

VALUES AND COMPETENCIES IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION



The contribution of extension could be further accentuated if the extension professionals adopt certain human positive values. A parallel investment for development of positive values through pre-service, induction, and in-service trainings is essential for the success of any agricultural extension worker. In this blog, Dr SVN Rao and Dr PVK Sasidhar emphasise these values which every extension workers must imbibe and internalise.

Values or what we value in our life determine the way we live, as they play an important role in prioritisation of our interests and in decision making. Positive values bring in positive effects and negative ones bring in negative effects on the society. There are certain positive values which we need to cherish for the welfare of the society which we often call as general values (irrespective of the profession). Some values are specific to a particular profession and these values drive our professional behaviour (Ashram Advaita, 2010).



In the case of public servants, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain moral standards and human values in the conduct of public affairs. This is because of the glamour the society is attaching to material prosperity. Although it is the responsibility of the government to provide a clean administration by inculcating ethics and human values in administration, it hasn't been able to do so in several cases (Sukhwinder, 2012).

WHY VALUES ARE IMPORTANT FOR EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS?

Values are important in all walks of life irrespective of the profession and position in the hierarchy. "These values communicate 'what we stand for' and 'what is important to us' ...values are the soul of the organization" (Hitt, 1988). One sign of a healthy, productive organization is agreement between the organization's values and the daily behaviours of its members. This behaviour is determined both by individuals' personal experiences as well as their experiences in a specific profession.

All professions develop their own self-image based on their member's attitudes, and an external image that depends on how they are seen by non-members. Neither can be considered without referring to moral and ethical questions (Hoffman et al 2009a). Values and attitudes such as faith in rural people, commitment to agricultural development, and concern for the whole

community are important for all extension personnel (Vijayaraghavan and Singh, 1997) See <http://www.fao.org/docrep/W5830E/w5830e0g.htm>).

Although some of the old Agricultural Extension text books (Reddy, 1971) do mention about some of these values as commandments for extension professionals, these are either ignored or not given the prominence they deserve. In the United States of America, Epsilon Sigma Phi (ESP), an independent not-for-profit organization of extension professionals has developed a creed for extension professionals (Box 1).

Box 1. Extension Professionals' Creed

I believe in people and their hopes, their aspirations, and their faith; in their right to make their own plans and arrive at their own decisions; in their ability and power to enlarge their lives and plan for the happiness of those they love.

I believe that education, of which Extension is an essential part, is basic in stimulating individual initiative, self-determination, and leadership; that these are the keys to democracy and that people when given facts they understand, will act not only in their self-interest, but also in the interest of society.

I believe that education is a lifelong process and the greatest university is the home; that my success as a teacher is proportional to those qualities of mind and spirit that give me welcome entrance to the homes of the families I serve.

I believe in intellectual freedom to search for and present the truth without bias and with courteous tolerance toward the views of others.

I believe that Extension is a link between the people and the ever-changing discoveries in the laboratories.

I believe in the public institutions of which I am a part.

I believe in my own work and in the opportunity I have to make my life useful to humanity.

Because I Believe these things, I am an Extension professional.

Source: <http://espnational.org/en/11-about-us/extension-worker-s-creed/47-esp-written-creed>

The work of Extension professionals requires in-depth knowledge of the processes of effective formal and informal education and the subject matter discipline in which he/she specializes. All extension workers need abilities to perform a task and their performance is directly related to the following aspects:

- the quantum of knowledge about the task,
- the extent of skills they possess, and
- the type of attitude they have towards work.

These behavioural aspects, called as competencies in a way differentiate an 'effective extension worker' from an 'ineffective one' (Box 2).

Hoffman et al (2009b) noted that "Not every person is equally talented to become a good adviser. People who are strongly oriented towards achievement or motivated by power are less suited compared to those who are motivated by affiliation. A prerequisite for advisory work is the guarantee of *confidentiality*. But also *patience* and the *art of listening* need to be mastered.

An adviser should be able to *perform in flexible roles*, should have a *high level of tolerance towards ambiguity*, and a *stable personality*. Those who have problems with themselves are unable to concentrate fully on the situation of the partner and are not best helpers. Besides these attitudes and personal traits, a good adviser has learned the *basics about human behavior* and has *diagnostic skills* to understand the client and his perception of his situation; he also possesses a larger repertory of *techniques of intervention and communication*".

