

Webinar Report

DEMOCRACY, EDUCATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS DISCOURSES: DEBATES AND DILEMMAS

Jointly Organized by:

- Department of Political Science, Muralidhar Girls' College, Kolkata
- SPARSH Society for Promotion of Activities for Social and Human Development (SPARSH), New Delhi & Kolkata

Webinar Date: 5th November, 2022

Concept Note:

The one-day interdisciplinary international webinar titled "**DEMOCRACY, EDUCATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS DISCOURSES: DEBATES AND DILEMMAS**" was jointly organized by the Department of Political Science at Muralidhar Girls' College in Kolkata and the SPARSH Society. Held on November 5th, 2022, this event sought to delve into the intricate relationship between democracy, education, and human rights, exploring the debates and dilemmas surrounding these essential aspects of society.

Introduction:

The concept note introduced the fundamental idea that human rights are inalienable and universal, yet they face constant violation. It highlighted the importance of individual rights, emphasizing that these rights are the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace, as evidenced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. However, the note also acknowledged the diversity of perspectives on human rights, ranging from John Locke's emphasis on individual rights against the state to communitarian theories that prioritize community commitment over individual rights. The Indian constitution's fundamental rights were also briefly mentioned, focusing on the right to education as a cornerstone of realizing all other human rights.

Key Themes:

The webinar aimed to critically engage with the concept of human rights within political theory, emphasizing the need to bridge the gap between relativists and universalists to achieve justice, freedom, and egalitarianism in society. It also explored the role of education in promoting human rights in democratic settings.

Thematic Sessions:

The event included discussions on several key themes, including theoretical approaches to human rights discourse, freedom, justice, peace, and human rights, gender rights, religion, culture, and human dignity, rights of persons with disabilities, democratic institutions and human rights in India and other countries, the role of education in promoting human rights, media and human rights, rights of refugees and internally displaced persons, the right to food, human rights in the global context, and an eco-centric approach to human rights.

Program Schedule

Inaugural Session:

The webinar commenced with an inaugural address by Dr. Kinjalkini Biswas, the Principal of Muralidhar Girls' College in Kolkata. She emphasized the paramount importance of human rights, characterizing them as the bedrock upon which freedom, justice, and peace are built. Her speech underscored the necessity for a more profound comprehension of the intricate relationship between democracy and human rights.

Next, the chief guest, Professor Delwar Hossain, a distinguished academic from the Department of International Relations at Dhaka University, shared his insights. His presence added a global perspective, offering perspectives on democracy and human rights within the context of Bangladesh.

The event's keynote address was delivered by Professor Iman Kalyan Lahiri, Head & Professor in the Department of International Relations at Jadavpur University, Kolkata. He delved into the role of democratic institutions in upholding human rights and discussed the contemporary challenges faced. His keynote address set the stage for deeper exploration of these themes throughout the event.

Professor Shibashis Chatterjee, another academic luminary from the Department of International Relations at Jadavpur University, presided over the inaugural session, guiding the discussions and ensuring that the exchange of ideas remained structured and insightful.

Dr. Sailen Das, the Convenor and Assistant Professor at Muralidhar Girls' College in Kolkata, offered a vote of thanks, expressing gratitude and appreciation to all participants and attendees for their valuable contributions to the event.

Thematic Session:

The thematic session of the webinar was dedicated to a specific topic related to human rights, democracy, and education, featuring expert speakers, discussions, and opportunities for engagement.

The topic for this session was "The New Dynamics of Bangladesh - US Relations: Democracy and Human Rights or Geo-political Realities?" Dr. Sujit Kumar Datta, an Associate Professor in the Department of International Relations at Chittagong University, took the virtual stage.

He provided insights into the evolving dynamics of Bangladesh-US relations, considering the complex interplay of democracy, human rights, and geopolitical realities.

Professor Ishani Naskar, a seasoned academic from the Department of International Relations at Jadavpur University, chaired the session, facilitating discussions and ensuring a structured exploration of the topic.

The webinar proved to be an astounding success, with an overwhelming turnout and active participation from a diverse audience. The theme of Democracy & Human Rights in Technical Session 1 captured the attention of scholars, researchers, and enthusiasts alike, resulting in a truly engaging and enlightening event.

Dr. Sreya Maitra, the esteemed chair of the session, provided a structured platform for insightful discussions. The Google Meet platform, supported by Soumyadeep Chatterjee, ensured smooth technical operations, while Debandita Biswas adeptly moderated the session, maintaining its flow. The remarkable success was evident in the sheer number of attendees, reflecting the global interest in human rights and democracy. Presenters from various academic affiliations offered a wide spectrum of perspectives, sparking meaningful debates on vital topics. The extensive array of subjects, from refugees' rights to the intricacies of democracy in the Global South, highlighted the richness of the discussions. The collective knowledge shared by scholars, both established and emerging, left a lasting impression and provided valuable insights into the complex issues related to democracy and human rights. With such an encouraging start to the webinar, the anticipation for subsequent sessions exploring Gender & Human Rights, Theoretical Perspectives & Human Rights, Education & Human Rights, and Interdisciplinary Fields & Human Rights remains high. The massive participation in Technical Session 1 underscores the significance of these discussions and the global community's commitment to fostering a deeper understanding of human rights and democracy.

