# *VALUE EDUCATION IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA*

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# VALUE EDUCATION IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA

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This book is dedicated




WITH MY SINCERE PRAYERS TO THIS GREAT SOUL
&
EVER FRESH AND INSPIRINGLY FOND MEMORY
OF MY BABA (GRAND-UNCLE), REV.
SHRI RAJENDRA SINGH
WHO LIVED HIS LIFE FOR ABOUT A CENTURY
AS A LIVING EXAMPLE
OF
THE TEACHINGS OF THE BHAGAVAD GITA
&
LEFT HIS MORTAL FRAME
IN THE MORNING OF 28-11-2016
AT
OUR NATIVE VILLAGE BRINDABAN
(GOPALGANJ), BIHAR,

## समर्पणः

**पुस्तक का यह संस्करण समर्पित है**
**मेरे जीवन के तीन दिव्य प्रकाश स्तंभों को :**



**पूज्य छोटे बाबा श्री राजेंद्र राय जी (पुण्यतिथि 28-11-2016), जिनकी शुचिता, सरलता, कर्मठता एवं भगवद्भक्ति हमारे लिए सदैव प्रेरक तथा मार्गदर्शक रहेंगे.**



**पूज्य बड़े बाबा श्री गया राय (पुण्यतिथि 31-08-2018), जिनकी सादगी एवं जिनका संत-सदृश जीवन हमारे लिए सदैव प्रेरणा स्रोत रहेंगे!**



**पूज्या माँ (पुण्यतिथि 11-2-2018) जिनके त्याग, तपस्या, समर्पण एवं उत्कृष्टता के प्रति दृढ़ विश्वास ने हमें संभाला, तथा जो स्वयं में मानवीय अभीप्सा तथा उत्कृष्टता हेतु संघर्ष तथा कर्मयोग की मिशाल थी।**

# Foreword

The world in which we the humans are living is generally identified as the world of constructs. The constructs, which have been created by collective conscious efforts of human beings, are supposed to guide us to lead a fulfilled life in terms of peace and prosperity, strength and stability, actualization and realization and above all substantial reality. For all these, one of the most common denominators is value, which has been perceived and defined as per the constructed reality of human beings based on socio-cultural contexts morally and ethically, which sanctify and beautify our very existence in this cosmos.

To realize the cherished ideals and aims of life, values provide us guided codes for moral and aesthetic behaviour conditioned by one's cultural orientations and guarded by one's conscience. Values help us to shape our life patterns by integrating our beliefs, ideas, and attitudes. By psychologically perceived knowledge, they are identified under the category of emotional make-up of one's personality and guide the responses of a human being in different circumstances of life. From the social point of view, values point to an area of life, which includes the process of purification, and encompasses whatever is good, true and beautiful for everyone in order to identify oneself among others in society to be worthy of a good social life. Essentially values are those abstractions whose manifestations make our own life valuable from all angles individually as well as collectively. In short, values indicate essence of 'being' and not just that of 'becoming'.

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One of the most dependable and authentic documents of Indian text, which can be looked up to understand the subtleties of dynamics of values is none other than the Bhagavad Gita, which is the epitome of Indian philosophical achievement and stands as a monumental scripture for making man unite with the higher consciousness. One of the greatest spiritualists Sri Aurobindo has said that the teaching of the Gita must be regarded not merely in light of a general spiritual philosophy or ethical doctrine, but as bearing upon a practical crisis in the application of ethics and spirituality to human life. Its value teaching is not just for contemplative moral discussions rather for actions in face of the most critical conditions in both inner and outer life of a man, society, and nation.

'Values are caught not taught' is a proverbial statement prevalent not only in societal discourses but also in the educational parlance. Thus, in the contemporary period, axiological perspective has prevailed over the other modes of deliberations and discussions on values. While this view has presented an idealist perspective and contributed to the development of morality as absolute concept leaving the very scope of socio-psychological as well as practical and critical dimensions of values in general and, Indian contributions have not been explored conceptually and pedagogically in particular. Against this backdrop, this very work by Dr. Sheojee Singh is a sincere and welcome endeavour. Painstakingly, he has investigated critically and documented the Indian way of understanding dynamics of values by contextualizing it in the settings of dialogical pedagogy. After presenting an overview of values he has shown the points of departure where the Bhagavad Gita perspective brings in innovations in approaching the value issues. Dr. Singh has critically examined the Bhagavad Gita view on values and his articulation and analysis of values are quite impressive and highlight its scope and interface with education conceptually and operationally.

