern education, which alone could meet the needs of a modern nation, was imparted.

However, the important powerful agency in spreading modern education for social change in India happened to be the Indian themselves. *Raja Ram Mohan Roy* was the pioneer of progressive modern education in India. He hailed English education as the key to the treasures of scientific and democratic thought of the modern west. "Subsequently numerous organizations such as the *Brahmo Samaj*, the *Arya Samaj*, the *Ramkrishna Mission*, the *Aligarh Movement*, and individuals like *Deshmukh*, *Chiplunkar*, *Agarhar*, *Maganbhai Karam Chand*, *Karve*, *Tilak*, *Gokhle*, *Malavia*, *Gandhi* and others worked towards the establishment of educational institutions both for men and women, imparting modern education throughout the country".\(^{13}\)

\(^{13}\) *Social Background of Indian Nationalism* by Desai A.R. *Bombay Popular Prakashan, Fourth Edition 1966, p.142*
Inspite of the growth of the modern intelligentsia and an educated middle class, an overwhelming portion of the Indian populace, however, remains illiterate due to poverty. Only by the removal of mass poverty the liquidation of mass illiteracy is possible.

The population of India is reported to be growing about 13 million every year. Almost 70% of the total population is still reported to be illiterate. A vast majority of adult population also remains illiterate. To change the society to a developed programme, "the National Ministry of Education Coordinates Programmes provides supporting services and conducts pilot projects. In addition, funds are provided by the Ministry to voluntary organizations for adult literacy work and to special institutes for promoting literacy among industrial workers and their families in the industrial centers of the country".¹⁴ In underdeveloped countries there is a vast number of people who have not at all had the opportunity to go to school. Education seeks to impart some knowledge about the society and the world, deal with the social problems to enable the people to imbibe certain social qualities and thus develop the social side of a man. "In order to set up an integrated and equalitarian society the educational institutions should try to bring

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different social classes and groups together".15

The framers of the Indian Constitution were aware that more than 70% of the people of India were illiterate for whom human dignity and respect for human rights will have no meaning unless they were educated. The three Articles – 41, 45 and 46 of the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution are designed to achieve, among other goals, the said goal of education. In order to treat a right as fundamental it is not necessary that it should be expressly stated in Part-III of the Constitution. Though right to education is not stated expressly as a fundamental right, it is implicit and flows from the right to life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution which derives its life breath from the Directive Principle of State Policy and thus it must include educational facilities for all. Without making right to education a reality the human rights will remain beyond reach of a large majority of people who are illiterate. Improved human rights literacy will give us better conduct of human beings. For this a right type of education is required to be given and sensitization from right angle, indicated. It is the responsibility of the educational institutions to bring about adequate awareness among the teachers and students.

15. Indian Education in the Emerging Society by Mohanty J., p. 30
The National Human Rights Commission is also making use of all the channels, including education, to spread a message of human rights in the society and bring about attitudinal change for respect of this rights.

In this connection the media and the university have to play an important role. The Commission wants universities to have human rights faculties. At the university level, the Commission has addressed a communication to all Vice-Chancellors proposing that the subject of human rights in all of its dimensions may find a clear place in the curriculum of the University. Section 12 of the Protection of Human Rights Acts 1993 provides that research, seminars and publications concerning human rights should be furthered, and that the Commission would encourage linkage between the academic community and the NGOs so that the best academic minds can bring their talents to be at on the practical work being done by such groups.

In the year 1998, the University Grants Commission released the IX th Plan Approach Paper that contained the UGC's policy regarding promotion of human rights education in universities and colleges across the country. According to the Approach paper, human rights education is to be given in the Law Faculties as a limited
component in the papers on International Law and Indian Constitutional Law. At the post-graduate level, specialized human rights education is given as optional paper.

At the University level, research on human rights is already being done and many have applied for doing research on this subject. The subject of Human Rights has also been introduced in the LL.B. and LL.M. Departments. Field-works have been done at various destitute homes like state home for women, women's legal aid cell, Home for destitute woman and helpless widows. Various cases from Gauhati High Court, Session Courts, Family Courts, C.J.M. Courts etc were studied for statistical data collection on human rights violation. A remarkable number of seminars on human rights were also organized by Gauhati University. At the LL.B. level, the subject on human rights carrying 40% marks has already been introduced. It implies that the subject on human rights be introduced at college level so as to give a basic idea at primary and elementary levels.

