

Empowering Children for Social Transformation

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ABSTRACT A Peace, Moral and Value education program- '*Mulyavardhan*' is being conducted by a NGO in 500 Government run rural primary schools since 2008 to date in Maharashtra. The immediate effect has been on children's interpersonal and conflict resolution skills. Children's learning about the personal benefits of being socio-emotionally skilled, self-controlling, respectful, and responsible for self and others, honest, empathetic towards others, has boosted their self-confidence and transformed them into empowered beings. It was reported by large number of parents that children always/often applied these learnt skills in incidents relating to domestic violence, smoking and alcohol indulgence in the family and community. Parents reported to pay attention to children's advice and act kindly towards them. Children's informed interventions in such situations have led to positive changes in the parents. This change process triggered by the '*Mulyavardhan*' children is enhancing the ambience of the whole community thus setting the stage for social transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Prior to Independence of India in 1947, the Central Advisory Board of Education (1943-46) recommended that provision of spiritual and moral instruction for building up the character of the young should be the responsibility of the home and community. The Post Independence period spanning between 1948 to date is dotted with the recommendations of various Education Commissions/Committees invariably emphasizing the importance of imparting values through education: *Radhakrishnan Commission on higher education 1948-49, Mudaliar Commission on Secondary Education 1952-53, Indian Education Commission- 'Kothari Commission' 1964-66, Acharya Ramamurthy Committee 1990, Planning Commission Core group on value Orientation of education 1992* (Government of India 1949, 1953, 1966, 1990, 1992). Time- to- time several Committees were formed to make recommendations specifically for value education as the *Sri Prakasa Committee on Religious and Moral Instruction 1959; Kireet Joshi Committee on value education 1981-82 and Standing Parliamentary Committee on Human*

Resource and Development 1996-99 (Government of India 1960, 1983, 2000). All Education Commissions and Committees unequivocally reiterated that value orientation should be the most desirable main focus of education throughout the country. India's National Policy on Education (1986) also stressed on value education in helping to eliminate obscurantism, religion fanaticism, violence, superstition and fatalism. The journey of nearly seven decades (1943 to date) has witnessed a steady shift from 'no need to impart moral/value education in schools, being family's responsibility to 'moral/value orientation-the most desirable focus of education at all levels'. This conceptual shift has followed the change in thinking regarding the role of education that has happened all along. The role of education has changed from its traditional function of inculcating values of life in the young minds to the overemphasized materialistic benefits of education. This undesirable turn in thinking has happened despite well-meaning thoughts and recommendations of various commissions, committees and well thought National Policy on Education. Genuine efforts were made to weave moral/value education in the curriculum of teacher training courses in the country. The long drawn debate on whether moral/value education should be imparted by integrating it into all school subjects or as a separate subject has remained inconclusive. The recommendations made by the National Moral Educational Conference (1981) to run moral education as a separate subject could not help this debate to be

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conclusive. Unfortunately, the pace of moral decay and consequent sharp deterioration of moral fiber of society did not stop to wait for action for all the positive emphasis on moral/value education by Education Commissions, Committees and Policies of the country.

The prevailing education system in the country promotes competition and has given an unwritten precedence to quantitative performance over qualitative development of students. Besides, a number of environmental factors such as rapid urbanization, industrialization, electronic entertainment, parenting styles and family culture have had their negative influences on the cultural and psychosocial development of children. Simultaneously, there are many more day-to-day pressures impinging on the time that parents and children have together. It is a fact that today's youth face many opportunities and dangers unknown to earlier generations.

Television and films are most often tagged with omnipresence of violence and at the same time it is not true that violence is a recent discovery. It had always been there. It is not television or films alone that affect children but could be the major factors. Why blame the media as it is being fed by ideas from real life, where truth is far worse than fiction. Violence in the world is leading violence everywhere, that is, television, films, internet, our living rooms and may be our lives. The point of concern is that it is no longer ugly rather in today's world it is macho, glamorous, even attractive for money and status. It is essential to kill violence to remove it from the media and our society. In this context, the real remedy that would work will have to start with children, since we know it is difficult to shift the behavior patterns of adults. The foremost, among many initiatives that could be undertaken is to bring forth the role of schools in inculcating the morals and values in children all through their school years, that is, from standard I to XII. The internalization and practice of morals and values by children in daily life would ensure that they will participate with enthusiasm, even spearhead, worthy causes.

Most recently, intellectuals and thinkers have also echoed the similar view at various occasions like *"the root cause of corruption, which has taken a shape of an epidemic in the country, is due to sharp deterioration in moral fiber of society"*; *"It is unfortunate that moral edu-*

cation has been removed from the academic curriculum in India despite the fact that it is the responsibility of academic institutions to nurture and develop the sense of morality among students,"; *"while economic and educational development was helping the poor and the marginal to improve their living conditions, steps must be taken to prevent crime at the grassroots level which is possible only if students are exposed to moral education from the school level itself"* (Mehta 2011; Viswanathan 2012). Madras High Court (2012) has asked the government of Tamil Nadu to discuss on introducing moral education as a subject across the state schools.

The Indian education system does not have a stand-alone program of peace, moral and value education for the elementary education system. Keeping in mind the increasing vices like anger, aggression, intolerance and violence over the past few decades, the Maharashtra state of India introduced a program called *Mulyavardhan* (MV) in 500 primary schools (Muttha 2011). About 35,000 students of standard I to IV are involved in this project. An eminent expert team prepared the curriculum for this program. About 350 teachers with diplomas in education were trained for 60 days by an expert team of teacher trainers. These teachers impart the *Mulyavardhan* program and are tightly monitored for their performance.

This unparalleled fast transformation in the Indian society over the last 20 years made BJS (Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana) a non-profit, non-religious NGO, take conscientious decision to work on the issue of decaying, crumbling morals and values. BJS strongly believes that the introduction of a new subject for Peace, Moral and Value education right from the beginning of formal instruction in the school, that is, from standard I has the potential to resolve the issue of declining values. BJS trusts beyond doubt that this is the only way to restore peace in the world. The seed of *"Mulyavardhan"* has thus been sowed in the soil of this belief pattern. *"Mulyavardhan"* literally means 'enhancement of value'. BJS envisages that the process of imbibing morals and values must start in the early years of life and should continue systematically till the child passes out from school. It is for the reasons that this entire period forms the most impressionable part of child's life. The continuity of the program from standard I to X is

thought to ensure that the child over this period would be able to internalize and practice the morals and values imparted through the new subject- "*Mulyavardhan*".

