The presentation on Jeevan Vidya (JV) will begin from the problems we are faced with today – Crime, violence, corruption and exploitation in society, strife in family, and lack of satisfaction in the self.

1. What are the current problems a reflection of?

The source of current problems seems to be an emphasis on materialism including physical facilities, glamour, consumerist lifestyle, and a false sense of satisfaction in competition and one upmanship (‘neighbours envy owners pride’). The focus on the external things leads to ignorance about the concerns of the self. It leads to a blind race for wealth, position and jobs. Many times, it leads to jobs and positions that are intellectually and mentally unfulfilling, and wealth that breeds chaos in family, problems in society, and imbalance in nature.

Basic physical facilities are needed to lead a proper life, however, there is a need to examine how much physical facilities are needed and what is their role? It is important to ask the question: besides physical facilities, what else is important for human life? The lack of attention to relationships leads to strife in the family in spite of all the worldly successes. It is the human relationships and human values that are the source of our perennial happiness. We all possess the human values inherently, and what is needed is to bring them out in each one of us.

Jeevan Vidya addresses the self in the human being. It draws attention to what is within us innate and intact need for human relationships, inherent desire to seek knowledge, and the joy that we naturally derive from these. Thus, it brings about a dialogue between what we are and what we seek. It does not posit happiness in an after-world, but here and now. It is rational, secular and universal.

2. Experiences of earlier Jeevan Vidya Shivirs

Jeevan Vidya is wholistic, covering a large canvas, and it has made a tremendous impact on people from different walks of life. Some experiences are given below. Although, the concerns of each of the groups is different, what they realize at the end is that there is a need for human values and relationships and that is founded upon the knowledge in the self.

2.1. Young students in engineering

Jeevan Vidya was included as a compulsory part of the academic curriculum at IIIT Hyderabad last year. It has led to a major rethinking among the first year students. They have been reflecting on what their goals are, the place of money in life, the joy one derives in relationship, and in seeking knowledge and not merely on jobs and the money they get out of it. They have become relaxed in their self, and become more sensitive to relationships with their friends and family, and regarding society and nature.
2.2. People from different walks of urban life

People from different walks of life are affected by Jeevan Vidya. Many realize the lack of time they give to their family in their relentless pursuit of wealth, and even more importantly, the way they behave with their children, spouse or old parents. Many such people are affected profoundly and come back to Jeevan Vidya shivirs with their family members, again and again.

2.3. Criminals in jail

Jeevan Vidya touches criminals in jail most directly. Those who are seething with revenge, slowly start realizing that in fact their “enemies” are not bad. They are to be pitied and not hated. In turn, they themselves get depressurized and relaxed. This eventually gets reflected in their day to day behaviour with other jail inmates and with jail authorities. Bilaspur jail experience shows that some of the most violent criminals with also the worst behaviour inside the jail, got totally transformed.

2.4. Social workers from NGOs

People working for upliftment of downtrodden in rural and urban areas are greatly affected by Jeevan Vidya. It dawns on them that along with work on employment generation, agriculture, irrigation, health, sanitation, scientific temper, it is also important to work on “understanding” of the self and on relationship, without which their work and successes are short lived.

2.5. Farmers and rural folk

Rural folk today are in a state of demoralization. They are being told that they are backward, and need to be developed; that they are ignorant and do not know what is good for them; that they need to study English and IT without which there is no future. The present political structure and political parties has led to a breakdown of the community decision making. High powered marketing along with TV has led to a loss of community life and led them to yearn for “Pepsi” and the “luxury of city life”. They do not realize what they possess clean air, clean water, and a stronger possibility of a wholesome life with fulfilling relationship in family and community.

Experience of rural people who attend Jeevan Vidya shivir has been that they feel a sense of empowerment regarding themselves and what they can do at their own place. Rather than treating farming as an unworthy activity, they see value in what they are doing. The importance and necessity of physical labour for all, comes out as a corollary.

Established business men who have done Jeevan Vidya have taken up sustainable or “zero-input” farming where all the required resources for farming is generated from farm land itself. Several experiments in renewable energy are also in full swing. They are deriving happiness out of farming and physical labor.

2.6 People with spiritual background

People with spiritual background usually take time to come to terms that one can talk about “human values” without bringing in after-life or after-world. Many are elated at this discovery. People from different faiths Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Islam have started getting deep into a process of self-exploration after doing Jeevan Vidya, and are able to see that the human values can be derived through this process of self exploration by each one of us and are the same as professed by their respective faiths.
3. **What Jeevan Vidya is Not**

3.1. Jeevan Vidya is not a course in moral science. It does not tell you DOs and DONTs. It does not tell you what you should become, or what you should do. (It only seeks to connect you with your Self and encourages you to seek answers within self.)

3.2. Jeevan Vidya does not talk about rewards and punishments in an afterworld. (The goal is happiness here and now. It puts forward the proposition that the basic human values are inherent and intact in all of us, all that is needed is to be aware of them. When we follow what is innate in us, we derive joy and happiness. The listener is free to do self-investigation and self-exploration and come to his own conclusions.)

3.3. Jeevan Vidya does not say physical facilities are unimportant and must be shunned. It rather talks of prosperity in every family. (It says that there is place for them in life and encourages people to fix their place in their life. This also requires separating needs from desires generated by TV and consumerist culture, where the irony is that accumulation of wealth is accompanied not by a sense of fulfillment but by a sense of depravation, Jeevan Vidya presents this aspect forcefully.)

3.4. Jeevan Vidya is not an organization or society. It does not insist on any specific faith or any specific belief. (It only proposes and asks its listeners to investigate and explore into their own inner self and connect to what is innate and intact in all of them as something which is universal, natural and all-fulfilling for them as well as others. They can do this irrespective of their own religion or faith or beliefs.)