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Kipling's Values in Life: An Epitome of Ethics and Values of Life

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Abstract:

The present social scenario of the world portrays the evil and wicked actions of man, which destroy the peace of man. The saints, priests and every religion in the world preach values of life, as it has become need of the hour. Despite of the advancement in the modern technology and other artificial resources, the entire world is suffering either from natural disasters or artificial ones. The increasing ratio of enmity, hatred, selfishness and egotism among peers can easily be sensed by the people. Similarly, the decline in the ratio of values and ethics is the fundamental attribute for keeping harmony in the society. Rudyard Kipling a Nobel Prize winner's unique prose work *Values in Life* is an epitome of values of life. . In the course of life, youth are dominated by the idea of money, while few of them succumb to the poison of lust for wealth. Many youth are carried away by the thought of wealth in the great game of life. Kipling advises youth to observe the people who do not show much interest in money, whether it is in the farm or any other place, they gain many things in life. Kipling's ironical use of the term 'Smartman' for the man who acquires enormous wealth is quite realistic, in the modern society. He urges that it is the responsibility of youth to show right path, values to little ones and lead them to knowledge of higher and more interesting things. Moreover, life must be purposeful, when humans desire for anything, it should have societal values. And understanding and practicing societal values surely help youth to follow right path.

Keywords: Values, life, youth, smartman, wealth.

The world in which humans live is bound to be based on human values. The values are prerequisites for every man to lead a disciplined and happy life. The values are closely related to human life. Values are found in all cultures and in all communities where humans subsist. Empathy, love, honesty, respect and consideration are some of the values which help humans to maintain brotherhood and peace. The present social scenario of the world portrays the evil and wicked actions of man, which destroy the peace of man. The saints, priests and every religion in the world preach values of life, as it has become need of the hour. Despite of the advancement in the modern technology and other artificial resources, the entire world is in the affliction, either from natural disasters or artificial ones. The increasing ratio of enmity, hatred, selfishness and egotism among peers can easily be sensed by the people. Similarly, the decline in the ratio of values and ethics is the fundamental attribute for keeping harmony in the society.

Several writers took the cudgels to bring the reality of pathetic, detrimental and unhealthy tendency of the societal approach, throughout the world. Rudyard Kipling a Nobel Prize winner's unique prose work *Values in Life* is an epitome of values of life. It is a speech delivered by Rudyard Kipling before a group of University students in Canada. Kipling puts before youth, the practicality of the battle of life. Besides, he talks about the misconceptions of youth about wealth. From the childhood, people are taught about the role of money in one's life. The more a child works hard, the more he will be successful. The definition of success is simply earning money and keeping assets for future life. Money has become a lifeline for every person. Values, relations and culture are overshadowed by the money power. Health is also being ignored on the note of wealth. Wealth is life and poverty is death and such misconceptions about wealth are being inculcated into the young minds. As a result, youth transcend the values of their culture.

Values enable people to explore values of life. Either social values or individual values, they assist in developing a discipline, stability and steadiness among people. Values in their implied form affect the behavioral pattern of humans. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel defines values as:

“Life has a value only when it has something valuable as its object we may affirm absolutely that nothing great in the world has been, accomplished without passion and without values.”

Cattel defines value as: “By values we mean the social, artistic, moral and other standards which the individual would like others and himself to follow.”

The definitions elucidate the idea of values as moral standards, which the entire world follows as they render meaning to one’s life.

According to Kipling, in the modern society, wealth has taken the place of health. Youth always indulge in acquiring wealth, as they consider it as the most important aspect for leading a better life. “When, to use a detailed phrase, you go out into “the battle of life,” you will be confronted by an organized conspiracy which will try to make you believe that the world is governed by the idea of wealth for wealth’s sake, and that all means which lead to the acquisition of that wealth are, if not laudable, at least expedient.” (Kipling 38) Youth, today are made to believe that wealth for wealth’s sake, wealth is everything in life. They spend their entire life in the acquisition of wealth. The thirst for acquisition of wealth leads to selfishness and self-centeredness among youth. And a selfish society cannot make a healthy approach in the society. The world, which is governed by the idea of wealth, is not praiseworthy, as it leads to an erroneous and faulty society.