Patoda *Tehsil* in Beed, a district in Maharashtra state of India was chosen as the first site for implementation of *Mulyavardhan*. The pre-implementation plan for Patoda Tehsil began in March 2009 and the implementation was in place by the end of July 2009. The present study has been conducted on the schools in Patoda which could be described as a backward and remote Tehsil. It has a population of 95,738 (as per the 2001 census). It is spread over an area of 366.17 sq. km. The population density is 261 and the sex ratio is 939 females to 1000 males. The number of schools where MV was implemented during 2009-10 was 159 schools run by the *zilla parishad* or state government with approximately 8,288 children. Permission was obtained from the District Council (*Zilla Parishad*) to initiate the process of MV program implementation in these schools. 88 *Mulyavardhan* teachers (MV teachers) were selected for implementing the program in these schools. Since the start of the program, a group of coordinators was appointed to liaise with the MV teachers regarding delivery of the program by MV teachers in the schools.

Mulyavardhan is backed up by three strong teams of professionals who closely ensure quality of inputs (Curriculum designing and training of 'Guides' for delivery of the curriculum); process (implementation and monitoring the delivery of the program in the field through a well worked system of logistics, feedbacks and troubleshooting) and evaluation (systematic, scientific evaluations are being carried out by the in-house well-experienced research team in collaboration/consultation with international researchers from the field of Moral/Value education). BJS has demonstrated operational excellence by implementing the project on such a detailed level. There are forms and processes in place to collect daily records of important developments.

All children are enrolled in schools. However, attendance of children and continuity of schooling are at the discretion of parents. Children generally commute to school on foot all by themselves for a minimum distance of 0.5 km to maximum 2 to 3 km. In hilly terrains, children commute by state road transport to reach

schools at a distance of 4 to 5 km from their homes. The school provides them books, uniform and mid-day meal. Daily routine of children of primary schools involves rising early and helping in household activities before leaving for school. Schools run till about 4 p.m., after which children go back home and then immediately leave for the farms to help their parents. At the farm, they are expected to pluck cotton from the plantations, dig out groundnuts during harvest time and graze the cattle. Girls as young as 8 to 10 years old cook and take care of younger siblings and engage in all household chores when the mother is away at the fields. Evening time is spent in watching television, outdoor games and studies. Children are generally shy and reticent. Parental education being minimal and their inability to give adequate time to children due to their struggle to make ends meet, leaves children with little exposure and stimulation from family environment.

Children are nurtured in an environment characterized by instability and under stimulation. Family environment is marked with alcohol abuse, domestic violence, other vices and domination of males in the guise of tradition. Tradition has put females in a disadvantageous position. Though the influence of print and electronic media is marginal as compared to urban environment, the emotional load on children coupled with stark poverty puts them at disadvantage. This environment dissuades the need for sustained education since basic needs of survival are met after tremendous hardship. Thus attendance in school and continuation of schooling becomes an area of concern. Such an environment can naturally be an impediment to the healthy psychosocial development of a child. Hence, the pressing need for Peace, Moral and Value education for this segment of society. Recognizing these impediments and understanding the growing need for provision of a morally sound environment for children, became the rationale for beginning *Mulyavardhan* program in Patoda tehsil of Beed district.

***Mulyavardhan* Approach**

Review of scientific literature concerning the issue of erosion of values indicates its global expanse. It requires long term permanent solution rather than a temporary quick fix. A liberal, broader and pragmatic perspective will be

more desirable rather than getting bogged down by the diverse, many a times idealistic views. All perspectives regarding the solution to the problem unequivocally agree on imparting moral and value education in schools. There are different approaches to the central question, 'how to impart it in the schools?' One school of thought thinks it proper to be integrated with other academic subjects being taught in the school. Another view is that it should be introduced as a subject like other academic subjects in the school. And yet others want it to be taught though as a separate subject but unlike other academic subjects. The debate on these three different approaches for imparting moral and value education could be unending if held to establish supremacy of one upon the others. At this juncture it would be wiser to reflect upon the available resources in terms of manpower, funds and time at our disposal to address the problem as it is getting graver with every passing year. In this context, after meticulous reflection upon all these three choices, BJS, voted for the third choice to work upon. The rationale for the third choice is that it gives scope for creating a unique subject with child centric, result oriented content. This proposition lends itself to weave in quality right from inputs through process to outcomes. The other reason to go for it is the flexibility as it offers to render it region/socio-cultural specific, the most essential consideration keeping in view the socio-cultural kaleidoscopic diversity of the country. It was favored over the other two approaches as the first one would involve working out the finer details of what could be the 'moral and value' content of each academic subject in each standard and accordingly designing, developing and conducting subject wise trainings of the entire schools for integration of moral and value education. The work does not end here; it would get more complicated for the tasks of implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Above all the integrated approach would have taken too long a time for fielding it in the schools.

Mulyavardhan Curriculum

Universal values are the focus of the *Mulyavardhan* syllabus. These values work towards reducing aggression, arrogance, intolerance and violence. The focus of the *Mulyavardhan* syllabus includes among other values: kindness, pa-

tience, tolerance, cooperation, empathy, equality and peace. Along with Universal Values, the syllabus includes core values and life skills accepted by National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT, Delhi, India, 2006). The syllabus is ensured: i) to deal sensitively with various subjects with local flavor; ii) to be religion-neutral rather secular; iii) to include age-appropriate content with child-friendly techniques of content delivery. This developmentally appropriate curriculum with unified scope, sequence of contents and skill-building exercises is designed to nurture core values to foster morals necessary for cultivating skills for creating safe and peaceful environs in and outside school. It is designed to make children understand about the basic moral values and learn their applicability in daily life through skill-building exercises so as to acquire social competency and skills to deal with conflict leading to peace making.

The *Mulyavardhan* curriculum delivery follows principles of co-operative learning, that is, uses methods like role play, whole-class-discussion; small group work; working in pairs; presentations by children; individual activity etc. The themes of the lectures are reinforced through age-appropriate interesting stories, songs/poems and games to ensure that the process of learning is joyful. The syllabus has been approved by the Local Government of Maharashtra state in Western India.

Soon after the implementation of *Mulyavardhan* in schools, BJS started getting positive feedback about the program from its stakeholders and the villagers. Teachers and Principals were speaking about positive changes in their students and the school. The *Mulyavardhan* teacher became popular among the students, parents and village community. At the time of implementation of *Mulyavardhan* no theory was envisaged for explaining the expected changes in the behavior of the stakeholders rather it was felt appropriate to arrive at a theory through observations of what was happening in schools and communities where *Mulyavardhan* was being implemented.

