

# Human Values in Academic Institution

## *A Case Study of IIT-Hyderabad*

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# Outline

- I **Context**
- II **Human Values course - Goals, approach, pedagogy**
- III **Impact on individual student**
- IV **Impact on institution**
- V **Conclusions**

# IIIT Hyderabad: A Research University

**IIIT-H started in 1998.**

**Goal:**

- **To do research in selected areas of IT and beyond, and**
- **To produce holistic and responsible human being**

# Student Dimension

- Institute might strive for research
  - But students might aim at only routine jobs
- Excellence might require hard work
  - But students might not be willing

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*Ultimately, action must come from inside.*

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- **As a part of such lectures, came across Jeevan Vidya**
  - Realized that it can be introduced as a part of education.
  - *How?*

## II. Human Values course: Goals, Approach, and Pedagogy

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- **Reason must be given as to what is wrong with that understanding. **What reason?****
  - *Reason must go beyond punishment – that you can go to jail*
  - **He/she might be willing to take a risk!**  
**Elsewhere we do tell him, learn to take risk (as an entrepreneur)!**

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- **By connecting the student to his natural acceptance,**
- **By questioning several commonly held beliefs**
  - **Thinking about the other and relationships**
  - **How much do I need to have a "satisfied" life**
  - **My responsibility towards society**

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*But what should be the criteria for the design of the course?*

# Criteria for Design of Human Values Course

**Course content should be:**

**Logical:** Possible to discuss and ask questions in class

**Verifiable:** Verify in one's experience. Non-mystical

**Universal:** Non-sectarian. Applicable to all individuals, for all time, for all place. Ex. Respect.

**Humanistic:** Good of humanity

**Breadth:** Encompassing all aspects of life



# Human Values Course: Goals

## Goals:

- To help students *discriminate* between valuable and "superficial" in life
- To develop *sensitivity and awareness*. Leading to:
  - Commitment, and
  - Courage to act on their own beliefs.
- Not to give values, but allow the students to *discover* values within themselves!

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*Became a required academic course  
for all first year undergraduate students at IIIT-H in 2005.  
Unanimous decision of faculty.*

# Human Values Course: Method of Conduct at IIIT-H

**Form small groups of 12-15 students mentored by a faculty member.**

- **Classes conducted through discussions**
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*It is everybody's responsibility! It is the core of education!  
Must not be left to experts.*

# Content: Jeevan Vidya

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- 4 Nature: Co-existence (Enriching cycle)**

### III. Impact on Individual

# Impact on Individual

- **Slow and steady**
- **Different parts appeal to different students**

# Practise at Individual Level

- **Self awareness**
  - Ex. Watch when one gets angry
- **One's relationships in family**
  - In nuclear family, extended family
  - Friends in classroom, work place, hostel
- **Relationship in society**
- **Relationship with nature**
  - Avoiding waste, and
  - Right utilization of natural resources

# Impact: Better Relationships

- **Better relationship among students**
  - Dealing with irritation, anger towards others – gone down
  - But a lot of abusive words (within friends) – increased
- **Greater reflection in relationship with family**
  - Ex. Son of JNTU Director(Academics) at IIT-H
- **Better relationship between staff and students**
  - Home assignment: Sweeping of friend's room
- **Faculty and students - Sense of opposition not there or reduced**
  - Even when differences on views regarding governance or student life

# Impact: Attention to Nature

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*Remember students are not one homogenous class!  
Some affected more than others, some affected less so.*



# Less Impact

- **Peer pressure**
  - Still, a lot of pressure of branded clothes, friendship with opposite sex
- **Placement**
  - Still, placement salary "package" very important.
  - But after working for 3-4 years, more students say
    - We did not believe you then, but now we know that there is more to job than package
    - Many more are going for higher study – but abroad
    - A few notable exceptions switching to humanities

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*Like planting of a seed. Hope that it will germinate later.*

# Summary so Far

- **Education must shape the society of future**
  - Not a mirror of present society
- **Do what is right, and if also done rightly, spreads**
  - Slowly at first, but faster than imagined later
  - Of course, newer challenges come
- **Environment of openness and discussion necessary**
  - Environment of Empowerment within the university community
  - True education takes place only in such an environment

*Reflective course as a foundation is most important!*

## IV. Impact on Institution

# Humanistic Practices: Impact on Institution

- **Putting humanistic practices in some facets of running the institution**
- **Slow and sweeping – Slow at first, but sweeping later!**

# Impact on Institution

**Impact in the institution on the following:**

- 1 Better relationships - Less ragging towards zero ragging**
- 2 Cultural/youth festivals**
- 3 Yuktahar mess**
- 4 Value of work with one's own hand**
- 5 Seriousness towards studies - Better grades**
- 6 Running department/centre based on relationship**

