

A Foundation Course on

Coexistence in Living & Humanness

- Value Education for Consciousness Development

(with Human values & Ethics)

In Higher Education – Institutes & Universities

Need for this course

World situation

We Human Beings have labored incessantly on this planet since millennia and have achieved the following:

- Better, universal understanding of physical reality – via Science
- Technology/Industrialization enabled access to food & lifestyle comforts
- Need for Democracy, Equality & education
- Notion of a United Nations, world peace, etc

However, the following issues persist:

- Increasing aimlessness in individuals, anxiety, individualism, anger, etc.
- Breakdown in interpersonal relationships and family structures
- Rise of communalism and societal & inter-faith intolerance.
- Increasing income disparity, Jobless 'growth' and lack of ethics in public life.
- Increasing consumption and 'non-renewable' technologies leading to destruction of nature and climatic imbalance – that are threatening humankind's very survival on this planet.

This state of affairs in human beings today is a direct result of the assumptions/understanding that we humans individually and collectively carry. We human beings conform to, or live according to our 'mental-impressions' or *sanskars* as against animals that conform to, or behave according to their 'biological race' or breed. In humans, education is the single most potent means by which such assumptions, mental impressions or understanding are formed. Education thus plays the most important role in influencing a human beings mentality & hence behavior. This mentality & behavior in turn, translates into the above effects we see in family, society & nature.

If Education is to play such a pivotal role in human life, what is its status? We can see that while prevalent education is very good at providing information & skills via the method of memorization & analysis, it fails to touch upon the fundamental aspects of human living such as values, character, behavior etc. It is amply clear that the current content and context of education is materialistic in nature – it predominantly involves the study of the formfull, material aspects of nature leading to a 'material' outcome.

As a result, while we see increasing income levels and material comfort, we are still faced with the above world issues.

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Scenario in Education

Specifically in educational institutes, we are unable to adequately address the following issues in students:

- Education content and process dissociated from 'actual living' - Information is largely theoretical, with little or no practical value
- Lack of 'real interest' in subjects, the focus is largely on 'marks'.
- Students feel disconnected from the course contents and see it as a 'compulsion'
- Lack of 'critical thinking' abilities and ability to choose between 'right' & 'wrong'.
- Anxiety, peer pressure and extreme competition leading to aggressiveness or depression.
- Reducing 'emotional connect' with family & little sense of responsibility towards society & nature.
- Little or no respect for the teacher, the *guru* and general rebelliousness at home and school
- Bad timings & eating habits leading to poor health, obesity and early onset of lifestyle diseases.
- Excess consumption, carnality and profit mentality have become the 'aims of life'
- Little to no improvement in the 'clarity of life', 'basic values' and 'character' of a student even after 16 to 21 yrs of formal education and a lot of 'degrees'.

A recent meeting of the registrar, members of the board of studies & directors of more than 100 Engineering Colleges in the University of Pune is representative of the above systemic problems & threw up the following points: ⁱ

- 'Most students want to just 'get through the course' and 'get out and make money'. As a result, teachers too are keen that the student 'disappears from view' as soon as possible!
- There are 4 major assumptions in students today:ⁱⁱ
 1. Money will bring happiness.
 2. We want to earn Money with the least effort.
 3. Material things & position are the most important things in life.
 4. Life is struggle, competition is most important ... (Leads to hatred, and the habit of dragging people around them down.)
- Influences from media & society are most prevalent... towards glamour..where 'appearances' matter, not the 'essence' of things.
- Students end up having a deep inferiority complex: Concerning their looks, language, color, communication skills, etc.
- Students are apprehensive, fearful about life, money, success, being accepted by peers, etc.
- Problem of shifting goals: They are unhappy with their present state: 'did not get engineering', 'could not get the college I wanted', could not get the desired branch', 'could not do well', 'did not stand first in class', etc.
- Obsession with owning goods, electronics, with members of the opposite gender, and addiction is on the rise & worrisome. Boys and Girls do not seem to know how to relate to each other. Heavy influence from media and messages from movies, etc.
- Parents & we, teachers are also under the same influences and confusions! We have to enable teachers to see their role as 'guiders', for human life ahead, to have '*vatsalya*', be, caretakers of the students (*abhibhavaks*).