The principal focus of this paper is to discuss the nature of transformation *Mulyavardhan* brought in children and secondly how 'transformed' children initiated changes in their families and thus became the 'agents of change' for the family and community.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is based upon three phases of data collection at different points of time stretching between September 2009 to March 2012 as detailed below for respective methods and sample sizes of stakeholders of the present study:

The First Year (September 2009 to March 2010)

As mentioned earlier '*Mulyavardhan*' was implemented to start with in Patoda (a Tehsil of Beed district of Maharashtra, India) in the month of July 2009. All MV Teachers (n:88) were given inputs during their formal training (of 17 days) of *Mulyavardhan* curriculum delivery in making field observations through a self-reflective process to focus on the significant events, concrete incidents or their lived experience/s for reporting. They were directed to write notes about various significant observations regarding positive changes in student's behaviour as perceived by them or reported by the School Principals, Government teachers, parents and members of the community to them during their formal or informal interactions. They were writing detailed narratives with dates about all the incidents/events they perceived were significant to reflect the change in student's behaviour since the implementation of *Mulyavardhan*. These 'Experience Diaries' provided rich contextual data from September 2009 to March 2010 by the participants that is, MV teachers.

Fifty (50) 'Experience Diaries' were drawn randomly out of 88, submitted by MV teachers conducting *Mulyavardhan* in 159 Government Primary schools of Patoda tehsil (Children: 8,288 from Standard I to IV). These fifty diaries were randomly assigned to two groups, Group-1 and Group-2. Each of the two groups' data was analysed by two investigators independently who were familiar with *Mulyavardhan* curriculum and its objectives. The texts of the 'Experience Diaries' were mainly composed of two kinds of data, one concerning the individual's (MV teacher, Government school teachers and parents) perception about the behavioural changes occurring in children and the second pertaining to concrete occurrences (reported by children, parents, Government school

teachers and MV teacher him/herself) reflecting changes in children's behavior. One of the investigators (Group-1) was asked to look for concrete occurrences and collate them in appropriate behavior categories. The second one (Group-2) was asked to collate perceptions regarding change in behaviour and collate them in suitable categories. These two separate analyses were undertaken to cross validate the reflections regarding change in children's behavior emerging out of insights and concrete examples.

The Second Year (February-March 2011)

In the beginning of school year 2010-11, *Mulyavardhan* program was expanded to include 22 more schools in addition to the earlier 159 schools so as to reach out to all existing 181 Government Primary Schools (GPS) of Patoda tehsil (Beed district). The number of MV teachers rose to 105 for these schools. In addition to this, 263 (GPS) schools from Ashti, the adjoining tehsil to Patoda (Beed district) were also brought under the program and a batch of 146 MV teachers was inducted to coach *Mulyavardhan*. Same year *Mulyavardhan* was initiated in 46 Municipal Corporation schools of Jalgaon city located in another district (Jalgaon) of Maharashtra. Thus by second year, *Mulyavardhan* fanned out to include about 35,000 children of standard I to IV from 490 schools. All MV teachers were imparted one month training in *Mulyavardhan* curriculum delivery before fielding them in the schools.

The sample was drawn using systematic stratified sampling technique from the schools of Patoda and Ashti tehsils only for the present study.

A total of 121 Principals; 59 Government Teachers, who did not participate directly in *Mulyavardhan* constituted the non-participant sample of this study. *Mulyavardhan* (MV) teachers (n: 190) and 604 MV children (were drawn out of 18,739 children from standard I to IV with equal distribution over the two sexes), who were directly participating in *Mulyavardhan* formed the 'participant' sample for the study.

The Questionnaires: Questionnaires were developed for Principals, government teachers and MV teachers. It comprised of a combination of closed-ended questions in the form of Likert scale and a few open-ended questions.

Interview schedule was developed for recording responses of the children. The questionnaires and interview schedule were translated into Marathi language and the translated versions were ratified through back translation.

Data Collection: MV teachers, who were promoted to the post of Coordinators after functioning as MV teachers during the first year of implementation (2009-10), were extensively trained for data collection by the research team. Additionally, a training manual was provided to the data collection team to ensure standardisation of the data collection process. Interview schedule was used with the children.

Data Analysis: Principals, government teachers and MV teachers were asked to mention the biggest change they had observed or experienced in children in relation to the *Mulyavardhan* program. Among the responses there was sufficient homogeneity so the answers could be collated into a few broader themes. Each open-ended response was categorized into its relevant theme depending on the content. This content analysis is being reported here in the context of the changes perceived by various stakeholders in children's behaviour. The children were asked to narrate their most positive experience since the start of the MV program. The open-ended responses were collated and categorized into the broader themes.

The Third Year (March-April 2012)

Selection of sample schools for collection of data from children's parents followed a procedure. A data base was compiled for various selected parameters for each *Mulyavardhan* school (No. of selected parameters: 17) along with the specific information about the village (No. of selected parameters: 8) where the school was located. Matched pairs of schools were identified through k-means cluster analysis using village-school data followed by creation of matched pairs by eye. A set of 60 schools from these matched pairs of schools (all I to IV standard schools) from Patoda and Ashti tehsils were selected for drawl of sample for the present study. The data was collected from parents (n: 1125) of MV children of these 60 selected schools through a structured interview schedule, approximately 20 parents per school. However, the present report is based on a set of 518 parents of children of 30 Government Primary Schools

from Patoda tehsil, where *Mulyavardhan* intervention had been carried out for three years. It is worth mentioning that all *Mulyavardhan* teachers were imparted two months training in *Mulyavardhan* methodology before the schools opened for the academic session 2011-2012. Data was collected by MV teachers who had already established rapport with children's parents. All MV teachers were given appropriate inputs before they conducted interviews with parents.

RESULTS

The First Year (September 2009 to March 2010)

Analysis of **Group-1** (n: 25) 'Experience Diaries' aimed at collating the concrete occurrences of behavior change among children (reported by MV teachers, government teachers, parents and community members) since they started with their daily *Mulyavardhan* lessons which continued from Sept 2009 to March 2010. Results are summarized in Figure 1. Among the seven behaviors shown in Figure 1 'cooperation' is supported by nearly 63%, the highest percentage, of the total real occurrences (n: 60) demonstrating changes in children's behavior. Incidents related to changes in 'Caring' behavior are 10% of the total. The changes in the remaining five behaviors namely 'Respectful behavior towards'; 'Loving'; 'Truthful' and 'Resolving conflicts' are evidenced for each by about 7% of the total concrete occurrences.

