

## **Value Erosion in Organizations and Society : Diagnosis and Change through Value Clarification Interventions**

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*Based on data from Value Clarification workshops in a variety of settings, this paper presents a diagnosis of the perceived value erosion in organizations and society. Data shows a gap between the values people believe they hold, they want others to practice and the values seen as being practiced. Value clarification interventions, particularly at leadership levels are suggested to break the vicious circle of value erosion and initiate a change process in the desired directions.*

Awareness about the significance of beliefs, values and culture conducive to bringing out the best potential of people in organizations had begun at least four decades ago. Watson, Jr. in his book 'A Business and its Beliefs' based on his experiences at IBM wrote "I firmly believe that any organization, in order to survive and achieve success must have a sound set of beliefs on which it premises all its policies and actions. Next, I believe that the most important single factor in corporate success is faithful adherence to those beliefs" (Watson, Jr., 1963, p. 5). Peters and Waterman also said "Every excellent company we studied is clear on what it stands for, and takes the process of value shaping seriously. In fact, we wonder whether it is possible to be an excellent company without clarity on values and without having the right sorts of values" (Peters and Waterman, Jr., 1982, p. 280). White and DeVries (1990), based on years of research at the Centre for Creative Leadership on what makes leaders successful, identified personal values as one of the two main qualities for successful leaders. Collins and Porras, based on their research on successful habits of visionary companies pointed out that "Companies that enjoy enduring success have core values and a core purpose that remain fixed while their business strategies and practices endlessly adapt to a changing world" (Collins and Porras, 1994, p. 65).

In spite of evidences such as these, generally the relationship of values with organizational effectiveness and performance is not clearly seen or believed and the process of culture building is perceived as an idealistic or image-building exercise receiving peripheral, sporadic and low priority attention in many organizations. Often it starts and ends with creating a statement of organizational values. In management and leadership education also, concrete and hard headed subjects viz, technical knowledge, organizational structures, policies, strategies, marketing and finance, etc. receive much attention and values are generally dismissed and ignored as vague abstractions. In fact, the process of management education tends to cultivate to some extent, explicitly and partly unconsciously, values contrary to what people cherish (Jain, 2002). Kimber (1997) brings out a number of basic human value principles that underpin effective business practice and which have got lost in business education. Often people in organizations find a gap between the stated values and culture and what is practiced. They voice considerable dissatisfaction and disappointment with the lack of practice of the cherished values. At the social level, the phenomenon seems more hazy and associated with greater sense of powerlessness as well as dissatisfaction. The dynamics of co-existence or collision of the traditional family, cultural and spiritual values with the emerging values of the industrial society is complex and neither well understood nor dealt with in a way that it results in a sense of well-being.

In the midst of the general stance of neglect or helplessness related to values, however, there have also been attempts by some organizations to work towards the cultivation of desired values and building a certain chosen organizational culture. Also, the personal urge to create a sense of meaning and well being has brought a number of individuals to value clarification workshops/seminars, which I have designed and facilitated in-house, as well as in other professional settings.

Tannenbaum (1969) had identified the directions of movement, from personally less meaningful and organizationally less relevant values to newer ones in thirteen value areas. Interestingly, while giving the direction of these movements, in a footnote in his article 'Values, Man and Organizations', he also quoted the comment of a corporate executive "I think the perspective is wrong when the impression is created that these values are widespread. They are probably spreading from an infinitesimal fraction to a tiny fraction of the world's population, but at an accelerating rate." Even more than three decades after this paper was written, is the situation radically different or significantly optimistic? Based on the value clarification workshops, this paper provides some data to answer this question as well as some diagnosis of the situation for strengthening the movement in the desired directions.

## **Learning Events in Value Clarification Workshops**

Typically, in the value clarification workshops, with about 15-20 people, participants went through several steps of individual value clarification. At the first stage, they were asked to identify their five most important values without any inputs. In the second stage, they were given an instrument which lists 27 values, and they were asked to select 5 most important ones. At another stage, they also participated in a Value Auction (Smith, 1977) in which they bid for and buy certain items. Items at the auction relate to values concerning work, living, personal growth and society. They have a limited, specified budget available, which they can use in any way they like. A limited number of joint biddings are also allowed in this event. After the Auction and some conceptual inputs on the concept of values, they were once again asked to list their final understanding of their own values.

