

CHARACTER EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Prepared and forwarded by

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The developing socioeconomic condition in India and the inability of the leaders to create conditions necessary for higher national development after 70 years of democracy rule, should be a concern to any person who cares about our nation.

The concept of national development (economic, political and social) is said to bring with it valuable and positive changes that improves the living standards of the people, as it creates employment opportunities and equality of opportunity, and reduces poverty, among other things.

In particular, economic development increases the efficiency of a system in the production of goods and services to meet the basic needs of the people in a society.

The achievement of these objective hinges on the character and attitude (moral compass) of the leaders entrusted with the management of the society.

Experts have noted that “strategic planning at a macro-level is a pre-condition for successful and long-term national development.” Therefore, the focus of this article is “Character Education” and its implications for National development.

As it were, “Character Education” involves “Educating for character” and for good “moral values.” It is the teaching of respect and responsibility (and other values) to the citizens for good character development and for the health of the nation.

‘Educating for Character’ “respect and responsibility are the two foundational moral values” that a society should teach its citizens. Others values are honesty, fairness, tolerance, prudence, self-discipline, helpfulness, compassion, cooperation, courage and other democratic values.

However, rule of law, equality of opportunity, due process, representative government, checks and balances and democratic decision-making are “procedural values” that define democracy.

All these would enable the people to create a viable humane society and to act “respectfully and responsibly.”

Thus taking responsibility for the things we do wrong as well as the things we do right is the way to move the society forward.

Responsibility matters!

The increasing moral problems in India (corruption, greed, dishonesty, violent crime, political killings, drugs (peddling and use) and other destructive behaviors, call for ‘Character Education’ in the society.

Presently, corruption drives and shapes social values in India, and for some individuals, the quest for 'easy money' is a justification for breaking the laws of the land and distorting policies directed toward national development.

Consequently, unnecessary display of ill-acquired wealth threatens India and its democratic political process.

When the leaders and the people think of public service in instrumental way, accountability declines, and national development is adversely affected.

Nevertheless, character would not be important to the young ones if it does not matter to adults. The youths need inspiring role models who make positive contributions to their communities because many of them that are 'ethically illiterate' are growing up not knowing that corruption is socially injurious.

And because of moral decadence among the youths many of them do not seem to realize that cheating (dishonesty) in public examinations, campus gang violence and prostitution are anti-social behavior.

Therefore, without good moral upbringing of the youths today the nation may not produce enough good leaders to manage its affairs tomorrow.

Experts in 'character education' believe that 'character development' "promotes critical thinking and moral reasoning", which positively impacts national development.

As noted earlier, because of greed, selfishness, dishonesty and immorality and lack of respect for the society, elections are often rigged in India, political opponents assassinated, and public schools are left to rot away.

The leaders abuse their office and plunder public resources, and bastardize public policies toward national development.

Some individuals and institutions with morality problems are known to have "aided and abetted frauds" during examinations.

The founding fathers of Indian democracy had noted that "character Education" or 'values moral education' is "essential for the success of a democratic society."

Because the people must possess the appropriate character to build a free and just society and the moral foundations to make democracy thrive in the society where it had never been cultivated.

Good character and 'loyalty to these democratic virtues must be instilled in the people at an early age.'

Good character as 'the life of right conduct-right conduct in relation to other persons and in relation to oneself'.

Therefore, good character consists of knowing what is good, desiring what is good and doing what is good.

Other attributes of a good character include respect for the rights of others, regard for the law of the land, taking responsibility for one's actions in public and private life concerning the common good.

These virtues are necessary for leading a moral life of the individuals and for the health of the nation and, therefore, 'strong personal character should manifest itself in service to organizations and communities'.

Nevertheless, Character Education should include 'political education' to enable the citizens develop critical political awareness to guide their actions.

Would democracy survive in a society where rule of law and human decency is cast to the wind?

Again, how would India develop without the citizens developing the critical and creative minds needed to manage its democratic system? As experts have noted, the success of any democratic system depends on the individuals' ability to analyze problems and make thoughtful decisions.

Because democracy thrives on the productivity of its diverse constituency-productivity fostered by free and critical and creative thought on issues of common interest.

For India to become a truly democratic society, and for it to develop economically, the citizens must possess the appropriate character and integrity to administer the laws of the land.

people who have good character "act truthfully, loyally, bravely, kindly, and fairly without being much tempted [or pulled] by the opposite [forces to indulge in anti-development behaviors]."

Undoubtedly, the extractive behavior of the political leaders in India has continued to drag the society behind economically, socially and politically.

That seems to show that honesty, integrity, transparency, accountability, respect and responsibility have been cast to the wind! What does 'responsibility' mean when the political leaders and their handymen ganged up And what does 'respect' and 'responsibility' tell Indians to do when they see someone steal public money and tell lies to damage another person's reputation?

The leaders have continued to play politics with public education by denying them the resources for effective teaching and learning (human capital development) because many of them do not seem to realize the undeniable linkage between 'Character Education' and national development.

They lack moral values to understand what is right and to do what is right.

This is unacceptable! India long-term economic and national policy goals should be placed higher than individual political interest or idiosyncrasy.

To prepare for life in a modern society the citizens should be exposed to qualitative education and acquire good moral values to enable them create a humane society and to function effectively in a democratic political environment.

However, the leaders should understand that 'Character Education' does not occur in a vacuum - the leaders must plan it.

The challenge for the political leaders is to confront India's problems with innovative ideas and include 'Character Education' (teaching of respect and responsibility and other democratic values) in the nation's school curricula for good character development and sustainable national development.

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