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## Reflected Human Values In Bengali Textbooks Of Elementary Level In West Bengal: An Analysis through the Lens of NCERT's Five Core Values

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### Abstract

*Values-based education is essential for shaping young learners' character and social consciousness. School textbooks serve as key tools in transmitting values, ethics, and moral perspectives. With the political upheaval in West Bengal in 2011, a fundamental change can also be observed in the curriculum of schools in West Bengal. There, values are being expressed through textbooks instead of the traditional path of value education. In 2012, The National Council of Educational Research and Training published Education for values in schools—A framework. There, too, emphasis was placed on the transmission of values through textbooks. From that perspective, the scope of regional-level values education undoubtedly deserves discussion, keeping in mind national-level values education. This study examines the reflection of human values in elementary Bengali textbooks of West Bengal, using NCERT's five core values. The research explores the extent and frequency of these values in textbooks for Classes I- VIII through a qualitative content analysis approach. The findings reveal that Environmental Awareness, National Consciousness, and Aesthetic Expression are the most frequently emphasized values. In conclusion, while elementary Bengali textbooks in West Bengal reflect several key human values, their distribution and integration require further enhancement. A more structured and balanced approach to embedding values in primary education can help nurture ethical, responsible, and compassionate individuals. The study provides insights for curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers to strengthen value-based learning in early education.*

**Keywords:** Bengali Textbooks, Elementary Education, Human Values, NCERT's Core Values.

### Introduction

Elementary stage of education is the ideal time for laying the foundation of child's personality. These years comprise the formative period of their lives. At this stage children are very active. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT, 2012, p.31). But young learners often lack a clear understanding of the broader purpose of schooling. While they may recognize that they are expected to study various subjects, they seldom comprehend why they are in school, how their education connects to real-life situations, or how it can contribute to their personal and social development. Their awareness tends to be confined to academic learning, with limited exposure to the values that shape responsible citizenship, environmental consciousness, and moral integrity. As a result, many students remain unclear about the kind of individuals they aspire to become upon completing their school education. (NCERT, 2012, p.3). This is why there is an urgent need for values education at the elementary level or upper primary level. "Values are essential for positive human behavior. Education, from time immemorial, has focused on values. Values form the core of educational goals and objectives, and almost every education policy document has emphasized the role of education in fostering values." (*Central Board of Secondary Education, (CBSE) 2012, p.1*). Values have repeatedly become relevant in various educational contexts throughout this long journey of Indian education. Especially in primary education, the teaching of values plays a significant role, which is universally acknowledged. NCERT (2012) states: "*Education for values aims at promoting broader capabilities, attitudes, and skills that matter, not just in schools but also in life*

*beyond schools, making the world a better place for themselves and for their family, friends, colleagues, and others. Education for values highlights the understanding that values are to be inculcated in students not just for their own interest but also for the common good, reflecting the balance between individual interest and the larger interest."* (p.9) Value education not only prepares individuals for the "World of Work" but also fosters attitudes such as discipline, empathy, and communication skills. It helps in building a healthy interrelationship between school and home. There is a common understanding that values should be nurtured in schools; however, there is ambiguity and debate about how this education should be imparted. Some schools or institutions integrate value education as a separate subject within their regular academic activities. In this regard, the concept of value education in the West Bengal school curriculum follows a different approach. With the political change in West Bengal in 2011, there was also a change in the curriculum. The "*Draft Report of the Expert Committee on Curriculum and Syllabus 2011*" stated that the practice of values through religious beliefs and rituals is not appropriate in a secular school education system. It further emphasized that value education should not remain confined to a few pages of textbooks but should be integrated into the entire teaching-learning process and various activities (P.30). However, the National Curriculum Framework 2005 termed value education as "*Education for Peace*." The NCERT (2012) also asserted: "*The spirit of values lies implicit or hidden in the textbooks.*" (P.24). The essence of values in textbooks is often not explicitly stated but remains inherent or embedded. Instead of imparting moral education directly, it is subtly integrated through stories, poems, illustrations, exercises, and activities, allowing students to internalize values naturally through reflection. Various school subjects such as language and literature, history, political science, geography, mathematics, and environmental science contribute to the development of values. As stated in NCERT (2012) , "*Of all the academic subjects, languages, being our main means of communication, are the easiest and most natural to integrate human values.*" (p.51) Among all academic disciplines, language serves as the primary medium of communication, making it the easiest and most natural means of integrating human values. Through language, individuals express thoughts, share emotions, and build social relationships. Hence, incorporating ethics, culture, and values in language education is relatively seamless and effective. Stories, poems, dramas, essays, dialogues, and interactive exercises within language subjects easily facilitate the integration of human values. Literature plays a significant role in shaping the moral development of school students. When effectively utilized, it can serve as a powerful tool in curbing immoral behavior and fostering a strong sense of self-discipline, integrity, and aspiration among learners. By exposing students to characters, narratives, and moral dilemmas, literature encourages critical reflection, empathy, and a zeal for personal growth and the pursuit of excellence (Shobowale, Jimoh, and Shittu, 2016). According to Khastagir (2004), the interest on values has started to grow up in the consciousness of general peoples on that time. As the day progressed, the diversity of values has increased in the primer. Values have become a mandatory area under discussion into the school subjects. (pp.9-10).