In the modern society, educational institutions and universities are playing the role of materialistic industries, which train students or scholars, a materialistic life. In the course of life, youth are dominated by the idea of money, while few of them succumb to the poison of lust for wealth. Many youth are carried away by the thought of wealth in the great game of life. However, the idea of being human becomes more dominant, as youth experience and watch people around them. The lust for money or wealth becomes less dominant, as money does not interest them anymore. Youth then start denying money, even if it is offered. Kipling rightly points out, “I do not ask you not to be carried away by the first rush of the great game of life. That is expecting you to be more than human.... Sooner Or later, you will see some man to whom the idea of wealth as mere wealth does not appeal, whom the methods of amassing that wealth do not interest, and who will not accept money if you offer it to him at a certain price” (Kipling 38).

Today’s youth hold misconceptions about being wealthy. They consider wealthy people as smart people and those, who do not possess money, are not smart and useless. For Kipling, people with likeness for money are dominated by it, while those who do not want money are always superior, gain profits and they find it appealing. Robin Sharma's *The Monk Who Sold his*

Ferrari is a classic example of Indian ways of simple living and understanding the purpose of life. Furthermore, it focuses on the techniques of life-long happiness. It explores the causes and reasons for the unhappy life of humans as depicted in the novel through the character of Julian Mantle, a successful lawyer. Nevertheless, because of his discontented and out of balance life, he is forced to confront the spiritual crisis. Ultimately, he transforms himself to a Monk, discovers powerful lessons to attain ultimate peace.

Robin Sharma's novel *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* unfolds the truth that the real and happy life lays in spirituality rather than the materialistic life. Julian, the lawyer turned monk calls his philosophy as a Sivanan system, in which people look younger, happier and balanced. He learns the secret of happiness. He asserts, " Find out what you truly love to do and then direct all of your energy towards doing it. If you study the happiest, healthiest, most satisfied people of our world, you will see that each and every one of them has found their passion in their life, and then spent their days pursuing it. This calling is almost always one that, in some way, serves others. Once you are concentrating your mental power and energy on a pursuit that you love, abundance flows into your life, and all your desires are fulfilled with ease and grace" (Sharma 54).

Kipling directs youth to observe the people who do not show much interest in money, whether it is in the farm or any other place, they gain many things in life. Meeting such people teach more values of life. "At first you will be inclined to laugh at this man, and to think that he is not "smart" in his ideas. I suggest that you watch him closely, for he will presently demonstrate to you that money dominates everybody except the man who does not want money....But be sure that, whenever or wherever you meet him, as soon as it comes to direct issue between you, his little finger will be thicker than your lions. You will go in fear of him: he will not go in fear of you. You will do what he wants: he will not do what you want. Whatever you gain, he will gain more "(Kipling 39). Kipling gives much importance to ethical values which transcend people to attain supremacy, spiritually.

The significance of values is highly accepted by the individuals in their life. However, individual's values are validated by the society. People obsessed by the value for money are less honored and privileged. Kipling believes that acquiring wealth is a sort of obsession, a desire which should not be encouraged. People who do not have any obsession for wealth, will help others and learn values of life. For Kipling, people desire wealth for wealth's sake. And such

people may stoop for anything. If one wants to acquire wealth, one must use left hand to acquire it, but right hand for proper work in life. “If more wealth is necessary to you, for purposes not your own, use your left hand to acquire it, but keep your right for your proper works in life” (Kipling 39). Kipling warns youth about the desire for excess wealth. If one employs both the hands to acquire and use wealth, it may lead to terrible calamity. If one employs both the hands in the game of acquiring more wealth, one will be in the danger of losing one’s soul. Earning for living can be good for one rather than living for earning. For Instance, Leo Tolstoy’s *How Much Land Does a Man Need* is a best example where Pahom’s greed for more land leads to his doom.

