

Yogic Traditions of India and their Educational Implications with Reference to Development of Values

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Abstract

Values are the set of beliefs that an individual or a community believes in. Values help to establish a just society. Value education is the kind of education, which helps to inculcate certain positive values in children. The introduction of value education in Indian education system started with the Radhakrishnan Commission. It is accepted worldwide that value education is the need of the hour. Even UNESCO has advised that education should have value education as a component. Yoga philosophy is one of the six Indian philosophies. It teaches the ideal way of life and purpose of life. It espouses inculcation of constructive values throughout the journey of yoga. Thus, it can be concluded that yoga has a major contribution to make in the cultivation of values in an individual. It implies that including yoga in the curriculum will ensure values to be internalised in children.

INTRODUCTION TO VALUE EDUCATION

There is much advancement in science and technology today. However, in the name of modernisation, one can see the decline in societal fabric with falling apart of the values system and rise in crime rates. There seems to be no anchor to hold on to for the modern generation in the absence of values. Post-renaissance, religion was

discarded as an archaic and outdated entity. With it, ethics, morality, and values also seems to be lost.

Values are the set of beliefs, which act as a guiding light for a person. It helps us to decide and make right choices in life. There are various definitions of value. Hipple (1969) defines it as 'conscious or unconscious motivators and justifiers

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of the actions and judgment'. Kane defines it as, 'the ideals, beliefs or norms which a society or the large majority of a society's members holds' (Kane, 1962). Having values and a strong value system ensures mental well-being. It also influences our actions and attitude to the environment, other fellow beings, and society as a whole.

A strong value system enables one to become a responsible person who is considerate and firm in one's stand. Values are inevitable if one has to ensure a peaceful society, where there is justice, liberty, secularism, and equality. Value education is, therefore, the need of the hour. Sources of inculcation of values in an individual can be from the family, society, culture, religion, peers, and education. The curricular and extra-curricular activities in education can be valuable tools for cultivating values along with informal education imparted by the family. A child spends a considerable amount of time at school. During the formative years, this time is crucial for moulding the child into a good individual. This can only be done by imparting value education.

Sociologist Morris Massey has described three significant periods during which values are developed. These are— the imprint period (up to 7 years of age), modeling period (8–13), and socialisation period (13–21 years) (Soundarajan, 2015). The imprint period is when children are most receptive and absorb almost

everything they see and believe to be true. During the modeling period, people tend to copy others and everyone chooses what to believe in. The socialisation period is when one is influenced by one's peers. It is a phase when the child is in a transition period and becoming an individual in one's own right. This phase is more influenced by one's peers as they are at a similar footing as oneself. Thus, we see that the education system has an important role to play in value development. A child starts school at three years of age and spends most of his time at school. Value education thus implies a kind of education aimed at cultivating specific values in the individual. C.V. Good refers to value education as the collective of all the processes by means of which abilities and attitudes are developed in a person for developing constructive values of society (Barik, 2020). Character education enhances students' knowledge, skills and abilities by providing them with discriminative power and good judgment and responsibility. (Ryan, 1999). Indeed, in the strict sense of the term, education cannot be considered complete until and unless it helps make an individual a better version of oneself. It should not be just cramming information and facts by the young minds.

As spoken by the unemotional character of Charles Dickens' novel, *Hard Times*, Mr. Gradgrind— "Now, what I want is Facts. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts.

Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the mind of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them.” Dickens, through this character, criticises the utilitarian aspect of education and extra emphasis on facts. He believes in just the opposite, and the way Gradgrind refers to young children as ‘reasoning animals’, it reduces a child to a lower stratum. Here Dickens tries to show that education should be more than this (Dickens, 2001). What is generally taught in the education system is what we refer to as *aparavidya*— knowledge of mundane things. *Upanishads* have advised that *paravidya*— knowledge of spirituality and higher self should also be taught (Nikhilananda, 1956). This kind of knowledge draws one inwards and makes an individual peruse upon one’s purpose in life. A person who has such questions in mind would necessarily develop positive values. Swami Vivekananda says education should be ‘man-building and character making’. M.T. Ramji, in his book, *Value-Oriented School Education*, has listed down 11 values that should be inculcated in school children. Those are cleanliness, courage, courtesy, the dignity of manual work, joy, respect for all religions, peace, purity, service, truth, and universal love (Ramji, 1973).

INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM AND VALUES

The Indian education system in ancient times was based on the Gurukul System and ancient Indian philosophies. The value system was quite strong during those times. The Gurukul System of education believed in bringing about a total transformation in the student by imparting education. Right from the beginning, education during the *vedic* times required strength of character and sound values in the student. *Sadhana Chatushtaya* in *Tattvabodha* (2014), explains the fourfold qualifications of a student. It says that a student should possess four qualities to be able to get education. Those are *viveka* (discrimination), *vairagya* (dispassion), *shatsampatti* (six properties— control over mind, control over senses, observance of duty, forbearance, faith, and single-pointedness of mind), and *mumukshatva* (intense desire for true knowledge) (Tejomayananda, 2014). During the medieval period, education thrived in stellar institutes like Nalanda, Takshashila, Vikramshila, and Ujjain (Pandya, 2014). The custodians of Nalanda University considered education as not just collecting information and facts but the overall development of personality, much like yogic principles.

As perceived by Nalanda University, development encompasses physical, mental, moral, aesthetic,

and spiritual (Chaurpager, 2018). This implies that values were an essential aspect of education there. Similarly, Takshashila University based its education system on the ancient scriptures like *Vedas* and *Upanishads*, which were the basis of yoga philosophy. Value education is inseparable from the teachings of *Vedas*. Practically, Takshashila demonstrates values of equality and secularism in the admission process. There was no discrimination based on status, power, caste, or family background (Siddiqui, 2012). The teacher had the liberty to assess the eligibility of the students based on their aptitude. Self-discipline, freedom from jealousy, self-control, honesty, and modesty were considered the pre-requisites for admission to the university (Apte, 1961). Moreover, the guru imparted education specifically for each student based on their personality and capabilities. The practice ensured that the students were given complete education that entails the development of the whole personality. The brightest minds were the products of this university, among whom the name of Chanakya can be mentioned.

With the advent of the Mughal invasion, the educational system changed. But it also had a different model of value education. Theology and ethics were also taught besides other subjects like history, politics, accounting, mensuration, agriculture, astronomy, and engineering (Anjum, 2018). While the Muslims studied

the Islamic model, the Hindus studied *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, yoga, and grammar. It goes without saying that value education was provided by these means.

When the Western model of education was introduced in India, the purpose was to create a class of Indians who were well versed in English and clerical knowledge. Furthermore, it does not come as a surprise that the education system had no components of value education. Indian education has been following the same paradigm even after independence. Only recently, education committees have come up with suggestions to include value education as a component of education. The Radhakrishnan Commission (1948) emphasised the inculcation of ethical values among students in colleges and universities (Charles, 2012). Secondary education commission or Mudaliar Commission (1952–53) advised that teaching method should be such that it helps inculcate desirable values and attitudes in the children (Purohit, 2018). Kothari Commission (1965) advised that values should be inculcated at all stages of education (Charles, 2012). It also stressed that education should help cultivate social, moral, and spiritual values. The UNESCO declaration on higher education has proclaimed the need to promote values through higher education, and suggest students to be involved in social service activities. The National Policy on Education

(1986) emphasised the need to make education a means to cultivate values. It lies down that there should be an interlinking of education and culture.

INTRODUCTION TO YOGIC TRADITION OF INDIA

Yoga is an ancient science and art of living life the right way. It is one of the six philosophies of ancient India known as *Shad darshanas*. According to Patanjali, it is defined as the cessation of modifications of the mind (Bryant, 2009). Likewise, Vasishtha defines yoga as the skill to calm the mind. According to *Ashtanga yoga*, eight limbs of yoga are listed down as techniques to achieve the ultimate goal of yoga. These are *yama* (codes of conduct), *niyama* (rules of self-discipline), *asana* (postures), *pranayama* (breath regulation), *pratyahara* (withdrawal of sense organs), *dharana* (concentration), *dhyana* (contemplation), and *samadhi* (self-realisation).

The four paths of yoga explained in accordance to *Bhagavad Gita* are: *raja yoga* (yoga of willpower), *jnana yoga* (yoga of knowledge), *karma yoga* (yoga of action), and *bhakti yoga* (yoga of devotion) (Tapasyananda, 2003). These are the different paths that an aspirant of yoga can take to progress in the journey of yoga. Walking on each of these paths, one has to cultivate specific values essentially. The *Gita* espouses that one should have faith, devotion, and compassion to tread in the *bhakti marga*. Also, if one were to adopt *karma yoga* as

one's path, selflessness, generosity, and kindness are a part and parcel of such an aspirant. For a *jnanayogi*, an analytical mind and wisdom are the pre-requisites. *Raja yoga* entails willpower and determination to be necessary to progress in the path. If these principles are adopted in our daily life, they can help embellish the individual's character. These principles of selfless action, generosity, wisdom, and willpower are the ingredients of an ideal person. Such a person is an asset to society as his judgment is always proper and has the welfare of all.

