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ETHICAL DEGRADATION AND SOCIAL CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

Ethical degradation is a key and critical problem confronting the society at large. Indeed, in the present day, “we are in the throes of a giant ethical leap that is essentially embracing all mankind” (Donahue, 1996, p. 484). Worldwide communication, economic realities, technological and scientific progress and pluralistic worldviews make it complicated and tricky for mankind to overlook the major significant ethical issues in the world. Indeed, ethics play a fundamental and vital element of the human society. However, people are badly diverted through various unethical practices that have an unfavourable and bad effect upon society at large, thus resulting in a social crisis. For that reason, it is crucial and vital to tackle this problem to establish good ethics and to overcome the social crisis prevalent in the society. The foremost aim of this paper is to examine the key causes leading to ethical degradation affecting society at large while highlighting few remedies to encounter the problem as there are sensitive and controversial ethical issues challenging the world community and their everyday lives.

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INTRODUCTION

Ethical degradation is a key and critical problem confronting the society at large. Indeed, in the present day, “we are in the throes of a giant ethical leap that is essentially embracing all mankind” (Donahue, 1996, p. 484). Worldwide communication, economic realities, technological and scientific progress and pluralistic worldviews make it complicated and tricky for mankind to overlook the major significant ethical issues in the world. Indeed, ethics play a fundamental and vital element of the human society. However, people are badly diverted through various unethical practices that have an unfavourable and bad effect upon society at large, thus resulting in a social crisis. For that reason, it is crucial and vital to tackle this problem to establish good ethics and to overcome the social crisis prevalent in the society.

The Meaning of Ethics: Indeed, it is imperative to have a fundamental knowledge and insight of the concepts employed in studying ethics all through history so as to identify and analyse ethical issues and problems facing the society. The term ‘ethics’ comes from Greek *ethos* that represents the habits, customs and traditions of people. In ancient Greek philosophy, the question was to discover how to act well and rightly and what special qualities are indispensable to be capable to do this. Ethics is a branch of philosophy to study ideal human behaviour and ideal ways of being.

For instance, Aristotle ethics concentrated primarily on the quest of the ‘good (life)’, the *eudaimonia* that is equal to a high level of happiness or well-being. As for Immanuel Kant, an 18th century ethicist and philosopher, he believed that ideal behaviour was acting in harmony with one’s behaviour. For Kant, well-being meant having the freedom to exercise autonomy and self-determination, being treated with dignity, and having the capacity and competence to think realistically and logically. Hence, as a philosophical discipline of study, ethics is a systematic approach to understanding, analysing and differentiating between matters of good and bad, right and wrong, and commendable and unacceptable as they relate to the well-being of mankind. Ethical determinations are applied through the use of formal theories, approaches and codes of conduct. Nevertheless, at times, people let their emotions overtake good reasoning. And when this happens, it does not give a good foundation for ethics-related decisions. Evaluations made all the way through the practice of ethics necessitate a balance of sentiment and reason. When people take into consideration matters of ethics, they generally are taking into account matters about freedom in regard to personal choices and judgements about human character. The term ‘unethical’ is used to illustrate ethics in its negative form when, for example, a person’s character or behaviour is opposite to commendable traits or the code of conduct that has been approved by one’s society, neighbourhood or work. As compared with ethics, morals are definite behaviours, beliefs and ways of being derived from doing ethics.

