

OCCASIONAL PUBLICATION 104

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VALUE-BASED EDUCATION

by

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VALUE-BASED EDUCATION*

Abstract

There is widespread concern today with the ‘values crisis’. Moral and ethical values are sinking, and materialistic pursuits generated by the neo liberal economy are thriving. Mushrooming of privatisation in education, giving rise to the phenomenon of ‘edu-business’ in India, fosters this trend. This makes a mockery of India’s great traditions in education, her spiritual heritage and civilisational values in which *gyaan* or *vidhya* is not a commodity—a *vyapaar* and in which education has no lucrative purpose. Moreover, ‘edu-business’ is also an affront to the ideals embodied in our constitution. We seem to have lost all respect for our philosophical foundations and civilisational values where knowledge is free, and the head is held high. Use of digital devices also adds to the values crisis, as evidenced by fake degrees awarded by Internet-based learning, as well as the potentially harmful effects of various sites on the minds of children and adults.

Many countries around the world are recognising the need and importance of overcoming the values crisis by promoting human values as a primary vocation of education. India, with its rich spiritual heritage and philosophical traditions, should be at the forefront in such initiatives. It is all the more imperative for India to play a pioneering role in value-based education since the thrust of India’s spiritual quest had been ‘universalist’, which makes it the heritage of the whole of humanity.

* Lecture delivered on 23 November 2019 at the India International Centre by Dr. Kishore Singh.

Transformation of the education system in that spirit calls for radical measures. The challenging task is to evolve a new architecture for education in India, in which core human values derived from India's philosophical legacy and spiritual heritage, as well as from ideals and principles enshrined in India's constitution, permeate the entire education system. Value-based education is invaluable in mitigating and overcoming many woes that afflict our society.

Introduction

The values crisis seems to be deeply entrenched in our society today. More than two decades ago, the World Declaration on Higher Education, adopted by UNESCO, Paris, in 1998, gave a call for radical change and renewal, ‘so that our society, which is currently undergoing a profound crisis of values, can transcend mere economic considerations and incorporate deeper dimensions of morality and spirituality.’¹

Since then, the values crisis has assumed larger dimensions. The unbridled pursuit of the neo-liberal economy is not just aggravating economic and social inequalities. It also breeds social injustice, and casts its spell on the moral and ethical fabric of society. The gravity of the values crisis is evidenced, for example, by violence and crime, including cybercrime, pornographic websites, fake news, and flourishing corruption which does not even spare education.² The concern expressed in the above Declaration remains most pertinent today, not only for higher education, but also as regards school education. Schools and universities are being drawn into the stronghold of the materialistic value system. This is also true of universities. The vocation of schools as the bedrock of human values, and of universities as the seat of learning for the pursuit of the ideals of humanity are being undermined. Lured by the corporate culture, adults and youth—so-called ‘millennials’—attach importance to materialistic pursuits, neglecting human values and ethics.

India is embracing these trends with no compunction. The display of wealth and vanity have become the coveted aims of life. Incidents of violence, robbery, crime, corruption, financial fraud so often reported have become mundane. Professions like engineering, marketing, management, etc., often show little concern with ethics. Many private hospitals have become

money-minting centres. Those executing public works indulge in underhand dealings. Children continue to be exploited by industrial houses. Corporate culture inducing materialistic pursuits is thriving, and children and youth are being uprooted from moral and ethical values. As Dr. Karan Singh has observed, 'our education system has become totally devoid of values'.³ Tragic incidents in India in recent years in the distribution of mid-day meals in schools, which have made children sick and even caused death bears evidence to the moral depravity of school authorities.⁴

'Edu-Business' and its Baneful Effect

The values crisis is engendered by the market-centred approach to education which is fast developing in India, bringing in its fold a corporate culture. Neo-liberal economic forces and international capitalism, spearheading privatisation in education, have a deleterious effect on our values and on society. A recent study, analysing the onslaught of the privatisation of education in developing countries in the last decade, which reflects the situation in India as well, demonstrates how education is increasingly opened up to profit-making and trade, and to agenda-setting by private, commercial interests. It provides insights into its consequences for individuals and societies, and shows how the learner is increasingly conceptualised as a consumer, and education a consumer good.⁵

Under the spell of neoliberal approaches, a range of entities such as individual proprietors or profit-seeking corporate houses in India have been spreading their business by providing education at all levels. This has given rise to the phenomenon of edu-business, which is assuming alarming proportions. With the fast growth of private universities and a huge upsurge of private schools, India's education system is becoming predominantly privatised.

Private schools—some of them operating even without recognition—indulge in huge propaganda to lure parents and students with false publicity for the so-called quality of education that they provide. A study by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which is composed of the industrialised countries, has shown that there is no evidence that ‘private schools do anything different to induce more learning than do public schools’.⁶ Many private schools do worse than public schools. Misleading propaganda by private schools denigrates the public education system, which is shrinking. Children from poor families are its victims. But it also vitiates the humanistic mission of education.

Private entrepreneurs or enterprises running private educational institutions propagate materialist values, and cater to their own business interest. They also breed a commercial outlook, and long for cultivating a corporate sector culture. Human, value-based education is being undermined by materialistic pursuits in education thus engendered. The vast majority of poor and economically backward people in India, who are lured with ill-founded propaganda by private schools, become the victims of corporate culture, and even take pride if their children can go to these private schools where they learn to say ‘hi’ instead of ‘namaste’. The repercussions of privatisation on education are far-reaching as regards the value system and values orientation.

Privatisation in education is baleful in several respects as regards value education. Private schools and universities cater to a particular social strata, and breed social segregation and discriminatory attitudes from early childhood, thus establishing a learning system disrespectful of cultural diversity. Privatisation also exacerbates disparities and inequalities, aggravating marginalisation and exclusion in education. Already at the

beginning of the 20th century, Mr A. B. Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister of India, in his Opening Speech to the Third Meeting of the High Level Group on Education for All (2003) held in Delhi, warned that ‘the difference between the poor man’s school and the rich man’s school is becoming starker with each passing year.’ And this trend continues unabated. It is an affront to the ideals enshrined in the constitution—ideals of ‘justice: social, economic’ as well as of ‘equality of status and of opportunity.’ It makes a mockery of the fundamental right of equality of opportunity in education, as also of education as a right. Provision of education by individual proprietors or profit-seeking corporate houses is disrespectful of the constitutional ideals and values.

Moreover, privatisation by definition is detrimental to education as a public good since it is driven by business interest, and sacrifices social interest in education for the sake of private profit. It even tends to make the teaching profession corrupt, forcing teachers to corroborate fraudulent and corrupt practices in matters of remuneration paid to them, and the financial operation of private providers. Privatisation in education also jeopardises the ‘academic freedom’ of teachers who do not have a choice in the adaptation of teaching material and application of teaching methods, and who are forced to play to the tune of their employers.

The phenomenon of edu-business is also fraught with fraudulent practices. Degrees and diplomas can be bought from private universities as if these were commodities. Privately operated learning sites and modes for education in a ‘virtual learning environment’ can also indulge in fraudulent practices, including the delivery of degrees and diplomas. Hidden corruption by private providers in education remains unscathed due to lack of financial regulations, of scrutiny of their operations, and of accountability mechanisms.

‘Edu-business’ is an affront to India’s traditions in education. *Gyaan* and *vidhya*—knowledge and education—in India’s traditions have been considered as spiritual, not as commodity or *vyapaar*. Education is, therefore, something ‘invaluable’—above any monetary or materialistic value. Allowing *gyaan* and *vidhya* to be made *vyapaar* (edu-business) is throwing mud on India’s traditions in education, and on the ideals and values embodied in India’s constitution. We seem to have lost all respect for our philosophical foundations and spiritual heritage, where knowledge is free and the head is held high.