Analysis of **Group-2** (n: 25) 'Experience Diaries' intended to collate the insights of behavior change among children (reported by MV teachers, government teachers, parents and community members) since the implementation of *Mulyavardhan*. The total number of insights culled out from the 25 'Experience Diaries' were 587. These insights were grouped into 14 behavior categories, almost double the number of categories for concrete occurrences of children's behavior. The results are summed up in Figure 2. The most dominant insights described children as happier and contented (17.72%); showing positive changes in their behavior (16.70%) and more cooperative (16.18%) since the implementation of *Mulyavardhan*. Cooperation among concrete occurrences of behavior overshadowed other behavior categories.

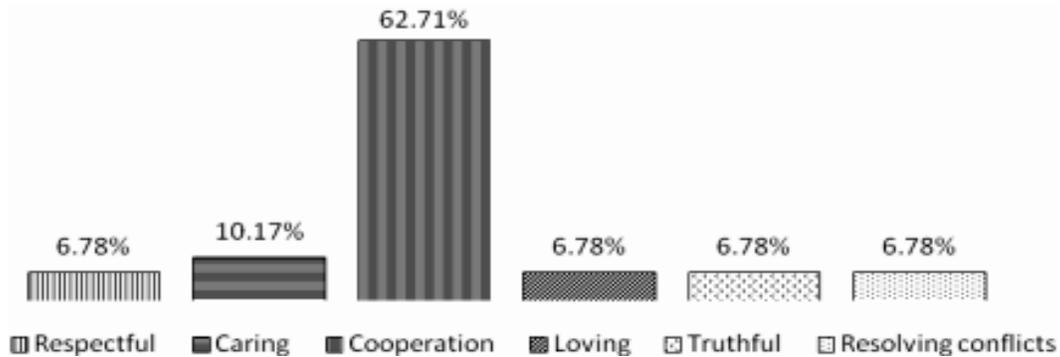


Fig. 1. Percentage of concrete occurrences of children's behavior recorded in the 'Experience Diary' of MV teachers [Sept. 2009 to March 2010]

The next three insights namely 'resolving conflicts among peers'; 'respectfulness'; 'honesty' and 'self awareness' in order of their percentage frequency ranged between 6.81% to 9.54%. These observations are close to those ('respectful' 6.78%; 'truthful' 6.78% and 'resolving conflicts' 6.78%) that came forth by analysing concrete occurrences of children's behavior. Children were perceived to be more 'disciplined' by 4.60% of insights. 'More interest in studies' 3.24%; 'observance of cleanliness' 2.90%; 'follows instructions' 2.73%; 'more confident' 2.39%. 'Affection and love towards animals' 1.53% and 'liking for school' 0.51% of total number of insights indicate that these behaviors are springing up.

The Second Year (February-March 2011)

The percentage of Principals and government teachers (non- participants) and MV teachers and students (participants) varied in the 'percentage expression' of their perception across all the behaviors presented in Table 1. The point of importance is that everyone perceived the similar/same behavioral changes in students since the implementation of *Mulyavardhan* program and thus triangulating the evidence in favor of *Mulyavardhan*. In this context both non participants (Principals and government teachers) and participants (MV teachers) expressed that students have become 'more disciplined' since the implementation of *Mulyavardhan*. The

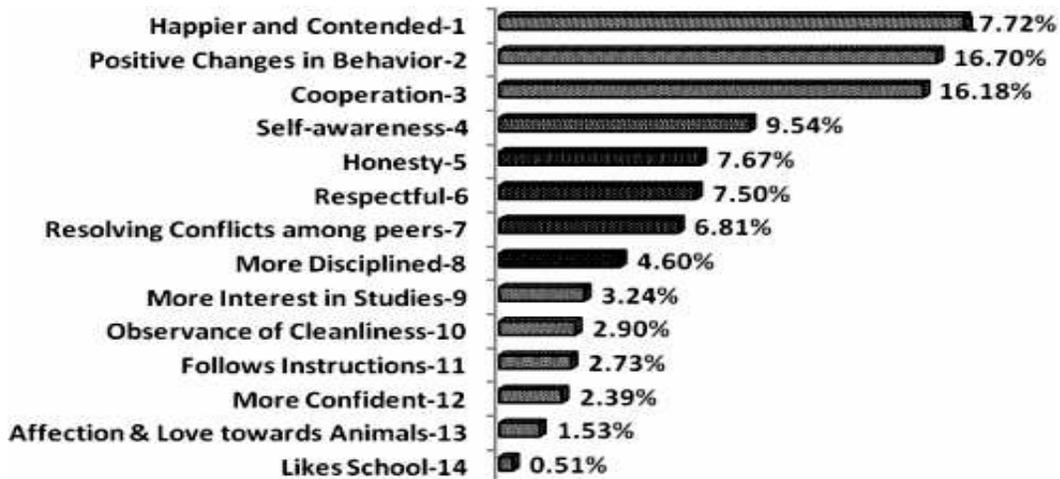


Fig. 2. 'Insights' of various behavior changes among children (%age of the total (587) 'Insights' perceived by MV Teachers, Govt. Teachers, Parents and Community members) recorded in the 'Experience Diary' of MV teachers (Sept. 2009 to March 2010)

perceptions expressed as ‘better in conflict resolution’ (Principal); ‘reduced fighting’ (government teacher); ‘less conflict’ (MV teacher) and ‘not fighting’ (student) are of same genre and point towards ‘lesser fights’ among students and if there is a conflict they are now better in resolving those. Both non- participants, that is, Principals (‘improved interpersonal relationship and cooperation’); government teachers (‘More cooperative’) and participants, that is, MV teachers (‘More cooperative’) and students (‘Helping others’ and ‘Playing together’) suggest that students have become ‘More cooperative’ since the explicit teaching of values through *Mulyavardhan*. Another change in behavior of students mentioned by both non- participant observers (Principals: ‘Increased honesty’; government teachers: (‘Increased honesty’) and participant observers (MV teachers: Honest; Students: Truthful and Honest) included ‘More honest’ than before imparting of *Mulyavardhan*.