Kipling’s ironical use of the term ‘Smart man’ for the man who acquires enormous wealth is quite realistic in the modern society. The rich people are being worshipped, honored in the world, whereas simple and saintly, but good people are being ignored. However, Kipling believes that though one succeeds in acquiring enormous wealth, one should know that he is moving towards the most terrible calamities, as several Whiteman, do. “If you employ both arms in that game, you will be in grave danger of being spoken and written of and pointed out as “a smart man.” And this is one of the most terrible calamities that can overtake a sane, civilized white man in our Empire today “(Kipling 39). Kipling’s concept of smart man is not acquiring enormous wealth but using it wisely and properly for the noble cause. Moreover, earning money in a proper manner without losing ethics and values tend to be a wise act. It is aptly pointed out: “The order of values, which we accept influence or at least ought to influence ourselves more than anything else. This order mainly depends on our choice of what shall be dominant in it, whether money or good conscience, the idea of success as conventionally interpreted, or a genuine commitment to a deeply felt higher value” (Khanna 9).

Kipling's observation of mannerisms and psychological issues of today's youth is quite noteworthy. Despite of their success, they find themselves in the horror of desolation. At times, they find themselves abandoned and worthless. Their unending desire for money, make them to grow sicker physically and mentally. “There is a certain darkness into which the soul of the young man sometimes descends a horror of desolation, abandonment, and realized worthlessness, which is one of the most real of the hells in which we are compelled to walk”.(Kipling, 39)

Kipling's illustration of reasons for the psychological issues of youth is quite remarkable. For him, egotism is the primary cause of mental illness. A human tendency to be superior to

others, results to lose everything. Like the character of King Lear in Shakespeare's play King Lear, who loses his kingdom to his elder daughters is a suitable example. King Lear's egotism leads to his doom. "This is due to a variety of causes, the chief of which is the egotism of the human animal itself. But I can tell you for your comfort that the chief cure for it is to interest yourself, to lose yourself in some issue not personal to yourself, in another man's trouble or, preferably, another man's joy"(Kipling 39). And it reveals the true meaning of life. King Lear's bitter experiences teach values of life. It is a fact that what is done cannot be undone. But, time is the healer and it helps humans to improve themselves and understand the life values.

Kipling advocates that humans can cure their psychological issues by being caring for others. By showing concern to others in their troubles and by sharing others joy, one can cure psychological issues. In spite of desolating oneself from the society, one must become a part of the society. Such sort of social behavior and concern can help reduce the darkness from one's life. Kipling further advice youth to keep trust in God, and believe in the infinite mercy of heaven. He strongly believes that God will protect people from going astray. He further urges that God will protect people from going astray. Kipling also counsels youth not only to take oneself so seriously but avoid giving much importance to one. Kipling, eventually, instructs youth to counsel little ones, in order to keep them away from showing smartness in their work or in their desire to earn more money.

Kipling holds views about the responsibility of youth to show the right path in the society. Healthy mind leads to a peaceful and harmonious society. Our values serve as the guiding principles that shape our beliefs and actions. He urges that it is the responsibility of youth to show right path, values to little ones and lead them to knowledge of higher and more interesting things. For him, one need not be smart in life, but must possess values of life, for the betterment of society. He also believed that smartness leads to sick minds but values in life help people to develop healthy minds. Moreover, life must be purposeful, when humans desire for anything, it should have societal values. And understanding and practicing societal values surely help youth to follow right path and vice versa. " To line with intention and build a life that feels purposeful, it's important that you understand what your values are.... Following societal values can inadvertently steer individuals towards the wrong career or the wrong partner, making life more challenging than necessary " (Mabon House).

Kipling further recommends that the component fostering values should be a part of education, as it is the bedrock upon which future societies thrive. Shaping youth equipped with values, thrives a positive change. And it ultimately leads to a better and a healthy society.

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