

Value-Based Education in India: Historical Evolution, Philosophical Core, and NEP 2020 Reforms

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Abstract: The word "value" originates from the Latin word *valere*, which means to be strong or of worth. In education, values are more than abstract moral ideas—they shape how people think, feel, and communicate with one another. This paper examines how Value-Based Education (VBE) evolved in India and how the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 works to restore it. Drawing on insights from scholars like John Dewey, Clyde Kluckhohn, and Radhakamal Mukerjee, we look at values as long-standing beliefs that support character development and social harmony. Core values in this study spans personal, social, civic, and spiritual, to constitutional dimensions. Historically, Indian education relied on the Indian Knowledge System (IKS), which centered on *Sanskara* (character), *Dharma* (righteousness), *Satya* (truth), *Ahimsa* (non-violence), and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (global oneness). British colonial policies disrupted this holistic approach, replacing it with a utilitarian framework geared toward imperial administration. Though post-independence bodies like the Radhakrishnan (1948–49) and Kothari (1964–66) Commissions urged a return to these moral roots, progress remained uneven. However in this paper examines how NEP 2020 offers a fresh blueprint, and how it merges traditional philosophy with constitutional values with hands-on learning to help build thoughtful, responsible 21st-century citizens.

Key Words – Educational Values, NEP2020, IKS, Curriculum, Human values, Ethical values, Traditional Indian values, constitutional values.

Introduction

A human being is a social animal, and society runs with certain rules and regulations. When a child is born in a family, his learning starts in an informal setting. He gradually learns many things from his family and the environment where he lives. Values are an integrated part of every family. When he enters into a formal education, he learns through formative experiences. Values play a most important role in daily life and work experience because values manage and guide our behaviour and actions in daily life. Values cultivate the ability to differentiate between Right and wrong in terms of ethical Thinking, True and False in terms of Knowledge acquisition, and foster a deeper Understanding of human existence. Mostly, values are learned with education. Values and education are intrinsically intertwined.

The term value is derived from the Latin word *valere*, which means “To be strong”. Values give us the right direction and strength to do the right things. Education without value is incomprehensible. Value-Based Education is the manifestation of this intrinsic relationship. Value-based education helps in moulding personality and character of an individual. The aim of value -based education is Promote, epensive abilities, skills, good human behaviour and develop multifaceted capabilities. Value- based education is envisaged as a holistic

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framework that integrates Constitutional values, universal human ethics, IKS, and essential life skills to nurture responsible global citizens. It aims at the development of values, emotions, attitude and holistic behaviour of the students.

The core pillars of Value- Based Education center on the comprehensive development of a student's internal and external life. At the foundation, Character Building focuses on strengthening essential moral traits such as honesty, integrity, and humility. While social responsibility encourages students to look outward, considering their impact on both the local community and the global environment. This approach fosters Holistic Development by seeking a healthy balance between intellectual growth (IQ) and emotional or spiritual intelligence (EQ).

Finally, it nurtures Critical Thinking, empowering students to evaluate complex situations through the lens of ethical principles rather than simply following rules without understanding their purpose. The National Education Policy (NEP2020) treats Value Based Education as a core pillar for developing good human beings, ethical citizenship and a holistic society. According to NEP2020, The NEP2020 as bringing forward the need for value- based education covering ethical, cultural and emotional developments in addition to being academically robust. The policy also promotes IKS and traditional Indian values as meditation and yoga for students.

There are different definitions which need to be analysed.

“Values is an element of shared symbolic system which serves as a criterion or standard for selection among the alternatives of orientation which are intrinsically open to a situation”.

T. Patter Parson (1960)

“Values are the principles and fundamental convictions which act as general guides to behaviour, the standards by which particular actions are judged as good or desirable.”

Halstead, Taylor and Taylor (2000)

“A value may be defined as something which you consider very dear, which you strive to acquire, preserve or protect and about which you can think and make judgement about the alternatives of action available in a situation in relation to the value.”

Prof. R.C.Das

All these definitions show that values are the standards, principles and aspirational beliefs which guide human behaviour, justice, democratic spirit and help in making decisions in different situations.

Types of Values

Ideally, values should not be classified, as they influence our entire life and all activities. However, if observed on the basis of the hierarchy of values, some values are eternal and are an end in themselves. Values are constructed through various life activities and educational processes. This aligns with the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP2020), which emphasises holistic and value-based education for the all-round development of learners. which, in accordance with NEP2020, the following are particularly significant:

Constitutional Values: The policy highlights the importance of instilling the core ideals enshrined in the Constitution values. It includes respect for the law, equality, freedom, fraternity, social justice, and democracy, which ensure harmony, peace, and mutual respect within a society. These values should be inseparable from the

curriculum to foster the real meaning of education and global citizenship. It considers these principles to be fundamental to the core purpose of the education system.

