



MANAGING PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL ETHICS: A STEP TOWARDS QUALITY LIFE

Dr. Ankita R. Brahmbhatt

Co-Ordinator & Assistant Professor (B.Com. – Self Financed & M.Com), C.P Patel & F.H Shah Commerce College, Anand, Gujarat

Abstract:

The fundamental purpose of this article is to provide an overview of ethics in personal and professional endeavor. It has been reviewed that the development of personal and professional ethics has been the contemporary state of practice. Ethics are the standards of right and wrong that refer to what we should and should not do. Often, our personal feelings differ from those of our employers. The tasks we are asked to do at work may not be illegal, but they can impose a conflict with what we think is the right thing to do in our personal life. The majority of professionals solve this by choosing to separate their professional lives from their personal lives.

It is an undertaking not just to ask difficult questions but have the courage to do so. The simple meaning, definitions, key areas including major differences between personal and professional ethics will be addressed. This engagement might include discretionary effort to build up strong sense of personal and professional codes and might help in building adaptive and flourishing workplaces within an increasingly and challenging global marketplace.

Keywords: Ethics, Personal Ethics, Professional Ethics & Codes, etc.

“Dear teachers, I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no man should witness: Gas chambers built by learned engineers, children poisoned by educated physicians, infants killed by trained nurses, women and babies shot and burned by high school and college graduates. So, I am suspicious of education. My request is, help your students to become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, arithmetic are important only if they serve to make our children more humane.” says ethicist Principal of the American school every year to the school teachers even today.

Introduction:

Since ages, it has been observed that human beings have been constantly putting all sorts of efforts to make life better, comfortable and quality based. Looking to all the scientific inventions and advancements, it would be rather unfair if we do not agree with the fact that life has truly been made better and comfortable. But, the doubt arises as to whether we can address this as quality and happy life. With the recent challenges, one of the most challenges which have probably put all the organisations in dilemma is to manage both personal and professional ethics and train their manpower accordingly in order to attain the organisational goals and objectives. It is very difficult task for any employers to make their employees understand as to what are their personal ethics and values and what are they expected to in terms of professional ethics. It is very obvious that every individual are born different and hence they carry their own beliefs, thoughts, behavior, codes, etc. No matter how vast the gap is in their beliefs and values, they are to behave and perform their duties as per the coded professional ethics. This perhaps turns out into conflicts in organisations. Our rich scriptures give us deep thought and understanding in this regard. It is mentioned in almost every Hindu scriptures that both *Para* and *Apara Vidya* actually balances our life. Somehow, with our more inclination towards science and technology individuals are much more towards materialistic and worldly affairs. With these, the more focus and probably the only focus

is left towards *Apara Vidya*, that is for materialistic luxuries and pleasure. Hence, the big issue has been rooted in context of ethics. In *Ashram age*, the students were taught both these *Vidya*, in which *Para Vidya* mainly focused on spiritualism, philosophy, ethics, practical lessons of life and so on.

What is Ethics?

The term comes from the Greek word *ethikos* from *ethos*, which means "custom, habit". The term 'Ethics' often is understood as the sense of what is right and wrong. Ethics, sometimes known as moral philosophy, is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct, often addressing disputes of moral diversity.^[1] Philosophical ethics investigates what is the best way for humans to live, and what kinds of actions are right or wrong in particular circumstances.

Ethics Defined:

The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy states that the word ethics is "commonly used interchangeably with 'morality' ... and sometimes it is used more narrowly to mean the moral principles of a particular tradition, group or individual."^[2] Dino Lobaton states that "standard definitions of *ethics* have typically included such phrases as 'the science of the ideal human character' or 'the science of moral duty' ".^[3] Richard William Paul and Linda Elder define ethics as "a set of concepts and principles that guide us in determining what behavior helps or harms sentient creatures".^[4]

What is Personal Ethics & is it really Personal?

Personal Ethics is generally considered as the basic principles and values that govern interactions among individuals. It can also be used to describe a particular person's own, idiosyncratic principles or habits. Sound personal ethics are typically those that positively impact the experience of others when used to govern an individual's social or business related behavior, and at the very least, such ethics should not have a negative impact on others.. It may also be used to characterize the questions of right-conduct in some specific sphere, even when such right-conduct is not examined philosophically. Personal ethics refers to the ethics that a person identifies with in respect to people and situations that they deal with in everyday life.

