# CHANGING FACES OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN VALUES DURING COVID-19

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**ABSTRACT**

Combatting the deadliest Corona carnage, I find it miraculous that I am still in the flesh and can reflect upon the changing faces of education and human values evoked from the pandemic. The study hypothesizes that not only current mode of education but more importantly, India's age-old socio-cultural value system (Sanatan values) went in peril during the pandemic. Therefore, this study delves into understanding the adverse impacts of Corona on education and Sanatan values in India. In doing so, the study piloted first to understand the ground realities of education and values pervading across the country by using three data gathering tools namely document analysis, observation, and interview. Taking stock of the perilous conditions of education and values, the study also conducted a perception survey with special reference to value crisis in which 150 respondents (50 intellectuals of Delhi-NCR, 50 relatives of the deceased, and 50 Covid survivors) were selected to share their painful experiences. The survey also tried to understand what kind of perceptions the respondents have formed about the people and society. Finally, the study forwards 12 suggestive measures to overcome the explored challenges.

**Keywords:** *Education , Human Values , Covid-19*

**PRELUDE**

In the midst of the unprecedented humanitarian crises caused by Covid-19 like economic crisis, education crisis, job crisis, family crisis, food crisis, value crisis, sensitivity crisis, leadership crisis, and many more, the present study delves into education crisis and value crisis as they play a pivotal role in the progression of human life. This study hypothesizes that modern mode of education and human values have substantially crumbled and the commoners feel stranded in a whirlpool of multifarious incessant sufferings for lack of well-crafted strategies to meet these two challenges caused by Corona. Assessing the ground realities, the study makes first a pilot study of the status quo of education and values in our social settings. Subsequently, the study has collected required data by using three important data gathering tools to ascertain the facts emanating from the pilot study. Analyzing the collected data, the study reveals several striking facts as to current mode of education and human values. From remedial perspective, the study also forwards 18 recommendations to overcome the problems under discussion.

**A WALK IN THE PAST**

It was January 30, when India reported its first case of Corona in Kerala's Thrissur district in the form of a student who had returned home for a vacation from China's Wuhan University. Unlike many developing and developed countries, where calls to protective gear were ignored, India stood up firm before the deadly virus would have devoured thousands of lives silently. The monstrous Corona sneaked into India to unleash multidimensional havoc on a critical note as the country was already engulfed in the outrageous flames of NRC (National Register of Citizens) protest and the ensuing communal riots in the national capital Delhi. With little time to introspect and retrospect over the national issues, the countrymen were slipped into the most nefarious crisis mode which can be broadly seen in two parts or waves as follows:

**FIRST WAVE OF CORONA**

In the first wave, India managed the pandemic quite efficiently by clamping the longest and harshest lockdowns. Bearing the pangs of four consecutive lockdowns laced with dogmatic foresight and clamped without well-crafted strategies, the vulnerable populace (migrant workers) of India were wailing everywhere over their perilous conditions cropped up by Corona.



Figure-1: Exodus of Migrant Workers after the Announcement of the First Lockdown

**VEDA'S**
JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE (JOELL)
*An International Peer Reviewed (Refereed) Journal*
Impact Factor (SJIF) 4.092          http://www.joell.in

Vol.8
Spl.Issue 1
(July) 2021

Deprived of food and bereft of any hope, they questioned the country after the first lockdown, "should we fight starvation or Corona". Despite the government's periodic assurance and sporadic support of food and shelter, they felt themselves in the lurch and sensed that their death is imminent of starvation if not of Corona. The situation remained worsening. Seeing no help from any quarter, they trusted their feet more than helping hands of the government or NGOs and left for their homes on foot. This was one of the greatest feats shown by commoners in the history of mankind as courting death, injuries, and so much sufferings, the migrants travelled the distance of thousand kilometers to reach their homes. Pertinently, the feat of a 15 year old girl, Jyoti from Bihar is worth mentioning here who cycled for 7 days covering the distance of 1200 Km from Delhi to Darbhanga with her injured father riding pillion. But the irony is such a feat that is equal to the world's longest cycle race went unheeded and remained confined to newsrooms and newspapers only.



