

Ethics and Values: Through the Psychological Viewpoint

Abstract

Ethics and Values provide the capacity to differentiate between right and wrong for both an individual and society. Ethics are related to values which determine the guidelines for conduct. Behaviour guided by the intrinsic values is rewarding in itself; it occurs for the pleasure provided by conduct itself not for external incentive. Hedonist found that ultimate goal of every activity is to gain pleasure whether the pleasure, happiness is related to future, present and past. Ethical Hedonism differentiates between egoistic and altruistic hedonism. Hedonism determine moral obligation which defines an individual rights and duties. Sometimes conflict arises between rights and duties or between two or more duties. Human society could achieve the mental peace through follow it's conscience not blindly follow the materialistic heights.

Keywords: Ethics, Values, Hedonism, Conscience,

Introduction

Ethics and values are concerned to the human behaviour- how it should be or ought to be. It determines the criteria to differentiate between right and wrong, good and evil. Ethics and psychology are closely related, but psychology deals with the 'is' the present, actual aspect of behaviour. Psychology is a positive science, whereas ethics is a normative science- which deals only with voluntary actions. While psychology has concern for all the three aspects of mental processes, i.e. affective, behavioural and cognitive. Psychology tries to evaluate the field of ethics through the objective viewpoint rather than the subjective one.

Ethics is related with the criteria about the proper and improper conduct, good and evil, right and wrong-which aim for the knowledge of ideal conduct.

The word 'ethics' is derived from the Greek word 'Ethica'-which means customs, practice, habits-these are human conducts which takes place due to exercise. Voluntary actions of men are known as conduct which have volition or will. Ethics are related to values, as we are inclined to know how the conduct should be rather than how it is. Values are of two types on the basis of motives-Intrinsic and Extrinsic.

In intrinsic values-the conduct is the end in itself. In extrinsic values-the conduct acts as the means for achieving some end. In ethics our focus is intrinsic values, where human behaviour is guided by intrinsic values because they are rewarding in itself, where men performs the ideal conduct because of the pleasure provided by the conduct itself not for some external incentive.

Hedonists believed that human behaviour is guided by 'Hedonism'-means to attain pleasure, happiness and joy of life. Hedonists applied the psychological or inductive method in studying the ethics- in which ideals are revealed from the reality or by the observation of human behaviour. Hedonists found that the final aim of every activity is to gain the pleasure. This hedonism is of two type -

1. Psychological hedonism and
2. Ethical hedonism- which is both the self and other directed.

According to Sidgwick the psychological hedonism is the view that "Volition or desire is always determined by pleasures or pains prospective, actual or past". In this way psychological hedonism is guided by the future, the present and the past. Ethical hedonism revealed that sometimes people sacrifice their pleasure for some intangible goal like posthumous recognition, or they sacrifice it for a principle or for the happiness of others. Advocate of the Pleasure Theory of Goals argue that people who make sacrifices do so because they know they would not be happy if they did not. But can one seriously urge that this is always the case? Such behaviour occurs because a person is concerned about standards and ideals that he is disconcerted when he fails and overjoyed

Parvindra Kumar

Assistant Professor,
Deptt.of Sociology & Political
Science Faculty of Social Science,
Dayalbagh Educational Institute,
Agra

Deepali Singh

Assistant Professor,
Deptt.of Psychology,
Agra College,
Agra

when he succeeds. It is the very opposite of the truth to say that what he wanted was to avoid the disagreeable and have the pleasant.

Brandt defined "ethical hedonism" as the view that "a thing is intrinsically desirable or undesirable if and only if and to the degree that it is pleasant or unpleasant".

Ethical hedonism is of two type- egoistic hedonism and altruistic hedonism. According to egoistic hedonism the highest aim of life is to benefit ourselves or the self pleasure. While the altruistic hedonism believed in the universal benefit.

