
Happiness and Ethics in the New Education Policy 2020 of India

Tushar Kant Mishra

Department of Commerce, Centre for Ethics and Values & School of Happiness, Ramanujan College (A++ Accredited), University of Delhi, New Delhi, India

Email address:

mishratushar101@yahoo.com

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Abstract: This article aims to revisit the paradigm of education and focus on the components of happiness and ethics as laid down in the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 of India. Our youth need to learn not only reading, texting, surfing and messaging but also how to be caring, compassionate and self-respectful; and how to develop family, ethical and constitutional values. To fulfill this objective, the rich heritage of Indian knowledge and wisdom has been a guiding light for the NEP. Only by combining ethics and positive psychology with education will it be possible for teachers to turn into future educators. This article attempts to answer five moot questions in the context of happiness and ethics. First, how education, happiness and ethics have been defined? Second, why should higher education teach happiness and ethics? Third, why have ethics in education gained more importance in the midst of technological revolution? Fourth, is there a functional relationship between happiness and ethics? Last, how NEP envisages building happiness and ethics in the higher education? To answer these questions, we have used an analytical method, and an interdisciplinary approach. While this article considers higher education in the context of the technological revolution era, ethics and happiness are viewed from traditional wisdom and the scriptural basis of India. Based on the exploration and analysis of this study, the author suggests that happiness and ethics, as enshrined in the NEP, are solid foundations to cope with the emerging challenges. It sends a strong signal: By means of happiness and ethics you will rise higher and higher. For future research, it is recommended that research be undertaken to explore the ethical means of implementing expeditiously and efficiently the psychological, philosophical, and moral matters enshrined in the NEP.

Keywords: Higher Education, Happiness, Ethical Means, National Education Policy

1. Introduction

The Education Policy of India 2020 states that every individual should develop their creative potential. It also states that education should develop not only their cognitive capacities, but also their emotional, social, and ethical capacities. This policy is based on the idea that education should also provide them with the necessary tools and resources to develop their higher-order cognitive and critical thinking skills. The principles that will guide the development of the education system are based on the concepts of human and Constitutional values. These include the importance of respecting others, being kind to others, and being able to communicate effectively with people. The goal

of the Education Policy of India is to instill a deep-rooted pride in being country's citizens. It also aims to develop a culture that values the principles of responsible global living and development. This vision is additionally evidenced by the multiple skills and knowledge that the students will be able to develop.

The article aims to revisit the concept of education and explore the various components of happiness and ethics that are included in the 2020 National Education Policy (NEP) of India. Besides being able to text and surf, our youth also need to learn how to be kind and caring. This can be done through the development of ethical and family values. The NEP was founded on the idea of combining the wisdom and knowledge of Indian culture with the education to make teachers more effective and efficient. The concept of

education, happiness, and ethics has been defined. There are various questions that need to be answered in order to understand the role of ethics and happiness in higher education. For instance, why should students be taught about ethics when technology is already more prevalent? Also, how can NEP help build a functional relationship between ethics and happiness in the education?

Through an analytical method and an interdisciplinary approach, the author explored the various questions related to the concept of education, ethics and happiness. While it is focused on the technological revolution era, the concept of ethics and happiness is also viewed from the traditional and biblical perspectives. Based on the findings of this study, the author believes that both ethics and happiness are solid foundations for addressing the emerging challenges of the 21st century. The findings of this study provide a strong signal that both ethics and happiness are solid foundations for addressing the various challenges that society faces. It is therefore important that future research is conducted on the ethical and practical methods that can be utilized to implement the various moral, philosophical, and psychological issues in the NEP.

2. Education, Happiness and Ethics: Meaning

“Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man” concluded Swami Vivekananda way back in 1894 [1]. “By education I mean an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit”, wrote M. K. Gandhi in *‘Harijan’* on July 31, 1937 [2]. “The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence” said Rabindranath Tagore, an awardee of the 1913 Nobel Prize in Literature [3]. Scripture *Rig-Veda* defines education as something, which makes a man self-reliant and self-less [4]. Another scripture *Upanishad* describes education as that whose end product is salvation [5].