The Principals, MV teachers and students (self-report) reported that students have become ‘more respectful’ towards others that included more often teachers and elders. Government teachers and MV teachers found students ‘More confident’ since being exposed to *Mulyavardhan*. It was observed by Principals and government teachers that students ‘attendance in the school has improved’ and they take ‘more interest in studies’ (Principals) and ‘drawing sketches’ (government teachers) since the implementation of *Mulyavardhan*. Students’ self-reports mentioned that they often practice ‘Golden Rule (‘treat others the way you would like to be treated by others’) which they learnt in *Mulya-*

vardhan and none among non- participants and MV teachers (participants) mentioned about it. Similarly only Principals observed students to be ‘happier and more contented’ since they learnt practicing values imparted by *Mulyavardhan*. Principals alone reported various positive changes in behaviors of students since exposure to *Mulyavardhan* the concrete examples are like ‘keeping classroom neat and tidy’; ‘following instructions’ and ‘showing proximity and affections to teachers’.

It is evident from the above observations that there is a strong ‘first level’ (where all non-participants and participants reiterate the same behavioral change) triangulated evidence of positive behavioral changes in students since the implementation of *Mulyavardhan* specifically that ‘students have become more disciplined; more cooperative; more honest and fight less (more peace-loving). The ‘second level’ (where perceptions of three out of the four observers match) triangulation indicates students have become ‘more respectful to teachers and elders’. The ‘third level’ (where two out of four observers perceive the same behavioral change in students) triangulation of evidence included behaviors like ‘students attending school more often than before (improved attendance), ‘take more interest in studies’ and become more confident than before’. The ‘fourth level’ (perceptions of change in behavior of students by a single observer) is not a strong level of evidence though being perceptions of only 1.4% of Principals alone which were not endorsed by other observers. However, 18% students alone reported the biggest change they had observed among themselves was of

Table 1: The triangulated evidence: The perceptions of the non participants and participants about the changes in behavior of children since the implementation of *Mulyavardhan* in the adopted schools

% of Non Participants perceiving specific behavioral changes in the children		% of Participants perceiving specific behavioral changes in the children					
Principals		Government teachers		MV teachers		Children's self perceptions	
Behaviors	%	Behaviors	%	Behaviors	%	Behaviors	%
Improved interpersonal relations and cooperation	22.2	More cooperative	28.8	Cooperative	61	Helping others	52
More discipline	17.7	Confident	17	More honest	9.4	Stopped fighting	19
Concrete examples of change in behavior	12.5	Improved attendance	11.8	Less conflict	9.4	Using ‘Golden Rule’	18
General change in values (respect, ‘peace’ and ‘obedience)	9.6	More discipline	10	Respectful	7.3	Play together	2
Improved attendance	8.8	More interest in drawing	10	Confident	5.7	Respecting others	5
More interest in studies	4.4	Increased ‘Honesty’	6.7	Disciplined	5.2	Truthful and honest	4
Increased ‘Honesty’	3.7	Reduced fighting					
conflict resolution	2.2						
Happier and contented	1.4						

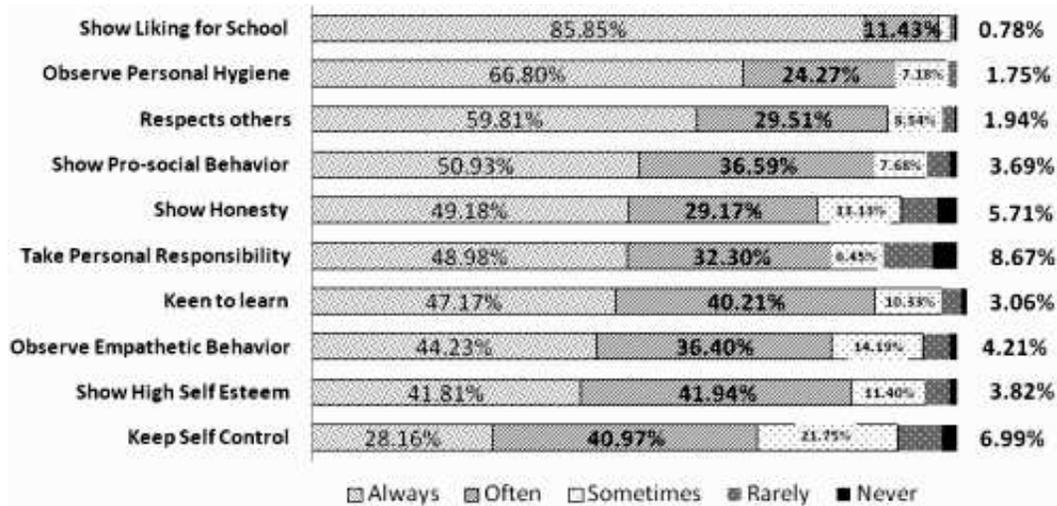


Fig. 3. Parents' perception of children's +ve behaviors after three years of 'Mulyavardhan'- the Intervention

observing 'Golden Rule'. It goes without saying that 'Golden Rule' is underpinned with a fountain of values with a potential of changing self and surroundings in terms of thoughts, feelings, attitudes and actions towards self and others and is a corner stone of all peace-making activities.

The Third Year (March-April 2012)

Parents' (n: 518) perceptions of their children' positive and negative behaviors are summed up in Figures 3 and 4, respectively on a five point 'Likert scale' (Always; Often; Sometimes; Rarely and Often).

It is quite evident that overwhelming percentage of parents perceived that their children 'Always' (85.85%) show 'liking for the school' while only 11.43% show it 'often' and that leaves merely 2.72% parents' perceptions for 'sometimes'; 'rarely' and 'never'.

Nearly 67% of parents perceived children 'always' 'observing personal hygiene' while 24.27% of parents observed that children 'often' 'observe personal hygiene. Less than 10% parents noticed that children either 'sometimes'; 'rarely or 'never' observed personal hygiene.