Still it is found not to be sufficient as there is no human rights awareness at the grass root level. Reports of custodial death, violence against women, exploitation of children, excess by police,

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army and other forces are pouring in daily. Women are still the most neglected and uneducated part of the society. So, mobilization of public opinion for these weaker sections is the most essential task for the educated people. On November 18, 2001, more than five decades after independence, under the impact of public opinion reinforced by the historic 1993 judgement of the Supreme Court in the Uni Krishnan case, education became a fundamental right as a direct corollary to the right to life and livelihood. Parliament amended the Constitution and added Article 21 (A) which states that the state shall provide free and compulsory education to all children between the age of six and fourteen years in such manner as the state may by law determine.

Government of India accords the highest priority to education both as a human right and as a means for bringing about a transformation towards a more human and enlightened society. Human Rights are essential for the adequate development of the human personality, happiness and progress. Both nationally and internationally all over the world human rights have now become a basic issue. Human Rights education is essential for the formation of public opinion. It is a comprehensive lifelong process by which people at all levels of development learn to respect the dignity of others and

17. Unikrishnan vs State of Andhra Pradesh 1993(1) JT 474
methods of ensuring that respect in all societies. Violation of human right can be prevented by human rights education. Knowledge of human rights is essential as a tool for the observance and the promotion of human rights. The individual must come to know human rights as a comprehensive concept encompassing their civil, cultural, political and social right. But the present education system is yet to satisfy the demand of the time and people. For lack of morality and ethics in the system of education, the society is suffering from gradual degradation. The sense of humanization is not increasing rather it is decreasing day by day. So, to increase the sense of humanization, each and every person has to be educated with moral sense. With education alone human rights cannot be secured and the basic objectives set forth in the preamble to the Constitution would fail. Neither Directive Principles nor Fundamental Rights could bring children to schools. Therefore, the crying need of the day is to make education compulsory and free for all, at least at the level of elementary education, by proper legislation.

But general education alone is not sufficient for a person who lives in a civilized society. People should have knowledge and sense of law. So to understand law, legal education is also important along with general education. Legal education in India developed after
the Despatch of 1854 along with the establishment of universities in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. Some kind of legal education was given in Bengal even before 1854. By 1901-02 the Universities, the Education Departments and High Courts directly controlled the law schools and colleges. The High Courts prescribed the conditions necessary for a person to be qualified to enter into the legal profession.

In 1902, there were three types of institutions for imparting legal education which were known as the Law Colleges, Law Classes (attached to Arts and Science Colleges) and Law Schools. In 1901-02, there were only two Law Colleges in India, one in Madras and the other, in Punjab.

"In Assam, legal education was started on New Year's Day in 1870 when the Collegiate school at Gauhati began law classes. But poor results and the abolition of collegiate classes led to the closure of the law classes as well in 1875. These classes were again opened on 5th May 1885; but the same were discontinued in 1886 for want of a sufficient number of students. However, public pressure led to the reopening of the Law classes in 1890. In 1902-03 there were law classes attached to the Government High Schools at Gauhati,
The state can act only through laws, rules, regulations and orders. After independence, the behaviour and actions of persons in India are getting more and more regulated and organized by the rule of law for a social change through various economic, social, educational, scientific and other pressures. The life of an individual in the community is so vast today that it does not leave even the personal law free from control and regulation. In such a total coverage, the role of legal theory as a continuous rethinking upon the purpose of law becomes an all-engulfing one. There is, therefore, not only a direct and continuing relationship between the problems of value with which both legal theory and educational planning for implementation upon law and hence upon legal theory which seeks to appraise the law itself. Legal theory attempts to examine and evaluate the fundamental rules and principles of law, national and international.