If the onslaught of corporate culture and international capitalism on society is allowed to continue, families as a social unit will be broken, and the traditional family pattern could vanish, with serious consequences for children’s upbringing and their outlook. Families may thus cease to be an invaluable font of India’s spiritual heritage, and of transmitting it from generation to generation. Future generations in India could grow with no knowledge of their own spiritual heritage and civilisational values, which could become a relic of the past.

Warding off Risks to Value Education in Use of Digital Devices

The digital revolution is taking place at a dazzling rate, and there is a huge interest in digital devices as they provide vast opportunities for new forms of connections, and sharing of information and knowledge. We must, however, be wary of their misuse and vitiating impact on human values, on the education system, and the society of today and tomorrow.⁷

The use of digital devices in education needs to be critically appraised, especially the ways in which these undermine human values. Online and web-based learning leads to deprivation of human interactions in education,

so important for imparting human values in teaching and learning.⁸ The use of digital technologies in education is also conducive to more consumer-oriented attitudes in universities, and is resulting in the commodification of knowledge. Besides, it reinforces disparities and inequities in education, creating a ‘digital divide’—those who are well-to-do have easy access to digital devices, whereas the marginalised, especially children from poor families, can ill-afford such access.

Children and adults are exposed to the potentially harmful effects of various sites on the Internet, notably misleading advertisements and spam, liberally diffused pornographic sites, cyber bullying, financial scams and even terrorism.⁹ Recently, the Minister of National Education of France considered the use of mobile phones in classrooms as a ‘civilisational threat’ after it was found that a large percentage of adults watch pornographic sites in the classroom while the teacher is teaching. Carrying mobile phone in classrooms was, therefore, banned.

Digital devices are also fraught with unbridled publicity with a view to fostering corporate culture and consumerism, with its despicable effects on the minds of children and adults. Moreover, they are detrimental to intellectual rigour. Students rely on the Internet for research material rather than refereed and scholarly writings. There is a greater proportion of students reading less, referencing less, and writing with less clarity and boldness. The popularity of Google is facilitating laziness, poor scholarship and compliant thinking.¹⁰ Moreover, fake news and fraudulent websites are emerging as a global concern. Information available on the Internet need not be reliable *ipso facto* vis-à-vis prescribed course readings. A careful scrutiny of the authenticity of the source of contents is an essential prerequisite for recourse to digital devices, considering these to be only supplementary

to teaching-learning methods under the proper guidance of teachers and professors.

Constantly bombarded with publicity, the Internet and digital devices dissipate users' capacity for 'concentration'. Being overloaded with information easily, or accessible even for educational and research purposes, they also debilitate the faculty for 'contemplation'. Nicholas Carr has warned us about the dehumanising impact of the Internet on our brains: 'How sad it would be, particularly when it comes to the nurturing of our children's minds, if we were to accept without question the idea that "human elements" are outmoded and dispensable (...) "meditative thinking," as the very essence of our humanity, might become a victim of this.'¹¹ India, which has been the cradle of philosophic traditions of 'meditative thinking', should take this warning most seriously.

Global Policy Responses to the Values Crisis

Value education emerged as one of the main concerns in the work of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century, constituted in the 1990s by UNESCO, to reflect over education in a future-oriented perspective. The Commission, popularly known as the Delors Commission, recognised that 'In confronting the many challenges that the future holds in store, humankind sees in education an indispensable asset in its attempt to attain the ideals of peace, freedom and social justice.'¹² It also considered it important for the universities to reclaim their intellectual and social vocation as guarantors of universal values and cultural heritage. The Commission put emphasis on values in these words:

It is on the strength of its belief in the importance of policy-makers that the Commission has stressed the permanence of values, the challenges

of future demands, and the duties of teachers and society; they alone, taking all the factors into consideration, can generate the public-interest debates that education—since it concerns everyone, since it is our future that is at stake and since education can help to improve the lot of one and all—so badly needs.¹³

A number of initiatives taken in a similar spirit at regional and national levels show the need for making value education a main plank of national policies and strategies. This is manifest in the Paris Declaration on Promoting Citizenship and the Common Values of Freedom (2015), in which the ministers responsible for education in the European Union expressed their ‘special duty to ensure that the humanist and civic values we share are safeguarded and passed on to future generations.’¹⁴ The concern with the erosion of human values and the role of education by the European Union is also common to other regions. The African Union has put a premium on ‘social renaissance’—respect for traditions and ‘shared values’—with a commitment to promote values and Pan-Africanism ‘in all our schools and educational institutions.’¹⁵ Accordingly, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (2016–25) places emphasis on ‘African core values’. Seychelles provides a good example of making ‘social renaissance’ an overarching programme of education, cutting across the work of other government departments in order to save children and youth from being deprived of traditional values.

Making human values a primary vocation of education is emerging as an important feature of education policies. Many countries recognise the necessity of promoting value education in face of present-day trends ushered in by globalisation, and forces of the neo-liberal economy in an endeavour to overcome or prevent the ‘values-crisis’:

- In France, the humanistic mission of education is becoming an important concern in ameliorating the system of education—with a drive towards fostering ‘morale’ and ethics?
- Ethics and moral values are becoming strong pillars of the education system in China,¹⁶ with growing interest in Confucian tradition and education. China is attaching high importance to the teachings of Confucius as the philosophic foundations of the cultural value system in a humanistic spirit, as a bridge for dialogue on universal ideals.¹⁷
- The humanistic nature of education and the priority of common human values are part of the Principles of State Policy in the field of education in the Education Law of the Russian Federation.¹⁸ Education, according to this Law, implies a purposeful process of educating and upbringing, implemented in the interest of a person, the society and the State.
- The Mexican Educational Model seeks to build a national education system with a ‘humanist focus’ as a key pillar of the country’s development.¹⁹ A recent Education Act in Chile on the Civic Education Plan has the objectives of fostering human rights values and ethics.²⁰
- Bhutan is known for having embraced the concept of Gross National Happiness (GNH)²¹ which ushered in an alternative model to market-centred approaches to development. With its foundation in the philosophic and cultural traditions of Bhutan and of Buddhism, GNH seeks to promote the values of individual and social well-being that stress the pursuit of happiness, and overall cultural and spiritual well-being, rather than focussing only on economic development.²² Educating for GNH places focus on curriculum reforms as well as practical measures to ensure teachers are demonstrating GNH in their daily actions. Global

interest in the concept of GNH as an invaluable approach to human development has been recognised by the United Nations.²³

- Kazakhstan promotes mutual understanding and respect for the richness of linguistic and cultural diversity among more than 40 ethnics in the country, by way of regularly conducted dialogue among them at the Assembly of the People which has constitutional status.

India, with its rich spiritual heritage and traditions in education, should be at the forefront in all such initiatives. She has the great advantage of drawing upon her philosophical legacy and civilisational values. As Radhakrishnan has observed, ‘we find in India from beginning of history an impatience of spirit, a love of wisdom and a passion for the saner pursuits of the mind.’²⁴ Drawing upon such invaluable heritage, India can set an example in bringing into the limelight, education as an ideal—a supreme value in itself. It can also become exemplary in giving shape to value-based education in keeping with the values, ideals and principles enshrined in India’s constitution, as well as the essential objective of education for human rights-based values in line with international human rights conventions and India’s obligations under them. Most importantly, a value-based education system which draws upon India’s spiritual legacy would be emblematic of India’s spirituality as being ‘universalist’ in spirit for the well-being of the whole of humanity

Education as a Supreme Human Value in itself

The centrality of education in people’s lives is being increasingly recognised in today’s world. It is now widely acknowledged that education is invaluable for individual empowerment and for social transformation.

