

Role of Ethical Values in Indian Higher Education-Challenges Ahead

Rashmi Bhatia¹ and Arun Bhatia²

JIMS, Kalkaji

(AMT), AIMA and Visiting Faculty

E-mail: ¹rashmibh.office@gmail.com, ²researchgateindia@gmail.com

Abstract—*The role of ethical values within Indian higher education and society is declining and requires a new way of thinking-i.e. based on Indian ethos. Education opens the doors of the mind, cleanses the soul and helps in self-realization. Colleges and Universities are the custodians of knowledge. These Institutions create and disseminate knowledge within a particular society and they are also the gateway to power, significantly affecting the quality of economic and social life throughout the world. Therefore, these Institutions have moral responsibilities to maintain the wellbeing of that society. Majority of the crimes are committed by students coming out of schools and colleges and by well educated people. In majority of the education institutions, there is a significant lapse on the concept of human development and nation building process. This lapse has resulted in the decline of values among students. It is therefore, required to identify the major causes of this decline in ethical values i.e. corruption, bribery, murder, rape, scams etc. The best way to address this issue is to impart value based ethical education incorporated in the academic curriculum, just the way it was being practiced in the ancient times where the education system was value-based and education would help in the improvement of human character and recognition of their inner purity. This paper goes on to emphasize the importance of understanding the roles of ancient Indian values and ethos and in turn, their role to shape students, educational institutions, and today's society, and therefore, provides the direction and future goals of Indian higher education.*

Keywords: *Ethical Values, Education, Human Development, Ancient Education System, Indian Ethos*

1. INTRODUCTION

Mahatma Gandhi: “Your beliefs become your thoughts, Your thoughts become your words, Your words become your actions, Your actions become your habits, Your habits become your values, Your values become your destiny.”

In ancient India, the instructions of a teacher (guru) to a student (disciple) would start as follows:

"Let your conduct be marked by right action, including study and teaching of the scriptures; by truthfulness in word, deed and thought; by self-denial and the practice of austerity; by poise and self-control; by performance of the everyday duties of life with a cheerful heart and in unattached mind. ... Deviate not from the path of good. Revere greatness."

In Taxila, later in Nalanda, Fès, Rabat and Al-Azhar, still later in Paris and Oxford, instruction emphasised moral and ethical values. This was because formal education, although available to a restricted few, was organised around religious institutions. Education was thought to be a cultural good for individual moral development and was to have very little to do with economic well-being or material progress. Education had to provide principally the codes of behaviour, as exemplified in the instructions above, initiation to the value system and an understanding of the ultimate objective of life in terms of spirituality. The ultimate goal of the whole process of education was to unravel the ‘truth’, to manifest “*the perfection already in man*”, to combine knowledge with compassion and efficiency with moral excellence.

The word Ethics is derived from the Greek word ‘ethos’ which means character and from Latin word ‘Mores’ which means customs. It can be defined as the moral values, rules or standards governing the conduct of a particular group, profession or culture. Thus group, organization, professional and cultural ethics co-exist with one another. Together they influence the set of values. Being personally ethical means acting in accordance with one’s own personal code of ethics. Ethical dilemmas arise when one’s own ethical standards conflict with those who have some other entity.

Aristotle was one of the first great philosophers to study the subject. To him, ethics was more than a moral, religious or legal concept⁹. To determine what is ethically good for the individual and for the society, he said, it is necessary to possess three virtues of practical wisdom: temperance, courage and justice. Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with morality. It may be defined as “a systematic inquiry into the beliefs we have and the judgement we make about what is morally right or wrong and morally good and evil”. Morality

is derived from Latin word 'moralitas' which means manner, character, and proper behaviour. It lay emphasis on the code of conduct in the matters of right or wrong whether by society, philosophy, religion or individual conscience. It also refers to an ideal code of conduct which would be espoused by all rational people under specified conditions.

Ethics seeks to address questions such as how a moral outcome can be achieved in a specific situation. The American Guru of Modern Management Peter F Drucker states that "business professionals should abide by "Principle of non-malefeasance", i.e. 'resist from doing wrong doings or illegal acts.'

Education refers to the process designed to bring out the hidden goodness and capability in human beings. Nearly two thousand and more years ago Greek philosophers used the term 'Educare', meaning, "Educators should devise the simplest and most effective methods to turn the minds towards the light. Not to implant sight in it because it already has the capacity, but to correct its orientation because it is not facing the right way."

—Plato, Republic, 375.