Figure-2: Lionhearted Bihar Girl Jyoti cycled for 1,200 km taking injured father.

Anyhow, not all were lucky enough like Jyoti to reach their destinations. Many died in road accidents; many died of hunger; and some died of fatigue.

Figure-3: 16 Migrant Workers Crushed to Death by a Speeding Train in Aurangabad

The Figure-3 reminds us of the ill-fated day of 8th May 2020 when 16 migrants for not being caught and punished by police took railway track to reach their destinations. But luck was not on their side as they were run over by a speeding train after 36 kilometers' tiring walk. Apart from several appalling casualties in which more than 500 migrants lost their lives in road accidents, the people in power proved no less in inflicting physical and mental injuries to commoners for flouting half-baked Covid protocols. The migrants were made hop and crawl in the scorching heat for taking roads to their homes.



Figure-4: Migrants Hopping and Crawling on the Road as Punishment

## SECOND WAVE OF CORONA

Despite the categorical guidelines of the government, the people went in relaxed mode quitting the habit of using face masks and physical distancing. Here, I can say that the second wave in India did not come rather was invited by us.



Figure-5: Kumbh Proving Atom Bomb of Corona

Unaware of the fact that any congregation becomes the chief cause of mass infections, the Jamatis in the first wave proved themselves the chief cause of surge in the Covid cases; so did the Naga Sadhus of kumbh in the second wave. So should election rallies of 2021 be held responsible for the Corona carnage.

## FIVE PHOBIAS SPROUTED FROM THE CORONA PANDEMIC IN INDIA

If Corona took a heavy toll on our lives, it also caused five unprecedented phobias namely Corophobia, Xenophobia, Islamophobia, Hospitophobia, and Psychophobia.

*Corophobia*: The term corophobia here simply means *fear of catching Corona*. This phobia evolved as a result of frequent use of Covid related terms and phrases like *social distancing*, *quarantine*, *isolation ward*, *suspected patient*, *crime* and *FIR* (under the Epidemic Disease Act 1897), *lockdown, testing positive*, *fear of developing corona like symptoms, fear of being in contact of asymptomatic patient*, *lack of ventilator, lack of oxygen, real N95 mask*, *real sanitizer, shortage of medicine, shortage of vaccine, recurrence of Corona*, *infection carrier*, *containment zone*, *imminent death*, *deprivation of last rites, etc.*. Due to corophobia, the people preferred to be in captive rather than going for tests, committed suicides to avert social stigma, fled from hospitals and quarantine centres, attacked teams of health workers, ignored suspected close and distant relatives showing almost no compassion, sympathy, or empathy towards them.

*Xenophobia*: In its global spread of Covid-19, the Corona not only paralyzed human life but brought with it a phobia called Xenophobia meaning the fear of catching Corona by getting in touch with people and products of China.

*Islamophobia*: This term was ingrained in our cognition through some foreign news write-ups after the international Islamic missionary movement called Tablighi Jamaat held a mass religious congregation in Delhi. I do not see any remarkable trace of Islamophobia in India. Yes, there was an ire over the non-cooperation of some Jamaatis in the detection campaign of Corona as they attacked visiting team of health workers sporadically in the country. Thus, Islamophobia existed to some extent in the first wave.

*Hospitophobia*: Hospitophobia here means fear of losing one's life after getting admitted in hospital. People are panic-stricken to think whether they will get bed with adequate oxygen in hospital; whether will they die or will be killed; whether they will be sexually abused; whether their body organs will be stolen, and so on as the country reported several cases of rape, molestation, death in the absence of oxygen in several premier hospitals of India.

*Psychophobia*: Psychophobia here means waking up with the same panic attacks every morning- whether my oximeter is original or fake, whether my medicines are original or fake, whether my sanitizer and mask are effective or not; whether they will do my last rites properly or not, whether the vaccine will create antibody in my body or not, etc.

Under this horrendous shroud of mistrust, this study firstly delves into identifying nature of value crisis that India underwent in the past 18 months followed by the findings of the perceptions elicited from 150 respondents. Finally, the article forwards remedial measures to restore our Sanatan values to see a better species of human with moral values.