Education is a supreme value in itself. First and foremost, education itself,

like life, is a supreme value for every human being. This is elucidated in the ruling by India's Supreme Court on education as an inalienable human right. While establishing the right to education as a constitutional right, the Supreme Court took the view that elementary education is a fundamental right, even when not so mentioned in the constitution, because education is an integral part of the right to life which is a fundamental right.²⁵ Education as a supreme human value is also reflected in the concept of right to education as an internationally established right: the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has recognised that as an empowerment right, education is the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalised adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty. It plays an invaluable role in enabling a human being to live a fulfilled life: 'the importance of education is not just practical: a well-educated, enlightened and active mind, able to wander freely and widely, is one of the joys and rewards of human existence.'²⁶ The concept of the right to education embraced by the United Nations thus echoes the traditions of education in India.

The Incheon Declaration, adopted at the World Education Forum (May 2015), to which Ministers of Education from all over the world remain committed, underlines the importance of education as a fundamental human right, as the main driver of development and as a public good.²⁷ The concept of education as a right and as a public good is widely prevalent in the countries of Western Europe, more prominently in the Nordic countries. Such a concept is embraced by many developing countries. For instance, the education laws in a number of countries of Latin America recognise education as a right and as a public good. Education is considered as a public good in many other countries in Asia, Eastern Europe, as also in the Arab world.

Education is also valuable as a foundation of human development. Experience shows that growth in the Human Development Index²⁸ is associated with growth in public spending on education. Investment for the realisation of education as a human right is the best investment a country can make.

One can thus understand the need for valuing education in the life of an individual and of society. The government's responsibility for the provision of education as a core public function is established by the Supreme Court of the United States of America which ruled that, 'Providing public schools ranks at the very apex of the function of a State', and that 'Education is perhaps the most important function of State and local governments.'²⁹

Education as an essential public function of the State deserves especial consideration in India for several reasons. As a result of unbridled engagement with the neo-liberal economy, the gap between the rich and the poor is abysmal. Equity-based education of good quality as a public function provides leverage in bridging this gap. Educational deprivations can be mitigated by expanding opportunities for education for the marginalised, and especially for children from poor families, thus creating an inclusive society. Such an empowering role of education as a public function of the State has tremendous value in lifting nearly one-third of India's population out of poverty. It can thus become an equalising force for mitigating social injustice as a constitutional imperative.

Those advocating the case of a neo-liberal economy who argue that the State must divest itself from education, and that education should be left to private providers, not only denigrate India's constitutional ideals and values, but also the concept of education as a public good. Education as a public function and social interest in education should not be allowed to

be abdicated for the sake of private profiteers. The concept of education as a public function and as a public good has a great value in order to roll back the upsurge of privatisation in education and uproot the edu-business, highlighted above.

India can take into consideration legal and policy approaches of several countries for preserving education as a public good and as a public function of the State. For example, the Education Law of China provides that ‘educational activities must conform to the public interest of the State and society’, and that ‘no organization or individual may operate a school or any other type of educational institution for profit.’³⁰ Similarly, the Russian Federal Law on Education provides a number of guarantees of the social nature of education as a public good and of the social function of education (Article 2 (1)). Ecuador’s constitution (2008), which ushered in a new human rights-based model for the State,³¹ underscores that education shall respond to public interest, and will not be subservient to individual or corporate interests (Article 28). National legislation and policies in Finland give paramount importance to education as a public function of the State, and as a public good. The law in Finland states that ‘basic education may not be provided in pursuit of financial gain.’³²

Singapore is an especially noteworthy example of how States can effectively regulate private education providers in order to safeguard public interest in education. According to the country’s Private Education Act, private educational establishments must abide by quality standards and norms which are very strict, and function in the public interest. The Act establishes accountability of management and provides that ‘any registered private education institution which contravenes any requirement or restriction imposed ... shall be guilty of an offence.’ It makes acting ‘fraudulently or dishonestly’ or misleading the public punishable by law. It

contains comprehensive provisions on inspection and enforcement, with a detailed section on offences by corporate bodies, including unincorporated associations which, when found guilty of an offence, shall be liable to be prosecuted and punished accordingly.³³

Safeguarding education from the forces of privatisation and preserving it as a public good is not only a legal responsibility; it is also a moral imperative. This assumes added significance when looking upon education as a supreme value for the individual as well as for society, and as a public good. The engagement of many Indians who are sincerely devoted to the cause of education, and who run or support educational institutions as a social service for common well-being without any lucrative purpose, shows that education, while remaining primarily a responsibility of the Government, is also a social responsibility. However, in supporting and applauding genuine philanthropy, which by definition is inspired by the noble cause of serving the country in a selfless spirit with no lucrative end, abundant care is necessary to ensure that providing education for business interest or for lucrative purposes under the guise of philanthropy is curbed, as this is not compatible with the ideals and values enshrined in the constitution.

India's Constitution and Values of Education

Values are central to the objectives of education, not only as laid down in international human rights conventions, but also in education laws in many countries. India's constitution embodies several ideals and principles on the basis of which essential objectives can be assigned to education. It provides that: 'It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions'³⁴ As a corollary, it is the responsibility of the government to devise an education system which

inculcates such a spirit among students so that as citizens, they abide by their fundamental duties.

First, the ideal of social, economic and political justice

Under the constitution, India is pledged to ‘secure to all its citizens: justice—social, economic and political.’ In the same vein, the Directive Principles of State Policy stipulate that ‘The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life’ (Article 38. 1). Accordingly, it is both a constitutional and moral obligation of the government to devise an education system which is respectful of social and economic justice as a constitutional value, and which engages and inspires every citizen to defend it. Students can be enthused with the ideal of social justice when the education system vehicles such values. Education must develop among them the spirit of standing up for the cause of social justice when social injustice is perpetrated, for instance, by commercialising education. Taking up the cause of social justice has a great value in the face of the abysmal gap between the rich and the poor which runs counter to the stipulations in the constitution—that ‘the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good.’ (Article 39 b). Similarly, exploitation of educated and talented youth for the sake of corporate growth and profit-making is also a sign of the disrespect of ‘social justice’. So is the case as regards exploitation of children by industrial houses. An education system in line with the ideals enshrined in the constitution can be invaluable in mitigating and overcoming many woes that afflict our society.

The ideal of social justice must also be seen in the context of the constitutional responsibility of the Government to ‘promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.’ (Article 46). Measures taken for this purpose require to be scaled up as India’s education system is characterised by gross disparities and inequities. The right to education as a constitutional right remains eclipsed by educational deprivations. More than one-fourth of India’s population is a victim of poverty, and children from poor families—also cutting across Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes—suffer most from inequities in education.

Second, human dignity

Human dignity is a moral concept. It is premised upon the basic tenet that each person must be valued and respected as a human being. As a moral concept, human dignity provides sustenance for human rights.

Everyone as a human being owes it to himself or herself to be respectful of the other person in terms of human dignity in every way—in one’s outlook and conduct, in one’s behaviour pattern, in personal as well as in social or professional life. Being placed in an inferior social or professional position or being a victim of poverty does not make one humanly demeaning. Treating humanely all those in subordinate positions professionally as well as those providing household aid in one’s personal life is a mark of being respectful of their human dignity. Persons with disability deserve to be treated with civility and with respect.

The Constitution of India specifically mentions that it is a fundamental duty of every citizen of India to ‘renounce practices derogatory to the dignity

of women.’ (Article 51 A (e)). Any citizen committing not only any act of violence against women, but even any act disrespectful of their dignity, flouts his or her fundamental duty and is liable morally as well as legally.

The Directive Principles of State Policy in the Constitution of India recognise the need for ‘human dignity’ as a national value in a larger perspective: ‘to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation.’ The concept of human dignity is intertwined with that of fraternity. Generating the national ethos for upholding human dignity by nurturing it through education is also a moral responsibility of the government.