### **Review of Related Literature**

Value education is a vital component of holistic human development, shaping moral, social, and emotional well-being. Several researchers emphasized psychological and experiential methods for value inculcation. Vohra (2003) advocated self-reflective techniques such as meditation, forgiveness, and emotional regulation to promote mental well-being and values. Similarly, Dhull and Khatri (2006) demonstrated that value clarification techniques, coupled with a nurturing family environment, positively influence children's moral reasoning. Gender, education level, and socio-cultural backgrounds also play a significant role in shaping value perception. Jagadish and Singh (2003) found that value preferences vary with educational levels—postgraduate students favored aesthetic values, while intermediate students inclined towards political values. Rajini (2011) and Vijayalakshmi (2011) reported differences in value perceptions based on gender and locality, with urban and female teachers prioritizing values like honesty and personal development. The role of subject matter and curriculum in promoting values has been extensively discussed. Vadrevu (2013) revealed that chemistry textbooks implicitly promote values such as

environmental awareness and health, while Thomas (2015) emphasized the ethical potential of mathematics education through concepts like logical reasoning and modeling. Pachury (2003) also highlighted the similarity in value orientation between tribal and American science teachers, suggesting a universal nature of scientific values like curiosity and objectivity. Textbook content and language education have also been examined as carriers of values. Sharada and Prasad (2012) and Devi et al. (2004) studied Telugu and English textbooks, noting that moral values were most prominently presented, especially in upper grades. Nidhi (2004) found a direct relationship between the values taught in schools and those reflected in students' behavior, despite a lower preference for values like honesty and simplicity. The pedagogical role of stories, literature, and traditional narratives has been affirmed by many. Choudhuri (2005), Mohajer (2005), and Dash (2015) highlighted that storytelling is a powerful and engaging method for instilling values in children, enhancing comprehension and internalization of ethical concepts. Teacher education and institutional roles are crucial. Bhattacharya (2006) and Suvirananda (2005) emphasized the integrated role of family, school, and teachers in moral development. Seshadri (2005) criticized superficial curricular additions and suggested embedding values meaningfully within teacher training programs. Reddy (2011) found that teacher attitudes towards value education significantly differ between urban and rural contexts. Environmental values were also highlighted. Saxsena (2003) and Latchanna (2011) proposed project-based learning and curriculum reforms to address environmental awareness. Kaur and Sharma (2014) discussed direct, indirect, and cultural approaches as comprehensive strategies for value education.

From the analysis of literature review it is appeared that all these research work mainly focus on the inculcation of values through chemistry textbook, English language textbooks, Telugu language text books, comics and short stories, mathematics books, teacher education, school education, environmental development and value education etc. But it arise that there is no such work on Bengali Literature and language and values. In today's world human value has been treated as an 'empowering tool' (NCERT, 2012, p.5). Through which a child becomes capable of his orientation. In prevalent education system it is also possible through different academic subjects. If seen form this point of view then we see Bengali textbooks of elementary level also helps in inculcating ethical values among children. So this is an important researcher gap and the present study is going to focus on this gap area.

### **Objective of the Study**

The objective of this present study was:

To identify and categorize human values embedded in Bengali textbooks prescribed for Class- I to VIII based on NCERT's five core values.

### **Methodology**

The qualitative research approach was employed in this study. By using qualitative content analysis, the study systematically reviewed, memoing, segmenting the data, open and manual coding (with expert opinion), and also categorizing human values based on NCERT's (2012) five core values.

