



Teaching Kids Indian Values

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After all, most families and cultures have their own set of values and are often in conflict with the values of others. How, then, can one decide what is valued by all of India, a country that is so diverse and so demographically complex?

I think what would qualify as a 'universal value' is a belief or behavior pattern that the majority of people identify with and respect, even if they don't act on it.

For instance, most people in the world respect honesty and courage. All cultures have legends of heroism, where someone gives up his/her wealth and risks his/her life for the sake of truth. Similarly, independence is highly valued. All countries have their national heroes, who have fought for independence from foreign domination – right from George Washington to Mahatma Gandhi to Laxmibai, Rani of Jhansi.

What would classify as Indian values would be something that people in India attach significance to, irrespective of whether the rest of the world does or not.

Traditionally, Indians have laid high stress on values like peaceful co-existence, spirituality, deference to elders, recourse to nature, seeking prosperity, strong family ties, respecting even the tools of your trade, joyousness and hospitality.

Look at any community or region in this subcontinent. You will see that almost all of them have been holding such values close, in some form or the other. Yoga and meditation are age-old practices, which have also found renewed favor with this generation. Prayer is almost a daily ritual. Most businessmen will say a short prayer before opening their shops or offices. Someone in the family will pray in the morning or evening.

The old have always been taken care of, at home, and it is generally the eldest who makes important decisions for the family, be it a financial matter or a

relationship. Dance and music are an integral part of all our cultures and religions. Most celebrations and happy occasions are bright and colorful. Most Indians are very close to aunts, uncles, cousins, and grandparents; holidays are usually spent together and there is little formality in such relationships.

Even today, we see people worshipping the source of their livelihood. A dancer will bow to the stage. A farmer will bow to his yoke. A vegetable-seller will bow to his hand-cart. A rickshaw-wala will bow to his rickshaw.

Individualism is more of a western value. Indian society has always focused more on paying your debt to society and being responsible for one's family and rather than breaking away to pursue your own individual desires. With increasing western influences, the conflict between individualism and fulfilling social obligations is great, especially for the younger generation.

Also, 'Indian values' are often misunderstood, or misrepresented.

For instance, I have come across websites that include 'dowry' as one of the values that Indians hold dear. There is no doubt that dowry is a common practice in India. However, it has been banned by law and also been reviled as a social evil, over the last few decades. Those who demand dowry are Indian, and those who banned it are also Indian. In fact, the same practice has been in evidence across several cultures in several countries.

Of course, values change over time. They have to, else society would degenerate and stagnate.

But before defying traditional values and norms, it is wise to question the need for change and to specify what part of society needs to change. Is our value system outdated, or do we need to change some common practices that are no longer relevant, or even evil, in their current form?

Raising children wards of wisdom – moral & good upbringing for kids.

One of the many compliments that elders bestow upon youngsters is – "What a well-brought up boy/girl!" We also hear praises heaped upon a child or youngster in the name of good breeding.

One the other hand, when a child misbehaves, the first people to get blamed are the parents. After all, they are the ones responsible for the behavior of a child until he/she is old enough to assume individual responsibility. Actually, even after growing up, it is your parents who get blamed for your behavior, because you cannot build a great house if the foundations are not strong and deep.

A well-brought up person is instantly recognized as one. Such a person is usually courteous, clam, confident and willing to help. Often, he/she will also be talented and eager to listen to others.

Good upbringing is all about training a child to be a good citizen and an asset to society. To this end, a parent has to think of the ideal citizen and try to encourage-remember. 'encourage' and NOT force- the child to become this ideal.

We all expect other people in society to be honest, forthright, incorruptible, hard working, learned, socially conscious, environmentally sensitive, generous, polite, broad-minded, non-violent and tolerant. The only we this is possible if our own children are brought up to be all these things. And the only way our children will submit to this sort of upbringing is when we also aspire to be the ideal.

And it is not fair to expect a governess, a maid, a teacher or even a finishing school to convert your child into a magically perfect creature. When you bring a child into the world and give him (or her) your name, you are forever linked to his fate and responsible for his values and his reputation.

One golden rule – while teaching a child anything, do not insult him/ her. No reprimands in public or in the presence of friends. Children are entitled to their dignity too. If a mistake has been made, wait until you are alone with the child and then gently correct him/her.

You have to give advice and counsel, but most of all, you have to show a child that it is possible to live with dignity and treat others with respect and kindness. You must teach them the difference between hoarding money and saving up for a rainy day.

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