## ***Group Decision-making Events***

In addition to the individual value clarification exercises, there were several group decision-making events in which the participants are first asked to individually decide and then divided into groups. Groups were given the task of taking decisions based on value criteria. In various workshops two or more of such exercises were conducted. After taking group decisions, each group was asked to present the criteria used for the decision and the other groups were asked to identify values upheld by these decisions. In in-house workshops participants were also divided into groups to identify the values desirable for their organization to function effectively in the current environment. Exercises often used were 'Princess', 'Cave Rescue', 'Psychic Power Discovery' and 'Who to retain'. A brief description of each follows.

In the exercise 'Princess', the princess had been ordered by the Prince not to leave the castle under any circumstances. She went to meet her lover and was killed by a madman while crossing a bridge when she was coming back. She had tried to persuade the bridge keeper and boatmen to help her but they asked for money which she did not have. Her friend and lover also refused help. Participants were asked to give a decision as to who was most responsible for the death of the princess. In another exercise 'Cave Rescue,' the participants are asked to come to a group decision about the order in which six volunteers who had been stranded in a cave in a remote part of the country should be rescued. Certain personal details about each of them were made available. The rescue of one person was expected to take an hour, and it was feared that rising waters might affect the possibility of rescuing the rest. In 'Psychic Power Discovery' (Smith, 1977), the Psychic power is assumed to enable any person to know completely another person's thoughts and feelings. The use of this power is proposed for either all or none. Participants are asked to opt either for or against the use of this power after considering its implications on self-identity, interpersonal relations, marriage, racial and intergroup relations, and national and world politics. In the exercise 'Who to retain', an organization under financial distress has to take a decision about discontinuing the services of some of the employees. Participants were asked to rank them in the order in which they will be retained in the organization.

## ***Short Duration Seminars***

In short duration seminars on values in which generally a larger number of people participated, a different design was used. The whole group was divided into three groups and each group was given a different question to work on:

1. What are the five most important values you hold? (Similar to the first stage in the workshops)
2. What are the values you want people to practice but they often don't?
3. What are the values you see being pursued in organizations and society?

Individuals in the groups were first asked to list their own thoughts and then collate the group list without rejecting any one's items even if they are not generally agreed upon.

## **The Data from Workshops/Seminars**

This section presents data analysed from the learning events discussed above. While value clarification workshops were meant for helping people clarify their values and for organizations to build desired culture, the various

exercises and explorations help in diagnosing the macro level issues about values in organizations and society. Though the data has not been generated through scientific and systematic research process and may have limitations, but at another level, it is rich in content as the participants were often open and forthcoming and the deeper explorations, which followed, have provided significant learnings to understand the roots of the issues of incongruence and value erosion in organizations and society.

**Values of Individuals**

Table 1 below gives the highly ranked values from the data of individuals after three stages of value clarification and the auction. Since the workshops were of different duration and depth, all the stages were not used in all workshops. Hence though, data has been analyzed for 539 people in 27 groups, the stage II and stage III data is available for 429 and 185 people respectively. Most of the time items are grouped as they were stated by individuals. Some of the first stage items were shortened and grouped only if the meaning is same. Value auction data is also available from 27 groups. Ranking has been done based on the percentage frequency of their occurrence. Since people wrote five values, the percentage in the table will not total up to 100.

