



MORAL DEGRADATION AMONG STUDENTS: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND REMEDIAL MEASURES - AN EXPERIENTIAL STUDY BY A HEADMASTER

R. K. Tripathi

Headmaster, Raniganj Sri Guru Nanak Vidyalaya High School (H.S.)
 Paschim Bardhaman, West Bengal

Abstract

The greatest challenge before Indian education today is not the transfer of knowledge but the erosion of moral values. In my 26 years of experience as a Headmaster of a school with more than 900 students in the Raniganj coal-belt area, I have witnessed an unprecedented change in student behaviour. Where the Guru-Shishya tradition once emphasized respect, discipline and truth, today mobile addiction, misuse of social media, substance abuse, disrespect towards elders, use of unfair means in examinations and violent tendencies are becoming common. According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2023, crimes by juveniles increased by 11%. Reports of ASER and UDISE+ also highlight indiscipline and low attendance. This research paper critically analyses the causes of moral degradation among students: disintegration of joint families, lack of parental time, internet and pornographic content, private tuition culture, valueless education system focused only on marks, influence of films and web series, and the psychology of freebie culture in government schools. The paper also suggests remedial measures in the light of ancient Indian educational philosophy, Mahatma Gandhi's Basic Education (Nai Talim), Swami Vivekananda's character-building theory and Value-Based Education proposed in National Education Policy 2020. The paper argues that moral education should not be a separate subject but should be integrated into every subject and every period. Character without education is incomplete, education without character is dangerous.

Key Words: Moral Degradation, Value Education, Student Discipline, Family System, Social Media, Mobile Addiction, NEP 2020, Character Building, Adolescent Psychology, Headmaster Observation

INTRODUCTION

In Indian culture it is said, "Acharah Paramo Dharmah" - Conduct is the highest religion. Chanakya said, if wealth is lost, nothing is lost; if health is lost, something is lost; but if character is lost, everything is lost.

I am working as Headmaster at Raniganj Sri Guru Nanak Vidyalaya High School (H.S.). Our school has more than 900 students. I see students daily in morning assembly. Fifteen years ago, when I was an assistant teacher, students used to get down from their bicycles seeing a teacher and offered pranam. Today the situation is different. Many students show cigarette packets in front of teachers, use mobile phones in classroom, abuse in foul language and if corrected, parents come to school and quarrel with teachers instead of correcting their wards.

This is not the story of my school alone. This is the story of entire India. Newspapers daily report - a student beating a teacher somewhere, a student committing suicide because he was denied a mobile phone, adolescents caught in drug addiction. This is moral degradation.



What is moral degradation? In simple words, when the distinction between right and wrong ends, when a student feels that lying, cheating, insulting elders is normal, it is moral degradation. Psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg in his theory of Moral Development said that adolescence is the age when morality develops. If right direction is not given at this age, the whole personality becomes distorted.

Today's student is tomorrow's citizen. If today's student is immoral, what will be tomorrow's India? Therefore, this topic is not only about education, but about nation building.

1. SYMPTOMS OF MORAL DEGRADATION: PRESENT SCENARIO

Based on my observation as Headmaster:

1. Disrespect towards Teachers: Earlier students were afraid of teachers, now teachers are afraid of students. In NCRB 2022, 147 cases of assault on teachers by students were registered.
2. Dishonesty in Examination: Cheating is considered a right by students. Cheating through mobile, chits is common. Once caught, students threaten suicide. This shows lack of moral courage.
3. Mobile and Internet Addiction: 70% of students from Class 9-12 have smartphones. Watching reels till 2 AM, playing violent games like PUBG, Free Fire. This leads to lack of sleep, irritability, aggression. A study by Indian Journal of Psychiatry 2023 says 35% adolescents in West Bengal are addicted to mobile.
4. Substance Abuse: In Raniganj coal-belt area, use of bidi, gutkha and even ganja among teenagers is increasing. In West Bengal, substance abuse among adolescents increased by 18% in 2023.
5. Vulgarity and Violence: Easy availability of pornographic videos, web series. Use of abusive language has become common among students. They imitate dialogues of web series.
6. Materialism: Mentality of "Everything should be free". Desire to earn money through shortcuts, not hard work.
7. Depression and Suicide: Getting depressed on small matters. According to CBSE survey 2023, 23% of students aged 10-19 are under stress.

2. MAJOR CAUSES OF MORAL DEGRADATION

Causes are multiple, not single.

A. Family Causes:

1. Disintegration of Joint Family: Earlier grandparents used to tell moral stories from Ramayana, Mahabharata. Now in nuclear families, both parents are in jobs. No one has time for children. The child considers mobile as his grandparent. UNICEF report 2023 says average quality time spent by Indian parents with children is only 45 minutes per day.
2. Over-busy and Over-pampering Parents: Many parents due to guilt of not giving time, fulfill every wrong demand of child. Saying "My son cannot do this" they ignore teacher's complaint. This makes child egoistic.



