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Value Crisis in Contemporary Indian Society

Abstract

Human value is intrinsic to this planet. The sense of value is an essential attribute of the human consciousness. It is this sense which prompts and guides the unceasing quest of the common thread of goodness in the good human being, the good society and the good life. In a general way the word 'value' expresses the qualitative significance we assign to ideas, feelings, activities and experiences. Values are the evaluative standards we use for deciding the difference between right and wrong; good and bad; desirable and undesirable. We experience life in innumerable ways. Our inner self sifts and analyses these experiences, sometimes consciously but more often unconsciously and attaches different degrees of significance to them. The basis of this evaluation process is our system of values. Life is essentially a summation of our value system encountered by the soul over ages but it manifests as 'what we are today'.

People in the present day society are facing the identity crisis. People identify themselves with limited characteristics such as gender, race, religion and nationality, forgetting their basic identity as a part of the universal spirit. Much of the misery that has come into the world in the name of religion can be avoided by reintroducing these shared values.

Key words: Human value, Personal Value, Group Value, Intellectual, Socio Cultural, identity crisis

Values are the essence of all major traditions of the world. Social scientists tell emphatically that the society will crumble without human value. Man is not a blank sheet of paper on which culture can write its text. He is an entity charged with energy and structured in specific ways, which, while adopting itself, reacts in specific ascertainable ways to external conditions autoplastically, by changing his own nature, like an animal, and were fit to live under only one set of conditions to which he developed a special adaptation, he would have reached blind alley of specialization which is the fate of every animal species, thus precluding history. Money, power and prestige have become his incentive and ends. Man is for everything but for himself. Gurcharan Das tells prosperity had begun to spread across India, but goodness had not.

When we think of Indian values, we normally think of personal values, viz., family, religion, respect to elders, helping the needy, sharing, be contented in all situations. However, this is not all. From time immemorial, India is enriching the whole world in Human Values. Mahavir, Buddha, Mahatma Gandhi, thousands of saints, seers, freedom fighter became icons purely because of their practice of Human Values par excellence. They lived knowledge and values for the whole world to emulate and get inspiration. Gandhi ji has once said, ‘ There is enough for man's needs but not enough for his greed.’ In the ancient, medieval and the modern political history of India, there are numerous invasions and plunders including a 350 years of British rule in India.

The independent India picked ‘*Satyameva Jayate*’ (Truth alone conquers and not falsehood), from *Mundaka Upanishad* as its motto and engraved in *Devanagiri* script below the National Emblem. However, free India could not continue with its ancient ethics and glory of a just society. Scams started surfacing soon after her political independence. One of

the earliest scam is the infamous *Mundra* scam of the 1960s, which happened during the period when Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was Prime Minister of India. However, the moral standard of the leaders at that time was very high. The then Finance Minister T. T. Krishnamachari resigned owning moral responsibility. Similarly, in 1956 Lal Bahadur Shastri offered his resignation after a railway accident at Mahbubnagar that led to 112 deaths. However, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru did not accept his resignation. Three months later, he resigned accepting moral and constitutional responsibility for a railway accident at Ariyalur in Tamil Nadu that resulted in 144 deaths. While speaking in Parliament on the incident, Nehru stated that he was accepting the resignation because it would set an example in constitutional propriety and not because Shastri was in any way responsible for the accident. Shastri's unprecedented gesture was greatly appreciated by the citizens. Thus the values among political leaders, few years after independence were exemplary in nature.

The corruption has an exponential rise from independence till date. The scam galore includes Harshad Mehta Security Scam, Medical Council of India Scam, Ketan Parekh Security Scam, Telgi fake stamp paper scam, Common Wealth Game scam, Sukhram Telecom scam, Bihar Flood Relief scam, Cash for Vote scam, Jain Hawala Scam, Home Trade scam, 2G Telecom scam, Food for oil scam, Fodder scam, Bofors scam, Sugar scam and IPL Scam to name a few. The country is reeling under scams. When we search for the reason of such scams greed is the easy answer that comes. But is it only greed that has taken an upsurge or we need to ponder over the basic fabric of society. The spheres of analysis may be categorized as 'personal, group, intellectual and socio cultural'.