The task of legal education is to make a good citizen because citizens are made, not born. Education for citizenship is a

18. Progress of Education in Assam by Devi Renu, p.136
lifelong process that begins in the family, gathers strength in the schools, widens into country-level and culminates into world citizenship. In order to set up an integrated and equalitarian society the educational institutions should try to bring different social classes and groups together. It is the responsibility of the educational institutions to bring about adequate awareness regarding human rights among the teachers and students. All of them should be oriented towards salient features and significant principles of human rights. Proper attitudes and interests in human rights are to be developed through actual participation in various programmes. Legal education involves harmonious and integrated development of the mind and its natural tendencies as would make it capable of facing any crisis. At school, teachers can lay the foundation of a good and strong character and further habituate the child to a better mode of living and thought. because Legislation by itself cannot make man good. What is needed is a human assent, a higher awareness, a process of conscientization – not merely a policeman and a magistrate. Above all, the people must rise to their rights, especially their constitutional rights.\footnote{20, Justice and Beyond – Krishna Iyer V.R. Forwarded by Chinnapa Reddy, p. 169}
Role of Human Rights Commission:

Human Rights recognize the inherent dignity and fundamental freedom of all members of the human family. "The concept of human rights has assumed importance globally during the past few decades and has international significance as every country is subject to international security by the world body which indicts member states for violations."\(^{21}\) The overall situation has been characterized by large scale breaches of civil and political rights, as well as economic, social and cultural rights.\(^{22}\) The violation of human rights is increasing day by day. Violation of human rights in different forms has become the headline of each and every newspaper despite the fact that the Constitution and the laws are there to protect and enforce the several facets of human rights.

But reports of custodial death, violence against women, exploitation of children, excesses by police, Army and other forces are pouring in daily. As a result the President of India promulgated an Ordinance on September 28, 1993 with a view to provide for the setting up of a National Human Rights Commission.

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21. Ms. Justice Fathima Beevi, Member of National Human Rights Commission and Former Judge, Supreme Court of India, New Delhi, in a key note Address, edited by Singh B.P., p. 11
22. Ibid 2.
Again, Assam Human Rights Commission visited different district jails and made recommendations for the improvement of the conditions of jail. The commission also visited some relief camps of different districts, made different awareness programmes, celebrated World Human Rights Day on December 10, 1996.

The Government of Assam in August, 1996, with the concurrence of the Chief Justice of Gauhati High Court under section 30 of the protection of Human Rights Act 1993 specified the courts of sessions at Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Nagaon, Tezpur, Dhubri and Silchar to be Human Rights courts of the respective districts for the purpose of providing speedy trial of offences arising out of the violation of human rights. The Commission is making efforts for getting all the Courts of sessions in Assam designated as Human Rights Courts in their respective Districts.23

All complaints, in whatever form received by the Commission, shall be registered and assigned a number and placed for admission before a Bench of two members constituted for the purpose not later than two weeks of receipt thereof. Ordinarily

complaints of the following nature are not entertainable by the Commission.

a. in regard to events which happened more than one year before the making of the complaint,
b. with regard to matters which are sub-judice,
c. which are vague, anonymous or pseudonymous,
d. which are of frivolous nature; or
e. those which are outside the purview of the commission.

No fee is chargeable on complaints. The Commission may, in its discretion, accept telegraphic complaints and complaints conveyed through Fax. On every complaint on which a decision is taken by the Chairperson/Commission to either hold an inquiry or investigation, the Secretariat shall call for reports/comments from the concerned Government/authority giving the latter a reasonable time for it.

On receipt of the comments of the concerned authority, a detailed note on the merits of the case shall be prepared for consideration of the Commission.
The Commission may afford a personal hearing to the petitioner or any other person on his behalf including opportunity of cross examining witnesses.

The Commission may, in its discretion, direct further investigation in a given case if it is of opinion that investigation has not been proper or the matter requires further investigation for ascertaining the truth or enabling it to properly dispose of the matter. On receipt of the report, the Commission on its own motion, or if moved in the matter, may direct inquiry to be carried by it and receive evidence in course of such inquiry.

The service which has been rendered by the Commission to make people aware of human rights and towards preservation of human rights up till now is quite satisfactory. However, still much needs to be done in this direction. It is an agency so closely linked with Government through its recruitment process that it remains suspect so far as its autonomy is concerned. The very structural nature of the Commission has its own limitations.

