

Sattva: An Educational Approach Towards Global Citizenship and Human Rights Awareness

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My name is Rajvi, and I was always told to fit into the “normal” category. When I was the only student in my school to opt for the Humanities stream, I was encouraged to switch to science—like everyone else. When I showed a natural inclination towards the performing arts, I was told to focus on academics instead. Apart from my parents, all others were keen on convincing me to study the sciences. This is how the system often functions: students are expected to conform to rigid norms, to perform in the same way, and to follow without questioning.

I was born and raised in Bhavnagar, a small town in Gujarat, India. From an early age, my parents wholeheartedly supported my passion for the arts. I say with pride that they stood by me through every high and low, always respecting my choices and decisions. Growing up in Bhavnagar offered me rich learning experiences, especially in terms of culture and heritage. The city’s deep-rooted artistic legacy gave me a profound understanding of the arts and shaped my creative identity. This nurturing environment played a vital role in making me the strong, ambitious woman I am today—someone who refuses to yield to external or societal pressures, and is determined to carve her own path.

But from a young age, I felt a strong urge to speak up and challenge systems that were unfair and exclusionary. I have always been deeply passionate about education, gender equality, and sustainable development, and I have constantly sought creative and meaningful ways to address these interconnected issues.

As a performing artist, I have integrated dance, storytelling and education in a way that allows me to connect with people, spark dialogue, and shift mindsets—because I believe that changing the way people think and feel is a crucial step in transforming society. For me, education is not just

about content delivery; it is about cultivating compassion, critical thinking, and a deep sense of global responsibility.

I want every student to feel worthy, seen, and valued for who they are—not despite their differences, but because of them. I believe that respecting diversity is fundamental to nurturing inclusive learning spaces where all individuals can thrive.

These beliefs are at the heart of my book, *Beyond the Classroom*, which explores how education can be a powerful tool to develop global citizens who are not only aware of the world's challenges but also empowered to act for a more just and sustainable future.

In response to the limitations of conventional education systems, I founded my own initiative—Sattva: A Space for Lifelong Learning. Sattva is an inclusive, informal learning space where all students are welcomed—regardless of background, age, gender, or socio-economic status. It stands for the belief that education should go beyond marks and ranks, and focus instead on the holistic development of every student.

Sattva's vision is firmly aligned with the principles of Human Rights Education and Global Citizenship Education. We are committed to creating spaces that are inclusive, equitable, and respectful of all forms of diversity. By empowering students with the mindsets, values, and skills they need, Sattva aims to build a generation of individuals who can lead with empathy, engage with global issues, and work towards a more peaceful, inclusive, and sustainable world.

Sattva

Sattva emerged in response to the limitations of the conventional education system. During my PhD in global citizenship education—which I eventually left after two and a half years—I became increasingly aware of how institutions often suppress creativity and discourage independent thinking. This realization led me to create Sattva – A Space for Lifelong Learning, an initiative that reimagines education as a lifelong, holistic journey. It was in February 2023 that we officially began conducting sessions at Sattva. I loved teaching. I used to train teachers while doing PhD. Sattva gave me the space where I could teach without being confined to rigid rules and the four walls of a classroom. At Sattva, we believe learning goes beyond earning degrees or landing jobs; it is about nurturing compassionate, creative, and engaged

individuals. As an informal learning space, we offer transformative, accessible, and joyful learning experiences for people of all ages and backgrounds. Our programs include teacher training, youth engagement, arts-integrated education, Dialogue on Documentaries, and more—each designed to inspire meaningful learning beyond the classroom.



Launch of Sattva with a community of trainee teachers, February 2023

Pedagogy at Sattva

At Sattva, our goal is to transform the learning experience by putting students at the center. In every session or class, I strive to understand students' needs, interests, and learning styles. In a system where a “one-size-fits-all” approach is common, we actively use varied methods and resources to ensure that each student feels seen, heard and valued.

Inclusivity is woven into the smallest details—right from seating choices to teaching methods. Students choose where and how they want to sit—chairs, bean bags, or floor cushions—so they feel comfortable and respected for who they are. Differences are not just accepted—they're celebrated.

