



---

## VALUE PRIORITIES AND WELL-BEING: IMPLICATIONS FOR VALUE ORIENTED EDUCATION

### **Dr. Bipasha Sinha**

Assistant Professor, Dept. of Education,  
S.S.Jalan Girls' College  
University of Calcutta

### **Meaning of Values**

An ideal education not only equips the students with the devices necessary for his sustenance among the competitive human race of today but also secures the development of character without which man though may be useful to himself and the society.

Man has conquered space and traversed on moon and mars. Advancement of science and technology has broken barriers leading to unbound materialistic development and opulence. It is all materialistic. Yet there is dearth of quality, lack of integrity and crisis of capability i.e., value-based competence. The ill effects of science and technology are badly affecting social equilibrium and cohesive values of human life. There is restlessness in human life all over the globe and there is widespread disorder and confusion in every walk of life. Growing global pollution, poverty, hunger, disease, unemployment, violence, corruption, exploitation, communalism, fanaticism and many such evils have caused value-crisis in the human society, shaking the bedrock of core human values such as honesty, sincerity, morality and humanity.

True education is knowledge integrated with values and wisdom without which knowledge may prove to be dangerous. Peace and harmony can only prevail in this world when individuals imbibe superior values that make him responsible while conducting his life and while dealing with others.

Values are socially defined way of life. They are goals set for accomplishment, which motivate, define and qualify all our activities. Values are basic beliefs that underpin the way we think, feel and respond to things happening in the outer world. They are basic orientations to the way things are or should be. (Shastree, 2004).

Values are central to one's life since they are normative in all of one's actions and understanding. Values give direction and firmness and bring to life the important dimension of meaning. They promote self development of an individual, and also contribute to the welfare of society as a whole such as the family, the community and the nation of which an individual is a part. Value system is the backbone of the society. To suffice, values bring quality to life.

### **Meaning of well being**

Psychological perspectives on well-being has been broadly divided into two primary types (a) Subjective well-being, the focal point of which is on hedonic outcomes (e.g., life satisfaction, happiness) and (b) Psychological well-being, emphasizing Eudaimonic outcomes (e.g., life purpose, meaning) ( Ryan and Deci, 2001).



Subjective well-being (SWB) is defined as ‘a person’s cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life’ (Diener, Lucas and Oishi, 2002). The cognitive component refers to what one thinks about his or her overall life satisfaction (in global terms) and in certain spheres (in specific areas of life such as work, relationships, etc.) The affective component refers to emotions, moods and feelings. Positive affect occurs when emotions, moods and feelings that are experienced are pleasant (e.g. joy, elation, affection etc.). Negative affect occurs when emotions, moods and feelings experienced are unpleasant (e.g. guilt, anger, shame etc.). The concept of subjective well-being is a ‘hedonic’ in nature as the concept of well-being here is perceived as being essentially about maximizing pleasure and avoiding or minimizing pain. So subjective well-being consists of three components: life satisfaction, the presence of positive mood, and the absence of negative mood, together often summed up as ‘Happiness’.

Eudaimonic well-being, on the other hand, strongly relies on Maslow’s ideas of self actualization and Roger’s concept of the fully functioning person and their subjective well-being. Eudaimonic happiness is therefore based on the premise that people feel happy if they experience life purpose, challenges and growth. Eudaimonic theories maintain that not all values endorsed by a person result in yield well-being when achieved. Some outcomes are not good for people even if they are pleasure producing and do not promote wellness. Waterman (1993) stated that the ‘eudaimonic’ perspective is one where one lives in accordance with ones ‘true self’. This perspective places focus on meaning in life and self-realization, and the extent to which a person fully accomplish his potentials.