The deepening value crisis in the contemporary Indian society is casting its evil shadow in all walks of our life. Even after progress in different fields- economic, industrial, scientific, and educational - it is doubtful if we are moving towards creation of a just society, a happy society, a good society. The promises of the 'tryst with the destiny' and the dreams

of prosperity, social wellbeing and human happiness are proving to be false. The anguish over this disillusionment finds expression in so many ways, in literature, art, academi seminars, and public discussions and in private conversations. They reflect the inner pain and frustration of sensitive individuals. A large segment of our intelligentsia appears to be under the grip of such a pensive helplessness. It is a daunting task to examine the nature of today's value crisis in this gloomy climate. Yet, there is no escape from it either. Why the human values are eroding in the contemporary society and how we can restore human values through education system are issues for the intelligentsia to ponder over and find acceptable solutions thereof.

Personal Value Crisis

The present day man has become consumerist. Attainment of personal success is the ultimate goal. This worldly success is measured by purely materialistic terms as acquisition of money, power and prestige. Consumerism is at its peak. Everybody want to see the end result not the means .The lack of moral, aesthetic and spiritual values in the Indian middle class and unethical and insensitive aggregation of wants is pervading in the atmosphere.

What is seen in today's society is a big gap in believing and implementing things in respect to others. All the Indians know the stories of legends and scriptures and take interests in listening again and again, but they do not live those ethics practiced by the icons. Many feel that values are too idealistic to be followed. It's believed that ethical and honest people suffer in society. Since corruption is prevalent in all cross section of the society, many do not have the valour, inclination and knowledge on how to fight for corruption. Government has brought up transparency through Right to Information Act. But does it reaches the poorest of the poor is a million dollar question. The think tank, policy makers, intelligentsia and social reformer need to think on the same.

The Indian Constitution Fundamental Rights are enumerated in Part-III and from article 12 to 35. These are fundamental obligations of the State to its citizens and the duties of the citizens to the State. The *Fundamental Rights* are defined as the basic human rights of all citizens. These six rights viz., right to equality, right to freedom, right against exploitation, right to freedom of religion, cultural and educational rights, right to constitutional remedies along with right to information act, 2005 are applicable to all Indian citizens irrespective of race, place of birth, religion, caste, creed or gender.

Directive Principles of State Policy are guidelines for the framing of laws by the government. These provisions, set out in Part IV of the Constitution, are not enforceable by the courts, but the principles on which they are based are fundamental guidelines for governance that the State is expected to apply in framing and passing laws. The Fundamental duties are defined as the moral obligations of all citizens to promote a spirit of patriotism and to uphold the unity of India. These duties, set out in Part IV-A and article 51 A of the Constitution, concern individuals and the nation.

- To abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;
- To cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;
- To uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;
- To defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;
- To promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;
- To value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;
- To protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures;

- To develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;
- To safeguard public property and to abjure violence;
- To strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement.

Fundamental Rights are enforceable by the courts, but the directive Principles and Fundamental duties are not legally enforceable. Gradually, after the constitutions come to place, the citizens are more conscious about the rights but unaware of their duties to such a huge nation. Public unrest, demolition of public utility services, naxalism and terrorism increased because individuals do not have a sense of duty and a feeling of belongingness towards the nation. They are not able to conceive the fact that, they are a drop of water in the ocean called 'the nation' and each drop is important and a role to play for the existence or non-existence of the ocean. The Fundamental Duties of Indian citizens serve an imperative purpose, as a democratic polity cannot succeed if the citizens refuse to assume responsibilities and duties and are not enthusiastic to be active participants in the process of governance. The Fundamental Duties are considered as the responsibilities which should be performed by each and every civilian of India.

