

a foundation course in
HUMAN VALUES and
professional ethics

Presenting a universal approach to value education
– through self-exploration

What is
my role in
this existence?



R R Gaur R Sangal G P Bagaria

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EXCEL BOOKS

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Preface

The long history of mankind has seen a lot of progress. Science has enabled us to improve our understanding of the physical reality around us, while technology continues to offer conveniences in increasingly newer ways. The human beings are able to see the need for peaceful co-existence at the level of human society and recognize the need for education as a 'fundamental need'. We have traversed a long way from the times of warring tribes and the fear of natural elements. While we have made tremendous advancements and innovations, the question still remains - Are we satisfied with the state of affairs today? On looking into this issue, it becomes evident that we are still faced with serious problems at various levels. At the human level, we can see that there continue to be issues in individuals with respect to lack of clarity on life-goals, contradictions and stress, while at the level of human relationships in the family, we see problems in mutual understanding, increasing mistrust, insecurity and generation gap. Further, at the level of human relationships in society we see increasing communal conflict, exploitation and strife, terrorism and violence in various forms. The increasing corruption and other unethical practices in various professions is also causing serious concern. At the level of nature, we have increasing problems of environmental degradation in various forms as well as resource depletion threatening the very survival of the human race. In fact, all these problems are a direct outcome of the 'well-planned' human activity carried out in the name of progress and in spite of all the advancements of science and technology. Where then, lies the solution? What exactly is amiss? This is an important question intriguing the human mind today.

The overall purpose of education is to enable a human being to live a fulfilling life, in harmony with oneself and with family, society and nature. Hence, it becomes the responsibility of educators to enable the resolution of these issues, so that human society can achieve the cherished goal. In light of this, it becomes essential to find out what is of *value*, or what is really valuable to a human being? While technology is an important human endeavour, it is only a *means* to achieve what is considered 'valuable' for human beings in an effective and efficient manner. It is thus not within the scope of technology to decide 'what is valuable' to a human being. The subject that deals with 'what *is of value*', or '*what is valuable to a human being*' is called 'value education'. Values thus provide the *basis* for all our actions and there is an essential complementarity between values and skills which needs to be ensured in any education system.

In the present context, our mainstream education system has continued to become lopsided in favour of skill generation and information enrichment and the value dimension

has been languishing. This imbalance has been responsible for the above mentioned problems. Even though, the importance of value education is repeatedly highlighted at various platforms and also has been stressed by various commissions and expert committees on education, the effective methodologies and models for value education have yet to find a rightful place in our education system.

As teachers and researchers in the area of technical education, we have been able to experience very strongly, the need for bridging this gap and introducing appropriate inputs of value education in the current system. For several years, we have been trying to develop our own understanding and vision as well as performing several experiments in order to evolve suitable inputs in value education which may be effectively integrated in the current curricula. This book is an outcome of our long search in this direction. In this process, we have been benefitted by various sources of wisdom both occidental and oriental. We have also had consultations and close interactions with a number of stalwarts and experts in the country in this regard.

In formulating and experimenting with the methodology described in this book, we have been greatly facilitated by the fundamental work of Sh. A. Nagraj of Amarkantak who has propounded *Sah-astivandā* (also called *Madyasth Darsan*) as the philosophy to understand the human reality *vis-à-vis* the rest of existence with the prime focus on discovering the inherent co-existence (*Sah-astitva*) and harmony (*Vyavasthā*) at all levels of existence. This philosophy has provided us a tangible basis to develop a holistic approach to value education.

We have successfully experimented for several years with the course inputs designed on the basis of above mentioned research efforts primarily in two modes – in the form of a seven-day full time residential workshop, and in terms of a normal, one semester classroom interaction course with two lectures and two hours of practice sessions per week (the proposed course syllabus is given in appendix-3). In the form of seven-day workshops, this input has been experimented very extensively with all spectra of people in the society as well as with teachers and students in the institutional framework. The other mode also has been successfully experimented in several institutions. The experiments conducted at IIT, Hyderabad, IIT Delhi, IIT Kanpur, NIT Raipur and Somaiya Vidyavihar, Mumbai, etc. are worth mentioning. Recently, UP technical university has accepted the proposed course syllabus in the form of a compulsory audit course for all its professional institutions. We are thankful to the Heads of these institutions for their kind support and help provided in our efforts.

We have noticed a tangible change in the thinking of students, in terms of their vision about happiness and prosperity, the clarity about life-goals, improvement in human relationships, self-confidence, commitment to learning, feeling more responsible towards the profession, etc. The effects of self-exploration are found to be very rewarding. Teachers have benefited by acquiring a better ability to relate to students and evaluating the relevance

of various academic inputs, in addition to benefiting in their own personal lives. Institutions have benefited from being able to have a holistic view of the education being imparted and infusing new energy in both teachers and students alike, in addition to effectively dealing with issues like student discipline, ragging, class absenteeism, etc.