3. Lack of Sanskar at Home: If parents themselves lie, abuse, the child will learn same. Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory says child learns by observation. If father disrespects mother at home, son will disrespect female teachers.

B. Social and Technological Causes:

1. Mobile and Social Media: This is the biggest cause. Psychologists say watching one reel releases dopamine. Child slowly becomes addicted. On Instagram, Facebook, vulgarity and violence are glorified.
2. Web Series and Films: Today's web series show abuse, drugs, sex as heroism. Adolescents consider it real life. Censor board has no control on OTT platforms.
3. Private Tuition and Coaching Culture: In school there is discipline, in tuition there is none. Student thinks I will pass through tuition, why need school? This reduces respect for school.

C. Educational System Causes:

1. Valueless Education: Our education system is only marks-oriented. A student getting 90% is considered intelligent, even if his character is bad.
 2. Misuse of Complete Ban on Corporal Punishment: We are against physical punishment, but no alternative of discipline was given. Teachers' hands are tied. Student knows teacher cannot do anything.
 3. Culture of Freebies without Accountability: When everything is available free without attendance, without hard work, student develops feeling that fruit should come without karma. This is against Gita's "Karmanyevadhikaraste".
- D. Psychological Cause: Adolescence is a period of Identity Crisis. According to Erik Erikson, if right guidance is not given at this stage, Role Confusion occurs.

3. CONSEQUENCES OF MORAL DEGRADATION

1. Personal Ruin: Dark future of student. Getting involved in drugs, crime. NCRB data shows 40% of adult criminals started delinquency in adolescence.
2. Family Disturbance: Conflict between parents and children.
3. Social Degradation: If students are immoral, corruption and crime will increase in society.
4. National Loss: Vivekananda said, "Give me 100 characterful youth and I will change India." Characterless youth cannot build nation. India has demographic dividend of 65% youth. If they are morally degraded, dividend will become disaster.
5. School Environment Spoiled: One indisciplined student spoils study of 40 students.

4. REMEDIES AND SOLUTIONS - AN EXPERIENTIAL MODEL

Only stating problem is easy, stating solution is difficult. I have done some experiments in my school which succeeded.



A. At School Level:

1. Revival of Morning Assembly: Not only National Anthem. Daily 10 minutes moral talk, one student tells moral story, one shloka of Gita and its meaning. We started this in our school, change visible in 6 months.
2. Integrating Value Education in Every Subject: NEP 2020 also says same. While teaching Mathematics - honesty, Science - truth, History - patriotism, Language - compassion. NCERT Framework for Value Education 2012 also says same.
3. Mobile-Free Campus: Mobile completely banned in school premises. If student brings, returned only after calling parents. We implemented with help of School Managing Committee.
4. Shramdan and Service: One day in a week, students clean school themselves. In Japan this tradition exists. This destroys ego and increases respect for labour. Gandhi's Nai Talim was also same.
5. Change in Reward System: Not only student getting highest marks, but also most disciplined, most honest, most helpful student should be rewarded. We started "Best Conduct Award" with Rs. 500 and certificate.
6. Counseling: Once in a week counseling by psychological counselor or experienced teacher.

B. At Family and Society Level:

1. Parent Workshops: Meeting of parents every three months, where they are told to give time to children, not to give mobile, create moral environment at home.
2. Code of Conduct for Parents: Like there is for students, there should be for parents too.
3. Community Involvement: Involving local clubs, religious institutions. In Raniganj, we invited Gurudwara committee to teach sewa.

C. At Government and Policy Level:

1. Proper Implementation of NEP 2020: NEP says by 2025 value-based education and yoga compulsory in every school. Yoga and meditation should be daily.
2. Give Authority to Teachers: For indisciplined student, corrective punishment like - extra time in library, debar from games, community service.
3. Control on Media: Age limit should be strictly implemented on vulgar and violent web series.
4. Making Scout, NCC, NSS Compulsory: This brings discipline, patriotism and service.

5. LESSON FROM ANCIENT INDIAN EDUCATION

Our Gurukul system was best. Three things were taught:

1. Tapas: Discipline and hard work.
2. Swadhyaya: Self-study. Daily evening meditation.
3. Achara: Service to Guru, speaking truth.



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Today we have to bring same in modern form. Finland, Japan still focus on character building, that is why they are developed. India also has to return from "Marks" to "Acharan".

6. CONCLUSION

As a Headmaster, my experience says no student is bad by birth. Situations make him bad. If we give him right direction at right time, he can be reformed.

Preventing moral degradation is not only responsibility of teacher, but shared responsibility of family, society, government and media - all four. Like a vehicle runs with four wheels, character is built with cooperation of all four.

We must understand that if we do not stop moral degradation of students today, tomorrow we will have to build more jails, courts and hospitals, not schools.

In the words of Swami Vivekananda - "Education is the manifestation of perfection already in man." That perfection is incomplete without morality.

Let us all take pledge that we will not only make doctors, engineers but also good human beings. Only then education will develop in true sense.

Character without education is incomplete, education without character is dangerous. The future of India depends not on how many students get 90%, but on how many students become good human beings.

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