

[What Are the Values We Teach?](#)

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What Are the Values We Teach?

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Hindu educators have begun to foster a truly significant global education. They have found that now is the time to return to the most basic of human values, which are taught in the traditional tribal cultures of India, as our page one article in this issue shows. Cardinal among these values is that people should be the primary concern of educators, not their institutions nor economies. We need, in the century ahead, to teach all children tolerance, openness to different ways of life, different beliefs, different customs of dress and language. We need to stop teaching them to fear those who are different than themselves, stop teaching them hatred for peoples of other colors and other religions, stop teaching them to see the world as a field of conflict and instead instill in them an informed appreciation and a joyous reverence for the grand diversity we find around us. Modern education can do that, provided the approach is changed.

Basic human Vedic values should be taught to every child and every student. These eternal values have nothing to do with race, creed, caste, politics or ethnic culture. Learning how to read and write is not the ultimate goal. The ultimate goal of education is also knowing what to read and what to write as well as how to live in tune with nature, in harmony with the universe and at peace with oneself and one's fellowman. A great Hindu saint once wrote, "Those who cannot live in harmony with the world, though they have learned many things, are still ignorant." The big question today that spiritual and political leaders are facing is how the peoples of the world are to live on this planet in harmony, and how to correct the errors of the past, and the resentments that still linger, to insure survival of humankind in their future. Education, they know, will play a key role, but only if educators focus first on human values, which makes humans better people, and secondly on technical know-how.

The human values we are speaking of here are known by all the tribal peoples, as

they are inwardly a part of the knowledge within each of us. These principles must be cultivated, however, to manifest in any society, community, village or family. Global education must reach all the peoples, including the tribals, in our worldwide global village. It cannot be one-sided on the part of those who have the resources teaching others what they think they need to know. Rather all voices must be heard. The tribal and the industrialist. But will they be heard? Perhaps yes! The intelligentsia of industrialized societies are realizing that they don't really have all the answers and that traditional tribal communities have something to teach after all. We have simple problems on this planet - food for survival, water, air, shelter and health care. The tribals are well aware of each and have them under control. In the same spirit that the modern pharmacologist journeys into the Amazon to discover medicines used for centuries that he can apply to world health care, so we in our various spheres of knowledge need to more and more rediscover the old ways and bring them forward.

Those who have perpetrated our planet's destruction so far assume the position of the educators of the uneducated. Modern men are listening carefully to the leaders of prominent governments. But are they listening to the tribal leader whose community is peaceful and causes no harm to the planet? Are they listening to those who can walk into a jungle without food or medicine, eat and live and feed themselves year after year? Yes, global education begins with the root people of the planet who are thriving and existing as they have for century after century. They have a sustainable relationship with nature and gentle relationships with the world.

No elite group, such as the western-educated, should take the position of speaking down to the tribal, the minority groups or the underdeveloped countries. We must remember that the "underdeveloped" countries did quite well for thousands and thousands of years before industrialization occurred. We live on a garden planet, the only one we have discovered so far in our galaxy. Let's take heed of the people who live on it with respect and reverence - the Cherokee, the Navaho, the Tongan, the tribals of Australia and Brazil and of Asia, the sixty million tribals of India, the Polynesian communities, the Eskimos, the noble African tribes. The fact that we are a global people, each a part of the global family, living together in a global village, must be recognized.

The basic human values must be cultivated, become popular and be allowed to develop and taught in many unique ways. The cultivation of the student's character is what the final outcome of education is all about. Education means to "bring out, or draw forth knowledge from the soul of the person" - not to impose a dogma, but

to awaken knowing from within, to teach the art of being a human being and how to usefully live with others.

In most Western countries, a student's education level is tested with two primary indicators - math and science on the one side and language on the other. Though these are essential and must be strong, they are not sufficient to develop a good person, a fully functioning human being, a useful citizen. In a real sense, these are peripherals. What we need to do globally is to make human consciousness the focus of human consciousness, rather than breaking it into bits and pieces of knowledge which are less important. We are focusing in the wrong area, having failed to understand what education really is. Therefore, we are not truly educating the student anymore. They are given a few facts with the hope they will figure out the really important matters on their own. Learn by their own mistakes is the course. What kind of a course is that?

Certain basics are still conveyed, but outside of school. The family does that education, the tribe does that education, friends and casual teachers do that. But the official media, the official machinery dedicated to education, does not anymore. And because the tribes and families are being broken up by this narrow. Western educational methodology, the world as a unit is ironically learning to be ignorant. Humanity is learning the ability to ignore this planet's beauty and all it has to offer us. Humanity is learning to ignore that the animals and fish and fowl and reptiles and humans all live here together and should live in love, trust and harmony, as a one force, which we call prana, shakti or energy, that which pervades us all, avoiding none.

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