Ethical values: Ethical values play a crucial role in student life. Ethical Values are Integrity, trustworthiness, honesty, fairness, respect, responsibility, compassion and Empathy. They guide and help in moral decisions. These values provide students with an insight into their own conduct, guiding them on how to behave in various situations. The cultivation of truthfulness, integrity in one's work, empathy towards the suffering of others, altruism, and the development of decision-making capabilities are all outcomes of ethical values.

Human values: It is broadly recognised that human values are indispensable for upholding the unity and integrity of society. By embedding these values into everyday practices, particularly into the teaching and learning culture of educational institutions. There are some of the core human values are as; Empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, and the spirit of service are such human values. These human values can enhance self-motivation. An individual who is not self-motivated can not motivate others. Therefore, inculcation of human values is essential for fostering the holistic growth of learners.

Traditional Indian values: Traditional values ensure the preservation and continuity of culture. Reviving ancient Indian ethics (Niti) and morality, focusing on timeless principles and concepts like Seva (selfless service), which denotes selfless service to humanity, Ahimsa, which stands for (non- violence), and Satya (truth), which signifies adherence. It is related to *satyam shivam sundaram* also. These values have their origins in antiquity and continue to be intrinsically linked to our cultural heritage.

Historical Background of Values –

The concept of Value-Based Education is not new; it has its roots in ancient times. Value-Based Education started developing through the *Gurukul* system. In the ancient education system, character building was the primary aim of education, which was developed in the students through *Gurues* and *Gurukuls*. They imparted not only academic knowledge but also moral, spiritual, and ethical values through their behaviour and lifestyle. The relationship of *Guru- Shishya* was very strong and characterised by profound closeness, respect, obedience, discipline, and deep spiritual bonding. The shishye served the Guru and, in return, received not only Shastras and Shashtra knowledge but also lessons in truth, non- violence, compassion, self-control, and duty. The main aim of ancient Indian Philosophy of “*Satyam Shivam Sundaram*”. Where *Satyam* means *Truth*, *Shivam* means *Goodness*, and *Sundaram* means *Beauty*. The aim of education in the ancient period to lead the student from evil to goodness, untruth to truth and to the beauty of the soul. All these things strengthened the character of the students. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi- “Value is a process which is a process which enable us to realise *Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram*”.

Value- Based Education as Per Indian Knowledge System

IKS (Indian Knowledge System) is a wealthy storehouse of ancient Indian wisdom which includes *Vedas, Smriti, Upanishads, and Puranas*. It emphasises holistic development through values like *Dharma, Satya, Ahimsa*, and *Seva*, which is the foundation of Value-Based Education in India. The educational institutions of ancient India continue to be renowned for their glorious academic heritage even in the present times. These centres of learning were not merely places for imparting knowledge but were also instrumental in fostering moral, spiritual, and ethical values. Among these, the most prominent institutions were-

- **Takshila University**

- **Nalanda University**
- **Vikramshila University**
- **Vallabhi University**

These are the universities of ancient times played a significant role in shaping the Indian Knowledge system. These ancient universities were the earliest examples of Value-based Education (VBE), where education was intrinsically linked with the inculcation of values such as truth, duty, discipline, and compassion for holistic development.

The National Education Policy (NEP2020) promotes Traditional Indian Values for the development, maintenance, and improvement of mental health through meditation, yoga, and exercise. Incorporating the ethical values, ethical moral teachings, spiritual learnings, and wisdom derived from Indian culture.

The main principle of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* holds deep meaning. It means “*The Whole World is One Family*”. This is a core concept of the Indian Knowledge system in Value-Based Education. It is related to *the Upanishads*. In the context of Value-Based Education, it promotes tolerance, empathy, and respect for all living beings, making education more humane and inclusive. It focuses on values and the development of a balanced and meaningful life. The Indian Knowledge System is rooted in values. It believes in all-round development, and it is related to science, ethics, and culture. Therefore, it is connected to truth and tradition.

Status of Value- Based Education in Colonial Era-Before the colonial period, education depended on *Gurukul*, *Pathshala*, and *Madarsa*. Its core purpose was value-based education. However, with the advent of British colonial rule, this system was systematically dismantled.

There was a very famous line from the colonial period which is related to T.B. Macaulay, when T.B. Macaulay clearly said that, “*We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect.*”

This is known as Macaulay's Minute (1835). After T.B. Macaulay, the Hunter Commission (1854) advocated for moral education, but it could not succeed because moral education could not be implemented at that time. Only textbooks were given to teach discipline, morality, punctuality, and obedience. During the British era, emphasis was not laid on holistic development or critical thinking; rather, the focus was on an education system designed to promote clerks.

Neglect of Indigenous Values – During this period, the values of the Indian education system were neglected. The primary objective of the British Era was solely the economic exploitation of India and the strengthening of its empire. For this purpose, they first attacked Indian culture, traditions, and values, and to achieve this, they first abolished the *Gurukul* system.