### **Source of the data**

The data for this study were collected from the existing Bengali language textbooks used in Classes I - VIII, specifically those published after 2011 and introduced in the school curriculum. These textbooks serve as the primary data sources for the research. The selected books include: Class I – *Amar Boi*, Class II – *Amar Boi*, Class III – *Patabahar*, Class IV – *Patabahar*, Class V – *Patabahar*, Class VI – *Sahitya Mela*, Class VII – *Sahitya Mela*, Class VIII – *Sahitya Mela*. These textbooks were approved and published by the West Bengal Board of Primary Education (WBBPE) and the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE), ensuring their authenticity and relevance in the school curriculum. In addition to the primary sources, the study also utilized secondary sources of data, which included reference books, journals, research articles, and other relevant academic literature.

### **Description of the Tools**

### **A. Opinionnaire regarding experts' opinion on identification of human values**

The researcher developed an opinionnaire to gather expert opinions on identifying human values in elementary education. Five experts provided their insights, all of whom held professional positions in the field. Among the five experts consulted, one is a member of the Bengali curriculum design committee for the elementary level in West Bengal, one is a university professor specializing in Bengali language and literature, another is a university professor of linguistics, and the remaining two are university professors in the Department of Education.

Initially, the researcher reviewed a range of significant reports and policy documents—such as the *Report of the Education Commission (1964–66), Volume II* by NCERT, the *Report of the Primary Education Syllabus Committee (1978)* by the Government of West Bengal, the *Report of the School Education Committee (2002)* by the Government of West Bengal, the *National Curriculum Framework (2005)* by NCERT, the *Draft Report of the Expert Committee on Curriculum and Syllabus (2011)* by the Government of West Bengal, and *Education for Values in Schools: A Framework (2012)* by NCERT. Through this document analysis, the researcher identified 132 words that potentially represent human values. These words were compiled into a data sheet and sent to experts for validation. Experts were asked to assess whether these words truly signified human values and, if so, which should be included in the elementary school curriculum. Following expert evaluation, 66 words were confirmed as human values by at least three experts. In the next phase, experts were asked to determine—by marking “Yes” or “No”—whether these values should be explicitly reflected in elementary level Bengali textbooks. After analysis, 54 values received agreement from at least three experts. These 54 validated human values were used for content analysis of Bengali textbooks, ensuring that the study was expert-approved and aligned with the objectives of values-based education at the elementary level.

### **B. Qualitative Content analysis**

To systematically collect data for the content analysis of Bengali language textbooks at the elementary level, the researcher developed a self-constructed checklist. A total of eight Bengali textbooks, covering Classes I to VIII, were read and analyzed multiple times with reference to 54 human values that had been previously validated by a panel of experts. Text segments that aligned with these expert-approved values were identified and marked as “Significant Segments” for further analysis. In total, 236 lessons across the eight textbooks (Class I to VIII) were examined to assess the presence and representation of human values. The checklist included four key questions to guide the content analysis:

- a) Which part of the textbook is relevant to the expert-defined values—that is, which section of the text can be considered for ‘memoing’ and ‘significant-segmentation’?
- b) Does the identified segment explicitly or implicitly convey a human value?
- c) Can an open code be developed from the segmented text and its corresponding memo?
- d) Do the developed codes align with the human values identified by the panel of experts?

### **C. Code Sheet for matching Codes and human values by experts' opinion**

The researcher also developed a self-made code-sheet to systematically document the analyzed content. This code-sheet included essential details such as: Class, Name of the textbook, Name of the lesson/content, Author(s), Page number, Segment of the lessons, Emerged codes, reflected human values. After compiling the data, the researcher sought expert validation by requesting professionals to review the matching between the developed codes and identified human values. Their expert opinion ensured the accuracy and reliability of the coding process.

Next, all human values reflected in the textbooks have been classified and analyzed based on the five categories prescribed by NCERT and analyzed.