The Commission also needs to be more forthright about the blatant violation of Human Rights, especially the cases involving
repression by the agencies of the State. It needs to be spontaneous and fast in reacting in case of service violations. Only then will it be able to establish its credibility as an organization free from the clutches of the Government, fearless in its words and bold in its approach for which a free and independent judiciary to protect the right is necessary. Happily, the judiciary, particularly the higher judiciary in India, has served the cause of human rights fairly well. However, there should be every effort to maintain and uphold the rule of law in all its aspects. In a country like India, with a low level of literacy and underdevelopment, a massive input is required for improving the state of affairs. It is for the state to consider the required ways and means which should go a long way in reinforcing the importance of human right. But along with it a massive effort is required to educate the vast majority of people about the role of the state and the incorporation of human rights in all models of human existence which will be discussed in another appropriate chapter.

"Exploring the origins of human rights and explaining the course of their development will no doubt be a rewarding experience. It will certainly buttress the cause of human rights. But a more important part of the story relates to identification of contemporary threats to basic human rights. This can be seen clearly in the phenomenon of
continued denials and violations of human rights in our social life and pursuits.24

Promotion of Human Right Literacy and Awareness:

Section 12 (h) of the Protection of Human Rights Act 1993 sets before the Commission the responsibility to "spread human rights literacy among various sections of society and promote awareness of the safeguards available for the protection of these rights through publications, the media, seminars and other available means". This undertaking requires no less than the creation of a culture of Human Rights across the entire country and amongst all of its people.25

The Commission has also readily associated itself with seminars and discussions on Human Rights, in particular the rights of women and of children.

Human Rights can flourish only in an open society, in which those in authority are accountable for their actions.

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Programme of AHRC:

Assam Human Rights Commission has been playing a vital role to educate and make the students of school as well as Law students aware of human rights in different aspects.

A seminar was held in Angels House High School at Hatigarh Chariali, Guwahati, on 9.9.2000. The subject was 'Protection of Human Rights and Women'. Shri S.K. Chand Mohammad, Member AHRC and Shri Paramananda Kalita, Member, AHRC and other resource persons delivered lectures to the students and teachers of the school where the guardians too participated.

A lecture on 'Human Rights vis-à-vis Duties' in B.B. Auditorium Hall organized by University Law College Students' Union, Gauhati University on 16.5.97 was delivered by Justice S.N. Bhargava, Chairperson, AHRC.²⁶

Another lecture was delivered by S.N. Bhargava, Chairperson, AHRC on 'Human Rights and Civil Liberties – Role of Civil Servants' to participants of Combined Induction Course for State

Civil Service Officers organized by Director of Training, Assam Administrative Staff College, Khanapara, Guwahati on 27.5.97. He also addressed the trainers and faculty members of North Eastern Police Academy, Govt. of India, Barapani, Meghalaya, on Human Rights on 27th October, 1997.

AT the time of inauguration of a two-day meet on 'Rights of Child' on January 28th and 29th, 1998 organised by National Institute of Public Corporation and Child Development, North Eastern Regional Centre, Beltola, Guwahati, where nearly 50 delegates from all the North Eastern States were present wherein Shri Paramananda Kalita, Member and Dr. S.B. Medhi, Secretary, AHRC, also presented papers.

S.N. Bhargava, Chairperson, Assam Human Rights Commission, addressed on Human Rights in the 1st North East Girls Students Conference organized by Students' Union, Handique Girls' College, Guwahati on 29th January, 1998 where H.E. the Governor of Assam was also present.

27. Ibid, 2
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
In the meantime, as a way of keeping a growing number of individuals, organizations and members of the public informed of its activities, the Commission has been publishing a News Letter yearly since January 1997.

The responsibility entrusted to the Commission under the Protection of Human Rights Act 1993, cannot be adequately discharged without the development of close and cooperative ties between the Commission and non-governmental organizations – the eyes and ears of the people. For the Commission, it is not just a statutory obligation under 12 (i) of the Act, "to encourage the efforts of non-governmental organizations and institutions working in the field of human rights", but a necessity to do so, if its own efforts are to be well-informed and in tune with the deeper aspirations of the country – aspirations that find expression in the courage and idealism of many non-governmental organizations.

The cause of Human Rights has much to gain both from the practical help and from the constructive criticism that NGOs and the Commission can bring to bear in their mutual interaction and growing relationship.
In addition, in every visit to a state, the Commission has made it a point to benefit from the experience and knowledge of NGOs, whose contacts at the grass root level gives strength and meaning to the Human Rights movement where it matters most.