Personal ethics is a category of philosophy that determines what an individual believes about morality and right and wrong. This is usually distinguished from business ethics or legal ethics. These branches of ethics come from outside organizations or governments, not the individual's conscience. Personal ethics can affect all areas of life, including family, finances and relationships.

Personal Ethics: Where has it Come from?

There is some disagreement on where ethics originate from. Some philosophers use man's sense of morality to support the existence of God. These philosophers typically agree that a divine power instilled personal morality in humankind, creating a basic universal system of right and wrong.

Other philosophers argue that ethics are not inherent at all and that children learn right and wrong solely from social conditioning. This could be the cause of the differing personal ethics found throughout the world. These philosophers typically suggest that a person's ethics are learned from families, friends and teachers. Some ethics might also be adapted from individual experiences. The purpose of personal ethics is often debated. Religion inspires a large portion of ethics. Many devoted followers are willing to adhere to a specific morality system on faith alone.

Others are motivated by humanitarian interests. These personal ethics can breed lofty goals. Some people shape their actions and priorities around ending world hunger, slowing global warming or encouraging world peace. Humanitarian efforts can also be more subtle, such as random acts of kindness for a neighbor or volunteering as a tutor. Sometimes different motivations can blend together. A religious person might make personal ethical choices that simultaneously please her god while also helping her community.

Another possible motivation for personal ethics is to serve the individual. Philosophers might argue that a child will learn to share, tell the truth and work hard because he sees that these actions benefit him. For example, when a child chooses to break the rules of a game, he is creating conflict and building a barrier between himself and his peers. On the other hand, the child who plays by the rules enjoys friendship and intimacy with his peers, ultimately benefiting himself.

Personal Ethics with reference to Shikshapatri:

The various verses of the Shikshapatri which is a scripture of moral teachings by Bhagwan Swaminarayan lays down the codes of non violence, tolerance, atonement, continence, devotion, philosophy, diet, hygiene, ecology, social and professional ethics, finance, employment and so on .Furthermore, he writes that “Whosoever obeys this Shikshapatri will attain the four purusharthas of *dharma, arth, kam and moksha.*(Verse 206) It is clearly mentioned in Shikshapatri about the practice of Non-violence in which it depicts that “All scriptures advocate ahimsa (non-violence) as the highest dharma. (Verse 12) With these many moral practices are cited like:

- Never gamble. (Verse 18)
- Never steal; not even for religious work. (Verse 17)
- Never commit a breach of trust.(Verse 37)
- Never falsely blame anyone, even for personal gain. (Verse 20)
- Never publicise, anywhere, the secrets of others. (Verse 75)
- Never praise oneself. (Verse 37)
- Never enter or exit stealthily. (Verse 33)
- Never lodge at a place without the owner’s permission. (Verse 33)
- Only spend in accordance with one’s income. Spending more than one’s income will result in great misery. (Verse 145)
- Serve your mother, father, guru and ill people for life according to your means. (Verse 139)

Professional Ethics: Not Always by Choice:

Professional ethics encompass the personal, organizational and corporate standards of behavior expected of professionals.^[1] Professionals, and those working in acknowledged professions, exercise specialist knowledge and skill. How the use of this knowledge should be governed when providing a service to the public can be considered a moral issue and is termed professional ethics.^[2] Professionals are capable of making judgments, applying their skills and reaching informed decisions in situations that the general public cannot, because they have not received the relevant training.^[3] Professional ethics the ethical norms, values, and principles that guide a profession and the ethics of decisions made within the profession. ^[4] Professionally accepted standards of personal and 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 ethical principles. ^[5]

- One should always take due care of one's servants, (employees and labourers), according to one's means, with regard to their food and clothing. (Verse 67)
- Labourers should be given wages and grains as agreed upon, but not less. (Verse 152)
- Do not enter into business or social relationships with wicked people. (Verse 152)
- Every person should be addressed with respect to his status and the prevailing circumstances, and should not be addressed in any other way. (Verse 68)
- Teach the knowledge one has to others. (Verse 36)
- Codes of behaviour, social dealings and penance – these three should be practiced as per one's place, time, age, wealth, caste and ability. (verse 120)

Do Personal Ethics differ from Professional Ethics?