Third, humanism

Developing ‘humanism’ is the fundamental duty of every citizen under the Indian Constitution.³⁵ Humanism denotes ethical norms governing human conduct based on humanist ideals for the common interest of the whole of humanity. It is both an individual and a social value. Humanism has been projected as ‘a cooperative effort to promote social well-being’ to be fostered by ‘education and supported by custom.’³⁶ Respect for human rights, considering them to be value-based, is an attribute of humanism. Thus, humanism can be correlated with the humanistic mission of education. Several values such as empathy, sympathy and compassion, refraining from any act which is injurious to life, and to the physical well-being of other persons, that each individual must uphold are considered as a mark of humanism. It is the moral responsibility of each individual to conduct himself or herself humanely with each and every other individual.

One can better understand ‘humanism’ as a constitutional value and its educational dimensions in the light of the address by the President of India

to the nation on the eve of Republic Day 2017, in which he called upon all Indians to partake in creating a new India: a ‘compassionate society, with spirit of empathy and moral basis of our policies and action.’ Referring to the ‘integral humanist component that is in our DNA’, he evoked the humanistic mission of education. Our education system can derive its strength from such a vision, upholding innate ‘humanism’.

Fourth, cultivating a scientific temper

The constitution also recognises the fundamental duty of every citizen to cultivate a ‘scientific temper’.³⁷ Thus, it is the constitutional duty of every human being to cultivate a scientific outlook, and the spirit of intelligent inquiry. Such a scientific attitude also implies the spirit of critical thinking and rational attitude, rather than dogmatic thinking or acceptance of any creed or superstitious beliefs.

There is a conceptual link between scientific outlook and humanism, as humanism is based on values of being humane, without basing this on a religious or dogmatic belief, but considering this an innate human value and, as such, a token of scientific thinking.

Fifth, democratic values

India takes pride in being the biggest democracy in the world. Yet, a democratic culture leaves much to desire. Democratic values such as respect for the democratic system, for the democratic way of life, and for the rule of law, are important for every student to inculcate. An important objective of education is to prepare children and adults for the responsibilities of the future, so that as citizens they are well prepared for playing an active part in the democratic life of the nation. Education is also valuable for inculcating

respect for freedom of thought and expression in a democratic spirit as part of the democratic culture.

Sixth, respect for richness of cultural and linguistic diversity

One's culture and language are very dear to one's hearts since they are a mark of one's identity. It is, therefore, natural that every citizen is required to respect the richness of cultural and linguistic diversity with which India is endowed, and her composite culture as a fundamental duty³⁸. Multiculturalism and multilingualism go hand in hand, and valuing one another's culture and language is important. Languages are a component of the richness of India's cultural diversity, and preserving them is a constitutional and moral responsibility for safeguarding the country's linguistic and cultural heritage.

Learning to live together peacefully and respectfully in a multicultural, multilingual and democratic society is a crucial cultural value which should be a part of the objectives of education. It is in this perspective that the provisions of Article 30 of the Constitution that minorities have the right to 'establish and administer educational institutions of their choice' must be perceived as a national value. While minorities have the right to preserve their own culture and languages, they have at the same time the duty to respect the national culture. The recognition of the right of members of national minorities to carry on their own educational activities, including the maintenance of schools, and the use or the teaching of their own language, is subject to conditions laid down in UNESCO's Convention against Discrimination in Education. The Convention clearly lays down such a responsibility. It provides that (a) 'this right is not exercised in a manner which prevents the members of these minorities from understanding the culture and language of the community as a whole and from participating in

its activities, or which prejudices national sovereignty; (b) that the standard of education is not lower than the general standard laid down or approved by the competent authorities.’³⁹ Moreover, it is required of any educational institution established by the minorities that it be fully respectful of the ideals and principles enshrined in the constitution.

Finally, the spirit of excellence

A commendable feature of India’s Constitution is that it enjoins upon every citizen the fundamental duty ‘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.’⁴⁰ Its special significance as an educational value has been brought out by the Supreme Court of India. Considering the pursuit of universal excellence as an ‘enduring value of our polity,’ the Supreme Court has stated that ‘[...] the primary imperative of Article 14 is equal opportunity for all across the nation for education and advancement. (...) What is fundamental, as an enduring value of our polity, is guarantee to each of equal opportunity to unfold the full potential of his personality. [...] The philosophy and pragmatism of universal excellence through equality of opportunity for education and advancement across the nation is part of our founding faith and constitutional creed. [...]’.⁴¹

Pursuit of excellence in education is not only a fundamental duty of citizens; it is also a moral obligation of the government. It is incumbent upon students, parents, teachers and the community at large to claim that excellence in the education system and in educational institutions is fostered and supported as a constitutional requirement. Reversing the trend of degrading quality and standards in education at all levels in India is essential to pave the way towards excellence. This calls for radical measures for imposing high

educational norms and standards, with measures by public authorities for their implementation with rigour. India's education system needs to put a premium on academic and professional excellence to bring forth talent and skills that her youth possess—to enable every child to bring forth his/her innate potential.

Making degrees and diplomas awarded by educational institutions a hallmark of excellence is a challenging task, for it requires stern steps for weeding out all private tertiary-level educational institutions which admit students in consideration of money that they demand in order to amass wealth in the name of education, often with no consideration for merit or competency. This has had a devastating impact on the value of higher education, especially technical higher education. Thousands of students with worthless degrees awarded in technical fields, particularly in engineering, by such private educational institutions are unemployable—ruining their future and that of the country. More than students, public authorities are to blame for thus allowing the provision of education of deplorable quality in the country. This is a mark of utter disrespect for the provisions in India's University Grants Commission Act (1956): that no candidate shall secure admission to a University course of study by 'reason of economic power.' This is also a sign of contempt for the ruling given by the Supreme Court of India: 'when the State Government grants recognition to private educational institutions, it creates an agency to fulfil its obligation under the Constitution to enable the citizens to enjoy the right to education. Charging capitation fee in consideration of admission to educational institutions is a patent denial of a citizen's right to education under the Constitution.'⁴²

India's International Obligations and Value Education

As already mentioned, India has international legal obligations for promoting value education, in particular, human rights values under the United Nations human rights conventions.

India is an original signatory to the Universal Declaration, which stipulates that education shall aim at 'the full development of the human personality'⁴³ Education has, thus, the mission to bring forth the potential in every human being, and nurture and nourish mental and intellectual faculties. Governments have moral responsibility to include among the aims of education its essential objectives laid down in the Universal Declaration, such as mutual respect, promoting international understanding, peace, and strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The Universal Declaration gives expression to a philosophy of education which is rights-based. This is enriched by Mahatma Gandhi's vision, which also takes a holistic view of education, while placing a focus on ethics. For Mahatma Gandhi: 'for a person to be truly educated, you had to have a united approach, by training the mind to think, the hands to acquire skills and the heart, for human values and ethics.' Mahatma Gandhi's vision is invaluable for guiding us towards a system of value education built around 'human values and ethics.'

India's responsibility to promote value education also flows from her obligations as a Member State of UNESCO, which has the institutional mission to foster the 'intellectual and moral solidarity of humankind.' Nehru had characterised UNESCO as the 'conscience of humanity'. As a member State, it is expected of India to collaborate with the Organization in the development of educational activities aimed at promoting 'ideals of humanity for justice, and liberty and peace.'