As the Commission increasingly begins to concentrate on specific human rights problems, for example child labour or bonded labour, it is natural that it should turn to NGOs having specialized knowledge in such fields.

The Commission has participated with enthusiasm in numerous events, discussions and workshops that NGOs have organized across the country, to which reference has been made in an earlier section of this research work.

NGO's and Human Rights activists have to persist in keeping a close eye on instances of violence to human being and to let the Commission know of any instances that come to their attention in respect of such offensive practices.
Training of Law Students on Human Rights:

On 27-4-2000, a training course on Human Rights for the students of Gauhati University Law College was held in the Commission's conference room at Bhangagarh. Dr. Subhram Rajkhowa, Reader, Department of Law, Gauhati University and Secretary, Human Rights Literacy Forum, Guwahati acted as Director. Shri P. Kalita, Member, AHRC inaugurated the function and Shri S K. Chand Mohammad, Member AHRC participated in the training course where they dealt with Human Rights in general and rights of women, rights of children and rights of the disabled in particular. 31

Again, on 13.5.2000 another training course on Human Rights for the students of J.B.College in the Commission's conference room at Bhangagarh was inaugurated by Shri P. Kalita, Member, AHRC where reputed resource persons delivered lectures on the rights of the disabled, children and women.32

On 10th of July, 1998, Chairperson S.N. Bhargava addressed the students attending the coaching and orientation course for Central Services Examination in Cotton College organized by

31. Ibid -- vol 2 No.1 Nov 2000, p. 2
32. Ibid
the Administrative Staff College, Guwahati, on Human Rights, and on 13th July, 1998 he gave a key note address and inaugurated a Training Course on the Elimination of Child Labour for North East Region organized by the Administrative Staff College, Gauhati in collaboration with V.V. Giri National Labour Institute, Delhi.

On 27.7.98, Chairperson AHRC, delivered another key note address to trainees in a workshop on “Empowerment of Women and Human Rights” at Assam Administrative Staff College, Guwahati. and on 31.7.98 he addressed the conference organized by UNICEF, at North Eastern Hill University, Shillong for launching of “Progress of Nations” wherein H.E. Governor of Meghalaya Shri M.M. Jacob, Dr. Subhash Chandra of UNICEF, Delhi and Dr. Rochita Talukdar, UNICEF, Calcutta were present.

This system of informal legal education seeks to build up the personality of an individual by providing for his intellectual, moral and emotional development and it is only those people who are educated that can contribute to a concept of development consistent

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33. Ibid vol 1 No. 3  34. Ibid  35. Ibid  36. Ibid
with the dignity of human beings. Human Rights education is a priority in that it contributes to a concept of development with the dignity of man as man. The knowledge and awareness of Human Rights is possible only when a person is educated.

**Seminar and Workshop:**

For legal education to be provided to the general people to make them aware of human rights through different seminars and workshops, Human Rights education is a must. It is essential for the formation of public opinion and generation of public pressure for compliance with human rights. The individual must come to know human rights as a comprehensive concept encompassing their civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. A seminar on Human Rights was organized by Assam Human Rights Commission from Feb 6 to Feb 8, 1997. The Seminar was sponsored by the National Human Rights Commission, New Delhi. It was inaugurated by H.E. Shri L.N. Mishra, Governor of Assam at Rabindra Bhawan, Guwahati.

The discussions were held on the following subjects –

(1) Moral and Ethical values,

(2) Human Rights – Woman and Child,

(3) Human Rights – Education and Awareness,
A workshop on Juvenile Justice was organized by Assam Human Rights Commission in collaboration with UNICEF. It was held on March 20, 1998 at the North Eastern Judicial Officers Training Institute, Guwahati. Justice V.D. Gyani, Acting Chief Justice, Gauhati High Court, inaugurated the workshop. The workshop recommended to the Chief Justice, Gauhati High Court, to constitute a Committee of Judicial Officers with experience of Juvenile Courts for suggesting amendments to Juvenile Justice Act, 1986. Accordingly, a committee was constituted which submitted its report which has been forwarded to authorities concerned for necessary action.38

On 19.7.98 a seminar-cum-workshop on Human Rights and Rights of Child of Tape 1998 (Teacher Awareness & Performance Efficiency Programme) was organized by Vivekananda Kendra, Guwahati.39