Professional ethics and personal ethics have two distinct applications as one is involved in one's own personal life and affects merely their perception. Personal ethics is probably more general, and is simply "practicing becoming an excellent human being" with respect to people and situations in everyday life (our family, our friends, our community). Professional ethics is probably more specific, and is "practicing becoming an excellent human being" with respect people and situations in work life (co-workers, customers, suppliers, the company).

Professional ethics play a unique role in that a person is held to a certain standard when in the workplace and must abide by a specific set of ethics that is required by all employees of the company.

"However, although your personal life is distinctly different from your professional life, I feel that your ethics roll over from one to another and if you have good ethical values in one area you will have them in the other. There is an exception to this and that is of the person who has low personal ethical standards, for this person it is less likely that they will have high standards professionally because of their inherent low personal ethical values. It is important to practice what you preach at work in your daily life and live by a set of ethical codes which guide your actions in all aspects of life and your personal/professional journey", says Nick Melillo, Internet Marketing Expert.
[1]

Personal ethics can influence all different areas of life such as family, finances, religion or relationship. Here the individual has the liberty and the freedom to choose his/her own set of rules if his conscience conflict with that of the surroundings. Professional ethics defines adherence to rules and regulation. Here the individual is expected to follow religiously, the code of ethics framed by the organization. [2] It can be heavily influenced by the culture of the organization but it cannot change as frequently as the personal ethics. There may be at times where our personal ethics can conflict with our professional one, for instance, when a Professor enforces Not Clear result to a student as per law and the student explaining the cause for not being able to write in the test because of accidental death of father. In such case, even if he is personally against this decision, he is abide by the professional ethics to do so. So by setting out expected behaviour in the form of professional ethics, professionals try to uphold a good reputation. On the other hand, professionals are also expected to be honest and respect the code of ethics by not getting involved in any conflict of interest. A conflict of situation may occur if an individual tries to achieve personal goal while at profession which ultimately leads to corruption.

The Divine Technology: Managing P & P Ethics and Roadmap to Quality Life:

In the famous zoo of Bronx, New York, there is a special exit zone for visitors carrying a huge mirror and the statement is written below it as, "Now you are looking at one of the most ferocious animals in the world: the only animal that kills its own kind." Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, the former President of India once met His Divine Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj who is the fifth successor of Shri Bochasanwasi Akshar Purshottam Swaminarayan Santha (popularly known as BAPS) on 30th June 2001 and stated "To make India the most developed nation, 500 eminent Engineers have identified five key areas: Education, Health, Agriculture, Information & Communication and Critical Technology." Listening this, Swamiji spontaneously requested Dr. Kalam to add the fifth key area and that is Faith in God and Spiritualism. It reveals that with *Para Vidya*, *Apara Vidya* is equally essential. Understanding the significance of Divine Technology, Warn Brown, the NASA Space Wizard has articulated, "For only with God re-instated in the heart of the world, will he provide us with ethical guidance through dangers of technological revolutions." Hence, is said by Benjamin Franklin, "Our humanity is a diseased humanity. It is not knowledge we need, but humanity is in need of something spiritual." Similar are the words of Thomas Campis as, "the humble knowledge of thyself is the surer way to God than the deepest research after science."

Though differences found both in Professional and Personal Ethics, it is revealed that the person strong and firm in Personal ethics are more likely to follow Professional Ethics, leaving all conflict aside. It is always a topic of debate as to where do one learn Personal Ethics from? Many scholars have shared their views as to family, neighbours, schools; surroundings, etc are more likely to make the person come across Personal Ethics. But it majorly is concerned about one's own thinking of behaviour and attitude. Similarly, Professional Ethics too do not match to every Profession. However, much of Personal Ethics are useful to identify and strengthen Professional Ethics. From the various theories and models of Ethical building and resolving ethical conflict at the workplace, it can be said that Ethics is something a belief and moral values and cannot be forcefully implemented. In this context, the Divine Technology stands to be stronger if the person believes that God is the Goal, God is the way and God is the means. Therefore, Abraham Lincoln (1861-1865) wrote a letter to the Principal of the school of his son addressing saying, "He will have to learn, I know, that all men are not just, all men are not true. Teach him that for every enemy, there is a friend. Teach him, if you can, that a dollar earned is of far more value than five found...In school, teach him it is far more honorable to fail than to cheat... Teach him to have faith I his own ideas, even if everyone tells him they are wrong...Teach him to be gentle with gentle people and tough with the tough...This is a big order; but see what you can do..."

