Extending UHV & Holistic, Value-Based Education to Communities: Experiences in Village Development

The purpose of education is not merely to prepare students for employment or to impart knowledge and skills, but to prepare every individual for life: to develop right understanding, live in harmonious relationships, make responsible choices, and contribute to the well-being of all, including the rest of nature. However, despite the increasing reach of education, right understanding, clarity of purpose, and harmonious relationships may remain insufficiently addressed. This gap may contribute to conflicts and disharmony at the individual, family, and community levels. Holistic, value-based education complements knowledge and skills by nurturing right understanding, harmonious relationships, and overall well-being. By addressing the human foundations of development, it can help address social disharmony at its roots, strengthen families and communities, and support the transformation of individual and collective consciousness.

In the Indian tradition, the concept of a university as a Vishwavidyalaya reflects a vision of learning that extends to the well-being of the whole world, not just its enrolled students or the surrounding community. This broader vision places a responsibility on educational institutions to extend education beyond their campuses and contribute to the well-being of society. Such engagement also provides an opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of education through its contribution to harmonious and sustainable living.

Recognising this responsibility, educational institutions, voluntary organisations, government bodies, and individual families are making efforts to bring Universal Human Values (UHV) into everyday life. By sharing UHV and supporting its exploration and application, they help individuals and families develop right understanding, strengthen relationships, identify their physical needs, and contribute to harmonious and prosperous communities. National initiatives such as the National Service Scheme (NSS), National Cadet Corps (NCC), Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA), and Skill India Mission also encourage educational institutions to contribute to societal development. Such initiatives also earn points in NBA and NAAC evaluation. Similarly, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives provide opportunities for companies to contribute to community development and well-being.

Within this broader effort, village development offers a meaningful context for exploring how human values can be integrated into community life. This session brings together four experiences that illustrate distinct approaches to this endeavour:

1. Bhojhata, Bihar: A village-level initiative demonstrating how UHV can strengthen relationships, encourage community participation, and support the development of an Anand Gram (Blissful Village).

2. Shramik Bharti, Uttar Pradesh: Experiences of an NGO in rural development working towards sustainable livelihoods, natural farming, and community empowerment, with an emphasis on integrating human values into development activities.

3. Rajya Anand Sansthan, Madhya Pradesh: A government initiative promoting Anand (bliss), harmonious living, and community well-being through the Anand Gram approach and other community-based programmes.

4. IRAT, Madhya Pradesh: A family effort to bring UHV into everyday rural life through family harmony, value-based agriculture, community workshops, Parivar Sabha (family meeting), and Anand Gram development.

Although these initiatives differ in their settings and approaches, they share a common concern: making human well-being an integral part of development. Together, they illustrate how rural development can move beyond material and economic considerations to include right understanding, harmonious relationships, and the well-being of individuals, families, communities, and nature. The session will explore the efforts made, changes observed, challenges encountered, and possibilities for wider participation by educational institutions, organisations, and families.

These experiences point towards a broader vision of education as a means of societal transformation: preparing individuals not merely to be job-ready, but life-ready; enabling families to live with happiness and prosperity; and fostering communities that live in harmony with one another and with nature.

Ultimately, extending holistic, value-based education into community life can contribute to the emergence of a humane society and to global peace and harmony, with the well-being of all ensured generation after generation.