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## SCHWARTZIAN ANALYSIS OF BASIC HUMAN VALUES AND LIFE SKILLS IN KAHLIL GIBRAN'S 'THE PROPHET'

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### Abstract

*The present study entitled "Schwartzian Analysis of Basic Human values and Life Skills in Kahlil Gibran's 'The Prophet'" explores the ways in which Almusthafa, enlightens the people on the topics like love, marriage, children, eating, drinking, work, joy and sorrow, law self-knowledge, teaching, good and evil, prayer, friendship, religion and death. These life skills are analyzed on the theoretical perspectives of Shalom H Schwartz Theory of Basic Human Values. The Prophet unfolds the mystic appeal of the universe and kindles spiritual awakening through a simple language. Further this paper brings out how this text motivates the reader to comprehend the life in positive light and how it helps one lead a meaningful and harmonious life.*

**Keywords:** *Schwartz basic human values, soft skills, Human life, stress, Relationship, people.*

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Today, people lead compartmentalized lives and they do not feel affinity with other humans. Infact, some people view this world as a hostile and indifferent place where one can find no reason for living. More over they are frustrated with their lives and go to the extent of taking their own lives in order to escape from day to day drudgery. In this context moral values and life skills helps our life to create a rhythmic, harmonious well-being. Shalom H Schwartz is a social psychologist and a cross cultural researcher developed Theory of Basic Human Values. This theory tries to measure universal values that are recognized through out all major cultures. Schwartz identified ten values namely- Power, Benevolence, Achievement, Hedonism, Stimulation, self-direction, Universalism, Tradition, Conformity and security and these values are related to the life skills and the coalescence of both is portrayed by Gibran through the speeches of Almusthafa, the prophet.

Life Skills has been defined as "the abilities for adaptive and positive behavior that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life" (Life Skills-3). They help people to refine their interpersonal skills and to improve their psychological competencies in order to solve problems creatively and critically. More

over they complement hard skills and are interpersonal in nature. It can be developed easily by systematic preparation and practice. However, it is difficult to answer the question, What are Life skills? The top ten life skills as laid down by WHO are 1. Selfawareness. 2. Empathy. 3. Critical Thinking. 4. Creative Thinking. 5. Decision Making. 6. Problem Solving. 7. Effective Communication. 8. Interpersonal Relationship. 9. Coping with Stress. 10. Coping with Emotion. (Life Skills -3) Most of the skills above mentioned can very well be developed through *The Prophet* and we can see a mutual interface of Schwartzian values and skills, as almost all the skills are taught in a lucid and clear manner that help the reader imbibe these skills in their day to day life.

Our human values and skills are unique that involve a complex process that distinguishes humans from non-human others. People are of different cultures and always keep in mind that culture plays a significant role in delivering and understanding the message. What is upheld in one culture may not be valued in another culture. There is a dearth of training programs available for developing life skills and people often involve in pseudo listening just for the sake of satisfying the other person. People's interpretation of world and other things around them is called perception. In most cases, perception occurs on the sensory world due to its attraction and nature. Everyone has his/her unique perception, which differs from others. At times, people view things based on their selective perception forgetting each culture has its own notions that are being followed by its people. To avert the situation one can rely on *The Prophet*, which holds scope for molding better humans.

Self awareness in Life skill as well as Self-direction in Schwartz reveals the importance of understanding the basic nature of oneself and it helps everyone to realize his abilities to cope up with the hard realities of life. Only through self-awareness and direction one can develop other skills and values. The Prophet educates people about the necessity of sacrificing oneself for the sake of others. He believes that people should not judge the deserving status of the borrowers rather should give everything like a tree that benefits both the good and the bad. Moreover he says that rather than giving things one should surrender oneself for the betterment of the world and sacrifice would turn the world as a paradise on earth:

*You often say, "I would give only to the deserving".*

*The trees in your orchard say not so, not the folks in your pasture.*

*They give that they may live, for to withhold is to perish (28).*

In the world of Epicurean philosophy, people are confused about the habit of eating and drinking. The prophet's comment on them throw a flood of light on "Eating and Drinking". He considers eating and drinking as the established law of nature and one has to participate in the food chain. Moreover he shows how the consumer would become the consumed in the ecological cycle that governs the universe.

