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Human Values and Its Relevance in Technical Education

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Abstract - In the course of their work life engineers and technologists are involved in various development activities to serve the society. With the galloping rise in population the world over the service of technocrats to the human race is becoming more and more important. It is desirable that engineers develop a good and practical sense of human values so that they can fruitfully contribute to the societal development. The paper gives an overview of human values in the Indian society and highlights the need to incorporate these aspects in the curriculum of our technical education.

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Human Values and Its Relevance in Technical Education

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I. INTRODUCTION

What is education? Learning a few things from books and being able to reproduce them in the examination to finally obtain a degree is not just enough. It is said that "Education is something that is left after you have forgotten all that you learnt in school".

The different dimensions of human values are material, societal, psychological, aesthetic, ethical and spiritual. A harmonious development and relationship of all these values helps us to grow as a true human being. Our technical education should be based on ideas drawn from both classical Indian value tradition and modern Western humanistic thoughts. The main objective of such an education would be:

- How to be a good human being?
- How to live a good life?
- How to help create a good society?

The academic enquiry pursuing into these varied dimensions of human life can be generally described as Human Values.

Of late we find a growing awareness amongst the educationists in the professional field, particularly in Technology and Management to incorporate courses like human values, ethics, professional ethics etc in their under-graduate and post-graduate curriculum.

II. THE GOOD LIFE

Values, what are they? Value is an essential attribute to human consciousness. It prompts and guides goodness in good human beings, good society and the good life. Value expresses the qualitative significance to ideas, feelings, activities and expressions. It evaluates the standards such as

- what is right and what is wrong?
- what is good and what is bad?
- what is desirable and what is undesirable?

Those who value money, power and status most will direct all their efforts for achieving these objectives ignoring the social, human and ethical implications. In the highly intellectual Greek tradition the ultimate values are – TRUTH, GOODNESS and BEAUTY. In the Indian Vedantic tradition ultimate reality is SAT, CHIT, and ANANDA that is, existence, knowledge and bliss.

In the Buddhist tradition it is liberation from bondage that leads to NIRVANA meaning, NO REBIRTH or MUKTI that is, complete liberation.

All the great religions over the centuries have aimed to expand and uplift the value consciousness of human beings.

III. INDIAN CONCEPT OF VALUES

The main teaching of Indian Philosophy has been "Plain Living and High Thinking." The Indian thought on values has been DHARMA which covers –

- Personal virtues,
- Righteousness,
- Duties,
- Obligations

Sense of values or DHARMA is essential for distinguishing between human beings and animals. Hunger, Sleep, Fear and Sex drive are common urges of both animals and human beings. In the Indian school of thoughts an integrated view of life consists of DHARMA (Religion), ARTHA (Money), KAMA (Desire) and MOKSHA (Liberation).

IV. WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

There are divergent views amongst various schools of thoughts as to what constitutes Human Happiness. These are:

1. Fulfillment of needs and desires
2. Self experienced state of well being
3. Happiness as a state of mind
4. Happiness from societal angle that is, one cannot be happy if all the people around him are unhappy.

Some traditional views on happiness are as follows:

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PLUTO, the Greek Philosopher said, "Happiness is the pursuit of goodness".

- BERTRAND RUSSEL said, :
"The good life is what is inspired by love and guided by knowledge". Love provides the very foundation of all goodness in life.
- Our Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of good life has been "A full, free, dignified and creative life, vibrant with intellectual tremors"

V. VALUES IN WORK LIFE

Quality of life is largely affected by the work by which we earn our livelihood. Our work shapes our attitudes and personality. We often have conflicts between individual value and value in work life. These conflicts can be categorized under the following:

- Attitudes to work
- Work ethics and quality of work life
- Organizational values
- Pursuit of excellence.

Let us discuss each of the above.

a) Attitudes To Work :

Why do we work? We work to earn our living and support our family. Work is a necessity, rather it is a compulsion.

At the second level work means gaining social prestige, esteem and authority. Farmers, artisans, laborers have a lower social status than managers, business owners, bureaucrats and politicians who enjoy a higher status in the society.

At the third level through work we use our talent, sharpen our skills and develop our creativity and get opportunity to learn, grow and improve our knowledge, skills and human relationship. It is said, Work is Worship meaning, our work in reality, is an offering (PUJA) to Good.

b) Work Ethics And Quality of Work Life :

A worker is paid his salary/wages and in return he is expected to contribute his best to the organization. Without such an ethical consideration the employer/employee relationship becomes exploitative with little trust and cooperation between them.

The second dimension of work ethics is a sense of loyalty to the organization. A loyal employee does not promote his personal interest at the cost of the organization.

The third dimension is that the organization must have a written, as well as, an unwritten rules/norms and ways of working. Team working and team spirit are the essential strengths of a successful organization.

Personal honesty and integrity are most important. The following attitudes must be avoided:

- Misrepresentation of facts
- Going back on words and promises

- Promoting selfish or hidden agenda
- Corruption and bribery
- Scams, frauds, kick-backs, accepting gifts, favors, even donation for charities etc.

c) Organizational Values :

Organizations are Social and Human units. Purpose of a business is not just making profit; the fundamental value lies in the special worth of its products/services and its impact on quality of life. Man must eat to live but man does not live only to eat. A good organization should be good to the corporate citizen. It should OBEY LAWS, PAY TAXES, PRESERVE THE ENVIRONMENT, HELP SOLVE COMMUNITY PROBLEMS, have due regard to NATIONAL PROBLEMS and PRIORITIES and share its earning and resources with the less fortunate sections of the society. EQUITY, JUSTICE and FAIR PLAY are the essential values in promoting good work culture. We must Discourage VICES like Jealousy, Back biting, Destructive competitiveness etc.

d) Pursuit of Excellence :

Excellence means achievement of exceptional accomplishments or success and getting excellent result from life as a whole. Chances of failure are always there. Hence, desire for success is always associated with anxiety. In reality at times achieving a goal becomes so important that any means fair or foul are adopted. Foul means include Bending rules/regulation, Cutting corners, Exploiting other, Offering bribes etc.

A few well established basic values for international business are:

LOVE, TRUTHFULNESS, FAIRNESS, FREEDOM, UNITY, TOLERANCE, RESPONSIBILITY, RESPECT FOR LIFE and HUMANITY, Preserving and Protecting the Environment.

VI. CONCLUSION

Value education is particularly important for students in professional and technical courses like Engineering, Management, Medicine, Law etc both in Under-graduate and Post-graduate levels. It is important to understand in the wider social and human context the impact of their chosen profession on the society at large. Creation of value concept in the appropriate climate will encourage emergence of good human beings, a band of worthy as well as socially responsible professionals and will eventually lead to the creation of a good society.

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