At Sattva, freedom of expression is a core value. Unlike traditional classrooms where students are often silenced, our sessions are rooted in dialogue, participation, and reflection. Teachers speak less, while students lead the conversation—contributing to collective learning through discussions, activities, and creative expression. Whether it is through speaking, writing, or drawing, every student has a way to share her/his voice.

We are also committed to nurturing creativity as a powerful form of expression. Our student magazine, *Ripples of Change*, and events like dance and art workshops provide platforms for students to explore global issues

and express their ideas confidently. These opportunities not only foster creativity but also build self-esteem and a sense of agency.

At Sattva, we are creating a democratic, inclusive, and student-driven space—where every student feels empowered to learn, express and grow.

Activities at Sattva

Dialogue on Documentaries - With the support of SIMA Academy, we organize *Dialogue on Documentary* events, where we screen powerful documentaries that highlight pressing global challenges such as injustice, inequality, and the urgent need for sustainable development. Documentaries have a unique ability to do what textbooks often cannot—they stir emotions, provoke thought, and leave a lasting impression. By witnessing real stories from around the world, viewers can gain a deeper understanding of complex human rights issues and the lived experiences of others. Our screenings are followed by dialogues that create space for critical reflection and meaningful conversations. These sessions are especially geared towards young people, aiming to cultivate empathy, global awareness, and a sense of personal agency. We want youth to not only recognize the importance of human rights, but to also feel empowered to act—locally and globally.

A recent example was the screening of “*Little Big Dreams*” with secondary school students in Karnataka, India. This documentary sparked conversations around equality and non-discrimination, helping students



Virtual Screening - Little Big Dreams with High School Students, 4 July 2025.



Dialogue on Documentary, October 2024.

internalize the idea that every human being deserves fair and dignified treatment—regardless of their appearance, background or identity. It underscored a core principle of human rights: that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. Through these events, we aim to build a generation that is not only informed, but also inspired to stand up for justice, equality and human dignity.

Workshops with Teachers - At Sattva, we firmly believe that teachers are the primary agents of transformation within the education system. As such, it is essential that they receive the support, tools, and training needed to meaningfully integrate Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and Human Rights Education (HRE) into their classrooms.

Unfortunately, we have witnessed classroom practices that undermine the dignity of students—such as labelling them with hurtful terms like “stupid” or “idiot,” or implementing rigid rules like the “three-second answer rule,” which limit student voice and discourage participation. These practices not only erode students’ self-esteem but also violate fundamental human rights principles of respect, equality, and inclusion.

GCED begins with recognizing the inherent dignity and potential of every student. Teachers must be equipped to create inclusive, respectful, and student-centered learning environments—spaces where every child feels seen, heard and valued. We ask: Why can’t every classroom be a space where

all students feel a sense of belonging? Why can't learning be relevant and engaging for every child, regardless of background or learning style?

These questions lie at the heart of our teacher training workshops. Our aim is to support educators in understanding their students more deeply and in transforming their classrooms into gateways to the world—spaces where global issues, empathy and justice are not abstract concepts, but living, breathing values.

Our workshops delve into the principles of GCED, explore its relevance in an increasingly interconnected world, and ground it in the philosophies of Indian thinkers such as Rabindranath Tagore, who championed holistic, inclusive, and student-centered education. Tagore's vision of education as a means for inner freedom and harmony with others resonates deeply with the goals of GCED and human rights education.

In our workshops, we focus not only on *what* is taught, but also on *how* it is taught. The approach to learning is just as important as the content itself. We guide educators in designing inclusive learning experiences that engage every student, recognizing the diverse needs, backgrounds, and learning styles present in every classroom.

We introduce practical strategies such as structured opening and closing routines, differentiated instruction, and activity-based learning to create a more dynamic and student-centered environment. Techniques like contracting—where teachers and students co-create shared norms and expectations—help foster a sense of ownership, respect, and psychological safety in the classroom.



Teacher Training workshop in a rural area, 24-25 March 2025.