#### **Importance of values for student wellbeing**

Human beings are the most developed in terms of superior intellectual functioning among all the living beings. The real objective of human existence is to live a life of virtue and the aim of education is to foster in human beings to optimally develop their body and mind. The immediate purpose of education is to enable the student in earning a livelihood. The ultimate purpose of education is to attain an exalted state of righteous conduct by growing a judicious mind which can distinguish good from bad and lead us to salvation. To help people in raising them to a higher level of existence, value education acts as a catalyst. Values are internalized through processes of conditioning, learning and socialization. It is therefore imperative that values in education should be actively introduced in order pave the way for a thought provoking humane society.

Several studies have proved that value education have positively contributed towards students well-being. Studies by Benninga et al. (2006, 2010) demonstrated a correlation between high quality values (character) development and strengthened academic achievement. Davidson et al. (2007, 2010) provided clarification and confirmation for similar findings in their study by linking ‘performance character’ and ‘moral character’ as an essential in the development of personhood. Several other studies have been conducted to provide conceptual basis and empirical evidence of the relationship between values education and holistic student wellbeing, including



academic enhancement. (Nucci & Narvaez, 2008; Lovat & Toomey, 2009; Lovat et al., 2010a; Lovat et al., 2011). Therefore it necessitates an exploration into the various types of values and its dynamics with the concept of subjective well-being.

### **The relation between values and well being**

To provide a theoretical base and measure values, reference of Schwartz's (1992) theory of universals in the content and structure of basic values have been made. Values are desirable aspirations, differing in importance, that serve as steering principles in people's lives. They are socially approved verbal depictions of basic motivations (Schwartz, 1992; Williams, 1968). Schwartz derived ten motivationally distinct types of values from the universal requirements of human existence. This set of values was intended to be comprehensive of the different substantive motivations common to people across cultures. Research offers considerable support for this claim of comprehensiveness (Schwartz, 1994; Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995).

- **Power:** Social power, authority, wealth, preserving own public image, control over people and resources.
- **Achievement:** Successful, capable, ambitious, influential.
- **Hedonism:** Pleasure seeking, seeking enjoyment and sensuous gratification in life, self-indulgent.
- **Stimulation:** Daring, seeking excitement, variety, novelty and challenges in life.
- **Self-direction:** Creativity, freedom, independent, curious, choosing own goals.
- **Universalism:** Broadminded, social justice, equality, seeking world peace and protecting the environment.
- **Benevolence:** Helpful, honest, forgiving, loyal, responsible, seeking welfare of people.
- **Tradition:** Humble, accepting and respecting customs, traditions, culture or religion, moderate.
- **Conformity:** Politeness, obedient, self-discipline, honoring parents and elders, does not violate social norms.
- **Security:** Family security, national security, seeking stability of society, of relationships, and of self

### **Individual differences in basic values might relate to subjective well-being.**

Overall life satisfaction comes from within an individual based on the individual's personal values and what he or she holds important. All values are not given the same importance by everyone and there exists considerable individual difference in the internalization and prioritization of values. For some it is family, for others it is love, and for others it is money or other material gains; as such priority of values varies



from one person to another. Accordingly an individual's subjective sense of well-being might depend upon his or her value priorities. For some individuals certain values may tend to exert a higher sense of positive well-being than individuals guided by different set of values. Subjective well-being may be associated with emphasizing particular values (e.g. compassion) rather than others (e.g. security). Volunteering for social work may be more rewarding for those who value social equality than those who value power. So engaging in social work shall bring about better sense of well-being for individuals who value social equality, but not to those who stress power.

Global life satisfaction which is an essential part of subjective well-being was strongly influenced by social life for individuals high in benevolence values, whereas it was strongly influenced by family life for individuals high in conformity values. For example, getting married to a match made by parents would provide a sense of satisfaction for individuals who value conformity. Satisfaction with grades was a stronger predictor of global life satisfaction for individuals who stress achievement than for those who do not. These results imply that global life satisfaction judgments are derived from different spheres of life for different individuals and were moderated by their value orientations.

