Value Erosion and Education: An Indian Perspective

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Abstract

"If Wealth is lost, nothing is lost; if Health is lost, something is lost; but if Character is lost, everything is lost". [1] This saying of the country's father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, throws a light on the strong foundation of values in India. With many of the saints, sages, philosophers and thinkers opining about the ethical and moral bases of life, the country holds a glorious heritage of value system. It is very unfortunate to see that the strong sense of values embedded in the heart of the country is now at a stake in the hands of modern society. The incidents of rage, violence, corruption, character assassination, murder, intolerance etc. are now permeating into the daily lives of individuals and leaving horrific scars on the minds. Amidst such circumstances, the present and the future of the country is prone towards witnessing an unprecedented devastation. With the erosion in values, the older generations are finding it hard to cope up with and the younger ones are falling prey to it thus involving in serious offences. This paper seeks to describe the types of value erosion and the factors behind such a crisis and also to explore the role of education in the Inculcation of values so as to restore harmony in the country. In such an attempt, relevant data have been collected from the secondary sources. The findings of the study reveal the importance of educational practices in inculcating values among the students. With planned interventions in education, positive changes could be expected in the light of this direction.

1. Introduction

With the alarming upsurge in the cases of crime in the country, the restoration of lost values appears to be the need of the hour. Although the historical legacy of the country bears imprints of great men and women who carved niches with their lofty ideals and thoughts, the contemporary society witnesses a significant drift from the essence of past values. This in turn paves the way for restlessness, hatred, maladjustment among the fellow citizens. Along with this, the rich diversity of the nation in multidimensional areas often imposes a challenge towards the harmonic balance. The constitutional ideals of socialism, secularism and democracy which form the very soul of the country's existence now suffer appalling threats at the hands of value erosion. Materialism, globalization, modernization are some the factors which interfere with the quality of life of the individuals to a great extent. They struck a blow to the past beliefs and ideals and give birth to new set of priorities and preferences in the lives of common men and women. Thus people now-a-days are driven towards money-making at the cost of principles. In the ways of success nothing matters to them more than their ambitions. The family ties, mutual faith and respect are now on the verge of extinction. In this context, education is probably the most important tool in creating a better scenario. As education essentially involves a process of shaping up the minds, it could be taken up as a saviour against the destruction of mankind at the hands of value erosion.

According to the great sage and philosopher, Swami Vivekananda, education should aim at man-making and character-building. In the light of this

view, education could be assumed to play a pivotal role in dealing with this decadence of values in the society. By reshaping the aims, curriculum and the methods of teaching, the entire process of man-making could be directed towards spontaneous inculcation of values in the upcoming generations.[2]

2. Value Erosion and Social Problems:

Value erosion is the gradual process of losing regard for the long-cherished set of ideals and beliefs that are fundamental in maintaining equilibrium in all spheres of society. The more people drift away from the values, the more drastic the society becomes in terms of effects. The contemporary society in India is evolving as a progressive one in respect of advancements in science and technology and also to a great in manners and etiquettes. But in spite of these things people are not content with their lives. They have become so materialistic and demanding that they are living chaotic lives full of bewilderment and confusion. In an inhuman race to achieve too much material success they are shedding of their abilities of living peacefully and harmoniously with others. This begets a society devoid of healthy lifestyle and values. Rashmi, 2016, Erosion of values,

The erosion or crisis of values could be traced across many spheres of human life namely moral, social, cultural, political etc. Each of them undoubtedly has crucial roles in the lives of human beings. As a result, decline in these values significantly affects the overall quality of life and results in unprecedented damage. Several problems crop up and penetrate into the very system of society which greatly alters the harmony among the people.

I. Erosion of Moral Values

There are innumerable incidents happening in the country every day that are shaking the traditional value system in which being morally upright was considered the best virtue in an individual. Now, it is widely seen that children do not respect the elders. Also, the grown ups try to alienate their parents in old age homes. Further, materialistic needs are given more weightage than moral justification in deeds and actions. Thus, corruption and greed prevail everywhere. Unnecessary greed paves the way for robbery, kidnapping, extortion etc. [3]

II. Erosion of Social Values

Over the years, Indian society has undergone massive change in social values and systems. The social norms and customs have witnessed paradigm shift in many ways. The mutually cooperative existence of people has become so rare that most of the families now follow nuclear structure. The helpful neighbourhoods have given places to secluded apartments and flats where even the next-door people do not bother to care about the needs and problems of their neighbours. Moreover, the children going into the schools are forced into unhealthy competition with their peers which results in jealousy, anger and hatred among them. These children grow up only to fetch marks and never learn human values of cooperation and compassion. This has a serious impact on their later lives.

III. Loss of Cultural Values

The cultural heritage of India is one that has been praised by many a people worldwide. However, the rapidly changing vibes of the modern society has engulfed the culture of it into the horrible clutches of urbanization and westernization. With the rise in globalization, cultural boundaries around the world are gradually disappearing. This promotes inter-cultural connections between the nations and societies. As a result, societies are losing traditional identities and taking up new forms.

