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# Cultivating Integrity: The Essential Role of Ethics in Higher Education in India

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## ABSTRACT

*Ethics is important in all facets of life. Nowadays, education is believed to be the most important human pursuit. Education ought to be an equitable and socially beneficial activity. Therefore, education itself is insignificant without ethics. As a result, ethics is important and useful in the field of education. This paper discusses the relevance of ethics in India's educational system and how it fosters a healthy society. Higher education establishments may do a great deal to help the next generation prepare for a promising future. Along with giving the student quality education, it is also need to instill strong ethical values and practices. The morals and principles that are upheld at their colleges and universities have a big impact on the future generation. Many Indian universities are excellent at teaching students to be value-oriented in addition to their academic specializations. But in many colleges and educational institutions, fundamental principles and virtues are also ignored in different ways. Young people will be taught that this is how the world operates and that acting unethically is the only way to achieve professionally if ethics are absent from higher education. The younger generation's character development and formation also depend on education. In such transformative contexts, it is essential to modify higher education systems so that they intentionally inculcate ethical values. It is the higher education system to offer realistic solutions to the problems regarding ethical issues currently facing. The paper discusses the significance, function, and role of ethics in higher education in India.*

**Keywords:** *Ethics, fundamental, Higher education, society, transformative.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the modern world, ethics is vital to all facets of life. Since education is essential to human existence, ethics in the educational setting are becoming more and more important. Thus, teaching ethics is essential. Technology makes it simple for us to access all knowledge. But the use of technology in the field of education, however, exposes some ethical issues also [1]. To help students grasp the significance of ethics, the educational system must include a course on

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the topic. First, one must understand the definition of ethics and why it is important for education. Ethics is the most prominent area of philosophy, which is especially moral philosophy. The term 'ethics' comes from the Greek word 'ethos', which means custom or character. It is connected to our morals and values. Ethics, therefore, deals with our behavior and reactions in daily life. We are responsible for all of our decisions because we have the mental ability to evaluate our actions and choices. Therefore, we can define ethics as the study of good and evil and what is right and what is wrong.

Education is any action or experience that moulds a person's mind, personality, or physical capabilities. The word 'education' derives from the Latin word 'educere' which meaning to teach or train. Education consists of two parts: learning and knowledge acquisition. It signifies instruction and education. Education has an impact on a person's intellect, personality, and physical abilities. Since the dawn of human history, education has existed. In addition, education makes people more capable and contributes to their development into civilized human beings. Since transmitting on information and skills from one generation to the next is the primary activity of people, education has the power to spread culture and cultural legacies.

In modern times, education needs to fulfill the requirements of both the people and the nation. As such, we place a great deal of importance on education. It fosters the growth of the state, gives information, and improves character. Not only does education complete an individual, but it also advances society and the nation forward. The essential pillars of the educational system are schools and colleges. A child's moral development is aided by school, and his or her college education prepares him to be an honorable and productive citizen of the nation. The only way to do this is to educate ethics in colleges and schools. As a result, moral education is crucial at universities and schools. Since ancient times, ethics has been a top concern in India.

#### **(A) Statement of the Problem**

As a discipline, 'ethics' looks at what is good or wrong in addition to moral duties and obligations. Every culture and community on the planet has developed an ethical code for its members, which they are required to abide by. Individual behavior is determined by moral judgments about what is right and bad, which vary depending on the national culture. Therefore, national culture plays a vital part in establishing moral standards that all members of society are expected to uphold. Establishing and instilling in the younger generation a value system that teaches them the necessity of upholding ethics in all facets of life is vital for higher education institutions. It is the great responsibility of the educational system to impart ethics to its younger generations. In India, it is the need of the hour.

### **(B) Review of Literature**

The book *Ethics in Higher Education* edited by Divya Singh and Christoph Stuckelberger is a fascinating compilation of 19 articles written by authors from eight countries and five continents. The articles are grouped into four sections: (1) Values in higher education, (2) Responsible Leadership, (3) Education Topics, and (4) Open and Distant Education [2]. The book discusses the various problems related to ethics in the higher education system.

Suja R Nair in the handbook research on higher education describes that “Institutions of higher education have a major role to play in preparing the younger generation for a propitious future. Apart from imparting quality education, they need to instill high ethical values and practices among the student fraternity” [3].

In a journal article Kodari Krishna Prasad depicts that, today, ethics has an important place in all areas of life. Education is also a fundamental process of human life. Therefore, in education ethics has a very important and effective role.

“Human Values and Ethics define the quality of a person or an organization or society at large. Practitioners of values and ethics learn these lessons through self-initiated endeavors, through the life experience that is the greatest laboratory of learning, and through the educational institutions, that they attend. Hence, the educational institutions themselves need to be values and ethics personified.” says in a book by Mulya Pravah [4].