### **Healthy vs unhealthy values**

All values do not produce the same degree of well-being among individuals. Some values deliver greater degree of well-being than other values. Values promoting higher positive well-being are referred as healthy values. Jensen and Bergin (1988) identified values like self-direction (e.g. autonomy, freedom), benevolence (e.g. responsibility, inter- personal and family relationships), and universalism (e.g. self-awareness, personal growth) as 'healthy values'. Similarly, Strupp (1980) referred to autonomy (self- direction), responsibility (benevolence) and fairness to others (universalism) as 'healthy values'. There is also some agreement that achievement and stimulation values are 'healthy' values.

Several studies in developed countries such as the United States and Germany (Kasser & Ryan 1996, Schmuck et al 2000) and in less economically developed nations such as Russia and India (e.g. Ryan et al 1999) have proved that the more people focus on financial and materialistic goals, the lower their well-being. Individuals who embrace materialistic values reported a lower satisfaction in life than their non-materialistic counterparts (Keng, Jung, Jivan, Wirtz; 2000). Individuals who value materialism have found to have lower levels of satisfaction with life and are caught in the endless web of wanting more and more materialistic goods. Such individuals experience further dissatisfaction when they do not have the money or purchasing power to fulfill their craving for more items. This has been referred to as a hedonic treadmill.

Conversely, it has been found that for those individuals who place less priority on acquisition of wealth, his or her financial condition does not make a difference on his or her overall life's happiness. Individuals with a high value on traditions and religion



reported higher levels of life satisfaction are selfless, non-materialistic acts. Other individuals that reported higher levels of life satisfaction were people who valued creativity, and people who valued respect for and from others—two more seemingly qualities not related to material goods (Georgellis; Tsitsianis; Yin; 2009)

Power as a value was also negatively correlated with social well-being and considered to be socially unhealthy. Sagiv and Schwartz's (2000) studies showed that the well-being was weakly related to power, security and conformity.

A higher life satisfaction level was reported of people who had social support, from friends, family, or church. Individuals who placed higher value to interpersonal relationships were found to be overall more satisfied with life than individuals who valued material objects (Wu;Mei;Chen, 2009)

### **Values and needs motivation**

Values are related to need, motivation and goal realization. Values that represent deficiency needs (e.g. health, safety) are especially important to those who are unable to attain the goals toward which they are directed. However, once the need is satisfied their value priority changes. So, the priority given to growth-related values is likely to correlate positively with subjective well-being.

According to the self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985, 1991), autonomy, relatedness and competence are innate, basic psychological needs which when pursued lead to 'intrinsic' satisfaction and personal well-being. Some researchers (e.g. Kasser & Ahuvia, 2002; Kasser & Ryan, 1996; Vansteenkiste et al., 2006) have argued that pursuing intrinsic values (e.g. self-acceptance and affiliation) benefits people's well-being. DeNeve (1999) noted, affiliation and relationship-enhancing traits are strongly related with subjective well being. So, stable, satisfying relationships are seen as general resilience factors across the lifespan (Mikulincer & Florian 1998).

In contrast, pursuing extrinsic values (e.g. material success, money, fame, public image) may lead to poorer well-being as strongly pursuing them often requires stressful, ego-involved engagement in activities (Ryan, Koestner & Deci, 1991). So a positive sense of well-being is experienced among those who pursue intrinsic rather than extrinsic needs or goals (Deci & Ryan, 1995).

### **Value congruence between person and environment may influence the sense of well-being:**

Congruence refers to the match between value and action. Congruity between people's values and their environment promotes well-being regardless of the particular values to which people ascribe importance. Several researchers have noted that individuals may experience problems if their value hierarchies are incongruent with the hierarchy prevailing in their social environments (e.g. Feather, 1975; Furnham & Bochner, 1986; Segall, 1979; Triandis, 1990).

