

Value Erosion and the Need for Spiritual Basis of Education



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ABSTRACT: Education is considered as the foundation upon which the entire edifice of the moral culture of an individual is to be constructed. Education should aim at producing this complete man or whole man with a harmonious all round development of personality i. e. physical, mental, social, moral and spiritual. Education in ancient India aimed at producing this whole man. At a later period, the Buddhist and Jain philosophy of education also insisted on morality, non-violence, self-control, austerity, sacrifice and service to the humanity. In spite of merciless and extensive destruction during the medieval age, Hindu educational institutions remained a living reality. At a much later period there developed the '*Namaghar*' in Assam and '*Bhagvat Tungi*' in Odisha which became the centers of mass education in their respective states. However, the system of education introduced by Macaulay in 1835 aimed at producing a volume of loyal white collar Indian employees for British administration. This led to the complete devastation of Indian values in the education system of India. This paper discusses about the degradation of values in the education system of India and suggests measures to work for the implementation of value education in the schools of India.

KEYWORDS: Value degradation, Education system, English education, Western culture

VALUE EROSION AND THE NEED FOR SPIRITUAL BASIS OF EDUCATION

The Bible says: God has created man in his own image. Man is considered to be the noblest creation of god. Man has rationality through which he can distinguish between right and wrong or good and bad and can judge his own course of action. The presence of certain characteristics in man has made him distinct from other species on earth. Such characteristics or attributes in man can be referred to as values with which he becomes valuable for himself as well as for the society and without which he becomes valueless.

Swami Samarth Ramdas has classified values into four categories. They are (1) personal values such as selflessness, industriousness, simplicity, self-evaluation, purity, leadership, self-control, judiciousness, faith in science and rationality, (2) Social values like friendship, equality, brotherhood, sacrifice, secularism, tolerance and good manners, (3) Moral values that include responsibility, truthfulness, sympathy and love for nature, and (4) Spiritual values consisting of faith in God, indifference, love and aesthetic attitude (Sarangi, 2003). A man imbued with all these values is regarded as a complete man. Education should aim at producing this complete man or whole man with a harmonious all round development of personality-social, moral and spiritual.

Education in ancient India aimed at producing this whole man. The ultimate aim of life was regarded as the ultimate aim of education. '*Moksa*' or attainment of salvation was the aim of life and so also the aim of education. The pupil was called '*Brahmachari*' (the seeker of Brahman, the Absolute Reality) and his tenure of study was taken as a journey on the path of the attainment of the '*Brahman*'. The whole universe emanates from that Absolute Reality. Therefore, all the organisms in the world, in one way or other, are related to each other. The aim education as well as the aim of life in ancient India was to realize that relation by making union with the Absolute.

Education during ancient India was characterized by the *gurukul* system. Pupils had to live together in the *gurukul* irrespective of their caste, creed or social status and were taught to be abided by the idea of '*vasudhaiva kutumbakam*' or universal brotherhood. Living together irrespective of socio-economic status leads to the inculcation of social and moral values such as love, friendship, tolerance, sympathy, equality and good manners. Along with the reading and memorization of the Vedic scriptures, pupils had to perform certain other activities such as collecting fire wood for oblation, grazing the cattle, doing agriculture etc. This helped in the integral development of human personality through life related experiences on the part of the pupil and evaluation of pupils in a continuous and comprehensive manner on the part of the teacher.

The life of a *brahmachari* in the *gurukul* was marked by purity and simplicity. A *brahmachari* or pupil had to observe purity in thought, word and deed. He had to lead a simple life by abstaining himself from all sorts of worldly pleasures through strict self-

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control. The *brahmachari* was taken as a seeker of the *Brahman*, the Truth. The life of the student itself helped in the development of personal and moral values such as purity, simplicity, self-control, truthfulness, selflessness etc. The Vedic scriptures are endowed with hymns in praise of nature such as *Usha* (the goddess of Dawn), *Surya* (the Sun-God), *Chandrama* (the Moon) etc, which helped in developing an aesthetic sense in the pupil along with the inculcation of spiritual values such as faith in God and love for nature.

The Vedic *Guru* or teacher was full of with love to his pupils. He was like a father to his students. Emphasis was given on maintaining a personal relation between the teachers and taught. Education was residential and absolutely free and the teacher had to fulfill the basic needs of his students including food and shelter. Education was considered as the foundation upon which the entire edifice of the moral culture of an individual had to be constructed. Therefore, the moral culture of the pupil was not separated from his intellectual culture (Prabhu, 1991). It was the duty of the teacher to teach morality or value along with knowledge. He had to attain self-realization, wisdom, values and virtues so much so that he could act as a model or an ideal before his students. His way of life was a constant source of inspiration for the pupils. Discipline was the result of this constant inspiration and influence.