### VALUE CRISIS

If the first wave witnessed issues of crippling heath care systems, education management, and other humanitarian crises related to migrants; the second wave witnessed not only the unprecedented deaths but also the unprecedented death of human values. Corona was no more a matter of debate in terms of whether it spread or was spread. But what corona has germinated on sociocultural front is definitely a matter of debate for us. We shall hardly forget, how our values substantially crumbled and the commoners were left in a myriad of humanitarian issues.

With the announcement of the first lockdown on 24th March, 2020, the black marketeers came in their elements causing huge shortage of masks, sanitizers, food items, medicines, etc. and selling them at exorbitant prices. The worse came to the worst in the second wave when the land of great sages and seers that always echoed the welfare shloka like

(सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः। सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः।सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु। मा कश्चित् दुःख भाग्भवेत्॥)

(*May all be at peace; May no one suffer from illness, May all see opulence; May no one suffer.*)

was witnessing strangulations of vital codes of ethics, morality, and Sanatan values. With black-marketing of oxygen, oximeter, medicines, vaccines, oxygen-beds, ambulance-service, the commoners also questioned skewed data of death toll, and incomplete last rites of the deceased.

Most grievously, our values went deep down the drain when we learnt about several cases of rape and molestation of female Covid patients and female attendants in many hospitals. But they went unheeded in the commotion of Corona. *How can we call it a Corona pandemic? For me, it is a sinister pandemic because the*

*corona-caused deaths could have been halved had we not lost our values and civic sense.* Why to blame any government or any administration? Dear countrymen, a government or an administration is not a separate or distinct entity. It comprises each one of us. Hence, we all ought to take onus for a government being corrupt or honest. One of the main causes of today's humanitarian crisis is we have learnt to live with compromised values. And, this is the statement of the problem for the present discussion as part of which a perception study was carried out to explore the degree of observance of 24 human values which were found to be in peril during the pandemic.

Value, often synonymous with human value, is a multidimensional socio-cultural construct that expects a human to be humane to live a happy and harmonious life. Despite stratified social structure with two broad linguistic compositions: *Indo-Aryan* and *Dravidian*, a true Indian is expected to practice the stated 24 human values as they are analogous to India's national identity on socio-cultural front. Although, these values and ethics evolved from time immemorial and remained idiosyncratic to Sanatan Bharat, the modern India under the influence of alien culture has reported a sharp decline in the observance of the stated values as shown in the bar chart below:
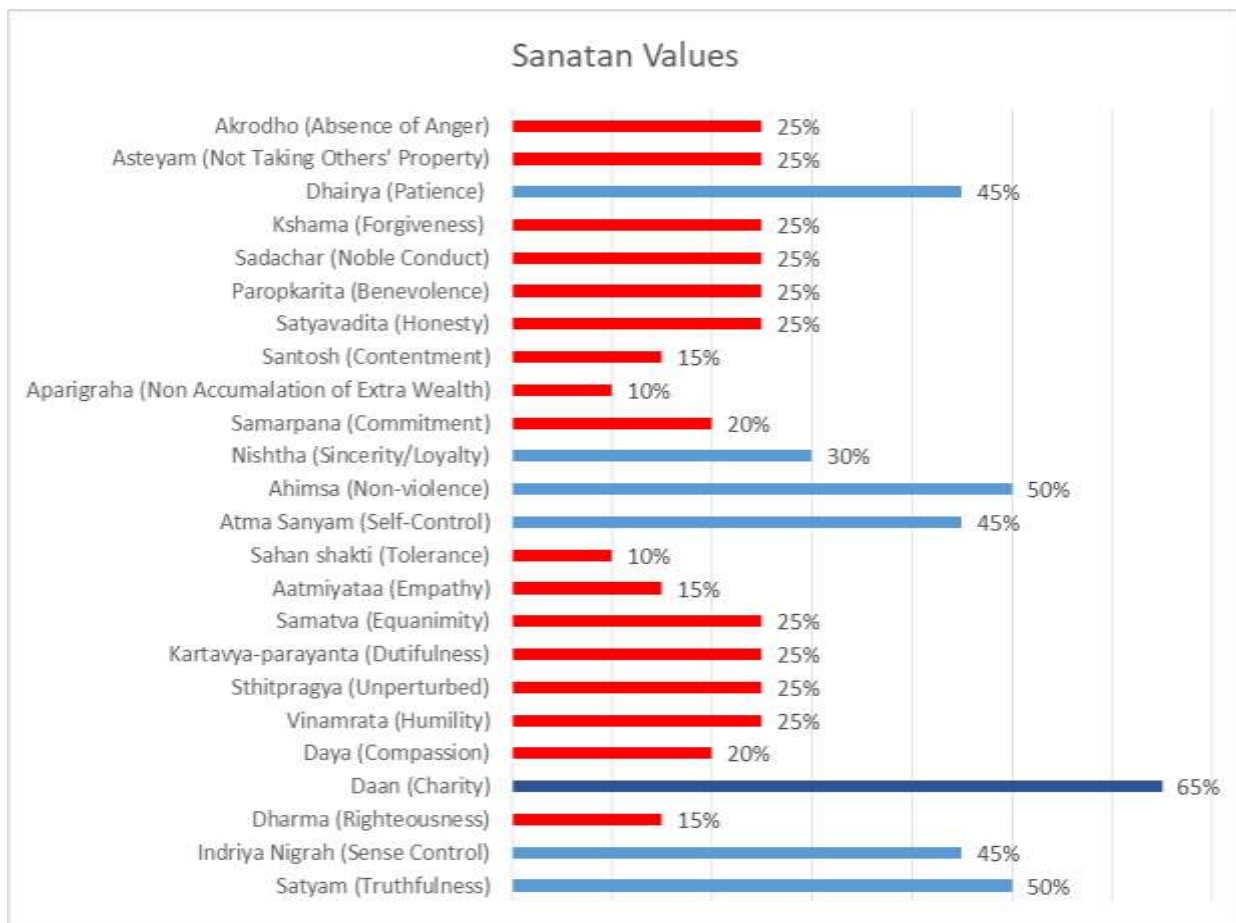