New Education Policy mentions that ‘building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key 21st-century skills including cognitive skills and developing learners into good, successful, innovative, adaptable, and productive human beings in today’s rapidly changing world’.

### **(C) Research Gap**

The summary of previous research demonstrates the importance of ethics in India's educational system as well as the factors that have led to its decline in modern society. The status of ethics in higher education now is largely a result of the epidemic. The importance of ethics in higher education and their role in it are the primary focus of this study.

### **(D) Research Methodology**

This descriptive study is carried out by the information collected from different sources like educational websites, peer-reviewed journals, and online sources. The present paper is relying on the data collected through research journals, doctoral thesis, scholarly articles, and websites. This is mainly based on collecting, examining, and interpreting existing knowledge on the

selected topic.

### **(E) Objectives**

1. To understand the ancient Indian education system and the place of ethics.
2. To know the present education system and the decline of ethics.
3. To analyze new national education policy and the importance given to ethics.
4. To comprehend the condition of Post pandemic world and the need for ethics.
5. Importance of infusing ethics in higher education.

## **II. ANALYSIS**

### **(A) Ancient Indian Educational System and Ethics**

In India, study and education have always been valued highly. These were transmitted from one generation to another verbally or in writing. One distinguishing characteristic of ancient Indian culture is that religious influences have had a greater historical impact than political or economic ones. Gurukul system of education existed during ancient times when students used to reside at the guru's place and learn everything which can be later implemented to find solutions to real-life problems [5]. The ancient tradition refers to the entire set of values, practices, and ways of being as Dharma, Virtue, or Duty. The outlook on life that our forefathers had, along with their meticulous deliberation and explanation of their responsibilities, all point to the spiritual values that guided them. They had a broad view on life and committed themselves, in carrying out their responsibilities, to the welfare of all people. Their actions had the exclusive goal of advancing society as a whole.

The principles of love, honorable behavior, moral conduct, and abstaining from conflict, aggression, and ego formed the foundation of ancient Indian culture. Life had a distinct goal and an ideal that, it was thought, transcended all material success. In ancient India, education was developed on the basis of this particular idea. Dr. R.K. Mukherjee said, Learning in India through the ages had been prized and pursued not for its own sake, if we may so put it, but for the sake, and as a part, of religion. It was sought as the means of self-realization, as the means to the highest end of life viz. Mukti or Emancipation [6]. It is also important to recognize that ancient Indian education was ultimately the result of the Indian theory of knowledge as a component of the corresponding way of life and values.

This offers a clear vision, a sense of perspective, and a sense of proportion that allows the distinction and precise definition of the material and moral, the physical and the spiritual, the

temporary and the permanent interests and values of life. Since every individual has the potential to contain a Divine spark, it is their greatest duty to recognize how they are developing into the Absolute and self-fulfillment. Education must facilitate this self-fulfillment rather than concentrating solely on the learning of strictly external knowledge. As a result, schooling elevated the significance of the student's overall growth. Value-based education was provided to ancient Indian educational institutions such as Taxila, Nalanda, Valabhi, Vikramshila, Mithila, etc., which aided in the students' entire growth.

In earlier times, pupils would sit near their teacher in a serene natural location, away from the clamor and distractions of the outside world, and through listening and meditation, they would be able to comprehend all of life's complicated problems. Rather than being satisfied with only academic learning, they would get a fair amount of practical information about the world and society through intimate interaction with others. There was a special custom in which the student resided at the teacher's home while simultaneously feeling a deep sense of obligation. Due to his teacher's intimate relationship with the student, the pupil would naturally emulate his traits. This system also emphasized how important it is to teach knowledge for practical applications.

The concept of 'Learning by Doing' as it is currently understood in the West, was the foundation and essence of education in ancient India. Because of this, the establishment of the traditional Indian educational system was inevitable since it was designed to satisfy the needs of both individuals and society. It had a distinct aim and purpose. Human life was moving towards more perfection as the forces of materialism and spiritualism found equilibrium. The cornerstones of ancient Indian education included life knowledge, a strong bond between teacher and pupil, advancements in social work, and vocational training. Therefore, we might conclude that the only thing on ancient India's mind was ingraining qualities and teaching ethics.

### **(B) Present Education System**

Numerous modifications to the educational system were brought about by a variety of factors, including foreign influence. Through their theories on education, ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle helped shape the structure of our modern educational system. In general, they all concur that education need to be utilized to further humankind. The Socratic Method is still used in contemporary teaching methods. This method involves teachers posing intellectually challenging questions to pupils, who then try to answer by offering explanations. Plato, the father of idealism, believed that the goal of education should be to increase a person's capacity to assist society. He was also the founder of Academy, the world's first university. He

believed that education was a right that belonged to both men and women.