Box. 2: Effective Vs. Ineffective Extension Workers

Extension experience in different parts of the world has stressed the extension workers' central importance and has highlighted a number of features which distinguish an effective extension worker from a less effective one.

An effective extension worker:

- spends time in developing the skills and attributes of the farmers themselves, and does not merely concentrate on extension projects,
- gets out to visit and meet farmers and does not become an office bureaucrat,
- encourages local initiative and self-reliance, and does not adopt a paternalistic attitude toward farmers,
- plans for the long term development of his area, and does not seek only quick results.

The work of an extension worker demands the particular values of dedication, humility and hard work. Extension administrators should ensure that extension workers are thoroughly prepared before they begin extension activities.

Source : Oakley and Garforth (1985)

Extension workers need to upgrade their competencies to match with the changing demands of their work. Irrespective of the methods (pre-service, induction, in-service trainings, symposia, workshops, and demonstrations) employed to upgrade their competencies, what matters is the mindset of the trainer as well as the trainee. The trainer must be competent to train and ready to impart the skills to the trainees. At the same time, the trainees must be receptive and ready to acquire the skills. This in turn rests up on the values the trainer and the trainees cherish towards the work.

Though essential, values are not being taught in class rooms. We learn or imbibe these values from our role models or parents or teachers. It is easy to preach these values than to follow. The values need to be respected and inculcate. Today, in the society most of us are not able to imbibe and internalise the values and hence people have no opportunity to learn about them. These values are supposed to be passed on from generation to generation. When majority of the people in a society are dishonest, it is very difficult to avoid its negative impact on the young generation. The person who is a stickler of the values is ideally suitable to preach. There are no attempts to do so mainly because these values were thrown to winds. These values are considered as surreal and obsolete in this present day materialistic world.

Following are some of the values that every extension worker should possess, among others:

- 1. Work is worship:** The job of extension professionals is to help farmers in several ways and they are expected to do it with utmost sincerity and honesty which is considered equivalent to worshipping the Almighty. Inactivity or not doing the duty or work assigned to them is a sin. We must do our duty as extension professionals to the best of our ability. This reflects upon the effectiveness and efficiency of extension worker in performing extension activities.

Extension workers who cherish this positive value will try to acquire competencies to perform their duties to the best of their ability. It is said that “A man should not be judged by the nature of his duties, but by the manner in which he does them. Every duty is holy, and devotion to duty is the highest form of the worship to God. What is important is not what we are doing but how we are doing it.”(Swami Vivekananda, 2003).

- 2. Help the farmers selflessly and transparently:** The farmers, basically food producers, are the back bone of any country and no country can afford to ignore their contribution. The extension professionals have the unique opportunity of helping the farmers directly in increasing food production to meet the nation’s food requirements as well as export demand. The greatest service to society is to help farmers without any expectations (cash or kind) from them.

Selfishness, ‘thinking of ourselves first’ is the main sin (Swami Vivekananda, 2003). Many among us are working with a business motive i.e., exchange phenomenon. We help others with an expectation of getting something in lieu of our help. Unselfishness will bring success. Whereas, selfishness leads to greed which is detrimental not only to society but also ruins the individual in question. The degree of unselfishness marks the degree of success everywhere. Extension professional must be a true friend of farmers in helping them to produce more from his crops and livestock to feed our ever increasing population. If an extension worker has no or little concern for the farmers, he or she cannot turn out to be a good extension worker and obviously the farmers cannot derive benefit from him which ultimately reflects on the farmers’ poor production.

Inbuilt is the value ‘transparency’ in dealing with the farmers. It is necessary for us to win the trust and confidence of the farmers to plan and implement various extension programmes which are not possible to accomplish without being transparent in working with them.

- 3. No wealth without work:** This is a fundamental principle on which the lifestyle of an individual depends. The exponential growth in corruption which cuts across religion, caste, language, sex, profession, etc., is attributed to the gross violation of this “value”. We are not supposed to accept anything (cash or kind) for which we have not put our effort. All types of problems we are facing today have their roots in our objective of getting easy money that too without sweating for it. As a result, the cases of “wealth disproportionate to the known sources of income” are on the rise in our society which is growing unabated. Plagiarism (literary theft), which has taken the magnitude of a plague among the scientific community is another example of drastic violation of this principle.