On the whole education in ancient India was totally value based aiming at the development of the whole man-body, mind and spirit. Various aspects of education such as aims of education, teacher, learner, discipline and school were centred around universal values like truth, purity, love sacrifice, tolerance universal brotherhood. The Buddhist and Jain philosophy of education also insisted on morality, non-violence, self-control, austerity, sacrifice and service to the humanity (Buddhaghosa, 2010).

Buddhist education aims at a personality transformation into a highest form of humanity through ethical, intellectual and spiritual perfection. These three faculties of perfection of human life undoubtedly lead a man through mundane happiness to supra mundane happiness, which is the highest achievement we all are equally looking for. The chief aim of Buddhist education is all round development of child's personality. This includes his physical, mental, moral and intellectual development. The other aims of Buddhist Education are to make a free man, a wise, intelligent, moral, non-violent and secular (Rahula, 2015).

However, the rise of Buddhist monasteries as centers of learning in the 6th century BCE was marked by the disintegration of the *gurukul* system (Majumdar, 2017). In the early medieval period temples of south India developed into centers of education. At a much later period there developed the '*Namaghar*' in Assam and '*Bhagvat Tungi*' in Odisha which became the centers of mass education in their respective states. By this time several institutions of a formal kind had also been established (Pandey, 1984).

All the above institutions aimed at inculcating some sort of values into their pupils through the system of education. There was a cordial relationship between the teacher and taught. Education had a spiritual base. *Namagharas* in Assam or *Bhagavat Tungis* in Odisha were purely established for religious purpose though later on they were turned to be centers of mobilizing mass education. This spiritual base of education had undoubtedly created the ground for the development of moral character in children. Educational institutions were still considered as sacred places and values like truth, love, kindness, service etc. had their own significance.

The medieval period in India was also marked by the destruction or deterioration of many ancient centres of learning and education. However, scholars like B.N. Luniya (1978), opined that with the invasion of Muslim conquerors nearly all the centers of higher learning of the Hindus and Buddhists were destroyed. Temples and educational institutions and libraries were put to destruction and they were replaced by mosques. In spite of such merciless and extensive destruction, Hindu educational institutions remained a living reality. They sustained strength from its inherent vitality and vigour and maintained the Hindu education system. Even during the reigns of terror and turmoil, merciless persecution and wanton destruction, the Hindu culture and scholarship continued to survive, though it had to migrate to more congenial regions within the country.

However, the system of education was interrupted by the advent of the British in general and that of Macaulay System of Education in particular. The system of education introduced by Macaulay in 1835 aimed at producing a volume of loyal white collar Indian employees for British administration (Srivastav, 1995). With the introduction of Wood's Dispatch in 1854, English became the fashion of the educated elite in India. Along with the introduction of English as the medium of instruction there also started the westernization of Indian education and culture. The few English educated Indians considered themselves superior to the common mass of India and alienated themselves from large bulk of society. They took it a pride to follow everything western. Thus, it destroyed the idealistic nature of education. The *guru* was no longer revered as a father nor does the pupil was treated as a son. The humanistic character of education was totally lost. There was nothing in the educational system which could be termed as spiritual. The trend was not even revised after independence. The system continues even today with a little modification.

The result is that from a totally value based education we have now an education system totally devoid of values. The present education system imparts knowledge devoid of wisdom. It only aims at giving some information to the child. Rote memorization of those information leads to sure success in examination. This in turn changes the school from a place of social harmony to a field of cutthroat competition. Education fails to save one from envy and rivalry. It does not save one from the

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clutches of lust and anger. Pupils are no longer treated as *brahmachari*. Education does not teach him to control his self and to see the material wealth in a disinterested manner. On the other hand it teaches man to acquire wealth by any means and to enjoy worldly pleasures irrespective of usual ethical considerations. Teachers are no longer treated as role-models for students who may teach one thing in the classroom and do the opposite outside. The teacher provides only theoretical knowledge without wisdom. School is without ideals and principal is without principles. Such a system produces man devoid of any value.

Human society as a whole has made remarkable progress in the field of science and technology. But man has lost the higher goal of peace, harmony and inner happiness. The world has achieved economic growth. At the same time it has taught the science of exploitation. In the name of religion, education has taught communalism. In the name of social harmony, it has taught narrow racial discrimination, mutual distrust and suspicion. While the poor and unprivileged of our country do not have means even to get two meals a day, there are affluent people who live in the midst of all sorts of luxuries. Man has lost all emotion towards his fellow-men.

