



INNOVATIVE RESEARCH ORGANISATION
International Journal of Advance Research in Education, Technology & Management
(Scholarly Peer Review Publishing System)

MORAL JUDGEMENT: THE NEED OF THE HOUR

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ABSTRACT

Since Independence education system in the country has expanded very rapidly. Not only in education, India has attained remarkable progress in the field of IT, Commerce, Industry, and various other fields. Her growing prestige among the nations of the world fully justifies the visions of her bright future. However, Quick economic growth, influence of western culture, even mechanization, urbanization and lust for materialistic life has resulted in loss of values and of the value system at the individual level and in the country as a whole. The whole country is experiencing massive erosion of values. Globalization has not only brought about an upheaval in the economic scenario worldwide, but it has also influenced every aspect of human life and relations. Although there has been great advancement in science and information technology, yet there has been gradual erosion of values which is reflected in large section of our present society. Our young generation under the growing influence of negative aspects of western culture is not able to decide which direction to take. It is the need of the hour to focus our self to seek ways for the development of the non-cognitive domains of human personality. The rapid degradation of values has posed a heavy challenge to our education.

INTRODUCTION

Ethics is a science of morality and it discusses the contents of moral consciousness and the various problems of moral consciousness. The individual and the social group have always passed on to the young's, their values and views about what is right and what is wrong. Without this kind of value transmission families and larger human groups would cease to function as effective units. For this reason, the value education of the young's has never been far from the minds of the adult community. In order to develop various aspects of human values, a number of theories and models of teaching have been developed. Such models provide a broad based pedagogy to mobilize feeling, to guide thinking and to sustain action. Democratic living by its very nature requires making value choices and value decisions in areas like love, friendship, politics, property, sex, religion etc. Many influences such as parental, peer group, family, school, religion etc. intervene in the way of making such choices and make them more difficult and confusing. The moral judgement may be supported by some statement of moral relevant considerations which define why this moral judgement is demanded by reason. Moral judgement is believed to be the ability to discriminate what is right and wrong according to social standards. It is the mode of moral reasoning where persons or events are rated as good or bad. Thus, moral judgement is a byproduct of Individual's potentialities and learning experiences which constitutes in terms of self and in relation to parents and cultural mores.

Parental behaviour is considered as a very important determinant of a balanced personality of a child. Parental behaviour means the relationship of parents to child. Parents play an important role in developing habits and shaping up the social character of the child. Parent's role is very important in child's life. Parents are not just persons who care for child during the helpless years of childhood. Parental behaviour is fundamentally a question of parent's attitude towards their children. During one's educational years more time is spent at home than at school. Therefore it is at home where the foundation of real and successful education is laid. After home the next mini society where child enters is school. In schools students come from different socio-economic backgrounds. The capacities, attitudes, ideas and ambitions of



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children vary according to their socio-economic status. Every society, whether rural or urban, whether agricultural or industrial has a status system. People are recognized as differing in status, some being perceived as of superior status and some as of inferior status.

MORAL JUDGEMENT

Moral consciousness is the consciousness of right and wrong. It involves three factors

1. Cognitive or intellectual,
2. Affective or emotional,
3. Conative or volitional

Moral judgement is the main cognitive factor in moral consciousness. It involves intuition of moral standard by reason and comparison of a voluntary action with it. It also involves evaluation of voluntary action of it as right and wrong. The emotional factors include the moral sentiments and moral judgements are followed by moral sentiments and not vice versa. Moral obligation is the main conative factor of moral consciousness and moral judgement involves moral obligation or the sense of duty or oughtness. It involves the moral impulse to do the right action. We feel we are under moral obligations to do what is right and avoid what is wrong. The moral judgement is the judgement which deals with the moral value or quality of an action. It is a judgement of value and it evaluates the rightness or wrongness of our actions. When we analyse a moral judgement then we find that it contains a) a subject which will judge, b) an object whose action will be judged, c) a standard in conformity to which the action of the subject will be judged and d) a power of judging the action as required.

Moral judgment is the judgment of moral quality of voluntary habitual actions. Generally, a moral judgment is given on the voluntary and habitual actions of a rational being. The voluntary actions of a rational person which involve deliberation, choice, and resolution, have the moral quality of rightness and wrongness. They are considered to be right or wrong with the reference to the moral standard. And on the basis of this standard, moral judgment is given. If the voluntary actions have conformity with the standard or the ideal, then the moral judgment will express it as the right action. If the action has conflict with the standard or norms, then the moral judgment will express it as wrong. So, moral judgment involves comparison of voluntary acts with the moral standard.

Moral judgment is active in nature and social in character. Because, as we know, voluntary acts of a person are right or wrong, because they more or less affect of interest of others. Man is a social being. His rights and duties of actions rise out of his relation to other persons in society. So, moral judgment, apart from society is inconceivable. Moral judgment can be said to be obligatory in character because a judgment can be given as right while we feel the moral obligation to do it. Similarly, moral judgment is given on an act as wrong, when we feel the moral obligation to refrain from it. Thus, moral judgment is always accompanied by the sense of duty or moral obligation. And this moral obligation is essentially self-imposed. In this way, we can find out the meaning of moral judgment.