One's morals are assessed to be good or bad all the way through efficient ethical analysis. The opposite of morality is immorality that denotes that a person's conduct is in contrast to established cultural, religious, societal or professional ethical standards and principles. Examples of immorality consist of dishonesty, murder, fraud and sexually abusive acts. Amoral is a term employed to denote the actions that can usually be judged as moral or immoral, but are done with a deficiency of apprehension for good behaviour. For instance, murder is immoral, however if a person perpetrates murder with entirely no sense of regret and repentance or maybe even a sense of enjoyment, the person is acting in an amoral way. Acts are believed to be nonmoral if moral standards basically do not apply to the acts. For instance, choosing between cereal and bread for breakfast is a nonmoral decision. At present time, people time and again use the word ethics when referring to a collection of actual beliefs and behaviours, in so doing using the terms ethics and morals interchangeably. Billington (2003) outlined and defined main essential characteristics on the subject of the concepts morals and ethics which is that the most significant and vital aspect about ethics and morals is that no one can keep away from making moral or ethical decisions because the social association and link with others requires that people must think about moral and ethical actions. Therefore, other people are at all times involved with one's moral and ethical decisions. Private morality does not exist. Also, moral decisions are of importance and significance because every decision has an effect on someone else's life, happiness level or self-esteem. In the period of morals and ethics, people cannot put into effect moral judgement without being given a choice. In other words, a need and requirement for making a sound and right moral judgement is being able to select an option from among a number of choices. In this way, people make use of moral reasoning to formulate moral judgements or to find out proper and right actions.

Types of Ethics: In the present day, ethics is normally divided into three sub-branches: meta-ethics, descriptive ethics and normative ethics. Meta-ethics is a rather new discipline in the ethical field. The Greek 'meta' denotes after or beyond and points out that the object of meta-ethical studies is morality and ethics itself. The goal is to better know the logical, pragmatic and semantic structures of moral and ethical argumentation as such, their origin and meaning. Consequently, meta-ethics is concerned with comprehending the language of morality all the way through an analysis of the meaning of ethically related concepts and theories, such as the meaning of good, happiness and virtuous character. Descriptive ethics often referred to as a scientific rather than a philosophical ethical inquiry is an approach employed when ethicists or researchers want to depict what people think about morality or how people actually behave - that is, their morals. Professional moral values and behaviours can be described through nursing research. An example of descriptive ethics is research that identifies nurses' attitudes as regards to informing patients the truth about their incurable and life-threatening sicknesses. Normative ethics refers to the methodological reflection upon morality dealing with its critique and its rationale. Norms and standards for conduct and acting are being established or tore down, and argued for or against. Therefore, normative ethics is an endeavour to decide or prescribe behaviours, values and ways of being that are good or bad, right or wrong. When making use of the method of normative ethics, inquiries are made about how humans should act, what type of character one should have and what ought to be done in specific situations.

Ultimately, in the sphere of normative ethics, there is applied ethics. At this point, normative theories are applied to certain, controversial moral issues like euthanasia, animal rights, abortion - generating the classic so-called hyphen-ethics, that is, business-ethics, medical ethics, nano-ethics, bio-ethics. These particular issues always challenge theory and demand improvements, specifications and changes. Next to hyphen-ethics, it is likely to differentiate between ethics that concentrates on institutional and societal dimensions (social ethics) or on the individual (individual ethics). In normative ethics, there are three main theories as to how criteria of moral conduct should be classified. Consequentialist theories conclude the

value of an action on the grounds of a cost-benefit analysis of its end results. If the positive results overshadow the negative ones then the action is morally right. Virtue theories concentrate on a certain set of rules like "do not steal". However, instead of defining them only as obligatory duties, the importance lies on the individual to grow good habits of character founded on these rules, hence stressing upon moral education. Deontological, that is duty theories place the basis of morality on particular, foundational principles of obligation and duty. These principles are binding despite the end result that performing on their basis might convey.