## Analysis and Interpretation

### Identified Human Values

The content of Bengali textbooks reflects a variety of human values, primarily conveyed through poems, prose, rhymes, drama, songs, and essays. This research specifically focused on the expert-recommended human values, selected through expert validation, and sought to identify their presence in the textbooks of Classes I to VIII. Among the 54 expert-recommended human values, the researcher identified only 34 values embedded within the content of the Bengali textbooks. These values include with their reflection frequency:

**Table no 1: Frequency of Human Values in the Bengali Textbooks, Classes I –VIII.**

SI No.	Reflected Human Values In Bengali Textbooks	Reflection - frequency
1	Aesthetic Expression	7
2	Affirmation of Other's Positive Qualities	5
3	Appreciation of Cultural Diversity	5
4	Appreciation of Group Work	2
5	Bravery	1
6	Courtesy	1
7	Dignity to Manual Labour	5
8	Empathy	1
9	Environmental Awareness	21
10	Fraternity	5
11	Health Consciousness	1
12	Kindness to Living Being	8
13	Love for Family	1
14	Love for Society	1
15	National Consciousness	16
16	Punctuality	1
17	Quest for Knowledge	4
18	Respect and Love for Mother Tongue	5
19	Self-Confidence	1
20	Unity	1
21	Altruism	2
22	Cooperation	2
23	Curiosity	5
24	Democratic Decision Making	1
25	Devotion	2
26	Discipline	1
27	Gender Equality	2
28	Honesty	1
29	Learning to Live Together	3
30	Modesty	2
31	Non Acceptance of untouchability	1
32	Positive Thinking	2

33	Simplicity in Conducts and Wants	1
34	Truthfulness	2

### 1. Dominant Values in the Textbooks

The values that appear most frequently suggest the priorities of the curriculum:

- Environmental Awareness (21 times) – This value was the most frequently represented, reflecting a strong curricular emphasis on nature, ecological consciousness, and sustainable living. The frequent presence of environmental themes suggests an effort to sensitize young learners to the importance of preserving natural resources and understanding their role in environmental stewardship.
- National Consciousness (16 times) – Ranking second in frequency, this value underscores a significant focus on fostering patriotism, civic responsibility, and national identity. Texts reflecting this value often highlighted historical events, national symbols, and stories of collective unity.
- Kindness to Living Beings (8 times) – The presence of this value reflects the textbooks' intent to nurture compassion, empathy, and ethical treatment of animals and fellow human beings. Such content supports the development of moral sensibilities in children.
- Aesthetic Expression (7 times) – This value indicates an encouragement of creativity, imagination, and an appreciation for beauty through artistic, poetic, and descriptive language. Its inclusion highlights the role of literature in cultivating sensitivity to aesthetic experiences.

### 2. Moderately Represented Values (4–6 times)

Values in this category are given reasonable attention but are not dominant:

- Dignity of Manual Labour (5 times) – this value reflects a deliberate effort to challenge class-based prejudices and promote egalitarianism by emphasizing respect for all forms of honest work. In West Bengal, where socio-economic stratification and rural-urban divides are prominent, highlighting the dignity of labour fosters a more inclusive mindset among students and challenges stereotypes often associated with physical work.
- Fraternity (5 times) – the promotion of unity, social harmony, and mutual respect is particularly relevant in a pluralistic society like West Bengal, where cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity coexist. Given the state's history of political polarization and episodes of communal tension, the emphasis on fraternity can be seen as an attempt to cultivate peaceful coexistence and social cohesion from a young age.
- Appreciation of Cultural Diversity (5 times) – West Bengal is a cultural mosaic that includes tribal, rural, and urban traditions as well as religious diversity. The inclusion of this value reflects the state's broader educational aim of fostering intercultural sensitivity and pride in diverse heritages. This aligns with Bengal's literary and artistic legacy, which celebrates multiplicity and syncretism.
- Respect and Love for Mother Tongue (5 times) – The importance of the Bengali language is deeply rooted in West Bengal's cultural identity. From the Bengali Renaissance to the Language Movement in East Bengal (now Bangladesh), the language has been a powerful symbol of identity and self-expression. By reinforcing this value, the textbooks aim to instill linguistic pride and strengthen cultural roots in a globalizing world.
- Curiosity (5 times) – The encouragement of curiosity and inquiry aligns with modern pedagogical approaches that value critical thinking over rote learning. In the context of West Bengal's legacy of intellectualism and scientific temper—nurtured by thinkers like Jagadish Chandra Bose and Satyendra Nath Bose—this value aims to inspire a spirit of lifelong learning and innovation among students.

### 3. Less Represented Values (2–3 times)

These values appear sporadically in the analyzed textbooks, suggesting that while they are acknowledged in the curriculum, they are not given significant emphasis. Their limited representation may indicate potential areas for curricular strengthening, especially in light of evolving social challenges.