Education is seen as consisting of three components, namely, *Information, Knowledge and Wisdom*, each one leading to the next so that we ultimately end up with wisdom. While knowledge backed by information develops human skills and capabilities to achieve many things in the best way possible, it is wisdom that guides one to decide the priorities. Ultimately, everything one undertakes has to be purposeful not only to oneself but more so to the society one lives in. Education, at higher levels has made human beings not only greedy but also self-centred. **Swami Ranganathananda**, eleventh President of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission puts it nicely with his reference to the Ten Commandments of Moses. He says, "Moses gave us Ten Commandments but highly educated persons today think that there were eleven of these and follow the eleventh one which says: "Even if you disobey all the Ten Commandments, make sure that you are not caught by the law." That is Education today.

Swami Ranganathananda, Prabuddha Bharata, Feb. 2011.

India is the largest democracy in the world and has a population of over 1.39 billion people, with well over a 677 universities and university-level institutions, including, 45 central Universities, 290 State Universities, 95 Deemed Universities, 12 IITs, 12 IIMs, 20 IIITs, 2 IISc's, 5 Institutions established under State Act and 13 Institutions of National importance apart from around 37,204 colleges including 2401 women colleges in India. The total enrollment of students in Universities and Colleges is 20 million while the number of teachers is 4.8 lakhs. Only seven percent of the population in the 18-24 age groups has access to higher education. India will need 1,500 universities to attain gross enrollment ratio of at least 15% by 2016. This is a key observation made by the National Knowledge Commission (NKC) in its note to the Prime Minister on higher education. Stating that opportunities

for higher education "are simply not enough in relation to our needs," NKC has called for a massive expansion of opportunities.

Is it that merely expansion of educational infrastructure will produce good human being without inculcating in them the basic ethics, values and virtues as advocated by the Saints, the Sufis, the Gurus of our ancient society and by our rich civilization? Can we produce effective Managers, Technocrats, Bureaucrats, Politicians and Entrepreneurs without the knowledge of ethics, values and virtues?

Learning gives Creativity, Creativity leads to Thinking, Thinking provides Knowledge, Knowledge makes you great.-

—Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

Indians largely are proud of their roles & professional ethics. In spite of all adverse conditions they perform their duties with full dedication. For parenting Indian parents, for software industry Indian Engineers, for patients Indian Doctors, for learners Indian Teachers are models for the globe. We have harmonious culture and healthy constellation amongst all entities. However a very large numbers of aberrations and deviations in all walks of life especially in higher education sector are spoiling the professional excellence, peace and harmony amongst the youth of India today.

The Evolution of Ethical Values

Ethics and values became an important concern in the US in the 80's. In US there are about 500 courses offered in the field of Ethics by various universities. Harvard Business School earmarked USD 30 Million in 1987 to focus on teaching Business ethics to MBAs. In India AICTE (The All India Council for Technical Education) recommended the inclusion of Business ethics as a course in MBA curriculum in 1995. IIM Lucknow has started a course that seeks to provide students with an understanding of changing relationship between business and environmental management (As per February 2007, Economic Times). The budding managers should be imparted with the knowledge of social responsibility and ethics. IIM-C is already having a Management centre for Human Values, and they are publishing a journal on Human values. They are also offering a course on Ethics and Values in Business.

Why is there no Measurement of Ethical Parameters in Higher Education. Following are the determinants of the quality management in higher education:

- Academic environment measured in terms of number of library books, journals national and international origin, audio-video aids, computer facilities, CD'S etc.
- Intellectual capital measured in terms of number of faculty, books published, seminars and conferences attended, etc.
- Physical infrastructure measured in terms of number of classrooms and laboratories, campus and hostel facilities.

- Industry interface measured in terms of number of management development programmes (MDP's) and in company programmes organized, consultancy projects handled, number of industry representatives and professional visiting the institute etc.
- Placement measured in terms of percentage of students recruited through campus recruitment, average salary offered etc.
- Stakeholders satisfaction and percentage measured in terms of faculty satisfaction, student satisfaction, recruiter's perception and satisfaction and also of parents satisfaction.
- Innovation measured in terms of number of courses modified and updated, new and innovative courses introduced etc.

However, it is to be noted with serious concern that there are no laid down yardsticks for the measurements of the ethical parameters. Ethics may be measured in terms of courses or capsules undertaken, ethical training carried out /debates/ discussions / seminars on the significance of ethical values and its implications to the future managers, establishment of ethical committees and performance of their activities in the higher educational institutions. Unfortunately there are no guidelines laid down by any apex body on higher education to measure the same. The outcome of this lapse is that many privately owned higher education institutes are playing with the lives of thousands of Young people of our country.

2. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

The Aim of teaching Ethics is to provide the youth :- to **Share** knowledge, build skills and develop minds of the young entrepreneurial managers of tomorrow, to **provide** and clarify and insights into concepts of business so that young managers avoid business misconduct, when they go and conduct the business, to **create** High level of integrity and moral and social awareness, so that they can decide when faced with business dilemma.

3. DEVELOPING MORALITY

The ethical education to our youth is the need of the hour, as it leads to various benefits for the youth of today. Some of them are :-

- Moral development.
- Cultural development.
- Development of healthy and balanced personality.
- Creation of good citizenship
- Resolving conflicts.
- Cooperative living.
- Maintaining peace and harmony.

- Adjustment with environment and its modification.
- National integration and national development.

4. FORMATION OF ETHICS AND VALUE

Main portion of the values we hold is established in our early years from family, teachers, friends, and others. Most of our earlier ideas of right and wrong, were formulated from the views expressed by our parents. As we grow, and exposed to other value systems, our values also change.

Five main sources of value formation in any society are:

- Value forming Institutions(Family, School, State and Religion).
- Organizational Values.
- Peers and Colleagues.
- Work and Career.
- Professional Codes.
- Situational Factors.

5. SECTORAL PERSPECTIVES OF ETHICS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

We shall be discussing *four* probable domains where most of the aberrations in ethics, values and virtues do take place. Knowing fully well that these are taking place, sometimes even with their connivance, even then the Apex bodies of Higher education are turning a deaf ear towards these illegal activities of some of the academic players. Newspapers are flooded with the reports on the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of AICTE and UGC with respect to the unethical practices being overlooked.

Let us have a look into these four domains where unethical practices are prevalent to the max extent. The absence of a coherent long term policy perspective on higher education has been the hallmark of Indian higher education in the 1990's and even in the present decade.

The Govt's lack of clarity on how to address the issue of privatization has led to ad hoc policies to chaos created by the several actors of higher education namely the central government, the states, the UGC, the AICTE, the national council of teacher's education, universities, colleges and most importantly the private sector.

Some of the ethics related issues which are having negative effects on the younger generation are being highlighted in the following domains.

- Actors of Higher Education such as AICTE, UGC, NCTE etc.
- Institutes of Higher Education's namely Engg/ Management Institutes.
- Family and the society.
- The guru and the shishya.

D1: Actors of Higher Education

- Mandatory provisions are not given due importance while granting approval in most of the cases of new Management/ Engineering colleges
- Large numbers of affiliations are being given without going into the academic requirements for the particular course/discipline.eg the Chhattisgarh educational fiasco whereas 108 universities came up taking the advantage of regulatory loophole in 2002. Supreme court had to intervene to correct these anomalies and set guidelines for the future.
- No selection committees in place while recruiting faculty, which is left to the whims and fancies of the management of the institute, thereby becoming party to exploitation of labour.
- MOU's signed by the private institutes with foreign universities and corporate bodies are not as per the provisions laid out for them.
- Pay Scales as per the UGC norms are not being strictly followed by private Management and Engineering colleges.

D2: Institutes of Higher Education

- Camouflaged salary registers are maintained in addition to actual salary disbursed registers in many colleges.
- Unfair means are being practiced in exams, sometimes even with faculty involvement. The famous case of Anti copying Act in UP by BJP Government which was later abolished within one hour of Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav becoming the chief Minister.
- Unqualified and inexperienced faculty are being recruited, which results in compromising the quality of teaching.
- Increased fee structure on some pretext or the other under the label of Developmental Charges by the colleges are being charged..
- No correlation between performance appraisal and increments in salary.
- Not concerned with professional ethics such as punctuality, attendance of faculty and students, results achieved, overall development of student's personality, quality research work/ projects undertake. The main concern of these institutes is to make profits by dubious means.
- Donations accepted while giving admissions to students as capitation fees and further no accounts kept for these donations.

D3: Family and the Society

- Parents allowing their wards to show off their status, wealth and prestige through unethical ways may it be cars, clothes and jewellery.

- Non availability of parents in the Parent- teacher meets. No monitoring of the performance of the students by their parents.
- No checks even when their wards are using the hi-tech services particularly internet as a result of which they fall prey to hacking and other cyber crimes.
- The working parents hardly have any quality time to spare for their wards.