We have generally received the following feedback about this course:

- *It is holistic and not fragmented* – i.e. Covers the entire expanse of human living: from self to society, nature and existence and covers all dimensions of human life: thought, behaviour, work and realization.
- *Addresses the 'Self'* – Discusses the human being or the Self and does not just focus on external realities. This proves to be self-empowering since each individual is able to make decisions and find out what is of value to them in their own right.
- *Is closely associated to life and living* – Establishes relevance in a person's life and does not just deal with information and skills. One can see the results of this understanding in human living in the form of behaviour with people and work with nature.
- *Methodology facilitates understanding and not just rote learning*: The emphasis is on understanding in one's own right by focusing on reality and its experiential verification and not just on reproduction of information and rote learning.

It may be pointed out that this course is presented in the form of a *dialogue* between the teacher and the students, wherein proposals are made and these are to be examined on the basis of reason and whether they are naturally acceptable, are true in reality and experientially verifiable. Both students and teachers benefit from this joint dialogue, which starts in the classroom, but continues beyond it, as a dialogue within the student, for the rest of his/her life.

This book is primarily intended to serve as a textbook for the foundation course on value education and the style of presentation is adopted to facilitate self-exploration among the students on the key proposals rather than packing up a lot of information. Frequent repetition is introduced intentionally to make the reader grasp the core concepts. A teacher's manual for facilitating the teaching of this special course input has also been made available. It is our earnest hope that the material presented in this book (along with the teacher's manual) will enable the introduction of this important course input widely in the professional institutions, other colleges and universities. This book is also expected to provide an interesting orientational material and food for thought to the general reader.

Developing the right understanding about oneself and the rest of reality through self-exploration and realization of the inherent co-existence, harmony and self-regulation at various levels in existence is seen to be the real basis for imbibing universal human values and ethical human conduct. This is what will affect transformation towards a holistic

worldview (human consciousness) which happens to be the prime purpose of value education. This is what is really crucial to ensure ethical conduct of profession as well. The identification of values, based on right understanding, enables the formation of a vision for humanistic education, humane conduct and humanistic constitution that leads to a universal human order. This opens up a lot of scope for R&D to evolve holistic technologies and systems.

Of course, it must be emphasised that this book only presents the material for a foundation course and is aimed at providing the basic orientation for the change of ethos. Deeper self-study (of the proposals in their entirety about the reality leading to understanding of oneself, the existence and the human conduct) and practice will be necessary to carry this exploration further and consolidate one's understanding and realization. Some of the references (Ref. 1-5, in particular) provided at the end of the book will be helpful in this pursuit. This extensive self-study leads to the development of human consciousness which naturally results into inculcation of human values and its expression in human living. The reader is encouraged to do so.

We invite you to evaluate the proposals presented herein in your own right and carry out the process of self-exploration. Suggestions to improve the presentation of this book will be welcome.

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This textbook, designed for a foundation course on Human Values and Professional Ethics, is an outcome of the long-drawn search, visualization and extensive experimentation by the authors and their colleagues towards evolving an effective and universally acceptable methodology for introducing value education in the present curricula of technical and other professional institutions. Thus, it is in response to a long-felt and urgent need to integrate value education with professional skills in the present-day education system. A unique methodology focusing on the right understanding of the human reality vis-à-vis rest of existence has been systematically presented. This involves the discovery of the inherent harmony and co-existence in the existence through self-exploration, forming the basis of universal human values and facilitating transformation towards a holistic world-view or the 'human consciousness'. The book is presented in three main sections, namely:

- Introduction to Value Education
- Understanding the Harmony at various Levels
- Implications of the Right Understanding in Life and Profession.

Unlike the conventional treatment, the issues in Professional Ethics are analyzed in the context of right understanding with the main focus on the development of Ethical Competence in the individuals. The book concludes by proposing several salient steps to undertake the journey towards holistic and value-based living.

Salient Features

The unique features of this book are:

- It presents a universal approach to value education by developing the right understanding of reality through the process of self-exploration.
- The whole course is presented in the form of a dialogue, whereby a set of proposals about various aspects of the reality are presented and the students are encouraged to self-explore and self-verify these on the basis of their natural acceptance and experiential validation.
- The prime focus throughout the book is towards affecting a qualitative change in the consciousness of the reader, a change in the world-view rather than on mere information transfer.
- While introducing the alternative holistic world-view and its implications, a critical appraisal of the consequences of the prevailing world-view is also made to enable the students to discern the difference in their own right.
- The style of presentation is kept simple and student-friendly with ample repetitions to bring home the core concepts. Each chapter ends with a summary and selective review questions to facilitate understanding.
- A model course syllabus along with exercises and guidelines for practice sessions is given in the appendix and a glossary for key terms is also appended. A Teacher's Manual for this course is also available.

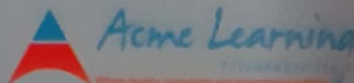
This innovative book along with the Teacher's Manual will go a long way in facilitating the introduction of value education inputs in the professional institutions, technical universities and other institutions of higher learning.

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