Inaction is considered as a sin. But of late, inaction is indirectly rewarded rather than considering it as a sin (Box 3). Extension professionals must effectively deliver extension services with the sole objective of helping farmers without any expectations from the latter. Quite often than not, our public extension system is criticised for delay in delivery of inputs (seeds, fertilizers, vaccines, etc.,) and services.

Box 3. Where there is no cost for doing nothing

“The primary cause behind the snail paced decision making in the Indian bureaucratic system is the incentive offered for doing nothing. When it comes to career advancement, there are hardly any repercussions for not taking any initiative. Contrast this, there is a likelihood that one may end up paying a very significant cost for taking an initiative or taking a decision that is not reliant upon routine precedents and requires an iota of reasoned thinking. Such a bureaucrat may come under the scrutiny of investigating agencies. A pending enquiry will definitely delay his or her promotion even if no merit is discovered. Till such time, penalising lack of initiative and offering immunity for reasoned decision making, it will be erroneous to assume that the pace of bureaucratic decision making will change in India.

Source: Pandey, 2016.

- 4. Accountability to society:** Every one of us is accountable to society as we derive lots of benefits from it. Man is basically egalitarian in nature and cannot lead a solitary life and depends upon society for satisfaction of his needs. Many of us do not realise that the every state government spends about. 10 to 15 lakh Rupees for producing a graduate (agriculture, veterinary, home science, dairy science) in addition to what the individual spends to acquire the degree. Hence, morally we are bound to help society in its development. There are several ways one can be involved in helping society. In addition to helping the farmers in increasing their production, we can also extend our helping hand in nurturing values like “helping the people in distress or natural calamities,” “sacrificing comforts with a focus on ‘development of community rather than individual development’” (Box 4).

Box 4. Shift from Money making Machine to Social Person

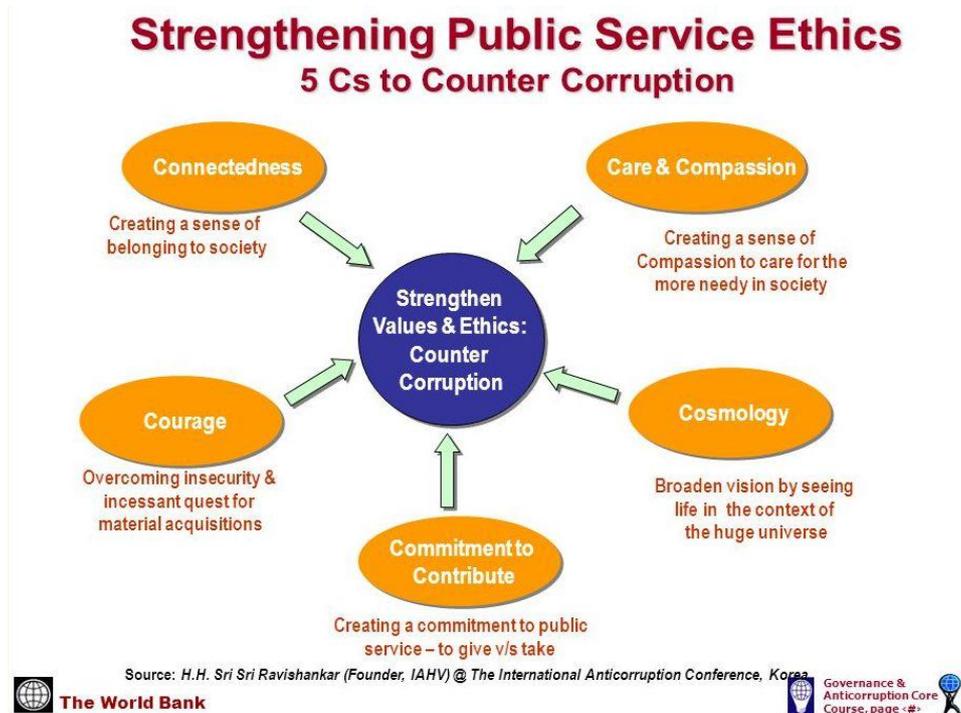
“If you had met me a few months back, you would have been shocked. I used to work like a money making machine. I was never a social person. The floods taught me a great lesson. It was an eye opener for me.” These were the words of 26 year old Mohammed Yunus who was recently honoured by the Government of Tamil Nadu for his selfless, noble, and brave act of rescuing nearly 2,100 people during the recent floods that devastated Chennai.

