

Essentiality of Professional Ethics

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Abstract

The key focus in this paper is on the practical awareness and cultivation of essential attributes of professional ethics in the conduct of professionals. Daily the leading newspapers cater to us the shocking news overflowing with the incidents of massive corruption committed by some professionals rendering their questionable and base services in different fields, such as, *Banking, Engineering, Education, Politics, Bureaucracy, Medicine, police, law etc.* It is a manifest truth that goaded by their mercenary motives, various professionals are inclined to propagating their ugly culture of corruption, fraud which is draining away our national economy, and the rampant, vile practices of professionals can be refined only when the essentials of moral norms define the conduct of different professionals on their work places as well as in social dealings evermore.

Keywords: Professionals, Ethics, Professional ethics, Right understanding, Self-actualization

Introduction

In its basic terminology, professionals are members of different professions, or persons who earn their living from the specified professional activities. The term also encapsulates the standard of *education and trainings that enlighten the members of various professions with practical knowledge* as well as particular skills that are indispensable for the professionals to perform their roles for the benefit of not only of the institutions where they work but for society and nation also. **Business Dictionary** defines *the professional ethics as professionally accepted standards of personal business behavior, values and guiding principles. Codes of professional ethics are often established by professional organizations to help guide members in performing their job functions according to sound and consistent practical ethical principles.* It is noteworthy that the rules of professional ethics are subordinate to the various Laws of our nation.

Facets of Ethics

To put it in simple term, ethics is concerned with the science of morals or the rules of conduct meant for doing good and coursing through the right path. **William K. Frankena** (1982:4) defines ethics in these words: *"Ethics is a branch of philosophy; it is moral philosophy or philosophical thinking about morality, moral problems, and moral judgements."* It is observed that in present scenario people have formed

their own norms of morality to satisfy their selfish desires, which is termed as **"situation ethics"**; but **Frankena**(6) states that *"Morality is sometimes defined as an instrument of a society as whole, as if an individual, family, or social class cannot have a morality or moral action-guide of its own that is different from its society."*

It is obvious that ethics studies the norms of morals. The norms of morals are based on the concepts of right and wrong. **Frankena** (34) explains the standards of morals in these words: *"The sole ultimate standard of right, wrong, and obligation is the principle of utility, which says quite strictly that the moral end to be sought in all we do is the greatest possible balance of good over evil (or the least possible balance of evil over good) in the world as a whole."* In order to understand the significance and relevance of adhering to the components of professional ethics, we have to comprehend the impact of morals on human conduct as a whole. It is stated in the **Dictionary of Philosophy**(1980:277) that *"Morals are the models and the standards of conduct people adhere to. Morals taken as a whole bear on the morality of a social community."* It is noteworthy that moral norms differ from other laws and regulations. It is clarified in the **Dictionary of Philosophy** (275) that *"Moral Norms are sanctioned not by the state authority but by the force of habit and public opinion; they are formed in the moral consciousness of society spontaneously and not as a result of a specially promulgated law."* In essence, the norms of morality guide people how to deal in good activities and

traverse the right path in order to maintain communal harmony and lead a life of peaceful co-existence for the good of society and nation too.

Why be Virtuous?

It is emphasized here that value education cultivates human values or human virtues in the mind of all human beings. Virtues distinguish human beings from animals. For **Frankena** (64), "*Virtue is a disposition, habit, quality, or trait of the person or soul, which an individual either has or seeks to have.*" **Plato and other Greeks** thought there were four cardinal virtues: *wisdom, courage, temperance, and justice*. In Christian theology, there are seven cardinal virtues: *three theological virtues—faith, hope and love; and four human virtues—prudence, fortitude, temperance, and justice*. **Schopenhauer** has held benevolence and justice to be the cardinal moral virtues. *The remarkable fact is that an indomitable will to live a virtuous life originates from nurturing certain moral ideals in conscience*. Brooding over the attributes of exemplary persons like Mahaveer, Buddha, Socrates, Jesus, or Martin Luther King has been the significant source of moral education and self-uplift. Real and natural happiness is realized by living moral and intellectual virtues. **As a matter of fact, to be virtuous is to pass a clean, peaceful, happy life with richness of unconditional love and empathy for others.**

Right Understanding reflects the realization of twofold truth values inasmuch as it reveals true awareness of one's abilities, capabilities, mindset and judicious evaluation of character, behavior and intelligences of others. Living in true harmony with family, society and nation highlights the richness of right understanding among human beings.

Right Understanding known as **Wisdom** empowers us to assess the realistic aspects of different situations in context of right and wrong perspectives having concerns with moral norms. *From the motivational dynamics of self-actualization or self-exploration, right understanding or wisdom takes shape which prompts a person to live a flawless, fearless, peaceful life regulated by well-defined moral norms.*

Self-Actualisation

Abraham Harold Maslow (1968) is known for his personality theory of **self-actualization**. The concept of self-actualization puts emphasis on the full exploitation of an individual's talents, capacities, potentials and personalities. *Self-actualization, self-fulfillment or self-exploration corresponds with the sense of accomplishment of one's unique potentials*. The acronym—SWOT is meant not only for management theory, but it is closely connected with the process of self-actualization. A person should be practically aware of his strength (both of mind and body), weakness (both of mind and body), opportunities and threats or challenges. We

have to transform our weakness into strength in order to achieve our goals. *The process of self-actualization creates right understanding which enhances our competence to take advantage of opportunities by smoothing away the hurdles of challenges.*