Ultimately, we believe that by nurturing reflective, compassionate, and globally aware educators, we can foster a generation of students who not only understand the world—but are prepared to change it.

Engaging Sessions with Students – At Sattva, we conduct a wide range of interactive sessions—both online and offline—with students across diverse settings. A key focus of our work is reaching students in rural areas, where access to quality, holistic education is often limited. By extending our efforts to these communities, we aim to ensure that GCED is inclusive and accessible to those who need it most.

Our sessions cover a broad spectrum of themes essential to nurturing globally aware and responsible individuals. From media literacy, which helps students critically engage with the information they consume, to social-emotional well-being, which strengthens empathy, resilience, and interpersonal understanding—our programs are designed to develop the competencies central to GCED.

We also integrate arts-based learning to make education more engaging and culturally grounded. Events like Mandala art workshops and dance-based sessions not only foster creativity but also help students connect with their heritage, understand cultural diversity, and appreciate shared human values through expressive forms.



Session with middle school students on the Basics of Theatre.

Through these diverse approaches, we aim to build students' capacities as thoughtful, empathetic, and active global citizens—rooted in their own identity while connected to the world around them.

Dance Education Programs - At Sattva, we believe that art is one of the most powerful and beautiful forms of self-expression—and a vital tool for social change. In our dance education programs, we use movement, rhythm and expression not only to channel energy positively, but also to help students build self-worth, confidence and emotional resilience.

Too often, the arts are dismissed as merely “extra-curricular” activities that are secondary to academic achievement. We challenge this perception. We see the arts as central to learning and to life. They hold immense potential to transform mindsets, challenge stereotypes, and foster empathy—all core components of GCED.

Through our dance and storytelling initiatives, students are encouraged to reflect on their experiences, express their identities, and connect with others across boundaries of culture, language and background. These creative practices help nurture more aware, compassionate, and socially responsible citizens, grounded in their own culture yet open to the world.

Video – *Story of a woman*¹ - We are constantly confronted with disturbing news about violence against women—stories that should shake the conscience of any society. One such recent incident deeply affected us and compelled us to respond—not with silence or despair, but with art, solidarity and purpose. We felt a strong need to shift the narrative surrounding women in India—from one of victimhood to one of dignity, equality and strength.

This led to the creation of *The Story of a Woman*—a powerful dance and storytelling piece choreographed and performed by an all-women ensemble. Together, we reflected on our lived experiences, shared our fears and hopes, and began composing a piece that would give voice to what so many women feel but are rarely able to express.

Through this collaborative process, we examined the root causes of gender-based violence and discrimination, and also discovered a profound sense of empowerment. Dance became our language of resistance and our tool for healing. As we performed this narrative, we felt free, courageous, and united—as artists and as women.

We proudly shared this performance with our wider community, believing that even a small act can ripple outward and contribute to a broader

movement for women's rights and gender equality, both in India and globally. *The Story of a Woman* ends with a powerful message: that women are no longer silent. They are claiming their rights, demanding equal opportunities, and being seen and heard as equal human beings—as they always should have been.

Through this, we continue to reaffirm our belief that the arts are not just a mirror to society—they are a force that can reshape it.



Stage show - Power of Dance and Storytelling in transforming societies, 4 May 2025.

Students' Reflections

At Sattva, student responses and reflections are at the heart of our work. We believe that understanding students' needs and perspectives is essential. Many of our students come to our sessions with curiosity, having rarely experienced workshops designed specifically with them in mind. They deeply connect with our approach to learning and participate with enthusiasm.

Our dance education programs, in particular, have brought noticeable transformation. Students report feeling more confident, empathetic and empowered. In many parts of India, women still face resistance when pursuing their passion for dance. One of our students, for instance, continues to attend classes despite being unable to share this with her family. Stories like hers inspire us to reach more individuals and help them realize their full potential through art and movement.

Here below are reflections of some students of Sattva.

Shilpi, Bangalore-India

You dance for fitness. I dance for freedom.

Freedom?

Yes — freedom to be me.

Out in the world, we're always playing a role — daughter, sister, wife, mother, employee, customer... something or the other. We live within definitions, inside boxes built from verbs that describe who we are allowed to be. And that's okay. But when I dance, I am no one. I am fluid.