The traditional education philosophy of India was based upon the principles of love, character and reverence. Life had a definite purpose and meaning, and the attainment of which was thought to transcend all material values. The educational evolution in ancient India was founded upon such ideals. Education used to impart wisdom-based knowledge, a long-term vision, a sense of perspective and proportion in which the material and the ethical, the emotional and spiritual, the perishable and permanent interests and values of life were clearly enunciated and differentiated. “There is a significance of emotions in human life. Education is not addressing now the ‘hygiene of emotion’ to bring about harmony in the society”, said HH Dalai Lama in the inaugural address of 2nd National Teachers’ Congress, at Pune in 2018 [6].

The pursuit of knowledge (*Jnan*), wisdom (*Pragyaa*), and truth (*Satya*) has always been accorded highest human goal in India. Education, according to Indian tradition, is neither merely a means of earning a living; nor is it only a nursery of

thought or a school for citizenship. It is an initiation into the life of spirit and training of human souls in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue. “Education develops in the body and soul of the pupil all the beauty and all the perfection he is capable of”, held Plato [7]. “It is the creation of a sound mind in a sound body. It develops man’s faculty, especially his mind so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of supreme truth, goodness, and beauty”, said Aristotle [8].

Education has changed since the time of Plato, Gandhi, and the Dalai Lama. It is clear that the concept of education has evolved into a synthesis of various moral, economic, and social values that can develop a child and society at higher levels. NEP recognizes that India needs to restore its great tradition to create well-rounded and innovative individuals, and which is already transforming other countries educationally and economically (10.2/NEP). The Policy considers that the most important factor in the success of higher education institutions is the quality and engagement of its faculty (13.1/NEP). For the happiness and well-being of teachers, the Policy emphasizes, “Teaching duties also will not be excessive, and student-teacher ratios not too high, so that the activity of teaching remains pleasant and there is adequate time for interaction with students, conducting research, and other university activities. Faculty will be given the freedom to design their own curricular and pedagogical approaches within the approved framework. The presence of outstanding and enthusiastic institutional leaders that cultivate excellence and innovation is the need of the hour (13.3, 13.4 & 13.7/NEP).”

Definitions and theories of education, ethics and happiness differ with divergence in backgrounds of religion, philosophy, thoughts, and culture. In this article, we review happiness perspectives from different angles, including that from Eastern and Western. Merriam Webster dictionary defines happiness as good fortune, prosperity, state of well-being and contentment, joy, a pleasurable or satisfying experience, felicity, and aptness [9]. However, to Wikipedia, the term happiness is used in the context of mental or emotional states, including positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. It is also used in the context of life satisfaction, subjective well-being, eudemonia, flourishing and well-being [10].

In the context of religion, while Hinduism considers 'absolute freedom' (*moksha*) as the highest form of happiness, Buddhism puts emphasis upon happiness as *nirvana*, which is achieved by conquering human desire in all forms. Christianity lays stress on happiness as felicity, which can only come from a close relationship with God and from Jesus’ teaching. The ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* regards happiness (*eudaimonia*) as the highest end of virtuous life or ultimate goodness [11].

“If we can discover that our minds are bigger than our problems, we’ll see that deep down we all have the potential to be truly happy”, says Gelong Thubten in his book ‘A Monk’s Guide to Happiness’ [12]. “There is a sense of freedom; says Gelong, when we are genuinely happy, we are

free from desire and other conflicting emotions. We are free from *wanting* happiness. When we are *searching* for that happiness, there is a sense of hunger, of incompleteness; we are wrapped up in the expectation of getting what we want and the fear of not getting it; we are trapped in uncertainty. We think we can only be happy when our goals are completed, which means that life is always about the future rather than the present moment”.

3. Need of Happiness and Ethics in Higher Education

According to Aristotle, happiness is the ultimate goal of human existence. He states that it is a central purpose of every human life and that attaining this goal would be a significant factor in attaining happiness. Given the importance of education, it is clear that attaining happiness would be a significant factor in attaining it. Two ancient great greek philosophers, Aristotle and Plato, believed that education was a vital tool that could help build a society that was harmonious and happy. Mencius and Confucius also believed that education could help cultivate moral individuals. From Eastern approach, Indic mythology has generally emphasized ethical or spiritual aspects of happiness, whereas the Western people have commonly stressed scientific or materialistic ways of happiness [13].

Higher education should focus on teaching universal ethics for building a welfare society as well as for developing individual life quality. From this standpoint, university education has disregarded happiness and moral education. Happiness is the ultimate goal of human beings, and moral education is a significant factor to live the ethical life. The universities in future should also place an emphasis on the importance of moral education and happiness in order to build a society that is conducive to the welfare of its members.