In India, considerable change could be seen in the attires, etiquettes and priorities of people in the contemporary society. In terms of food, clothing and language, each of the states of India have uniqueness which contributes to its rich diversity. But, the onslaught of westernization and globalization has brought about radical changes in the current scenario. Thus junk foods are widely gaining popularity over the regional delicacies. Also, most of the youths now prefer to wear easy going western outfits rather than the ethnic counterparts. The most radical loss in culture is perhaps the gradual extinction of Indian languages due to the excessive use of English. It is also seen that many of the young ones now feel ashamed of using their native languages.[4]

IV. Loss of Political Values

The political discourse in India has noticeably declined in refinement than those of the yesteryears. Hate speech, threats, filthy language and communalism are some of the blackspots of modern Indian political system that has ruined its glorious heritage of the past. Fake news spread has given birth to hate crimes in the country, one of them being the riots in Delhi in 2020. It is also seen that many of the eminent journalists also face threats routinely. It is important to mention here that 'Facebook' has also a role in this. According to an article of 'The Wall Street Journal', Facebook is deliberately involved in unrestricted handling of hate speech in India in comparison to other countries. This has eventually affected the cult of politics in the country.[5]

3. Factors Affecting Erosion of Values in India:

3.1 Materialism – This is imposing a great challenge as the needs and demands of people are continuously rising due to it. Along with knowledge explosion, the concept of material explosion is also coming into prominence and thus man is moving towards the wrong ways to accomplish his desires of the material world. He perceives material comforts as real happiness. In this context, everything is judged in terms of economic benefit.

3.2 Parental behaviour – As has been discussed earlier, parents now-a-days are prone towards the making of marks-fetching wards than morally upright beings. Some parents also never teach their children the how to deal with refusals or denials in life. They provide everything which their children crave for. As a result, many of them turn into spoilt brats. This never lets them understand the values of patience and compromise. This sometimes proves to be hazardous when they take recourse to unfair means to fulfill their unrestricted aims.

3.3 Influence of mass media- The ever-growing world of television and internet undoubtedly plays important role in shaping up the personality of the youth. Excessive violence, rowdiness and indecent content displayed in the media harms the minds of the young ones as many try to imitate them voluntarily or involuntarily.

3.4 Faulty system of Education- The information-oriented and rote-learning system of the country has a very limited scope for exposure of values. It is seen that in schools more importance is given to materialistic achievements. Also , privatization of educational institutions have given rise to commodification of education.

3.5 Lack of extra-curricular activities – It is a well-known fact that extra-curricular activities have significant role in building values in children. But unfortunately, there is a dearth of sufficient exposure to such activities in the educational system of the country. Even, days of national importance are often celebrated only for the sake of formality.[6]

4. Inculcation Of Values Through Education:

The ultimate goal of education is to bring out the best in man. Since education is said to be a powerful instrument of social change and progress, it has certainly a role in the inculcation of values in an individual. There are many ways to inculcate values through educational initiatives:

A. Cleanliness programmes – This type of experiences should be organized on a weekly basis so as to promote the values of hygiene and aesthetics. The participation of maximum number of students should be encouraged through competitions and prizes. The teacher could assign cleanliness tasks to students in different groups so as to ensure maximum efforts.

B. Courtesy and manners–Good behaviours of students should be appreciated and praised and plays could be organized in order to highlight the importance of particular values.

C. Dignity of Labour – The idea of dignity of labour means that any work performed with honest intentions deserves respect. The children in Indian education system generally do not understand the value of manual labour. By engaging them in different types of household chores such as laying the table, watering the plants, feeding the birds etc., they could be made self-sufficient from tender age so that they do not entirely have to depend on others. Thus manual work among children should be encouraged.

D. Patriotism – Celebration of National days should be organized in such a manner that the students might connect themselves with the ideals of patriotism. For this, students could be asked to participate in fancy dress competition and dress up like the great men of the country and give speeches. This will connect them with the thoughts of the great leaders.

E. National Integration – Plays could be organized on the theme of Unity in Diversity. Also, dance programmes on the folk songs of different states could be designed to promote national integration. Films should also be shown to the students on national integration.

F. Punctuality – The keys to success in the lives of a student are punctuality and discipline. The teachers could maintain records of students who never arrives late at the school and finishes assignments on time. These students should be presented badges and medals for such activities. Also, creative writing projects could be given on such topics.

G. Religious Tolerance- The educational institutions should try to uphold the atmosphere of secularism by referring to the quotations of the saints and philosophers from different religions during the assembly. Respect towards all might be shown by displaying posters and pictures on the festivities of different religions.

H. Scientific temper- This involves Inculcation of reasoning power among the students so that they do not blindly accept any propositions. For that, organizing science exhibitions could be effective in the sense that with hands on activities, students will be able to learn the truth or reason behind any phenomenon.[7]

I. Community involvement- To establish connection between the curricular world and the real world, programmes of community service could be organized. For example, the students could be asked to participate in community awareness campaigns against Dengue or Save Trees, Save Environment etc. The children along with the teachers could conduct door to door campaigns locally so as to understand the duties of future citizens.

J. Sports and games – It is a fact universally accepted that sports and games are quite helpful in inculcating values of cooperation and understanding among the students. The physical activity involved in sports relaxes the mind and body and drives away the negative feelings. This enhances healthy relationship among the students who do not get involved in any sort of destroying habits.

Conclusion

With the above mentioned strategies, education could be expected to yield fruitful results for the restoration of lost values in the contemporary society. In this context, the government, the teachers and the parents should be actively participating as the main stakeholders so as to attain optimum changes. The Central and the State Governments should try to incorporate these types of experiences within the curriculum. Along with this, orientation programmes should be organized for the teachers so as to enable them in the organization of such experiences among the students. With this, the parents should try to keep in touch with the school authorities and teachers so that they might help their children in such activities and also to enhance a positive home environment. All these initiatives, if undertaken seriously could be helpful in saving the future generations from further devastations.

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