Group Value Crisis

The *Triratna* (three guiding principles) of *Buddhism* are: *Buddham Sharanam Gacchami. Dharmam Sharanam Gacchami. Sangham Sharanam Gacchami*. The third jewel '*Sangham Sharanam Gacchami*' means "I take refuge in the community", the community of those who enjoy the jewels of refuge, who learn that teaching, seek that understanding, and work to embody that Dharma. They are consciously evolving toward being *Buddhas* (or supreme knowledge), sharing their understanding and bliss with others, as teachers of freedom to other beings, helping them discover these jewels. In ancient to present day the

value of community, group or a society is given prime importance. Joint Family systems and the Panchayati Raj Governance are India's contribution to the world. Unlike other features of our Constitutions, we have not borrowed local self-Government from other parts of the world, but it's originated indigenously. This decentralisation of power was incorporated by 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts. The geographical area, now called India, Pakistan, Srilanka and Bangladesh has a long history of self- Government. In ancient India, every village, across the length and breadth of India, had its own, native and local water harnessing system. Each of these shareholders who own land in the locality was called *Pangudhar*. All *Pangudhars* jointly maintain the water body of the area.

In west also people give importance to the existence of community. Aristotle said 'Man is by nature a social animal; an individual who is unsocial naturally and not accidentally is either beneath our notice or more than human. Society is something that precedes the individual. Anyone who either cannot lead the common life or is so selfsufficient as not to need to, and therefore does not partake of society, is either a beast or a god.' Along with personal growth, we have to look into the obligation of our community. A man needs the society for everything. Nationalism, Patriotism are very important and for a human being. The nation and its outlook shape his destiny. However, undermining the values of Gandhi and Vinoba the spirit of *Sarvodaya* and *Antordaya* could not blend to the society well. The gap between haves and have-nots increased to an alarming level of jeopardising the safety of the former by the later.

At the time of independence we gave ourselves a thoroughly enlightened and egalitarian Constitution for the creation of a just and a modern society. It promised to secure for all citizens justice, liberty, equality and fraternity. To realise these liberal humanistic values a new system of governance was adopted featuring parliamentary democracy, rule of law, balance of power between the executive, legislature and judiciary, legally enforceable

fundamental rights of the citizens, etc. Most of these features were borrowed from different parts of the world, but were different from the prevalent societal values. No attempt was made to evaluate the efficacy of the new system, to harmonise them with our own value system and to assimilate them into our societal and intellectual temper.

Intellectual Crisis

Educated people and intelligentsia of a land decide value pattern of a land. These include writers, scientists, academicians, industrialists, bureaucrats and politicians etc. Our look west policy made us look down upon traditional values like frugality, contentment, search for higher truths in life and humility. The world is becoming a global village and we are exposed to a plethora of information and exposure of the globe through internet, social network, print and electronic media etc. This has led to confusion and dilemma in choosing the best from all and sundry. The consumerism of the west has influenced India a lot. Though it could not take away the ethos and roots of Indian youths and think tank, it has left a strong impression in policy making and other arena. The end cannot always justify the means. The brain drain in India added to this problem. The graduates from IIT and IIM settle abroad for a highly paid job or pursue their higher studies abroad. For last few decades, they did not contribute or represent India intellectually to the maximum capacity as expected from them. The eastern brains find their suitable sets in the west. The ancient Indian scientists, mathematicians contributed in a significant way that is fading with the pangs of time. Invention of zero, Vedic Mathematics and Ayurveda, the science of life are to name a few from the numerous contributions they have made.

Like the proverb goes, every cloud has a silver lining, may be the time has come when India can not only boast of her ancient glory but also can take pride for the present generations too. In 2010, as many as 60,000 Indian professionals returned to India from the USA. As one can

imagine, reverse brain drain is important for India, given that it faces a talent crunch in most sectors.