Just about 60% of parents' perceptions found children 'always' 'respectful to others' including parents, teachers and elderly persons, while

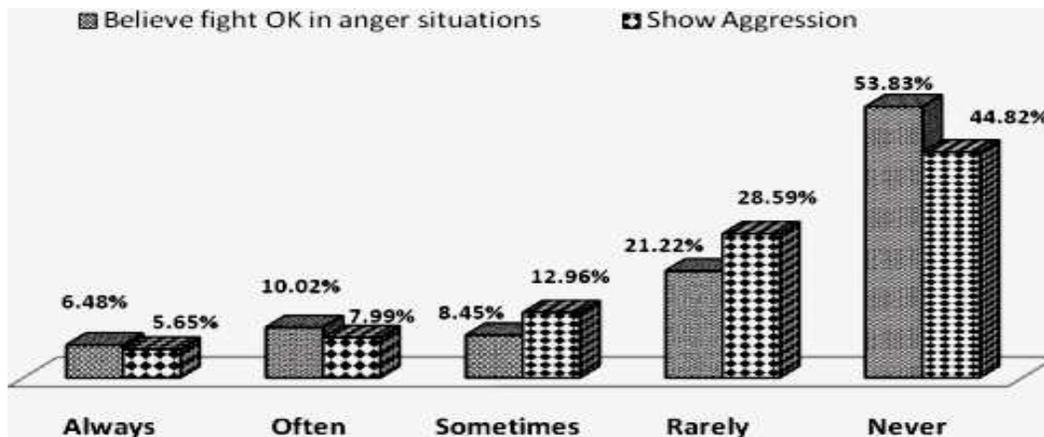


Fig. 4. Parents' perception of children's -ve behaviors after three years of Mulyavardhan

30% of parents felt that children are 'often' 'respectful'. Among the remaining 10% of perceptions revealed that about 8% children were 'respectful' 'sometimes and nearly 2% happened to be so rarely.

As per parents perceptions children 'always' (50.93%) showed 'pro-social behavior'. It was shown 'often' by 36.59% children. Remaining 12.48% children were perceived to exhibit 'pro-social behavior' either 'sometimes'; 'rarely' or 'never'.

Parents perceived that 49.18% of children 'always' showed 'honesty' and about an equal percentage (48.98) of them 'always' displayed 'personal responsibility'. 'Honesty' was perceived to be shown 'often' by children by 29.17% of parents. Children were perceived to show 'personal responsibility' 'often' by 32.30% parents. About 22% percent of parental perceptions categorized children into observing 'honesty' either 'sometimes'; 'rarely or 'never' and the corresponding percentage for showing 'personal responsibility' is 18.72%.

Children were perceived to be 'Always' (47.17%) 'keen to learn' whereas 40.12% parents perceived that they are 'Often' 'keen to learn'. There are yet 10.33% parents who perceived that children who are perceived as only 'sometimes' showing either 'liking for school' or 'keenness to learn'.

'Empathetic behavior' was perceived to be shown by children 'always' by 44.23% parents whereas 36.40% of them 'often' saw it in their children. Similarly 'high self-esteem' was perceived by 41.81% of parents to be 'always' evident among children while it was exhibited 'often' as found by almost equal percentage (41.94%) of parents.

Children were perceived to 'always' show 'self-control' by 28.16% of parents, whereas 40.97% of them perceived that it is only 'often' exhibited by children and yet 21.75% of them thought that it is only 'sometimes' observed among children

Figure 4 summarizes parents' perceptions of negative behaviors among children with particular reference to aggression and beliefs related to aggression. A little over 50 percent of parents perceived that children do not believe that it is okay to show aggression in fight situations, whereas nearly 45% of parents observed that their children 'never' fight. Nearly 29% of parents viewed that their children 'rarely' show

aggression and approximately 21% of parents felt that their children rarely believe that it is okay to use aggression in fight situations. Just about 25% of parents reported that their children find aggression 'always' (6.48%); 'often' (10.02%) and 'sometimes' (8.45%) okay in fight situations. About 16% of parents perceived that children show aggression either 'sometimes' (12.96%); 'often' (7.99%) or 'always' (5.65%).

Parents' perceptions of how children respond to the violent incidents in the family are presented in Figure 5. Just about 75% parents found that children 'never' (31.14%) or 'sometime' (44.30%) remain silent on observing violence in the family. About 25% children either 'always' or 'often' stay silent. Do children show displeasure in such situations? In response to this question, nearly 47% parents reported that children either 'always' (17.08%) or 'often' (30.63%) show displeasure and remaining about 53% parents perceived that children 'sometimes' (45.42%) or 'never' (6.87%) exhibit displeasure.

About 53% parents noted that children 'always' (18.57%) or 'often' (34.87%) use non-verbal communication signals like 'quiet signal' whereas almost 46% parents observed that children do so either 'sometimes' (30.06%) or 'never' (16.50%). Do children dissuade parents in case of violence in the family? Parents responses to this question revealed that only about 20% of parents perceived that children either 'never' (3.89%) or 'sometimes' (16.30%) persuade against violence. On the other hand, about 80% parents viewed that children 'often' (43.03%) or 'always' (36.78%) urged the parents to put off such a behavior. Parents perceived that children either 'always' (42.08%) or 'often' (31.66%) used 'golden rule' ("*Do not do to others what you do not want them to do to you*") to advocate non-violence in the family. Just about 20% parents observed that children 'sometimes' used 'golden rule' to earnestly advise family members to refrain from violence while a very few parents (6.39%) found children never using 'golden rule'.

Parents were asked to put across their perceptions about children's reactions if they found someone smoking or chewing tobacco in the family or in the community? The percentage distribution of parents' responses is summed up in Table 2. About 51% parents expressed that children would 'never' just observe while nearly

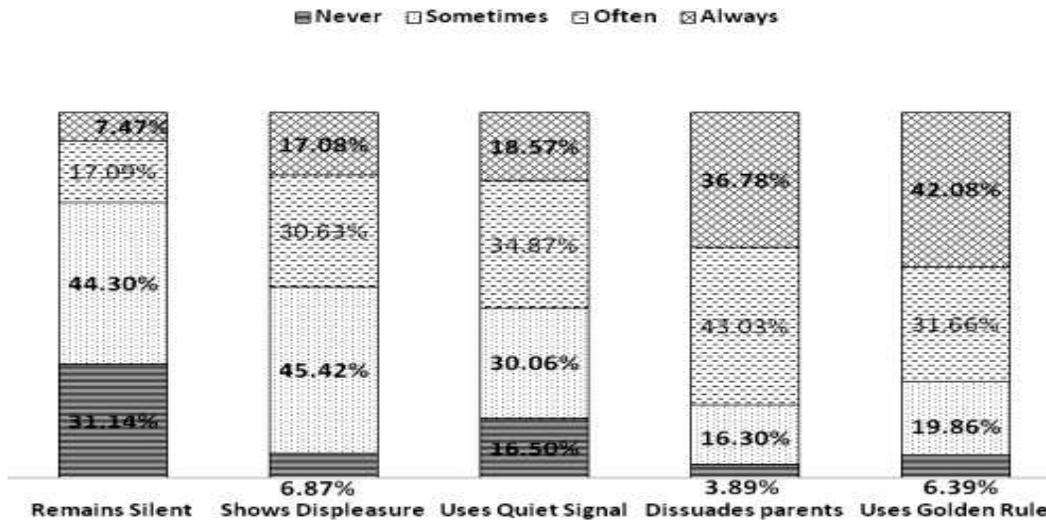


Fig. 5. Parents' perception of children's responses to 'violence in the family' incidents

34% of parents noted that children would 'just observe' sometimes only. Just about 20% parents perceived that children would 'never' go away from the person indulging in smoking/chewing tobacco; however, 36% parents observed that the children would 'sometimes' leave the place. About 85% parents perceived that children either 'always' (44.86%) or 'often' (40.18%) dissuades the concerned person.