When asked "what in our current education addresses these issues", the gathering of eminent educationists fell 'silent'. There was no answer. The truth is, we have no relevant input in current education, especially higher education, to address these significant & burning issues. We have ended up assuming that as long as

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a person is able to 'study' & 'do well', get a job or start a business, 'everything else shall be taken care of'. Education has thus ended up becoming solely to get a 'job' or earn a 'livelihood' - while jobs and business themselves are not free of unethical, exploitative practices. We even keep hearing of cases where teachers, who are supposed to be the 'guiding lights of knowledge', are themselves displaying immoral character.

Most humans - intellectuals, scientists and common-folk have become victim to this violative, carnal thinking. These conditions do not augur well for us. All this is despite innumerable committees & large scale investment of thought and resources in education. For example, the Radhakrishnanⁱⁱⁱ and Kothari commissions on higher education in India stressed the need for inclusion of the 'human values aspect'. While a lot of books and language has been created, there has been no 'holistic content', that students and teachers can connect to, that is secular, etc. 'Value education' becomes another subject to be 'memorized'. There have even been instances when students were found copying in the 'values & ethics' paper !

Addressing student concerns

When we speak to the current generation of students, including our own children, this is what we find as some of their pressing concerns:

- I would like to have better clarity on my goals and strengths
- How can I develop leadership abilities, self-confidence & communication skills? If I become a 'leader' how can I behave so as to not make others feel 'ordered' and in the process hurt them?
- Why do my parents end up fighting/have less time for me? Why do I feel closer to my friends than my own parents?
- I am fearful, insecure, nervous and have an uncomfortable feeling about my future...I often feel 'empty', depressed and lonely and hence are more comfortable with gadgets than with people.
- I often end up being arrogant and look down upon others, at times, even my teachers and don't like this feeling in me
- I feel 'Earth is our Home' and would like to protect it for now, and for generations to come.
- I feel a sense of social responsibility and are pained by what I see around us.

We can thus see that since education largely moulds a human being by providing values or mental-impressions, the education system, specifically, Universities are thus indirectly and directly responsible for the current ills that ail humankind and the earth's balance. In other words, 'University's influence minds'. 'Minds make up individuals, families and society'. So, universities are responsible for the way individuals, society and the world is.

Need for a 'paradigm' shift

The above issues continue to persist because our current content of education is 'incomplete' – it arises from a plane of thinking of consciousness in which our understanding is *partial*. As a result, fundamental aspects like understanding of the human-self, understanding the nature & purpose of human relationships, living in family & society, and our relationship with nature are completely ignored, or at best addressed in a half hearted manner in prevalent education. The key issues of human happiness, peace & prosperity are lost in this discourse. Although our National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2005) states some of these as goals, the resolutions to these issues cannot be found within our current educational context - simply because the understanding on which it is based is itself *incomplete*. Thus, 'solving' one problem only seems to end up leading to another 'newer problem'. For example: We systematized our education, but are now complaining that our students don't 'think' for themselves; We introduced competition to encourage excellence but this has larger stress and focus on 'marks'; We employed industrialization & technology, only to end up with the ecological problem, and so on. Most efforts in addressing such issues via 'value education inputs' either become limited to mere 'words' or 'religious/faith/personality' based moralizing. Our results from education today ratify this assessment. One is thus reminded of Albert Einstein here, who said – 'We cannot solve problems with the same thinking we used to create them'^{iv}. Thus, no matter what we do, we end up thinking in the *same plane* – in which the problems themselves exist.

On closer scrutiny of the aforementioned student voices, we can identify that the basic inherent tendency of every human child is to 1) do the 'right thing', 2) behave in the 'right way' and 3) know the truth. This unfortunately gets lost in the melee of educational discourse and the pressure to 'conform', 'perform' and 'earn' a living. Whereas animals too are anyways 'surviving' and it may be argued, in a *healthier* manner than humans. *Hence, it is the aforementioned 3 aspects that really distinguish a human child from the animal offspring.* Our education needs to be able to address these three aspects or expectations in the human child in a *universal* manner.

It is thus obvious that the 'study of the Human Being' should be the most important or primary component of Human Education^v. However, the basis for education in human history till date has been either materialistic or theistic (idealistic). The Scientific method has not been sufficient to recognize the Human being while the knowledge had from it is insufficient for all aspects of human living. In the same vein, it has not been possible to recognize the 'Human Being' via theistic or idealistic systems. It is hence necessary to recognize a human being with his inherent 'humanness'.