Dewey (1932), "Moral judgement is the transformation of unsettled moral situation into settled one with worthiness or unworthiness of thought involved in it."

Louis (1959), "Moral judgement is a judgement involving choice among principles, policies or courses of action and also involving some criterion of right conduct, the judgement may involves primarily the selection and application of the right principles, or it may involve choice among or resolution of conflicting principles of morality".

James (1973), "Moral judgement as one mode of moral reasoning where one rates with wise and virtues, bad and good about a person or an event."

Mohmood (1996):-"The goodness or rightness of society standards of right and wrong".

Mallon, Nicholas (1990), "All morality is an accepted moral standard's conduct that is accepted as right or proper."

Moral judgment is a judgment of values. It is distinct from the judgment of facts. A Judgment of value is a judgment of "what ought to be". But a judgment of fact is a judgment of "what is". Judgment of fact is a descriptive judgment, while



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moral judgment is an appreciative or critical judgment. So, moral judgment is a mental act of pronouncing a particular action to be right or wrong. Moral judgment is not merely to state the nature of some object, but to compare it with a standard and to pronounce it to be good or evil, right or wrong. So, it is normative (Mackenzie, 1984). Moral judgment is concerned with the judgment upon conduct, the judgment that such and such conduct is right and wrong. The judgment upon conduct has a judicial sense and the judgment of fact has logical sense. Thus, when we perceive a voluntary action we compare it with the moral standard and thus judge whether the action is in conformity with it or not. So, it is clear that, moral judgment is inferential in nature, involving the application of a standard to a particular action (Muirhead, 1987). Ordinarily moral judgment is intuitive and immediate. Because, we intuitively brings an action under a moral rule recognized by the community and judge it to be right or wrong. It is only in difficult or doubtful cases that we consciously compare an action with the moral ideal and judge it as right or wrong. Hence, we can find out that a moral judgment presupposes a subject, who judges an object that is judged, a standard according to which an action is judged (Bradley, 2002).

STAGES OF MORAL JUDGEMENT

Lawrence Kohlberg (1969, 1971, 1972, and 1976) defines development of moral judgment utilizing the following stages:

Level I: Preconventional Morality. The preconventional child thinks of morality in terms of the consequences of disobedience to adult rules in order to avoid punishment. Behaviors are “good” or “bad” depending on their consequences, or in other words, behavior is guided by rewards and punishments. The child at this stage does not comprehend the rules of society.

Stage 1. This first stage has been called “punishment and obedience,” or “might makes right.” Obey your parents, or these powerful authority figures will physically punish you. The child’s understanding is that punishment must be avoided for her/his own comfort. The child is still unable to view the world from the perspective of others (Piaget’s egocentricity), and behavior is largely guided by Freud’s pleasure principle (is id dominated) – although the ego begins to emerge as the child understands that reality calls for discretion.

Stage 2. By stage 2 the child recognizes that there is mutual benefit in cooperation. This stage has been called “instrumentalism” or “look out for number one” or “what’s in it for me.” The child is a bit less egocentric at this stage, recognizing that if one is good to others then they in turn will be good to you. There is now the notion that everyone looks out for their own needs, but that proper social exchanges are on a “tit-for-tat” basis. In Freudian terms, the reality principle has emerged to a greater extent at this stage.

Level II: Conventional Morality. At this level the child begins to grasp social rules and gains a more objective perspective on right and wrong. Freud would equate this level with superego development, or the formation of a conscience. In these stages Piaget’s egocentrism has largely or entirely vanished.

Stage 3. It is called as a stage of interpersonal relationships or good girl/boy. The major motivating factor in good behavior is social approval from those closest to the child.

Stage 4. Maintaining social conventions or “law and order” are brief but apt descriptions of the fourth stage. This sense of order becomes generalized beyond close others to society at large. The concept of “doing one’s duty” is crucial here.

Level III: Postconventional Morality. At this level the emphasis is no longer on conventional, societal standards of morality, but rather on personal or idealized principles.

Stage 5. This can be called the “social contract” stage. The understanding is that laws, rules, and regulations are created for the mutual benefit of all citizens. Laws that are unjust ought to be changed. People at this stage understand and believe in democracy in action.

Stage 6. This is the stage of “universal ethical principles.” Right and wrong are not determined by rules and laws, but by individual reflection on what is proper behavior. But essentially, personal ethical values (e.g., a belief that all life is sacred) take precedence over any and all laws and conventions. As a biblical example, think of Jesus, who said in response to the Pharisees that “The Sabbath was made for man, and not men for the Sabbath?”

Havighurst’s stages of Moral Development (1978)



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- Amoral - going for self-gratification
- Expedient - also self-gratifying, but trying to mask it
- Irrational conscientious - rule oriented; extremist
- Other directed - conforming
- Utilitarian - Rational altruistic, considerative, having high regard for others.