D4: The Guru and the Shishya

- Students disobey the code of conduct during day to day life in the college.
- Attendance and regularity issues on the rise.
- Teacher's commitment towards their profession particularly those teachers taking private home tuitions.
- Internal assessment of teacher is another subject of debate which is being used as double weapon for and against the students by some of the teachers.

6. TEACHER AS A MENTOR

- Help create an atmosphere of love, trust and security in the college.
- Understand the student and its development character and adopt their methods accordingly.
- Relate value education to concrete situations.
- Organize value education indirectly through a variety of co-curricular activities.
- Influence the student with his/her total personality.
- Example is better than precept. Teacher must be honest in his/her dealings with students.
- Remember mere emulation is not education. We want student eventually not to do things in blind faith, custom or traditional but after rational deliberations and thought.

7. STUDENT AS A MENTEE

- Listening to others with the intention of learning with them.
- Reflecting intentionally to gain more understanding of the complexities of organizational life.
- Being open-minded and accepting that there are multiple legitimate and viable perspectives and possibilities in any situation.
- Understanding that there is no right answer or right approach in an ethical situation.

- Being proactive in anticipating potential ethical or moral dilemmas and finding different ways to learn from different perspectives about how one might address such dilemmas.

With so much of unethical chaos prevailing under the nose of these apex bodies should be we go for teaching ethics and value formation for the Youth of India.

8. PRACTICAL ASPECTS RELATING TO ETHICS IN INSTITUTES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Issues of value and ethics in the education system needs to be resolved if we want to tackle the larger challenges we face today in the education sector like total literacy, better quality of education and so on. Corruption is all pervasive and includes our education also. India is one of the most corrupt countries in the world and ranks 72. The level of corruption in any organization depend upon three factors- the individual's sense of values, the set of values upheld and cherished by the society and lastly the system itself which will punish the guilty and if it does not then the corruption flourishes.

Some of the unethical practices being followed by most of our higher education institutes are being listed below, though, it is not the exhaustive list:

- How far college education has succeeded in helping students to become integral part of society. How far has the college culture changed the life of the students?
- Why college have failed to bring in the expected standards in values and beliefs.
- There is no education which can enrich human life, who is to ensure the quality and standard of values maintained. Is it the only Principal or the teachers or some other actors of higher education?
- Universities are awarding degrees and certificates to students without ensuring anything related to quality which is affecting the Education system in an adverse manner.
- People purse a degree for the status it carries.
- Teachers deliver lectures without employing proper teaching methodologies. Many a time teachers do not have time to the inclination to ensure whether the student could follow lecture. Teacher often merely dictates notes, reading out of the text book or the guide of the subject.
- Evaluation and testing gives more stress upon rote memory. There is no genuine comprehension or critical evaluation. Curriculum design is mere a collection of topics and subjects.
- The accumulation and presentation of data alone cannot become the criteria for quality education. Does higher

education cater for or include acquisition of habit or skills?

- The colleges are plain enrolment centres and examination bodies. They are not bothered about quality of teaching and the ethical considerations. Neither there is any procedure to check the kind of teaching that is imparted at the college.

9. CONCLUSION

It has been quoted that the true philosophy of education lies in the combination of Virtues, Values and Validity of human life. It implies that there is need to understand the criteria that can help in development of human beings. Education is not merely imparting knowledge in a particular faculty or subject or making one fit for securing jobs or fare well in exams, it should be training in logical thinking and should help the coming generations adjust to the available changing environment.

The big Missions, Aims and Objectives of many educational institutions with bold letters interspersed with high flown jargons remains only on the walls of these institutions in their chairmen/Directors'/Principles' offices and are seldom preached, practices or implemented in true spirits. This is true not only in case govt. aided institutions but also in case of privately owned self-financial institutions as well. The institution should enable students to become contributing member of the society by providing knowledge, skills and character development opportunities.

Proper education process is a passport to good, comfortable and secure life. The process is transmitted through commitment and sharing of Teacher-Pupil relationship. The love and joy, values and respect, the basic ethics are getting either eliminated or getting deteriorated to the rock bottom.

In these days the educational institutions of all kinds of higher education neither cared for the community nor respect for others. No importance is given to human relations who are much pertinent matter required for an effective education. There is no encouragement or appreciation of virtues of responsibilities and self-discipline. Therefore is no projection of the college as the servant of the society.