There are two noteworthy facts surfacing in the above bar chart. First, according to the respondents, out of 24 human values and civic ethics, 17 values are being observed up to 25% only (as shown in red). Second, only 7 values are observed in the range of 30% to 65 %. The most notable fact in the bar chart is not even a single value is observed up to 100%. This finding is very disturbing as it can be deemed as the death of our core

values like *akrodho, asteyam, Kshama, sadachar, paropkarita, satyavadita, santosh, aparigraha, samarpana, sahan shakti, aatmiyataa, samatva, kartavya-parayanta, sthitipragya, vinamrata, daya,* and *dharma*.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO OVERCOME VALUE CRISIS

From remedial perspectives, the study forwards six suggestive measures to lead a life of peace and prosperity.

1. Values must be talked if not taught.
2. For stable internalization of values, students from the age of 5 to 25 need to be in the companion of valued parents and teachers.
3. Like vaccination was produced and jabbed in a short span of time, so is the need to produce, imbibe, and radiate desirable values to save the mankind.
4. Redesign our value-system that could also give us psychic, spiritual or aesthetic strength to live in harmony with nature.
5. To get rid of our dystopian society filled with paradoxical stances, all the regulatory bodies need to prioritize human values above the rest.
6. The people need to understand that eradicating Corona will require cooperation not segregation among us.

### EDUCATION CRISIS

It goes without saying that Covid-19 across the globe has grounded human lives to a standstill and India is no exception. Causing multiple crises surrounding human lives, Corona has paralyzed our academia too. And, the education crisis can be seen more precisely as crisis of online education. After the imposition of lockdown and induction of *Online Education*, an annoying question that started perplexing us is "*Does currently adopted technology-driven online education indicate a point of departure from offline or on-campus education?*" The answer, to my mind, will be 'NO' for various reasons. The present article, therefore, delves into decoding the potential causes of why online education cannot compete or be at par with on-campus education. Although, we embraced the challenge of evolving an experimental model of online education that could meet or suit the changing needs of students and teachers in tandem with our changing world, but the outcome of online education is far from satisfactory owing to several challenges associated with seven vital components of online education as elucidated below.

