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FOSTERING CIVIC RESPONSIBILITIES THROUGH MANAGEMENT OF ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

People today are so much driven by their personal goals that civic sense as an expression of ethical behavior has become a low priority, almost a nuisance to those who disregard it as unnecessary evil. This attitude could be harmful for the society in the long run. Right from the beginning since man started living as social being; efforts have beenmade to instill civic sense either through stories or religion. Today what we are teaching them is just to keep themselves, their things and their homes in order. With this limiting attitude, it is no wonder that parks, cinema houses and roads are all littered, because they do not belong to anyone. Parents, teachers and authors of management literature can do to a lot to assist this down swinging cooperation with Corporate Management. By setting good examples to their children, parents and teachers can easily inculcate good habits in their children. Many organizations are trying to express their civic and social consciousness through various CSR initiatives. Education is for enabling children to develop as socially conscious attitudes and civic responsibilities. This is the right time for all to reflect if current actions are sufficient or something more is to be done to assuage our conscience!

KEYWORDS: *Civic responsibilities and corporate consciousness, who will bell the cat? Ultimately, it is a responsibility for all citizens to realize and stand for.*

INTRODUCTION

The need of the hour is to effectively address the civic problems by discouraging behavior of citizens that is detrimental to the country as a whole by instilling a set of values that can lead to creating the 'right' mindset in people spread across the country which is an essential

prerequisite in building our nation. We should not only make a promise to self that, "I will not only do the right thing but I will also try to stop others from doing something wrong". We need a sense of ownership, belonging and pride in our country. Values must be reinforced by various means foremost among them being one's ability, conduct and responsibility to be a living example.

Civic sense is nothing but social ethics, consciousness or the unspoken norms of society. It is not just about keeping the roads, streets and public property clean but also has to do with compliance with law, respecting others' point of view and maintaining decorum and decency in public places. Individualism, vandalism, intolerance, racism, road rage etc. are all examples of lack of civic sense. People are becoming less and less tolerant of each other, of other's cultures, backgrounds, and beliefs and behavior. Disregard for the law is a primary cause for lacking civic sense. The current state of public transport and vehicles, for example, is disheartening. There are spit marks, urine, vulgar graffiti, random garbage and overflowing sewers at every nook and corner. No one is to be blamed other than ourselves for this condition. We put the waste or wrappers in the bin lying in kitchen and teach our children to do so but overlook when the child throws it on the road. We should realize that teaching civic sense is as important as warning them against fire. Latter harms them directly whereas lack of knowledge of civic sense has proved catastrophic for society.
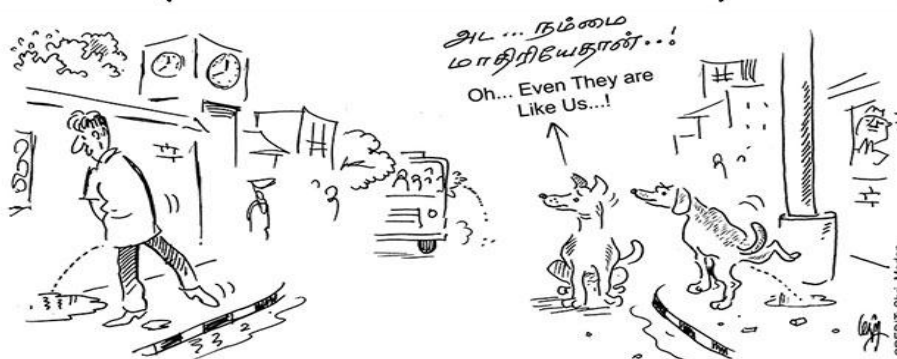
Figure 1: An interesting cartoon on civic sense.
(Even the street dogs can make fun of a person without civic sense)

Everybody wants their children to be successful, but not many make the effort to turn them into good human beings and citizens of society. We must teach our children to respect our living conditions in the planet and do his or her bit for conservation of nature and resources.

