

# The Role of Parents, Teachers and Society in Instilling Culture Values

## Meaning of Culture Values

When we talk about instilling culture-values in our children, we should be clear about one thing: What do we mean by culture-values? What kind of values do we want to teach? Do we want to continue the present hypocritical double standard in the name of culture and tradition? Are we not keeping alive a culture, devoid of any real values, a mere pomp and show, where in the gap between saying and doing is too wide and deep to cover it? Do we want our children to make outward claims of religion, morality, good conduct and behaviour at places of worship, temples, churches and social gatherings while in the work place and at home, to be involved in deception, intrigue and immoral behaviour? I am saying this because perhaps we have the same expectations from our children. Today, we want our youngsters to become successful businessmen, officers or politicians. But whether a person having good character and doing what he thinks and says, may be successful presently in any field? These days, corruption is so widespread in politics, administration and business, it seems

that no one with good character and morals can be successful. Even in the field of so-called religion, the success of such a person is doubtful because there too fundamentalist monks, sectarianism, the blind pursuit of name and fame are so strong that the difference between words and deeds is clearly visible. Our so-called 'good', yoga teachers and masters of religious establishments are clear examples of this dualism. Thus, we need to be clear what we mean by building the character of our youngsters. Do we want a 'successful' person or a truthful and honest one? It seems that in our heart of hearts, we want our youngsters to be successful but seemingly truthful and honest. It is a bitter fact that while talking about a well-cultured child, we do not mean more than formal courtesy, etiquette and blindly following old traditions.

Does instilling culture-values imply adopting the modern Western culture of materialism and lavish luxurious living without good conduct and morality? To this end, now-a-days, not only in the prosperous high class but even in the middle class, people have the desire to send their

children to convents. Though the children in convent schools learn outward formality and etiquette, they are largely poor in moral and spiritual values.

Alternatively, in the name of culture and tradition, do we want to instill sectarianism, religious fanaticism, prejudice and/or lifeless ritualism in our children? Many people who talk of character building have such hollow objectives. They expect their children to have blind faith in religious concepts and traditions.

Thus, before discussing the problems of instilling culture and tradition in our youngsters, we should define what we mean by a cultured person. Does it mean one who is successful in the present atmosphere? Does it mean one who is Westernized in attitude and conduct? Does it mean a child who is religiously attached to traditional rituals? Or do we want our youngsters to have spiritual outlook and to have faith in humanitarian values?

In my view, when we think beyond our personal interests and religious prejudices and set aside indulgence towards our child, we will clearly see that, in reality, a cultured person is one who has good intentions and immaculate conduct. In fact, culture means good character. Culture means moving away from animal instincts and imbibing human values. Culture can be instilled in children by teaching them such qualities as self-control, rational outlook and co-operation. Let us now consider how we can accomplish our goal.

#### **Avoid Certain Fallacies about Education:**

It is unfortunate that most of us do not understand the purpose of education. Neither gaurdians nor teachers, politicians nor society understands the real motive behind what is being taught. Most of us have forgotten that an important purpose of education is instilling-culture values. There seems to be a chaos in the field of education and consequently people merely link education to livelihood. Materialistic thinking limits the purpose of education to prepare an individual to earn his livelihood. However, if the goal of education is just earning bread, what is the difference between man and animal? It is said :

*Āhār nidrā bhayamaithunam ca  
sāmānyametad paśubhih narānām*

(Eating, sleeping, fear and sex, these four instincts are common between men and animals.)

It is a fact that bread comes first but it is not the ultimate goal of life. So why, only earning the bread is being considered the goal and the end of education? It is

unfortunate that this thinking is dominant not only in the field of education but also among the parents and administrators. Today, parents want their children to study the subjects leading to prosperity and authority. We want our son to become a doctor, an engineer or a government officer not because he will become more useful to the society but because he will have authority and weath. This blind pursuit of power and wealth has polluted our outlook towards education. This materialistic outlook is not producing good educated human beings but it is breeding the 'devil' in us. Our education is turning out everything but a human being. But can an education, not breeding human values and not making man a man be called education? Today, education is related to bread and not to character. Today, the significance of education is not building a good character but producing a clever diplomat. The government is under this delusion. Our (Indian) government thinks that teaching of ethics is against the ideal of secularism, but does secularism imply immorality and unethical conduct? The teaching of ethics has been discarded in the name of secularism. We may print the motto

*sā vidyā yā vimuktaye*

(education is, that leads to liberation).