In addition to moral education and happiness, the university should also place an emphasis on the importance of digital technology in order to build a society that is conducive to the welfare of its members. Various fields such as artificial intelligence, cybercrime, and robotics are expected to have a significant impact on the economy. However, they are expected to have a significant challenge to the current social systems and the quality of human lives. To establish healthy ethical values is important in the midst of the explosion of technology, because healthy ethical standards or norms in higher education will become change agents for the healthy advanced technology society.

4. Importance of Ethics in the Technological Revolution Era

Ethics has always been an integral part of education. We cannot imagine an education without ethics. Realizing this and for adapting to a rapidly changing world, NEP has focused more on cultivating ethical values in the students. In

the light of technological revolution affecting humanistic development, NEP enunciates: “The purpose of the education system is to develop good human beings capable of rational thought and action, possessing compassion and empathy, courage and resilience, scientific temper and creative imagination, with sound ethical moorings and values. It aims at producing engaged, productive, and contributing citizens for building an equitable, inclusive, and plural society as envisaged by our Constitution.”

In the light of technological revolution and NEP has shown specific concern for value education, humanities and soft skills. It states: The very idea that all branches of creative human endeavor, including mathematics, science, vocational subjects, professional subjects, and soft skills should be considered ‘arts’, has distinctly Indian origins. ...‘liberal arts’ (i.e., a liberal notion of the arts) must be brought back to Indian education, as it is exactly the kind of education that will be required...A holistic and multidisciplinary education would aim to develop all capacities of human beings - intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical, emotional, and moral in an integrated manner. Such an education will help develop well-rounded individuals that possess critical capacities in fields across the arts, humanities, languages, sciences, social sciences, and professional, technical, and vocational fields; an ethic of social engagement; soft skills, such as communication, discussion and debate; and rigorous specialization in a chosen field or fields. Such a holistic education shall be, in the long term, the approach of all undergraduate programs, including those in professional, technical, and vocational disciplines (11.1 & 11.3/NEP).

On the role of ethical values amidst technological revolution, NEP states: New circumstances and realities require new initiatives. The recent rise in epidemics and pandemics necessitates that we are ready with alternative modes of quality education whenever and wherever traditional and in-person modes of education are not possible. NEP recognizes the importance of leveraging the advantages of technology while acknowledging its potential risks and dangers. It calls for carefully designed and appropriately scaled pilot studies to determine how the benefits of online/digital education can be reaped while addressing or mitigating the downsides. In the meantime, the existing digital platforms and ongoing ICT-based educational initiatives must be optimized and expanded to meet the current and future challenges in providing quality education for all (24.1/NEP).

5. A Functional Relationship Between Happiness and Ethics

“The just man is happy, and the unjust man is miserable,” Plato states in *The Republic*. Aristotle (1987) claims that happiness arises from a life of virtue and that virtues are acquired by behaving in a virtuous or ethical manner [14]. Aristotle follows Socrates and Plato in taking the virtues to

be central to a well-lived life. Harvey S. James (2009) considers the question of whether ethical decision-making affects a person's happiness [15]. According to a study conducted by the World Values Survey, people who believe that it is unethical to engage in certain behaviors are more satisfied with their lives than those who are more tolerant of such conduct. The findings show that the people who are more likely to say that it is never justifiable to do something unethical are also more likely to report being happy.

Ethics is at the core of happiness. In other words, ethics is intrinsic to authentic happiness. Ethics and happiness move together towards a virtuous life and personal growth. In the common parlance, happiness is considered to be an outcome of success. But in reality, success is an outcome of happiness. Happiness is not only an end of human endeavor but also a means of success. Success eludes an unhappy person.

Happiness is a function of ethical values [Happiness=f(Ethics)]. Here, happiness is a dependent and ethics is an independent variable. This implies that higher the adherence to ethics, higher would be the discovery of meaning and purpose of life resulting in happiness.

Research shows that those who are altruistic and selfless often have higher levels of happiness. Psychologists Ed Diener and Pelin Kesebir [16] write, "Happiness appears to bring out the best in humans, making them more social, more cooperative, and even more ethical." These findings are consistent across multiple studies and environments. Moreover, according to Earley and Konow [17], "some tasks, such as helping others, appear capable of sustaining happiness at a higher average level than other goals, like the pursuit of material wealth."