People are likely to experience a positive sense of well-being when they emphasize the same values that prevail in their environment and subjective well-being is likely to be undermined when there is low value congruence between person and



environment. Individuals may be faced with choices that are not congruent with their value system. Social choices like having to perhaps pay a bribe for something that is our legitimate right may give rise to negative well-being in an individual who places high priority on honesty as a value.

### **Values are influenced by their culture and may change across developmental stages.**

Culture may determine an individual's societal values and beliefs and therefore influence the degree of subjective well-being. Culture channelizes the attention to different sources of information for making the life satisfaction judgments, thus affecting subjective well-being appraisal.

For instance, individuals in an individualist culture tend to value autonomy. Therefore, it is assumed that global life satisfaction would be more strongly related to personal achievements and self-esteem in individualist cultures than in collectivist cultures. Oishi et al (1999) findings reveal that freedom was more related to subjective well-being in individualistic nations than in collectivistic ones. In collectivistic cultures the attention is directed to outer sources (i.e. abiding to social norms). Suh et al. (1998) found that in collectivistic cultures affect and adhering to norms are equally important for life satisfaction.

Age is also a predictor of the prioritization of values among individuals. Carstensen (1998), suggested that the functions of relationships change with age. Younger adults are more interested in novelty, knowledge, and experience expansion, and older adults are more interested in depth and poignancy. Among adolescents the value of achievement is predicted to be more profound as it is the prime time in their life to choose and secure a vocation. In young adulthood, building an intimate relationship is a prime security value. For individuals in this life stage, romantic relationship should be valued. Among retired old people benevolence as a value can be assumed to be important as they can devote more time to welfare of people.

### **A Model for Value-Oriented Education**

Several studies have proven that the judicious choice and prioritization of values are imperative to the personal well-being of individuals. Rather than viewing value education as an appendage to be taught in conjunction with other subjects, values should be the platform on the basis of which curricular, policy, organizational and pedagogical decisions should be made. Value education should be imparted to students at all level of education so that they can explore the different types of values, identify higher values and incorporate them into their personality structure.

#### **Introduction of Value Based Curriculum.**

The need of the hour is to instill in young minds the importance of values like:-

- Universal values: - honesty, self control, self discipline, compassion, charity, courage, forgiveness, tolerance, non-violence
- Democratic values: - justice, equality, liberty and fraternity, patriotism



- Social values:-politeness, etiquette, respect for elders, being an active member of civic society.
- Personal value:-value of personal and community hygiene, value of balanced diet, meditation and exercises.
- Economic values: - Valuing commodities, talking care of them and purchasing what is necessary and limiting wastage.
- Aesthetic Value: - Appreciating the beauty, goodness, having a creative mind and an understanding of the natural environmental.

#### **Practicing Values**

- Involving students in case studies, group discussions, debates, seminars, role-plays on topics related to values.
- Making arrangements for students to attend lectures by eminent people, enable them to attend seminars and workshops on the themes related to basic human values.
- Develop a good library of books, journals, audio and video material on themes related to values cultures and civilizations and environmental ethics.
- Make students undertake social welfare projects for the benefit of the poor and disadvantaged groups in society.
- Make students aware of the value of sensible eating and teaching students exercises, yoga and meditation.
- Make students to participate in various co-curricular activities so that can develop qualities like co-operation, feeling of belongingness, leadership qualities, loyalty, trustworthiness etc.

#### **Lessons in emotional intelligence to help students understand themselves better.**

Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and handle one's emotions. Emotional intelligence grows out of life experiences and is nurtured by lessons taught by parents and teachers, care givers and family during childhood and adolescence. Introduction to the concepts of emotional intelligence in value education can enable students to regulate their thoughts, select their values and beliefs, and make choices for their wellbeing and for the well being of others.

