



NURTURING ETHICS AND VALUES THROUGH LITERATURE

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“Try not to become a person of success, but rather try to become a person of value.” -- Albert Einstein

INTRODUCTION

Since the time of Aesop’s fables, Arabian stories, stories of Ali baba or Panchatantra, moral values were taught through these kinds of stories, poems, or other forms of literature. From time immemorial, all the religious holy books were the true path shower, full of wisdom and moral instructions. The ancient tales of Panchatantra and fables are still inseparable from life and the fictional lives and the fantasies of literature have always affected us from time unmemorable and keep on influencing our life and moral sense. Literature can be utilized in a multi-dimensional approach for improving society, behavioral development, problem-solving skills, and the right attitude to handle social situations. By narrowing it can be said that literature can be used to nurture and enhance moral literacy. This paper sheds light upon the need for value-based education and it also attempts to focus on how literature can be an effective tool in nurturing ethics and values in the human race.

- **NEED OF VALUE-BASED EDUCATION:**

Human value crisis is one of the intense burning problems in our daily life. Moral values such as humanism, kindness, honesty, law, justice, truthfulness, patriotism, etc. are needed to be maintained and well conserved in society to influence human life to regulate in a well-ordered manner. Value-crisis has emerged due to not understanding the proper role of moral values in our human society. The issue of value deterioration in society can be stored out if we have concern and consciousness about the deep-rooted ethics and moral values in our society. Modern human society is valued based on material possession and its position. The feelings of mercy, sympathy or kindness, etc. are today worthless and deliberately ignored. Human values are deliberately neglected and have become meaningless in day-to-day life, for human beings have become the resources for the rich to earn money. People are so busy with earning material things that they have no time and no desire to think about the plight of the human race. The human value may lay as the cornerstone for the foundation of social wellbeing. Those who show adorable respect for human value will be entitled to social value, so the preference for social value over the human value crisis is one of the intense

burning problems in our day-to-day life. The choice to co-create a better future for our future generation by ensuring excellence and quality in education as mere core values that will help transform our world.

Value education means developing appropriate habits and behavior involving inculcation of certain moral values and routine habits. Value education initiates from families and it is continued at schools with the help of educators. Thus, teachers, families, and educational activities play a very vital role in values education. Families are the first source of role models to their children as they give information so they should be very careful about their behaviors and attitudes. The role of teachers is very crucial for the children because most are what the teacher does in the classroom counts them more to inculcate. Educational activities such as organizing seminars, conferences on value-based themes; even families can take an active part in organizing them so that, there can be an effective harmony among families, educators, and educational programs. The inculcation of value-based education has become a need of the hour and it cannot be given only by the teachers. The need for values is to promote fundamental values and direct people to lead a healthy life which helps them to improve their overall qualities of life to become responsible citizens.

- **THE VALUE OF LITERATURE:**

Literature is the speculum of society. Literature from time immemorial has invoked students of all ages. The true function of literature is to teach and delight, it means that literature has its origin in delight but its end is in offering wisdom to its readers. Literature facilitates students to understand and appreciate diverse cultures and universal human passions such as love, anger, jealousy, greedy, etc. Once the students have self-determined control over their emotions, it will help them to find a perfect balance in their professional lives also. In short, one can say that literature serves a dual purpose which includes the acquisition of the English language and inculcating value education.

Literature can be a good way to teach character education because “literature lends itself to the teaching of specific moral dilemmas and the examining of specific character traits” (Prestwich, 2004, p.143). Students can empathize with the characters and understand character traits better than just being told information about each trait, also known as catharsis, or the connection between the reader and the characters (Lowe, 2009; Prestwich, 2004). Literature can assist in discussing difficult topics such as incarceration, bullying, death, and abuse. Literature can provide students with emotional and social support for things they might also be going through; thus, the use of literature may be a useful method to discuss difficult topics (Jalongo, 2004; Lowe, 2009). Moreover, Bibliotherapy, or therapeutic reading, can help students cope with emotions and problems they are facing because “expression through text offers readers of all ages the opportunity to find solutions through the character and conflicts within a story, and thus within themselves” (Lowe, 2009, p.1). In addition, and perhaps most importantly, Children’s literature should be used to teach character education because picture books attract children, communicate ideas, and the visual images leave “the most indelible impression” (Jalongo, 2004, p.38). The students often relate to the characters and pictures in these books rather than non-picture books, which adds to their effectiveness. The pictures aid the students in understanding the abstract concepts taught in character education stories, which is another reason why picture books are beneficial for teaching character education to young children. Furthermore, children are

more likely to respond to storytelling because it is seen as a gift from the teacher (Sanchez & Stewart, 2006).

Thus, students are more likely to internalize and remember the lessons that they learn from these stories.

- **TEACHING VALUES THROUGH LITERATURE:**

Teaching English Literature opens a new era of the world to the students. It nurtures the abilities of Human society to have a set of core ethics and values to live with. The importance of inculcating these kinds of values in the young generation is acknowledged universally. The study of literature in the form of short stories and novels enables students to find moral lessons everywhere beyond their textual readings. With appropriate materials of literature is given to them to read, students can learn to monitor their behaviors by reading stories and fables having a moral behind them. Every fable or any reading material with a moral leaf a deep impression in their young minds and they are in a position to imbibe such values in their day-to-day living.