- Learning to Live Together (3 times) – This value reflects an effort to foster social harmony, tolerance, and collaborative living. In a diverse and densely populated state like West Bengal, where religious, linguistic, and cultural pluralism coexist, this value is crucial. Its modest presence suggests a need for deeper integration, especially to prepare children for democratic participation and conflict resolution in an increasingly interconnected world.
- Altruism, Cooperation, Devotion, Gender Equality, Modesty, Positive Thinking, Truthfulness (2 instances each): These values, although fundamental to personal and social development, are only minimally represented.
- Altruism and Cooperation are central to building empathetic, community-oriented individuals, which is especially relevant in the context of West Bengal's long-standing traditions of collectivism and grassroots movements.
- Devotion may relate to spiritual or moral commitment, but its low representation possibly reflects a secular curricular approach.
- Gender Equality is of particular concern, given the ongoing efforts to challenge patriarchal structures in both rural and urban contexts. Its limited presence signals a missed opportunity to address gender sensitivity early in the schooling process.
- Modesty and Positive Thinking contribute to character development, while Truthfulness is a cornerstone of ethical education. These are classic moral values, and their minimal inclusion may reflect a shift from didactic moralizing toward more implicit value transmission—though this approach risks underrepresentation of these essential traits.

#### 4. Neglected Values (1 time)

Several critical human values appeared only once across the 236 lessons analyzed, indicating a significant gap in their curricular emphasis. While these values are essential for the holistic development of learners, their minimal representation raises questions about curricular balance and the comprehensiveness of value education in the elementary Bengali textbooks.

- Bravery, Courtesy, Empathy, Health Consciousness, Love for Family, Love for Society, Punctuality, Self-Confidence, Unity, Democratic Decision Making, Discipline, Honesty, Non-Acceptance of Untouchability, Simplicity in Conducts and Wants — each of these values appeared only once in the content.

These values are not only fundamental to character building but also vital for nurturing socially responsible and emotionally intelligent citizens. Their underrepresentation suggests missed opportunities in addressing pressing societal issues:

- Empathy, Love for Family, and Love for Society are key to nurturing emotional intelligence and civic responsibility—traits essential in today's fragmented social fabric.
- Health Consciousness is especially important in light of public health challenges, particularly in underprivileged and rural areas of West Bengal.
- Bravery, Self-Confidence, and Punctuality contribute to personal growth and resilience—skills needed in both academic and life contexts.
- Democratic Decision Making and Unity are foundational to participatory citizenship in a democratic state like India, yet their negligible inclusion may indicate a lack of emphasis on democratic values at the primary education level.
- Non-Acceptance of Untouchability, despite being a constitutional mandate, appears only once, raising concerns about the adequacy of textbooks in addressing social justice and equality.
- Simplicity in Conducts and Wants, along with Discipline and Courtesy, are timeless values that support self-regulation and ethical living, which are often undervalued in modern consumerist culture.

## 5. Overall Observations from the analysis

- The curriculum strongly emphasizes environmental awareness and national consciousness, which aligns with contemporary educational trends focusing on sustainability and patriotism.
- However, personal moral values (truthfulness, honesty, discipline, punctuality, self-confidence) are underrepresented.
- Empathy and social harmony (learning to live together, unity, cooperation, respect for diversity) are present but could be strengthened.
- Gender equality and democratic decision-making appear less frequently, which suggests a potential gap in promoting inclusivity and participatory culture.

### Categorization of Reflected Human Values under Core Values Recommended By NCERT

The Asia-Pacific Network for International Education and Value Education (APNIEVE) emphasizes that human development is rooted in eight core values, which encompass both individual and societal well-being. These values—Health and Harmony with Nature, Truth and Wisdom, Love and Compassion, Creativity and Appreciation for Beauty, Peace and Justice, Sustainable Human Development, National Unity and Global Solidarity, and Global Spirituality—provide a holistic framework for education that nurtures ethical, intellectual, and social growth. Building upon APNIEVE's vision, NCERT (2012) attempted to cluster these values into five core values aligned with specific attitudes and competencies in the Education for Values in Schools: A Framework (p.17). This structured approach ensures that values are systematically integrated into school curricula, fostering well-rounded individuals who are responsible, compassionate, critical thinkers, and appreciative of diversity and aesthetics.

The core values are follows:

- (i) Health and Hygiene.
- (ii) Responsibility (towards self- development, towards one's work/duty and towards society).
- (iii) Love, Care, and Compassion.
- (iv) Critical and Creative Thinking.
- (v) Appreciation for Beauty and Aesthetics.

