

## Towards a Value-based Society: Learning to Live Together

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*"Man has no chance of survival if knowledge only remains knowledge but if we could transform knowledge in to wisdom, he would not only survive but will be able to ascend to greater and greater heights of achievements"*

*GB Shaw*



*...through sincere initiatives and efforts, people are educated and persuaded to lead a life based on these indications, the dimensions of work culture in places of work; as also the climate in educational institutions would stand transformed. Let every person, every professional, every parent realize his role in transforming India*



Amongst all living beings, only humans are blessed with the unique, instinctive and lifelong urge to explore, visualize, concretize, develop, create, refine, utilize and persist with further efforts to improve towards better life and more knowledge and wisdom. As the human civilizations grew, the need to transfer the experiences gained and knowledge acquired to generations ahead became an obvious responsibility. Accordingly, ways and means were found in every civilization to 'educate' their young. It may appear a bit complex to visualize how great scriptures were passed on from one to another in perfection already achieved; only through oral learning traditions, without any paper and pencil support! At the present juncture of history, the process of dissemination, creation, generation, augmentation and utilization of knowledge is subsumed under education and research. It stands strengthened through interactions, exchange, technical support and information technology refinements that, again, are outcomes of persistent human ingenuity and initiatives. Even fifty years ago, the present shape of an I- pad or laptop computer appeared a

utopian dream to most of the people. Whatever benefits and advantages that emerge out of accumulated knowledge, understanding and wisdom, humankind is blessed with, at present, is an outcome of sustained efforts of devoted and dedicated human beings who had the human welfare as the prime goal of their life. As the knowledge base grew gradually in different places and circumstances and human mobility increased, the universality of knowledge gained was realized, acknowledged and utilized to enhance the pace of strengthening it further. Today, human beings understand the forces of nature; they know how to utilize the treasure trove that the Mother Earth has in its possession for the betterment of human life. They also realize that all human beings have common and shared future. To sustain, and make it better for generations ahead, they also realize the value of sharing and caring that emerges instinctively from the eternal unity of human beings: *World is but one Family!*

History also reveals that knowledge gained has also been utilized to feed and foster negativity. As man moved across continents, it resulted

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in colonialism, slavery, apartheid and such other inhuman tendencies. When the man gained knowledge of atomic power, he also created the tragedy of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Today, he suffers fundamentalism, terrorism and the fear of Cyber attacks! Human beings have indulged in wanton exploitation of global natural resources in full knowledge that natural resources are limited and there is no other planet other than this one to sustain human life. When greed takes over human conscience, violence finds the most fertile climate and space to flourish, wars follow and wanton destruction of human and natural resources become the order of the day. Never before had human beings so mercilessly disrupted the sensitive man-nature link as at present. Even for a layman, the dying rivers, polluted air and contaminated water tell the entire story. Great advances in the area of health preservation and medicines just appear inadequate to match the health hazards that man has himself generated through its wanton indulgence materialistic pursuits, totally ignoring the obvious disastrous consequences that may follow. Today, scientifically-sound estimates are being made on 'how long shall the planet earth survive if corrective measures are not initiated sincerely and honestly? The malady is known, the medicine is also known, but the glamour and glitz to acquire more and possess more prevents nations and their leaders in implementing strategies that would prevent disasters that are looming large before all, threatening the very survival of the planet earth. What has gone missing amongst leaders and people? Why are human beings bent upon ruining their own habitat, killing their own brethren and making the world insecure and unworthy of a peaceful, dignified and decent life for all of the human beings? The search for the answer could also be levelled eternal! *Vedas* did it much earlier. For those unfamiliar with the Vedanta, it would be worthwhile to recall Plato. In his 'Republic', Plato wants his audience to understand that 'a good life consists in being a certain sort of a person rather than merely doing certain

sorts of action'. To Plato, the answer lies in moving from 'What should I do' to 'What sort of a person should I be'? And here comes the teacher, and education. The teacher transforms a lay innocent individual into a personality. The teacher takes him from humanity to divinity. If that objective is achieved, the values of truth, non-violence and peace would be visible all around! Love and brotherhood would follow and love would no longer remain an invisible aspiration. That would be the strength of education that inculcates values through the teacher who knows his role as a role model on one hand and as a nation builder on the other. He moves far ahead of being a mere curriculum transactor.