Socio Cultural Crisis

English Education, Western lifestyle and American movies have influenced the socio economic fabric of India. Those lifestyles are considered to be most cultured and everybody else strives to attain such lifestyles through opulence, food habits, pronunciation, attire etc. The media are constantly prodding us to accept these modern lifestyles. The youth belonging to the economically well-off class are particularly enamoured of the glamour, the fun and freedom promised by the modern culture. They reject traditional restraints on pursuit of sensuous pleasures as old fashioned and unnecessarily restrictive of their individual freedom. Various parts of India are endowed with the flavours of a wide range of food according to the festivals and seasons. These are not only nutritious in nature but also have a scientific reason. Traditional food is replaced by fast food joints in big cities pose a threat to traditional delicacies. The Indian taste buds are forced to relish the limited varieties of western food viz., Pizza, burger for the sake of being levelled as civilised and modern person. There is no harm eating western food to satiate the taste buds but not for a personal brand building.

Similarly, Indian fabrics and variety were considered the best in the world and used to be exported in the past. Cultures are made over a period of thousands years depending on the geography and climate of the land. Aping some other culture without deeply understanding it does not help in the growth of a man. As psychologists say, a teaching in mother language at the preliminary level is most desirable though the child has a knack to learn at least three languages at a time. Indian music, dance, sculpture are the gift to the whole world. The world is looking at us to learn the beautiful tradition the land holds. We need to uphold the rich cultural heritage of the land. The great scriptures of the land led to many important inventions

of the world viz., aeroplane, test tube baby, cloning. The most important contribution of India to the world is Spirituality. *VasudhaivaKutumbhakam*, four *Punishartha* viz., *Dhamma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha* are guiding principles of an Indian society. An Indian is considered great because of his inner wealth in living the values viz., humility, dispassion, caring and sharing, sense of gratefulness and gratitude for the divine and culture of higher values but not because of possession of material wealth. Though Buddha, Mahavir, Rama and many incarnations have taken birth in royal families but they set standards on Human values by renouncing a comfortable life for a value based life. Similarly the land had a large chunk of saints who originated from *dalits*. Also there is always reverence rendered to saints, seers and knowledgeable persons irrespective of their caste, creed and origin. The Indian tradition welcomes knowledge and wisdom from all directions. We see the dearth of living values in the society. Though increasing population has affected the value system, this is not an excuse to bypass traditional value and lead a shallow life devoid of one's root. A person with broad vision must know all the cultural tradition of the world; however, one should never undermine one's own and weigh it as low in comparison to other.

The entire crisis discussed above may be different at a grosser level, in a more subtle level it is different manifestation of a common man and his association with the society, his behaviour adapting changes of the Constitution and socio economic changes of the country. As the saying - 'a patient is to be treated and not the disease', the crisis can be dealt keeping overall situation in the mind. But in the process of finding a solution, the common man's perspective is most important. The solution must reach each individual of the society. Spiritual master Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's statement, 'Broaden the vision; Deepen the roots' may give a solution to the crisis. These four aspects discussed earlier need a proper analysis by the intelligentsia of the nation in every field to find a working and pragmatic solution. This problem has much wider connotations.

In this paper an effort has been made to study the Human Values in educational Institutions. For any social change mass movement is required. Public policy and education system play a pivotal role in modern days to find a solution to value crisis in the contemporary society. Man lives the life of his contemporaries. Therefore the contemporary solutions are traced from the contemporary minds.

India is a the country with its unique and age old tradition and culture. Inhabited by almost 130 crores of people , the food, fabric, sculpture, handicrafts, music and dance, festivals are famous for its diversity and richness. Our country is endowed with richest mineral resources, rivers, mountains, forests, aboriginal tribes and nature's bounty. The value crisis engulfed the all the states of the country.

Becoming value conscious is the solution of the malady. But it's not so simple as you say or write. It takes generations to form or change a value. Human beings are rigid to adapt to changes. Spiritual masters, thinkers, reformers and Governments of the world take generations to see a significant result in a community.

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