This hedonism is one of the major factors to determine moral obligation which defines an individual's rights and duties. Rights to give birth to virtues -which are learned attitudes or habits. Duties to respect life, society and truth i.e. duties to self, others and God. Individuals are aware of their rights, which are ethical demands, but simultaneously they are bound to their duties, it is a kind of ethical debt which requires its repayment. Continuous practice of duties also gives birth to virtues. In this way hedonism is not always demands gratification for self-needs but demands self- sacrifice also. Continuous practice of duties also give birth to virtues.

Mental conflict arises due to conflict between rights and duties or different kind of motives, and it persists until an individual reaches on the solution. And this solution is depends on moral standards-which could be considered a continuous process because of its changing nature according to given circumstances. A critical juncture may occur when a person goes from a protected home life into the stress of competitive world, and finds that moral standards which apply in one do not hold in the other. Sometimes actions are guided by social pressure, sometimes people merely permitting their desire to govern their beliefs, sometimes duties are in harmony, but when the person is torn between two or more duties-the conflict arises. And it is also not necessary that the struggle takes place between the good and bad one. Both the values could be undoubtedly good in its place but which now get in each other's way. At this point we turn to psychology-how do individuals come to have the ethical standards they do have? There are some major factors that influence the values of the individual-as home influences, prestige figures, information, consistency and personal experience, personal interests, needs, temperament and sympathy etc. Values determine the ethical standards of a person and this could be the subjective one. He follows the standards which he thinks, are the right and proper in the given situation.

A single person can't change the society, but he can change himself. It is under his 'self-control' to behave-morally in society. An individual choose the most moral and ethical alternative among the several others because of the knowledge between right and wrong. It's the other thing to follow them or not. Ethical standards are also changeable according to the place and period.

It is human conscience which continuously alarms individuals to right, but in the fast changing circumstances of life and society, people ignore it to survive. They compromise for the goals which they

think are more important to them, but in reality this is the downfall of the society as a whole. We are aware, understand the whole scenario but most of us sits passively. It is not all and enough to survive only physically; but not mentally and ethically. A simple way to achieve mental peace is to listen to your conscience or moral consciousness. Moral consciousness is a complex mental state consisting of cognitive, affective and behavioural factors, i.e. the knowledge, feeling and activity.

It is not sufficient only to study about the ethics and values but one should concerned about the cultivation of virtues in human society which ultimately gives rise to ethics and values, as these are not innate but the acquired practices. And this could be done with the help of positive psychology, which can help immensely in the promotion of ethics and values in the society. Positive psychology is the movement that directed attention towards human strengths and virtues that most cultures and religions have commended as qualities that fit people well for living in the world. Positive psychology works at both the subjective and group level. The aim of positive psychology is to focus on the building positive qualities rather than only repairing the worst things in life. And we can easily apply this movement in education system for more improved ethical standards for a better future in real human aspect.

Aim of the Study

Aim of this paper is to analyse the concept of 'Ethics' and 'Values' through the psychological viewpoint. an effort has been made to achieve the mental peace with our own conscious efforts for positively and for resolving mental conflicts.

Conclusion

In this present era we talk frequently about decrement in ethics and values. Moreover, our attribution for 'us' and 'others' is also different. If we really want to improve as a person and as a whole nation we have to inculcate ethics and values in ourselves. These are practices, which could be easily acquired; we can induce values in our education system so that our next generation had a better ethical standard and values. Which ultimately results in a better positive society and significantly less mental conflicts.

References

1. Brandt, R.B. (1959) *Ethical Theory: The Problems of Normative and Critical Ethics*, Printice-Hall, United States
2. Munitz, M.K. (1958) *A Modern Introduction to Ethics*, The Free Press, New York
3. Mukerjee, Radhakamal (1950) *The Social Structure of Values*, Macmillan, London
4. Sidgwick, H. (1922) *The Methods of Ethics*, Macmillan & Co. Ltd, London, p-40
5. Seligman, M.E.P. & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000) *Positive Psychology: An Introduction*, *American Psychologist*, pp:5-14, 55
6. Verma, Ashok Kumar (2005) *Nitishastra Ki Rooprekha: Pashchatya & Bhartiya*, Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi
7. Srichandra (1962) *Nitishastra Ka Parichay*, Laxminarayan Agarwal, Agra