<b>Table 1. Most Frequently Stated Values by Individuals</b>						
Rank	Stage I		Stage II		Stage III	
	Value	% of people	Value	% of people	Value	% of people
1	Honesty and Truthfulness	47.4	Family happiness	51.2	Family happiness	100
2	Dedication	31.1	Achievement (Sense of Accomplishment, Mastery)	47	Health (being physically and mentally well)	47.5
3	Concern & Respect for others	25	Inner harmony (Honesty, Sincerity, Standing up to one's beliefs)	45	Achievement (Accomplishment, Excellence)	35.6
4	Family duty, Responsibility	22.6	Responsibility (Accountable for results)	33.1	Financial security	34
5	Sincerity	22	Freedom (Independence, Autonomy)	30.7	Success in profession	32.9

The above table shows clearly that the first level awareness of their own values which people hold is at an idealistic and global level more like the principles and maxims of life which appear good. Even though it is a response to an open-ended question without any structure, there is significant concentration on certain value items viz., honesty, dedication, etc. In the second stage, the most highly ranked items tend to move towards day-to-day behaviour. However, still people choose inner harmony, which is defined similar to first stage items of honesty, integrity, etc. In the third stage, the things take a very different shape with the day-to-day life and self-oriented items, gaining high ranks and the idealistic items not finding a place in the first five ranks.

**Values in Action (Value Auction Data)**

Table 2 gives the value auction priorities analyzed from data of the Auction with 27 groups. These are the values chosen as priorities by individuals getting reflected in the group's top bid for an item. The ranking has been done by two different methods. One on the basis of the total amount the group spent on the item and the other by analyzing six most highly bid items of all the groups and ranking the items on the basis of their frequency of occurrence in the highly bid items.

**Table 2. Most Frequently Highly Bid Items in Value Auction**

Item	Rank based on amount spent	Rank based on no. of times in top 6 items
Success in chosen profession or vocation	1	1
A Happy family relationship	2	2
Freedom to do what I want	3	3
Freedom within my work setting	4	-
Life time financial security	5	5*
Satisfying and fulfilling marriage		-
Complete Self-confidence and positive outlook in life		4
Long life free of illness		5*

Note: If Happy family relationship is combined with satisfying and fulfilling marriage, it becomes the top ranking item by both methods. \*These items had the same frequency.

The table 2 shows high priority items even more in the direction of personal success, wealth, personal life and comfort and the idealistic global level values listed earlier are almost non-existent in the priority. Approximately 23% of the resources were spent on the first two items of success and happy family relationship and another about 18% in the next three ranks. Most people managed to get only one or two items of their choice and only if they were focused on a few. Participants acknowledged that the process of the Auction exercise has happened to them and is likely to repeat in real life where the conditions of limited resource and competition often exist.

***Values held, wanted and pursued***

Table 3a and 3b give the most frequently listed items with their ranks from 28 groups in which about 1000 people participated and responded to the three different questions. Three of the groups were in USA. However, the data for Indian and US groups on these questions shows no significant differences in patterns (Jain, 2001, p. 744).

**Table 3a. Most Frequently Listed Values by Groups**

Rank	Values we hold		Values we want people to practice but they often don't	
	Value	No. of times listed*	Value	No. of times listed*
1	Honesty & Truthfulness	73	Honesty & Truthfulness	34
2	Compassion & Respect	49	Respect & Concern for others	30
3	Dedication	38	Openness, Transparency & Straight forwardness	28
4	Loyalty	24	Sincerity	16
5	Discipline	20	Loyalty	14

\* Since some items, which are highly similar in meaning have been grouped and they were listed separately by the same group, the numbers may add up to more than the number of groups.

The above data shows that the values held are similar to the value analyzed from the individual data. The main difference is that the person-oriented items of compassion and respect for others appear more prominent on the whole than in the individual values. In individual items, family had fourth place while here loyalty has fourth rank. The values we want others to hold but they often don't are quite similar to values we hold. But the person-oriented item transparency/straight forwardness has third rank while it is not even in top five in the values people themselves hold. Therefore the expectation from others is higher than self in this aspect.

**Table 3b. Most Frequently Listed Values by Groups**

Values we see being pursued in organizations and society

Rank	Desirable/Positive Values	No. of items listed	Undesirable/Negative Items	No. of items listed
1	Honesty & Truthfulness	20	Selfishness & Self centeredness	22
2	Dedication	15	Corruption & Dishonesty	18
3	Commitment	13	Materialistic gains : greed for money, profit making, etc.	16
4	Loyalty	12	Lack of transparency & Hypocrisy	14
5	Sincerity	11	Indiscipline & Irresponsibility	10

The values seen as pursued are the only area where a number of items also appear which are apparently negative practices apart from some of the values held. In all the groups that I worked with, only in this question such items were consistently listed which are self-interest related and generally seen as negative practices. The most frequently listed value here is selfishness and self-centredness which is the opposite of concern/compassion. The desired values of dedication, honesty, etc. are also listed but much less often than in the values we hold.