Again, it is important to observe that moral judgment is distinguished from logical and aesthetical judgment. As we know Ethics, Logic and Aesthetics are normative science. And accordingly they have three supreme norms and ideals of life. Ethics is concerned with the ideals of Highest Good, logic is concerned with the ideal of Truth and aesthetics is concerned with the ideal of Beauty. It is true that all of them are appreciative or critical judgment. But moral judgments are always accompanied by moral obligation and moral sentiments, which are not accompanied by logical and aesthetics judgments. When we judge an action to be right, we feel a moral obligation to perform it and have a feeling of approval. And we judge an action to be wrong, we feel that under moral obligation we are not to perform it and therefore, we have a feeling of disapproval. Feeling of approval, disapproval, rightness, wrongness etc. are called moral sentiments. Thus, moral judgments are obligatory in character and are accompanied by moral sentiments. So, they differ from logical and aesthetic judgments which are not accompanied by moral obligation and moral sentiments.

Moral judgement whether something is good or bad in its own right are contained wholly in the field of ethics. In the process of reasoning also we find different classes of judgement and they are usually judgement of facts. But moral judgement as a judgement of value is concerned with what ought to be. It judges our actions ought to be. It has distinctive features. It is critical judgement and appreciative. It is the mental act of discerning and pronouncing a particular action to be right or wrong. After evaluation and deliberation actions are to be judged in conformity with a standard. 'To speak the truth is always right' is a moral judgement. Moral judgement differs from judgement of fact which is descriptive judgement and it describes what is. Judgements of facts are more objective because they depend on the real nature of the world (Kohleberg, 1978). Moral judgement is inferential in character though the element of inference generally remains implicit. It involves the application of a standard to a particular action. When we perceive a voluntary action, we compare it with the moral standard and we judge whether the action is in conformity with it or not. Ordinarily moral judgements are intuitive and immediate.

One grants a man the respect of assuming that he is conscious of what he says and does, and one judges his statements and actions philosophically, i.e., as what they are—not psychologically, i.e., as leads or clues to some secret, hidden, unconscious meaning. One neither speaks nor listens to people in code. It is not man's subconscious, but his conscious mind that is subject to his direct control—and to moral judgment. It is a specific individual's conscious mind that one judges (on the basis of objective evidence) in order to judge his moral character. These are two interchangeable variants of the same motive: escape from the responsibility of cognition and of moral judgment (Adler, 2001).

The same basic format for moral judgement is being based on stages of cognitive theory that children are supposed to pass through at certain approximate ages. The first stage is known as premoral judgement and lasts from birth until about five years of age. In this stage, children simply do not understand the concept of rules and have no idea of morality, internal or external. This stage roughly coincides with the sensori-motor and pre-operational stages of Piaget's cognitive theory and is related to them in the sense that since the child has a poor conception of other people's consciousnesses (if at all), and is incapable of carrying out complex mental operations, it is impossible for them to have a sense of morality. The second stage is called moral realism and lasts from the approximate ages of five to nine. Children in this stage now understand the concept of rules, but they are seen as external and immutable. Children obey rules largely because they are there. Since a rule tells you what you're not supposed to do, moral realist children evaluate wrongdoing in terms of its consequences, not the intentions of the wrongdoer. In terms of Piaget's cognitive theory, this stage corresponds to the pre-operational and concrete operational stages. The third and final stage is called moral relativity. This stage begins at about seven years of age, so it overlaps at first with moral realism. Children who have reached this stage recognize that rules are not fixed, but can be changed by mutual consent, and they start to develop their own internal morality which is no longer the same as external rules. A major development is that actions are now evaluated more in terms of their intentions, which most people would see as a more sophisticated view of morality. Piaget also thought it was during this stage that children develop a firm concept of the necessity that punishment specifically fits the crime. This stage



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corresponds to the concrete and formal operational stages in Piaget's cognitive theory, during which children become able to carry out complex mental operations, first on concrete examples, and then additionally on abstract concepts.

A person of good moral judgement possesses sensitivity, experience and discernment. That is, she is sensitive to the needs of others and the details of the situations she finds herself confronted with. She is good at recognizing what has to be done and what is the best way of doing it. These are qualities a good moral agent – a person of moral character – aims to cultivate. How considerate and sensitive people are to the needs of others, how careful they examine the details of a particular case and think about what to do, depends crucially on their character. The capacity of moral judgement thus closely linked to what kind of person we are, that is, our character. Moral principles are an essential part of our moral character. A man is not to be condemned or excused on the grounds of the state of his subconscious. Morality demands that one treat and judge men as responsible adults.

CONCLUSION

Education is rightly regarded as a key to national development and prosperity. It is the most important investment in social sector. It constitutes an essential base for social, economic, moral and industrial development of a nation. However it appears that the present educational system does not contribute, to moral development of a child. Moreover, the moral factor is rather, ignored in our curriculum. The reason behind this problem is the lack of “will” and definite policy and programme, to incorporate the topics, relating to moral values, in our curriculum. This attitude, in turn, has led to the devaluation and degeneration of moral and social values. Today everybody thinks about their own interests only not for the interest of society or nation. It is so because patriotism has not illuminated their minds. The education, which does not imbibe moral and spiritual values, is incomplete in itself. The moral and spiritual values should be cultivated in the individuals, right from the childhood. It is the prime need of a country, failing which we shall be a nation without a soul



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