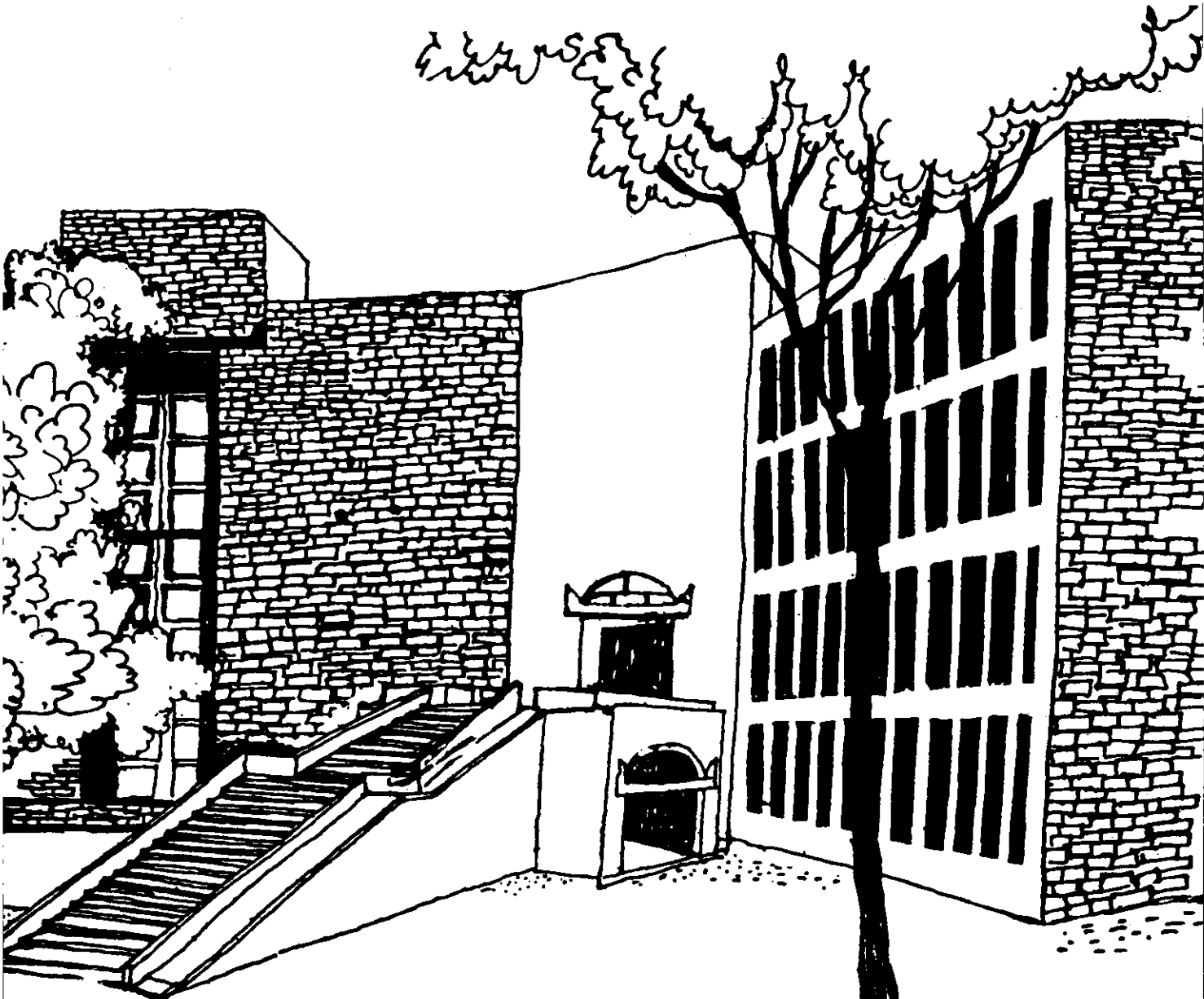




Working Paper



VALUES IN SEARCH OF EDUCATION

By

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VALUES IN SEARCH OF EDUCATION

N.R. Sheth

Abstract

This paper is based on an amateur research effort to understand how social values are transmitted through non-formal education. The point of departure for the study lies in some currently expressed views on deterioration of values in society with serious implications for human survival and welfare. The nature of values as a part of social reality makes it difficult and hazardous to identify and observe them in an objective study. Values would have to be chosen and examined somewhat arbitrarily. In such an arbitrary framework of values, the author has described the value education component of the activities of three projects in socio-economic development. The description is followed by some tentative thoughts on education in values. At the end, some candid questions are raised on the theme of the paper.