Our education needs to thus be able to address the above issues in a fundamental manner by enabling a 'shift' in the students and teachers plane of thinking & consciousness. There is a need to take a fundamentally new view and charter a new path in education –by addressing 'humanness' and the issue of consciousness-development that leads to a fundamental-inner transformation. 'Qualitative Transformation' is the purpose of education – where in an individual learns with awareness and this translates into a change within (in oneself) and without (in family & society). It is only via such humane education & *sanskar* (mental impressions) that each human being is able to determine their purpose, direction, & responsibilities^{vi}

If Universities are able to determine that we are directly responsible for the prevalent state of human beings, society & nature, we can adopt this course on Coexistence in Living & Humanness.

The onus is thus squarely on us to correct this alarming situation.

About this course

Philosophy

This course on “Coexistence in Living - Value Education for consciousness development” (VECD) is based on a new fundamental and deep understanding of the human conscious & existence as it is in reality. This course is based on Coexistential Philosophy or *saha-astitva-vad*, a new existential discovery by A.Nagraj, also called ‘Madhyasth Darshan’. According to the Coexistential view, entire Nature & Existence (reality) is in the form of Coexistence, is in harmony. Humans on this planet are in a state of ‘awakening-progression’ or ‘underdeveloped-consciousness’, in which our ‘understanding’ of ourselves and nature is *partial*. Human living and societal efforts, including in Education are also thus ‘partial’ or ‘incomplete’. The basic need of the human being is *happiness*, and this is possible via ‘Knowledge of Coexistence’ that leads to transformation to ‘human consciousnesses’ & living with ‘humanness’.

Living in human-consciousness or with ‘awakening’ results in an answer to every state/situation we live in, in a harmonious manner in all spheres of our living^{vii}. This is called *samadhan* or ‘resolution’. Such an ‘awakened human being’ lives with resolution within, with material prosperity in family, trust & cooperation in society & coexistence with nature – which itself is happiness, peace, satisfaction, etc. Such an ‘educated’ individual then goes on to establish/play their role in humane culture, civility, norms & societal organization.

Every human being has a natural, innate need for this understanding, for these values. Enabling this transformation to human consciousness & its expression in living as ‘humanness’ is thus the *basic purpose* of education. This new knowledge system has been presented as an ‘*alternative*’ to prevalent thought systems and education. The complete VECD curriculum is contained in the 12 core books of the Coexistential philosophy and shall have to be adopted for any ‘real’, long-lasting change or transformation to ‘humanness’ in human beings.

The course

The proposed course on ‘Coexistence in Living – Value Education for Consciousness Development’ enables the following:

- Study of the Human Being in a Universal manner
- Study of Existence in a Holistic & Universal manner
- from which the model of a Human Being, in the form of ‘complete or definite Humane Conduct’ becomes clear.

This education inspires & enables individuals to elevate themselves from underdeveloped consciousness (partial understanding, inhumane tendencies, narrow outlook) to a state of human consciousness (full awareness, humane tendencies, holistic-resolved outlook).

Since the current education system does not immediately have room for a transformative syllabi such as this, we have come up with an academic course based on this philosophy, as a ‘foundation course’ in the ‘first stage’. In this stage, we have ‘modularized’ the foundation-content so Institutions, educational counVECDs & Universities may first assess the usefulness of VECD as a ‘foundation course’. Stage-1 starts with a 1 week ‘concept-pilot’, and has then been divided into three phases: “Phase-1 –Exploratory”, “Phase-2 – Beginner” & “Phase-3 – Intermediate” to enable gradual exposure, assessment & adoption. In the subsequent stages of implementation, the core-books of the philosophy will be taught in Institutions followed by research work on a spectrum of alternative views.

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Salient Features: The salient features of this VECD foundational course are

- It presents a 'universal' approach to value education
- Enables a *qualitative transformation* in the consciousness of both the student & the teacher, rather than just a transfer of 'information'
- Enables discriminative thinking (*viveka*) in teachers & students by helping them evaluate every dimension of their living without bias. This then becomes the basis to decide between 'right' & 'wrong'.

Importance of teacher education:

We can only 'give' what we ourselves 'have'. For anything of substance to percolate to students, it is essential that it first be present in the teacher. The course thus also aims to enable teachers to explore & understand the real purpose of life & the content and aims of humanistic education. That is, teachers should themselves be able to live with the practice of humane consciousness and inspire & thus impart humanness in students. This needs some significant investment of faculty time in development workshops (FDW).