Yoga is a system of developing personality in all aspects. If one was to consider the concept of *Panchakosha*, it emphasises different aspects of one's existence (Sharvananda, 1921). The concept brings forth the idea of the different layers of existence and their improvement by yogic practices. The layers are *annamaya* (physical), *pranamaya* (vital energy), *manomaya* (mental), *vijnanamaya* (intellectual), and *anandamaya* (bliss). It is said that yoga helps to achieve total well-being by improving the different layers of existence.

CONTRIBUTION OF YOGA IN THE CULTIVATION OF VALUES

Yoga is, all in all, steeped in values. There can be no yoga without values. To be a yogi, one has to follow a set of injunctions. How one eats, sleeps, dresses, talks, and eats is regulated. Yogic concept of *ahara* (dietary rules), *vihara* (way of living), *vichar* (thought

process), and *achar* (mannerisms) set down the rules to be followed. Traditional texts of yoga— *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, *Bhagavad Gita*, all without exception, explain how to be a yogi by cultivating specific values.

Yamas (codes of conduct), as explained in *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, lists down five vows, and those are *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (abstinence), and *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness) (Bryant, 2009). Each one of these vows is significant in itself. Patanjali says that by observing these vows, one can move closer to the ultimate goal of yoga. Yogi Swatmarama also lists down ten *yamas* to be observed. These are *ahimsa* (non-violence), *satya* (truthfulness), *asteya* (non-stealing), *brahmacharya* (abstinence), *kshama* (forgiveness), *dhriti* (endurance), *daya* (compassion), *arjava* (humility), *mitahara* (moderate diet), *saucha* (cleanliness) according to Chapter 1 verse 16 of *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (Muktibodhananda, 2003).

Ahimsa or non-violence is the principle of not harming any other being or object by thought, word, or deed. Inherent to this principle is the concern for fellow beings. If one has to follow the principle of *ahimsa*, care for the environment and animals are the values that are inevitably cultivated. *Satya* or truthfulness is another principle which talks about being truthful always and not relying on falsehood. This is yet another

significant value in itself. *Asteya* (non-stealing) is based on the value of honesty. It means not taking another person's possession without their permission. *Brahmacharya* (abstinence) implies not indulging in sexual activities and connotes control over one's base instincts. Self-control is the value related to this principle. *Aparigraha* (non-possessiveness) is the principle which talks about minimising one's needs. It can be related to the value of simplicity, a sense of sacrifice, or self-abnegation. *Kshama* is the *yama* that talks about forgiveness. It entails that the person should be large-hearted so as to be able to forgive. *Daya* is compassion. It is an essential value in itself. *Arjava* is humility. Being humble implies that the person possesses positive qualities. As is evident from the saying, 'The tree laden with fruits always bends low' (noble and virtuous persons are always humble and are very keen to help others). *Mitahara* is moderate diet. For a yoga aspirant, moderation in diet and several other aspects is a must. It implies that a yogi should not eat too much or too little. This suggests that a yogi does not indulge and does not give in to desire. It shows he is someone who has self-restraint.

Another important concept in yoga, *niyama*, or rules of self-discipline, is significant when we talk of value education. According to Patanjali, *niyamas* are five in number. They are *saucha* (cleanliness), *santosha* (contentment), *tapas*

(austerity), *svadhyaya* (self-study), and *ishvarapranidhana* (surrender to God) (Bryant, 2009). *Saucha* (cleanliness) refers to cleanliness, both external and internal. An external aspect relates to the physical body, clothes and environment. The internal aspect denotes the cleanliness of the mind. Herein, the mind has to be made clean by removing negative thoughts and emotions. Also, one has to cultivate positive emotions and thoughts for the same purpose. This can be compared to values like purity. *Santosha* (contentment) refers to the principle of being satisfied with what one has and not crave for other things. This is another important value one needs to inculcate. *Tapas* (austerity) refers to the principle of fulfilling only one's needs. One should follow the principle of simple living and not indulge in a materialistic lifestyle. *Svadhyaya* (self-study) teaches that one should analyse oneself. The progress that one has made in the spiritual path should be gauged time and again. This shines a light on one's moral development as well. Introspection will bring about the development of insight and mental maturity. *Ishvarapranidhana* (surrender to God) refers to a total surrender of one's ego to the divine. Surrender of ego inevitably refines the person and thus leads to the inculcation of values like humility, benevolence and kindness.

