

Human Values in Indian Perspective

Dr. Anita Shaw

Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy,

Nistarini College (Under SKBU), Purulia- 723101, West Bengal, India.

Abstract: A Hindu scripture like Yajurveda teaches us to do good to humanity, earn wealth in a righteous way, live in a spirit of friendliness with all, perform noble deeds, develop intellect and purify your mind. There is a great deal of talk of corruption and dishonesty in our official and business life. It is the students of today who are to be in charge of the various departments of life tomorrow; and if they learn what integrity is in their early years, they are not likely to go very far wrong later on.

Four most important human values to be developed in students are: 1) Determination, 2) Devotion, 3) Discrimination and 4) Disciplines. Some of the important ways of imparting value education are:

1. Examples should be taken from day today life situations.
2. Extracts from sayings of great men should be explained.
3. Incidents and problems which develop value judgment should be taken up.
4. Inspirational dialogues, dramas, poems and materials from religious scriptures could form the major part of the content of value education.
5. Biographies of great personalities should form an important source of value education.
6. Personal, neighbourly and community values should be taught in the classroom and thoroughly discussed with the students.
7. Yoga and other activities that develop self discipline among student should be included.

Keywords: Values, spiritual values, pure consciousness, unselfishness, true religion, culture, charity, rational values.

Introduction

Apart from the religion preachers and spiritualists, the economists, educators, humanists, philosopher, sociologists and thinkers have reflected upon the meaning and dimensions of the concept 'Value'. Although their views differ widely but all of them give stress the significance of values at personal, national and global level. The noted philosopher A.C. Garnett in *Religion and Moral Life* (1955) observed that values are so deeply embedded in human thoughts and actions that it is extremely important to understand the essence underlying values.

John Dewey (1948) views value as, "The value means primarily to prize, to esteem, to appraise and to estimate. It means the act of cherishing something, holding it dear and also the act of passing judgment upon the nature and amounts of values as compared with something else."

T. Pattern Parsons (1960) holds, "Value is an element of shared symbolic system which serves a criterion or standard for selection among the alternatives of orientation which are intrinsically open in a situation."

The *Dictionary of Education* (1959) defines values as "the things in which people are interested, things they want to desire to be or become; feel as obligatory, worship, or enjoy."

The Committee on Religious and Moral Instruction (1959) defined moral and spiritual values as, "Anything that helps us to behave properly towards others is moral value." "Anything that takes us out of our self, and inspires us to sacrifice for the good of others or for a great cause is spiritual value."

The philosophy of values is described by Swami Vivekananda in these words, "To be happy is the universal urge of all beings and at all times. One has to be at peace with oneself to be happy. When mind is calm, we can turn it within to 'see' the treasure of pure consciousness. No treasure, on earth is equal to a slice of that 'tattva'". Gitā

states, “Mind, has to be loosened from misdeeds and engaged in acquiring virtues. A mind which has divine qualities has peace. These values make us introspective and correct our personality.”

Values in our Religion and Culture

Here we are primarily concerned with the ethical and moral values enshrined in religion and spirituality. Edward Tyler says about religion, “Religion refers to a faith in the spiritual power.” Swami Vivekananda writes, “Usefulness is the test of religion. He who has more of this unselfishness is nearer to Shiva. And if a man is selfish even though he has visited all the temples, seen all the places of pilgrimage, and painted himself like a leopard, he still further off from Shiva.” At some other place he writes, “I do not care for liberation, I would rather go to a hundred thousand hells doing good to others like the spring, this is my religion.” True religion is the motive power behind all ethical and moral codes. Nobody can be counted as properly educated unless he or she knows the religious interpretation of life.

About moral value and religion, Gandhiji writes, “For me moral, ethics and religion are convertible terms. A moral life without religion is like a house built on sand.”

According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, “True religion is in the heart of man, not in the man-made creeds. If you become merely a ‘sakshara’-- literate man -- and you do not have the moral principles and you do not cultivate wisdom, what will happen to you? You will become a ‘rakshasa’—an evil person.”