# Other Related Activities

- 1 Human values for housekeeping staff**
- 2 Humanities academic projects**
- 3 Social internships**

# 1. Punishment to Praayaschit

**Example: Case of ragging in 2006 – 3 students sent to Mussoorie NGO**

- **Punishment was suspension for a semester**
- **Appeals process. Asked them to go to an NGO – but with a sense of praayaschit**
- **They did what punishment would have required anyway, but with a changed feeling.**
- **The Head of NGO (graduate of IITD, 1976), had daily discussions with them**

*When the students came back, they were changed in a major way.*



## ... 1. Punishment to Praayaschit

**Ex. Case of ragging in 2010 - Disciplinary committee gave punishment to 16 students**

- **Later 9 other students came forward and confessed (Senior students got involved)**
- **Punishment converted to Praayashchit. Farm work for 1 or 2 semesters. Tough but did with joy in 1st semester (Dr Shyam Sundar Reddy)**
  - **Praayashchit does not mean feeling bad !**
  - **It means self purification in action and thought**

# Feeling of Justice

**How do the different categories of people perceive the action taken?**

- **Victim**
- **Ragger/Harrasser**
- **By-standers**
- **Far-standers**

**Should feel satisfied.**

# Feeling of Justice

**How do the different categories of people perceive the action taken?**

- **Victim** – *Wanted punishment reduced*
- **Ragger/Harrasser** – *Did not want to be suspended*
- **By-standers** – *Were given lesser punishment*
- **Far-standers** – *Cleaned their hostel rooms for a semester*

**Should feel satisfied.**

## ... 1. Punishment to Praayaschit

**Case of drinking in hostel in March 2008. Students lied to wardens. Wardens understood**

- **Senior students (Pranav) got involved and helped them to speak the truth. Pranav helped helped them draft an interesting letter**
- **The guilty students said ready to pay fine, but said *not to inform their parents***
- **We asked them to write a letter to their parents, Institute would mail it.**
- \* **They did themselves what they most wanted to avoid!**
  - **Next day some students came and cried:**  
*They had called their parents and informed them, what they had hidden from them.*

## 2. Youth Festivals

- **Imitative art**
- **Mostly directionless**
- **Emphasize show off - How expensive is the festival**
  
- **Turned around after we learnt how to approach the problem**
  - **Not an issue of music, rock or otherwise, but an issue of**
    - **Show off vs. simplicity**
    - **Consumption of alcohol etc.**
- **Quality started changing on its own**
- **Change in thought process is slow, but sure**

*However need to be pursued continuously, new students every year*

### 3. Yuktahar Mess

- **Earlier, problem with extremely spicy and oily food**
    - **Bad menu, with cooks who did not reduce spices**
    - **Conflict between students and contractors – Menu with "costly" items**
    - **Problem could not be solved even after 2 years of effort!**
  - **Yuktahar mess started by institute effort (Vinayakji) in Jan. 2006, for those who cannot eat spicy food**
    - **Thought that no more than 50 will ever eat in it – Virtually no infra-structure**
    - **Numbers swelled to 400. An extremely popular mess today.**
      - **Simple food**
      - **Students wash their own dishes**
      - **Sit on the ground and eat**
- Lesson in simplicity, humbleness!**

*Our day to day practices are an important training ground!*

## ... 3. Yuktahar Mess

- **Ex. Conjunctivitis spread among all the workers (Apr 2007)**
  - **Students came forward to cook chapaatis**
  - \* **There was a queue of students waiting to cook!**
  - \* **Sense of ownership**
- **Yuktahar mess led to the starting of another mess (NBH mess, July 2007)**

*Dignity of labour!*

## 5. Human Values for Housekeeping Staff

### **Workshops conducted for Institute housekeeping staff (Shanthi, Nisha)**

- **Staff have become more conscious of their families**
- **More time and care to their children**
- **Reduction in alcohol intake**



## 6. Studies and Research in Human Values

**After the foundation course in Human Values which makes students think**

- **Elective courses on HV are offered**
- **Optional "Humanities Project" for UGs**
- **Social internships**
- **Research program started**
  - **PhD dissertation work underway on HV**

## 7. Department/Centre based on Relationship

- **Students as well as staff involved in running a centre (Earthquake Engineering Research Center)**
- **Based on relationship rather than command and control**

*Much easier to run and manage the centre*

# Conclusions

**Impact of running the Human Values course that is *reflective* about the self has been immense**

- **Education must shape the society of future**
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- Youth/cultural festivals
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**Thank you**