### **Values in Groups**

Table 4 gives the values upheld by group decisions and the values desired for the organizations. The dimensions identified in the table have been entirely from the data and explorations in the workshops. Even a large part of the words were used by the participants in the process of explorations in the workshops. The list is not exhaustive but covers the directions which repeatedly occurred in exercises as well as group work on desirable values. Broadly opposite values have been juxtaposed.

<b>Table 4. Values Upheld and Desired by Groups</b>	
Values upheld by group decisions	Values desirable for the organization
Obedience/Duty: Self-denial, Acting on fear, Expectations.	Freedom/Empowerment: Autonomy, Independence, Proactivity
Security/Safety: Cautiousness, Risk avoidance, Farsightedness, being always right	Achievement/Excellence: Risk taking, Courage, Learning from mistakes
Self-sufficiency/Self protection	Concern, Support and Helpfulness
Conformity	Diversity
Distrust: Cleverness, Shrewdness, Judiciousness	Trust/Mutuality
Status quo, Following traditions	Change, Responsiveness to change
Self-actualization: Self respect, Valuing life	Output/Productivity: Usefulness to society
Technical ability/Knowledge	Leadership and Managerial competence
Secrecy, Privacy, Keeping one's feelings Unknown, Harmony	Openness, Confrontation, Straight-forwardness, Transparency, Authenticity
Loyalty/Duty: Fidelity, Responsibility, Following rules, Procedures	Experimentation/Innovation: Responding to self and situation, Creativity, Dynamism.

Similar decisions were taken by groups with the exception of one or two rare groups over the years. More often the rankings of a small minority of individuals in the total group were towards the desired direction of values but most of the times either the individuals changed their point of view or were prevailed upon by the majority. Values upheld in exercises are likely to be the kind of practices often prevailing in organizations and groups. Quite a few of the values desired in Table 4 are in the nature of directions of movement identified by Tannenbaum (1969) and the values upheld by groups are similar to the state away from which the movement was envisaged.

**Main Patterns from the Data:** The data presented above mainly shows:

- The gap between the values people think they hold, what they practice and what others see them as practicing.
- There is a tremendous gap between the values wanted, seen as practiced and also the values upheld by groups and the desired organizational values.
- There seems to be a tug of war between traditional/family ideals, emerging values in the changing society and the practices of people. At an individual level, the gap between practices and ideals seems to move

towards upholding the self-interest related choices of success, family happiness, etc. and at the group level the traditional concepts of stability, obedience, security, safety, etc.

### **The story repeats itself**

The data has been generated in work which has evolved and taken place over the last 18 years in many groups, but there is such similarity in the story which repeat itself in every group that even if we gathered a large group of 500 to 1000 people in one place at one time, the picture is not likely to change to any significant extent. The gap by itself is not the only issue. It is also commonly associated with feelings of frustration, helplessness, powerlessness and disappointment. It is often believed that we cannot practice the values that we want to, because of circumstances, constraints, pressures etc. in work organizations. At the societal level, it is generally agreed that there is a general degeneration/erosion of “values” in society but there is also an unstated assumption that we (or our organization) is the victim of it and is neither the cause of it nor can make a difference. People also focus on rationalizing why they can't practice the values rather than practicing what they can. Basically the unspoken and unarticulated preference is to be part of the problem rather than paying the price for breaking out of it and attempting change. Values are consciously or unconsciously important to people but the energy around the issue of values is focused on getting helpless, frustrated and judgemental towards others' lack of practice of what I want rather than what I want to practice and enabling myself to do the same.