VALUES IN SEARCH OF EDUCATION

This paper is a product of an attempt¹ to study the process of non-formal education in social values. The genesis of the study lies in some personal observations and reflections in relation to the growing concern among intellectuals about a perceived trend of degradation of human values in modern social living. Let me try to express the pertinent observations and reflections on this subject.

1. Human society is constantly growing and progressing. The awesome progress in science and technology enables us to command an ever-widening spectrum of material goods, services and techniques which could be employed for our comfort and pleasure. Each achievement in the field of science and technology generates a real-time hope and expectation for further conquest of our environment in terms of control over resources on the earth and in the outer space. We have begun to draw upon the extra-global resources (space and energy) to solve problems of shortages at home. The sky seems to be the limit in a literal sense.
2. One of the most consequential effect of the rapid strides in science and technology is that the world is becoming a global village. Economic, social, political and psychological barriers are collapsing. Global markets and global economy have already become a part of social existence. Many a strand of our material and non-material culture has become global. A global polity is still a distant dream (or nightmare) but well within the realm of possibility.
3. Our frontiers of knowledge in human and social behaviour are constantly widening. We keep acquiring new skills and techniques for revolving social and personal conflicts at all levels and in all segments of collective endeavour. We have evolved many excellent models of harmonious and collaborative development of individuals and society for grater well-being and happiness of one and all. The recent collapse of dictatorial regimes has raised the chances of political and social democracy to be chosen universally as the preferred system of governance for social growth and happiness. The increasing use of the philosophy and techniques of human resource development (HRD) in all types of work organisations symbolizes the confidence and hope about raising the level of satisfaction and happiness in the population.

4. The bulk of the products of science and technology in the form of goods and services for human comfort, luxury or happiness touch only a small minority in our society due to well known socio-economic inequalities. With all the plans and programmes of reducing inequalities, the problem of inequality has been steadily aggravating. While more and more people are becoming aware of the goods and services produced around them, they are chastened or frustrated by their inability to enjoy the products. At the level of whole society, therefore, we face escalation in happiness and misery (due to relative deprivation) at the same time. The poor and the wretched do not seem to inherit the world and are unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future.
5. Our success in conquering nature has yielded, apart from the goods and services for our comfort and pleasure, degradation or depletion of our natural resources, some of which (such as air and forest products) are of absolutely vital importance for our survival. We can certainly hope that science and technology will eventually help us to get over this alarming problem. But for the present, we are trapped in the paradox of happiness which seems to be slowly destroying the ecology which supports it.
6. The global village as mentioned earlier has also run into a tragic paradox. The shrinking or collapsing barriers in trade, commerce, culture etc., are replaced by new (or renewed) barriers of religious, regional or other ethnic identities. Pride in one's own group increasingly generates false notions of superiority, hatred for others and hopes of vanquishing others by any means whatsoever. The new technology provides an alluring cafeteria of the means of destruction. The political process within and across geographical or national boundaries provides progressively greater leverage to groups and communities to seek to achieve social and political objectives by use of sophisticated weaponry and techniques. The society is increasingly pilloried by tensions, conflict, violence and liquidation of human life - often in the name of promoting human welfare or dignity. The society and communities within it are progressively marked by brutal exercises of control and counter-control, power and counter-power. All this increasingly generates a sense of insecurity and uncertainty among people. The distribution of power

and control is becoming more and more diffuse. As the size and scale of the social relations continue to grow, people in power need brokers and contractors at various levels to sustain or enhance their power. This has created a vast variety of lumpens who acquire their own vicarious power to serve their immediate selfish interest at any cost to the rest of the society. Lumpenization destroys the effectiveness of the socially approved structure of authority in society including the police and the judiciary. Hence the problems of social order and stability are often handled by the wielders of lumpen power. This trend is poignantly visible in the glorification of extra-legal power which is becoming the hallmark of our entertainment media.