According to *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *niyamas* are 10 in number. They are *tapas* (penance), *santosha*

(contentment), *astikya* (faith), *dana* (charity), *ishvarpujanam* (worship of God), *siddhantavakyashravanam* (listening to sacred scriptures), *hri* (modesty), *mati* (discerning intellect), *japa* (repetition of hymns), *hutam* (sacrifice) (Muktibodhananda, 2003). *Astikya* is faith. There is a saying, 'Faith can move mountains. Faith in the divine gives moral strength and increases endurance in a person'. *Dana* is charity. It arises from values like kindness, compassion and universal love. *Ishvarpujanam* does not only refer to the ritualistic worship of God. It also implies having devotion to God at all times. *Siddhantavakyashravanam* is listening to sacred scriptures. In *Sanatana Dharma*, the sacred scriptures like *Vedas*, *Upanishads* are a treasure trove of spiritual knowledge. Listening to these, one can introspect and develop inner awareness. One realises one's strengths and weaknesses. *Hri* means modesty. Being modest is a beautiful value on its own. *Mati* is discrimination. It tells us what is right and what is wrong. *Japa* means the repetition of hymns. It is again an activity that requires dedication and discipline. *Hutam* is translated as sacrifice. It refers to the oblations offered during a ritualistic sacrifice. It also connotes the sacrifice of one's ego and total surrender to the divine.

Patanjali yoga sutras yet again talk about the concept of *chittaprasadanam* (Bryant, 2009). It refers to the attitudinal change

one should have when faced with different situations. It talks about four attitudes that an individual should have— *maitri* (friendliness), *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (encouragement), and *upeksha* (indifference). The text expounds that one should assume friendliness or share happiness when encountering someone who is in a joyous mood. When faced with someone who is mourning, one should show compassion. If they come across someone who has done good work, one should encourage the person. However, when one is faced with an evil person, a yogi should be indifferent. *Chittaprasadanam* helps to inculcate values like generosity, compassion, maturity, and wisdom.

Bhagavad Gita mentions the concept of *sthitaprajna* as an ideal of mental equipoise (Tapasyananda, 2003). It is described that a *sthitaprajna* is not affected by the dualities of life, nor is it driven by the urges of senses. He is not distracted by desires and passions. His wisdom and judgment are ever balanced. This ideal of the *Bhagavad Gita* can be related to values like self-restraint, wisdom and discrimination.

Yoga Vasishtha is another authoritative text in the field of yoga (Bharati, 2002). It is a dialogue between Lord Rama and sage Vasishtha. Lord Rama was in despair seeing the suffering of humanity. Sage Vasishtha counsels Rama and teaches him the nuances of the path of yoga. Vasishtha explains about

the four gatekeepers at the entrance to the realm of *moksha* (liberation). Liberation is the ultimate goal of yoga. The four gatekeepers are the pre-requisites to achieve liberation. Those are self-control, the spirit of inquiry, contentment, and good company. Self-control is a significant value. The spirit of inquiry is another necessity in the path of yoga. It implies the need to introspect and assess one's progress in one's spiritual path. Good company refers to being in the company of people who will have a good influence on self, be it in a spiritual sense or mundane aspect.

The simple concept of *mitahara* (moderate diet), as taught by traditional texts like *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and *Gheranda Samhita*, advocates that one should not eat too much or too little. One's food intake should be just the right amount to sustain the body. It should not have extremes of taste and substances that are stimulating. The purpose of food is to nourish the body. This principle teaches self-restraint and simplicity (Muktibodhananda, 2003).

Another text, *Tattva Bodha*, explains the qualities of an aspirant of yoga. It lays down four qualities necessary in an aspirant of yoga, known as *sadhana chatushtaya*. They are *viveka* (discrimination), *vairagya* (dispassion), *shatsampatti* (inner wealth), and *mumukshutva* (intense desire for liberation). *Shatsampatti* are *shama* (mind control), *dama* (control of external sense organs), *uparati* (strict observance of one's

