



Youth and moral values from a transitional perspective

Manish Yadav

Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, Rajasthan, India

Abstract

Youths are one of the most crucial assets of any Nation. They being the future leaders, determine the course of development of the country. Therefore it becomes imperative that anything targeted at this group of persons must be worthwhile and contribute in helping them fulfill their purpose as would-be leaders. Leadership is the way through which the individuals and their affairs are directed to achieve desired ends through socially acceptable means. . Therefore, when preparing youths for leadership roles; it is necessary to ensure high moral standards and values which in turn, will mold their personalities in such way that they will be ready to lead for the progress of the society. The paper presents an overview as to how the change in society impacts on youth and moral values.

Keywords: youth, moral value, morality, societal change, value system

Introduction

In the words of Maciver and Page 'society is an ever changing web of Social relationships', hence the meaning of human existence is rooted in relatedness and this meaning can only be attained through those common activities where individuals share the same vision. Leadership comes at a forefront as a means to achieve the envisioned common values for ensuring a comfortable and settled life. In order to ensure development and goal attainment for society, it is important that right and morally disposed leadership skills are cultivated in its members, particularly, among the youths which will ensure them to become positively oriented leaders of tomorrow.

The present article looks at the various aspects of as to what is the definition of a youth, what moral values are, and in what ways the conflicting values of the past and present and moral values are impacting youths in a changing society.

The Idea of Youth

From demographic point of view Youths are the most important resources of societies. They are the power houses and major determinants of the extent of growth and development in any given society. Youth is best understood as the period of flux and transition from the dependency of childhood to independence of adulthood. Defining youth is a difficult task because as a category, it is more fluid than other fixed age groups. Yet age is the easiest way to define this group. In India Youth are defined as those aged 15-29 in the national youth policy, 2014. This age group constitutes 27.5 % of India's population. According to 2011 census there are 563 million young people from 10 to 35, according to the 12th five year plan (vol. 2, 2013). The United Nations for statistical purposes, define 'youth', as those persons between the ages of 15-24 years, without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. (Secretary-General's Report to the General Assembly, A/40/256, 1985).

From the point of view of general understanding, youth can be

defined as young persons exhibiting a strong zeal to be successful and be at the top, highly ambitious and full of enthusiasm, having strong idealistic views as a result of their exposure to values passed into them at earlier ages, having strong desire to be alike their role models along with occasional feelings of despair, frustrations and anxiety resulting from the conflict between the strong held opinions of idealism and harsh realism of daily existence. It is essential that their frustration and anxieties be reduced by utilizing proper measures and tools by not only motivating them but at the same time channelizing their vigor and power in the developmental processes. Primary socialization poses a great impact on the psyche of young minds. The moral values installed from the very beginning sets up an idealistic unchanging perspective within them. The question then arises as to what these moral values are which are of such great importance?

Notion of Moral Values

In order to have a proper understanding of the concept of moral values, the associated terminologies of Morality and Moral education must also be understood. Morality is derived from the Latin word "Mores" which means "manners" or "morals". According to Collins dictionary 'Morality is a system of principles and values concerning people's behavior, which is generally accepted by a society or by a particular group of people'. In other words, morality is the acceptance of something as right or wrong. Thus, Moral education provides learning of as to how to behave in accordance with what is good while rejecting the bad. It is a holistic approach which provides and ensures character building and healthy development of an individual. The qualities associated with morality are truthfulness, patience, obedience, honesty, integrity, hard work, responsibility, respect, tolerance, loyalty, public spiritedness, freedom, respect for human life and dignity of persons. Others include justice, fairness and

equality.

The very meaning of the human existence is rooted in 'being related' to each other, therefore, the individual dealings with 'others' demand great responsibility to the extent where rights and freedom of the others are not compromised. Moral values ensure that individuals adhere to what is considered right for the greater good in order to maintain cooperation and peace in society.

Contesting Values of the Past and Present

Society is given an analogy of an organism which is constantly changing and evolving from simple traditional societies to complex modern societies; along with societies the value systems, trends and people also change. For instance, the traditional Vedic Indian system had relatively simple means of oral transmission of knowledge (Shruti) from teacher to disciple opposed to modern Indian society, which is highly influenced by the Western world and is more advanced with a lot of literary collections on an array of subjects. With continuous developments taking place in societies, the value systems too have undergone serious changes to an extent where they present a laxity in their character and streaks of decadency in modern times. Some cherished and upheld moral values of the past include:

- **Truthfulness:** The Oxford English dictionary defines truthfulness as 'The fact of being realistic or true to life', in other words, Honesty or Realism. It implies being frank, direct, open or even straight. Gandhiji's ideology rested on the two pillars of truthfulness and non-violence, which demands for standing up what one, believes in no matter whose pride, gets in the way. It also means being one in thoughts, words and actions. Traditional societies have cherished this value and have always been associated with characteristic traits of all Leaders which provided them a firm persona of integrity and confidence from their followers.
- **Respect:** Respect is positive feeling or action shown towards someone or something considered important, or held in high esteem or regard; it conveys a sense of admiration for good or valuable qualities; and it is also the process of honoring someone by exhibiting care, care concern or consideration for their needs or feelings. In traditional societies, respect is considered to be a core value, particularly respect for elders. This was essentially because of their experience, knowledgeability and wisdom gathered over a considerable life span.
- **Tolerance and Cooperation:** Tolerance and cooperation are essentially core associative social processes which ensure peace, harmony and solidarity in society. Ideally, it is impossible for any society to have absolute homogeneity as diversity is essentially a natural trait. What is required is that individuals appreciate their differences and work together to achieve the desired ends. Tolerance means being receptive to the beauty of differences while cooperation is simply identified as team work. Traditional societies understood the importance of togetherness. Differences added a flavor of variety in perspectives which resulted in enriching communal life and existence.
- **Hard work and Functionalism:** Hard work and