### **Impact on organization/society**

What dynamics does this picture generate in organizations and society? The common concerns in our society today which have connection with values are:

- Pursuit of wealth without adequate contribution, consumerism
- Terrorism, communalism and violence
- Widening disparity between rich and poor
- Environmental degradation, pollution
- Lack of discipline and civic sense in public settings
- Widespread corruption, even by people in top leadership
- absence of role models in leadership

At the organizational level, the patterns are:

- Individually, people believe that their career progress is adversely impacted if they practice the values of openness, honesty and do not engage in manipulation, dishonesty, etc.
- Perceived impossibility of combining business success with desired values. Examples of corruption by reputed corporations
- Competition and struggle for survival determining choices
- Disappointment amongst people with the practice of values and culture
- Dissatisfaction even amongst senior professionals in spite of material and career progress.

If we juxtapose the patterns in the data from workshops with the organizational and social issues, a connection can be seen. Individuals' pursuit of wealth and self-interest for example, pursued by a significant section of people forms a social reality which becomes the milieu in which the individuals ultimately have to function. This also becomes a vicious circle which moves from individual choices to the groups, organization and to society with multiplying effect and at any point of time the system finds it difficult to practice values because individuals in it are not doing it and the individuals unable to do it because of the system.

### **Why does this story repeat itself?**

Why does something, which is of so much concern apparently to so many people, not move in the direction they want? Why does this story occur over and over again? Explorations in the workshops over the years have provided some learnings about the mystery behind this phenomenon. Some of the emerging repetitive patterns at the root of this phenomenon are as follows:

*Lack of awareness about one's own values and practice*

Most of the people, almost all of us perhaps, are not fully clear about our own values. Values are often also clouded or covered by the expectations, demands and the need to keep up with the Jones's. People state their values in terms of things which are ideal and look good but are really not aware of what their real values are. In traditional pre-industrial societies, the values and norms of the society determined behaviour. Today, we have stopped following many of the given norms of the society as they cannot or need not be followed in the current systems, but not clarified our own values or developed the values required today. People are also unaware of the values they are upholding through their decisions. The gap partly stems from the lack of clarity of the concept of values itself and partly from a cultivated blindness to the actual values being practiced as compared to the values stated.

### ***Choices and decisions often based on habits, fears and expectations of others, rather than values***

One of the reasons for the gap between values stated and practiced is that in a good part of our day-to-day life, we do not focus on our values, and even amongst values, our priority values. Many decisions of life are taken as given because that is the way it has been and that is the way it is safe or acceptable to others rather than taking the courage to do what we really value. Also values are considered something sacrosanct and not to be brought into day-to-day life. Most people believe in progressive values of trust, openness, concern for people, but these values get sidetracked in the pursuit of unquestioned goals of success which it is believed in the current world can only be achieved by compromising on values. Therefore, the end values as well as means values begins to change the priority and the values which were either not in the list or were very low on priority get practiced.

### ***Differing standards for self and others***

While still the intellectual concept of value is ideal, this idealism is largely expected to be practiced by other people. People tend to judge themselves (quite liberally, apparently) by their good intentions and excuse their own lack of practice of values as compelled by circumstances, but evaluate others harshly by their practices. People see others' practice through the critical eyes of idealism and expectations and feel acutely about the gap between what they want and what is happening. However, they either fail to be aware of the gap between their own cherished and practiced values or see it with the heart full of helplessness, powerlessness and constraints. End values/goals are taken as given constraints within which the cherished values will be practiced. But others are evaluated on one's own cherished values. Therefore, the gap between what they hold, they want others to practice and they see being pursued is quite significant. This judgemental stance also results in frustration with other people.