**Salovey and Mayer (1990)** model of emotional intelligence can be suggested as a part of the value education programme:

- Emotional insight and recognition - the awareness of your feelings as they are occurring.
- Emotional facilitation of thought – the development of your feelings to guide you to what is important to think about.
- Emotional understanding -the ability to appreciate the close association between emotions, thought and behaviour.
- Emotional management - the ability to take responsibility for one's own emotions and happiness and the ability to turn negative emotions into positive learning and growing opportunities.



### **The Teacher's Inspirational Role**

The role of the teacher is a moral mentor to her students who is entrusted in the dissemination of values. Teachers are role models for the society in general and for their students in particular. She should have sound professional ethics and realize the immense responsibility of building future citizens of the country. Value education should not be treated as separate activity from teaching. The teacher through interaction with her students should instill values and ethics in her students.

### **Role of administrators and policy makers**

Educational administrators and planners must give emphasis to integrate subjects like environment, peace, international understanding, human values, cultural development, moral education and so on in the curriculum.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Aristotle's saying that true happiness is found in the expression of virtue—that is, in doing what is worth doing should be the motto in each student's life. It should be instilled in each student that that optimal well-being requires distinguishing between those needs (desires) that are only subjectively felt and whose satisfaction leads to momentary pleasure, and those needs that are rooted in human nature and whose realization is conducive to human growth and produces eudaimonia, i.e. "well-being", - Fromm (1981).

### **References:**

- Benninga, J., Berkowitz, M., Kuehn, P., & Smith, K. (2006). Character and academics: What good schools do. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87, 448-452.
- Benninga, J., & Tracz, S. (2010). Continuity and discontinuity in character education. In T. Lovat, R. Toomey & N. Clement (Eds.), *International research handbook on values education and student wellbeing*. (pp. 521-548) Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.
- Bilsky, W. & Schwartz, S. H. (1994). Values and personality. *European Journal of Personality*, 8, 163-181
- Carstensen LL. 1998. A life-span approach to social motivation. In *Motivation and Self- Regulation Across the Life Span*, ed. J Heckhausen, CS Dweck, pp. 341-64. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press
- Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York: Plenum Press.
- Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M. (1991). *A motivational approach to self: Integration*



- in personality. In R. Dienstbier (Ed.), *Nebraska symposium on motivation*, Vol. 38, Perspectives on motivation (pp. 237-288). Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press.
- Deci, E. L. & Ryan, R. M. (1995). Human autonomy: The basis for true self-esteem. In M. Kernis (Ed.), *Efficacy, agency, and self-esteem* (pp. 31-49). New York: Plenum.
  - DeNeve KM. 1999. Happy as an extraverted clam? The role of personality for subjective well-being. *Curr. Dir. Psychol. Sci.* 8:141–44
  - Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., & Oishi, S. (2002). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and life satisfaction. In C.R. Snyder & S.J. Lopez (Ed.), *Handbook of Positive Psychology*. Oxford and New York : Oxford University Press.
  - Feather, N. T. (1975). *Values in education and society*. New York: Free Press.
  - Furnham, A. & Bochner, S. (1986). *Culture shock: Psychological reaction to unfamiliar environments*. London: Methuen.
  - Fromm E. 1981. Primary and secondary process in waking and in altered states of consciousness. *Acad. Psychol. Bull.* 3:29–45
  - Georgellis, Yannis; Tsitsianis, Nicholas; Yin, Ya Ping, “Personal Values as Mitigating Factors in Link Between Income and Life Satisfaction: Evidence from the European Social Survey”. *Social Indicators Research*, Vol 91(3), May, 2009. pp. 329-44.
  - Jensen, J. P. & Bergin, A. E. (1988). Mental health values of professional therapists: A national interdisciplinary survey. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 19, 290-297.
  - Kasser, T., & Ahuvia, A. C. (2002). Materialistic values and well-being in business students. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 32, 137–146.
  - Kasser, T., & Ryan, R. M. (1996). Further examining the American dream: Differential correlates of intrinsic and extrinsic goals. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22, 280–287.
  - Keng, K.A., Jung, K., Jivan, T.S. and Wirtz, J. (2000), “The influence of materialistic inclination on values, life satisfaction and aspirations: an empirical analysis”, *Social Indicators Research*, Vol. 49, pp. 317-33.
  - Lovat, T., & Toomey, R. (Eds.). (2009). *Values education and quality teaching: The double helix effect*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.



