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Ethics and Education: Its Impact on Society

Dr. Mohammad Yousuf Mir, Assistant Professor, Department of Arabic Language & Literature, Islamic University of Science and Technology, Awantipora, Jammu & Kashmir, India
Email: mir.mohammadyousf@gmail.com

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Abstract

Ethics and Education are so closely knitted to each other that one loses its importance in absence of the other. They must go hand in hand in order to promote a well disciplined society where the behaviour of people reflects their educational and ethical values. Every religion advocates the promotion of ethical values both at individual and collective level and declares education as a main tool for development and propagation of such values. The history bears testimony to the fact that ancient nations were swept from the surface of earth in wake of their moral degradation. The modern education system and the prescribed syllabi therein totally ignore the moral and ethical dimensions which in turn promote moral decadency. Thus it becomes imperative to mould the present education system for the development and promotion of a welfare society buttressed on moral and ethical values. This would result in the mass awareness of the duties and responsibilities afresh.

Keywords: Ethical values, education system, society, duties and responsibilities.

Introduction: Ethics and moral values are of primary significance for the development of a welfare society. Ethics has an indispensable place in every aspect of life and is an integral part of education. The erosion of ethical and moral values dismantled the whole structure of humanity and the law of jungle prevails. On unfolding the pages of history it is concluded that the antique nations of the world were swept away from the surface of the earth on account of the adaptation of unethical attitude and trespassing the fundamental principles of humanity. The Holy Quran clearly cites the examples and mentions at length the fate of such nations including the nations of Nuh, Lout, Salih etc. In the world today, despite being the age of science and technology, the mankind is ethically so degraded that it has plummeted from the pinnacle of humanity into the abysmal depths of ignorance and inhumanity.

When we look back at ancient education systems, we realize how prosperous, value-based and skilful they have been, enriched with ethical and human values. The teachers used to be concerned mainly with the overall development of students including their intellectual (physical, mental and spiritual) level; understand their abilities, sense their feelings and emotions; make them aware of their social responsibilities, regards for elders and above all nourish them with ethical and moral values. The modern education system and the syllabi prescribed therein do not reflect such developments which in turn resulted in moral degradation. It is thus the need of hour to mould the present education system for the development of a society enriched with moral and ethical values to see a better future. Before presenting a detailed account of the importance of ethics in education and the impact thereof, it is indispensable to understand these terms.

Concept of Ethics: The term “ethics” is derived from the Latin word ‘ethicus’ and in Greek from ‘ethikos’ which has its root origin in the word ‘ethos’ meaning disposition or character. It may be discussed as a set of moral values, rules and parameters supervising the behavior of any particular individual, society, culture or profession. The persona of an individual is usually reflected in the prism of his comportment (series of actions) which altogether may be called as right or wrong, good or bad moral or immoral. Hence, ethics may be defined as the branch of knowledge that mainly deals with the conduct and behavior of a person described as right or wrong character. It is pertinent to mention here that ethical problems arise when somebody’s own ethical standards contradict with those who possesses dissimilar identity^[1]

Education: Generally, education refers to any knowledge or action or attitude that has an inspirational impact or influence on the psyche, disposition or physical ability of an individual. Etymologically, the word education has its derivation from the Latin word “educio” which means to educate or train.^[2] Thus education may be defined as a procedure of learning or attaining information that in turn leaves an indelible mark on human psyche, disposition and physical capacity. As far as the history of education is concerned, it starts right from the dawn of human history itself. Education is also a tool that helps in establishing a well-developed civilized society. Culture, skills, attitude and cultural heritage can also be passed on to next generations by dint of education, which is important job of mankind.^[3]

Modern Educational System: Since education is a tool for the comprehensive and overall development of humans, if any dimension of human personality is neglected, its repercussions may be result very adverse in his development. But when we dive deep into ponderation over the current educational system, we find that it is totally fruitless in developing and promoting the basic human values among students and ignores the issues of uprooting the vices from their lives, irrespective of scientific and technological progress. The educated section of the society which is ideologically brought up under the present education system is completely saturated with all vices that mainly crept from the west, however, so far as its virtues are concerned, they are wholly and solely impermeable to them. They lack all those traits which the virtually educated people are imbibed with,

including the sense of responsibility, punctuality, patience, accountability, honesty and truthfulness. They are personified to the wild plants with no distinct national character and don't bother of using their moral sense in resorting to the most corrupted practices while holding the highest public office. Besides, we come across people all around us, ironically the educated ones, who practice nepotism, show undue favor, abuse justice, without any moral qualms, seize the rights of others and sacrifice the interests of the country for their own gain. ^[4] The main objective of the students is to get degrees, to pursue a job and make money without taking into account moral principles and national pride in their lives. It is thus need of the hour to understand the importance of teaching ethics in educational institutions.