### ***Tendency to avoid pain/loss rather than seek meaning and well-being***

It is generally found that people make their choices to avoid the possibility of pain rather than to pursue the values they cherish. They want to practice their values when they will not perhaps have to pay much of a price for it. McCoy (1983) brings out this dynamics in his Parable of an Indian Sadhu whom he and his fellow climbers met during their expedition to Himalayas. He quotes his fellow climber, "I feel that what happened with the sadhu is a good example of the breakdown between the individual ethic and the corporate ethic. No one person was willing to assume ultimate responsibility for the sadhu. Each was willing to do his bit just so long as it was not too inconvenient. When it got to be a bother, everyone just passed the buck to someone else and took off" (McCoy, 1983, p. 104, 106). In the process of avoiding pain and unhappiness and not wanting to pay a price, we do not pursue what is meaningful and therefore do not also experience the joy and sense of well-being. People seem to lack the clarity and wisdom to prioritize values, to pay the price for their values or to integrate the practice of more than one value. Traditional maxims and ideals exist side by side with an awareness of newer progressive values, but practices are driven by fears, needs and assumed consequences. The process values of stability, security, conformity, secrecy, cautiousness, and self first operate in action as opposed to openness, trust, sharing, giving, risk taking, supporting and helping, etc.

### ***People making choices based on values different from others, experience themselves alone***

Making value choices is risky when they do not match with the prevailing norms of the system. To be able to take the courageous step, people need some support but more often than not, it is not available or felt which makes the task harder. Not only that, if some people do take the risk of pursuing values different from the norms of the system, they often experience themselves alone, alienated or end up paying a disproportional price. In this process,

some of the people who feel strongly about values, lose their zeal because of the pressures of the group and loneliness.

***People want others to change the system, but their own choices support the status quo***

People want change in the way things are but expect that someone else rather than themselves should bring out change. They want to start practicing the cherished values when it becomes a little safer and it has already become a norm. People generally cherish openness in relationships in organizations, but they are afraid of being open for the fear of consequences. Choices of groups in Psychic Power Discovery exercise in the workshops almost always reflected a preference for not letting one's true feelings known and there were fears and assumptions about other people in being open. However, people expect others to be more open and wait for others to take the first step. In this process, they in effect, keep supporting lack of openness.

***Blindness to group processes and larger entity***

In a number of group exercises, instead of groups adding value to the explorations and coming to decisions with clarity of values, majority prevailed over minority. Not listening to minority ideas and taking decisions which did not support and uphold the stated values was a pattern repeated in almost all groups with just a few exceptions. Quite to their own surprise, people found and accepted that the values upheld by their groups were contrary to what they really thought they were upholding. The basic reason for this process is the blindness to the impact one's own behaviour has on the group, group processes and lack of skills in influencing them. Similarly, people are often unaware of the connection between their actions and the larger system – whether group, organization or society and have a cultivated stance of insignificance, powerlessness and being a victim in the system. This blindness keeps perpetuating the actions which are creating the process of value erosion which no one likes or owns.

***People hold incompatible values and often their materialistic and self-related values take priority***

It is not uncommon for people to list all very good things as values. For example, success, kindness, concern for others, family happiness, meaning of life, wealth etc. but they cannot be pursued all together, at least not all at the same time. Most often, when very incompatible values are put together, in decisions and actions, the values related to self-interest and immediate task gain priority over the values related to higher state of human existence. Many times people say that even though they are successful, materially well off, rising up in their careers, they do not feel a sense of satisfaction and well being because they do not see the scope for pursuing their values or they have to do things against their values. They do not see the scope for integrating the two. Gentile (2001) in his study of management students brings out that a high percentage of students believe that they will have to take decisions during their business career that will conflict with their values and most of them also believe that they will look for another job rather than trying to work within an organization whose values clash with their own.

***End values not supported by process values and skills***

For being able to practice a value effectively, we generally need to cultivate some other values or skills, which support it. More often people are clear about values that relate to their end state of existence, for example, Team work or participative leadership, but they are neither conscious of the process values which will lead towards the accomplishment of this value for example, trust, openness, respect for others' competence, interpersonal skills etc., nor the skills that will be essential to practice it viz. group observation, listening, facilitating groups etc.