India's obligations under various international human rights conventions make it incumbent upon the Government to pursue the objective assigned to education and human rights-based values. For instance, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), to which India is a signatory, assigns to education the aim of developing 'respect for human rights, for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own.'⁴⁴ Accordingly, State parties to the Convention must recognise 'the need for education to be designed and provided in such a way that it promotes and reinforces the range of specific ethical values enshrined in the Convention, including education for peace, tolerance, and respect for the natural environment.'⁴⁵

Besides such international legal obligations, India also has moral obligations for promoting value education under various resolutions adopted by the United Nations and various Declarations adopted by the international community. For instance, States have obligations for promoting education for 'peace, democracy, development and social justice', as a follow up to the Vienna Declaration and the Programme of Action, adopted at the World Conference on Human Rights (1993). Such obligations have especial significance for India as they overlap with the ideals and values enshrined in the constitution.

As regards value education, the World Declaration on Education for All (1990) is of outstanding importance as it places emphasis on building on spiritual heritage. The Declaration states that:

The satisfaction of these needs empowers individuals in any society and confers upon them a responsibility to respect and build upon their

collective cultural, linguistic and spiritual heritage, to promote the education of others, to further the cause of social justice, to achieve environmental protection, to be tolerant toward social, political and religious systems which differ from their own ensuring that commonly accepted humanistic values and human rights are upheld, and to work for international peace and international solidarity in an interdependent world.⁴⁶

India played a prominent role in the adoption of the Declaration, with full political commitment to give it effect. It is, therefore, India's moral obligation to adopt educational programmes for elementary or basic education in conformity with the values emphasised in the Declaration.

The humanistic mission of education was a main concern of the World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century (1998), already mentioned. The Declaration invites the international community to 'help protect and enhance societal values and the reinforcement of humanistic perspectives,' (...) 'inspired by love for humanity and guided by wisdom.'⁴⁷ Promoting the humanistic mission of education is also an important thrust of the Incheon Declaration, adopted at the World Education Forum (May 2015)⁴⁸ under the auspices of UNESCO. India has a moral obligation to give effect to the Declaration.

India's moral obligations for promoting value education also flow from her commitment, along with all other governments, to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015⁴⁹, with a focus on its economic, social and environmental dimensions. All these dimensions have a bearing on value education. The need for integrating the principles, values and practices of sustainable development into all aspects of education and learning has been recognised

by the international community.⁵⁰ The constitutional duty of every citizen ‘to protect and improve the natural environment’ (Article 51A (g)) is convergent with this.

Education for sustainable development has become critically important for transforming outlook and discarding practices which breed a consumer society. Consumerism can be mitigated by an earth-friendly way of living, with respect for nature. The Japanese traditional culture of *mottainai*, meaning ‘still valuable to use, not necessary to throw away’, provides an example. Changing our way of living has become necessary with new attitudes and ways of life respectful of the eco-system, and of sustainable development.

The concept of harmony between nature and human life, and respecting nature as being integral to ‘good living’—*sumak kawsay*—enshrined in Ecuador’s constitution (2008) is another noteworthy example of promoting education for sustainable development. It valorises the traditional value systems of indigenous people, according them an important place in the country’s educational programmes.

In committing to the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, India, along with other governments, has also pledged ‘to foster inter-cultural understanding, tolerance, mutual respect and an ethic of global citizenship and shared responsibility.’ These values, assigned to education, are especially significant as they open some new important vistas for educational programmes. In this respect, it is important that the need for a ‘new global ethics for our common humanity’ was recognised while formulating the Sustainable Development Agenda.⁵¹ This has multiple dimensions, not only regarding the new ethics of conservation of biodiversity, but also of bioethics, ethics in international financial transactions

which is being discussed so much, as well as new ethical approaches to artificial intelligence, etc.

India's Spiritual Heritage and Civilizational Values

Reflecting over the tension between the spiritual and the material existing as a perennial factor, the Delors Commission, mentioned above, brought to the fore in a most lucid and profound manner, the paramount importance of spiritual and moral values:

“often without realizing it, the world has a longing, often unexpressed, for an ideal and for values that we shall term ‘moral’. It is thus education’s noble task to encourage each and every one, acting in accordance with their traditions and convictions and paying full respect to pluralism, to lift their minds and spirits to the plane of the universal and, in some measure, to transcend themselves. It is no exaggeration on the Commission’s part to say that the survival of humanity depends thereon.”⁵²

India’s spiritual legacy can be a beacon light for lifting ‘the minds and spirits to the plane of the universal’. It is in this respect as well that a pioneering role devolves on India which is most richly endowed with spiritual heritage. Dr. Karan Singh, who was a member of the Delors Commission, observed that, ‘the creative reorientation of our education system’ can be valuable ‘to provide an educational mode not only for ourselves but for the entire developing world, which is desperately seeking a new synthesis between the traditional wisdom of the East and the technological progress of the West.’⁵³

Many renowned thinkers, writers, philosophers, historians, scientists and scholars from foreign countries have sung songs of praise for spiritualism as ancient India’s precious legacy. We can take pride in Sylvia Levi’s

observation that India is a country ‘symbolizing the spirit of humanity.’ Drawing inspiration from the views of Mark Twain that our ‘most valuable and most instructive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India’⁵⁴, our educational programmes can shed light on this hidden treasure so that our students become enriched by these ‘most instructive materials’. Similarly, education should make students well-versed with India’s ‘spiritual perennials for humankind’,⁵⁵ highly praised by Robert Arnett. With scientifically rooted convictions, Albert Einstein and Julius Robert Oppenheimer—both renowned scientists—were great scholars of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and its spiritual treasure. Aldous Huxley had esteem for India’s philosophical heritage couched in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, not only for the benefit of India but also for the whole of humanity: ‘The *Bhagavad-Gita* is the most systematic statement of spiritual evolution of endowing value to mankind’, and a ‘perennial philosophy’ for ‘all of humanity.’⁵⁶

If so many luminaries have been fascinated by India’s ancient legacy and spiritual heritage and its great value for humanity, this can be looked upon in terms of India’s eminence as regards the philosophy of education. Their views on India should find a place of pride in India’s education.

India’s spiritual legacy is a font of spiritual and moral values. Some prominent features can be mentioned for illustrative purposes as regards value education.

As already mentioned, *Vidhya* and *Gyaan*—education and knowledge—in India’s cultural and philosophical traditions have been considered as laudable human endeavour, and imparting knowledge and education—*vidhya daan* and *gyaan daan*—a contribution par excellence to human and social life. Those devoting their life to this noble cause—to reflection and thinking, to generating knowledge and its dissemination—were held in high

esteem and placed on the highest pedestal in society. Value education can feed on India's spiritual legacy, respectful of knowledge and learning.

The highest esteem for intellectuals and philosophers in society for showing an enlightened path to the ruling class in India's philosophical traditions has great significance today, when corporate sector magnates, devoid of human values and spirituality, rule the roost in a country's governance.

The universalist spirit underlying India's civilisational values is illustrated by *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*⁵⁷ which denotes the concept of 'mother earth', and that of looking upon all her inhabitants as one family. *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* thus embodies the spirit of universal brotherhood intertwined with that of humankind as one family. It will be no exaggeration to say that the concept of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' is a precursor of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which seeks to foster universal brotherhood, stipulating that all men and women 'act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.' However, the concept of mother earth underlying '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' is richer than that underlying the Universal Declaration, in that protecting mother earth from environmental degradation is implicit in it. All inhabitants of earth, that is, the whole of humanity, bound by a feeling of fraternity, must respect mother earth.

As Indians, we have the great advantage of embracing and disseminating the universal spirit underlying our rich spiritual heritage and civilisational values. Dedication to the ideals of universal well-being and happiness for the whole of humanity vividly exemplifies this: *Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah, Sarve Santu Niraamayaah; Sarve Bhadraanni Pashyantu, Maa Kashcid-Duhkha-Bhaag-Bhavet* (ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चिदुःखभागभवेत्) Om: May All be Happy; May All be Free from Illness; May All See what is Auspicious; May no one Suffer. Such

ideals, which are akin to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, are highly pertinent in today's world in all endeavours for resolving conflicts and creating societies free from fear and violence, for fostering mutual respect and international solidarity among people, for global peace, harmony and justice.