They are simple but essential means which can encourage our children to save the planet and we also must remember that practice is better than speech. If we do not teach our children about social issues, they may not be able to take an appropriate decision when confronted by such issues in society. For example, you need to teach your child about the bad effects of drugs and addiction, what sort of people smoke them and what effect it could have on his or her life. In fact, you need to inform children that their peers could introduce it to him at school! This knowledge will help them take an appropriate decision if ever confronted by such a situation.

Figure 2: CSR includes civic responsibilities.

There are a lot of social problems like female infanticide, alcoholism, drug abuse, and superstitious beliefs etc. which are still of a huge proportion in India. It is vital that more and more people be made aware of these issues so that we can fight them as united citizens of the country. Social awareness also makes the individual more mature and considerate when it comes to making important decisions. We must lay emphasis on credence to this feature for proper and holistic growth of individuals in society. All ancient civilizations had taken upon themselves the onus of maintaining moral values in society and fostering civic responsibilities. There might have been different value systems, yet a common factor which brought them on the same platform was propagating moral teachings through storytelling.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Civic responsibilities are as important as our responsibilities as corporate members in an organizations with responsibilities to society at large sometimes coined as corporate social responsibility (CSR). Many people take care of their own house or office ambience, by keeping their houses and offices clean but they may not be concerned about the roads or the drains in the surrounding their offices or places of living. A different outlook or approach is very much needed to foster such civic sense among colleagues or neighbors. As human beings such dirt and grime is not acceptable to us but it still exists around us because we

accuse everybody for it and wanting someone to remove it but do nothing about it ourselves. If this sense of responsibility is found wanting, who is responsible for the same? The purpose of this research paper is to find answers to this and related questions which are fundamental for our continued well being as a corporate citizens as well as members as the members of community and the country in which we live and pursue our life purposes. Since the subject matter of this research is very vast in content and scope, I have limited the Objectives in the context of this research paper to the following.

1. A brief review of present environment for business and society.

2. How the environment has shaped corporate social responsibility.

3. How civic responsibilities are currently addressed.

4. A brief Analysis of GAP between CSR and CRs (Civic responsibilities)

5. Areas where scope for improvement exists.

6. Suggestions and Action plans to improve commitment.

As can be seen from the above, the objectives are specific and relates to our civic responsibilities as members of the society in which we live. The business and corporate involvement and environments have an impact on how society shapes their outlook towards common problems and try to find amicable solutions to satisfy all. Sometimes, individual responsibilities are treated as no man's concern and this is the start of the civic problems in society. While there have been a lot of noise about Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in business organizations as well as in public forums much less is heard about Civic responsibilities of late. While the blame game of politicians who are in power and out of power is clear for citizens in India all over, many have not spared a thought about what individuals can do to bring about a change. The Focus of the current research is specifically on this aspect which somehow has not been highlighted as much as one would wish for. A questionnaire survey properly designed and administered to all sections of society would have been ideal to elicit the opinion of different cross sections of society, however, practical considerations for seeking answers to the immediate concerns of the above questions were overwhelmingly in favor of a comprehensive desk research to unearth information to seek answers to the above research questions quickly and effectively. In fact while identifying data sources and it was found that adequate information was available through published research papers in Journals and magazines. Further the data search was complimented by the information collected and suitably collated from web sources. The results of the Analysis of data and conclusions thereof can be seen in the following pages.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Roads are not dirty because nobody cleaned it, but they are strewn with garbage because that we threw in the first place. Dengue- a disease which has proved fatal for many and has spread across the country was caused by the absence of hygiene. The boundary wall of our colony was being used as open urinal. It used to stink so much that even the 'Safai Karmachari' (Cleaners and sweepers) used to avoid sweeping it. When requests failed, the residents of the society got pictures of God's painted on the boundary wall of the colony. From open urinal it soon became a sight of pleasure with clean swept side walk. This situation was not always true; we were never as uncivil as we are today. Why this deterioration in civic sense? We do not bother about needs of others, could be the plausible reason.

Figure 3: A classic example of lack of civic sense.