When I dance, I become an emotion — a floating depiction of my thoughts. If I dance alone, I dance to be raw, to return to the truest version of myself. And when I dance with others, I become the embodiment of the emotions in the room — sometimes joyful, sometimes heavy, some days in love, and distant on others. What else would allow me to be this bare, this real — if not art in its purest form?

Dance — especially — is more than movement. It is a memory. Language. Protest. Healing.

It is a mirror for the world we live in. A spark for the world we want to build.

In communities, dance or art becomes a safe and expressive space — where stories are told without judgment, and emotions are held without shame. It gives voice to identities often left in the margins. It invites people to reflect, to listen, to challenge what they've always believed. It allows us to move through trauma, reclaim agency, and rediscover joy.

When people move together, something shifts — inside and around them.

Because real change doesn't begin with instructions. It begins with connection.

And art, in its essence, creates that connection.

For me, dance is a confidant — a sacred space where I can return to myself. When I dance, I connect. It is my rebellion and my return. My movement and my stillness.

Sandra, Bangalore, India

As a child, when I was denied the opportunity to learn classical dance, I felt like my wings were tied. I carried a deep sense of injustice—it was as if the dancer in me had been imprisoned. And that prisoner was hard to keep locked away. There were numerous jailbreaks when I was home alone, listening to peppy

music. I couldn't deny my body its right to movement, no matter how much I tried to suppress it. I knew I had to free this prisoner, or she would affect me in unpredictable, even disruptive ways.

As soon as I became financially independent, I started with "dance fitness." It brought me so much joy, but something was still missing. Turns out, the dancer in me loves Zumba—but she longed to move to the tunes of Indian classical music. I hesitated for a long time but finally convinced myself to sign up for my first Kathak class. Once I got there, my mind and body found a deep sense of belonging.

And when I danced, I felt liberated. Through dance, I've also found a way to share messages of self-liberation, equal opportunity, and empowerment. I believe that true empowerment lies in the freedom to pursue one's passion—and empowered people empower others.



Stage show - Group presenting stories from Indian Mythology from a feminist perspective, 4 May 2025.

Anagha, Bangalore, India

Dance, especially our Indian classical dance form called Kathak, has been a guiding force in my life, shaping not just my artistic expression but also my overall lifestyle and art [Drawing, painting, illustration] have played a transformative role in shaping my lifestyle, offering me a powerful outlet for self-expression, emotional healing, and personal growth. They have become more than just creative practices—they are now essential parts of my daily rhythm, bringing balance, joy, and a deeper connection to myself and the world around me.

I am truly grateful to Rajvi Trivedi, the visionary founder of Sattva, for creating such a beautiful and empowering platform. Her dedication, passion and belief in the power of art and dance

have inspired countless individuals, including myself, to embrace our creative journeys through workshops, narrative dance education and providing me with the opportunity to channel my inner thoughts and ideas into meaningful action.

Sattva has been a meaningful platform in this journey, giving me the opportunity to transform my inner reflections into purposeful action. Through Sattva, I have been able to use Kathak and art as powerful mediums to share my voice, inspire others, and grow both personally and artistically.

Concluding Remarks

At Sattva, we are deeply committed to placing the student at the heart of the learning process. This approach is rooted in the belief that every individual has the right to learn, to be treated with dignity, and to reach their full potential—a fundamental principle of Human Rights Education.

In today's world, it is more important than ever to nurture individuals who feel a true sense of belonging, who can respect diverse perspectives and uphold the rights of others, and who are empowered to take informed, compassionate action for a more just, inclusive, and sustainable future. This is the essence of GCED—and the guiding vision behind all our work.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to this mission. As educators, facilitators, and students ourselves, we will continue to grow, adapt and listen—so that we can contribute to building a world that is not only more informed, but also more empathetic and equitable.

We may not have all the answers, but we carry with us a deep intention: to leave this world brighter, fairer, and more humane than we found it.

Endnote

¹ The video is available on YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYerBYfPhA4>