Jeong-kyu lee [18] writes, "In a viewpoint of moral education, knowledge or learning fundamentally seeks after truth and goodness besides utility and skill. Thus, education also pursues ethical or moral values and norms as well as pragmatic or economic theory and practice."

6. Role of NEP in Building Happiness and Ethics in Higher Education

The happiness focus of the NEP gets amplified in its statement, "Reduce curriculum content to enhance essential learning and critical thinking." The Policy reiterates, "The aim of education will not only be cognitive development, but also building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals..." Its' thrust on happiness and ethical values is further clarified while stating, "Curriculum content will be reduced in each subject to its core essentials, to make space for critical thinking and more holistic, inquiry-based, discovery-based, discussion-based, and analysis-based learning. The mandated content will focus on key concepts, ideas, applications, and problem-solving. Teaching and learning will be conducted in a more interactive manner; questions will be encouraged, and classroom sessions will regularly contain more fun, creative, collaborative, and exploratory activities for students for deeper and more

experiential learning. In all stages, experiential learning will be adopted, including hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education, and story-telling-based pedagogy... (4.5 & 4.6/NEP).

Psychological well-being essentially depicts happiness of individuals. The Policy enunciates the need to integrate sports in education, as it serves to foster holistic development by promoting physical and psychological well-being (4.8/NEP). Boosting the happiness and comfort level of students is a high priority of the Policy. It proclaims: All efforts will be made in preparing high-quality bilingual textbooks and teaching-learning materials for science and mathematics, so that students are enabled to think and speak about the two subjects both in their home language/mother tongue and in English...Every student will take a fun course, during Grades 6-8, that gives a survey and hands-on experience of a sampling of important vocational crafts, such as carpentry, electric work, metal work, gardening, and pottery making...(4.14 & 4.26/NEP).

On creating ethical values amongst students, The National Education Policy (NEP) states that students will be taught about the importance of being ethical when they are young. This will help them make informed decisions. In later years, the curriculum will also be expanded to include topics such as violence, cheating, and plagiarism. This will help children develop a deeper understanding of how to be ethical in their lives. They will also be able to formulate a position on an ethical issue through multiple arguments. As consequences of such basic ethical reasoning, traditional Indian values and all basic human and Constitutional values (such as seva, ahimsa, swachhata, satya, nishkam karma, shanti, sacrifice, tolerance, diversity, pluralism, righteous conduct, gender sensitivity, respect for elders, respect for all people and their inherent capabilities regardless of background, respect for environment, helpfulness, courtesy, patience, forgiveness, empathy, compassion, patriotism, democratic outlook, integrity, responsibility, justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity) will be developed in all students" (4.28/NEP).

Author's real life experience of applying positive psychology (happiness) to teaching:

Positive psychology (the academic province of happiness), came to light in the 1950s with Martin Seligman of Pennsylvania University founding it. Earlier, psychology was concerned only with clinical aspects and mental diseases of humans. But, it was realized that the absence of disease does not imply good health or absence of sadness does not imply happiness. We have to develop the ability to be happy or resilient or have the courage to be ethical. I realized, teaching at Ramanujan College, University of Delhi that to rewire student's strategies against abnormalities, a positive psychological intervention is needed. Despite the positive effects of the world economy, people still believe that the world is worse than it is. This is why I believe that positive psychology is needed to help people feel better about their lives. One of the most important factors that people need to consider when it comes to addressing the world's problems is the lack of a comprehensive understanding of what's wrong.

This is why I believe that it is important that we start looking at where we can collaborate and have a more productive and visionary debate on education. Often, people are blamed for their hardships because they have to fight for their lives following a natural disaster. However, in the same scenes, we will also see people who are able to help each other.

If we believe that by pointing out where the problems are, we can improve society's functioning. Is that really true? Not only is it important to point out where the issues are, but it's also important to add where things are going better, and how they can be improved or improving? Don't we need to tell students what they should adopt and what not? After the pandemic, I had the opportunity to talk to a student about what it was like to lose her parents, her home, and her classes. She had a great interview, and she talked about how hard it was, but she also said that she had learned something. I was stunned by her statement, and I thought that what can be learned from this crisis? After asking her what she had learned, she said that she was stronger than she had thought. She also said that there were people around her who helped her, and she had gotten a better relationship with her brother. She made me realized that what I had been applying sub-consciously in all my years of teaching is a reality. Positive psychology framed my world like that. I was absolutely assured of what people actually can be. And when she affirmed that, I wanted to change much more.