Parents were asked whether children ever stopped others in the family for various negative behaviors. The percentage distribution of parents' perceptions regarding children's 'stopping' initiatives is shown in Figure 6. About 37% parents reported that children definitely stopped

Table 2: Parents' perceptions of children's responses to 'Someone' found smoking or chewing tobacco

Child's response	Parents' perceptions			
	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
Just observes	50.96%	34.26%	13.24%	1.54%
Goes away	20.09%	35.83%	33.65%	10.43%
Dissuades the concerned person	3.15%	11.80%	40.18%	44.86%

someone from cutting a tree, while nearly 45% were almost certain about children having stopped someone from cutting a tree. Similarly nearly 40% parents stated without doubt that children stopped someone from throwing garbage...

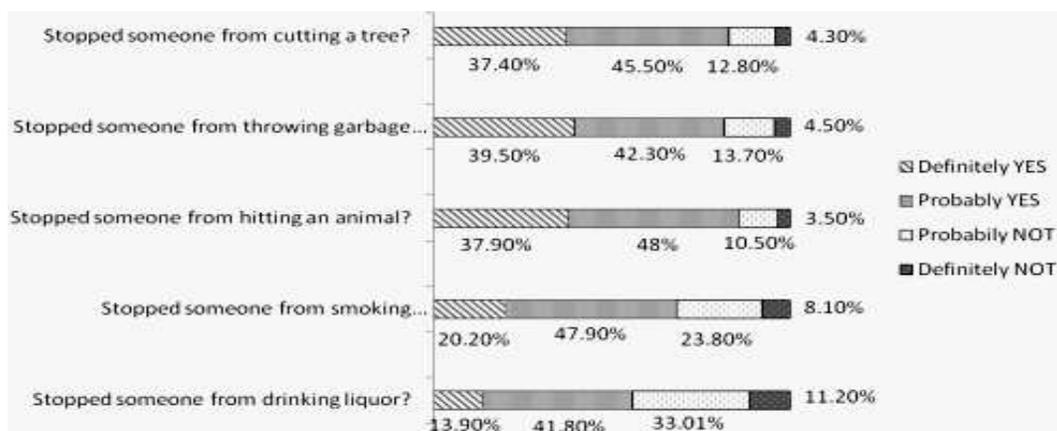


Fig. 6. Parents' report of children's behavior in the family setting

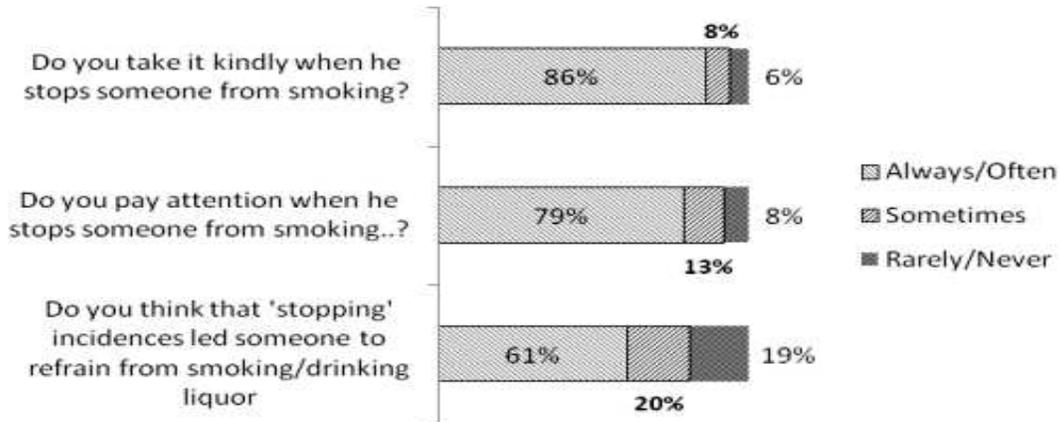


Fig. 7. Parents' response to children's 'stopping' actions

bage at an inappropriate place, whereas about 42% of them were almost certain that children did so. Children either definitely or in all probability stopped someone from hitting an animal was noticed by 37.89% and 48.05% parents. Parents (20.24%) expressed beyond doubt that children stopped someone from smoking tobacco, while 47.94% of parents were reported with almost certainty that children did so. About 14% parents stated beyond doubt that children stopped someone from drinking liquor, while 41.85% of parents stated in all probability that children did so.

Parents were asked about how they reacted to their children's 'stopping' actions regarding smoking; drinking; hitting; throwing garbage or cutting the trees etc.

Figure 7 summarizes parents' responses. About 46% parents 'always' took it kindly while just about 41% did so 'often'. The remaining 13% of parents only 'sometimes' (8.02%); 'rarely' (3.13%) or 'never' (2.35%) took it kindly. Almost 37% parents 'always' paid attention to children's 'stopping' actions while nearly 42% did so 'often'. About 13% parents 'sometimes' took notice of children's 'stopping' actions, whereas almost 6% parents 'rarely' paid attention to such actions. Only about 2% parents 'never' focused on children's 'stopping' actions. It was reported by 21.25% parents that children's 'stopping' actions 'always' succeeded in making people refrain from various kinds of negative behaviors in the community. On the other hand nearly 40% parents stated that children's 'stopping' actions 'often' led people to refrain from various sort of indulgences.