### 1. Technology

The Covid-19 has compelled us to realize the importance of technology which indeed has proved to be a lifesaver for today's academia. But, when we adopt and adapt to new technologies we meet several challenges. As for challenges associated with technology, half of the 50% students are computer-wise illiterate and half of them (vulnerable students in rural areas) do not have access to computer with high-speed internet due to unaffordable price of the devices and data plans. Unless we reach out to students at large, online education will merely serve as an addition, rather than as a replacement to on-campus education. Another challenge associated with technological aspect is rapid evolution of different versions of online model of LMS (Learning Management System) because of which we are not able to decide which LMS platforms such as Google Classroom, Microsoft Team, Moodle, MOOC, Zoom, Courseera, will be effective for online teaching. Most of these virtual platforms fail to attain the set pedagogical goals and expectations of online teachers and learners. It seems we need blended or eclectic approach of online education. For example, teaching through MST, examination through Google Classroom, assignment through Slide Share, etc. Even the most

sophisticated technology is not 100% reliable. There can be breakdowns of different types while imparting online lessons. For example, the server hosting the program might crash, students' PCs might crash, the Internet connection might fail, etc. Moreover, reading from a computer screen is more strenuous and hurting to eyes than reading from papers.

### 2. Teacher

With sudden closure of academia for an unspecified duration, teachers were left in the lurch about their roles of establishing a connect with students as most of the teachers from nursery to tertiary level were not used to teach in virtual classrooms. Since, most of the teachers are still not comfortable in terms of using LMS platforms efficiently, a divide between LMS friendly teachers and LMS unfriendly teachers has surfaced as the former favors the induction of LMS; whereas, the latter is still in a wait and watch mode anticipating that face-to-face teaching and learning will return. Come what may, the role of today's teacher is getting redefined for virtual classroom. Today's teacher is treated more as a facilitator and less as a teacher. Does this mean that the importance of teachers will be minimal in our life. To my mind, NO. Whatever technology we are empowered with, the status of a teacher is unique in society and this is why, it is said that no one can rise above the level of a teacher. The online teachers often fumble in creating an appropriate atmosphere and conducive environment in the virtual classroom on the fronts of monitoring and making online classes more participatory, collaborative, and interactive. In offline teaching, teachers are open-ended in a sense that they can switch from one theme to another and still maintain the coherence of the topic. But, on virtual platform, the fluidity of cross-reference, paraphrasing, and gelling with students become less as students expect more structured and close-ended lectures.

### 3. Curriculum and Study Materials

The C-19 crisis has made us think what our students should academically be prepared for in the future. According to a Dell Technologies report, 85% of the jobs in 2030 that current generation will enter into have not been identified yet. According to another report of the World Economic Forum, 65% of primary-school children today will be working in job types that do not exist yet. Given the stated reports of Dell and World Economic Forum, hardly any need assessment is carried out to know and suit the needs of our next generation. Today, when we are flooded with new knowledge everyday from every quarter, it is difficult to identify, prioritize and ascertain our new course of action as part of new curricula. Should our curricula be loaded with life skills or human values or mixture of both? The curriculum of any online program must be carefully considered and developed to see its success. E-learning is not conducive for all subjects. It is more conducive for subjects under humanities but for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) courses and medical science, we need more practical tutorials. Knowledge is likely to be open-ended and transitional but online education takes place in a structured or closed-ended manner. The knowledge imparted though online education is less subject to be debated and discussed.

### 4. Students

In India, nearly 50 % of student population in India from nursery to tertiary level deprived of online education. Students who are more vulnerable especially in remote areas without internet connectivity remain deprived of online classes and examination. In online teaching, students find it hard to meet and discuss any assignments with their teachers. The virtual classrooms do not avail face-to-face mentoring. Virtual classroom gives a sense of isolation and less opportunities of collaborative learning. As a result, students develop negative thoughts and psychological issues. In physical classroom, a teacher can gauge mind, language, body language, and behavioral activities of a student to know whether s/he is focused on the given topic or not. While an online mode of education can be effective for the mature, self-disciplined student, it is not appropriate for younger students (i.e. elementary or secondary school age). This is why, Karnataka Government had to ban online

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Vol.8
Spl.Issue 1
(July) 2021

education from nursery to primary level. Unfortunately, students today are groomed more as a marketing product in the name of a skilled human or entrepreneur with the ability of launching startups and less as a complete human empowered with values.

