

THE RELEVANCE OF PHILOSOPHY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Introduction:

“Human Values in the 21st Century”. Is human value acquired or inherited? Human behaviour, desires, aptitudes, and attitudes always constituted the central stage of discussions of all philosophers, Indian or Western irrespective of the period. The focus is on the central and pivotal role of human beings as the key factor in the developmental process. Human values are important irrespective of the nationality.

Decent living conditions with the political and civil freedom to promote the life in community, living a healthy life, are important indices for human excellence and economic progress.

The prosperity and progress of a nation depend not only on the material resources but to a large extent on its human element too. Increasing the knowledge, providing the requisite skills, increasing mental and physical abilities, all these aid the human capital.

We put forward many goals. These are meant for the billions of people. For these goals to become meaningful and a reality, the nation must commit itself to work on the human values. It is important to work on the human development and when this research addresses the subject in detail, it will be a journey through the ages as to how philosophy viewed this aspect. The research examines the social values, makes us understand our obligation to human beings from a national and global perspective.

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(SPPIS) Haryana
24th June, 2014
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The purpose of research on this topic “shaping Human Values in the 21st Century, and the role of philosophy” is primarily intended to bring out the areas of concern where the child misses the values while studying and to produce a proposal that addresses concerns of youth. The fact remains that there is urgency to identify the practical importance of lack of harmony in society and also to find out ways as to how the contemporary challenges can be faced.

The two basic human urges are reasoning and vision. In Indian philosophy is not a mere theory but a “way of life”. The Indian Philosophers represent a synthetic and balanced approach to two tendencies: “Know in order to believe and believe in order to know”.

Accepted values must be taught, encouraged and supported at National and International levels. The pluralistic society recognizes the human rights of each individual and that should be treated equal. Humanistic values are built upon moral and ethical values.

We have to refer to the schools of Indian thought which are from the Indian Philosophy. Belief in the reality of the world, Belief in the reality of the Self, Faith in the law of Karma, Faith in the law of transmigration of soul, feeling of bondage to Samsara and necessity felt for emancipation, Authority of Vedas, philosophy based on psychology where in the ego is studied in all its possible states viz, waking, dream and dreamless states and philosophy as a means and not as an end in itself, these are the tendencies.

Philosophy distinctly adds measures for the betterment of the human race particularly at a time when the values are deteriorating with no value attached to human life. Philosopher’s understanding is based on reflection and their vision and wisdom will formulate a decisive role to bring into equilibrium the requirements of happiness, freedom and justice.

The topic “The Role of Philosophy in shaping human values in the 21st Century” is meant to embark on the nature of human values. Advancement of technology, apart from its use to provide material benefits, also can create havoc to human life by way of man made disasters. Regional differences, discriminatory attitudes, establishing supremacy over other nations and erratic behavioural patterns disturb the living conditions.

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Philosophers Views on Human Values :

Kant said that the subject matter of philosophy is all comprehensive. Whitehead said “It is descriptive of the generates which apply to all details of experience.

The systematic period of the two great philosophers of antiquity, Plato and Aristotle, is characterized by a concern for all the problems of philosophy. The metaphysical problems concerning reality and the humanistic problems relating to man’s knowledge, conduct and place in the world order. Plato and Aristotle build upon the foundations laid by the master Socrates and construct rational theories of knowledge (logic) conduct (ethics) and the state (politics).

Philosophy is critical in the sense it investigates the principles of knowledge; as rationalistic, it accepts the competence of reason in the search after truth; as humanistic, it studies man; as spiritualistic or idealistic, it makes the mind an important factor.

One cannot miss the Greek’s Sophists period of enlightenment. The individual began to think of himself independent of the old traditions. “Man is the measure of all things” is the famous saying of Sophists.

Descartes stressed the importance of philosophy to practical aspects of knowledge and in his words “Philosophy is a perfect knowledge of all that men can know as well as for the conduct of his life as for the preservation of his health and the discovery of all the arts”.

Soren Keirkegaard, a Danish philosopher, followed the argument and technique of Socrates in the field of epistemology and ethics as well. He further believed that the highest philosophical merit that any man can attain was self knowledge. Man can exist at any one of the three stages of life viz., (1) Aesthetic stage of life (2) Ethical stage of life and (3) Religious stage of life.

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Karl Jaspers a great German existentialist in his book “Man in the Modern age” makes an in depth study of the effect upon man of science, technology and industrialization. Man in the modern age has lost his individuality and humanity and has become mechanical. He is bored. He is afraid to look inside because his inner life is completely desecrate and vacuous. He is afraid that through inward look he would lose the world. The main purpose of philosophy is to guide man, not to preach escapism. Philosophy, should enable man to attain peace of ‘mind’.