Jataka tales were a major source for inculcating in people a deep sense of moral values and spread the message of kindness, compassion, generosity, non-violence, self-sacrifice, charity etc. The Holy Quran along with other teachings advocated civic sense. "O people, surely we have created you from a male and female, and made you tribes and families that you might know one another. Indeed, the noblest of you with Allah is he who is best in conduct." [Quran, 49:13] Valmiki, also known as Aadi kavi or first poet, exemplified the dos and don'ts of life in the Ramayana, a tale portraying Lord Rama as a model for Hindu virtue. Even today, moral lessons from the Ramayana are adopted by millions as a reference for day-to-day living. Gandhi often compared democracy with Rama Rajya, a society with no divide between the rich and the poor and where all religions are treated equally. Civic virtues have historically been taught as a matter of chief concern. Constitutions of many nations became important in defining the public virtue of republics.

In the west concern for civic virtue started with the oldest republics of Athens and Rome. Socrates and Plato were quite concerned about defining the virtues of civic sense; Aristotle viewed citizenship as consisting, not of political rights, but rather of political duties. Citizens were expected to put their private lives and interests aside and serve the country in accordance with duties defined by law. Philosophers in Rome tended to blame the loss of liberty on the perceived lack of civic sense in their contemporaries, contrasting them with idealistic examples of virtue drawn from Roman history. Renaissance scholars tried to gather as many texts of antiquity as they could find, especially in monasteries, from Constantinople, and the Muslim world. Aided by the rediscovery of the virtue of ethics and metaphysics of Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas fused Aristotle's cardinal virtues with Christianity in his Summa Theological.

Humanists wanted to reinstate the ancient ideal of civic virtue through education. Important aspects of civic virtue were: civic communication- listening to others' point of views and offering yours without arguments, civilized behavior- proper mode of dressing, proper use of language and discharging civic responsibility and using civic authority prudently. Parental authority too was included in civic virtue. Civic virtue was very popular during the Enlightenment but it had changed dramatically. Parental authority began to wane. Freedom became popular. Civic virtue also became a matter of public interest and discussion during the 18th century. Laws had to be obeyed for the sake of conscience, rather than fear of the ruler's wrath. Civic virtues focused on individual behavior and responsibility there in.

One of the most frustrating problems in urban India is honking, quite often; it is out of habit and not a necessity. Drivers must be educated and made aware of the noise pollution. Let the kids see you putting garbage in trash bins instead of throwing it on the street and they will follow suit. I recently read a news item that some schools have decided to take a step towards inculcating civic sense in students and spreading the word through interactive programs. The students are being sensitized to various civic issues through talks and activities. They are also being taught waste management in the city. They are being encouraged to collect the extra food from their own kitchens that is edible but untouched and would have been otherwise thrown out and giving to the needy and feeding the hungry. Good parenting could be a strong foundation from where each one of us could start building national culture of civic sense and sensibility and making the future citizens of the country aware of the importance of social ethic or societal norms which should not just be followed but should become a way of life.

Smooth functioning societies owe a lot of credit to the right amount of civic behavior among its people. With the degeneration of ethical values and the tragic deterioration of standards of our social, economic and political life, the need for a new model of values which will provide a basis and firm foundation for national development has emerged dominantly.
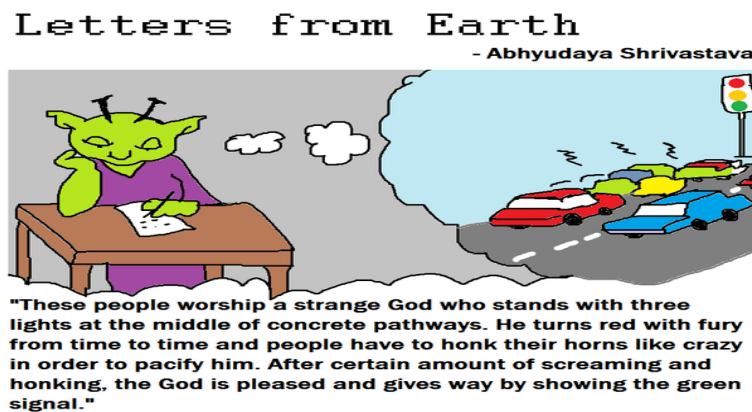
Figure 4: An interesting comic on civic sense.

