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Education: Why teachers are the vehicle of change for social issues

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Abstract
Education is a lifelong investment steering towards building a strong healthy society. The major vehicles of change are the educators or the teachers. Teachers have a major role to play in building personal and societal development. Emphasis should be given to teaching and learning, such as curriculum content, instructional styles, classroom environment and student–teacher relationships while encouraging and providing settings for students to promote a healthy society. The challenge faced by the society today is to maintain a healthy social environment free from all types of social evils. The society is progressing towards caste and classless based society, whereas on the other, fears from various fanatical ideals are gripping different zones around the globe. Social evils, mainly the issues corroding the society need to be addressed in order to bring a viable solution to these social issues. The degradation brought about by these issues is reflected upon the prevailing social environment of a particular society. Therefore, there is a need to make the people aware of the negative impact of social problems in today's fast paced world in the development of the Nation. Wide spread social issues can be curbed only through changing the mindsets of the people through slowly but steady progressive education from the grass root level. To maintain a healthy social environment, an eye opener to these issues lies with educating the masses in bringing about a social change conducive to a more humane society whose responsibility lies solely with the Teachers.

Keywords: Vehicle of change, social evils, humane society

Introduction
Education is a lifelong investment that helps in building a strong foundation of a healthy society. Economic, socially prosperous and politically sound nation building can be brought about by education as a standalone mechanism. Externally, we now consider the world as a global village, since it is home to all the nations of the world and people are living interdependently. The significant indicator of overall development of any region is the peaceful co-existence of different ethnic groups mushrooming together in a society. It is necessary that we live in harmony with other fellow beings. In fact this world is like a tightly knit nuclear family. The Sanskrit verse, Vasudaiva Kutumbamkam, means that the world is one big family. Hence the goal of every country and people in this world should be to live as a member of this big family.

Image of an Ideal Society
An ideal society is one in which each individual assimilate knowledge about different sections of the society along with their perspectives. Racism persists as a hindrance to equality and liberty that negatively influence the future generations. Children should be taught the moral values of their religion or culture, but still expose them to a variety of opposing views. Tolerance towards others of differing background should be encouraged. Oppression of any kind can be prevented by the legislation, and overcoming individual prejudice.

The real and tough questions that people struggle with on a daily basis are tensions that arise as we try to build harmonious, active, and diverse society. Communities living together should establish a sound relationship between diverse groups in the economic and social strata. The struggles between different cultures should be studied. Efforts to build alliances and coalitions between groups should be done. Issues that are prevalent in common should be studied and a viable solution should be searched among these communities.

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Structuring a Healthy Society

To help people commit to working on diversity, every person needs to feel that they be included and is considered important in the decision making process. A need to feel appreciated for the efforts in building a conducive society, free from all evils is a necessity. Blaming and shaming people for being in a privileged or underprivileged position only cause people to feel bad aggravating an already hostile situation.

Although every person is unique, mistreatment or oppression because of belonging to a particular group is a social injustice. If we ignore these present-day or historical differences, the misconceptions about the opposite community persist. Hence, understanding the needs of these individuals is a must. Learning about the different and opposing views, can reveal and revel in important junctures that can project the commonality between the sections in considerations.

People have a difficult time functioning when they feel there is no hope for change. It is important to take the time to develop strong relationships with a core of people, and then work together as a group instead of going solo.

In working to combat racism and other forms of oppression many people become discouraged when they are unable to create a heterogeneous society. Recognizing differences in religion, socioeconomics, parenting, and class backgrounds will help create a climate that welcomes differences and lays the groundwork for becoming more inclusive.

Families, organizations, institutions, and neighbourhoods should insist on not remaining isolated from individuals of different background, transforming the society into equitable, non-oppressive, and diverse communities.

Perspective of Indian Society

India, being the largest democracy in the world, people speaks 122 major languages and 1599 other languages. Unity in diversity is the beauty of the nation. The Indian Constitution assigns equal rights, privileges and duties to all people irrespective of gender, caste, class, community, language and religion. The Indian society has been multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic from time immemorial. At the same time our country has been confronted with forces of divisiveness. Hence the biggest challenge is to preserve the pluralistic tradition and bring the various communities into the mainstream society by promoting the spirit of multiculturalism.

People of India show clear distinctions in their physique, dress, language, food habits, religious practices and rituals. This unique unity of India in the midst of diversity and enjoying unlimited freedom as the largest democracy in the world is the beauty of India which is a wonder to the world. However, there are real tests to the multiculturalism of India.

The religious and communal trends in India are alarming to find that people give undue importance to their religious beliefs and rituals. National feelings and patriotism are being devoured by the monster of religion. Thus national feelings and affiliation shall be uppermost of all other narrow feelings of religion, community, language, region etc.

Language plays a prominent role in multicultural unity. Languages are the special gifts of man which make him distinct from other animals. Humans become more learned and wise because of languages. Mother tongue should be promoted at any cost. At the same time India being a multicultural, multi-lingual country other languages and their literature should be respected.

Communalism- A Threat to Society

Threat to a federal society emerge when a group or a community starts thinking in a narrow way, considering themselves as superiors to others and show discrimination and animosity to other groups. However, whenever diverse groups interact, intergroup tension, stereotypes, and institutionalized discrimination develop. Some major causes of communalism posing as a threat to such favourable society are caste and class, presence of Communal Parties, isolation of minorities, poverty, Cross-Border Factors and failure of Government to curb the issues of communalism. The religious and communal feelings are given undue importance by the constricted views of certain communities. Nationalistic feelings and patriotism are being trampled.