Importance of ethical education: Indeed the teaching of ethics in educational institutions has an undeniable importance in the present era. Since educational institution is the only place where a student can be groomed and molded according to the principles of ethics that would in turn smoothen the way for pacifying the surrounding atmosphere and environment. It is only possible in such institutions where we can prove the students as the harbinger of peaceful and prosperous future provided that the ethics should be the essence and nub of an educational system and it must be ethical-centric. But if the ethical dimensions of education are totally ignored, the student's personality would lack humanness and would be unaware of the meaning of manhood. Ultimately, they will be ravenous creatures in the guise of human beings who would disturb the peaceful atmosphere of their society by becoming the mass source of all social evils including dishonesty, sexual anarchy, psychological depression, corruption, drug addiction etc ^[5].

Four stages can be identified in the education of ethics.

- Ethics instruction in the home.
- School-based ethics instruction.
- University-level instruction in ethics.
- Business ethics education.

In family, mother's lap is the first school of a child where he learns how to talk and behave with others. Parents are a role model for a child who he follows in word and action. Conversely, parents' character and behaviour leave an indelible mark on the mind and thinking of a child. So, it is of primary importance that the ethics education in families, should focus on descriptive facts.

In school, students learn the difference between good and evil, right and wrong. It is a character-based or value-based education. In educational systems, religion and ethics are typically linked. Therefore students take religious courses instead of ethical courses. In addition, a school fastens students to become trustful, responsible and just in their daily life. In universities, ethics should be profession centric. At this point, ethical education helps students understand what is right and empowers them to make moral choices in their field. Additionally, pupils learn to assess various moral stances. ^[6]

Three arguments are presented by Gardelli, Albery, and Perssons regarding the benefits of teaching ethics in schools. The three arguments are the quality-of-life argument, the tool argument, and the socialization argument. The socialization argument holds that schools should put their primary attention toward guiding pupils toward becoming good members of society, a goal that requires a strong emphasis on ethics. According to the quality of life thesis, schools help pupils control leading fulfilling lives. Schools have a responsibility to hone kids in this regard so that they can become moral members of society. According to the tool argument, students will excel in other subjects, if the students had ethics in school” [7].

From the above mentioned arguments, it becomes obvious that teaching of ethics in educational institutions is the need of the hour, as it is the only source which provides a better life to students.

Impact of Ethical education on Society: Every society needs ethics because it plays a crucial part in influencing how people behave within that society. Since the dawn of human civilization, someone has tried to control human nature in order to preserve social harmony. Ethics function as a self-governing system to maintain balance and evenness in human self-interest and the good of society, whereas statutory law is utilised to regulate official business and occurring.

Indeed the ethical education has an everlasting impact on society. Our society will be free of all types of anarchism, chaos and confusion, ethical erosion, turmoil and unrest provided that our educational system is governed by the principles of ethics. The primary and everlasting effects of ethical education on society are mentioned as follows:

I. Terrorism –free society: In this current era of scientific and technological advancement, where every field of life is progressing at a brisk rate, but at the same time, the terroristic atmosphere engulfing the every nook and corner of the world, has snatched the peace of mind from the whole humanity. The blood and wealth of a person has become legitimate for the others, the honour and beauty of womenfolk always remains at stake. Besides, the small children are nipped in the bud by the tyrannous hands of cruelty. But, the whole source and impetus of the said unrest and turmoil is our educational system which is not ethical centric. It is the ethical education that teaches the meaning of humanity and manhood and stresses upon the respect for elders and love for youngsters. The ethics discourages terrorism, extremism and prejudice. It always focuses upon dissemination of love and peace.[8] Ethical education plays a crucial role in the creation of a terrorism-free society by fostering values and skills that counteract the conditions conducive to terrorism. Here's how:

1. **Promotes Tolerance and Respect:** Ethical education helps individuals understand and respect diverse perspectives and cultures, reducing prejudice and discrimination. When people are educated to value diversity, they're less likely to engage in or support violent extremism against others.
2. **Encourages Critical Thinking:** By teaching students to think critically and question information, ethical education helps individuals resist extremist propaganda and

manipulative rhetoric. This helps prevent the spread of radical ideologies and reduces susceptibility to extremist recruitment.