Rise of crime in a country occurs due to numerous factors, like lack of religious, cultural and moral values in a society and the other is the lack of education which we can describe as lack of civic sense. The positive transformation of society as a whole is therefore an essential prerequisite to national development and this can only be achieved by appropriate value formation. The essence in value formation is restoring a sense of appreciation for the right and wrong and choosing right from wrong. The importance of education to defend the cultural and historical values and to make our children inheritors of a secure future on the other hand cannot be over emphasized. Few years back when Tsunami hit Japan and there was complete power failure in Japan, the world was shocked by the tragedy but was also pleasantly surprised at the conduct of the people affected. When the city was plunged in darkness, people left the shops, leaving the merchandize on counters. No one took advantage of the darkness. There was no looting or ransacking of stores. No wonder Tokyo is among the most affluent, progressive, safe and orderly cities in the world.

Having a highly developed society and culture, does not guarantee civic sense if we are lacking in our ethical approach. When we lack civic sense, we tend to indulge in separatism, racism, vandalism and road rage. It is wrong thinking that since we pay taxes, we have the right to throw garbage, spit, urinate on roads and it is the government's duty to clean it! During rains, our roads clog up disrupting everyday life, but still we blame the government for not cleaning the drains, though it is we who throw garbage on roads and into drains,

which get clogged. Some are so irresponsible that they do not bother about health and hygiene. Similarly, careless and chaotic driving is taking its toll every day, yet we continue to indulge in buying driving licenses, and put ourselves, our family and our fellow countrymen at grave risk. Being civilized is much more than just living in cities, having computers at home or mobiles in our pockets. To be civilized is, above all, to know how to live in peace and harmony with our neighbors and fellow citizens. Many people are still not ready to live in a community. As a general rule, people learn the manners which pertain to their particular social, economic and cultural situation. One should live without disturbing others whether it is home, school, office, theatre or any other place. It is a struggle and we ought to learn to be a good citizen with a sense that makes one more civilized and full of good etiquettes.

The Figure 5, given below is an illustrated list of some (Examples) of our civic responsibilities which can act as a check list. Rights and responsibilities go together. While we are quick to establish our rights as citizens, we also need to enforce our commitment to social responsibilities. Sometimes our Personal responsibilities and civic responsibilities are congruent and at other times they are different and sometimes conflicting in nature. This can be seen from the illustrated diagram given below (Figure 6):