duty), *titiksha* (endurance of dualities), *shraddha* (faith), and *samadhana* (single-pointedness of the mind) (Tejomayananda, 2014). *Viveka* (discrimination) is the ability to differentiate between right and wrong. It is an important quality to be able to make a proper judgment in life. *Vairagya* (dispassion) is the attitude of not being attached to any material object. It relates to the value of stoic calmness. *Mumukshutva* (intense desire for liberation) is the burning desire to attain the ultimate goal of life— liberation. It is closely related to the value of perseverance, endurance, and spirituality. Among the *shat sampatti*, *shama* is mind control. It implies values like equanimity and resilience. *Dama* is control of the senses. It refers to self-restraint as a value. *Uparati*, or observance of one's duty, is an important value taught by the *Bhagavad Gita* also. Being dutiful is a value necessary for a good human being. *Titiksha* means endurance. One should be able to endure adversities in life as they are inevitable. *Shraddha* is faith. It is already mentioned earlier how faith is an important value. *Samadhana* is single-pointedness of mind. For achieving success in any endeavour, focusing the mind is essential. Yoga philosophy, as the name suggests, is the union of the individual soul and cosmic soul. It implies the merging of a human entity into the vast infinity of the cosmos. This cannot be perfected without inculcating values that make the individual a perfect being.

Yoga is perceived to be merely physical exercise and practice devoid of the philosophical basis. This is not yoga in totality, but there are benefits of practising it even without understanding the philosophy. As for the inculcation of values, each practice of yoga has some value ingrained in itself. For instance, the practice of asana is done by relaxing the body and concentrating the mind on the infinite soul. As described by Patanjali, the benefit of asana is to overcome the dualities of life (Bryant, 2009). If done correctly, the mere physical practice of an asana can improve willpower and endurance. Thus, it helps to inculcate values even without studying the scriptures. Another illustration would be the practice of *pranayama* (breath regulation). While practicing *pranayama*, one can improve one's mental state and perseverance.

CONCLUSION

In the 21st century, we can see tremendous growth in science and technology. The impact of this growth is markedly present in the Indian educational system as well. It has had a paradigm shift from the *guru-shishya parampara* of the Gurukula System to online education during the COVID-19 pandemic. The inculcation of values that was an essential aspect of education in the past had taken a backstage. One can see an erosion of moral, ethical, and spiritual values from the number of heinous crimes committed nowadays.

This has resulted from many factors that are intertwined with our current lifestyle and beliefs. High profile jobs of parents, nuclear families, paucity of quality time for family, disregard for age-old customs in the name of scientific temper, and the so-called liberal ideas replacing values mark today's societal scenario. This calls for a means of inculcating positive values in the young children.

The National Education Policy 2020 draws its inspiration from the ancient style of Gurukula education. It is not flawless and lacks a workable paradigm. Nonetheless, in principle, the NEP 2020 tries to weave the principle of ancient education into the fabric of modern education. In the Gurukula System and even later at Nalanda and Takshashila Universities, free education to the deserving was a beautiful precept. The NEP 2020 tries to include this. Being all-inclusive and giving provision for multidisciplinary learning was another aspect of ancient Indian education. The same model is one of the new aspects of NEP 2020, whereby it allows a student to opt for a subject beyond their discipline of study (Choice Based Credit System). Underlying these conditions are the ethics and values of benevolence, equality, and broad-mindedness. NEP 2020 states, "The purpose of the education system is to develop good human beings capable of rational

thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper and creative imagination with sound ethical moorings and values" (NEP, 2020).

There are many instances where yogic principles espouse the need to inculcate values for progress in the path of yoga. Values and yoga are indeed inseparable. From the above discussion, it can be concluded that yoga is a system that teaches an ideal way of life. Yogic principles entail that one should religiously follow specific rules and regulations. These injunctions help in cultivating values as a part of yogic lifestyle. In the path of yoga, one has to conduct oneself according to the yogic principles. It may be how a person eats, sleeps, talks, thinks, and lives one's life (Yazdani, 2015). According to a study done on hidden curriculum and character education, the researchers have found that it serves an important role in cultivating values in children (Cubukcu, 2012). The same paradigm of investing an individual with values right from the beginning is seen in yoga.

In order to ensure the inculcation of positive values in children, yoga component should be interwoven with the usual curricular activity. A concrete roadmap needs to be designed to make this possible. Yogic

games or *krida* yoga (games with yogic component) should be made a part of their physical routine. It enables children to incorporate positive traits like dexterity, skill, leadership, etc. A yoga module suitable for a specific age-group should be created including *asanas*, *pranayamas*, *shatkriya*, and meditation. Yogic philosophy should be incorporated in the form of stories in the curriculum for young children.

Children can be made to enact skits based on yoga philosophy as part of their extra-curricular activities.

The yoga way of life is an essential contribution to developing values and value education. This implies that including yoga as a subject in the curriculum will help inculcate some beautiful values in our children and enable them to be complete individuals.

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