7. The expanding knowledge base of human and social sciences increasingly gives us insights into human behaviour. The recent trend towards humanization of enterprise by concepts and methods of HRD also yields good scope for making concerted efforts towards human happiness and satisfaction. However, in the background of growing insecurity and uncertainty as stated above, people are likely to become more selfish and narrow-minded in their behaviour and attitudes. The need to acquire maximum wealth, status, power and recognition and use these assets for the glorification of one's immediate social group (such as family) reinforces the lumpenization process in society. This spreads the behavioural syndrome of greed, possessiveness, arrogance and lust for power and status. Often, knowledge (even knowledge of human social behaviour) is used as an instrument for enhancing immediate selfish interests. This trend in social behaviour is described as the process of degradation of human character.

These observations would lead to the conclusion that our human and social values have eroded and that such erosion of values is a serious challenge for all those who are concerned about a stable and sane society. A related conclusion is that our knowledge of human behaviour and social systems has failed to keep pace with the progress in natural science and technology. Many thoughts and solutions are offered for restoration and promotion of human values.

While there is no universally agreed inventory of values which need to be restored, protected and promoted, we usually refer in this context to those values which are socially upheld as ideal behavioural yardsticks in democratic societies. An arbitrary list of these values would include: truth, honesty, love, peace, mutuality, tolerance, understanding, kindness, empathy, respect for human dignity, social equality, justice and freedom of expression.

Any study of erosion, restoration or promotion of these values would face the following obstacles.

- (1) Values are personal. Values refer to the standards of behaviour which determine the choice between right and wrong action, opinion or orientation. While these standards are laid by social authority or convention, values in real terms can be located only in the individual behaviour patterns over a period of time.
- (2) Values are distributed widely in a population.
- (3) Every person reflects a complicated mixture of values. Any statement of socially approved values is an ideal type. Individual behaviour is always an approximation in some degree to the idealized version of values such as truth and love.
- (4) Values bear an extremely uncertain relation with success or achievement in the work-a-day society. Often the socially approved values like truth and honesty lead to solid failure or insecurity. On the other hand, people known to have fallen easily for greed and lust have made significant contribution to social progress and growth.

However, values are an integral part of society. They have been examined, analysed and promoted through the history of human civilization. In fact, the contemporary concern about erosion of values is far from being a unique event in social history. According to an Indian scriptural tradition, the Lord would assume an incarnation in the human form whenever the basic values were seriously violated by leaders and the led. Thus Rama, Krishna and other forms of God were designed essentially to restore the human values of piety, duty, justice etc. The dialectic of erosion of social values with

someone destined to promote these values, often on pain of torture and death seems to have been a recurring phenomenon of human history. A few outstanding examples to demonstrate such a dialectic would include the Buddha, Socrates, Christ, the Prophet, Shankaracharya, Marx and Gandhi. These leaders were concerned and agitated about degradation of values in the social reality around them and offered prescriptions for restoration of the values in terms of change in personal behaviour (Buddha, Shankaracharya) or social system (Marx, Gandhi). Their prescriptions were sooner or later hailed by people and incorporated in the social code of values and ethics. However, they were all ahead of their respective times. They were in course of time worshiped and idealized so that the people worshipping them could suitably distance themselves from the ideal. In reality, Buddha, Gandhi, Marx were duly incorporated in the emerging divisions of society on the basis of religions or social beliefs, ideology, inherited status and wealth or new opportunities. In the extreme form of this process of incorporation, we know how Christ or Gandhi is used almost as a commodity which can be encashed for personal or sectional gains.

But the values preached or promoted by Buddha, Christ or Gandhi were not entirely pulverized into the instruments for achieving selfish goals. These values became a part of social legacy for future generations. The values would survive the course of history not merely as scriptural or social canons of human behaviour, but also in the actual behaviour of men and women. The best way to appreciate the force of this argument is to attempt a quick summary assessment of the value of Christ or Marx or Gandhi for the current society. We do not know how to quantify the value of such leaders for us and our children. But we do know that if they had not lived and worked in their times, human society today would have been much more wretched and depraved than we find it.

