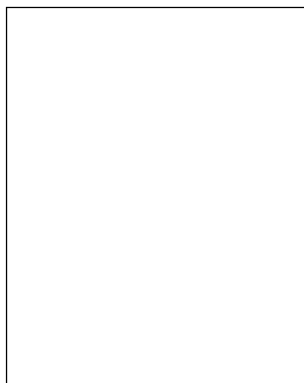


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 EDITORIAL

SOCIOLOGICAL BACKLASH : NEEDS GLOBAL ATTENTION



A recent report has amply illustrated how human values are facing utter erosion in the context of modern culture. According to the report, a few girl students at the Cambridge University (UK) were luring male folks from outside just to earn a few bucks for their higher studies, and also for fun to maintain socio-economic status. Their plea was that higher education now a days was expensive, which their parents or guardians failed to afford, nor they could have part time job to meet their expenses. Crazy though, such an approach to life, particularly in the case of youngsters, cannot be over ruled.

In fact, exotic behaviour among young people, juveniles included, leading to severe criminal offences are now seen all over the world in different patterns with different motives – cruelty, revenge, sex, self-demolition, monetary ambition, political vendetta, racial conflicts, etc., etc. In many cases, their activities are confusing even to sociologists and criminologists.

A few examples of the recent past :

It happened on the Valentine's Day, 2008. With minutes left in an 'Ocean Sciences' class at Northern Illinois University, 104 Kms from Chicago. A tall skinny man, dressed in black stepped out from behind a curtain on the stage of lecture hall, said nothing and fired from a shot gun. He shot again and again, perhaps twenty times or more. Students in the lecture, stunned and screaming, dropped to the floor. The death toll had gone up to seven,

including the Killer, who turned the gun on himself. Fifteen lay wounded. The 27 year-old killer was identified as former student Steven Kozmierczak, who had no police record. Report said, he was an award winning graduate student of sociology, and an expert on prison. He had also served with a student criminal justice group, and also honoured by the university with 'Dean's Award' for his work in sociology. He had helped write papers on self-injury in prison and the role of religion in early U.S. prisons that had brought him the award.

The act confused the criminologists – was it due to frustration ? Motive was not clear.

Virginia Tech, a university in Blacksburg, Virginia (U.S.A) became a site of the deadliest shooting rampage in modern U.S. history in April, 2007 when a gunman killed 32 people and himself. The cause still remains a mystery.

Lack of value, impatience and aggressive behaviour are common among children in most of the societies all over the world. India is no exception. An example : In January, 2008, at Satna in Madhya Pradesh two students of class X at Choraubari village government School killed their class mate, a student of Class VIII with a gun just to take revenge for teasing. How silly it was ! The question was, how school students could openly carry a gun ?

Childhood is the golden era in one's life. But the childhood is lost now pretty earlier, even by the age of 11. Researchers in Britain in their recent study have found that it now effectively ends at the age of 11 with parents increasingly succumbing to a "pester pressure" with their kids. A report of *The Daily Telegraph* has revealed that in Britain, children are forcing their parents to authorise freedoms that belie their years in contrast with the

traditional upbringings experienced by their moms and dads. *The Daily Telegraph* added ; "According to the study, more and more teenagers are being allowed to drink alcohol, stay out late, sleep over at their boyfriends' or girl friends' house and have sex". Little girls in particular are growing faster than ever and they no longer want to play with dolls. Instead they go away to pierce their ears, dye their hair and prefer to wear fashionable dresses. The researchers came to the conclusion after carrying out a survey of 1170 parents with kids under 18.

The survey has showed a gulf between the parental code of previous generation and the lenient attitudes of today's parents, with 50% parents claiming childhood is now "over by 11". The study has shown three quarters of parents allow their children to drink alcohol at home before they turn 18, 45% permit their 16 year-old children to spend the night at a boyfriend's or girl friend's house, and admitted that their children had scant regard for their authority and regularly acted against their will, which indicate their basic sense of values, factors that shape attitudes to functioning their activities, different than what their parents traditionally inherited.