I am sure that this very piece of work on values will make a reader aware regarding pedagogical standpoint for

value education and pedagogy of value education as developed in the Indian philosophical tradition. He has rightly made an observation that human values present a continuum of interconnected attributes and tendencies which largely guide the behaviour of human beings individually as well as collectively. From the pedagogical point of view, human values have been indicated in the Bhagavad Gita as the by-products of *samvada* (dialogue) and investigation of the issues concerning the challenges of day-to-day life. Bhagavad Gita teaches that the teacher has to show the patience to induce values gradually by making the disciple realize his or her true nature (*swabhava*) and making him or her aware of his duties towards himself, towards society and towards dharma or righteousness (*swadharma*). He is right is saying that in the context of value education, it is very significant that we learn to perform our duty, with mind fixed on the goal of raising our consciousness to higher levels.

This very initiative taken by Dr. Sheojee (pronounced as Shivji) Singh shall definitely travel long miles in challenging the very mindset of the students of education and teacher educators. It also presents a promise for meaningful dialogue that may enrich their understanding and practices. I take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Singh for this presentation on pedagogical standpoint for value education and pedagogy of value education and hope that he will develop these ideas further and test them by relating them to the practices in teaching learning situation inside the pedagogical spaces and beyond.

Jan 4, 2017

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**SHEOJEE SINGH**

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# 1

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Introduction

Since the dawn of civilization, it has been man's quest and aspiration to lead a better life- materially, socially and spiritually. The various kinds of inventions and discoveries in the field of science and technology, the creative expressions of man's innate powers and urges in various art forms have been instrumental in fulfilling diverse needs of man from time to time.

Mankind has changed a lot through various eventful stages of its journey in the process of evolution, and at the same time a lot of learning as well as adjustment through various kinds of adaptation have taken place. Development of the faculty of reasoning, in the highly sophisticated form we find now in man, in fact, is the result of thousands of years of evolutionary process combined with the capacity to adjust to the environment and learn to lead a better life. Man has been continuously trying to overcome all the problems and challenges posed by external as well as internal nature (to some extent through meditation, music, etc.), yet these problems do not seem to lessen either in number or in intensity.

The present state of the world indicates that the cut-throat competition for material prosperity is distancing man

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from man. In place of peace, prosperity and progress, we witness threats of war and conflict worldwide – in subtle or gross forms both in developed as well as developing countries. Everywhere we find mankind badly in the need of a strong basis for sustaining the fountain of life; which can only be provided with acquisition and development of human values. In fact, human values are what give meaning, significance and direction to life.

Human values are jewels of human life and they strengthen, sanctify and beautify our existence on earth. In fact, the whole process of education may be termed as value development enterprise at different levels. With value-acquisition and development, our life becomes worthwhile and valuable to us as well as to the society around us. When we talk of values in broader context, we obviously include various desirable qualities and virtues for a good and righteous way of life. And, in this perspective, morality is one important social aspect of human values. The greater is the degree of value development in an individual, the more perfect he becomes morally for establishing righteousness in society.

Regarding the significance of moral values, Allen (2006) says, 'the moral virtues are the foundation and support of prosperity as they are soul of greatness. They endure for ever, and all works of man which endure are built upon them. Without them there is neither strength and stability nor substantial reality, but only ephemeral dreams. To find moral principle is to have found prosperity, greatness, truth and is therefore to be strong, valiant, joyful and free.' Thus it is clear that for peace, prosperity and greatness in life, proper acquisition and development of human values is an essential pre–requisite.

The importance of values has been beautifully explained by Hassija (1995) in the following words – 'Every sane person on earth would like the present day world conditions to improve substantially because, looking at the total picture of the world, one finds that there are thousand times more thorns and thistles than roses or raspberries. Leaders, in many fields,

have tried in many ways, to enhance the quality of life but the hopes and aspirations of a vast majority of human–kind have been belied. Various kinds of remedies have been applied or tried, but of late, it has become almost a united voice of all that moral, social and human values are the ultimate and the much – needed remedy'.

Kalam (2002) is of the opinion that *for the society to prosper there are two important needs. These are prosperity through wealth generation and cherishing the value – system of the people. The combination of the two will make the nation truly strong and prosperous.*

## 1.2 Meaning and Concept of Values

The word 'value' is derived from the Latin word "Valerie" which means "to be strong and vigorous". The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche first used the word "Values" in 1880 in plural to denote moral beliefs and attitudes that were personal and subjective (Sharma and Katoch, 2007).