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37. Ibid vol 1 No. 2 Feb 1998
38. Ibid vol 1 No. 3 March 1999, p. 1
39. Ibid
On 4th, 5th and 6th December, 1998 the Chairperson S.N. Bhargava addressed All India Seminar on Judicial Reforms wherein one of the topics was Protection of Human Rights. The Seminar was inaugurated by the President of India and presided over by the Chief Justice of India.40

**Project work by AHRC:**

Assam Human Rights Commission has already completed a pilot study on child labour in Guwahati city identifying the various working children, rag-pickers and child-beggars in different zones of the city with their sociological background. A detailed study on the same would be completed soon with emphasis on domestic servant which is a very delicate issue to study.

Another study on suggestions for amendment of the local laws relating to children has also been completed. In this in depth study, the aspects of customary laws prevailing in the two Autonomous Hill Districts of Karbi-Anglong and N.C. Hills of the state of Assam are

highlighted for necessary modifications as additional benefit in their traditional practices.41

AHRC has also proposed to undertake a project on Situational Analysis of Girl-child in Assam in collaboration with the Law Research Institute and Women's Studies Research Centre, Gauhati University, with the help of UNICEF.42

The Chairpersons of AHRC inaugurated and launched the pilot project for the education of the mentally retarded in North East India on 9.4.99 at Hotel Raj Mahal, Guwahati organized by Fr. George Plathottam, of Don Bosco, where Minister of Social Welfare, Assam presided over the function and Shri D.K. Manavalan, Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India participated.43

41. Ibid
42. Ibid
43. Ibid vol 2 No. 1 Nov 2000
Legal Education through Literature for Creation of Awareness of Human Rights:

Not only through seminar, workshop or project but also through literature, it is possible to provide legal education on Human Rights. From ancient time we have seen that literature helped a lot for the development of the knowledge and education on Human Rights indirectly. It is not possible for the common man to know about all the human rights and what remedy has been provided by the judiciary against the violation of human rights. The main aims and objectives of published literature were an all round cultural development of man and to form an integrated moral character which is very important for the protection of human rights. Legal knowledge can be developed with the help of literature which is specially meant for human rights.

Assam Human Rights Commission has published the following literature for creation of awareness of Human Rights:

1. four issues of Assam Human Rights commission News Letter.

(4) Summary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in English.


(7) Judgement dated December 10, 1996 of the Supreme Court of India in Writ Petition No ( C ) No. 465 of 1986 in English.44

(8) A leaflet in Assamese about Assam Human Rights Commission.

(9) Assamese translation of the judgement of the Supreme Court of India in Writ Petition No. ( C ) No. 465.

Improved human rights literacy will give us better conduct as human beings. For this a right type of education is required to be given and sensitization from the right angle, indicated. The National

44. Ibid vol 1 No. 3 March 1999
Human Rights Commission is making use of all the channels including education to spread a message of human rights in society and bring about attitudinal change for respect of this right.

Legal aid:

Human rights allow the human beings the right to develop their human qualities, intelligence and their conscience to satisfy their needs. Sometimes it is seen that backwardness is a hindrance to enjoying human rights. That backwardness may be educational, social or economical. But the poor, neglected, and the downtrodden who are regarded weaker sections of the society should have the opportunity to get justice.

Article 39-A of the Constitution directs the state to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or schemes or any other way and to ensure that opportunities for securing equal justice are not denied to any citizens by reason of economic and other disabilities. Now, a legal aid camp is a part and parcel of the course of education in LL.B. level. The aim of the legal aid camp was to study the life style and economic condition of the people including the difficulties
and hurdles being faced by them for their survival and to extend legal assistance for redressal of their grievances and also to make them aware of legal education and human rights.