Content of VECD Education

The basic content of human education is:^{viii}

- **Knowledge = Why & How** things exist in reality: knowledge a) of all dimensions of reality b) of conscious self ('*jeevan*') c) of complete humane conduct
- **Wisdom = What to do** - Ascertain human goals and laws of humane living based on knowledge – discern 'right' from 'wrong'
- **Science = How to live**, how to do – as behavioral science & material science (physics, chemistry, biology)

In other words, the entire content for education is the study of physical, chemical & conscious activities in existence-reality & their interrelationships, leading to 'mental balance', 'behavioural balance', 'social balance' & 'natural balance'. This content covers the three dimensions below:

1. Self education (*jeevan vidya*) – values inherent in me

- *jeevan vidya* - understanding myself, my activities, goals and how I am conscious, the causes for my happiness and unhappiness, my aspirations and fears as they are

2. Behavioral education: (*vyavhar vidya* – value education) - intrinsic values in living

- *in Family*: understanding my relationships & emotional connect with other humans: in family, with parents, brothers, etc and with friends & teachers.
- *Social education*: understanding my relationship with other humans & inherent equality. Understanding social-laws & human values and how to live in them

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- *Human organizational education*: Learning how human society is formed and what our common societal goals are. Learning to live in family, and the roles, duties and responsibilities, like *seva* or service in family.

3. Material education: (*vastu vidya*)- value of material goods

- *Material science education*: understanding the physical-chemical processes in nature and how they have evolved, their innate nature and characteristics
- *Ecological education*: understanding the evolution in nature and how to interact with and live with it in a harmonious manner. Understanding natural law.
- *Skill based occupational education*: Learning useful skills so I can be materially self-sufficient when I grow up.

Course Pedagogy

Methodology^{ix}

- **Based on observation & reason**
 - A systematic and rational study of the human being vis-à-vis the rest of Existence (Nature) based on Scrutiny, Observation & Survey (*nirikshan, parikshan, sarvekshan*).
- **Not prescriptive: Dialogic**
 - There are no “dos & don’ts”. Conducted in the form of a dialogue whereby the content is presented in the form of ‘proposals’ and students are faVECDitated to explore & verify them using a process of guided self-investigation, based on what is naturally acceptable to them, and what is natural to existence.
- **Uncovers hidden assumptions & proposes answers**
 - FaVECDitates students to evaluate their preset notions or beliefs with respect to who they are, goals of life, relationships, lifestyle, society & ecology and recognize their true meaning.
- **Enables discriminative thinking (*viveka*) & reflective ability: Wisdom**
 - In teachers & students by helping them evaluate every dimension of their living without bias. This then becomes the basis to decide between ‘right’ & ‘wrong’.
 - Ability to distinguish between essence and form; or between what is of value and what is superficial in life
- **Qualitative transformation – Enables Higher Order Thinking & Metacognition**
 - In the values & plane of consciousness of both the student & the teacher, rather than just a transfer of ‘information’

Learning Theory

1. Addresses the 'human self' directly

- **Addresses inquisitiveness** and exploration by every student – *in place of memorization and rote learning*
- **Respect:** Respects the 'freedom of imagination' and 'freedom of action' in the student.
- **Promotes Critical thinking & Self-Reflection:** Proposals will be communicated in the form of an interactive dialogue & students are encouraged to reflect on them

2. Recognizes human relationship

- Based on responsible, emotional **teacher-student relationship** – *as against it merely being a 'job' to be done.*
- Course assessment is on **values & evaluation**, *as against fear and enticement. (punishment and rewards)*
- **Fosters cooperation** and mutual fulfillment with other children/ humans – *in place of seeing them as opponents to compete against.*
- **Promotes excellence** – everyone can be 'good'. *As against individualism & competition.*

3. Integrated approach based on reality

- **Subjects taught in an integrated manner** – as the inter-related fabric of the cosmos, human life on this planet and our roles as individuals, in families, society, nation-state etc – *as against fragmented teaching leading only to specialization*
- **Addresses all dimensions of human living:** realization, thought, behavior and occupation – *as against the current goal of education largely for an occupation, or 'to make a living'*
- **Based on the reality of 'Coexistence'** – of Existence being in harmony, that can be known directly – *as against material-centrist or mystical views.*

To draw a parallel with current pedagogical theories, this course thus employs critical pedagogy, dialogic learning & student-centred learning, didactics and experiential learning. It enables reflective-practice, metacognition, higher-order thinking & wisdom.