Although, 'value' is a recent term denoting a wide spectrum of human aspiration and virtues, human values, in words of Swami Tyagananda (2003) exist as demands, because they have around them, an aura of 'ought-ness' in the choice among alternatives. Values provide an in–built standard of reference and judgement for our actions. This term has different connotations depending upon the context in which it is used. From a philosophical standpoint, values are those standards or codes for moral behaviour conditioned by one's cultural trends and guarded by one's conscience, according to which a human being is supposed to conduct himself and shape his life patterns by integrating his beliefs , ideas and attitudes to realize the cherished ideals and aims of life.

Psychologically, values fall under the category of emotional make-up of one's personality and guide the responses of a human being in different circumstances of life. Intellectually, value denotes a concept which is accepted by the sub-conscious mind, is understood by all and perceived by the individual.

Sociologically, values point to an area of life which includes the process of purification, and encompasses whatever is good, true and beautiful for everyone in order to identify oneself among others in the society to be worthy of a good social life. Here the thing or idea that is right and important for society has sociological value and significance.

### 1.2.1 General Ideas

Philosophers, psychologists and sociologists have given their own interpretation of the term 'values', but essentially values are those abstractions whose manifestations make our life valuable from all angles individually as well as collectively.

Philosophy in its pursuit of the truth (and knowledge) asserts that there is only one value with three dimensions namely truth, beauty and goodness. This eternal value is the foundation and to find it oneself i.e. to be aware of its presence in oneself and be guided by it at all moments is the supreme achievement of human life. The philosophy about values is that value should help any one to seek the real knowledge and goal of life in a righteous manner. It is equally important to ensure that the youth are equipped with core values needed to live as responsible citizens in complex democratic societies (Goel and Goel, 2005).

Psychologically, values are inner imperatives which urge us to seek higher goals in life. In words of Mukerjee (1964), 'The psychological and social sciences dealing with values define them as mere preferences, as desirable goals, emotions and interests. The humanistic disciplines, on the other hand, define them as functioning imperatives or 'oughts' '. Thus we can say that values signify higher needs of man and they belong to the category beyond the basic needs as defined by Abraham Maslow (1956). Swami Bhajanananda (2003) gives a comprehensive definition as – 'values are the higher normative needs of humanity which individuals experience as inner moral or aesthetic imperatives or goal-seeking'.

Sociologically, values are the norms of behaviour in a community and make us live a better personal as well as collective life. Sociologists emphasize on the process of

conditioning, learning and socialization as the processes through which values get internalized as well as regularly manifested in human inter-relations and collective human behaviour. Values, according to sociological point of view, promote integrative social processes such as accommodation, adjustment, cooperation and assimilation.

And finally, we have the spiritual aspects of human values where the focus is on strengthening the individual from within by making him increasingly oriented to the highest reality or God through day to day activities. In fact, the emphasis of spirituality is on developing a state of mind, which is more constructive, broader in approach and generous in perception; and at the same time, non-reactive but active. This is what is generally termed as spiritual intelligence.

Thus, we find that human values are four dimensional in nature- philosophical, social, psychological and spiritual- and these four dimensions are essentially the evolutionary steps in the process of value development in human beings for strengthening each individual from within. The human values present a continuum of interconnected attributes and tendencies that largely guide our individual as well as collective behaviour.

### 1.2.2. Philosophical Aspect of Values

Philosophy throws light on values in a very deep manner as one of its branches 'Axiology' is entirely devoted to values. From philosophical standpoint values are abstract conceptions which make our life full of essential wisdom so that we have a guiding light to manage all our affairs in the most meaningful and satisfactory ways. Moreover, values indicate, philosophically, the essence of '*Being*' and not just that of the '*Becoming*'. Values are the end result of the process of becoming which lead to the realization of the true self or identification with the true state of being. From this perspective, education for values is education of being best harmonized in life for having and loving. This also accentuates the fact that all values identified, analyzed, practiced and evaluated either individually or in group are

meant for excellence and ascent of man. Hence what should prompt value education more vigorously than what is normally done in the name of imparting value education is to enable pupils to explore value of values. It has to consider the individual learner as a conscious and careful interpreter of what is true, good and beautiful in the context of the self and the society. Value education, philosophically, should, be closely linked with value-aesthetics which again can only be caught and can hardly be taught (Chakrabarty, 1997).