Causes of Ethical Degradation and Social Crisis: In the present day, mankind has changed into a mechanical machine owing to the application of technological and scientific innovations that have enhanced comforts to their lives, thus resulting in the degradation of the ethic and moral value system in the society. Unethical practices are quickly rising and their effect is also becoming comprehensive and influential. The values have been deserted not only at the social level but at the national level as well. Along with the scientific and technological advancement, there is deficiency in the development of right moral vision among mankind. Consequently, mankind can make such strong means of destruction like nuclear bombs and devastate the whole world in no time. Mankind fails to differentiate between right and wrong, good and evil. Emphasis is laid on secularisation of social relationships, wealth and power rather than religion. Nowadays, the parents must play crucial roles in forming the personality of the child. However, parents are much more worried about the academic education of their children rather than teaching good ethics to them. Working parents fall short to build up good discipline among the children. Today, parents have been unsuccessful to control the activities of their children. At times, undue freedom to the youth keeps them involved in detrimental activities such as gambling, visiting night clubs and so on. People are ensnared by political parties that are exploiting them for serving their personal interests. For instance, students union in colleges and universities sometimes make students engrossed in unethical activities such as hitting teachers if they failed in examinations or carrying out strikes for satisfying their superfluous demands causing the weakening of ethical standards of the society.

Certainly, print media, television, internet websites and cinema play a vital role in the personality formation. Many media images, movies and games not only counteract brutality and violence but often venerate it. So much hostility, violence and vulgarity in all these entertainment avenues have an adverse effect on the society. Adolescence is an essential phase when youths start to analyse issues and build up their own personality. Desire of self exhibition frequently brings a youth towards crime and immoral behaviours like drinking, smoking, quarrelling, and sex and drug abuse and so on. Peer groups play a fundamental role in building up the concept of morality. At present day, students are sometimes brainwashed by their peers. They accept the views of their peers instead of listening to parents and teachers that often direct them to involve in immoral practices. The economy is growing at such a high-speed pace satisfying the materialistic and money minded people. Socially undesirable good and excess in fashion are promoted competently to the innocent people. In such an unfavourable environment, it is expected that youngsters do not embrace high standards and personal principles. The education system falls short of conveying moral and ethical values among the students. The aim of education is all round development of personality. In the present educational system, provision has been made for academic and intellectual education by giving more importance to intellectual development. Moreover, there is a scarcity of extracurricular activities founded on values and ethics in the life of the students. However, nowadays, the range of extracurricular activities has been restricted to solely quizzes, sports, limited games, literary competitions, musical or dance events. Morning meetings, literary works, debates on social issues as well as other cultural activities have been moved out. Also, there is a scarcity of academic syllabus related to values and ethics. Student's concentration has been transformed from promoting hidden talents or values to merely making them professionally qualified and equipped.

At the present time, children are educated. However, they are not responsive to the ways of its practical application. As a result, students are unemployed and disheartened as the current education makes them job seeker instead of job maker. Another most important cause for the deterioration of ethical values in education is the privatisation of educational institutions. The government grants permission and recognition to private institutions to open self-financed educational organisations, thus making the education to acquire the status of a marketable commodity, where educational organisations operate as the traders and students are their customers. These institutions are in charge of diverse courses without necessary fundamental infrastructure and competent and trained faculties. The teachers allotted in such institutions are not paid enough with no job security and they do not meet the necessary teaching standards.

Effects of Ethical Degradation and Social Crisis: Indeed, the effects of ethical degradation leading to social crisis are many. At the present time, armed robbery and kidnapping have become a grave issue in the society. Young men and women are kidnapped, raped and even murdered. Apart from kidnapping and murder, other kinds of crimes that are widespread in the society comprise of stealing, burglary, pick-pocketing, armed robbery, house breaking, car snatching, severe wounding and cheating among others. People are engrossed in corruption, bribery, gambling and currency offences. Human trafficking is prevalent as well. The most shocking feature of human trafficking is that some of these people are exploited for crime, pornography, prostitution, child labour and eventually domestic servants. The shocking and startling percentage of criminality and immoral activities has increased considerably in the society with the change in social structure. Creation of new types of scam, corruption and fraud are rising considerably as young people are likely to get more fascinated and attracted to simple and painless way of gaining wealth, fame and power, thus paying least attention to human values and ethics and encouraging identity crisis and relationship with individuals or group who already alleged the association as morally poor and lacking. People in society are busy in unsocial practices such as misbehaving and smoking in public places, involving in drug addiction and misbehaving in the household among others. Social values and ethics are pulled up by indulging actively in antisocial acts, thus resulting in the collapse and downfall of the society. House of worship and religious books have been dishonoured in the most humiliating manner. The wounded, the sick and the old aged people have been put through merciless and brutal aggression and hostility. Among the forces responsible for keeping law and order, that is, the Police, the Army and the judicial Magistrates, are those who have overtly bonded with the communal riots. They have not merely perpetrated acts of assault and violence in person, but they have assisted, encouraged and led the brutal and cruel operations as well. Furthermore, tax evasion, cut-throat competition, corruption in numerous shapes and at different levels, exploitation and mishandling of public funds, deceptive and illusory propaganda, unethical advertisements and sale promotion, exploiting the weakness of consumers through an assortment of enticements, producing counterfeit and fake products and endangering the health and safety of the public at large are the consequences of ethical degradation in society, leading to a social crisis.