Functionalism have always been cherished and considered a virtue in Traditional societies. The very foundations of learning in these societies were focused towards installing these qualities in younger generations. For instance, Traditional Indian education system was very functional in its approach as it comprised basic education for living in conformity with the traditions of the community; education endowed skills which were family and caste specific which was directed towards self-reliance. Traditional societies honored hard work and encouraged its members by rewarding them with Leadership positions.

- **Reverence for human life and honor for individualism:** From the Traditional Indian perspective, human life has always been considered sacred, as the ultimate aim of human life is to go beyond the shackles of life and death and find divinity within oneself. Traditional societies have revered human life deeply because it has been associated as a gift from God and thus important to maintain the dignity of individuals'. Traditional societies promoted the security of life because of their beliefs in its sacredness.

Traditional societies upheld these qualities in great respect as they believed that pursuing the righteous path is essential for self-development and also because it was considered a command from divine and disobedience of which could result in punishment from gods. The only way to cultivate righteousness was through the agency character development, obedience, mannerisms and respect for conventions and laws of land.

- **Contemporary Values:** In the new era of modernization, societies are undergoing rapid changes which have resulted in both positive and negative consequences. For instance, Modern technology has made our lives easier and convenient but at the same time has resulted in increasing conspicuous consumption by creating artificial demand through the agency of media. This has resulted in a value system which encourages interest in pleasure and enjoyments over other more serious things. Unfortunately, this has resulted in the laxity and decadence of moral standards in societies thereby causing indiscipline at all levels in society. This moral decadence can be seen clearly in lack of integrity toward work, our readiness to cheat and embezzle, lack of dignity and respect for human life and most importantly corruption, prevalent at all aspects of life. The values systems in modern societies have undergone complete change and people seem to have well accepted the antagonistic values like dishonesty, disrespect, intolerance and lack of cooperation, profit oriented relationships, profane of life and abuse of human dignity, loss of pride in hard work and an increased interest in the pursuit of injustice and other crimes. It is unfortunate that in modern societies the worth of a person is measured by his wealth which have resulted in "Get Rich Quick Syndrome". Leadership positions are misused to acquire wealth for themselves and secure the future of their families. Integrity is lacking in the interactions of men with one another and flagrant abuse of the laws and of human rights is the order of the day.

Moral Values for Youth in a dynamic Society

In present changing times, it has become all the more important for societies to have a strong moral foundation base. This is particularly important in the case of youths who are experiencing a discrepancy in what is being taught and what is being practiced in today's times, thereby creating a fracture in personalities and hindering their overall development. Today youths are surrounded with people who have thrown morality aside and who can do almost anything to attain power and money. It is important that youths should be made aware of the importance moral values and the power that it contains within itself to change the world, at the same time their energies must be channeled in the right direction so that they may develop a strong uncompromising character against loose practices so that they may bring about positive impact in society by the way they live. No matter how much times have changed, the world still celebrates men and women of great values who held on and continue to hold on to values that are undeniable and true. From Mahatma Gandhi to Nelson Mandela to the young Pakistani youth, Malala Yousafzai are all such examples of those who held on to values despite facing persistent danger. Thus, the onus lies on individuals as to what choices we make in lives whether we want to be the change we look for be the victims of change. The moral values are universal and eternal in nature. The responsibility in present times lies on youths to make a difference by standing out of the crowd and upholding moral values in a morally bankrupt society.

Recommendations

1. It is often said that 'Family is the school of Life'. Family plays a crucial role in the process of primary socialization of individuals. Thus, value systems must be restructured and strong value foundations must be laid to help develop youth a strong character.
2. The authority figures at various leadership positions must act in such manner which can set examples for young persons. Today's leaders must realize their duty to act responsibly so that people may develop trust in them which in turn, will aid future leaders to internalize those qualities unconsciously.
3. A greater responsibility lies on youths to motivate themselves in times when there is decadence in moral standard. They must do so by interacting with one another and creating social networks that can easily strengthen them.
4. It is imperative to cultivate right types of values and attitudes which develop national consciousness and fervor among individuals. The importance of greater good must be emphasized through such values and must become part and parcel of core national identity.

Conclusion

Youths are the core components which determine the sustenance and level of development in any society. It is important to ensure that this human resource is optimally utilized. For this purpose youths must realize their power and importance in the process of social development. Awareness among Youths must be created to imbibe and uphold moral values through life as these values will shape the ways they

think, speak and even act. They must be socialized in such a way so that they hold an uncompromising attitude towards moral values even in the times of decaying moral standards. This will prove an effective means of restoration moral values. Youths can be the agents of change in their societies by accepting to live by moral codes and become "lights in perceived darkness" to show the way forward for nations to become truly prosperous, developed and functional.

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