Education for values primarily demands an inquisitive search for the true concept and role of the self. From this philosophical dimension, the components associated with education for values are poignant enough to explore and re-explore the self from positive and negative aspects of development.

Values as values are essentially inert in the sense that it is detached from humane involvement. These become living and thrilling only when these are related to life and activities, performance and serenity. When values are associated with mankind, the role of education in order to identify, analyze, appreciate and evaluate values becomes all the more imperative. The quest for values in relation to various value components brings forth three major issues in relation to education for values –

(a) Whether these value-components in education should be relativistic or individualistic in approach?

(b) What should be the major points of ambivalence or departure as value components and how should these be treated as value components in education?

(c) What should be strategic role of teachers in case of an individual learner who should exercise these value components both for individual and for social development?

Thus, philosophically, the role of education in understanding and appreciating the self in relation to others and the 'divine self' itself encapsulates the essence of values.

The learner must identify within himself the positive values that lead him to recrystallize his vision of fullness, and the negative ones standing in the way of his advancement. He must explore and examine each value concept in terms of truth, goodness and beauty. Therein lies the genesis of value education.

Hence, we can say that philosophically human values are the essence of the Being but are the end results of the 'process of becoming' and education in human values is that of being best harmonized in life for being, having and loving. It primarily demands an inquisitive search for the true concept and role of the self in relation to personal aspiration.

### 1.2.3. Psychological Aspect of Values

The domain of values (i.e. human values) comes under the larger field of psychology as 'values' are very much concerned with emotions, expression in behaviour traits, analysis and appreciation, interpretation and evaluation. These are linked to the will and aspiration of the individual learner in relation to the group and vice versa and also conform to the world of society and culture where these act and react with tradition and individual talent as well as perception.

The quest for the fullness of man keeping an eye on the psychological parameters of fullness of values encompasses the very nature of man with relation to individuality. All values are individualistic in essence as we are primarily and psychologically concerned with virtue which Aristotle terms as 'excellence'. In education, values are directed towards motivation where excellence awaits a closer reach towards perfection in all directions - virtuoso well bred in the strictest possible maintenance of discipline added to ingenuity. Hence the lesson of values in educational instructions always demands a quest for excellence to crystallize virtuoso in reasoning as well as appreciation (Chakrabarty, 1997).

A psychological interpretation of values in education demands spelling out the following components as shown in

the following diagrammatic representation (Table 2.1.Chakrabarty, 1997):

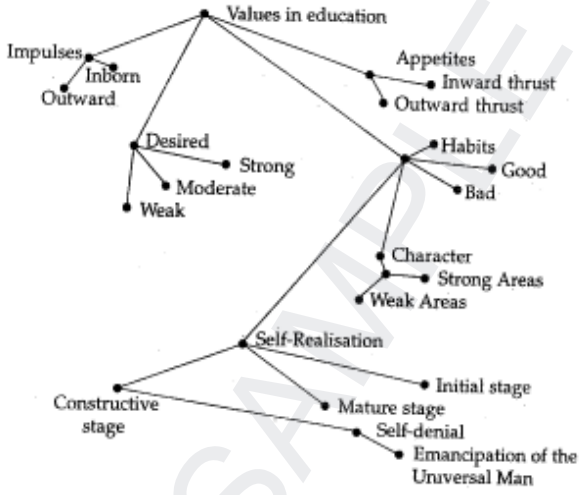



**Figure 1.1 showing Chakrabarty's hierarchy of values**

Impulses associated with values which must be sought and cultivated in course of education in an intensive manner necessitate a careful approach to education for values. To analyse values inherent in an individual learner in education is to delve deep into his impulses, which may be either inborn or outward or a combination of both. As for inward impulses playing their role in the context of values, the teacher should be allowed to identify value bases and crystallize value norms towards greater and nobler essence of excellence. The outward impulses vary from time to time primarily from two-fold perspective: positive and negative. While positive outward impulses are to be carefully exercised in education, the negative impulses should be thoroughly probed and reviewed for orientation towards better utilization for positive outcome in the form of values in education. Keeping in mind that education for values is a thrilling step towards synchronization of impulses in values, a proper quest and exercise for enrichment of positive impulses is not only desirable but also essential and therefore, more or less compulsory in case of every individual learner.

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