Jean Paul Sartre, a French Philosopher developed insights into existentialism. Existentialism is a Humanism. This is to make every man aware of what he is. Responsibility of his existence rests on him. When he is responsible for himself he is responsible for all men. What is good for us has to be good for all. In general our life is based on half hearted approaches without firm commitment.

John Dewey an American philosopher and educationist, insists, that one has to apply critical enquiry in problem solving and his procedure of five steps can be applied to personal, social conflicts and weighty scientific problems.

The ancient Indian philosophy believes that life is full of suffering and that the aim of religion and philosophy is to attain freedom from suffering. The contemporary Indian thinker acknowledges the reality of suffering and speaks about the possibility of an escape from it. Some of the contemporary Indian thinkers go to the extent of saying “through pain and suffering, life gets dignity and a human significance.

Contemporary Indian thinkers are aware that there is a distinction between a “purely academic philosophy” the philosophy of the scholar and a philosophy of life and existence the philosophy of wise man. Deliberations were on conduct, behaviour and way of life. There is no simpler way to describe human mind.

Renaissance movement led by Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Humanism of Tagore, Humanism of Radhakrishnan, Swami Vivekananda’s social philosophy, universal religion, neo-vedanta;

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Radhakrishna's idealist view of life and the finite aspect of man; Tagore's views on creation, finite aspect of man and infinite aspect of man; Aurobindo's triple transformation and integral yoga; Mahatma Gandhi's Truth is god, Satyagraha, Ahimsa, Sarvodaya, trusteeship; Nehru's views on democracy, socialism and secularism; J. Krishnamurthy's conception of the thought, and concept of Mind: and Prof.K.Satchidananda Murthy's beliefs on views on political and religious situation, view on polity and spirit of sportsmanship. All these modern thinkers abundantly discussed about human values.

Philosophy seeks to provide answers to the numerous riddles and paradoxes that confront the human mind. From time immemorial seers and saints, scholars and scientists have turned to philosophy for solutions to the endless problems of human existence. More recently it has been aptly said if the purpose of life is a life of purpose, only philosophy can help humanity in finding a roadmap for harmonious living. Man has conquered nature but is unable to conquer his own nature said Maxim Gorky the Soviet author. One of the biggest challenges facing human kind is the problem of human relationships. Science and technology have conferred on man innumerable benefits. Longevity is on the increase. People are living more comfortably than before though poverty continues to afflict more than half of the seven billion people living on planet earth.

This is the age of the computer the mobile phone, the awesome power modern technology. A click of the button or a press on the remote brings many pleasures, joys and headaches too into every home. Still, there is no peace at home, no harmony in society and no happiness for most people. Anomie, boredom, addiction to alcohol and do addition internet have reduced human life to meaningless existence in many towns and cities.

Only philosophy can discuss and solve contemporary challenges created by (1) growing technological power (2) growing human greed (3) increasing poverty (4) alarmingly rising violence.

War is now taking new forms such as terrorist strikes that kill innocent people in mindless violence. War begins in the minds of men says UNESCO charter. As a scholar puts it "the

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minds of men are nurtured in nurseries”. In every home the young minds must be taught the importance of human values and the need for global peace and harmony. As Harvard President Neil Rubenstein said the of higher education ultimately is “how to create a just and humane society”.

In the 21st Century the school, the media and the NGO, civil society institution will shape human destiny. Philosophy will become the source of human values at both micro and macro levels.

My study, in a humble way, seeks to raise such issues and explore avenues for improved human relationships at all levels.

Human Values in Social Philosophy :

Social philosophy is the philosophical study of questions about the social behavior (typically of human), social philosophy, ethics and political philosophy all share intimate connections with other disciplines in the social sciences.

Human values in the ambit of social philosophy, are social agency and free will the will to power, accountability, speech acts, situations, modernism and post modernism, individualism, crowds, property rights, authority, ideologies, culture criticism. Each one of the above concepts are intended to identify the human acts, stipulate the external factors, and create motivational traits. Many themes in social philosophy include the self, social entities, and the relationship between them. Social philosophy often mixes with sociology and psychology.

Human Values in Political Philosophy:

Political philosophy is the study of concepts such as liberty, justice, property rights and law. History of political thinking, takes us back to antiquity. Philosophers were obliged to confront social and political breakdown, and seek solutions to the crisis. Disintegration of the social order was avoided. Aristotle’s dictum was that man seeks to be happy.