Source: The Hindu, Jan 27, 2016 Chennai edition.

This is the main idea behind the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and companies (established with profit motive) are expected to extend help in addressing the problems experienced by societies by spending some percentage of their income on rural development. Similarly all agricultural extension workers should feel “Individual Social Responsibility” to extend a helping hand to farmers and to justify Government’s spending on agriculture education.

- 5. Wrong means can never justify the right ends:** Means are no less important than ends. There could be several ways and means to accomplish a task or attain a goal. But one should be careful in choosing the right means to attain the goal. Right means in the sense accepted and approved by the society in which one is working. One needs to be wise in discriminating (power of intellect/*budhi*) between right and wrong means. It is worth adopting the right means even if they fail to attain the goal. It is said that, “If a wrong person chooses the right means, the right means will work in the wrong way.” We must refrain from achieving targets by targeting the rich or progressive farmers, making false promises to the farmers, etc.
- 6. Deceiving others tantamount to deceiving yourself:** The extension professionals (as researchers) are involved in organising field trials to test the improved seeds, fertilizers, medicines, chemicals, etc. In this process of experimentation, we should bring out the facts

to the notice of the farmers without any bias. Sometimes we wish to promote the products with a fervent appeal to the farmers although the product in question is not up to the standards. This happens mainly because the companies give us the sample products with associated freebies to conduct the field trials with an inbuilt expectation that we recommend their products for wider application. Honest reporting of the facts about the worth of a product is very much necessary as it helps us in deriving the peace of not cheating the farmers by giving false reports.



It is not out of context here to quote Michael (2016) who argued that “Considering the political complications in modern-day agriculture, the question that needs answering is this: How do Extension professionals work with people who have polarized agricultural values while respecting those values, not disrespecting the values of any group, and providing unbiased information? This question represents the challenge that faces everyone in agricultural education in the 21st century. We must be able to serve an ever-divided public and respect polarized differences among people, especially when working amid agencies that have more biased agricultural messages”. The story of GM seeds (Box 5) is a case in itself.

Box 5. The Story of Genetically Modified Seeds in India

Monsanto’s operation in India illustrates monopolization and manipulation of the market economy, tradition, technology, and mis-governance. The world’s largest producer of genetically engineered seeds has been selling genetically modified (GM) in India for the last decade to benefit the Indian farmers – or so the company claims.

Enter Monsanto with its “magic” GM seeds, to transform the lives of the poor Indian farmers. The U.S. agri-business giant took full advantage of its entry into the Indian market. It entered into an agreement with state governments including Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh to introduce a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that dictated the terms of disseminating the GM technology in Indian market. For Monsanto, it is one thing to convince farmers to use artificial seeds for the purposes of enriching their lives, it is quite another to manipulate nature and technology to profit from them.

Source: Vandana Shiva <http://www.navdanya.org/news/423-genetically-modified-seeds-in-india>

- 7. Production by masses but not mass production:** This is one of the most famous economic principles of Gandhiji (Schumacher, 1973) who insisted on involving more and more people in production to mitigate the problem of unemployment. In India the agricultural production, more so the livestock production, is in the hands of millions of resource poor farmers who contribute to more than 60% of the agricultural produce in the country. In case of the livestock sector, priority must be given to the landless livestock farmers who need our help the most. Resource poor farmers are slowly deserting farming adding to the problem of unemployment and urban migration. We should be biased towards resource poor farmers in extending all possible help, although it is difficult to achieve targets. We have a tendency to work with few resource-rich farmers for obvious selfish reasons which needs to be curtailed. In response to this, several inclusive and targeted programmes focusing only on the small, marginal and landless farmers emerged over the past few years.
- 8. Inclusiveness:** Inequality in sharing and using resources is leading to the yawning gap between the rich and the poor. 90% of our resources are being used by 10% of the people and the remaining 10% of the resources are being shared by 90% of our population. The society is groping with the serious problem of social unrest leading to chaos mainly because of the inequality which arises because of greedy people. Gandhiji very rightly pointed out that "there is enough to meet the legitimate needs of every one, but not the greed of any one in the country." Extension workers must aim at reducing the gap between haves and have-nots by consciously working in line with the value of inclusive growth.