The fault is not of man. It is the fault of our defective and improper materialistic education that produces such men. Instead of imparting the Vedic values of love, sacrifice, service, tolerance etc. it teaches the teaching of Nietzsche for whom life is essentially appropriation, injury, conquest of the strange and weak, severity and exploitation. The theory of Nietzsche had contributed a lot for the rise of Hitler, the sole figure behind the World War II. While the edifice of the entire education system is built on this theory, then it is sure to give birth to hundreds and thousands of Hitler leading the whole world to the catastrophe of a war that would be hundred times more dangerous and destructive than the Second World War. Such a war would result in the total extinction of man from earth.

There is erosion of value in all aspects of education. Consequently there is erosion of value in all spheres of human life. Modern education has produced only incomplete man. It trains human body and mind at the negligence of human spirit. A complete man is not only materially well off, but even spiritually rich. It is the task of education to prepare the whole man by an integral training of the body, mind and spirit. It is the task of education to train people to think rightly and constructively so that he can apply his knowledge for constructive purposes for the welfare of entire humanity. But our traditional educational basis has failed to achieve the desired goals and has landed us into trouble of all sorts. As educated persons we should not stick to that system of education which has made our life miserable by bringing discontent and destruction into it. The only alternative is switching over to the spiritual basis of education. It is only by the arousal of spiritual nature of man that his inner potentialities can be directed in a constructive way. Spiritual basis of education can achieve those things which the present system of education has failed to achieve. Therefore, the curriculum must include some important aspects of spirituality depicting values par excellence. The Religious Education Committee (1946) has recommended the teaching of spiritual values in the following word:

"Spiritual and moral teaching common to all religions should be an integral part of the curriculum and provision of facilities of instruction there in should be a responsibility of the state. An agreed syllabus incorporating the spiritual and moral teachings common to all religions should be formulated."

Similarly Dr. Radhakrishnan Commission (1948-49), Mudaliar Commission (1952-53), Kothari Commission (1964) and many other committees and commissions insisted on the inclusion of moral and spiritual education in school curriculum. It is through a spiritual basis of education that the improper and defective materialistic education can be replaced by a proper system of education that can transform man into divine by arousing his spiritual nature. Spiritual nature is marked by the presence of qualities or attributes such as love, peace, non-violence, truthfulness, honesty, self-control etc. and the absence of pride, egoism, envy and hatred. These are the qualities that the present world needs for its survival. Only spiritual leaders can save the modern world from the volcano of nuclear destruction. Hence education should intend to inculcate a spiritual attitude of life in its students by adopting a spiritual basis of education.

IMPLEMENTATION

Ways and means should be developed to provide spiritual education as part of the streams of formal, and non-formal education. Though informal education is out of control of educational agencies, the formal and non-formal agencies of education can be moulded to introduce methods of providing education in spirituality.

A value-centered syllabus is an effective method of promoting education for spiritual values. These spiritual values and principles can be made the objectives of several aspects of theoretical education (Vyas, 1986).

Orientation programmes can be arranged on a regular basis to offer courses in spiritual values.

Work experiences are attached to all educational institutions and have become an accepted mode of correlated activity. It can be used for the provision of spiritual education. Suitable techniques should be introduced for developing work experience with reference to the spiritual values.

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Reading materials in the form of text-books, pamphlets or booklets etc. can be prepared to inculcate spiritual values among students.

Last but not the least selected prayers capable of arousing spiritual sentiments of students should be sung in the prayer meeting or morning assembly. Prayer is regarded as the best link between life and spirituality.

CONCLUSION

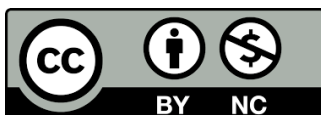
Modern world has solid faith in the method of experiment. All the physical sciences are based on experimental truth. An experiment in education based on spiritual foundations may be done in schools to find out the real growth of man that emanates from spiritual souls and enlightened minds.

The best description of man is a spiritual animal. It implies that though man appears to be an animal, he has a fire of spirituality laying dormant in him. It is the task of education to rouse that fire so that the animal in man shall be transformed in something like divine. He is not to be educated only because he will be required to be an engineer, doctor, teacher or politician. He is to be educated so that he can develop into a complete man which is best possible through spiritual education.

It is not possible to substitute the modern education with spiritual or moral value. However, it is possible to find a harmonious co-ordination between modern trends in education and spiritual values. Mere knowledge cannot help in the real growth of personality. Therefore, education should aim at a balanced growth of both knowledge and spiritual wisdom.

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