India's philosophical traditions are reflected in the message of 'harmony and peace', of 'universal religion,' given by Swami Vivekananda at the World's Parliament of Religions, Chicago (1893). His message is so much more pertinent in today's world when we talk of the ethics of 'global citizenship' in the context of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Our education system should take pride in the dissemination of the teachings of Swami Vivekananda.⁵⁸

Yoga, acclaimed worldwide, is a living example of the universal value of India's legacy for the whole of humanity. It is a quest for harmony between nature and human beings, between inner and outer self, as well as physical and mental well-being. Yoga is the kernel of meditative thinking. It also teaches one to perform one's actions *par excellence*, as an end in itself, as an offering to the divine: *Yogah karmasukausalam*. It is in appreciation of the manifold advantages of yoga that it is being taught in schools, and is also practised in many countries around the world.

In Sanskrit, which is *devavani*, many words or short phrases, such as *satyam vad*—speak the truth, or *vidhya dadaati vinayam*—humbleness is a sign of knowledge and wisdom—can be catalogued for use in school textbooks for inculcating value education. Sanskrit, with its grammar deemed to be most scientific and rational, is best suited for imparting value education founded on India's spiritual heritage, since such spiritual heritage is couched in Sanskrit. Giving supremacy to Sanskrit in India's Official languages listed

in the 8th Schedule to India's Constitution, would be an asset for making India's spiritual heritage a living reality.

Founding the Education System on Core Human Values

A new architecture in education requires to be evolved in order to integrate various core values into the education system. India's education system can be founded on core human values, and endowed with a humanistic mission, as highlighted above. Core human values can be derived from (i) national values embodied in the ideals and principles enshrined in the Constitution as well as the fundamental duties of citizens, especially for developing 'humanism'; (ii) human values reflected in the international human rights conventions and declarations pertaining to the global development agenda; and above all, (iii) universal values in which India's ancient culture and philosophy abounds, as discussed above.

In that spirit, core values can be outlined under several categories such as

- personal values: intrinsic to a human being such as honesty, compassion, kindness, humility, benevolence, etc.;
- moral values: such as human dignity, truthfulness, moral integrity, righteousness, altruism, doing good as an end in itself, ethical approach to life, philanthropy;
- social values: such as charity, community service, solidarity, alleviation of the suffering of others and helping those in distress; respect for the disabled, corporate social responsibility, respect for parents, elders and teachers, rejection of a culture of consumerism, upholding social justice, 'abjure violence';
- cultural values: such as respect for one's culture and language, for

civilisation and values of others and for cultural diversity; mutual understanding and respect, fraternity, generosity, living together peacefully and respectfully in a democratic and multicultural society;

- democratic values: such as the democratic way of life, rule of law, democratic rights and responsibilities, judicious exercise of freedom of thought and expression;
- civic values: such as human dignity, treating others with civility, respect for elders, civic courtesy and civic discipline, respect for ideals and values enshrined in the constitution, compliance with constitutional duties, patriotism and love for the country;
- philosophical values: such as the highest esteem for *gyaan* and *vidhya*, meditative thinking, safeguarding '*vidhya*' from being made a '*vyappar*', '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*'—looking upon the whole of humanity as one family;
- educational values: such as the spirit for excellence in educational pursuits, developing a scientific outlook, a rational attitude rather than dogmatic thinking, practice of yoga, love for lifelong learning, preserving the humanistic mission of education;
- environmental values: such as preserving and respecting harmony between nature and human life, preventing environmental degradation;
- professional values: (such as professional integrity, unwavering adherence to professional ethics, not only as regards specialised professions, but also as regards any professional pursuit, including those in the informal sector; responsibility and accountability while holding public office, contempt for corruption; not to submit to professional exploitation and to inhuman treatment.

In order that the education system becomes value-based in its full sweep, such core values should permeate the entire education system, beginning from early childhood education and through elementary—basic—education to tertiary level education. The outline of various categories of values, drawn above, can be considered a referral framework for a value-based syllabus, making these an integrated part of textbooks and teaching materials in the most simple language.

Early childhood education

Early childhood education is a delicate phase in which the imprint of values imparted remains lasting, engraved in the heart and minds of children. By way of play and recreational activities, early education can nurture in children the spirit of imagination and creativity, and kindle in them a love for learning.

A child grows up amidst a family and indelibly imbibes values upheld by the family as exhibited in daily life. The manner in which a family nurtures a child along with emotional care and with affectionate guidance is of lasting importance, shaping a child's development.

An important role, therefore, devolves upon the family as the fundamental group of society. In education policies, the family has not received the consideration commensurate with its importance for early childhood care and development. It deserves much more attention and support for assuming its responsibilities.

The Directive Principles of State Policy stipulate that 'The State shall endeavour to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.' (Article 45). Accordingly, provision of early childhood education is clearly a government responsibility. It is

expected of the government to progressively expand opportunities for early childhood education. However, while discharging its constitutional responsibility, the government should ensure that where early childhood education is provided by private providers, it has no lucrative purposes, nor shows any disrespect for values and ideals enshrined in the constitution.

Elementary education

It is the main vocation of school education to nurture moral and ethical values in children and adults and kindle in them a desire to develop their innate talents and competencies. In this respect, it is important to make yoga an integral and prominent part of school activities in appreciation of its universal value for human and social well-being. It nurtures the faculty of ‘concentration’ in a human being, which is invaluable as a lifelong asset.

Integrating the fundamental duties of every citizen enumerated in Part IVA of the constitution into the curriculum, and making them a part of course contents, especially for elementary education, is a policy step crucial for popularising constitutional ideals and values among students with a sense of respect and allegiance.

For devising a value-based educational programme for elementary education, public authorities can be inspired by a ruling of the Supreme Court of India more than two decades ago: “We part with the fond hope that the closing years of the twentieth century would see us keeping the promise made to our children by our Constitution about a half century ago. Let the child of the twenty-first century find himself into that ‘heaven of freedom’ of which our poet laureate Rabindranath Tagore has spoken in *Gitanjali*.”⁵⁹

India has produced many great intellectuals, thinkers and philosophers, and some of them have already been mentioned. The textbooks for elementary

education and all courses of studies in humanities, social and natural sciences, as well as technical specialised courses, should carry, as appropriate, the values they preach and the ideals they embody so that students learn from their teachings.

Similarly, the text books should carry chapters, as appropriate, on many renowned philosophers, thinkers, scientists, historians and intellectuals—both foreigners and Indians—who have ennobled India’s spiritual heritage and civilisational values with universal acclaim. Great figures such as Mark Twain, Sylvia Lévi, Will Durant, Max Mueller, Robert Arnett, Aldous Huxley, Albert Einstein, Julius Robert Oppenheimer, Leo Tolstoy, Arnold Toynbee, A.L. Basham, Herman Hesse, Henry David Thoreau and many others who have admirably delved into India’s past—with great esteem for spirituality in India and for the richness of her civilisational legacy—can be the well-spring of value education. Indian students should be conversant with such great figures and their enlightening work, with a sense of pride and fervour.

Value education is equally important for vocational education and training (VET). Going beyond technical competence and stimulating entrepreneurship and the innovative spirit, cultivating work ethics with a sense of social responsibility among students pursuing VET is also essential. Emphasis needs to be placed on critical thinking and on human values so that VET does not remain merely instrumental, but is endowed with a humanistic mission as well. Otherwise, VET does not serve the essential objective of education as ‘the full development of human personality.’ Integrating learning with thinking, with human considerations, provides a value-based mission for VET.