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European age of enlightenment, new theories about what the human was led, to a conceptual distinction between state and government. The industrial revolution reshaped human society. Contemporary period debated regarding punishment and the degree to which human constraints on action are determined. Influential philosophers were Confucius, Chankya, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas Hobbes, Spinoza, Locke Rousseau, Kant, Bentham, Mill Marx, each of Rousseau these contributed and created thoughts such as relating ethics to political order, divine virtues, righteous government, world peace, social justice and governance. All these focused on human values.

Ethics of Humanism :

Ethics is the science of conduct. It considers the actions of human being with reference to their rightness or wrongness. Different philosophers projected different theories on moral consciousness and judgment. Categories of duties, moral codes outline many requirements to treat every individual as a person and never as a means to attain some end. Virtues (a) Cardinal Virtues (b) Courage (c) Temperance and (d) Justice, these qualities are human values and harmonious balance has to be arrived at between them. We need ethical standards because they provide us the basis to reconcile with selfish interests of the individual with the interests of the group. Values are misplaced in the present turmoil. Better ethical guidelines are required for broad based applicability. Entire human race is one community.

Human Values in Professional Fields:

When it comes to professional fields, the basic requirements are to obtain proficiencies in the chosen fields, such as a doctor, lawyer, engineer, architect etc. Professional ethics determine the methodologies outlined.

All over the world people are wanting their independence and their sovereignty. Humans aspire of their distinctiveness. Managers know that when people are treated with dignity the

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efficiency improves. Humans value respect and recognition. People's beliefs cannot be ignored and managements have to be cognizant of this basic ingredient.

Human Values – Philosophy of Education:

Man is essentially a member of the community. Political, social and economic improvements are for the better being of man. Human heritage focused on spirituality and efforts are to know the Divine within and Adhyatmika vidya catered to these vital requirements.

The youth of modern India strove to become dynamic and education became the source. Upanisads advocated this character development aspect. Education is not worth its name if it does not generate a feeling of character and value formation.

Human integration is sought by way of education and all philosophers propounded this, virtues have to be taught at school level and children are to become contributors to the society and cause betterment. Human values in education becomes a subject of utmost importance. Values once imbibed and forgotten, and they are unable to accept the technological changes in entirety. The philosophers need to focus on the educational methods, taking into consideration the impact of transition. Philosophy in education enables to treat education comprehensively; paying special attention to the observations of modern philosophers in east as well as west.

Human Values in Science and Technology:

Science and technology with its rapid growth is of paramount importance for a better economy. The knowledge and skills required to face these challenges are an asset. Understanding, mutual respect, team spirit, confidentiality, risk taking are all requirements. With this type of acumen and with values, honoured and protected by the authorities, the team members perform for profitability.

Conclusion and Findings:

There is an increasing awareness amongst the world community for achieving better living standards and to ensure that economy balances out to a reasonable degree. The fact remains that some nations are developed, some developing and the remaining underdeveloped. The world leaders apart from their own strategies in the areas of military, protection etc, always project ideal views with other countries to share and participate for bettering the life style.

Mineral resources are spread over the globe and the wealth of the nation to a large extent depends upon their share of owning within their territorial limits. Industrializations depended largely on their capacities. One significant factor is that Human element is common to all. Billions of people play their roles globally. Our effort has to be to erase the artificial structures and recognize that the individuals mind and behaviour is what matters'. Virtues and vices have to be dealt with. The research topic aims at these human values, a subject of concern centuries ago, and with ongoing significance for now and future. In spite of the fact that the human race has performed extremely well from its evolution, there is a lot desired. The deficiency primarily stems from the "mind" and the thinking/ decision process. Individual's rigidity, ego aspects need to be understood, and trimmed to meet challenges that the world is facing today.

Human potential is the best of all assets and ignoring this human values will mean that knowingly the nations are marching towards imperfection, which might even affect the very survival.

Human values and ethical concerns have to be dealt with, understood, analyzed and in the appropriate manner, to be communicated to the majority of populations across the world. This can be accomplished by way of publishing findings, conducting seminars and with the help of the media make it available to the society at large. Educational institutions, industrial sectors, and other agencies and many other associated groups should benefit and understand the need for asserting on human values.

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Individual always aims to uphold his self esteem and ego. Role of Philosophers is of paramount importance. Established norms are vanishing rapidly. The modern age demands express attention to let philosophy regain its supremacy. Leadership is imminent to ensure that every human being is respected and recognized. The ideals have to be incorporated in day to day life. Its applicability covers present as well as future generations.

It is not out of context to mention about the concept of “Chinese Room” brought out by John Searle. A program cannot give a computer a “mind” regardless of its intelligence/ behaviour. A Robot does not have a feeling. Human actions perceiving, feeling and thinking; all these have to be cognized and respected.

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