

## ***HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION THE DON BOSCO WAY!***

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An attempt to see Pedagogy of Presence (read Preventive System) as an Enabling Environment for Human Rights Education and Practice.

A workshop for school teachers, both government and Salesian Family schools was inaugurated today 9<sup>th</sup> July at Ekalavaya Training Centre, People's Action For Rural Awakening, Ravulapalem which is the Justice and Peace Centre of Hyderabad Salesian Province.

This five day training programme is the second such programme for school teachers. Orientation talks and discussion will occupy the first three days (9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup>). The second module meant for Class VII on "Child Rights" will be introduced on the last two days (12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup>)

A five day work shop, July 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> on the Pedagogy of Presence, An Enabling Environment for Human Rights Education, was inaugurated today by Mr.Sudhakar Reddy, MLC who represents the teacher's constituency of Mahaboobnagar, Rangareddy and Hyderabad districts. 38 teachers – 13 from selected government schools of East Godavari district and the rest from Salesian Family schools are participating.

In the keynote address, Mr. Sudhakar Reddy spoke of the educational situation in Andhra Pradesh and the pathetic situation State Government schools in the context of rapid privatisation and commercialisation of education. He noted that the same challenge is being faced by "missionary" schools too. He expressed his willingness to lobby for the widening the reach and scope of Human Rights Education in Schools. Speaking during the Inaugural session Fr.Sabu Joseph Sdb underlined the importance of the teacher in the lives of the students. Fr.Koshy Sdb, the director of Navajeevan, Vijayawada, drawing on his vast experience spoke of the various rights of the children of which the right to participate gives the best ambience for HRE.

Fr. John Tharakan Sdb from Don Bosco Psycho-Social Services, Hyderabad spoke of the need to see HRE as essential in the context of education that is to be contextualized in a situation of marginalisation and rampant socio-economic and gender disparities. He spoke of the prevailing and taken for granted violence in the families which continues as a right in schools.

Fr.Thomas Pallithanam, the Director of People's Action For Rural Awakening (PARA) is coordinating this venture of Human Rights Education in Schools in Andhra Pradesh. This project is being done collaboration with the Institute of Human Rights Education (IHRE) / People's Watch, Tamil Nadu. Last year HRE classes were held for 6<sup>th</sup> Class students with the introductory module on Human Rights.

Fr. John then went on to speak of three elements that could give a holistic approach to education and transformation: the cognitive approach that goes beyond feeding information to reflection and meaning making; behavioural approach that transforms leading to change in life style; finally the affective or the emotional approach where

the pupil's feelings are factored into a participatory approach where the children feel understood and loved and will in turn trust and love what the teacher loves. Education would become more fun, growth promoting and its effects lasting. The teacher would find satisfaction in his service.

The last two sessions were taken by Prof. Hara Gopal, who teaches Human Rights at the Central University of Hyderabad and is a human rights activist. Based on various experiences, he traced the inhuman depths to which the helping professionals were stooping in the light of the unhealthy competition and the effort to amass wealth. The style of education, provided by private institutions and sought by parents was leading in much the same direction. He hoped that this venture of HRE would serve to make a much needed paradigm shift in the educational praxis and the moral values of the new generation.

Based on his practical experience, the philosophical basis of human rights, and the historical growth of human rights movement Prof. Haragopal pointed out humanisation process that need to be promoted through education for which HRE could play a key role.

He spoke of building up character as the primary goal of education. He defined character as a concern for other human beings. He was quick to point out that HRE is an invitation and a programme to humanize ourselves and our students and through them our society.

A sharing of experiences revealed that even a theoretical study convinced people of the need to change the existing dominant model of society of which we are all a part. Different teachers shared this experience of teaching Human Rights to VIth Class students. Mr. Matchiraj was moved to say that the response of the children was overwhelming. They had become more responsible. Interestingly their teachers have become more regular and diligent and look up the HRE teacher. The energizing songs rendered by Srs. Maria and Nirmala FMA made for an ambience of relaxation as we took in the excellent presentations of the day. The programme was ably supported by Ch. Venkat Rao the State Coordinator of AP-HRE.

Evidently the potential for HRE as a tool for a more relevant Salesian Education and Christian living is enormous. Loving Kindness and love of neighbour and concern for the other and different aspects of the same reality though spoken from the perspectives the Preventive System, the Gospel or Human Rights.

**Thomas Pallithanam**