The categorization of human values in Bengali language and literature textbooks at the elementary level, based on the five core values mentioned in NCERT's "Education for Values in Schools – A Framework" (2012), provides a structured way to analyze the moral and ethical components embedded in the curriculum. Below is an elaboration on how the identified values align with NCERT's core values:

#### (i) Health and Hygiene

- Health Consciousness (1)

Health consciousness, though only marginally represented in the analyzed Bengali textbooks, plays a vital role in shaping students' understanding of well-being as an essential life value. The theme is subtly embedded in select narratives, serving as indirect yet meaningful prompts for students to develop healthy habits. One notable example appears in *Patabahar* (Class IV, Page 123), where a brief but illustrative narrative highlights the importance of physical activity: "*Waking up early in the morning, Jyoti used to go wrestling with his uncle.*" This anecdote, while simple in structure, promotes multiple positive behaviors—such as early rising, regular physical exercise, and intergenerational bonding. Though the value is not extensively covered, such content introduces young learners to the foundational principles of health and hygiene in an engaging, relatable manner. The depiction encourages students to internalize the significance of bodily care, routine, and discipline, thus reinforcing health consciousness as a component of responsible daily living. However, given the increasing relevance of public health and physical well-being—especially in a post-pandemic educational landscape—the limited emphasis on this value suggests a need for more deliberate and structured inclusion in the curriculum.

#### (ii) Responsibility (towards self-development, one's work/duty, and society)

- Punctuality (1)
- Discipline (1)



- Self-Confidence (1)
- Honesty (1)
- Dignity to Manual Labour (5)
- National Consciousness (16)
- Non-Acceptance of Untouchability (1)
- Democratic Decision-Making (1)
- Respect and Love for Mother Tongue (5)
- Bravery (1)
- Devotion (2)
- Truthfulness (2)
- Environmental Awareness (21)

The core value of Responsibility encompasses essential attributes that contribute to personal growth, commitment to duties, and social awareness. Values such as punctuality, discipline, self-confidence, honesty, and truthfulness reflect an individual's responsibility towards self-development, fostering a strong moral foundation. Similarly, dignity to manual labour, democratic decision-making, and national consciousness highlight a sense of duty towards one's work and nation, promoting respect for all professions and active civic participation. Furthermore, non-acceptance of untouchability, respect and love for the mother tongue, and devotion emphasize social responsibility, advocating for equality, cultural pride, and dedication to ethical principles. Notably, environmental awareness plays a crucial role in fostering a sense of responsibility towards nature and sustainability, ensuring collective well-being. Lastly, bravery signifies the courage to uphold responsibilities despite challenges, reinforcing the commitment to truth and justice. Together, these values shape individuals into responsible citizens who contribute positively to society.

### **(iii) Love, Care, and Compassion**

- Empathy (1)
- Love for Family (1)
- Love for Society (1)
- Fraternity (5)
- Altruism (2)
- Cooperation (2)
- Kindness to Living Beings (8)
- Courtesy (1)
- Learning to Live Together (3)
- Unity (1)
- Gender Equality (2)

The core value of Love, Care, and Compassion reflects the essential human qualities that foster harmonious relationships and social well-being. Empathy, love for family, and love for society highlight the emotional connection individuals share with their close ones and the broader community, emphasizing the importance of understanding and affection. Fraternity, cooperation, and altruism promote mutual support and selflessness, reinforcing the idea of collective progress. Kindness to living beings and courtesy extend compassion beyond human interactions, encouraging respect and care for all forms of life. Additionally, learning to live together and unity emphasize peaceful coexistence, social harmony, and inclusivity. Gender equality further strengthens this category by advocating for fairness and respect among all individuals, regardless of differences. Together, these values cultivate a society based on love, understanding, and cooperation, essential for long-term peace and progress.

### **(iv) Critical and Creative Thinking**

- Quest for Knowledge (4)
- Curiosity (5)

- Positive Thinking (2)
- Appreciation of Group Work (2)
- Democratic Decision-Making (1)
- Environmental Awareness (21)

The core value of Critical and Creative Thinking plays a fundamental role in shaping individuals who can analyze, innovate, and make informed decisions. Quest for knowledge and curiosity drive intellectual growth, encouraging individuals to explore new ideas and expand their understanding. Positive thinking fosters resilience and a problem-solving mindset, essential for overcoming challenges and adapting to change. Appreciation of group work highlights the significance of collaborative thinking, where diverse perspectives contribute to creative solutions. Democratic decision-making reinforces critical reasoning and fair judgment, ensuring balanced and inclusive choices in personal and social contexts. Additionally, environmental awareness nurtures analytical thinking and responsibility toward sustainability, urging individuals to develop creative solutions for ecological challenges. Together, these values empower individuals to think independently, make ethical choices, and contribute meaningfully to society.