In this background, I thought it might be useful to attempt a study of the ways in which values are learnt by people who practise the "right" values. Common experience makes it simple to state that values are learnt and imbibed through a series of social experiences through the process of socialisation. Formal education can play a role in transmission of values merely as one of the many steps in the process of socialisation. Hence, it is that we occasionally find people practising Christian or Gandhian

values without any formal or informal exposure to the teachings of Christ or Gandhi. From personal experience, I venture the hypothesis that every segment of the population in any stratum of our society contains at least a small proportion of people who practise the "right" values and would stick to these values regardless of pressures of circumstances or public opinion. It would be a fascinating research experience to try to locate such people and study the forces which have contributed to the practice of "right" values.

Obviously, one of the factors in the practice of these values is education. As I have stated above, formal education is only one (small) part of the process of education in values. An important aspect of education in values is provided by those people and institutions which deal with promotion of values as a part of their mission or task. Such people and institutions fall in an interestingly wide spectrum. For instance, we all know of social, political and spiritual leaders who have made it a part of their profession to advocate the need and urgency of promotion of the right values which have eroded. On the other hand, they provide plenty of concrete evidence to suggest that they do not intend to practise what they advocate. These people provide powerful role models for the average citizen to follow double standards according to the dictates of self-interest. Similar double standards are involved in the growing trend in our entertainment industry towards a confounding combination of antithetical values in a single showpiece. You see more and more dastardly crime and violence to be led to conclude that crime and violence do not pay. Imagine that you have got a sweet plum by stoning a tree. Do you conclude that a tree symbolises the character of one who yields sweet fruit inspite of being beaten? Or do you choose the conclusion that you need to beat a tree, if you want to get fruit out of it?

I thought it worthwhile to look into the efforts in value education among those people and institutions which focus on values as an integral part of their work. This would include those involved in socio-economic development focussed on specific groups of people with concrete objectives and action plans.

The questions on value education I wanted to answer during the study are: (1) What was the educational component in the total effort? (2) What part of the education involved values? (3) What

were the intentions of the educators in offering value education? (4) What was the process of education? (5) What were the effects of such education on the recipients? (6) What were the effects of such education on the group or community involved in the effort?

I looked for relevant literature on the subject with the assistance of a colleague. This search did not yield much significant information. A fairly large volume of published material is available on values and ethics in business and the corresponding issues of value education in business school curriculum. Such material would be only marginally relevant in the present context. The literature on values and ethics as a focal point of discussion is quite meagre. Value education seems to be looked upon as a subject of ephemeral interest. I also discussed the questions on value education as stated above with several intellectuals in the academic as well as non-academic categories. While my effort was generally appreciated, most people raised doubts about the feasibility of identifying an unambiguous list of values and the people and institutions involved in value education. Values and value education are present everywhere, but how do we isolate them for a meaningful study?

I had assumed that any effort in changing or developing people was based on a specific set of "right" values and contained a process of education in these values. I thought it would be useful initially to look into the value education aspect of the following programmes or organisations: (1) Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA); (2) The Universal Primary Education (UPE) project undertaken by the Indian Institute of Education; (3) the community services undertaken by the Ramakrishna Mission; and (4) the Swadhyaya Parivar (SP) led by Pandurang Shastri Athavale. SEWA's primary mission is to raise the level of socio-economic existence of self-employed women from the underprivileged classes and make them aware of human dignity and equality. UPE was launched with a view to promote non-formal education in rural India in the context of the basic democratic values of equality, social justice etc. Ramakrishna Mission provides social and educational services to the community on the foundation of Indian spiritual and philosophical heritage. SP also uses this heritage to promote self-dependence and human dignity among underprivileged communities.

I have so far not been able to make any significant contact with the Ramakrishna Mission in the present context. My understanding of the other three organisations is also inadequate for me to claim depth or intensity. I propose to record below what I have been able to find out about these organisations.

1. Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)

While SEWA's central mission is improvement in the social and economic conditions of its members, it is explicitly founded on the Gandhian ideology of non-violence, truth, social justice, service and self-reliance. These values are highlighted in orientation programmes for new recruits and occasional training programmes. However, the values are essentially sought to be disseminated silently by the behaviour of leaders. Equality and respect for every human being are practised in day-to-day work. Women with modest educational background occupy roles with considerable authority and responsibility. Women are assisted to solve their problems themselves. In this process, they often need to challenge the authority and power of people with considerable vested interests (police, politician etc.). In such situations, they are taught to be straightforward, reasonable and firm. As women from different communities work jointly in various activities, they learn tolerance and respect for one another. They are also taught to respect even the people against whom they have to organise action. As a result, they earn respect from others including their adversaries. Police officers and businessmen listen to them with care and understanding when they meet such people.

2. Universal Primary Education (UPE)

The following text consists of extracts from Chitra Naik, Collaboration for Educational Change. Journal of Education and Social Change, Vol. V, No.1, April-June 1991, pp. 49-78.

"The project on Universal Primary Education (UPE) consists of a series of innovative interventions beginning in 1979-80, to be normally concluded in 1992-93, with an extension in 1993-94 if necessary....."

"Essentially, universal primary education was viewed as basic to the realisation of the goals of the Indian Constitution which affirms the Indian people's faith in collective striving for equality, liberty, fraternity, dignity of the individual, secularism, democracy, and the right to follow an occupation of one's choice, regardless of caste, creed, race and gender. The Directive Principles of the Constitution include the right of the child to education upto the age of fourteen and make this a state responsibility. A further provision of the Constitution requires special protection and facilities for the 'weaker' sec-

tions in the Indian society, viz, women, tribal people and 'untouchable' castes (listed in a Schedule to the Constitution). Apart from following the tenets enunciated in the Constitution, the UPE project decided to emphasize respect for nature, cooperation, non-consumerism, hard work and the scientific attitude as values to be reflected in its various activities....."

"The purpose of the UPE project was not restricted merely to offer education to the 6-14 age-group but to make the project a stimulator of social change by raising community consciousness for creating a learning climate for all....."

"The project, started in 1979, was a modest intervention. It was not expected to generate any movement for socio-economic transformation but simply to discover the ways and means of involving some rural communities in planning, organizing, supervising and evaluating education at the local level and see if education could be an accepted responsibility of the community, in so far as UPE was concerned. The interventions for making such community involvement possible were to be a significant focus of the Institute's action-research for UPE, restricted to selected rural areas."

"A further objective of this participatory action-research was to bring together those already operating within the primary education system and researchers who are high-grade products of the system. The first category included personnel from the administrative structures of government and the Zilla Parishad (District Council), local teachers and pupils. The second category covered the faculty of the Institute, containing an interdisciplinary expertise in education and social sciences. These participants could bring together a wide variety of knowledge and experience to bear upon the design and implementation of the action-research project. Innovations could be devised through a combination of conceptual formulations and down-to-earth experiences of the realities of rural primary education. It was important to demystify the process not only of education but of research also. The involvement of political and administrative leadership in this participatory action-research was essential for future diffusion of innovations and their adjustment with the existing system. The assumption was that people do not misunderstand or reject innovations if they feel that they themselves have been responsible for evolving and testing them....."

"Basic Issues: The project design was a response to certain basic issues which had emerged during the extensive discussions held on the problems of universal primary education with special reference to the rural areas and under-privileged groups in the rural society.

- i) The aim of the project which sought to evolve innovations in the service of the rural under-privileged, could not be compulsory primary education but it had to be voluntarily promoted universal primary education.
- ii) For bringing out-of-school children into the fold of primary education, legal provisions would play a minor role since universalization was essentially a matter of cultural, social, economic and political change.
- iii) There need be no dichotomy between formal and non-formal education and the two arrangements must be treated as aspects of a functionally integrated system serving the convenience of the learner and the community, and facilitating the learner's lateral passage from one to the other whenever necessary. In Maharashtra State, such lateral entry is possible under rules. An out-of-school child who has studied externally can be tested by the headmaster of a primary school in language and mathematics and admitted to an appropriate class, provided the child's age is more by at least one year than the age normal for that class. For instance, rules lay down the age for school entry as 6+ and in the normal course, the child will take class III examination at 9+, class IV examination at 10+ and so on. An out-of-school child can be tested for class III at 10+ and class IV at 11+. For children entering the non-formal channel, there are no fixed rules except that the upper age limit is 13+.