As said by the philosopher, "An ounce of practice is more than tones of theories." Ethics, either Personal or Professional is to put into practice. This can only lead us to true peace and quality life. Or else as American President Lindon Jhonson (1965) says, "The guns, the bombs, the rockets and warships are the symbols of humanity's failures to find the way to true peace."

References:

1. Azurmendi, J. 1998: "The violence and the search for new values" in *Euskal Herria krisian*, (Elkar, 1999), pp. 11-116. ISBN 84-8331-572-6
2. Blackburn, S. (2001). *Being good: A short introduction to ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

3. Caroline Whitbeck, "Ethics in Engineering Practice and Research" Cambridge University Press, 1998 page 40
4. De Finance, Joseph, An Ethical Inquiry, Rome, Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 1991.
5. De La Torre, Miguel A., "Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins," Orbis Books, 2004.
6. Derrida, J. 1995, The Gift of Death, translated by David Wills, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
7. D'Urance, Michel, Jalons pour une éthique rebelle, Aléthéia, Paris, 2005.
8. Encyclopedia of Ethics. Lawrence C. Becker and Charlotte B. Becker, editors. Second edition in three volumes. New York: Routledge, 2002. A scholarly encyclopedia with over 500 signed, peer-reviewed articles, mostly on topics and figures of, or of special interest in, Western philosophy.
9. Fagothey, Austin, Right and Reason, Tan Books & Publishers, Rockford, Illinois, 2000.
10. 'Gems from Shikshapatri', originally written by Bhagwan Swaminarayan on 11th February 1826 CE , translated in February 2006), Swaminarayan Aksharpath, Amdavad, page:11-17
11. Guy Cools & Pascal Gielen, The Ethics of Art. Valiz: Amsterdam, 2014.
12. <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/personal-ethics.html>
13. <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/professional-ethics.html>
14. <http://www.triadsearchmarketing.com/similarities-and-differences-in-professional-ethics-and-personal-ethics/>.
15. <http://www.wisegeek.com/what-are-personal-ethics.htm>.
16. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: "Ethics"
17. John Deigh in Robert Audi (ed), The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy, 1995.
18. John Newton, Ph.D. Complete Conduct Principles for the 21st Century, 2000. ISBN 0-9673705-7-4.
19. John Paul II, Encyclical Letter Veritatis Splendor, August 6, 1993.
20. Kidder, Lobaton (2003). How Good People Make Tough Choices Rev Ed: Resolving the Dilemmas of Ethical Living. New York: Harper Collins. p. 63. ISBN 0-688-17590-2.
21. Lafollette, Hugh [ed.]: Ethics in Practice: An Anthology. Wiley Blackwell, 4th edition, Oxford 2014. ISBN 978-0470671832
22. Levinas, E. 1969, Totality and infinity, an essay on exteriority, translated by Alphonso Lingis, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh.
23. Miller-Keane Encyclopedia and Dictionary of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health, Seventh Edition. © 2003 by Saunders, an imprint of Elsevier, Inc..
24. Paul, Richard; Elder, Linda (2006). The Miniature Guide to Understanding the Foundations of Ethical Reasoning. United States: Foundation for Critical Thinking Free Press. p. np. ISBN 0-944583-17-2.
25. Perle, Stephen (March 11, 2004). "Morality and Ethics: An Introduction". Retrieved February 13, 2007., Butchvarov, Panayot. Skepticism in Ethics (1989).
26. Royal Institute of British Architects - Code of professional conduct
27. Ruth Chadwick (1998). Professional Ethics. In E. Craig (Ed.), Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. London: Routledge. Retrieved October 20, 2006, from <http://www.rep.routledge.com/article /L077>

28. Sadhu Viveksagardas, 'Shikshavalli – An explanation of the Shikshavalli, a chapter of the Taitriya Upnishad' (March 2008), Swaminarayan Aksharpith, Amdavad, page: 2-4, 13- 16, 30, 154-159, 182-184, ISBN: 81-7526-368-7
29. Solomon, R.C., *Morality and the Good Life: An Introduction to Ethics Through Classical Sources*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1984.
30. Vendemiati, Aldo, *In the First Person, An Outline of General Ethics*, Rome, Urbaniana University Press, 2004.