Education under the constitution is a concurrent responsibility of both the Union and the State governments. The Union government has a nation-wide responsibility, and the onus is on it to ensure that values and ideals enshrined in the constitution are promoted and fostered throughout the country. Similarly, it is the responsibility of the Union government to ensure that the international legal and moral obligations undertaken by India under the international human rights convention as well as the political commitments made under other international instruments, including those within the framework of the global agenda for sustainable development, are abided by everywhere in the country.

For the purpose of embracing value education as a national drive, the Ministry of Human Resources Development can establish an ‘academic authority’ as envisaged in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009).⁶⁰ Consisting of eminent educationists, philosophers, literary figures, intellectuals, writers and scientists, such an ‘academic authority’ can be entrusted with the mandate to codify core human values to be imparted in education at its various stages. The mandate of such an authority should require it to be guided by the ideals and principles enshrined in India’s constitution, by India’s international legal and moral obligations, and above all, by ancient India’s legacy and spiritual heritage, while considering education as a supreme value in itself. Further, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) should be entrusted with the task of preparing text books and syllabii in which such core human values are incorporated.

Several categories of values outlined above can be imparted in keeping with the level of students in their progression in elementary education. Even as the pattern of school education across the country must be

uniform, the core values to be imparted in schools must also be uniform throughout the country. Indian civil services function in an all-India spirit. Her judicial system is uniform throughout the country. Education is more important as regards its vocation for bringing into being a nation-wide value system.

In the context of value education to be imparted nation-wide, an important question relates to the rights of minorities to preserve their culture and language as a constitutional right, and establish their own educational institutions for this purpose. As already mentioned, in exercising their right, it is expected of the minorities to respect national culture. We must also not forget that the fundamental duties of every citizen *ipso facto* hold good for all minorities and must be respected in any educational institution they maintain. Thus, in all minority educational institutions, core national values should be taught as well, in addition to their own cultural values. Cultural and linguistic rights of minorities are not above the constitution, but derive their legitimacy from it.

Building a value-based school system is an essential vocation of education in which primary responsibility devolves upon public authorities. Teachers, parents and communities are all stakeholders and active participants in fostering this. Teachers play an important role in nurturing human values in students so that they become an integral part of their behaviour patterns. However, teacher training in India, provided in its quasi-totality by private institutions, makes this self-defeating. What kind of respect for tradition in education in India and human values can be expected of a teacher training system which is run for lucrative purposes? India can learn a great deal from Finland where the teaching profession as a public service enjoys high esteem and provides an ideal model. Teacher training in India, therefore,

should be entrusted to the education faculties in public universities in recognition of the key importance of the teaching profession as a public function. Moreover, value education should be an essential component of teacher training. Every teacher should be well-versed with the fundamental duties of citizens, and the ideals and values enshrined in the constitution, with an emphasis on constitutional duties such as the scientific spirit and humanism. Besides, teachers should also be trained as regards the need to avoid risks and the undesirable use of digital devices in education.

Higher education

Value education is crucial at the primary and secondary levels. But it is also equally important at the tertiary and higher education levels.

Current developments in higher education run counter to value education. The higher education system is grappling with the emerging global marketplace and the growing spirit of competition.⁶¹ International consortiums specialising in ‘selling’ education are a manifestation of this. Besides jeopardising the independence and autonomy of public universities, this has serious implications for value education, as this leads to the predominance of materialistic pursuits in education to the detriment of the humanistic mission and the social function of universities.

A value-based approach has become necessary as regards the main orientation of the higher education system and its *modus vivendi*. Universities need conventional public support to preserve their independence and autonomy. They also need to foster values such as fervour for research and reflection, scientific reasoning and intellectual rigour, academic freedom, unfettered intellectual pursuits, moral integrity, as well as a philanthropic spirit among students for giving back to society.

Professional values such as professional integrity, unwavering adherence to professional ethics, not only with regard to specialised professions, but also any professional pursuits including those in the informal sector; resentment in cases of professional exploitation, etc., are necessary for preparing students for every profession— public or private. In all technical higher education institutions and establishments across the country, such as engineering faculties and Indian Institutes of Technologies (IITs), business management institutes, law faculties and medical science faculties, it should be mandatory for all students to follow ethics and professional ethics as a compulsory subject. It is not enough, for example, to provide courses and programmes on business ethics and on corporate social responsibility in management institutes. It is more important to place emphasis on moral integrity, on the need to shun unethical business practices and on professional rectitude. Making human values an integral part of all areas of specialisation, including specialties in technical areas with a focus on knowledge and wisdom, can safeguard and valourise the humanistic mission of higher education.

In intellectual discourse and scholarly writings in India, more often the work of Western scholars, especially American scholars, are referred to. It will not be an exaggeration to say that in some manner, India's education system remains far removed from India's traditions in education and still smacks of Macaulay's vision.⁶²

A paradigm shift is called for in this regard. We need to develop a new academic culture so as to encourage students and researchers in higher education institutions to cite also and even *à priori* the work of Indian scholars to raise esteem for intellectual pursuits and research *in* the country. As stated in the Delhi Declaration adopted at the BRICS Summit (March

2012), there is a ‘storehouse of knowledge, know-how, capacities and best practices available in our countries’ that can be shared ‘for the mutual benefit of BRICS as well as other developing countries.’⁶³

There is also need for a paradigm shift for the university culture in the face of internationalisation of higher education which tends to make universities from Western countries predominant players. India should engage in a drive towards excellence so that in academic mobility and exchange programmes, she becomes a valued destination. It is equally important to valourise patriotism and love for the country, so that upon completing higher education, students stay in India and serve the country rather than migrating abroad for lucrative gains and materialistic considerations.

Making knowledge of literature, philosophy, social sciences and humanities mandatory in technical higher education institutions is required in order to foster the humanist mission of education.

Assessment of Students’ Education and Learning: Towards a Value-Based Approach

The exercise of making human values an integral part of education remains incomplete unless such values are made a crucial component of evaluation and assessment of student learning achievements. This is important as value education remains neglected in some prevailing assessment tools for evaluating learning.

Assessing learning at elementary level

The approaches being advocated for evaluating and understanding what students learn currently exhibit a lopsided focus on ‘learning outcomes’,

with an ‘input-output’ model, as if there is an analogy between schools and factories, and as if what matters is the material value of education in the narrow sense of economic development, devoid of human values. Such distorted approaches to evaluation eclipse the humanistic mission of education. It is therefore important to discard the use of ‘input-output’ and ‘learning outcome’, and instead, embrace innovative methods of ‘assessment of student’s educational achievements’. Education is not a factory but a lifelong learning process, and the system of evaluation should be centred around the key objective of education: ‘full development of the human person.’

The most important function of education in imparting human values is neglected in the *assessment of students’ learning performance* based on a narrow and reductionist approach. For instance, the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) consists of a triennial survey, testing the performance of 15-year-old students in reading and mathematical and scientific literacy, and benchmarking a country’s performance against that of other countries participating in PISA. A country like India, with its traditions centered around spiritual values and knowledge as ‘*gyan*’, should not allow a system of students’ educational assessment which neglects the humanistic mission of education.

With a paradigm shift, we need to embrace an approach of assessing students’ learning which accords key importance to human values in an encouraging spirit. What is essential is to assess whether students are knowledgeable of India’s spiritual heritage and her civilisational values, whether they are conversant with a citizen’s fundamental duties, possess an aptitude for literary pursuits and imbibe human values. These cannot be neglected in assessing students’ knowledge and learning. Besides, due

importance should be given to critical thinking and human values, with a focus on professional ethics, while assessing competencies and skills of students pursuing vocational education and training (VET).