Through a programme of legal aid camp at Sanaigaon, a location situated under Sonapur Sub-division in the District of Kamrup that provided interactions and discussions, it was found that people are living their conventional life, mostly depending on agriculture and day to day labour. All members of the family including minors are engaged in labour for livelihood. These people are aware neither of the necessity of education, their rights, health care, recreation nor are there any institution to provide them these facilities. They are living in 'nature'. For any small problem the village head man known as the Gaonburha is the only reachable and available person. The verdict of the Gaonburha is supposed to be followed by one and all. It is a matter of concern and surprise that even after more than five decades of independence some citizens of our country living in such rural areas are still in total ignorance of their rights and duties and succumb to poverty, deprivation, exploitation and superstition. After discussion with Rangmela Terang, Sri Pathak Kelong, Boddu Rehang, Jaldah Kelang it was found that they do not have legal awareness of their rights nor
had even the minimum education for all family members. They are simply living from hand to mouth without any prospect and development.

So far as the village of Sonaigaon is concerned it is seen that even the children up to fourteen years are not going to school and the parents are not serious about their education. Advice has been given them to send the children to school because without education it is very difficult to place their problems before the agencies and it is their fundamental right to get free education (as decided by the Supreme Court in Unikrishnan's case) up to 14 years. Our Constitution also gives recognition to these rights in the Directive Principles of State Policy and the Supreme Court acknowledges it as a fundamental right. In fact, our rural literacy rate is very poor and women are in the majority among the illiterates. Illiteracy has a direct bearing upon exploding population and mortality rate among infants and their mothers.

It is seen that there is neither a health centre in the village nor required medicine for them, as a result of which they are facing immense difficulties and they find it very difficult to go to the city to get proper medical care. Right to health and nutrition is also a
universally accepted human right. In India, the Supreme Court has recognized the right to health as an integral part of the fundamental right to life under article 21 of the Constitution.

The people of that area are mostly illiterate and they are not aware of the right conferred upon them by law. There is lack of legal awareness amongst them. These people are somehow surviving without any knowledge of their constitutional and legal rights. The outside world is unknown to them. In an age where people are talking of Internet, cyber laws, Intellectual property rights and ever changing models of fast cars, these people are content just to be alive without enjoying minimum human rights.

**Conclusion:**

The concept of human development involves varieties of issues such as a clean environment, safe drinking water, basic health care, communication facilities, education, gender empowerment and other rights and freedom apart from concern for food, shelter and clothing. As a welfare state, it is the duty of the state not only to make the people aware of their rights and freedom, but also to take up appropriate measures to ensure that it is provided to them.
So the aim should be not only to make these otherwise innocent and ignorant people aware of their legal and other rights but to take steps to provide the benefit of such constitutional and other provisions. To make legal awareness a reality, there should be conscious, continuous and genuine effort not only on the part of the Government or Commissions but also by the Court, the NGOs and other socially conscious and privileged citizens of the State. Otherwise legal aid, speedy trial and legal awareness will remain an El Dorado for the vast majority of our people.

All these programmes are fruitful to provide legal education to the common man, because the main aim of Human Rights movement is to build rights culture; but these human rights agenda should cover rural areas as India lives in villages.

Steps should be taken to organize programme on Human Rights among the school children, the Panchayat, NGOs, etc to bring awareness. In a democratic set up, the fruit of democracy cannot be realized without the removal of ignorance and apathy of the people which stem, to a large extent, from illiteracy. Illiteracy, poverty and non-awareness of work have also been the main root causes of violation of human rights.
Along with general education, moral education and legal education also should be compulsory. The teachers must be efficient and capable enough of impressing the students under their care and should see that their care and guidance develop their character and a sense of their own right as well as others' right as human beings.

Moreover, the basic right to life flows from the core structure of our Constitution. By a natural corollary from the right to life flows the right to education. Education, in fact, is a right to life - a human right because through education a citizen understands how to enjoy his rights and how to protect others' rights as well.

It is essential that from the earliest childhood, moral value should be there in human beings. Good manners will impose a proper restraint on us and remove harshness and rudeness in our behaviour. "Good manners verily are like the oil that helps keep the machine of human society running smoothly. We have been losing our manners rather rapidly and it is necessary that we should recover them. Good manners should be sedulously inculcated and teachers must give instruction in this to all students at all times, both by examples and by precept. We must be constantly told that what hurts us, hurts others also and we must behave towards others as we want others to
behave towards us. Thus a sense of humanization develops in the minds of children by which human rights can be protected. This is the legal education for tiny tots, though not in a formal way and, ultimately, through this legal education the common people can acquire the fruit of justice.

45. Teacher and Education in a Developing Society by Aggarwal J.C., p. 485