- a. **Children's Literature:**

Donna Norton (2010) finds the value of literature for young people in her book *Through the Eyes of a Child*. Children's literature is of great importance because it offers students the opportunities to respond to literature according to their intellect; it also allows students to appreciate their own culture and cultural heritage as well as those of the other culture which they have never been seen in person; it helps students to develop emotional intelligence and creativity; it nurtures growth and development of the student's personality and social skills; and it transmits important literature, motives, and themes from one generation to the next and from one culture to another.

Children's literature helps young minds to develop emotional intelligence in them. Stories have been seen to function as a powerful means to endorse emotional and moral development. Children's literature "contains numerous moments of crisis, when characters need to make moral decisions and contemplate the reasons for their decisions," an important skill for children to see modeled (Norton, 2010, p. 34).

Guji Guji (Chen, 2004), for example, is a story about a crocodile who is adopted into a family of ducks. Ultimately, he must choose between betraying his adopted family and going back to his own "species," and he decides to remain true to his beliefs and not betray his family.

The Scar (Moundlic, 2007) is an interesting and influential book to read with students to teach them about responding to grief, as it is about a boy whose mother passes away. This requires a complex level of emotional and intellectual intelligence, as many young children do not understand the concept of death. The topic of death is more appropriate for a higher level of school classes, but it is an important topic to discuss with students.

Another book that encourages emotional intelligence is Selma (Bauer, 2002), which discusses what it takes for a young sheep to be happy. It is a philosophical story within a picture book and challenges students to think about what is the meaning of happiness is.

Another story, *The Big Box* (Morrison, 1999) is a story about children who have their freedom is taken away by being put into a box and the deeper problems that exist with not being given one's freedom.

Children's literature encourages students to contemplate deeper into their feelings. Children's literature is of great value because it fosters personality, morality, and social development. Children are very

impressionable during their formative years, and children's literature can assist them to develop them into intelligent, caring, thoughtful, and friendly people. Developmental psychologist, Jean Piaget observes that when children move from the pre-operational to the operational stage of their cognitive development, they tend to become less egocentric. Whereas students in pre-school may be entirely focused on themselves and become self-centered, as students grow older, they begin to take into account the feelings and viewpoints of others. To be able to understand other people's point of views and not to be selfish are essential skills that adults must nurture these skills in their children from an early age, as Norton says that "acceptable relationships require an understanding of the feelings and viewpoints of others" (2010, p. 27). Children's literature may be observed as being capable of fostering social development by encouraging students to accept other people and their differences. Books such as, *And Tango Makes Three* (Parnell & Richardson, 2005), *Molly's Family* (Garden, 2004), *Heather Has Two Mommies* (Newman & Souza, 1989), and *Daddy's Roommate* (Wilhoite, 2000) present situations which may encourage students to become more liberal and open-minded to different types of people and families and realize that love is the beautiful and important thing in a family. Children's literature can also inspire students to develop social relationships with other people, encouraging social contact. An atypical friendship is portrayed in *Loop the Loop* (Dugan, 1992), where a young child and an elderly person become good friends and share the common joy of playing with a yo-yo. In *A Couple of Boys Have the Best Week Ever* (Frazee, 2008), the boys learn to think of the needs of others when they build a diorama for the grandpa who is fascinated with penguins. Literature motivates students to be considerate and friendly beings, and these traits may assist them to be consistent with developing students into morally correct citizens.

b. **Poetry**

Poetry is the most powerful instructional tool and an age-old art to impart education at any age and it is also a universal vehicle of human expression of emotions and passions. It is an expression of passions or deep emotions and aesthetics sense of what is beautiful about the very existence. Only poetry is capable of revealing and passing on the universal truths as well as cultural differences of humankind. Throughout history, poetry has addressed various themes, ranging from, social issues, war, love, and the beauty of nature, and the love of God. The very function of poetry is to invoke experiences, it emphasizes the role of the senses, calling to mind memories, feelings and an outstanding medium for motivating creativity among students. Through poetry, students can expand and expose the aesthetically elastic boundaries of language. Poetry develops empathy and understanding to view the complexities of the world in new ways. Poetry should have an essential place in all of our lives, not only for the aesthetic pleasure it affords but also for its competency to awaken our senses, connect us with ourselves and others, to lead our life in synthesizing way.

• **CONCLUSION:**

Social and moral human values are the most fundamental elements of the corporate lives of any community without which modern society cannot continue to sustain. Thus, human values should be protected and preserved with high priority. Today, Human values are observed to lose their importance and human values are degrading with the passing time. The degradation in the moral life of the human community leads to the loss of moral integrity. General awareness should be created by socio-cultural groups regarding the

value of education of traditional customs and heritage. Thus, English literature carries an ability in the attainment of ethics and morals through value education. It helps to understand those beyond the visible-values, beliefs, and attitudes for sustainable life and help to learn to build bridges from one culture to another.

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