Assessing competencies and educational achievements at higher education levels

India needs so much to develop professional ethics. This is critically important. In addition to being made part of the courses of study in specialised areas in all higher education institutions, as mentioned above, professional ethics should also become an integral part of examining competencies and knowledge of students. Students' knowledge of and commitment to ethics and professional ethics in all technical higher education institutions and establishments should be given full weightage in assessing their technical and professional competence across the country in engineering faculties and IITs, business management institutes, law faculties and medical science faculties. Along with proficiency and competence in specialised technical areas, this should become part of examination and tests, and be given due weightage for the award of degrees and diplomas to successful students.

Value education in our universities and higher education institutions is also a victim of the prevailing systems of evaluation and global ranking of universities which are widely publicised, bringing into the spotlight universities from the Western world, and perpetuating their stranglehold over global educational institutions.⁶⁴ As a result, students from developing countries rush to these universities. This undermines the image and worth of their own universities. It is, therefore, vital to critically review current evaluation methods and approaches in a bid to move towards a new system of evaluation and ranking of universities, which is value-based.

‘The social function’ of higher education and its contribution to ‘human development’ constitute important elements of this. Key parameters for assessment of students’ learning and for evaluating their competencies as well as for evaluation, rating and ranking universities are provided by the World Declaration on Higher Education, already mentioned. Accordingly, some critical questions should be considered in devising tools of assessment of students pursuing higher education and the evaluation of the higher education system itself: does higher education serve its humanistic mission and reinforce humanistic perspectives? Have students been endowed with such a perspective firmly? How does higher education imbibe a sense of societal values and have students imbibed such values? How does higher education prepare students for discharging their social responsibility? Have students become capable of this? How does higher education promote equity and justice, and are students well versed for such promotional work? How does higher education make students enthused by the ideals of humanity, and are they dedicated to such ideals?

Human values deserve a central place in assessing students’ learning and educational achievements and the education system as a whole. These do not find a respectable place in the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) devised by India for evaluating and rating universities in the country. Human values with a focus on professional ethics should be given an important place in this Framework.

Future Perspectives on Value-Education: Education Laws and Value-Based Education

India has very rich jurisprudence in the field of education, and at the same time, a very poor system of education laws which are highly underdeveloped. India needs to modernise national legislation in the field of education, and

a process of elaborating new education laws must be ushered in along with a set of rules and regulations in order to lay strong legal foundations for the education system. While doing so, a legal basis can be provided for making education value-based as part of the aims and objectives of education in all new education laws.

Education is a matter of *entitlement* in terms of universal access. But it is also a matter of *empowerment* in terms of imparting knowledge, values, competencies and skills. These two key dimensions of education go hand in hand. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (2009) in India, besides being limited in scope, does not provide for the aims and objectives of education which are normally laid down in school education laws. It merely stipulates that the central government shall ‘develop a framework of national curriculum.’ The standards and norms specified in the Schedule to the Act do not address the question of the empowering role of education in terms of human values.

Similarly, India’s Apprenticeship Act (1998), which still governs vocational education, requires to be modernised, in which the focus on values such as the faculty of critical thinking and humanism is important. In the field of higher education also, the University Grants Commission Act (1956) is outdated, and a new higher education law needs to be enacted, giving key importance to human values, especially professional ethics.

Concluding Remarks

Overcoming the ‘values crisis’ with which our society is faced today is of paramount importance. It is imperative to arrest the trend of declining moral and ethical values, and the predominance of materialistic pursuits to the detriment of the humanistic mission of education, engendered by the

neo-liberal economy and corporate culture. A new architecture of education needs to be evolved so that human values, so necessary in today's world, become its bedrock.

This calls for radical measures for safeguarding the noble cause of education of—‘*vidhya*’ and ‘*gyan*’—supreme human values, and for weeding out the phenomenon of commodification of knowledge and of edu-business which is flourishing in India, and which is an affront to India's traditions in education and to her spiritual heritage, as well as to the ideal of social justice enshrined in the Constitution. Moreover, it is important for India which places so much emphasis on digitalising education, to bear in mind that ‘knowledge’ is different from ‘information’, and to take heed of the wise words of Richard Paul Evans: ‘What a culture we live in, we are swimming in an ocean of information, and drowning in ignorance.’⁶⁵ To save her youth from drowning in a culture of ignorance, India must go back to her philosophical and cultural traditions which give supremacy to advancing from darkness to ‘knowledge’ and ‘wisdom’—*tamso ma jyotir gmaya*— and which are the intellectual and spiritual assets of the well-being of humankind.

Resurgence of India's philosophical traditions and her ancient spiritual quest is of pivotal importance in devising a value-based education system for moulding present and future generations that are intellectually accomplished, and endowed with virtuous characteristics. Bold initiatives taken to that end would be invaluable, making India exemplary in humanising the forces of globalisation, and creating a better future for today and tomorrow.

Endnotes

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- 15 OAU/AU 50th Anniversary Declaration of the Heads of State and of Governments, Addis Ababa, 26 May 2013.
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- 35 Part IVA on Fundamental Duties of Citizens. article 51 A (h).
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- 39 Article 5 § 1 c) of the Convention.
- 40 Article 51 (j) of Chapter IVA on Fundamental Duties of Citizens.
- 41 Chitra Ghosh and Another vs. Union of India and Others, 1969 (2 SCC 228.)
- 42 Mohini Jain vs. State of Karnataka and Ors, AIR 1858, 1992 SCR (3) 658.
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- 58 In his address at the World’s Parliament of Religions in Chicago, 11 September 1893, Swami Vivekananda said: ‘I am proud to belong to a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance. We believe not only in universal toleration but we accept all religions as true.’ See *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, Vol. 1. 19th Edition, December 1992. Advaita Ashrama. Calcutta, India. p. 4.
- 59 Mohini Jain vs. State of Karnataka and Ors. AIR 1858. 1992 SCR (3) 658.
- 60 Article 29 on Curriculum and evaluation procedure in the Act provides that:
- (1) The curriculum and the evaluation procedure for elementary education shall be laid down by an academic authority to be specified by the appropriate Government, by notification.
 - (2) The academic authority, while laying down the curriculum and the evaluation procedure under sub-section (1), shall take into consideration the following, namely:—
 - (a) conformity with the values enshrined in the Constitution;
 - (b) all round development of the child;

- (c) building up child's knowledge, potentiality and talent;
 - (d) development of physical and mental abilities to the fullest extent;
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About the Author

Dr Kishore Singh holds a Ph. D. in international law (1977) from the University of Paris 1 (Sorbonne). He had served UNESCO for many years, and has long standing professional experience in the field of the right to education. Upon his retirement from UNESCO, he was appointed as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education from August 2010 to July 2016. In that capacity, he has presented to the Human Rights Council and to the United Nations General Assembly annual reports on areas of priority concern for the international community. He has contributed to the development of the right to education in its various dimensions, and promoted its better understanding as an internationally recognised right. Dr. Kishore Singh has been participating in a number of high level fora and public events, including ministerial meetings and remains engaged in informal consultations with State representatives, international organisations as well as civil society. He has a large number of publications to his credit in the field of the right to education, to which he has devoted his career.



The India International Centre was founded with a vision for India, and its place in the world: to initiate dialogue in a new climate of amity, understanding and the sharing of human values. It is a non-government institution, designed, in the words of its founder president, Dr. C.D. Deshmukh, to be a place where various currents of intellectual, political and economic thought could meet freely. 'In its objectives, the Centre declares its purpose as being that of society to 'promote understanding and amity between the different communities of the world by undertaking or supporting the study of their past and present cultures, by disseminating or exchanging knowledge thereof, and by providing such other facilities as would lead to their universal appreciation.'

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