DIFFERENCES IN THE VALUE ORIENTATION

People change their values over a period of time. Slowly people are taking to negative values ignoring their serious negative impact on the society. For instance, in the past "character" was considered as the best value one should cherish throughout his life. Now its place is taken by wealth (Box 6). Extension workers must consciously aim at building character among the farmers which is possible only when they value the value of character. Extension professionals with unquestionable character alone can develop trust and confidence among the farmers. In fact *the main purpose of education is building character and as professionals of extension education it is still more imperative for us to restore the well deserved place of character – highest value in any society.*

Box 6.Changes in the Value Orientation Over a Period of Time	
Values in the past	What we value now
If character is lost everything is lost and if wealth is lost nothing is lost	If character is lost nothing is lost and if wealth is lost everything is lost
Means are as important as ends	Ends justify the means
Inactivity is a sin.	Inactivity quite often is rewarded while initiative may invite punishment.
Righteousness, moral, and ethical values are kept at a high pedestal.	Righteousness, moral and ethical values are at low ebb

- a) **Individual vs. Organisation Values:** If the value orientation of the individual and organisation is same the probability of accomplishing the objectives is high. On the contrary

if they differ or are in disagreement with each other, it may lead to conflict and it may ultimately result in poor performance. Extension professionals may get into conflicts if their personal values and norms clash with those of the clients and the organisation in which they are working (van den Ban and Hawkins, 1996). Same is true with the conflicting values of the employer and employee. If the employer or boss is corrupt and aims at amassing wealth by hook or crook and if the employee or the subordinate is honest to the core, sooner rather than later, the employee may have to desert the organisation because of the 'value conflict.' If he chooses to toe the line of his boss which is comparatively very easy, it is detrimental to the individual as well as to the society.

- b) **Value orientation in West and East:** The western society has no issues in slaughtering cows which are suffering with communicable or dreadful diseases like TB, mad cow, BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy), FMD, etc. In UK during 2012, millions of cattle were destroyed when they were suspected to be suffering with BSE. Whereas in India, because of the value "cow is holy" we cannot slaughter the cows even if they are suffering with zoonotic diseases (that can be transmitted from man to animal and vice versa). To protect the cows (unproductive) from slaughter *goshalas* have been established and maintained in India by those who owe their allegiance to *gomatha*.

EXISTING SITUATION ON VALUE EDUCATION:

Values in School/College Curriculum: Although values are very important in building a healthy and peaceful society, enough attention has not been paid to inculcate values among students. The fact that Moral Science which speaks of moral values are taught in the schools only up to 9th standard, reflects upon the importance we have been giving to values.

IGNOU's Programme on Value Education: IGNOU has embarked upon a certificate programme to inculcate values among all those associated with education under distance education mode (Box 7).

Box 7. IGNOU's Certificate Programme in Value Education (CPVE)

CPVE is a six months certificate programme designed to inculcate the importance of value education in teaching learning process among teachers, teacher educators, graduates, NGO'S and professionals from the corporate and other sectors.

Course Structure

Course 1: Overview and Perspectives of Values: Deals with the socio-cultural milieu of the present day modern society, reconstructing the society through a holistic development of individuals' - cognitive, physical, affective and moral.

Course 2: Socio Psychological Basis: It analyzes the development of values from various angles: physical, social, intellectual, and spiritual that help in the building up of a holistic personality.

Course 3: Pedagogy of Values: It examines both the normative and descriptive foundations with emphasis on what kind of ethos/value structure could prevail in schools so that they can be considered truly educative institutions and professional communities. It discusses various value models, identification, integration, and transaction of values.

Course 4: Application and Support Skills: It discusses the importance of application skills as means to empower the younger generation and assist them in facing the challenging situations in their lives with an activity component.

Source: <http://www.ignou.ac.in/ignou/aboutignou/school/soeds/programmes/detail/539/2>

Similarly, MANAGE (National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management), Hyderabad has started organising a four day training programme on 'Work Ethics for Development Personnel'. This programme delves on ethics in Public service, understanding and maintaining ethical values in the Public sector, how to developing strong work ethics, how to improve employee work ethics, etc. The reading material for this course could be accessed at <http://www.manage.gov.in/studymaterial/workethics.pdf>.

Values in Curricula: The BVSc and AH curriculum has two courses— Veterinary Jurisprudence & Ethics and Veterinarian in Society— which contain legal and ethical issues, responsibilities of a vet towards society, and dos and don'ts for a vet; with a focus on human welfare at its centre. Similarly, the vets take the Hippocratic Oath, which lays emphasis on ethical standards, and are expected to honour it while practicing as veterinarians. However, very few graduates (Veterinary, Agriculture, Fisheries, Dairy science) opt for extension profession and neither at graduate nor post graduate level the values required by an extension professional are inculcated.