A Hindu scripture like Yajurveda teaches us to do good to humanity, earn wealth in a righteous way, live in a spirit of friendliness with all, perform noble deeds, develop intellect and purify your mind. Manu teaches us to cultivate the firmness of mind and contentment, to cultivate the spirit of forgiveness under all circumstances, and to devote our mind to virtues and observe absence from the entertainment of sinful thoughts. Christianity tells us to honour our father and mother and not to kill and steal others things. Islam tells us to be honest in exchange of things and we should not be unjust to others. Sikhism teaches us that, truth higher, but higher still is truthful living. There can be no worship without good action. God’s eye of mercy falls on those who take cares of lowest. Buddhism speaks of right thought, right understanding, right speech, right action, right effort and right concentration. Jainism speaks of right faith, right knowledge and right conduct. Some other human values as contained in various religions are control of anger, brotherhood, duty, sincerity and work.

Moral values are found in Indian culture also. About culture Gandhiji says, “Culture is the foundation, the primary thing. It should show itself in the smallest detail of your conduct and personal behaviour, how you sit, how you walk, how you dress etc. Inner culture must be reflected in your speech, the way in which you treat visitors and guests, and behave towards one another and towards your teacher and elders.” Nehru thinks, “Culture is the widening of the mind and of the spirit.”

Culture heritage implies the values of India held by it through the ages. These values and their sources are:

- *The Vedic vision.* It is imbued with a sense of toleration. It shows respect for the many paths to truth. It exhorts to be peaceful.
- *Philosophy of Bhagavadgita.* It states that action and duty is supreme and this is the basis of salvation. Duty well done without the expectation of reward leads to *moksha*.
- *Bhakti marg.* It stresses two main parts, i.e., love of God and love of man as the means of liberation.
- *Central concepts of Islam and Christianity.* Brotherhood of man and charity must be accepted as main principles of life.
- *Muslim Sufis (mystic saints).* They also promoted love for God and love for man.
- *Indian Nation Movement.* It was a very broad based movement in which people belonging to different creeds, faiths and religions etc., worked shoulder to shoulder for freedom. It emphasised national values.

- *Influence of Sikhism.* Sikhism has exercised an important influence on Indian culture through the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib.
- *Western Influence.* The western influence is also quite visible in our ways of life. It stresses rational values.

Education and culture are interrelated. Education is conceived as a systematic effort to maintain a culture. In its technical sense education is the process by which society through schools, colleges, universities and other institutions, deliberately transmits its culture heritage. In our culturally plural society education should cultivate universal and eternal values, oriented towards the unity and integration of our people. Such value education should help eliminate obscurantism, religious fanaticism, violence, superstition and fatalism. Apart from this argumentative role, value education has a profound positive content, based on our heritage, national goals and universal perceptions. Education is an instrument of cultural change. Education can impart knowledge, training and skill as well as inculcate new ideas, attitudes and values among the young.

Need for the Education of Human Values

Value form an important element of the personality of individuals which influences their thought and behaviour in an unconscious manner. They are normative standards by which human beings are influenced in the choice among alternative courses of action. It is, therefore, very essential that education should develop such values in the students that they become an asset and guide them to become individuals of sterling character who place service of the society above service of the self. One of the most prominent statesmen of India, C. Rajagopalachari has said, National character is the keystone on which rests the fate and future of our public affairs, not this 'ism' National character depends on, and, in fact, is individual rectitude.

The Committee on Religious and Moral Instruction (1959) explained the need for teaching moral and spiritual values as: We have to pay special stress on teaching of moral and spiritual values. Moral values particularly refer to the conduct of man towards man in the various situations in which human beings come together in the home, in social and economic fields, and in the life of the outside world. It is essential that from the earliest childhood, moral values should be inculcated in us. We have to influence the home first. We fear that our homes are not what they ought to be. Habits, both of mind and body, formed in the early years at home, persist and influence our life afterwards.

Good manners are a very important part of moral education. It is not unusual that when a people attain freedom suddenly, after long years of bondage, they are inclined to become self-willed, arrogant and inconsiderate. In such situations good manners are easily set aside and young people tend to express the first flush of freedom in licence. Good manners will impose proper restraint on us and remove harshness in our words and rudeness in our behaviour. We have been losing our manners rather rapidly and it is necessary that we should recover them.

There is a great deal of talk of corruption and dishonesty in our official and business life. It is the students of today who are to be in charge of the various departments of life tomorrow; and if they learn what integrity is in their early years, they are not likely to go very far wrong later on. Every effort must, therefore, be made to teach students true moral values from the earliest stage of their educational life. Values can be taught as well as caught. With a view to learn to painting, one has to learn the rules of painting and practise the art of painting. Likewise for learning how to swim, one has to learn the rules and then to plunge and to swim. Similar is the case of learning music. In the case of human value development also, value clarification and practise are needed. In the process of education for value development, method appropriate to volition and affection should be more proponents.