Course Objectives & Outcomes:

Initial outcomes: (Stage-1)

We can expect progressive improvement in the following areas from implementation of the 'Phases-1, 2 & 3':

1. **Self-reflection:** Begin to recognize inner confusion & conflict in the Self as the basic cause of unhappiness, strife, dissatisfaction, etc. Recognize that conflict is about our notion of self, other humans, society, nature/existence.
2. **Critical thinking & discriminative abilities:** Enable critical reasoning abilities by ascertaining how our living is conditioned. Discriminative abilities to choose between 'Right' and 'Wrong'; 'Desirable' "Undesirable" based on the right evaluation of realities & relationships.
3. **Clarity on Wealth:** Identify role & limitations of material goods & money –why, what & how much to 'consume'.
4. **Family & Human Relationships:** Recognize emotional-connect & inherent responsibilities in Family & relationships. Accept & strive for harmonious relationship with other humans (in the place of jealousy, hatred etc)
5. **Honesty & Ethics:** Accept & strive for honesty in life and occupation: in thought, word & action.
6. **Relationship with society:** Recognize the universal goals of human society and identify positive steps one can take to contribute to the same.
7. **Relationship with nature,** recognizing our environmental footprint and efforts to make positive contributions to natural balance
8. **Spiritual Quotient:** Pay attention to larger aspects of Existence, Self, purpose, etc.
9. **Clarity & Self Confidence:** Increased awareness of internal 'self' and an integrated view of holistic, universal goals spanning all dimensions of human living. Recognize and resolve 'undesirable tendencies' such as anger, cheating, lying, jealousy & hatred. Ability to associate reasons for such conflict with the lack of understanding of a corresponding reality. This leads to self-confidence.

Course Guidelines

The course content follows the guidelines mentioned below, that are in the line with those recommended by the Ministry of HRD:^x

- Universal
 - Secular: Free from dogma and sectarian/faith based prescriptions.
 - Humanistic: -natural for human being - same for every human, for all place & time
 - Natural to Existence: based on studiable natural principles
- Communicable
 - Non mystical, has logically consistent explanations
- Liveable
 - Improves clarity, quality & experience of life
- Verifiable
 - Can be validated rationally, intuitively and experientially (sensory & otherwise)

Results so far

Inclusions of this course in formal education have been going on since the last 15 years in India. Initial implementation of this course has met with good success in Chattisgarh and two other State Governments. Preliminary human values courses based on this philosophy are now a part of more than 30 Universities in India, including IIT BHU, IIIT Hyderabad, UPTU, JNTU, and also a regular feature at IIT Kanpur. A few PhD's have also been awarded related to this subject. The recently released 2018 model curriculum by AICTE (All India Council of Technical Education) includes an 'Induction program' for first year students with a component of 'Universal Human Values' that is based on Coexistential philosophy.

About us

Value Education for Consciousness Development Research Institute (*Chetna Vikas Mulya Shiksha Shodh Sansthan*) is a proposed University in the making. It is being established for the purpose of 'humanization of prevalent education'. It is comprised of human beings.

We are a self supporting group of people, with no religious, political affiliation or 'formal membership' – bound by a common vision and purpose. We are, or have been engineers, farmers, architects, housewives, scientists, social activists, corporate executives, monks, educationists and students; rich, middle-class and poor; 'well-read' and not so much; young and old; from villages, towns and cities across India & other places; from small colleges to top notch institutes. We are common in that we are Human and we have an honest quest for the truth and to lead a meaningful harmonious life on this planet. We feel this 'coexistential knowledge' is the fundamental need of the human and the 'long-term' solution to humanities problems – the myriad issues all of us face, the world faces.

These initiatives in education are not a source for our 'livelihood' - we don't 'charge' anything for sharing this 'knowledge'. We do this, for our satisfaction – for our own development and societal responsibility. We also fulfill our responsibilities in family and towards nature.

More information about the philosophy, the propounder A.Nagraj and its reach in education is available at www.jvidya.com

ⁱ University of Pune, meeting for UHV in Induction Programs, 7 April 2018

ⁱⁱ IIIT Hyderabad, assessment of HV Course, Sangal R

ⁱⁱⁱ University Education Commissions: 1948, 1966

^{iv} Also see Einstein, Albert: 'We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them'

^v Nagraj A, *Vyavharatmak Janvad* (Behavioral Humanism)

^{vi} Nagraj A, *Ibid.*

^{vii} Nagraj A, *Jeevan Vidya an Introduction*

^{viii} Nagraj A, *Shiksha ka prarup* (Outline of Education)

^{ix} Jeevan Vidya (Coexistence) workshops, various

^x See Panel recommendations on National Convention on Value Education via Jeevan Vidya, IIT Delhi, May 2007