Contemporary Social Issues of India

Some of the prevalent social issues India is dealing with currently are: Poverty, agricultural distress and farmers suicides, Unemployment, Population explosions, Communalism, Secularism and Regionalization, Youth unrest and agitations, Child abuse and child labour, Violence against women, Illiteracy, Urbanization, Juvenile delinquency, Alcoholism, Drug Abuse and drug addiction, AIDS, Terrorism, Corruption, Bonded Labour, Black Money, etc.

Other varied forms of social problems related to issues such as Casteism, Untouchability, Gender Inequality, Dowry, Domestic Violence against Women, Child Abuse, Religious Violence, Issues related to SC/STs, etc.

The list may go on and it is not a comprehensive list. There are several other social issues and problems ailing the country but above mentioned ones are really pressing issues which need immediate attention.

Identifying the Cause of Social Issues

Perhaps the problem lies in the very deep rooted beliefs in the mind sets of the people of the country which is not letting the situation to change. It is the belief system or the cultural conditioning of the people which is not letting the society to change at a fast pace.

It is not so that social ills have not been fought with; in fact from the ancients times in our country there have been various social-cultural reformers such as Budha, Mahavira, Kabir, Gurunanak, Raja Ram Mohun Roy, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Ambedkar, Vinoba Bhave etc. who have tried to fight those evils throughout their lives; they have succeeded also to a certain extent. But still the country is facing these socio-cultural problems in various degrees which is an unfortunate reality of 21st century India.

Inequality and violence against women can be witnessed on a daily basis. Female foeticide is continuing, religious-communal violence is on the rise, un-touchability is still a reality, child labour is widely practiced, etc.

On one hand, the society is progressing towards caste and classless based society, whereas on the other, fears from various fanatical ideals are gripping different zones around the globe. Social evils, mainly the issues corroding the society need to be addressed priorly in order to bring a viable solution to these problems.

The degradation brought about by the social problems on the societal culture is reflected upon the prevailing social environment of a particular society. Therefore, the need to make the people aware of the impact of social problems on the cultural identity of the particular class of people is highly essential in today's fast paced world.

To maintain a healthy social environment, an eye opener to these issues lies with educating the masses in bringing about a social change conducive to a more humane and harmonious society is important. There is a lot that needs to be done for the situation to improve. And without changing the mind set and beliefs of the people it is a very difficult task.

Education – A Key Change For Society

Education is a progressive approach for transformation that holistically analyzes and addresses current shortcomings, failings, and discriminatory practices of the society. It is grounded in ideals of social justice, education equity, and a dedication to facilitating educational experiences in which all students reach their full potential as learners and as socially aware and active beings, locally, nationally, and globally.

Diversity in the nation's schools is both an opportunity and a challenge. The nation is enriched by the ethnic, cultural, and language diversity among its citizens and within its schools. Schools must find ways to respect the diversity of their students as well as help to create a unified nation-state to which all of the nation's citizens have allegiance. Educational policy makers and practitioners should realize this elusive and difficult but essential goal of a democratic and pluralistic society. The ultimate goal is to include culture, social class, gender, language, race and ethnicity in equalizing mainstream with minorities.

For this purpose educating people about various social problems and sensitizing them towards changing their way of thinking is the best way forward. Because without people trying to change themselves, any governmental or non-governmental efforts will prove as a half-measure. If the vision of every citizen of India is to make the country a true world leader and a modern 21st century country of the world, it is imperative that that we make an improvement on our social front.

Widely spread social issues can be curbed only through changing the mindsets of the people through slowly but steady progressive education at the grass root level. Education about diverse culture should be disseminated from early age; so also, tolerance and respect for other cultures, religion, race and ethnicity will construct a strong foundation of a nation with varying degree of diversity, yet working in communion.

Teachers – An Agent for Social Change

The major vehicles for social change are the educators or the teachers, in simple term. Teachers have a major role to play in a personal and societal development by encouraging and providing settings for students to promote common goals. Emphasis should be given to teaching and learning, such as curriculum content, instructional styles, classroom environment and student–teacher relationships. Tolerance of any kind should be treated with due importance as with this virtue a harmonious society free from violent outbreaks can be controlled. In such scenarios, teachers should take up responsibility in educating the students of the importance of

tolerance and the consequences of their action in a multicultural society such as ours. A harmonious society free from intolerance would be an ideal society.

Conclusion

The present and future generation should remember to protect the national feelings and should give due importance to nationalistic sentiments which is above any religion, community, language, region etc. Since children are the future generations and it is in their hands to build a strong nation, they should be well informed about equality and equity of different communities, race, religion and ethnicity. This can be done at personal, institutional and community level in formal, informal and non-formal ways of education.

In a nation where different ethnic and religious minorities resides with the mainstream groups, tolerance from every quarter is a must. The very gist of a democratic nation is that the rights and duties of the every citizen are respected and protected by law and the constitution. It is therefore essential that every individual should set limits and boundaries where each one is self-realised not to go beyond these invisible lines of humane value system. Education is highly essential in imbibing the necessary qualities of global citizenship. The agents for this change are the teachers who need to live by setting example and help in forming a value system from the grass root level. This would help in building a desirable society where each is free to follow and live the dreams of their choice without disrupting peace and harmony.

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