#### **(v) Appreciation for Beauty and Aesthetics**

- Aesthetic Expression (7)
- Simplicity in Conduct and Wants (1)
- Appreciation of Cultural Diversity (5)
- Modesty (2)
- Affirmation of Other's Positive Qualities (5)

The core value of Appreciation for Beauty and Aesthetics nurtures an individual's ability to recognize, admire, and uphold beauty in various forms—whether in nature, culture, art, or human character. Aesthetic expression fosters creativity and artistic sensibility, allowing individuals to convey emotions and ideas through different forms of art and literature. Simplicity in conduct and wants reflects an appreciation for minimalism and a life free from excess, emphasizing inner contentment over materialistic pursuits. Appreciation of cultural diversity promotes respect for different traditions, languages, and customs, enriching social harmony and global understanding. Modesty encourages humility and grace in behavior, reinforcing the value of inner beauty over outward show. Lastly, affirmation of others' positive qualities highlights the ability to recognize and appreciate the goodness in people, fostering an environment of encouragement and mutual respect. Together, these values cultivate a refined perspective on life, emphasizing beauty, harmony, and admiration for the world and its diversity.

#### **Major Findings of the Study**

Several significant findings regarding human values in Bengali textbooks from Classes I to VIII, published by the West Bengal Board of Primary Education (WBBPE) and West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE), emerged from this research. These are summarized below:

- Presence of Human Values in Textbooks
  - Out of 54 expert-recommended human values, only 34 values were identified in the Bengali textbooks from Classes I to VIII.
  - The representation of values varied across different grades and content types, including poems, prose, rhymes, drama, songs, and essays.
- Most Frequently Occurring Values
  - Environmental Awareness (21 times), National Consciousness (16 times), and Aesthetic Expression (7 times) were the most frequently reflected values in the textbooks.
  - These values highlight the emphasis on nature, patriotism, and artistic appreciation in the elementary curriculum.
- Limited Representation of Key Values
  - Essential values such as Honesty, Self-Confidence, Discipline, and Punctuality appeared only once or twice, indicating a lack of emphasis on moral and ethical values.

- Love, Care, and Compassion (including Empathy, Unity, and Love for Family) were present but not sufficiently covered.
- Gaps in Value Representation
  - Gender Equality, Democratic Decision-Making, and Non-Acceptance of Untouchability were either underrepresented or minimally included in the content.
  - Critical and Creative Thinking was moderately reflected, but its application in problem-solving and decision-making was not well integrated.
- Categorization of Values
  - The identified 34 values were classified under the five NCERT core values:
    - Health and Hygiene (e.g., Health Consciousness)
    - Responsibility (e.g., Discipline, National Consciousness)
    - Love, Care, and Compassion (e.g., Empathy, Cooperation)
    - Critical and Creative Thinking (e.g., Curiosity, Quest for Knowledge)
    - Appreciation for Beauty and Aesthetics (e.g., Aesthetic Expression, Cultural Diversity)
- Need for More Balanced Integration
  - The study indicates that textbooks focus more on cultural, national, and environmental values while moral, ethical, and social values require stronger representation.
  - A more structured approach is needed to ensure balanced integration of all human values in elementary education.