- iv) As the prevalent curriculum of full-time formal education had been characterized as irrelevant and the pedagogy oppressive, the part-time, non-formal arrangements should be treated as an opportunity to develop innovations in (a) curriculum content and construction, (b) pedagogical techniques, and (c) teaching-learning material.
- v) Growing consumerism and a self-centered outlook in the upper strata of society was doing incalculable harm to the basic human values of limited wants and cooperation with others and non-formal education would emphasize the basic values and also stress rationality and the scientific attitude as the foundations of modernization. Cooperation more than competition, group-work more than individualised teaching-learning, concern for satisfying group-needs and community-needs more than personal needs, and acquisition of self-learning skills for getting a free access to knowledge at all stages in life, would be promoted....."

Effect of education on graduates :

"Pupils who have completed their primary education through the IIE Model of non-formal education (NFE) show certain achievements visible to the family and the community. For instance, they can study the formal school text-books quickly and succeed in formal examinations. They can read out from books to parents and younger siblings. They can keep accounts and write letters. Their achievement is exhibited before the family every day they attend the centre. This is a rule they must follow. As a result, their learning gets reinforced daily. The family, being convinced of the intelligence of these children, gives them more respect and facilities. This open demonstration of achievement has increased the prestige of the NFE centres and made them attractive for the NFE pupils. The NFE centre pupils also seek a chance to speak in village meetings on the problems in their working life. The social etiquette inculcated in them by the NFE programme has given their behaviour a polish which is not seen in the formal school pupils. The pedagogical strategies adopted in the project, therefore; have helped the NFE graduates not only acquire the minimum levels of learning specified for them but also developed their personality and made this development visible to all concerned. This factor has been the real incentive for the community to send girls in particular to the NFE Centres. It has also helped many VECs (village education councils) to think of non-formalizing the formal school."

"The power structure in the communities has not changed entirely. But the increased participation of women and youth has had a telling effect on candidatures for Panchayat memberships. In a few villages, educated young men and some of the women trained as Animators have become 'Sarpanch' (the Head of the Village Council). The social atmosphere, created for support to universal primary education, has been having an impact on the political power structure, local administration and the status of women. The proof of girls in the 9-14 age-group learning well and faster than their brothers attending full-time school, the change in the bearing of these girls and their mastery of language and etiquette, have surprised the villagers. It has begun to change their attitude towards girls and women to quite some extent. The camps for women Animators held with a view to mobilizing support to girls' education and family welfare have given rise to a demand for establishment of a training centre for women where teachers for pre-schools and non-formal programmes, para medical workers, better agriculturists, rural women entrepreneurs, and so on, could be trained. The girl graduates of NFE Centres are between the ages of 13-14 and cannot fit into the formal system nor do they desire to pursue formal education. But they are asking for some kind of useful education upto the age of 18 because that is the age of marriage prescribed by law. To fill the interim period with useful education is a felt need and their desire for education which can make them self-reliant is a happy sign of social change. This 'demand' for further education by girls, if met soon and appropriately, may provide the community with several benefits in course of time and justify the foresight of some of the interventions made in the --- Project for empowerment of women."

3. Swadhyaya Parivar (SP)

Swadhyaya Parivar (SP) was created in the early 1950s by Pandurang Shastri Athavale (popularly known as Dada, Lit. elder brother). Dada was the son of a Maharashtrian Brahman teacher in rural Maharashtra who mixed with socially "untouchable" groups inspite of his strong Vedic orientation. Dada was educated in a traditional Sanskrit school, but learnt English informally to be able to read Shakespeare at 19. He was greatly disturbed by the evils of caste inequalities, economic exploitation and degradation of human character around him as he grew up. He read Darwin, Marx and Freud looking for effective solutions to the problems of human inequalities and degradation. He concluded that each of these scholar-philosophers provided only a partial view of social reality and inadequate solutions to the problems. This search led him to a personal "discovery" that the Indian Vedic philosophy encapsulated with remarkable competence in the well-known Bhagavadgeeta contained a comprehensive and integrated view of human beings in society. Such a view offered the relevant intellectual and operational guidelines for a thorough understanding of human nature and resolution of the problems of inequality, greed, lust for power and egoism. He then decided to launch an effort towards unity of human beings across the barriers of caste, creed, religion, language and geography. The mission of SP can be described as follows: (1) to end human suffering and exploitation of human beings by human beings (2) to help socially deprived and disadvantaged people to overcome their poverty and disabilities (3) to promote the concept and feeling of human dignity at all levels of social existence (4) to promote the concept of unity and brotherhood of mankind across all social and cultural barriers.