- Lovat, T., Toomey, R. & Clement, N. (Eds.), (2010a). *International research handbook on values education and student wellbeing*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.
- Lovat, T., Dally, K., Clement, N. & Toomey, R. (2011). *Values pedagogy and student achievement: Contemporary research evidence*. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.
- Mikulincer M, Florian V. 1998. The relationship between adult attachment styles and emotional and cognitive reactions to stressful events. In *Attachment Theory and Close Relationships*, ed. JA Simpson, WS Rholes, pp. 143–65. New York: Guilford
- Nucci, L., & Narvaez, D. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of moral and character education*. New York: Routledge.
- Oishi S, Diener E, Lucas RE, Suh E. 1999. Cross-cultural variations in predictors of life satisfaction: perspectives from needs and values. *Pers. Soc. Psychol. Bull.* 25:980–90
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review on research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52,141-166.
- Ryan RM, Chirkov VI, Little TD, Sheldon KM, Timoshina E, Deci EL. 1999. The American dream in Russia: extrinsic aspirations in two cultures. *Pers. Soc. Psychol. Bull.* 25:1509–24
- Ryan, R. M., Koestner, R. & Deci, E. L. (1991). Ego-involved persistence: When free choice behavior is not intrinsically motivated. *Motivation and Emotion*, 15, 185-205.
- Sagiv, L., & Schwartz, S. H. (2000). Value priorities and subjective well-being: Direct relations and congruity effects. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 30, 177–198.
- Schwartz, S. H. (1992). Universals in the content and structure of values: Theoretical advances and empirical tests in 20 countries. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, Vol. 25, (pp. 1-65). New York: Academic Press.
- Schwartz, S. H. (1994). Are there universal aspects in the content and structure of values? *Journal of Social Issues*, 50, 19-46.
- Schwartz, S. H. & Sagiv, L. (1995). Identifying culture-specifics in the content and structure of values. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 26, 92-116.



- Schmuck P, Kasser T, Ryan RM. 2000. The relationship of well-being to intrinsic and extrinsic goals in Germany and the U.S. *Soc. Indic. Res.* 50:225-41
- Segall, M. H. (1979). *Cross-cultural psychology: Human behavior in global perspective*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Shastree, N. K. (2004). Issues in value education: Developing a synthetic approach, *University News*,42(46),164-166.
- Salovey,P.and Mayer,J.D. (1990). Emotional Intelligence, *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*,9 185-211.
- Suh, M., Diener, E., Oishi, S., & Triandis, H.C. (1998). The shifting basis of life satisfaction judgments across cultures: Emotions versus norms. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 482–493.
- Strupp, H. H. (1980). Humanism and psychotherapy: A personal statement of the therapist's essential values. *Psychotherapy*, 17, 396-400.
- Triandis, H. C. (1990). Cross-cultural studies of individualism and collectivism. In J. Berman (Ed.), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, 1989 (pp. 41-133). Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press.
- Vansteenkiste, M., Duriez, B., Simons, J., & Soenens, B. (2006). Materialistic values and well-being among business students: Further evidence for their detrimental effect. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 36, 2892–2908.
- Waterman, A.S. (1993). Two conceptions of Happiness: Contrasts of personal expressiveness (Eudaimonia) and Hedonic Enjoyment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64 (4), 678-691.
- Williams, R. M. Jr (1968). Values. In E. Sills (Ed.), *International encyclopedia of the social sciences*. New York: Macmillan.
- Wu, C., Mei, T., & Chen, L. (2009), "How do positive views maintain life satisfaction". Springer.