



VALUE EDUCATION FOR A BETTER DEMOCRACY

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Abstract:

Values are most generally some normative behaviours. They are expected to be internalized by the individuals of any society in the process of learning termed as socialization. Values are of vital importance to any society because they serve as criteria for selection of actions which are regarded as most valuable. Though one of the major aims of education is inculcation of values among the learners, a special drive on value education has become the need of the hour –given the abysmal pictures of value-crisis in the present consumerist society. Value-education refers to a programme of planned educational action aimed at the development of values and character of the learners. In order to build a democratic society, values like tolerance, self-respect, human dignity, secularism, compassion for others, human rights, practice of peace and non-violence, fellow-feeling, leadership- etc are of topmost importance. But unfortunately, present education system is producing only information-loaded men and women –not 'valuable human beings'. As a result, society is facing conflicts of different types that are out to erode the democratic fabrics of our nation. This paper reflects over such crisis and attempts to suggest some way-outs of this crisis through education.

KEY WORDS:

Value, Value-education, Democracy, Democratic- values.

CONCEPT OF VALUES:

The Greenwood Dictionary of Education (2003) observes “values are qualities based on normative judgements of good and bad, and in which there is an emotional investment”. They may be held consciously or unconsciously by the individual and they tend to influence the behaviour of an individual. Values nourished by an individual are his internal principles that guide him to evaluate and criticize the actions, ideas and principles of his own-self and that of others. These values are amenable to change, having no universally set standard. But “public values are necessary for the common good in a pluralistic society allowing for diversity and individualism to exist and influencing how people interact with each other”(Ibid). These values are endorsed by all groups within a society or nation to maintain societal cohesion. Dictionary of Education –A Practical Approach (2009) states that values are “internalized beliefs considered worthy by the individual. Values have reference to social and humanitarian aspects of the individual's life”. They are ideas with which the individual has identified himself and which have been accepted by him emotionally. They are a far stronger determinant of behaviour than the knowledge one possesses about an ethical principle. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1993) puts values as “moral or professional standards of behaviour”.

Famous personalities and educationists over the world also have tried to define values from their

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standpoints. Thus psychologist Allport says, “Values are centralized systems of psychological dispositions, capable of making a larger portion of the environment functionally equivalent to the individual and generating in him appropriate type of adaptive behaviour.” John Dewey holds that to value means primarily to prize, to esteem, to appraise, to estimate. It means the act of cherishing something holding it dear and also the act of passing judgement upon the nature and amount of its value as compared with something else. Lindzey's observation in this regard arrests attention. He says, “Value is a person's idea of what is desirable, what he and others want, not necessarily what he actually wants”. It means that, not all the things people desire are worth desiring and may pass for values. For a man who desires to be rich by looting the wealth of others or a student desirous to be the first boy in the class by copying in the examination –are not practising values. Both of their actions contradict with the higher values like honesty, respect to others' life and wealth etc. Thus we require human quality of critical self-examination in order to attain higher objective values of life. Hence values need be objective above one's personal desire and preference. Ultimately values are those principles which have worth in themselves without reference to any personal end. They are universal. Dr. R.K. Mukherjee's (1950) observation seems apt in this regard. To him, values are “socially approved desires and goals that are internalized through the process of conditioning, learning and socialization and that become subjective preferences, standards and aspirations”.

Values refer to objects or ideas that an individual considers worthy of pursuit in his thought, belief, feelings and day-to-day behaviour. These objects may be material or non-material –abstract qualities and states of mind and heart, such as peace, honesty, patience, truthfulness, fraternity etc. They function as ideals and standards that govern human activities in different fields – personal, social, religious, professional, ethical or moral. Values as standards of action may vary from culture to culture or time to time within a particular cultural set-up. But ultimately values are intrinsic truth. They are the essential norms to build an integrated and happy society. They are the yardsticks with which all the good things in life are measured. In present years, the horizon of value-concept has enlarged so much so that everything good and useful falls under its compass. For example scientific temper, environment-consciousness, equality and equity of educational opportunities -etc also are being considered as values.

SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE VALUES:

By nature, values may be subjective or objective. Values are sometimes individual-based and sometimes they are influenced by social environment. Some educationists believe that value depend upon individual ideas and experiences. They say, men are the constructors of their values just as they are the constructors of their truth. Men test their value claims in experience and so accept them as temporary and tentative. Since values are to be found in the context of experience, men will have to find out what they ought to want in the self-same relativistic circumstances of ordinary experiencing. Man's valuing is a constant creation of and accommodation to the changing moral environment around him. Such a public sharing of values is best fostered in the liberal and permissive atmosphere of democracy. There is nothing absolute or permanent about values nor do they have any objective existence apart from the subjective likes, dislikes and perceptions of the valuing agent. Societies, too, differ in their customs, mores, folkways and their conception of the good life and good person. Sociology of education rightly points out that the development of the human personality should be thought of in terms of the norms and ideals of the particular society. In this sense values are subjective and relative to the agent, time and place.

On the other hand, objective values are basic and grounded in the very nature of the universe. They transcend the phenomenal world- the world of ordinary sense perception. The moral order belongs to this realm. As there is such a moral order, we have justification in judging some things as 'right' and others as 'wrong', some things as 'good' and others as 'bad'. Similarly, because there is an aesthetic order, some things are categorized as 'beautiful', and others 'ugly'. As per the order of truth, some things are 'true' and others are 'false'. The true, the good and the beautiful –are external values. These values are not created by man; nor are they just subjective inner experiences. They are pre-existent and have as real an existence as any of the so-called laws of nature. They are independent of personal desire. Reality is not indifferent or neutral to values. Man perceives and experiences values because he has an innate spiritual capacity to comprehend values. Man is an essentially valuing organism and can perceive the pre-determined pattern of reality.

VALUES AS JUDGEMENTS:

Majority of people use the concept of value as judgement. Judgement is the internal potentiality of an individual reflected through decision making. It represents the quality of human life. In every walk of life, man is guided by judgement. Right judgement leads to proper way of life. When a man is out to do anything or thinks over an issue, he tries to visualize its logical side before executing them in action. Thus

value may be equated to judgement.

FORMS OF VALUES:

Values may be expressed in an individual's life in different forms; such as:

Moral values: Committee on Religious and Moral Instruction (1959) defines moral value thus: "Anything that helps us to behave properly towards others is a moral value." It is of much importance in guiding an individual in his inter-personal relationship in a society.

Social values: Man is a social being. He acquires social values while interacting with others in a social set-up. These values are the product of social structure and its processes. A society is evaluated according to its values. Human conduct, behaviour, duties and responsibilities are judged in terms of certain ideals, models and norms set by the society. These social values include love to mankind, fellow-feeling, honesty, sincerity, punctuality, co-operation etc.

Aesthetic values: Aesthetic values are subjective and personal. They are based on senses towards realm of beauty. They give one happiness and pleasure. Some philosophers say, aesthetic values are confined to the artistic excellence. There is no universal criterion to validate aesthetic values, as a work of art, for example, may evoke different options from different persons.

Spiritual values: Committee on Religious and Moral Instruction (1959) observes, "Anything that takes one out of oneself and inspires to sacrifice for the good of others or for a great cause is of spiritual value". Material things give a man happiness but spiritual values give him peace of mind and perennial pleasure in life. Absence of spiritual values lead to confusion, disaster, exploitation, destruction, aggression and selfishness. Bertrand Russell commented that the choice before mankind is either co-existence through cultivation of ethical and spiritual values or total annihilation of the civilization.

The concept of value education:

The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) observed, "The aims and objectives of a true democratic education should be to develop habits, attitudes and qualities of character" of the pupils. However, though all forms of education is a type of value education, a deliberate thrust on value-oriented education has become the need of the hour at the face of the crisis in values which the present society is passing through.

Seshadri in his book 'Value Education: A Conceptual Framework' commented that value education involves "a process of working on one's outlooks, beliefs and perceptions with a view to develop capacities of reflective thinking and independent judgement on issues that are of critical concern to oneself and to humanity". It includes development of awareness of a sensitivity to moral and aesthetic phenomena, education of the emotions and training of will and character. The development of values is influenced by complex network of environmental factors, home, peer group, community, the media and the general ethics and aesthetic norms of the society and also by the person who wish to develop them.