***Unquestioned pursuit of materialistic goals, not balancing with spiritual Goals/Values***

There seem to be some unstated goals/end values of success, career growth, wealth etc. which are taken as given without questioning. In the pursuit of the unstated end values, the stated ideal or cherished values are not seen as congruent. Apparently it is believed that success has to be achieved at the cost of values. Being rooted in materialistic goals, values are sacrificed in pursuit of these goals and thus the vicious circle goes on. Sometimes it is difficult to conclude whether people lack a sense of well being and are unhappy because they are not practicing their real idealistic values or their real value is materialistic but there is a lip service being paid to ideals and the dissatisfaction being voiced as a crutch to continue the practices that bring some desired materialistic results. At higher levels in organizations, pursuit of materialistic goals at the cost of values is not really a survival need but



more of a habit or addiction nurtured by lack of clarity of values. If people were even to some extent rooted in spirituality, it could help them in defining the limits of the materialistic goals for their own cherished values.

The above patterns have implications. These patterns strongly indicate the hurdles and bottlenecks in building the desired culture in organizations as well as personal barriers which people face in pursuing their own values. At the root of the process of value erosion is -- lack of clarity about the concept of values, one's own values, inability to prioritize, the lack of courage and willingness to pay the price for one's values, lack of awareness of the impact of one's actions on the system and the lack of skills to pursue one's values. These factors together strengthen each other's impact and it becomes almost impossible for people to recognize where the process began and that they exist in their own attitudes, beliefs and actions.

### **Interventions for change**

Generally values do not find a place in early education but even when they do in some institutions, it is in the form of religion, moral values or spirituality. Occasionally, one finds optional courses on ethics and social responsibility in management institutes which take more of a prescriptive and normative mode than helping the management graduates to clarify their own values and value practice before they come out of management schools and start impacting organizations through their decisions. Any talk about values is generally perceived as value preaching rather than value clarification. Chakraborty (1991) has done considerable work bringing out the relevance of Indian ethos and scriptures into management. While this has its own value, it does not address the issue of incongruence between the stated and the practiced values. On the contrary, it is likely to increase the gap, till the inner processes, which perpetuate the gap are addressed. My work with a large number of people in a spiritual institution showed that even people who were highly aware of spiritual values and deeply rooted in them through their practices needed value clarification inputs to break the inner barriers which were obstructing their practice of values.

A Value Clarification course typically addresses these issues. It is not about preaching of values, ethics or religion but people clarifying their own personal values, examining the congruence between their cherished and practiced values, knowing the impact of their decisions on their own lives and organization culture and developing the courage to practice the values that they cherish. In Value Clarification workshops, at various stages, important learnings emerge for individuals and groups to be able to make a change in their lives as individuals, start relating differently to organizational reality and influencing it. A glimpse of the learnings stated by the participants is given below:

- ❖ Not enough to talk also check whether you are practicing.
- ❖ Gap between stated and practiced values was unknown to self.
- ❖ Principles are many, values are few.
- ❖ Learnt to differentiate between end state and process values
- ❖ Shaking out of an existing value is tough work.
- ❖ Affiliation groups are created out of shared values.
- ❖ You may have to prioritize, choose. If you seriously prioritize, you can achieve it.
- ❖ Cherished values change in a competitive situation.
- ❖ It is difficult to achieve all the values you desire, you have to sacrifice something.
- ❖ To avoid frustration, you should know your own values.

As individuals and organizations start operating closer to the desired values, it will facilitate social change. Therefore, the strategy of organizational and social change suggested here is through widespread change in individuals and their behaviour. If people who are influential and in influential positions in organizations go through Value Clarification exercises and make changes in their practice, the impact will be larger and faster and also less painful in terms of the price to be paid. If a significant number of people engage in such exercises, this vicious circle can be converted into a strategic spiral of change in the desired direction.

In a society driven by the perceived imperatives of the organized, corporate and industrial sector, the practices, if not real values are getting directed by business organizations to a significant extent and therefore, these organizations can play a role in change. The corporations and other organizations need to play a role in helping people clarify values, evolve values through participation of people and create mechanisms and practices for rewarding value practice. Watson brings out this point effectively "Businessmen aren't the only ones at fault, and

they can't effect this change alone; every other element of our society is going to have to do its part. But someone is going to have to set a standard and this, I believe, we businessmen can do" (Watson, Jr., 1963, p. 106).