Our modern education tells us a lot about negative emotions, about post-trauma stress, about victims, about negative relationships, about dissents and conflicts. But it tells less about all the positives. It was constructs of positive psychology that really opened my mind to how fascinating the world is. Through positive psychology, I have been able to enhance the abilities of my students to be happy and outlook on the ethical world. I love to talk about the various constructs that are related to happiness, such as resilience, optimism, and grit. These are all very important to me as they help students develop their creativity and collaboration. So, while making positive emotion as a source I teach them, that gives a better learning outcome. When they are happier, they listen more, they expand their heart, they are thinking more, they reflect more, and they are able to participate more.

One of the most critical factors in education is to make the world a better place. For instance, by teaching about refugees coming in from countries such as Syria, Ukraine, and Afghanistan, we can help them see themselves as victims rather than aggressors. Unfortunately, if we only focus on the negative, we tend to teach them in a negative manner. To make a better world, we need to ask refugees what they want to do and how they can improve their lives. This can be done through the help they provide us with their resources and inspiration.

Instead of focusing on the negatives, we need to consider the positive aspects of the world. For instance, education is becoming more prevalent, democracy is growing, human is flourishing, Innovation is ushering, and poverty is lessening etc. Positive teaching is uplifting, and they follow to basic functions of education. The core function of education is to

teach students how to be ethical and how to be a responsible citizen. This is why many colleges and universities have adopted a certain style of teaching. This particular teaching style was instrumental in our college being able to receive an A++ grade from the National Assessment of Accreditation Council (NAAC) this year. NAAC assess the performance of Institutions based on set parameters through introspection and a process that provides space for participation of the institution.

7. Summary and Conclusion

NEP sends a strong message: By means of happiness and ethics you will rise higher and higher in life. Nothing strengthens individuals so much as ethics. Nothing creates happiness so much as ethics. Ethical, human and constitutional values like empathy, respect for others, cleanliness, courtesy, democratic spirit, spirit of service, respect for public property, scientific temper, liberty, responsibility, pluralism, equality, and justice are the hallmarks of the NEP. The vision of the Policy is to instill among the learners a deep-rooted pride in being Indian, not only in thought but to develop a culture of responsibility and commitment to global well-being. This is done through the development of knowledge and skills that will enable students to make informed decisions and contribute to the development of a sustainable world. Cultural diversity is a unique characteristic of India. And without ethicality, diversity cannot have a full play.

The purpose of this study was to describe the interrelationship amongst happiness, ethics and education; and outline the NEP priorities in this regard. To examine systematically, five pertinent questions were addressed in this article. First, how have concepts of education, happiness and ethics been defined? Second, why should higher education pursue happiness? Third, why ethics in education is important in the midst of technological revolution? Fourth, is there a functional relationship between happiness and ethics? Lastly, what are the ways of building happiness and ethics in the higher education system?

The outcomes of the study are summarized in following way: First, the concept of happiness can vary depending upon various factors such as religion, philosophy, culture. In Hinduism, absolute freedom is regarded as the highest form of happiness, while Buddhism considers nirvana to be the ultimate joy. On the other hand, Christians consider felicity to be happiness. Aristotle regards eudaimonia (happiness) as the highest end of virtuous life or ultimate goodness. Second, the goal of human beings is to be happy, and moral education is very important to ensure that they live an ethical life. This is why education should focus on developing a welfare society and building ethical human beings. Third, the importance of ethics is also acknowledged in the technological era. Developing a healthy ethical standard in higher education will create a society that is happier and more ethical. Healthy ethical standards in higher education will create 'change agents' for a healthy technological

society. Fourth, In addition to these values, higher education should recognize the importance of philanthropy, human rights, and charity in order to create a balance between education and growth of technology. This can be done through the use of ethical inputs. Technology should include ethical inputs for creating a happy, responsive and quality life.

The author concludes that happiness and ethics, as emphasized in the NEP, are a guiding light to cope with the emerging technological revolution. Future research can be undertaken to explore how to expeditiously implement the educational, philosophical, and ethical thoughts of NEP. Finally, it can be asserted that the future society centered on digital, biological, and information technologies may create risks, confusion, or chaos, unless higher education as a change agent attempts to build a harmonious, happier and ethical society.

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