One of the major aims of education is to transmit knowledge into the learner; and the curriculum seeks to achieve this end through instruction and teaching of different subjects. Teaching of any subject basically aims at developing learners' knowledge and understanding pertaining to a particular aspect of reality under consideration. But knowledge as a value involves conceptual thinking, understanding of principles, laws and generalization, development of insight and reflective thinking. Thus value education is programmed method of teaching and learning process for the attainment of the qualities like awareness, understanding, appreciation, sensitivity, willingness, problem solving ability and enlightenment.

CULTIVATION OF VALUES –AN END OF EDUCATION

It has been recognized over the ages that education is necessarily a process to instill values into the pupils to help them lead a good life that is satisfying to them in accordance with the cherished ideals of the society. Philosophers like Swami Vivekananda stressed on character-formation through education. In the age of Upanishads in India, the inaugural lecture of the Guru (Teacher) to his Shishwas (pupils) started thus, "Let your conduct be marked by right action,....; by truthfulness in word, deed and thought; by self-denial and the practice of austerity; by poise and self-control; by performance of the everyday duties of life with a cheerful heart and in unattached mind..... Deviate not from the path of good. Revere greatness." In

that age, education was thought to be a cultural good for individual moral development and was to have very little to do with material benefit. Education was principally to provide the codes of behaviour, initiation to the value system and an understanding of the ultimate objectives of life in terms of spirituality. Education had to unravel the 'truth' before the learner; to manifest 'the perfection already in man', to combine knowledge with compassion and efficiency with moral excellence.

Social values are mostly encouraged in school education level. Development of personality of the pupils in socially desired ways –is the aim in this level and the total concept of development is saturated with social values. Here values are to be considered in terms of gaining some skills and qualities like patience, courage, faith, love, analytical ability, reasoning, problem solving power, honesty, purity of mind, perseverance, co-operation, sense of unity, leadership etc. Therefore, the whole system of education should be value-oriented in order to produce balanced personalities those may contribute to national peace and progress. The whole plan should be so designed as to lead the learners to express and mobilize their basic instincts in socially acceptable ways. Education should empower them to build a happy future based on the good paths of co-operation, fellow-feeling and amity. The Secondary Education Commission of 1964-66 laid importance on value-oriented education to build culturally cohesive society. The National Policy of Education (1986) and the National Curriculum Framework for Elementary and Secondary Education (2005) have referred to the following concepts as components of value-education:

Cultural heritage of India
The democratic ways of life
Scientific temper
Secularism
Environment
Gender equality
Social cohesion
National unity

The Declaration of Human Rights of United Nations (1948) has encouraged the nourishment of such values through education as liberty, equality, well-being, peace, tolerance, reason etc. Again, Learning to Care –Education for the Twenty-first Century (UNESCO, 1990) advocated for promoting, through education, values like caring for oneself, one's family and friends, caring for other people, social, economic and ecological welfare of one's society and nation, caring for human rights, caring for livability of the earth and caring for truth, knowledge and learning. All these are necessary values for the promotion of "Learning to Live Together". But unfortunately, value-education has received merely lip service so far. As a result, nations have been facing crisis of character –adversely affecting the quality of life and leading to inter and intra-personal tensions and strife.

VALUE CRISIS –LEADING US TO NOWHERE:

At present value crisis is a global phenomenon. Rapid scientific progress and technological advancement resulting in Information and Technological Revolution in the twenty-first century –are out to threaten our age-old moral standards. In highly industrialized and commercialized societies of today, greed for material progress knows no limits. Deforestation, global warming, environmental pollution, gene-cloning –etc. are leading to vacuum in our basic ethics. When we consider the case of our own motherland, value crisis is casting its evil shadow in all walks of life. It is true that we are progressing in economic, industrial, scientific and educational fields, but the promises of the "tryst with destiny" and the dreams of prosperity, social well-being and human happiness –that our nation-builders once spoke about –are proving false. The anguish over this disillusionment finds expression in different ways of public life. They reflect the inner pain and frustration of the sensitive souls. The mass is giving to fatalistic resignation. A large chunk of our intelligentsia also appears to be under the grip of such pensive helplessness