*By the same power that slays you, I too am slain; and I too shall be consumed*

*For the law that delivered you into my hand shall deliver me into a mightier hand*

*Your blood and my blood is naught but the sap that feeds the tree of heaven (30).*  
 Gibran Succinctly ascertains his outlook of work, exposes how people worship work, and considers it their privilege to serve others when ethics is practiced in the society. For the people who feel work as burden the prophet highlights the sanctity of work and terms it as the bliss of human life. He asserts that only by the sheer joy of work one can realize the divinity in the universe and the aversion to it fits but begging thus:

*"Work is love made visible and if you cannot work with love but only with distaste, it is better that you should leave your work and sit at the gate of the temple and take alms of those who work with joy"(35)*

Gibran delves on the nature of joy and sorrow and identifies them as the sides of a same coin. He accentuates the fact that whatever is joyful would become the object of sorrow with the passage of time and vice versa and hence instead of separating one from the other one has just to accept them:

*Verily you are suspended like scales between your sorrow and your joy  
 Only when you are empty are you at stand still and balanced  
 When the treasure keeper lifts you to weigh his gold and his silver,  
 Needs must your joy or your sorrow rise or fall.(37).*

Having explored all the ways to change the sad plight of humanity, Gibran asks the people to laugh with others and share their joys and sorrows. At the same time one can restrict one's sorrows to oneself and live peacefully. Though one does not do any good to others, one has to abstain from harming others. He declares that he wants to live with ethical values and with people who are neither bad nor always sad. He urges everyone to join together to make this world a meaningful one.

In this modern and busy world, people have lost their respect for human values and lead insular lives. Empathy is often neglected for convenience and for selfish gains. The prophet proves to be different from the rest by his sympathy and concern for others. "Empathy is ability to imagine what life is like for another person. Without empathy, our communication with others will amount to one way traffic. Worst we will be acting and behaving according to our self interest and are bound to run into problems. No man is an island, no woman either!" (Life Skills 4)

It is empathy that turns humans into social beings and it promotes better understandings and social relationships among people. Further, it helps the people to accept others in spite of their social, cultural, religious and educational differences and to be efficient in cross cultural communications. According to Lamont (1997), "Humanism simply means human being-ism, that is devotion to the interest of human beings where ever they live and whatever their status" (23) and for Gibran friendship is the gift of the heaven that would always reward people with ecstasy. Further, it needs no words to understand the feelings of a friend as the mind themselves travel beyond the region of human understanding. More over a friend is the right choice to share one's ups and downs in life a sharing would relieve one from everything that disturbs the peace of mind:

*Your friend is your needs answered  
 He is your field which you sow with love and reap with thanks giving  
 And he is your bread and your fireside  
 For you come to him with your hunger, and you seek him for peace (70)*

The prophet urges everyone to abstain from judging others and to understand everybody have their justifications for their actions. Only by transferring oneself to the situation of the other, one can truly comprehend the intensity of an action.

Critical thinking helps people to scrutinize the available information and experiences in an objective manner and makes them understand how the individual traits such as attitude and behavior are influenced by the society and its constituent elements. On the other hand, Creative thinking is a fresh way of perceiving or doing things that is characteristic of four components that include "fluency (generating ideas), Flexibility (shifting perspective easily), Originality (conceiving of something new), and elaboration (building on other ideas)" (Life Skills-5). According to Gibran, the human soul is troubled by the judgement on reason and emotion. He deems that they are complimentary in nature and would rise as a phoenix when they are united. Further, both of them are guests of human soul and one ought to realize their divine presence:

*Therefore let your soul exalt your reason to the height of passion that it may sing  
 And let it direct your passion with reason that your passion may  
 Live through its own daily resurrection, and like the phoenix rise above its own  
 ashes (60).*

In life there are plenty of situations, which demand sound decisions and it in fact decides the future course of one's life. It is making good decision that has people to access the options and apply them rationally depending on the intensity of the circumstances. As a fellow being, the prophet shows the path of divine knowledge and illuminates the minds of human with the knowledge of the universe. He informs humans about the fate and urges humans to surrender unto the will of the everlasting soul.

Coping with stress and emotions refer to identifying the situations that make people lose balance of their mind and which disturb their inner peace. It is only by deciphering its origins and root cause, people can come out of its brutal impact. As the progress of the mankind leads only to the problematic situations which have no solutions to address the shortcomings, the prophet urges the humans to realize the causes that aggravate the imbalance of the mind. Prophet points out one has to cope-up with emotions and stress as they arise due to the whims and fancies of humans and they can keep them pure by abstaining away from unethical deeds. It is only by following the path of dharma one can be free from the clutches of the swinging mind:

*You are good when you are one with yourself.  
 Yet when you are not one with yourself, you are not evil  
 For a divided house is not a den of thieves; it is only a divided house (75)*

Some of the factors that prove fatal to the sanctity include capitalism that exploit masses; corruption, terrorism and human selfish acts. The prophet urges humans to come out of their narrow boundaries and motivates them to realize their oneness with the universe.

An awareness of the influence of components of Life Skills and basic human values on the sanity and health of people hold scope for positive response. This analysis reveals how the book unfolds the mystic appeal of universe and kindles spiritual awakening though written in simple language. Thus, this paper has brought out how the prophet motivates the readers to comprehend life in positive light and how it helps them lead a meaningful and harmonious life.

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