



*“Those who do not respect human values hurt others and violate human rights.”*

## Fostering Human Values

**H**uman rights is all about protecting another’s freedom, seeing the other person like oneself. It is about giving others security, letting them live. If one is not happy, compassionate or friendly, will he or she ever protect another’s rights? It is not possible.

Who violates human rights? Those who do not respect human values hurt others and violate human rights. Even a terrorist has human values; he is concerned about his family. We only have to make him realise that others also belong to him.

In today’s world, we have become so formal in our dealings with others that it becomes almost mechanical. So, we need to become more cordial and informal. This is the basis of fostering human values in society.

What are human values? Compassion, friendliness, co-operation, peace of mind, joy and a smile that lasts forever! The sign of real success is the tendency to help and cooperate with people around. We need to ensure that these values are harnessed in our society.

Often, we find a crisis which is based on identity. Groups are formed to assert their identity. When this happens, somewhere they lose a sense of belongingness with the human race. When people say, “I am a Hindu”, “I am a Buddhist”, “I am a Muslim”, or “I am a Christian”, they are also saying, “Those who are not Hindus or Muslims or Christians, do not belong to me”. To maintain this limited identity, some people are ready to lose even their life. If the emphasis were on being a human, then there would be peace in society. We need to make people see that before being a Jew, or a Muslim, he is a human being. As a human being, the whole of humanity is part of you and it belongs to you.

Today, people who are looking for some identity often move into religious dimensions and get caught up in fanaticism or fundamentalism. When there is a lack of proper spiritual education or knowledge about the oneness of the human race, people adopt an ideology that is not conducive to the welfare of humankind. Friendliness needs to be fostered especially among our children. The basic tendency to connect with people and make friends is getting lost somewhere. If you ask a kid how many friends he or she has in the class, he or she will count them on the fingers. Three, four or five in a classroom of 40-50 students! If our kids are unable to be friendly with all the 40-50 of their class, then how do we expect them to be friendly with the world when they come out of school?

The current system of education has somehow failed to nurture the basic human values. It is very painful to hear about shootouts and crimes happening in college and school campuses. Neither at school nor at home, our children are taught what to do when one is upset, angry or depressed. How can we get anger, violence and the sense of hatred out of the hearts of people? This is the challenge we are facing today. We know the answer philosophically, but what are the practical steps? It is here that something very basic to our life comes into play - our breath. Breath is the link between body, mind and emotions. By attending to it, we can calm our minds. Once the mind is calm and free of stress, human values will manifest itself in one’s life and they will get perpetuated in society. Then there will be no question of human rights violation; the whole world will become one global family. And, that’s what our ancient ideal of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam is all about.