Now-a-days, the fabric of humanity is being torn apart due to value-crisis. Monopoly control of industry, class-conflict, and capture of political powers by a few –all are direct offshoots of degeneration of values. Modern man's greed for money has crossed the limits of all ethical standards. The malady has afflicted especially the young and middle aged generation. Under the impact of globalization and western culture, the increasing attraction towards selfish glamorous life-style has such an effect on this generation that it is taking recourse to any means –fair or foul –to reach the end. Everybody is trying to be at the top in the rat-race of life. Large quantity of wealth with only a few has led to reactionary attitude among a section of people. It has also bred conservatism and an opposition to any social and economic reform. Loss of values has created a sense of sloth, complacency and lack of effort for labour among the common masses.

Now-a-days news of disrespect to the law of the land, murder, dacoity, kidnapping, extortion, eve-teasing, cheating –crowd the daily newspapers. Where are we leading to? It seems that we are the denizens of nowhere –living without any purpose –“We are the hollow men/ We are the stuffed men/ Leaning together/ Headpiece filled with straw” (T.S. Eliot). The old values of truth, honesty and goodness –no longer attract the youths today. Only a few want to be 'good' men while the majority strives to be good-earners by hook or by crook. Corruption has gripped the men on powers so much so that ethical and moral values have become, as if, pristine concepts.

CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY:

The English word 'democracy' derives from the Greek words –'demos' meaning 'people' and 'kratis' meaning 'power'. So democracy means a state where the ultimate power lies with the people. Abraham Lincoln, the first President of the United States defined democracy as a “government of the people, by the people and for the people”. Democracy is not only a form of government; it is a way of life. It is the most respected and valued life-philosophy in the modern world. In a democratic state, individuality of the people is highly respected. At the same time, inter-personal relationship among citizens and people's responsibility towards state also get utmost importance in a democracy. This form of government assumes all individuals the right to freedom. Individual is an end and the state is a means in democracy. It ensures equality and liberty of human being. Citizens are entitled to some fundamental rights in a democracy. On the other hand, the state deserves some fundamental duties to be practiced on the part of its people for attaining individual as well as national excellence. Equity and equality of social, legal, economic and other state-offered opportunities and thereby ensuring social justice to the citizens consists the heart of a democratic state. Thus the core components of a democracy are:

- Maximum individual excellence through co-operative social living.
- Following the maxims of equality, fraternity and liberty in all walks of life.
- Sympathy and co-operation instead of competition and exploitation.
- Absence of social discrimination and class-conflict.
- Moulding character and personality of the citizens for right judgement in daily affairs.
- Attaining qualities worthy of a better citizen.
- Government formed by majority-voters.
- Activities aimed at common-good and national upliftment.

VALUES TO BE FOSTERED IN A DEMOCRACY:

The aim and objective of value education in school level in a democratic country like India should be to make the students good citizens of our land. They should be made aware of our national goals. The values stated below should be cultivated among students to make a democracy successful:

- Equality: Legal, social, political and economic equality is the corner-stone of democracy. Everyone has the right to the same treatment to the state regardless of sex, race, religion and socio-economic status.
- Fraternity: It assures the dignity of individual, fosters love among citizens and promotes unity of nation.
- Liberty: This includes personal, political, economic and religious freedom, freedom to gather peacefully for a cause, freedom to pursue own belief, ideas and freedom to express opinion in public.
- Respect for others' life: A person's right to life cannot be violated.
- Common good: Working together for the welfare of the society.
- Justice: Everyone has the right to justice. No individual or group should be favoured over the other.
- Respect to diversity: Variegated cultures, languages, castes, creeds and regional varieties should be celebrated to strengthen the democratic fabric of the nation.
- Truthfulness: Citizens should follow the golden path of truth in their day to day life. Government should disclose true information to them about affairs of the state.
- Sovereignty of the people: The ultimate power in a democracy lies with people. People have the power to elect representatives in the government.
- Patriotism: In words and actions, the citizens should show their love and devotion for national causes.
- Obedience to the law: Both the high and the low people and government authorities should abide by the laws of the land. Everybody is equal in the eyes of law.
- Balance among three pillars of democracy: The executive, judiciary and legislation –these three pillars of democracy should have clear-cut ambit of jurisdiction and power. No section should dominate over the other.