**And who is not talking of 'value erosion' that comprehensively illustrates all the harm that human beings, in their full knowledge and understanding, are inflicting upon themselves. Human ingenuity must find out a way out. The only way out is to go to education - schools, colleges and institutions of higher learning - and put in prime focus value inculcation, nurturance and development.**

Materialistic global trends impact, to varied degrees, everyone and that includes teachers and the system of education also. Education shall always remain the ray of hope for mankind. Knowledge and its pursuit are necessary but that alone is not sufficient. Wisdom and '*vivek*' are essential ingredients to let the human race survive. Not that there were no warnings on the count; we simply ignore them! When Mahatma Gandhi said that nature has sufficient to meet the needs of everyone; but not the greed of anyone, he, in fact, summarized the entire future of human race in these words. It comprehends the sensitivity and mutuality of the man-nature relationship and contains a warning that exploitation of natural

resources must end. When *aparigrah*: non accumulation, grew in Indian philosophy, it was both a warning and a value that needed to be heard and heeded. Today, we learn about global concerns being expressed in the meetings like Earth Summit, Climate Summit, and others at regular intervals. Not much effective action emerges out of it. And who is not talking of 'value erosion' that comprehensively illustrates all the harm that human beings, in their full knowledge and understanding, are inflicting upon themselves. Human ingenuity must find out a way out. The only way out is to go to education - schools, colleges and institutions of higher learning - and put in prime focus value inculcation, nurturance and development.

In Indian tradition, much before other civilizations entered that area, the learned and knowledgeable strived to understand not only the life on this planet but also what happens after one's final departure from this planet! In this quest, they explored, in their own way, the very objectives of creation. That led to development of the philosophy and practice of spirituality. The entire world acknowledged it. The spiritual quest led to better understanding of the mundane life as well. The values of right conduct, concern for others, eternal human unity, peace in life and with others emerged and their significance duly realized. Indian scriptures elaborate how and why the man-nature relationship must be maintained in all of its sensitivity. These also assign this responsibility to human beings, as they are bestowed with capacity to think, envision, plan and whenever necessary, devise new strategies as corrective measures. The widely known Delores Commission Report (UNESCO, 1996) that presented a vision of education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century identified seven tensions that human beings are facing at present:

- Global and the local;
- Universal and the individual;
- Tradition and modernity;
- Long term and short-term considerations;

- Competition and equality of opportunity;
- Knowledge explosion and capacity to assimilate; and
- Spiritual and material;

The consequences of these tensions are now not only obvious to one and all on the planet earth, this calls for immediate corrective initiatives in several areas. On one hand is the issue of global warming; and on the other, the present generation has also to confront increasing violence, fanaticism and terrorism. These just cannot go together with human advancement and development. Further, practically every nation is facing an economic crisis. Developing countries look towards developed countries for economic aid, support in techniques and technological advancements and in various other sectors. Such inputs do not come for free and often result in a crisis of ideology of progress that may suit a particular country but not the other. All this leads to the visible presence of 'some sort of a moral crisis' that every nation is facing at present.

#### Preparing a 'Humane' Person

Every civilization and every religion has evolved its own traditions, norms, practices that bind people together in their practices of life and living; and also norms of behavior and human socialization. Everywhere, it can safely be stated, people are followers of one religion or the other. With increased mobility, communities are developing fast in which followers of different religions and cultures have to live together and work together. The diversity of culture, religions and languages or nationality is no impediment to human advancement if the essential unity, and equality, of the humankind is realized, and internalized by one and all. This happens most effectively during the process of growing up of the child and the process of acquisition of education and learning of the young.

How does a country decide upon the model of education that it implements? It is now widely accepted that education

of every nation must be rooted to its culture and committed to progress. It is India's own experience that transplanted structures of education just cannot flourish on alien lands. After independence, India decided to persist with the model of education that was meant for preparing manpower to assist the alien rulers in the lower rungs of the system of governance. It was not meant for all, it was not concerned with the culture, history and the Indian tradition of knowledge pursuit. While there are certain eternal human values, the cultures and traditions have their specific connotations that provide strength and motivation to its people. These spread the sense of beauty that diversity offers to all across continents, religions and regions. Hence, these have to be preserved and strengthened

**The Twin-Tower-Tragedy of 2001 revealed that young boys and girls from sixty nationalities were working together in those two buildings. Their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and social upbringings were far varied but they had learnt how the world of tomorrow shall take shape and how people have to learn to strive together to move on the path of progress and development.**

through mutual interactions and the process of expansion, strengthening and refinement. For all this and a better and more fulfilling human life, the prime force is the process of education in the current times. The objectives of education, in whatever manner these are articulated, finally lead to one comprehensive statement; it has to be man-making education! When Swami Vivekananda states that 'education is the manifestation of perfection already in man', he is putting the totality of human life, its goals, objectives, process and product in a couple of words that even the great treatises may not communicate! Rabindranath Tagore presents his comprehension of education as a relationship of man and nature: "The highest education

