TOWARDS AN EDUCATED INDIA:

Personal Ethics - An Essential Ingredient for Leaders of Tomorrow

The word ethics as called *ethicus* in Latin and *ethikos* in Greek, stems from the word *ethos* which means the science of morals. A simple definition of ethics is: a set of principles of right conduct. Ethics serve as guidelines for analysing 'what is good or bad' in a specific scenario. They create a framework for determining right versus wrong, and represent the core value system for every day problem solving. Ethics are the systematic, rational reflection upon a choice of behaviour and can be taught.

Personal ethics are not a conventional set of laws that are passed on from generations by birth; they grow and are crafted over time. Personal ethics are the moral foundation based on values, on which individuals construct their lives. Contributing factors towards their development are family influence, religious beliefs, culture, personal experiences and internal reflection. Personal convictions and values form the most effective basis for moral and ethical behaviour. Many define personal ethics as their inner voice or as conscience.

Can ethics be taught to budding leaders? It is heartening for educationists to note that the answer is an assertive yes. Harvard psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg stated that an individual's growth in the ethical dimension happens through three levels, pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional. Generally, students in higher education are adults at the conventional stage, wherein their perceptions of right and wrong are based on group loyalties: to family, to friends, or to the nation.

Among the many factors that stimulate ethical development to the next ie the post-conventional stage, the most critical dynamic is education. Kohlberg's research proved that it made a huge difference when students took courses in ethics, which challenged them to look at issues from a universal point of view and helped promote universal ideals of justice, human rights and welfare. The note worthy point here is - there is an interconnectedness of cognitive and moral growth. Ethical development happens over a period of time and ethics can be taught and learnt.

Do personal ethics impact business and social decisions? They certainly do. The factors that influence ethical behaviour are culture, structural variables like leadership, rewards, etc and most importantly the characteristics like personal values, ego strength and locus of control. Ethical conduct is influenced by moral intensity, ethical sensitivity and situational influences. Ethical sensitivity requires empathy and being able to construct cause-consequence chains of events. Ethical judgment requires a sophisticated ability to judge actions. Since ethical decisions involve making value judgments, problems arise when an individual's personal values are misaligned with institutional or social values, resulting in ethical dissonance. When ethical dissonance involves fidelity to one's promises, the pain is acute. Sound ethical decision-making provides opportunities to affect our own happiness and of those around us - this results in peace, that is so threatened in today's tumultuous, ethically-challenged times.

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The IPL row, Commonwealth Games, 2G spectrum scandal, land allotment allegations and the Adarsh Housing Society scam - the skeletons of corruption keep tumbling out. On the other hand, the tremendous support generated for the Jan Lokpal Bill reiterates the demand for an ethical and corruption-free society. But as quoted by Alexander Solzhenitsyn, 'Even the most rational approach to ethics is defenseless if there isn't the will to do what is right'. Can we as educationists, faculty and educational heads develop this will within ourselves and our future leaders? All educational stakeholders must determine where they can best influence and engage in the effort of integrating ethics throughout the course, curriculum, and community. Students should be engaged in a process where they can develop a greater self-understanding by introspection, reflect on personal ethics and on the outlook of other students who may have radically conflicting points of view. It would be meaningful to enhance educational opportunities that ensure our students develop concrete personal ethics along with an understanding of various ethical theories. This would provide them with a strong frame of reference. Students should develop skills to analyse situations in terms of different theories to gives them varied ethical perspectives. Educational experiences should present occasions to practice those ethical decision-making skills. The most important mandate would be to infuse the courage to give voice to their values. Social scientific research shows that self-construal - how people see themselves, has a dramatic effect on their behaviour. Therefore, it is essential to help students see themselves as future leaders with power and responsibility, who will be able to influence their organisation and community and how the power of their personal ethics and ethical decisions can create footprints for a better world.

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The High-Performance Entrepreneur: Golden Rules For Success In Today's World
Author: Subroto Bagchi
Publisher: Penguin Books India Ltd
Price: ₹299
Pages: 256

A broad and general good read for starters who are making it to the world of entrepreneurship. Illustrated with good examples that are relevant for the subcontinent, *The High-Performance Entrepreneur* is among the most inspirational books that one can encounter while starting out. It is an informative book from a top Indian entrepreneur who started mindtree.com. The book brings together 'golden rules for suc-

For success

cess' that Bagchi draws from his experience. He has a very clear set of insights to entrepreneurship, many of which obviously cross over into mature enterprises, including non-profits. The writing is easy to follow and does not require an MBA to be understood. It is a good book to set the guiding principles of an organisation. The story of MindTree is fascinating but what makes it more interesting is the advice that the author provides during the course of the book about starting up.

"I have been an entrepreneur thrice," Bagchi writes. "Once, as a small kid, I sold balloons. As a grown-up, at the age of 28, I had my first taste of serious entrepreneurship. It lasted all of three years. At the age of 42, MindTree happened and it continues to happen." It all begins with a special moment, Bagchi reminisces. You get an inner call that says, 'you are designed to create something new.'

Each of the 18 chapters contain plethora of information and it would be difficult to assimilate it all in one go. Please give you time and energy to this book. In fact, a friend of mine, who is very serious about starting something of his own, called it 'The Entrepreneur's Bible'.

From the very first chapter to the last, Bagchi has painstakingly explained the golden rules of a successful entrepreneurship. He helps you understand if you are ready to start on your own, what should the profile of an entrepreneur be, how to sense the right opportunity, how to choose the right team, how important mission statements and business plans are, how to get the good people on board and subsequently retain them, and finally how to transform an idea into an IPO.

The first two chapters are perhaps most unique to this book. The first one 'When do I know I am ready' is a carefully crafted list of questions one should ask before starting a company. They form a critical bunch, since each one of these questions can be formulated as the 'top reasons of why my startup may fail'.

The second chapter talks about the profile of an entrepreneur. By reading about and listening to many successful entrepreneurs in the past, one could draw some patterns about what makes them click. It presents some of the must-haves of estimating whether you can make it through the rough roads of a startup. I personally enjoyed reading it.

There have been many entrepreneurs who have successfully set up great enterprises. I always wanted to know about their profile and I am thankful to Bagchi for dwelling deep into the profile of an entrepreneur. Paying my due respect to the book, I will not reveal it here. If you think you are entrepreneur material then go ahead and read the book, and match your profile with what Bagchi says should be of an entrepreneur.

One of the prime reasons I loved this book is the personal touch Bagchi has given to it. Throughout his book he shares his experiences of setting up MindTree. He gives real life account of going through the steps of establishing one of the most successful IT companies in India.

Overall, I'd suggest this book for anyone who is in a doubt of whether to start a company. If you do not want to be an entrepreneur, you can still read the book to at least understand whether you are working in the right company where the founders of the organisation are serious about the role they have to perform as entrepreneurs.

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