Education without goodness i.e. without ethics is arrogant and dangerous. Unethical behaviour thrives in darkness and can only exist when ethical leaders remain bystanders in the face of evil. If we who are in the business of educating the young want to measure and assess our efforts we need to look at how our institutions nurture human freedom in the service of humanity. Success today is all too often defined by the power of the wealth that one holds.

All the symbols, ranging from who occupies the best office, to the size of the pay cheque, the Rolex watch, exist side by side with mind dulling drugs, divorce, rape cases, abortions, suicides etc. While we no longer expect that the class Room

teaching is enough to make a person learned, and while there has to be some academic input to fulfill course requirement. We may be tempted to forget the Ultimate Aim of the Education, i.e., *the Formation of Qualities to help student become Decent Human Beings*.

Whenever we criticize the Indian education system, people point out that it is the same system which has produced brilliant people who have distinguished themselves in different fields such as Dr Rabindra Nath Tagore (Noble Prize Winner), Dr Homi J. Bhaba, Dr. Hargobind Khurana (Noble Prize Winner), Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, Dr. Manmohan Singh, Dr. S Radha Krishnan, Dr Vikram Sarabhai and Dr Amritya Sen (Noble Prize Winner) etc. But the question is that such people may be more an exception than a rule. We should design such a system in which excellent quality of education will be the norm rather than the exception.

Long term developments and improvements come by changing the mind-set of the people and unless we are able to bring Ethical changes, we are not going to succeed. While it may not be possible to make a nationwide change, can't we at least try for areas of excellence and gradually increase the coverage of such areas? Need is not to change 100% in one particular area, but we should work for changing 1% in 100 different areas.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abhinav Singh and Bharathi Purohit (2011): Fracas over Privatisation, Quality Assurance and Corruption in Indian higher education, *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol 2, No 11&12.
- [2] Abhinav Singh and Bharathi Purohit (2011): Reconsidering privatisation for corruption free administration in Indian higher education, *Education Research Journal*, Vol. 1(7): 128 – 134.
- [3] Anita Pathania (2011): Teachers role in Quality Enhancement and Value Education, *Academe*, Vol. 24(1), 19-25.
- [4] Bala Harish (2011): Challenges of Higher Education in 21st Century *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol 2, No 6 pp78-81.
- [5] Bray, M. (2003). *Adverse Effects of Private Supplementary Tutoring: Dimensions, Implications and Government Responses*. Paris: IIEP-UNESCO.
- [6] Deepti Gupta and Navneet Gupta (2012): Higher Education in India: Structure, Statistics and Challenges, *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol 3, No 2, pp 17-24.
- [7] Hallak, J. and Poisson, M. (2001): "Ethics and Corruption in Education." Paris: IIEP-UNESCO.
- [8] Hallak, J. and Poisson, M. (2005): Ethics and corruption in education: an overview. *Journal of Education for International Development*, 1(1).
- [9] Hallak, J. and Poisson, M. (2007): *Corrupt schools, corrupt universities: What can be done?* Published by International Institute for Educational Planning.
- [10] Harry Anthony Patrinos and Ruthkagia (2007): Maximizing the Performance of Education Systems The Case of Teacher Absenteeism published in *The Many Faces of Corruption* 63-87.
- [11] Kanchan Garg and Kamaljeet Kaur (2012): Declining of Ethical Standard in Higher Education System in India presented in Cambridge Business & Economics Conference, Cambridge, UK.
- [12] MS Pabla (2011): The Corrosion of Ethics in Higher Education: A Challenge of 21st Century, *International journal of management and business studies*, Vol. 1(2).
- [13] Richard Rosea and William Mishler (2010): Experience versus perception of corruption: Russia as a test case, *Global Crime*, Vol. 11, No. 2, May 2010, 145–163.
- [14] Ritimoni Bordoloi (2011): Challenges in Elementary Education in India: Various Approaches, *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol 2, No 7 pp 39-45.
- [15] Shirley van Nuland and B.P. Khandelwal (2001): Ethics in education: the role of teacher codes Canada and South Asia in Ethics and corruption in education published by IIEP, UNESCO.
- [16] Uttara Dukkipati (2010): Higher Education in India: sustaining long term growth, *South Asia Monitor*, Vol. 141, 01 May, 2010.
- [17] Wit Wisadavet (2003): The Buddhist philosophy of education: approaches and Problems, *The Chulalongkorn Journal of Buddhist Studies*: Vol. 2(2).