Compassion and tolerance: Individuals should be compassionate and tolerant towards their fellow citizens in a democracy.

Respect for national interest: Bypassing the narrow self-interest, citizens should respect for national interest and strive for national development.

MEASURES TO BE ADOPTED FOR PROMOTING VALUES IN A DEMOCRACY:

Values are woven in every activity of the school and also in every subject taught to the learners. School environment and academic climate should be so designed as to infuse necessary democratic values among the learners. The text book materials should correlate with learning of values by identifying areas in which the desired values may be promoted. The main aim of value education in schools should be to 'humanize' the learners, to make them good citizens of the land, to help them understand the national goals of democracy and secularism. Only then, they could contribute to the national progress and development. However, keeping these ends in mind, the following measures may be suggested:

Reorganization of curriculum: Textbooks of language and literature in Hindi, English, Bengali etc. should be so designed as to inculcation of right attitude and interest and the basic human values. Teaching of social sciences should be free from wrong concepts and should promote ideals of humanism and democracy.

Teacher's role: Values cannot be taught; they are imbibed and the teacher needs to be the role model to the learners to set an example. He should not only be a good lesson-deliverer, but also a good citizen –possessing basic values.

Value-added co-curricular activities: Annual sport-meets, morning assembly, yoga, meditation, debate, excursion –etc. co-curricular activities should be so organized as to inculcate among students values of co-operation, leadership, discrimination between right and wrong, dignity of labour, curiosity, respect to the heritage and tradition of the nation.

Respect to the Constitution: The fundamental duties of the citizens to the democracy may be written prominently at the entrance of the classrooms to catch the learners young.

Respect to diversity: Participation of the learners in various cultural activities like dance, drama etc. of different regions of our land depicting unity in diversity should be made compulsory.

Social service campaigns: N.C.C. and National Service Schemes may help the learners to build the attitude of social service and dignity of labour.

Organization of Mock Parliament etc.: Students' self-governance, leadership etc. may be inculcated among the pupils by organizing mock assembly and mock parliament in schools.

Exhibition of charts and pictures: Pictures of eminent national personalities and freedom fighters, their brief life sketches and sayings may be displayed in classrooms. Similarly, charts depicting the history of freedom movement may be displayed permanently in every classroom.

Wall-writings on values: Quotations of the great thinkers of the globe on moral values should be written on the walls of the classrooms and every suitable corner of the school.

Activating local community-school network: Active participation of the local community and parents of the pupils in all the programmes organized in school should be ensured to strengthen democratization of the school organization.

Evaluation strategy: While evaluating the pupils, a certain weightage should be assigned on values like leadership, cleanliness, honesty, punctuality etc.

Response to crisis: Pupils' active participation should be ensured in alleviating suffering of people at the emergent situations like flood, fire, drought, earthquake etc.

Wakeful to social changes: Schools should sensitize the learners to the continuous influx of changes

taking place in local, national and international levels. They need to be counselled to adapt themselves to these changes and learn positive lessons from such changes.

Nourishment of aesthetic values: Students' aesthetic values may be nourished through programmes of cleaning campaign of the school campus, making flower-garden and such other activities.

Observation of national and international days: The Independence Day, the Republic Day, World Peace Day, U.N. Day, Teachers' Day and such other days of national and international importance should be observed with the active participation of the learners.

Awareness to diverse festivals: to infuse the sense of unity in diversity into the learners, they should know the significance of and lessons from the festivals like Holi, Diwali, Id, Christmas, Janmastami, Buddha Purnima, Guru Nanak Jayanti, Mahavir Jayanti, etc. This will mould their minds in a secular fashion and help them respect cultures of others.

Lessons on internationalism: To uplift the minds of the pupils from the narrow concepts of nationalism, they should be taught to be liberal –to think themselves as global citizens –irrespective of narrow geographical divisions and historical obsessions.

CONCLUSION:

In the 21st century knowledge-driven societies of ours, human civilization is facing a plethora of problems largely due to lack of basic values. To make the golden ideals of democratic society turn into reality, education system must 'humanize' the learners through proper value education and value oriented education. To develop our future citizens as full human beings, equipped to lead a good life and ready to contribute to build a better democracy, a renaissance of value education is the need of the hour.

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