DISCUSSION

The results as presented above amply elaborate the various kinds of changes that have occurred in children's behavior since implementation of 'Mulyavardhan' over a period of three years. The changes noticed by *Mulyavardhan* teachers during the first year (September 2009 to March 2010) of the intervention included real change examples and their own perceptions. The analyses of MV teachers indicated positive changes or improvements in children's behaviors like they being more 'respectful'; 'caring'; 'loving'; 'truthful'; 'cooperative'; deft in 'resolving conflicts'; 'disciplined'; 'observance of cleanliness'; 'affectionate towards animals and plants'; 'readiness to comply'; 'confident'; 'self aware'; 'liking for school'; 'interest in studies' and above all 'happier and contented'. The percentage distribution of perceptions of MV teachers regarding these changes varied widely across the spectrum (as just been mentioned above) of children's behavior. The scenario could be best explained through an analogy to sowing seeds of plants of varied genera, which due to their intrinsic attributes differentially sprout and root to the soil. In the same way, some of the behavioral changes among children could be perceived in miniscule proportions compared to others. Some of the changes may require longer time than others to become visible.

Triangulated evidence about the behavioral changes in children was gathered for the second year of intervention (February- March 2011) through the perceptions of the non-participants (Principals and government school teachers) and

participants (MV teachers and school children). The triangulation pointed out that improvement in children's behavior was supported by varied percentages of perceptions across non-participants and participants. However, it entails similar behaviors across both the groups, non-participants and participants. The positive behavioral changes put across included 'cooperation'; 'helping others'; inter-personal relations'; 'disciplined'; 'honest'; 'confident'; 'respectful and obedient'; 'attendance'; interest in studies; 'truthful and honest'; 'conflict resolution skills; 'happier and contented'. This evidence was corroborated with many real life instances supporting their perceptions.

At the end of the third year of intervention, parents' perceptions regarding the changes in the behavior of children were gathered through a structured interview schedule. The aim of including parents for collecting evidence was twofold, one regarding the changes they perceive in their children's behavior and second to get to know from parents whether children are applying *Mulyavardhan* learning in real situations or learning is limited only to the four-walls of the classroom.

India has made education free and compulsory up to the age of 14 years to improve educational quality. Though many initiatives have improved the percentage of access and retention, problem of irregular attendance, extended absenteeism and repetition affect many schools across the country. Children belonging to disadvantaged communities and living in rural/remote areas are vulnerable to these problems in particular (Govinda and Bandyopadhyay 2008; Pratham-ASER Report 2007). Causes of absenteeism include health problems, school phobia, anxiety and truancy among children (Kearney and Silverman 1993). Educational Consultants India Limited (2008) reported that overall average attendance rate of students in India at primary level was 68.5% and 75.7% at upper primary level. Absenteeism is the most challenging problem as it is the initial factor leading to drop out problem being faced by schools all over the country. In this context, 91% to 97% observations by parents indicating children either 'always' or 'often' exhibiting 'liking for school' and 'observing personal hygiene' are very encouraging results of the intervention. This is the most welcome change that has happened in children themselves. It may be mentioned that

Mulyavardhan objectives did not focus on 'enhancement of children's liking for school', the observation that 97% of parents perceiving their children now 'like going to school' is a spillover of great significance in the context of the problem of 'absenteeism'. Similarly, observance of 'personal hygiene' among children was perceived to be 91% either 'always' or 'often' is a major contributing factor to overcome many health problems. This might be an indirect factor to improve attendance in school.

It was encouraging to note from the analyses of parents perceptions to many questions asked to probe the changes in children and application of *Mulyavardhan* learning beyond classroom. Overwhelming percentage (80 to 86%) of parents noticed either always or often the positive changes in various domains of children's behaviors such as 'Pro-social'; 'Empathetic'; Personal responsibility'; 'Respect for others'; 'Honesty'; 'Self control'; 'Personal hygiene' and 'Self esteem'. Parents' perceptions (about 73%) regarding aggression among children convey that children either never or rarely show aggression and similarly (75% parents' perceptions) they never/rarely believe that fight is okay in anger situations. These perceptions of parents indicate that children have become more peace loving.

It is quite evident that the changes which were palpable at the end of the first year of intervention grew stronger through another two years of intervention and became too conspicuous to be missed by parents. Since *Mulyavardhan* is a school based program where MV teacher uses unique child centered methodology to impart MV lessons, may be for these reasons, it could be believed that MV teacher wields tremendous influence on children.

All these positive changes that occurred in children may have helped them to become more confident, more articulate, and more powerful. These positive changes could have transformed children to become active agents to bring forth positive changes in the members of their families and communities. It became evident from parents' responses to the questions related to children's moral engagement in opportunities that daily living often provides them. At the end of three years intervention, parents reported that 75% children are not silent spectators to incidents of family violence and 84% of them would not just observe a person smoking or chewing

tobacco. In such situations parents reported that more than 80% children do not hesitate to show displeasure; would mediate using non-verbal peace signals; would dissuade them to refrain from and most often (93%) would use 'golden rule' to advocate the logic behind his efforts. Similarly, parents reported that most often than not children had virtually stopped someone in the family from cutting a tree; throwing garbage at an inappropriate place in the village; hitting an animal; smoking tobacco and from drinking alcohol.

Parents perhaps feel motivated by such actions of children and that could be the reason that nearly 85% of parents take it kindly and about 79% of them pay attention to the 'stopping' reactions of their children. It was amazing to note the effectiveness of children's 'stopping' reactions from parents' perspective. In this context just about 21% parents reported that 'stopping' incidents had always led someone to drop the negative behavior whereas 40% held the view that it often caused the concerned individual to refrain from.

It may be mentioned that efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy of *Mulyavardhan* is limited to inculcating morals and values among children to shape them into righteous and peaceful citizens of the nation. *Mulyavardhan* genuinely aims at building critical capabilities in children so that they could analyse various issues related to self, family and the community and act independently. It aims at empowering them to freely make their own decisions. Thus, 'children turning change agents' is a spill over of this program.

The Peace, Moral and Values Education Programs like *Mulyavardhan* are supported by evidence of infusing positive behavioral changes among children and turning them adequately self-confident, assertive, articulate and competent social actors to take stand (despite unequal power relations between adults and children) for the "Positive Actions" in their families and communities.

The experiences as described above have revealed that it is imperative to provide intervention like '*Mulyavardhan*' to children to facilitate the desirable changes in their web of values, morals and virtues. The present intervention seems to have helped children understand and internalize the core values and therefore, it

had empowered them to make choices, judgments and decisions more intelligently and meaningfully. Once the children are initiated in the process of change, the present presentation proves beyond doubt that the positive changes, many more than which are presented here, will be rolling out in the families and communities. These changes might be happening at micro level initially but continuity of school based intervention could ensure beyond doubt the changes at macro level too. Thus '*Mulyavardhan*' a school-based peace, moral and values education program has the potential of empowering young children to act on their own to affect positive changes in their families and communities.

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