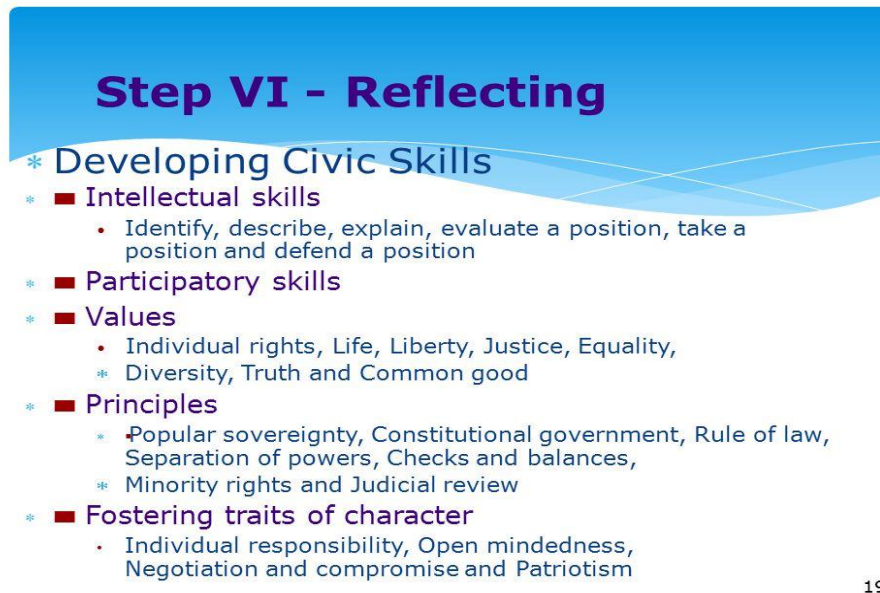**Figure 5: Examples of civic responsibilities.**
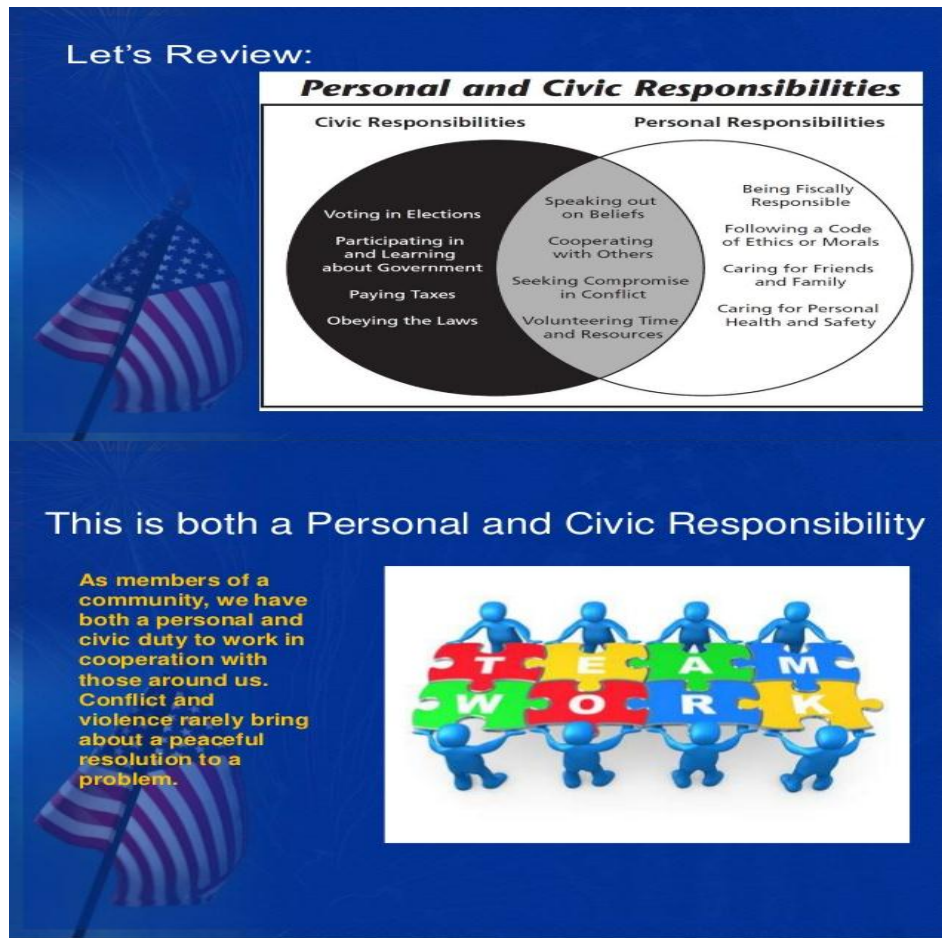
Figure 6: Where Personal & Civic responsibilities meet.

There are occasions when personal and civic responsibilities meet and congruent, which we need to understand and recognize.

Civic sense and skills are not obtained by sudden flight; these skills are to be developed from the school days as students and children. These skills are intellectual as well as participative when it comes to community welfare. The diagram below (Figure 7) illustrates how these skills can be developed by Training and Practice.

Figure 7: Reflection helps in developing civic skills.