Broadly speaking, qualitatively human being has two kinds of values : 'Fundamental' and 'Transient'. Irrespective of caste, creed or colour, he or she is endowed with, perhaps by nature, some treats – love, affection, sense of appreciation, which may be called fundamentals. These treats are inherited, may be genetically, and independent of 'time and space' continuum, just like gold that retains its unique properties throughout its existence, unless transmuted. But, as ornamentation with gold changes from time to time as per human tastes, and to some extent needs, similarly, human expressions also vary from time to time, which may be called as the 'Transient' feats of human beings, affecting social culture, as well as behaviour. The latter, if not properly work, create crisis in the societies leading to futility. This is exactly happening in the age of rapid globalization, which The World Bank defines as "the growing integration of economics and societies", leading to abound material facilities and exponential aspirations (some times very conflicting) camouflaging the 'fundamental treats' of human

propensities. Both adults and children become victims to such situations, children and youngsters are the worst hit. Loss of positive personality, confusion, lacking of mutual trust (even for parents) and aggressiveness are the results, what has been seen in the school boy from Satna or in Cambridge girls violating social values. In broader spectrum drug abuse, antisocial activities, terrorism as well are included. Prevalence of such activities has reached at a point of epidemic all over the world – developing and developed. Young generations, including children, are the victims. This is true in the case of economically downtrodden, as well as as affluents. According to sociologists, value based education is the principal cause.

The Seventeenth century has been called the Age of Enlightenment, the eighteenth, the Age of Reason, the nineteenth, the Age of Progress; and the twentieth, the

Age of Anxiety. The black plague is replaced by a host of subtler psychological plagues – worry, value conflicts, loneliness, disillusionment, and doubts as to whether one can weave a success course through the complex maze of freeways and blind alleys that make up modern existence.

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personal life and leave their wake of mutilations, grief, and social unrest. Periodic breakdowns and runways of economic machinery – as well as automation, and other technological innovations – have taken their toll in millions of victims of unemployment and dislocation. The human population explosion is creating difficult political and social problems and tensions. Racial discrimination, with unreasoned feelings of superiority, hatred, and resentment, hurts both the individual and the community. Homes broken by divorce and conflicts leave emotional scars upon parents and children alike. Excessive competition, conflicting pressure groups, impersonal bureaucracy, rapid social change, and the ever present terrorism further aggravate modern man's anxieties.

The result is that man is increasingly and inescapably confronted with the finiteness of his own individual

existence and with questions as to its meaning. Under such situations, traditional values and beliefs no longer seem self-evident, and he lacks the confronting absolutes that gave security to his forebears. We know much about the atom but not nearly enough about love or values needed for a meaningful and a fulfilling life. With all his uncertainties and anxieties, modern man has few moral beliefs to guide him. Children are the worst victims.

Charity begins at home, and home is the nursery where parents are mainly responsible to develop values – moral, ethical and spiritual among their children. True, the crisis facing the world today is fundamentally one of identification. People identify themselves with limited characteristics such as gender, race religion, cooked practices and nationality, forgetting their basic identity as part of the universal spirit. These limited identifications lead to conflicts on a personal level, and globally. Any way, with the proper identification of our true nature, we need to return to the values that are the essence of all major traditions. That form a way of life of oneself. But practices of life, as His Holiness Sri Sri Ravi Sankar puts it, "are like a banana skin, and the spiritual values – the quest for truth and basic awareness – are the banana. Paradoxically, people in every tradition throw away the banana and are holding on skin." Many of the parents are prone to this situation, the children follow their parents accordingly as consequences. Therefore, to render value based education to children, parent's role is very much

important. Next comes the role of schools, where well trained teachers can motivate the children in this regard.

Demographic proliferation and involvement of children in active politics are two dominant forces, too negative to develop their moral values, and their expressions are universal in almost all societies all over the world. The problems should be nationally and internally tackled in conjunction. For such a venture, roles of parents, educationists, politicians, policymakers should be jointly worked out and properly executed.

To combat the problems, value-based education should be immediately introduced universally to schools from elementary to universities (including technical) to develop balanced personality of students, who can decide 'right' from 'wrong', in their behaviours and attitude pertaining to life. This needs global attention with priority – or educators and education policy makers working from grassroot level. For such a venture specially trained teachers and course curricula are needed.

One may note that 'Rome was not built in a day, but, it perished in no time due to disastrous slides of values and morals of the Romans, with enough prosperities. Let that destiny be not repeated in the case of the present civilization for our faults. It is learnt that the University Grant Commission (UGC) is considering inclusion of courses related to value based education in the regular academic curricula of colleges. It's a good news.

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