The mission is sought to be achieved with the following strategy: (1) use the spiritual-religious idiom of Vedanta, especially the bhakti (pure and total devotion) approach, to help people accept a common parentage of all creatures in one entity - the creator and its logical corollary, equality of human beings across social divisions such as caste, religion, language or nationality. Bhakti is used as a social force (energy, power) and encompasses all human activities including physical labour. (2) Use the main ingredients of the Indian spiritual value system - love, tolerance, humility, pleasure of giving and sharing etc. - to generate a culture of oneness and mutual respect among human groups. (3) Promote human dignity by helping poor people to solve their problems through self-help and hard work

rather than through the generosity of wealthy and powerful people (4) Use the social and intellectual resources of the people in the upper socio-economic strata to interact with their deprived brothers and sisters to reinforce the unity and equality among human beings.

The major activities of SP are as follows:

- (1) A Centre for spiritual learning (Tattvagnyan Vidyapith) was set up in Thane near Bombay in 1956. Young students are admitted to this Centre for intensive residential learning for a year or two in philosophy, social science and spiritualism. The Centre also contains facility for social and spiritual learning for older people. The learning covers religious and philosophical knowledge in the context of current social and environmental problems.
- (2) A Centre for learning and discourses on the Geeta is set up in Bombay where Dada gives regular discourses on Indian and Western philosophy, contemporary social and political issues and modern science.
- (3) Self-learning Centres are established in towns and villages in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. These centres provide opportunities to people in local areas to participate in spiritual and social learning and in programmes for social service.
- (4) A large number of gatherings of young people have been organised in India and abroad (East Africa, Middle East, Britain and America) to inspire the younger generation to go to villages and carry the message of universal brotherhood of man in the spirit of gratitude and devotion to the creator. Over 1.5 lakh people are reported to have participated in this programme.
- (5) SP has inspired villagers in many places to cultivate land collectively with a sense of devotion to the creator. People contribute labour to the collective farms (Yogeshwar Krishi farms) by turn. The produce of these farms is regarded as the Lord's wealth and distributed as His gift. The basic idea is that the Creator should be treated as a co-worker and those who contribute labour should do so in the spirit of devotion. Hence there should be no superiority complex among the givers, nor should the receiver feel inferior.

- (6) SP's spirit of brotherhood and devotion to the Lord has inspired fishing communities in coastal Gujarat and Maharashtra to buy fishing boats (called Matsyagandha) as collective assets from the pool of savings of members of a community. The ownership is socially vested in the Lord. The boats are used by members by turn in a spirit of worship. The wealth created through this collective effort is distributed among the needy people in a community as the prasada (gift) of the Lord.
- (7) At some places, the SP members have crated orchards (called Vrikshamandirs) on barren plots of land. The people from neighbouring towns and villages across socio-economic hierarchy look after the orchards by turn in a spirit of devotion to the Lord. This effort contributes to the urgent need for growing more trees in view of environmental degradation.
- (8) In many villages, the local population has built inexpensive hut temples (called Amrutalayam). These temples are treated as centres for social meetings of the local population irrespective of caste, religion or any other distinctions. Everyone is free to offer worship to the Lord in these temples according to their religious practices and beliefs. The people are encouraged to offer to the Lord a portion of their earnings with a sense of gratitude. The collection from these offerings is distributed to the poor and the needy as a gift from the Lord.
- (9) The SP members have in the past organised volunteer squads for rescue and relief work during natural disasters such as floods and cyclones. On other hand, SP members affected by such disasters decline charities from other sources and depend on the collective assets created by their own effort such as the Amrutalayam temple as mentioned above.
- (10) At some places, SP has organised socio-spiritual centres for children (called Bal Sanskar Kendra) and young people (called Divine Brain Trust). The participants in these centres are helped to learn socio-spiritual lessons and undertake social service in tune with the major programmes described above.