There are different levels of education, he claimed. He believed that education is the foundation of any society. The father of realism, Aristotle, believed that education was exclusively available to citizens. He believed that a person with education was happy. Technical, practical, and theoretical education was all things he promoted. Education supports the development of the body and mind. Current views of education are built upon the philosophies of these philosophers.

Due to various changes such as modernization, industrialization, urbanization, privatization, globalization as well as the influence of western culture accompanied many problems and evils in Indian society that cause declining ethical values in the Indian education system [7]. Undoubtedly, this system has raised literacy rates, but it hasn't helped society produce more educated people, and consequently, it hasn't produced the ideal citizens of the nation. Indian students' main priorities have always been to earn a degree, acquire money, and pursue careers without considering morality or patriotism. Indian society today would surely have to deal with a lot of new and ongoing problems as a result. Unchecked corruption, a collapse in moral principles, criminal activity, cruel conduct, indiscipline, disobedience to rules, a lack of self-awareness, and immoral consumption are all signs of a society that is slowly but surely upending India, the nation at large, and the entire globe. It is high time to identify the Aim of Education and the major causes of declining Social and moral values and ethical strengthening in the Indian education system [5].

### **(C) New National Education Policy and Ethics**

Rabindranath Tagore had said long back that the Indian education system needs to change. We live in a society where a child spends his parent's earnings and still not getting the standard education and struggling to get the desired employment [8]. The principle of change is a continuous and unchanging aspect of the operation of the cosmos. Every culture is impacted by the process of transformation. Society is inherently characterized by change. In Indian society, this is also true. Currently, if a society wants to alter in its development, the education policy needs to be addressed first. The educational standards of any country show how important education is to that nation's government and extent of its responsibility. Following India's decline in global university rankings, there was anticipation that the government and the system as a whole would take decisive action to rectify the situation and bring about some changes. After 34 years, the Indian government decided to reform the country's education policy while keeping in mind the overall goal of national development.

The first education policy was introduced in 1968 by the government of former Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The second education policy was formulated by the Rajiv Gandhi government in 1986, with some amendments by the Narasimha Rao government in 1992. The National Education Policy 2020 is the third education policy of independent India. [9]. The gross enrollment ratio in higher educational institutions under National Education Policy 2020 has been targeted to increase from 26.3 percent (the year 2018) to 50 percent also 3.5 crores new seat will be added in higher educational institution [10]. The National Education Policy 2020 in the undergraduate curriculum allows for multiple entries and exits. According to the system adopted, students can exit a three or four-year undergraduate program at various levels, and they will be given degrees or certificates following their exit level.

A certificate after a year, an advanced diploma after two years, a bachelor's degree after three years, and a graduate certificate with research after four years are new changes. Students who are pursuing a four-year degree can complete Ph.D. with MA in one year. The Academic Bank of Credit will be established through this policy. The students' digits or credit will be digitally preserved [11]. The Education Policy of India 2020 states that every individual should develop their creative potential. It also states that education should develop not only their cognitive capacities, but also their emotional, social, and ethical capacities. Higher education should focus on teaching universal ethics for building a welfare society as well as for developing individual life quality. Moral education is a significant factor to live an ethical life. The universities in future should also emphasize the importance of moral education to build a society that is conducive to the welfare of its members [12]

Education has always included a strong ethical component. A lack of ethics in education is unthinkable. Realizing this and adapting to a quickly changing world, NEP has emphasized developing ethical principles in the students. In the light of technological revolution affecting humanistic development, NEP enunciates: "The purpose of the education system is to develop good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper and creative imagination, with sound ethical moorings and values. It aims at producing engaged, productive, and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by our Constitution". On the role of ethical values amidst the technological revolution, NEP states: New circumstances and realities require new initiatives. The recent rise in epidemics and pandemics necessitates that we are ready with alternative modes of quality education whenever and wherever traditional and in-person modes of education are not possible.

NEP conveys a clear message that by practicing ethics, you will advance in life. Nothing makes



people stronger than ethics. Empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, a spirit of democracy, a willingness to serve others, respect for public property, a scientific temper, liberty, responsibility, pluralism, equality, and justice are just a few of the ethical, human, and constitutional qualities that hallmarks of the NEP. The goal of the policy is to inculcate in the students a deep sense of national pride and to help them establish a culture of responsibility and dedication to the welfare of all people.