Essentials of Professional Ethics

Seebauer and Berry (2000) point out that professional ethics corresponds with the professionally accepted standards of personal and business behavior, values and guiding principles. The codes of professional ethics are generally formulated by various organizations to ensure honest, punctual, fruitful and trustworthy services from their paid professionals. *Significant characteristics of the professional ethics are explained as under:*

- **Honesty:** The virtue of honesty requires the professionals to perform their duty or services without any type of deceit and cheating. Its opposite term is dishonesty or corruption. Honest performance of the professionals increases the benefits of organizations. An honest professional renders his services for the benefit of his organization forsaking his selfish motives.
- **Integrity:** It is concerned with the nurturing of professional morality and upright conduct. A professional of unquestionable integrity does his duty with deep knowledge and sincerity.
- **Accountability:** It refers to accepting the outcome of one's performance whether beneficial or injurious to organization. The quality of accountability prompts a professional to perform his duty without any fault in accordance with the set standard.
- **Respect:** Good manners demand of professionals to pay proper respect to their elders, superior authorities of Organization. Respect shines your result-centric communication with others bearing decency of behavior. Listen, talk and share the beneficial experiences of others with the decency of respect, so that, you become the kingpin of praise by all.
- **Confidentiality:** The quality of confidentiality is most important to be maintained by all professionals. It means a professional must not disclose to others the secrets of his organization.
- **Transparency:** The quality of transparency refers to the maintenance of clarity, impartiality and uniformity in the implementation of policies and regulations formulated by the organization for its betterment and welfare of the professionals.
- **Loyalty and Obedience to Law:** These qualities require the professionals to be faithful and devoted towards their organizations, society and country. The professionals are required to obey laws, rules, systems formulated by the Government and their organizations for the betterment of their organizations and country.

It is a remarkable fact that the rules and regulations earmarked for professional ethics and formulated by various professional organizations in contravention of the established Laws of the nation will be null and void. Established Laws enshrined in Indian Penal code, Civil Procedure Code, Criminal Procedure Code and others are super Laws that overrule the standpoints of professional ethics when abused. Professionals working in the Government departments are called public servants and they are governed by Civil Service Regulations. Any public servant found guilty of Gross Misconduct or Misbehavior can be terminated from his services after departmental enquiry and he can seek the shelter of Higher Courts or the Apex court to redress his grievances.

Violations of Professional Ethics

A lot of tragedies and disgusting cases of massive corruption and fraud deliberated as under might have not occurred in our country if different professionals had performed their duties in upright ways adhering to the set moral norms of professional ethics:

The Bhopal Gas Tragedy is treated as the worst traumatizing tragedy in the history of Indian industry. The tragedy occurred on December 3, 1984 in the midnight in UCIL that was the Indian subsidiary of Union Carbide USA. Water seeped in a tank in which 42 tons of methyl isocyanate (MIC) gas was stored. Seeping of water caused exothermic reaction which resulted in the increase of temperature about 200 degrees. Gas leaked and spread into many parts of Bhopal. As the gas caused the symptoms of blindness, vomiting, frothing in mouth and respiratory trouble in people, they were admitted in Hamidia hospital in large numbers which created havoc in the city. Thousands of children died and many became disabled. Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) had had to pay a compensation of 470 million US Dollars to the victims by order of the Supreme Court of India.

The Bhopal Gas Tragedy revealed the gross carelessness of employees and absence of disaster management measures and accountability of the professionals.

Uphar Cinema Tragedy- New Delhi

Uphar Cineama tragedy occurred on June 13, 1997 at New Delhi in Uphar cinema during the premiere of movie Border inasmuch as a fire broke out around 5pm in the basement due to short circuit and a huge transformer was also kept there. Fire spread in the nearby places and many offices situated alongside Uphar cinema. The fire brigade was called after 20 minutes and it took an hour to extinguish fire. A lot of innocent people died due to stampede.

Uphar cinema tragedy also exposes the shocking violation of the norms of professional ethics. Employees and management staff of Uphar cinema shirked from their accountability to duty and loyalty to their organization, as neither the screening of movie was interrupted nor the spectators were intimidated with the spread of horrid fire in the cinema premises.

Colossus Monetary Loss to Banks

It appears that not only the rich but also common people are propagating without shame the indecent, fraud culture of availing of huge loans from banks with the mala fide intention of escaping deliberately the liability of repaying the huge amount of bank loans. Among the notorious rich defaulters are Malya and Neerav Modi, and the list is too big to be revealed. Billions of rupees have been put forth in the category of NPA (Non Performing Assets) in many banks, and repetitions of such corrupt practices have drained away Indian economy to a great extent and tarnished the image of India in the world.

Conclusion

It is a conclusive fact that the shocking incidents of political corruption, deaths in police custody, doctors trafficking in human organs, excessive cases of NPA in public sector banks, abuse of Law and other indecent practices will decrease in proportion to the duties performed by the professionals in tune with abiding by moral norms of professional ethics. In addition to it, swift punishment must be awarded by Law courts to those professionals who commit the offences of fraud, corruption and unethical practices willfully. *Nowadays professionals have forsaken their intrinsic virtue of loyalty to organization, law and nation.* People should be motivated and made aware practically of the benefits of rendering their services in accordance with the specified moral norms of professional ethics in order to pass clean, fearless and peaceful life.

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