### 5. Parents

The role of parents is fundamental in online education. The full time working parents or parents who are already occupied with several household issues are reluctant or unprepared for online education of their wards because when schools close, parents are often asked to facilitate the learning of children at home which most of them cannot. Most of the parents of senior students neither bother to tell their wards to remain in touch with their teachers and carry out the recommended lessons and activities; nor do they monitor whether their wards are taking lessons or are watching X-rated content. Parents and family members especially in joint families find it hard to keep a peaceful atmosphere of study for their wards.

### 7. Evaluation

Evaluation in online education lacks integrity because of the absence of teachers and monitoring systems. The online education does not heed to knowing and analyzing learners' quest for knowledge and resorts to practice of ready-made questions and answers before examinations which in turn deprive students of a real-time answer using creativity and problem-solving abilities. In addition, there is hardly any integrity on the part of majority of the teachers as they do marking of any answer superficially. They do not read subjective answers minutely and do average marking by a click of mouse. To see the model of online tests, I feel the outcome of an academic programme is simply to create a rote learner and conduct a so called examination in the form of memory testing which can never nor should be an indicator of learning outcome. The institutional administration needs to think out of the box and identify as well as rectify all the issues related to evaluation.

### RECOMMENDATIONS TO MEET ONLINE EDUCATION CRISIS

1. For the success of online education, teachers and students need to be well-versed in using the LMS for proper delivery and receptivity of the lessons.
2. The need of the hour is to form learning consortiums by involving all the stakeholders especially teachers, learners, technologists, curriculum designers, parents, policy makers, publishers, and telecom operators on one platform and keep one another informed of planning, executing, and monitoring any existing and prospective approaches and innovations.
3. Redesign the current curricula that could give psychic, spiritual or aesthetic strength to our students.
4. Given the stated challenges of technology, teachers and technologists need to work together to come up with a more eclectic or hybrid version of the LMS that could work in both online and offline modes.
5. The need is also felt to use blended or eclectic approach of online education, for example, teaching through MST, examination through Google Classroom, assignment through Slide Share, etc.
6. The country needs to revamp its education sector so that the learners from both rural and urban areas could be equally benefitted from online education.

### CONCLUSION

To conclude, this study encapsulates faults, fears, frustrations, and fallacies evoked by and during pandemic with special reference to education and values. Summarizing the education crisis, a great paradigm shift is not only imperative but also inevitable. But it should happen at a slower pace as getting accustomed to newer platforms of online education mounts up unwanted anxieties in teachers and students. Pertinently, I am reminded of the Affective Filter Hypothesis of Stephen Krashen that says *higher the anxiety; lower the learning*

*and lower the anxiety; higher the learning*. And, in this turbulent time of Corona when we are under high anxieties, I not only rebut online education for now but also affirm that online education is not going to be an absolute alternative to our traditional format of on-campus education. In overcoming technological issues involved in online education, the role of artificial intelligence (AI) and augmented reality (AR) will be very significant in personalizing our learning experiences. We do not know whether all these technologies will be operational in India in near future or not. But sooner or later they have to be the part of our teaching and learning. Above all, the concerns of vulnerable students need to be duly kept in mind because we believe in inclusive education that allows everyone to be part of it.

Summarizing the value crisis, it is imperative to understand that Sanatan values are universal values that connect humans, societies, and civilizations across the globe. But the pandemic has caused a void of values in India. Given this, the need has arisen to transform a human into a better species of human laced with at least 24 values. In doing so, we need to form an array of learning consortiums at both micro and macro levels of society and involve all the stakeholders especially teachers, parents, students, and valued policy makers from judiciary, legislative, executive, and media on one platform and find eternal solutions of humanizing a dormant soul with Sanatan values for a new dawn of Sanatan Bharat.

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