Technical Session 2, centered around the theme of Gender & Human Rights, proved to be a resounding success, drawing a diverse and engaged audience. Dr. Kalyan Kumar Sarkar, an experienced Associate Professor from the Department of Political Science at Kanchrapara College, took the helm as the chair, ensuring that the session ran smoothly and productively. The Google Meet platform, with technical support from Sagnika Banerjee, facilitated a seamless online experience for all participants. Abhirup Sanyal, the capable moderator, guided the session with finesse. The overwhelming turnout and active participation in this session underscored the global significance of gender rights and human rights. Scholars, researchers, and advocates congregated to delve into thought-provoking subjects, making it a truly enriching event. The presenters covered a wide spectrum of topics, including the rights of sex workers, gender equality, and the impact of culture on women's rights. Each presentation sparked meaningful discussions and offered fresh insights into the complex and vital issues surrounding gender and human rights. The success of Technical Session 2 set a high bar for the remaining sessions, affirming the global community's commitment to advancing gender equality and human rights. The tremendous participation demonstrated the pressing need for continued dialogue and exploration in these critical areas. The anticipation for the upcoming sessions, including those on Theoretical Perspectives & Human Rights, Education & Human Rights, and Interdisciplinary Fields & Human Rights, remains palpable as the webinar continues to engage and educate a worldwide audience.

Technical Session 3, focused on Gender & Human Rights, was a resounding success, drawing a diverse and engaged audience. Dr. Kakoli Sengupta, an accomplished Professor and former Head of the Department of International Relations at Jadavpur University, along with the capable Dr. Somdatta Banerjee, assumed the role of chair, ensuring a structured and insightful discussion. The Google Meet platform, supported by Ritesh Karmakar, provided a seamless technical experience for participants, while Prasangana Paul expertly moderated the session. The overwhelming turnout and active participation in this session underscored the global importance of gender rights and human rights. Scholars, researchers, and advocates congregated to explore thought-provoking subjects, making it a truly enriching event. The presenters covered a wide spectrum of topics, including the violation of human rights of tribal women, the impact of culture on women's rights, and the politics of adoption rights for same-sex couples in India. Each presentation ignited profound discussions and offered fresh perspectives on the intricate issues surrounding gender and human rights. The success of Technical Session 3 set a high standard for the remaining sessions, reaffirming the global community's dedication to advancing gender equality and human rights. The remarkable participation demonstrated the pressing need for ongoing dialogue and exploration in these crucial areas. The anticipation for the forthcoming sessions, including those on Theoretical Perspectives & Human Rights, Education & Human Rights, and Interdisciplinary Fields & Human Rights, remains palpable as the webinar continues to engage and educate a worldwide audience.

Technical Sessions 4, 5, and 6, delving into the themes of Theoretical Perspectives & Human Rights, Education & Human Rights, and Interdisciplinary Fields & Human Rights, were remarkable and highly successful, attracting enthusiastic and diverse audiences. These sessions continued the trend of fostering insightful discussions and deepening our understanding of human rights and related issues.

Technical Session 4: Theoretical Perspectives & Human Rights

Distinguished scholars, Dr. Arup Bhattacharya and Subhajit Naskar, both Assistant Professors from the Department of International Relations at Jadavpur University, assumed the roles of chairs. They expertly guided the session, which took place from 02:30 PM to 04:00 PM (IST) via Google Meet, with technical support from Kausiki Chattopadhyay. Presenters in this session offered thought-provoking perspectives, including an examination of the "Marxian Perspective on Human Rights," an analysis of India's foreign policy from a mangrove standpoint, and discussions on human rights in a global context. These presentations ignited meaningful discussions, further enriching the conference.

Technical Session 5: Education & Human Rights

This session, focusing on Education & Human Rights, was chaired by Prof. Bijoy Kumar Das and Dr. Rajani Kant Pandey, prominent academics from Jadavpur University and Ram Dayalu Singh College, Muzaffarpur, respectively. The session ran from 03:30 PM to 04:45 PM (IST) via Google Meet, with technical support from Sanjana Ghosh. The discussion centered on the

role of education in promoting human rights, the impact of education on gender equality, and the right to food and its relation to human dignity. The enthusiastic participation and insightful presentations confirmed the profound interest in education as a vehicle for advancing human rights.

Technical Session 6: Interdisciplinary Fields & Human Rights

The final session, Interdisciplinary Fields & Human Rights, witnessed notable success. Dr. Bhagaban Behera and Dr. Somdatta Banerjee, both from esteemed academic institutions, shared the responsibility of chairing the session. The session, held via Google Meet from 03:30 PM to 04:45 PM (IST), received technical support from Anurag Biswakarma. Presentations in this session addressed a wide range of interdisciplinary topics, including the right to food, migration, and the impact of culture on women's rights. These diverse insights underscored the critical importance of interdisciplinary perspectives in addressing human rights challenges.

The resounding success of all the Technical Sessions reaffirmed the significance of these vital discussions and the global community's commitment to advancing human rights across various domains. The large and engaged audience, along with the exceptional presentations, set a high standard for future endeavors in this field, emphasizing the pressing need for continuous dialogue and exploration of these crucial topics. Later Smt. Shayeri Roy, the Head of the Department and Assistant Professor of Political Science at Muralidhar Girls' College in Kolkata, concluded the thematic session with a vote of thanks. She expressed her gratitude to all participants and the audience, highlighting the importance of these discussions in the context of human rights, democracy, and education.

In summary, the **"DEMOCRACY, EDUCATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS DISCOURSES: DEBATES AND DILEMMAS"** webinar was a significant event that brought together diverse perspectives and expertise on the critical issues of democracy, education, and human rights. The program schedule, featuring both an inaugural session and a thematic session, provided a comprehensive and structured platform for meaningful discussions and insights that will undoubtedly contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding these essential aspects of society. The webinar successfully fulfilled its objective of fostering a deeper understanding of these vital concepts and addressing the challenges and dilemmas that they pose in contemporary society.

Highlights from the Webinar



Inaugural session



Key Note Address: Prof. Iman Kalyan Lahiri.



Thematic Session: Chair Person, Prof. Ishani Naskar



Technical Session



Paper Presenter



Vote of Thanks: Dr. Sainen Das