## Discussion

A major finding of this study is the predominant representation of Environmental Awareness, National Consciousness, and Aesthetic Expression, echoing the results of Vadrevu (2013), who found that science textbooks subtly promote environmental and health values. However, while environmental concerns are strongly emphasized in both studies, other key values—especially personal integrity (e.g., honesty, punctuality, discipline)—remain underrepresented in the Bengali textbooks. This aligns with the observations of Nidhi (2004), who reported a discrepancy between the values taught and those internalized by students. The current study's identification of values such as Kindness to Living Beings, Fraternity, and Cultural Diversity also resonates with findings by Choudhuri (2005) and Dash (2015), who emphasized the role of literature and storytelling in developing empathy and social harmony. Despite the narrative and poetic richness of the Bengali textbooks, values such as Empathy, Love for Family, and Unity appear only once, suggesting a gap between literary potential and value representation. Notably, values related to Gender Equality, Democratic Decision-Making, and Non-Acceptance of Untouchability are minimally present—each appearing just once—highlighting a significant shortfall compared to the inclusive values promoted by UNESCO (2000) and endorsed by NCERT (2012). This is concerning given the rising focus on gender sensitivity and social justice in contemporary education, as discussed by Kaur and Sharma (2014). Contrary to Rajini (2011) and Vijayalakshmi (2011), who observed greater emphasis on moral values like honesty and personal development in urban school settings, this study reveals that such values are weakly embedded in the curriculum. Similarly, values like Self-Confidence and Bravery, critical to personal growth as noted by Bhardwaj et al. (2015), lack adequate representation in the textbooks reviewed. In sum, while the curriculum succeeds in promoting environmental and patriotic values, it falls short in offering a well-rounded value education. This comparative analysis underscores the urgent need for curriculum designers and educators to integrate underrepresented but essential values—like integrity, equity, and empathy—more effectively and explicitly into educational materials.

## Suggestion and conclusion

According to NCERT (2012), education is fundamentally a process of inculcating values, aimed at equipping learners to lead fulfilling lives in alignment with societal ideals. Indian philosophers, spiritual leaders, and educationists have long highlighted education's role in *character development*, the *unfolding of innate*

*potential*, and the cultivation of an *integrated personality* for both individual and societal well-being (p. 14). The present study examined the reflection of human values in Bengali language textbooks from Classes I to VIII, published by the West Bengal Board of Primary Education (WBBPE) and the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE). This analysis, guided by NCERT's core values and a set of 54 expert-validated values, reveals that while some values—such as environmental awareness, national consciousness, and aesthetic appreciation—are well-represented, others, including honesty, discipline, gender equality, and democratic decision-making, are insufficiently emphasized. This imbalance underscores the importance of ensuring that all critical human values are integrated into the curriculum in a balanced way. While the textbooks play a crucial role in shaping students' moral and ethical development, the findings suggest that there is a significant gap in the representation of values that contribute to personal integrity, social justice, and inclusivity. Although patriotism and cultural heritage are well-promoted, other essential values such as honesty, gender equality, and need greater focus, particularly as society moves towards a more inclusive and equitable framework. While values like environmental awareness are prominent, values linked to personal integrity (e.g., honesty, discipline) and social values (e.g., gender equality, democratic decision-making) receive minimal attention. There is a lack of emphasis on addressing emerging issues such as gender equality, inclusivity, and social justice, which are essential for students to navigate and contribute to an evolving society. NCERT's core values like peace, non-violence, and righteous conduct should be integrated more systematically across subjects to provide a cohesive framework for moral development.

The findings suggest the need for comprehensive curriculum reforms that ensure a more balanced integration of values. Future revisions should prioritize personal integrity, social justice, gender equality, and democratic decision-making, in addition to the values currently overrepresented, such as patriotism and environmental awareness. This revision should focus on embedding values into every subject area, not just language textbooks, to create a more holistic educational experience. To effectively implement value-based education, teacher training programs should be upgraded to focus on value education techniques. Teachers need to be equipped with strategies to incorporate values like honesty, empathy, and discipline in their daily interactions with students. Moreover, professional development opportunities should focus on gender sensitivity and inclusive education to help teachers foster environments where diverse perspectives are valued and respected. Regular content audits of textbooks should be conducted to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant and balanced in its portrayal of human values. Feedback from educators, parents, and students should be incorporated into the textbook revision process to better align the content with evolving social values and educational goals. The curriculum should be more explicitly aligned with National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and global frameworks like the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which advocate for value-driven education. These frameworks emphasize inclusivity, gender equality, and global citizenship—values that should be more prominently integrated into the West Bengal education system.

In summary, while the existing curriculum in Bengali language textbooks promotes several essential values, an imbalance in value representation can limit the holistic development of students. Addressing these gaps through curriculum reforms, teacher training, and policy alignment will ensure that future generations are equipped not only with academic knowledge but also with the moral, social, and emotional intelligence necessary to thrive in an increasingly complex world. By systematically integrating a broader range of human values into education, textbooks can become powerful tools for shaping ethically grounded, socially responsible, and empathetic individuals who are prepared to contribute positively to society.

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