is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence." In 1909 Mahatma Gandhi wrote 'Hind Swaraj, and in that, he quoted the definition of education which, it would be seen also comes essentially to man-making: "That man I think has had a liberal education who has been so trained in youth that his body is the ready servant of his will and does with ease and pleasure all the work that as a mechanism it is capable of; whose intellect is a clear, cold, logic engine with all its parts of equal strength and in smooth working order... whose mind is stored with a knowledge of the fundamental truths of nature... whose passions are trained to come to heel by a vigorous will, the servant of a tender conscience... who has learnt to hate all vileness and to respect others as himself. Such a one and no other, I conceive, has had a liberal education, for he is in harmony with nature. He will make the best of her and she of him." The search for such an education continues worldwide and that in itself is a very encouraging sign of civilization growth and evolution. Huxley indicates what could be the output of excellence in education: "The well-developed, well integrated personality is the highest product of evolution, the fullest realization we know of in this world." He goes on further to emphasize; "The exploration of human nature and its possibilities has scarcely begun. A vast new world of uncharted possibilities awaits its Columbus." Dr. Radhakrishnan put it in words that comprehend education in its totality: "The end-product of education should be a free creative man who can battle against historical circumstances and adversities of nature." In the current terminology that emerges out of the globalization, enhanced connectivity, cultural interactions and economic interdependence, one may state that only those who enhance their cognitive capital shall rally move ahead in a world that, at present, is not so conscious of the importance of 'cognitive capital' and is focused only on generation of financial resources, often over-exploiting what nature has to offer to

mankind. It is this blind pursuit and exploitation that has resulted in natural calamities in Uttarakhand, and have inflicted huge hardships on Mumbai and Chennai. The air that the residents and visitors to Delhi breath is dangerous and most injurious to children but the increase in polluting it further continues unchecked. It is the valueless development that has practically killed natural water reservoirs, rivers and has not spared even the most revered of rivers on the planet Earth mother Ganges! Does it not speak volumes on the erosion of values that is now threatening the very survival of the human race? The irony of the situation is that all this is happening when the world, and India, boast of enhanced literacy rates and great achievements in the universalization of elementary education. The situation warrants urgent remedial steps to let education achieve its objectives in totality. Nelson Mandela articulated it very comprehensively: "education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world". Towards that education must bring the best out of 'body, mind and spirit'. Total personality development requires initiatives at the level of family, community and education to pave the path of growing up through thought, action and deed.

#### What Can be done?

The freedom struggle of India was unique in many ways, the most outstanding being the presence of Mahatma Gandhi and his firm belief in the pursuit of Truth, come what may. He summarized it all in one sentence; "My life is my Message". Through his own example and actions, he motivated crores of Indians to lead a value-based life, realized the need to serve the needy, and finally, be ready

to sacrifice everything for the country and countrymen. In those days of low literacy and meager means of communication and a scanty presence of print media, one was interested in how Gandhian ideas and values could spread so fast to every nook and corner of the country! It emerged in personal interactions with those who had the privilege of participation in the freedom struggle with Gandhi Ji that the role of school teachers in spreading the Gandhian thoughts was indeed the most significant. They spread the use of Khadi, and that meant acquisition of the value of *aparigrah* – non accumulation. Anyone who limits his needs and requirements, shall certainly not be lured by corrupt practices that engulf only those who indulge in acquiring more, and more. A great visionary that Mahatma Gandhi was, he could see what would result in value erosion in future if necessary caution is not exercised by the systems of governance, and more importantly, by the people. In 1925, he published seven social sins in the Young India:

- Commerce without Morality
- Education without Character
- Pleasure without Conscience
- Politics without Principles
- Science without Humanity
- Wealth without Work
- Worship without Service.

These seven present the comprehensive guidelines for the planners and implementers of every country. India needs to acknowledge that unless it presents a model of value-based society in action, its dream of leading the world in spirituality shall remain a distant dream. Convert the above seven sins to 'Seven Individual Action Points; putting with instead of without; and witness the miracle! Once,

through sincere initiatives and efforts, people are educated and persuaded to lead a life based on these indications, the dimensions of work culture in places of work; as also the climate in educational institutions would stand transformed. Let every person, every professional, every parent realize his role in transforming India. Just impress upon each one of them to review on daily basis: what I have done today for others; what have I done today for the community and my country; and what mistakes did I commit today that violate the path of truth? It has the potential to let people achieve their inherent potential and play a leadership role. Yes, everyone could become a role model for everyone else. It would create an environment right from home to school to workplace to lead a fulsome, creative, and contributing life. Let education accept the challenge to assist in creating an environment for the individualized action plan that aims to transform every person in to a personality.

#### Readings

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#### One Stop Shop : Farmer's Portal

The Farmers Portal along with mKisan Portal aims to serve as a One Stop Shop for all the farmers for accessing information on agricultural activities. The Portal provides information about package of practices; crop and seed varieties; common pests; dealer network for seeds, fertilizers & pesticides; machinery and tools; agro-met advisories, credit & insurance, rain-fed areas etc.

Both these Portals can easily be accessible from any part of the country free of cost by the farmers by visiting the Ministry's website. Its activities are also highlighted through short discussion/interview on "DD Kisan Channel.