### ***Changes Expected through Workshops***

*Clarity of Values.* People beginning to recognize what their real values are and what they are practicing. They can also begin to define their values in less idealistic terms to start with and bring their practice nearer to the stated values. They are also likely to become less judgemental and caught with expectations from others

*Awareness of the Priority of one's Values.* The Value Auction brings out that the willingness to pay a disproportionately high price for the priority values, having focus on a few values rather than too many, collaboration when needed and possible leads to greater satisfaction. In contrast, wanting to have everything in life, sticking to fixed plans, not wanting to collaborate and wanting to buy things which are available cheap leads to choices away from values. These learnings can be translated into real life in relation to pursuit of values.

*Courage and Willingness to pay the Price.* The process of value clarification in the workshops generally makes people develop greater courage and willingness to pay the price for the values, which they stand for instead of expecting to practice their values when the circumstances become conducive.

*Setting Goals in Congruence with Values.* Data shows that most often, the issue is not whether people have the right values but how much of their life actions are governed by values and how much by the unquestioned habits and goals and expectations of others. Value clarification can help people develop the clarity and courage to run much more of their day-to-day life around their own values. People learn to set their goals in work and life in congruence with what they value rather than have some given goals, which they see no possibility of pursuing along with their values. They also realize the need to develop process values and skills congruent with their end values.

*Awareness of the Larger Picture.* They begin to see the whole picture and the connection between their own behaviour and the processes in groups, organizations and society. They also understand the processes underlying value incongruence and value erosion and their own part in creating and perpetuating them. This can help people move away from the stance of seeing themselves as helpless victims.

*Leadership In Clarifying Values and Role Modeling.* People in leadership positions can learn to help others clarify values rather than attempting to impose them. Also, they become better role models by demonstrating the practice of their own priorities. They can also play a role in developing and evolving a shared value system and vision through a process of participation and include value considerations in business decisions.

*Understanding and Respecting Other People's Values.* People develop a sense of understanding and empathy with others. They find that they are not alone in their concerns and struggle, there are people they can talk to. Others are not generally immoral or unethical which in their judgement they tended to believe. They develop empathy as well as self-esteem – a prerequisite for value-oriented life. They also learn how to work with and negotiate with people around different values.

*Recognizing the Current Reality and Working for the Ideal.* It is difficult to conclude whether the values of people are less ideal or only the practice. Perhaps it is both and in different degrees with different people. However, It can be concluded with a reasonable degree of certainty that if people clarified their values, the gap will reduce and the practice will be closer to the desired values. It may eventually evolve in the direction of the ideals rather than by paying lip service to the ideals and continuing with practices far removed from them. Value clarification process can help in accepting the real values, recognizing the gap between practices and ideals and evolving towards the ideals. Concept of *full value* (Smith, 1977) and *value construction process* (Bargo, 1980) can be used to strengthen the chosen values for self and for cultivating some of the values chosen by the groups as desirable.

Clare W. Graves (1970), after his decades of research on Human Values wrote, "For many people the prospect of the future is dimmed by what they see as a moral breakdown of our society at both the public and private level. My research, over more than 20 years as a psychologist interested in human values, indicates that something is indeed happening to human values, but it is not so much a collapse in the fiber of man as a sign of human health and intelligence. My research indicates that man is learning that values and ways of living which were good for him at one period in his development are no longer good because of the changed condition of his existence. He is recognizing that the old values are no longer appropriate, but he has not yet understood the new" (Graves, 1970, p. 131). Graves also talks about the possibility of human beings evolving to higher levels of existence in the process of growth. Sheth (1995) says "The current wave of concern over degeneration of values is explained in relation to the unprecedented complexity of today's global society and the socio-economic challenges posed by this complexity for individuals at all levels." Awareness and concern about the gap between desired and practice which the data presented in this paper shows is a positive indicator of the possibility of arresting the value incongruence and

erosion. In today's world, people are not willing to have their lives driven by traditions or norms of family, organization or society but they have not yet developed clarity of what they really want and the courage and capacity to practice it. They need to clarify their own values and play a part in shaping and evolving the values of organizations and society. Gap between ideals and practice will perhaps always exist and it should but it essential to start the process of value congruence and development as opposed to value erosion.

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