Methods of imparting value education

We should not depend on one particular method in teaching moral values to younger generation. All should be used in an integrative way. However, it is generally accepted that indirect methods are more affective in developing moral values. We can teach moral values by storytelling, by discussion in seminar, round table etc. The discussion may be based on pictures, life situation, newspaper, contents of letters, songs, films, religious books etc.

Self study of students by visiting to places of religious, social and spiritual importance can also develop moral values. Participation in prayer services, dramatisation, talks by eminent speakers, debates, games, creative writing, workshop, project work, celebration of festivals and team learning can also develop moral values in students. Inculcation of desirable values in the students is felt essential for meeting out the crisis of character. In the situation that is rapidly developing, it is equally important for us to give a proper value orientation to our educational system.

Four most important human values to be developed in students are: 1) Determination, 2) Devotion, 3) Discrimination and 4) Disciplines. The standards and norms adopted by people at home and the immediate environment influence the child in shaping his moral behaviour. It is very unfortunate that often elders observe double standards of values. These double standards are observed by children. It is therefore very essential that elders set high standards of values. What parents do in their daily life has a lasting effect on the minds of children. Home is the first place to influence the behaviour of the child.

Teachers play an important role in his pupil's behaviour. It has been stressed again and again that nothing can be more helpful in moulding the child's behaviour, than the teacher's own conduct. A teacher has to set a high standard of behaviour before the child. Some of the important ways of imparting value education are:

- Examples should be taken from day today life situations
- Extracts from sayings of great men should be explained.
- Incidents and problems which develop value judgment should be taken up.
- Inspirational dialogues, dramas, poems and materials from religious scriptures could form the major part of the content of value education.
- Biographies of great personalities should form an important source of value education.
- Personal, neighbourly and community values should be taught in the classroom and thoroughly discussed with the students.
- Yoga and other activities that develop self discipline among student should be included.
- Group activities like cleaning the school campus, visiting slums, service campus, visits to hospitals, visits to places of worship of different faiths should form part of content in value education.
- Discourses on the lives of national and spiritual leaders can bring out values like self-sacrifice, self-satisfaction by helping others, collective happiness, love for truth and ultimate values of life for which the great leaders lived.
- Prayer, meditation and '*shramadaan*' should form an integral part of the content of value education. They can help the students cultivate inner poise and an attitudinal shift, and develop the quality of 'dignity of labour'.
- Observing birthdays of great national and spiritual leaders can go a long way in the inculcation of values in students.
- A variety of learning resources can be used for value education. These may range from biographies, scriptures, proverbs, hymns and sayings of great persons.
- A spirit of cooperative work and mutual help should prevail in the entire functioning of the school.

This education, we believe, should be provided, both by direct and indirect methods, by suggestion as well as by discussion and teaching. We attach great importance to the role of indirect influence in building up good character. The school atmosphere, the personality and behaviour of the teachers, the facilities provided in the school, will have a large say in developing a sense of values. We would like to emphasise that the consciousness of values must permeate the whole curriculum and the programme of activities in the school. It is not only the teachers in charge of moral instruction who are responsible for building character. Every teacher, whatever be the subject he teaches, must necessarily accept this responsibility. He must ensure that in the teaching of his particular subject and in his dealings with his pupils, fundamental values such as integrity and social responsibility are brought out. The teacher need not try to draw out underlying moral all the time; but if he has given some thought to the value underlying the scope of his subject and his work as a teacher, they will imperceptibly pass in to his teaching and make an impact on the minds of his students.

References:

- Altekar, A.S., Education in Ancient India, New Delhi, Motilal Banarsidas Pub.1943.
- Eight Upanisads, Vol. 1, trans. Swami Gambhirananda Calcutta: Advaita Ashram, 1952.
- Forbes, Scott. H. Values in Holistic Education, paper presented in London: Rochampton Institute, 1996.
- Ghosh, Biswanath, Ethics in Management and Indian Ethos, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House, 2005.
- Iyengar, B. K. S., The Tree of Yoga, New Delhi, Harper Collins, 2005.
- Joshi, Kireet, The Veda and Indian Culture, New Delhi, Rashtriya Veda Vidya Pratisthan, 1992.
- Krishnamurti, J, Education and the Significance of Life, San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981.