The SP movement has covered over 80000 villages or local communities and influenced over 300000 people in its various activities. The combination of the down-to-earth secular objective of restoration of social equality and human dignity and the strategy of using the religious - philosophical medium of total dedication (bhakti) as encompassing all segments of personal and social life has attracted a large number of intellectuals to the mission. These people are convinced about the relevance and effectiveness of the SP approach in achieving an equalitarian man-man relationship and a mutually supporting relationship between man and environment. many of these people devote a significant part of their time to SP activities and feel that this work makes their personal and social life more happy and fulfilling. I have met young men who gave up lucrative jobs to go through the residential educational programme at Thane. Disadvantaged communities such as the Vaghari in Gujarat and fishermen in Maharashtra have shown signs of remarkable social change. They have given up habits such as drinking, gambling and stealing and become more cooperative and responsible in their behaviour. For instance, it is reported by people who deal with the Vaghari community in Ahmedabad that the members of this community who have come under the SP influence have remarkably changed their behaviour and outlook. They have given up their well-known habits of lying, quarreling, stealing and cheating in economic transactions.

Concluding Thoughts

The three programmes summarized above deal with socio-economic development of quite disparate sub-groups among the masses of the underprivileged population. They also emphasize different degrees and criteria of social and economic development of their respective target groups. Nevertheless, it is easy to notice a fairly similar value-orientation guiding the three programmes. They are all concerned about the social and economic disadvantages suffered by these groups. Restoration and promotion of human dignity is a central value-orientation in all the three cases. But they are also equally concerned about promotion of the democratic values of social equality and justice. While SEWA and UPE stress these values explicitly, SP has a unique way of promoting them by using the higher socio-economic groups to carry the spiritual idiom of bhakti to the have-nots in a spirit of universal brother-

hood. The values of self-dependence and confidence in one's own abilities also are common to the three programmes. The strategic choice for this purpose however, varies among them. SP stresses the identity of its target groups within a society bound by ties of love, goodwill and collaboration. SEWA emphasizes the inequality of wealth and power between its constituents and other categories of people with whom they have to transact relations and hence the potential conflict of interests. UPE trains its focus on creating awareness about the reality of social inequality as its primary constituents are children. All the programmes are intended to contribute to the eventual emergence of a social order where diverse groups and people live in peace and love in search of a better quality of life for one and all.

In all the programmes, values are explicitly articulated and transmitted as an integral part of the mission. The process of dissemination is largely unstructured and woven into the various activities of a programme except in the case of UPE which involves structured action for formal or non-formal education. The "educators" are aware that dissemination of values is a slow and uncertain task. Individuals receive the educator's message within their specific psychological and social framework. It seems that if the dissemination of values is anchored in a cultural symbol such as religion, people would internalize and follow the values with more conviction and commitment than if such dissemination is based on facts of socio-economic reality which may be seen as external to one's immediate experiential framework. A senior leader of SEWA brought this out when she said (in reply to a question) that SEWA women were unlikely to show as much tolerance and understanding across religions as would be shown by people served by SP due to the latter's emphasis on spiritual equality. This is also supported by the observation of people associated with SP that members of traditionally notorious backward communities had shown remarkable and lasting change in their social behaviour as a result of their exposure to the SP value system.

These observations do not lead to any concrete conclusions. My effort so far is merely an exploration in exploration. The study needs a better and sharper focus. I have scribbled this note in the hope that it will expose all the disabilities of a study such as I wanted to make, apart from sharing whatever contribution it can make in the field of social values and the educational process of their

transmission across social divisions. Perhaps one should start afresh with more elementary questions than I raised for this exploratory exploration. Let me end with a modified set of questions.

- (1) What is the nature of social values as social facts?
 - (2) How wide is the spectrum of values in specific social reality?
 - (3) What are the ways in which we can establish a reliable link between a given set of values and a given state of social order?
 - (4) How does one measure consonance and dissonance of values in an individual or group?
 - (5) How can values be incorporated in a structured educational process, formal and informal?
 - (6) Is there any way to measure the degree of success in any structured process of transmission of values?
 - (7) Is there any way of engineering values which are commonly acclaimed as vitally important for a desired social order? As Socrates once asked: is there a market-place for values?
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