Values, Traits and Character are developed through a trained process of reflection. Such values are about rights and responsibilities if citizens. For example: Justice, Equality, Truthfulness for Common good are traits developed and reinforced through principles of Rule of Law, constitutional rights and Judicial review. But it is important to foster these qualities through development of character, open mindedness and patriotism characterized by compromise and negotiation and not confrontation.

Attempting to define civic responsibility can be a difficult task because of frequently overlapping concepts, values, and interpretations. Indeed, the very mention of the term civic responsibility evokes ideas of what it means to live in a democratic society, in addition to the complementary ideas of citizenship, social responsibility, civic engagement, and community involvement. Civic responsibility means active participation in the public life of a community in an informed, committed, and constructive manner, with a focus on the common good. We encourage you to work with your colleagues to reshape or change this definition entirely to formulate one that works for your immediate environment. Given the working definition, how can we make civic responsibility an integral part of education and potentially influence society. Most definitions of civic responsibility often exhibit some or all of the following characteristics:

1. Addressing society's problems in an informed manner
2. Showing respect as well as constructive dissent for laws
3. Recognizing the difference between legally defined and culturally defined citizenship

4. Engaging in an active process that goes beyond passive citizenship

5. Establishing a balance between rights and responsibilities

6. Understanding the concept of the common good and who defines it

7. Being able to negotiate differences through peaceful means

8. Involving the community in decision-making processes

9. Questioning governmental policies and practices for societal benefit

10. Exhibiting stewardship, i.e., being responsible for one's community

11. Recognizing the value and human dignity of each person

12. Reaching varying degrees of political awareness and advocacy, ranging from basic knowledge (e.g., knowing the local mayor's name) to developing a voice and making oneself heard

ANALYSIS AND INFERENCE

Review of Literature has brought out several perspectives regarding civic responsibilities. It is very clear that it is a combination of an individual's responsibility as well as a social duty. How difficult it is to define the concept is clear from the above. Business Environment today is characterized by competition, which naturally makes companies customer friendly and wanting to make every effort to lure a customer to their fold. In the process of achieving customer acceptance, social and responsibilities and the company's commitment to raise the bar becomes very interesting.

The environment shapes the company attitudes and policy and as far as social consciousness is concerned this is a top priority in companies to adopt policies which are seen as not only as social responsibility as part of CSR initiatives, it has definitely increased corporate commitment to community and social welfare. As part of such initiatives companies are trying to foster a sense of civic consciousness and make each and every employee sensitive to their surroundings. Several initiatives and training activities undertaken by Indian and foreign companies have been outlined. We have also seen how our educational systems are undergoing changes to support corporate and Family initiatives. Family initiatives start from making the children and young students through education and orientation by participating in social service activities to raise their civic consciousness thereby realizing their continued commitment to society and surroundings to make a better place for living with peace and prosperity for all.

Several areas where GAP exists between Civic responsibilities and corporate initiatives and how corporate companies are getting more and more involved have been outlined. One of the areas repeatedly mentioned is how to make everybody in society to be a willing and automatic participant in this process. Attitudinal changes and adjustments are inculcated from elementary schools to Universities so that our younger population and future generations will turn out to be more conscious of the social problems and issues.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

In conclusion we find that civic sense is growing among our youngsters, who organize rallies for making people more sensitive to social issues and focusing on urgent needs of society. Some such issues are urban cleanliness and religious intolerance. Whereas we have progressed as a nation in cricket and other games we are far behind in achieving equal opportunities for all. Though the number of higher educational institutions has increased, we still need to improve quality to match international standards and also make such education accessible to socially backward areas and people in society. We are making progress everyday but much more needs to be done and desired for!

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

Civic sense does not come from just enforcement but from a "sense of belonging" which creates pride and a sense of ownership. It is our duty to make every citizen accountable. Law cannot be enforced on many things. As a society we have to address this problem in pro-active way and need to build that sense of accountability. A well planned and coherent education system with effective training strategies, and concentrated efforts we will be able to instill values among our younger generation until it becomes second nature in our children. Value of outcome as a determinant of behavior is an important phenomenon that needs to be inculcated in society.

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