The Fifth Deans Committee Report constituted by the ICAR has proposed a new non-gradual course "Human Value and Ethics" for undergraduate courses in Agriculture (Box 8).

Box 8: Course on Values and Ethics (Credit hours: (1+0): Content

Values and Ethics-An Introduction, Goal and Mission of Life. Vision of Life. Principles and Philosophy. Self Exploration. Self Awareness. Self Satisfaction. Decision Making. Motivation. Sensitivity. Success. Selfless Service. Case Study of Ethical Lives. Positive Spirit. Body, Mind and Soul. Attachment and Detachment. Spirituality Quotient. Examination.

Values in Corporate Sector: The corporate sector increasingly pick up candidates before they graduate (campus recruitment) and train them as per their organisational requirements which include core values and ethos. They usually pick up raw graduates when their minds are comparatively fresh as it is easy to mould them. Every company has its own unique ethos on which the functioning of the company rests (Bani, 2009). The success of Matsushita (National/Panasonic) is attributed to its company's ethos developed and nurtured by its employees (Box 9). Similarly, civil servants are also given training to maintain certain core values in the interest of the nation.

Box 9. Seven Spiritual Values of Matsushita

The Japanese firm Matsushita has developed its own business philosophy from the founder Konosuke. This philosophy was codified as the "Seven Spiritual Values" of Matsushita that all employees learn today. These values are

- (1) contribution to society - national service through industry,
- (2) fairness and honesty,
- (3) cooperation and team spirit,
- (4) struggle for betterment,
- (5) courtesy and humility,
- (6) adaptability, and
- (7) gratitude.

Source : <http://www.panasonic.com/global/corporate/management/code-of-conduct/chapter-1.html>

VALUES IN PUBLIC SECTOR EXTENSION AGENCIES IN INDIA

With respect to public sector extension agencies there is nothing like a list of core values (like the extension professionals creed mentioned in Box 1) that need to be imbibed by the extension staff. 'Adherence to the rules' is an important value, which needs to be honoured in public sector organisations even at the cost of the work itself. Public sector extension staff timings quite often do not match with the time convenient to the farmers (before 10 am and after 4 pm). They are expected to perform the task during working hours (10 am to 5 pm) and that too on week days (Monday to Friday). Transport is also available only during office hours for extension work. This mis-match in the timings has been found to impact extension work.

In this context, NGOs are better placed than public sector extension organisations. NGOs like PRADAN, BAIF, AWARE, SEVA, MSSRF, have their core values and the strength of these NGOs depend upon the extent to which these values are honoured by their staff. The flexible timings being followed by the NGOs will help in reaching the farmers and maintaining contact with them in an effective manner.



PRADAN organises a one year induction (Development Apprenticeship) for its newly recruited staff to align them towards the goals of PRADAN.

To succeed as a human being (must be more useful to the society than any other creature on this globe) in delivering extension services to the farmers, values discussed above are essential in addition to subject matter competencies and soft skills. Therefore a parallel investment in 'human values development' through pre-service, induction and in-service trainings is essential for the success of any agricultural extension worker.

The important values, if valued and cherished, help not only the farmers and extension professionals, but also the entire society. Ignoring these values leads to disproportionate wealth, conflicts, and social unrest; the signs of which are already visible in our society. Although many scholars in the past cautioned us about the negative consequences of neglecting these values in the society, till date we have not taken it seriously. It is high time we focus our attention to values which must be inculcated and imbibed. Cherish the values and save the society or else perish. It is said "*Dharmo rakshati -Protect righteousness (core value) and righteousness protects you*" and we need to practice it which is good for all of us.

WAY FORWARD

1. Identification of core values which do not vary from lower to higher positions in the hierarchy is necessary for extension professionals.
2. Identification of suitable trainers who have been adopting these values.
3. Allocation of an exclusive session for inculcating values while organising training programmes for the extension professionals.
4. Inculcating values especially of general nature must be continued at graduate level irrespective of the specialisation. It must be made part of the core curriculum.
5. The core values adopted and adhered to by great leaders, without compromising on the values, need to be stressed.
6. The core values need to be made available in print as well as electronic media and made accessible to the people.

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