But our present system of education is not concerned with it. Moral and spiritual values do not have any place in today's education although the commissions recently set up by the government have stressed the urgent need for the teaching of morals and ethics in their reports. Today's educators and students, both are slaves of money. On the one hand, the teacher teaches not because he is interested in developing the character of his students but because he gets his salary. On the other hand, the government, the parents and students do not consider him to be a GURU (master) but a servant. When GURU is reduced to the status of a servant, then the expectations of instilling culture values are invain. These days the GURU-student relationship is business like - a bargain. In our ancient scriptures, education has been described as the nectar of life but today it has been reduced to the status of means of earning the livelihood. We have forgotten the basic goal of education. In the words of the famous Urdu poet Firaq:

*Sabhī kuch to ho rahā hai is a tarakki ke jamāne men  
Magar kyā gajab hai kī ādamī insān nahin hotā*

(Everything is happening in this age of progress but the tragedy is that man is not becoming a human being.)

Today's education is turning out doctors, engineers,

lawyers, etc. but to some extent, it is not producing good human beings. Unless education instills moral and spiritual values in a child, it can not produce human beings. Our primary responsibility is to make man a man, to instill culture values in our youngsters. The famous American thinker Tufts writes:

Education is for character building, by character building and of character building.

Thus, according to Tufts, the purpose and end of education is to sow the seeds of good character and good values in a human being. Since the independence of India, the commissions, set up to study and suggest reforms of education, headed by the famous philosopher, Dr. Radhakrishnan, the famous scientist, Dr. D.S. Kothari, and the famous educationist, Dr. Mudaliyar, all came to the conclusion that education must relate to human values. As long as this is not done, as long as education does not sow the seeds of good character traits, instead of good human beings, our colleges and universities will continue to turn out people with undesirable attitude and tendencies.

### **The Role of Parents and Guardians in Character Building:**

It is true that family is the first school for a child where the seeds of culture values are sown. A child spends about 18 out of 24 hours with the family members. Thus, naturally he or she is most influenced by the character of his family members. Now the question arises: Are today's parents in a position to teach good character to their children through their actions? If the parents are busy in the pursuit of their own interests and material pleasures, then it seems impossible for children to learn good values. Many parents of high class, affluent families lead a luxurious life, greatly influenced by materialism of modern culture. It is rather difficult to imagine that their children will keep away from materialism. On the contrary, it is seen that such youngsters develop many undesirable habits and behaviour. First, such families are adopting non-vegetarianism and using intoxicating drinks, thus moving away from good, healthy, clean diet. Secondly, their untamed desires have put a question mark on the purity of their character. Thirdly, because of the greed for money, the reliability and simplicity of their lives is being eroded. It is evident that such atmosphere is not conducive to the building of good character of children. If the parents spend much of their time in offices, parties and clubs, and the children are left in the care of servants and baby-sitters, they lose intimacy

with their children. Thus, how can their children be expected to learn culture values? This also applies to the children of working parents. In many cases, the character traits developed by such children are of the servants and baby-sitters and not of the parents. Many people send their youngsters to Western-style boarding schools so that their children may not come in the way of their indulgence or they may not pick up the undesirable habits and conduct of their parents. In this context the couplet written by an Urdu poet seems to be appropriate:

*Tifl men boo aai kyaa ma baap ke itwaar ki  
Doodh to dabbe ka hai taaleem hai sarkar ki*

(How can an offspring adopt the faith of the parents?  
He is the given canned milk and (British) government's education.)

We can not depend on others to instill our culture and traditions in our children. If parents want their children to imbibe the sound and health, features of our ancient Indian culture, they will have to lead a clean life of self-control and self-sacrifice. They will have to be immaculate in their livelihood and behaviour.

### **What should Parents and Guardians Do?**

1. Parents and guardians should have an immaculate, cultured and ethical conduct so that they produce a good influence on the youngsters.
2. Parents and guardians should watch the kind of company their children keep. Peer pressure has tremendous effect on youngsters.
3. We should select the schools carefully. We should respect the teachers and teach our youngsters to do the same.
4. We should select the boarding schools and dormitories carefully for our youngsters.
5. As far as possible, the children should not be left in the custody of servants and baby-sitters. We should spend as much time with our children as possible.
6. We should provide good literature for reading and should try to keep our children away from 'dirty' books, films and records.
7. We would educate our children about our values with the medium of moral stories and the life stories of great men.
8. We should take our children to meet with noble, educated and cultured personalities.