3. **Builds Conflict Resolution Skills:** Ethical education often includes training in nonviolent conflict resolution and negotiation. These skills enable individuals to handle disputes and disagreements through dialogue and compromise rather than violence.
4. **Fosters Civic Responsibility:** Ethical education emphasizes the importance of civic duties and community engagement. This sense of responsibility encourages people to contribute positively to society, making them less likely to be drawn to extremist groups that promise radical change through violence.
5. **Promotes Empathy and Emotional Intelligence:** Understanding and managing one's own emotions, as well as empathizing with others, can reduce the likelihood of engaging in violent behavior. Ethical education helps individuals develop these emotional skills, making them less prone to radicalization.
6. **Reduces Social Alienation:** Ethical education can address feelings of disenfranchisement by fostering inclusive communities where individuals feel valued and connected. Social isolation and alienation are often precursors to radicalization, so mitigating these feelings can help prevent the allure of extremist ideologies.
7. **Encourages Ethical Leadership:** Educating future leaders in ethical decision-making helps ensure that they lead with integrity and prioritize the common good. Ethical leadership can create fairer societies and address grievances that might otherwise fuel extremism.
8. **Supports Personal Integrity:** Teaching ethics helps individuals develop a strong sense of personal integrity and moral responsibility. This foundation makes individuals less likely to justify or participate in terrorist activities, which often involve moral disengagement.

Overall, ethical education builds a foundation for a more harmonious society by addressing the root causes of radicalization and extremism, creating individuals who are less likely to resort to violence and more inclined to work towards peaceful solutions.

II. Society free from moral degradation: Whenever we observe our society, we find that it is wholly and solely encompassed by moral degradation and all types of heinous crimes and abuses are rampant within. The drug addiction, abusive language, inhumane nature etc has become necessary part of young generation. Likewise, the daily newspapers always publish the news about the incidents of killings, abduction and molestation, rape etc, which reflects the moral standards of our society. The only remedy for uprooting such a moral degradation from our society is to make our educational system ethical centric and focus on ethical values while framing the curriculum.^[9]

Ethical education can effectively address specific social evils by instilling moral principles and fostering critical thinking. For instance, in combating corruption, ethical education promotes honesty and integrity, helping individuals recognize and resist corrupt practices while encouraging a culture of accountability. In tackling inequality and

discrimination, it cultivates empathy and respect for marginalized groups, emphasizing justice and empowering individuals to advocate for fair policies. Regarding violence and crime, ethical education builds moral values such as respect and non-violence, and teaches conflict resolution skills to handle disputes peacefully. In environmental issues, it instills principles of stewardship and responsibility, encouraging sustainable practices and raising awareness about the impact of environmental degradation. Finally, to address economic exploitation, ethical education promotes fair trade, highlights worker rights, and encourages corporate responsibility, guiding businesses towards equitable practices. Overall, by shaping values, promoting ethical behavior, and enhancing awareness, ethical education serves as a powerful tool in uprooting social evils and fostering a more just and responsible society.

Conclusion: In essence, it can be said that education is a moral endeavor. Education has the power to make people either antagonistic or peaceful. Education with an ethical focus aims to empower learners to act on their own free will. We can easily educate norms, but unless we also teach ethics, it will be impossible to enforce these rules on people. As a result, ethics instruction is crucial and important in the educational system. It is important to note that graduates from various reputable institutions or colleges may be well-educated individuals in their respective fields but it does not suffice to them nor to their society and this notion gets clearly reflected from the saying of Aristotle who says, "Educating the mind without the heart is no education at all." Thus there is a dire need to incorporate ethics-based education into the curriculum, which should concentrate on the development of human values, ethical values, logical thinking, learning, research, and moral development in the educational system.

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