Remedies to Counter Ethical Degradation and Social Crisis: At the individual level, everyone should be ethically mindful and aware of his or her identity and its uniqueness. Ethics is inseparable from people. For that reason, it should be treasured and enjoyed. Individuals should be conscious of the fact that they should not indulge in antisocial activities and they should avoid all types of evil effects of the society which may thwart them to fulfil their vision. Also, the social institutions such as the family plays a vital role in its function of socialisation to internalise the virtues, values and ethics, which are in tandem with the family's cultural principles and rules so as to certify ideological similarity and behavioural sameness. Children should be taught rituals, religion and tradition while modernisation should be at the same time sustained. Education is an ethical practice. Students are the future generations of the society.

The ethics and values transmitted to students through the school as an institution also comprises of credentials, competition and a utilitarian approach to learning. All educational institutions are of the same opinion upon essential competencies at different academic levels. The educational system should give necessary moral and ethic classes to all students. Teaching method should not be merely exam oriented but also practical along with continuous evaluation. Few changes should be carried out in the curriculum keeping in view the moral, cultural, social and national values. Teachers should act as role models to the students in their conducts, characters and all righteous things. They are expected to counsel and lead the students as regards to their general behaviour inside and outside school. Often, value inculcation programme should be organised in schools consisting of group discussion on social issues. Analysis approach, moral development approach and in depth self analysis exercises help to locate ethical, moral and logical reasoning and make scientific investigation to decide value and ethical issues. Community services, participation in school governance, extracurricular activities as well as field research, simulations and role playing will help to instil certain values among students. NGOs and other social volunteer organisations need to focus on value based moral character of the society and consequently steps have to be taken to organise common people irrespective of age. Emphasis should be laid on the development of appropriate moral behaviours and habits and ethics appropriate to modern living, thus resulting in successful adjustment to life circumstances. On the other hand, on the part of the government, political power should be employed to persuade cultural people to grow interest in promoting their cultural uniqueness and influence that could be of socioeconomic advantage. Also, the government should pass laws against media operators who publish indecent publication so as to ensure that only appropriate type of broadcasting will be televised, thus diminishing the trauma of moral decay. Employment, serene atmosphere, essential infrastructure and economic stability should be granted as much as possible to the generations of society.

CONCLUSION

In the contemporary period, ethical and moral values are worsening. To dream of a crime free society where all humans can live a peaceful and harmonious life with respect and dignity, ethics must be given due consideration. People need to inspect the human ethics that the religious masters preach. It is high time to uncover the main causes of decline in ethical values that result in social problems like crime, antisocial behaviour, terrorism, assault, cyber crime and corruption and so on. The sole way to end this decline is to provide ethical or value orientation programmes that deal with increase in human values, ethical values, rational thinking, learning, research and moral development to establish an admirable society. Therefore, we must remember the quotes of Mahatma Gandhi: "Civilisation is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality is to attain mastery over the mind and our passions. So doing, we know ourselves".

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