#### **(D) Post-Pandemic World and Need for Ethics**

The pandemic was the first disaster that compelled educational institutions to discontinue in-person instruction forever, bringing about an abrupt shift for which most teachers and students were unprepared. Around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic brought about unimaginable disruptions. Education was one of the most impacted industries. Education institutions and society as a whole were not prepared to accept the rapid national move to online platforms. The unprecedented closure of schools led to the transition from traditional in-person instruction to distance learning modes in higher education [13]. Universities must uphold their core values and ethical obligations in the face of all the uncertainty and shock, as doing so gives academics a sense of direction and credibility. Working from home, isolating oneself, and communicating just online are all extremely challenging experiences that will only get harder as time goes on. They demonstrate that social, emotional, and mental strength is just as important as intelligence. Self-reliance and character-building are becoming increasingly crucial components of academic education.

The pandemic and the subsequent transition to virtual classrooms have brought to the surface certain drawbacks of online learning that are hard to overlook. Most importantly, online education can become a painful experience because it exacerbates inequality issues [14]. The students engaged in a variety of immoral behaviors as a result of their nearly two-year separation from educational institutions. Exam-copying, indolence, improper sleep patterns, excessive internet usage, Smartphone addiction, disdain for educators, inability to control one's temper, rudeness, aggression, drug use, and other difficult problems are things that universities ought to address. As a result, moral and ethical instruction is desperately needed in the higher education system. It ought to be taught as a subject in the school system.

#### **(E) Importance of Ethics in Higher Education**

The Indian higher education system has a significant responsibility to provide students with the ethical principles that would help them develop into complete human beings. Therefore, it is essential to have an insightful approach to the higher education system that is provided to

students in India in terms of the inculcation of ethics and values [15]. Some factors are focused, particularly on issues like the insistence on teaching morals and values, the standard of the higher education system, etc. These aspects are crucial in shaping society as a knowledge society in the 21st century. The quality of instruction is compromised when inexperienced and under qualified faculty is hired. Institutions raise fees under the pretence of 'developmental charges' for a variety of reasons. Salary increases have little to do with performance reviews. Professional ethics such as being on time, having instructors and students present, helping students develop as individuals generally, and completing high-quality research projects are not given enough weight or consideration. Some institutions of higher learning have as their primary objective maximizing income and profit by utilizing all available tactics.

Donations are taken as capitation fees when students are admitted, and no records of these donations are kept. A lack of modesty in education is a sign of danger and arrogance. Only when moral leaders keep silent in the face of anomalies can unethical behavior persist and send the people into a state of darkness. If we who work in the field of educating the youth wish to gauge and evaluate our performance, we must consider how our institutions promote human freedom for the benefit of all. The success of a person today is judged by the amount of wealth he acquired. First of all, the mindset should be changed. India is at present rapidly developing in every aspect. All societies require moral behavior based on ideals. However, in the present globalized society, a common value system is required since this world is highly interconnected and interdependent. It is linked by trade, information, and communication technology, quick social media, and the large movement of people. Interaction on a global scale requires a shared set of ideals, including justice, fairness, and peace, as well as virtues like respect and honesty. Cooperation is impossible without this shared set of values, with trust serving as the prerequisite for communication. So this value system should be instilled in higher education.

#### **(F) Scope for the Further Study**

The topic can be deeply discussed with the unique ways in which ethical-based education can be infused into higher education. There is a lot of scope for further study by focusing on the current situation and how it can be tackled. Further research can also be conducted by showing how far value-based ethical higher education is the need of the hour.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

Information is expanding at an incredible rate on a global level. Due to the expansion of the social sphere brought about by globalization, financial, economic, social, ecological, political, and cultural spheres no longer have borders. In practically every industry, including behind

university walls, the world is changing at an unprecedented rate. It is evident in the field of education. People lost their jobs, investments, and money because of the pandemic. It has long been established that morally responsible educational systems based on sound ethical principles are necessary. These institutions are challenged to review their educational programs, curricula, and overall systems to generate intelligent citizens with high moral standards and to engage in teaching, training, and research that connect the heart and mind of the human being holistically. Thus, it can be seen that there is an ardent need to reform the ethical framework of education, especially at the higher levels, where it prepares future managers, academics, researchers, and decision-makers for society. This analysis makes it evident that it needs to be rejuvenated. We only impart the syllabus and conduct the examinations. Between these ideals that were assessed and those that were upheld, there is scarcely any relativism. To make the future generation ethically sound and stable, this system needs to be reformed by including seminars, social projects, and other social contribution causes. This will strengthen both our corporate world and society as a whole.

In an effort to instill the value of life in education, higher education institutions include ethics and the environment into their courses. A shift in perspective is required in the framework of a new educational vision, from focusing just on reading and writing to emphasizing the development of abilities that are applicable to society and daily life. Education on ethics can help to cultivate a fresh orientation towards values. Such education ensures the training of both the teacher and the student, produces new technologies, and makes these things possible, thereby opening up new markets, opportunities for policy, resources, and systems. The birth of a new humanity of responsible leaders motivated by values and virtues and knowledgeable enough to influence their surroundings is the outcome of ethical-based education.

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