Under British administration, collective consciousness and the traditional justice system, which were also neglected. The fundamental aim of British education was to suppress Indian values and propagate its own Western Culture.

Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Raja Ram Mohan Rai, Swami Vivekananda, and Mahatma Gandhi tried to promote Value-Based Education through Basic Education; this education is known as *Nai Taleem* also.

Gandhi ji said that “Education without character is useless.”

Status of Value-Based Education after Independence-

After independence, many commissions and policies were constituted to integrate Value-Based Education in India. **Radhakrishnan Commission** (1948-49) emphasised that value - based education is the best for students. The commission focused on protecting the values of equality, justice, and fraternity. In this commission, an attempt was made to develop value-based education among children at the middle school level through storytelling and biographies of great personalities. This was not sufficient for holistic development and value - based education, because it depended on rote learning.

According to the **Mudaliar Commission** (1952-53), value-based education is the base of education. This commission explains that values can not be imparted through rote memorisation, but can be effectively inculcated through co-curricular activities such as *NCC*, *Scouts*, and *Guides*, and *community service*. This commission focused on character building, practical activities, democratic, moral and social values.

In **Kothari Commission** (1964-66) completely focused to develop in student's honesty, truth, tolerance, sympathy, justice, moral, ethical, social and spiritual values in their behaviour by education. After the commission, the subsequent policies also attempted to focus on value-based education.

National Policy on Education (1986) in this policy, values were sought to be imparted through education and a separate subject was introduced for moral education; however, it could not be effectively implemented, as value education remained in a passive mode within this policy.

A highly significant committee, the **Yashpal Committee** (1991), also laid major emphasis on value- based education in its curriculum. This committee integrated concepts such as equality, cleanliness, responsibility, duty, cooperation, and truthfulness into education; it is these fundamental qualities in children that will sustain national development in the long term.

National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005): This framework provided a robust structure to the curriculum. In this framework, Value-Based Education was given a significant place. Its primary objective was to ensure that the development of children is not limited to the classroom but is also connected to life outside, and to foster their holistic development to make them responsible citizens.

Integration of Value-Based Education as per NEP 2020 – The National Education Policy (NEP 2020) integrates Value-Based Education through ethical values, human values, traditional values and constitutional values. In the National Education Policy (NEP 2020), Value-Based Education has been integrated with every subject. This policy demonstrated that values can be learned by doing. In this policy, Value-Based Education has been kept in an active mode; it means students will learn values by doing, through their curriculum, along with curricular activities in the classroom, and it is also emphasised that Value-Based Education should be learned from the external environment. The New Education Policy is student-centric. Although the school curriculum encompasses a wide range of perspectives, teachers must focus on at least some core value domains to ensure the sustenance of democracy.

1. Personal Responsibility
2. Respect for law and Justice
3. Respect for others and Empathy
4. The necessity of involvement
5. Democratic spirit and the spirit of Service

6. Equality and Liberty
7. Reintroducing Traditional Indian morals and principles
8. Critical Thinking and Character Building
9. Multi-dimensional approach
10. Environmental ethics

It helps students to focus on awareness, qualities, accountability, creativity, helping decision-making, respecting others etc. The status of Value Based Education in the National Education Policy (NEP2020) motivates holistic development of the students. Under the National Education Policy (NEP2020), it is proposed to a National Curriculum dedicated to value education. This framework aims to facilitate the incorporation of values in all subjects and across different grades. It will offer practical guidance to teachers for effectively embedding values within the curriculum.

Conclusion – The evolution of Value Based Education in India reveals a profound narrative of resilience, disruption, and strategic renaissance, rooted deeply in the ancient Indian Knowledge System (IKS), where education transcended mere information acquisition to achieve the holistic realisation of Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram and the cosmic ethos of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*- value education was historically designed to foster righteous character (*Samskara*) and inner strength Valere). However, the colonial regime systematically dismantled this indigenous framework, replacing character-driven holistic pedagogy with a utilitarian, employment- focused model engineered to serve imperial interests.

Post-independence, successive education commissions-from the Radhakrishnan and Kothari commissions to the Yashpal Committee grappled with the pressing need to reverse socio-cultural degradation by reintroducing moral and national ideals. Yet, implementation often suffered due to compartmentalisation, passive instruction, or over-reliance on rote learning.

The National Education Policy (NEP2020) marks a paradigm shift by moving value-based education out of passive isolation and placing it at the active core of learning. By systematically embedding VBE into contemporary curricula and experiential pedagogies, the policy bridges timeless traditional Indian wisdom with modern constitutional imperatives. Ultimately, VBE serves as the vital anchor that transforms raw intellect into wisdom, equipping 21st-century learners to navigate and lead a complex world with integrity, empathy, and global responsibility.

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