

Ethics, Morality and Objectivity of our Education

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by Md. Anwarul Kabir

There is a strong correlation between institutionalised education and all pervasive corruption in our country. This perception, indeed, becomes true if we objectively analyse the prevailing corruption in the society. Who are the main actors in corruptions? If we unmask, then in most of the big events of corruption, the involvement of the so called educated people will be traced prominently. The political change of 1/11 has revealed many massive corruption cases, especially those committed during the period of the last BNP-led alliance government. On the surface, we have seen the faces of many 'half educated' politicians as the major actors of these corruptions.

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The deviation of our education system from ethics and morality has not occurred in a day. In fact, if we shed light on history, it will reveal that since the imposition of colonial education system on the sub-continent, the era of decaying ethics and morality—the major objectivity of education, has been initiated. The British Raj introduced their education system in the sub-continent for its own interest—not for the interest of the native Indians. On part of the British regime, major driving force to introduce the newly formulated education system in India was to establish its hegemony and elongate their rule. In support of this assertion, the quotes of Lord Macaulay, founder of the English education system can be cited. Macaulay, in the context of framing colonial education policy explicitly stated that, “In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. Those Indians of the high class, who are in the government, also speak it... We must do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons Indians in blood, but English in taste, in opinions, words and intellects.’ The similar view was expressed by Sir, Trevelyan, a major policymaker of British colonial education: “There is only way to turn the thoughts of Indian nation in another direction. And that is to create Western thoughts among them.(by introducing our education system).” In 1857, Trevelyan further expressed in the British Parliament, “After such an education, a political revolution in this country will be unlikely and we will be able to rule over our Empire for long. By increasing education and by giving jobs to more and more Indians, the British rule can be made permanent.” So, the major objective of implementing colonial education system was to create a privileged class who would collaborate the British regime.

Perhaps the dangerous implication of British colonial education system is the orientation of education towards jobs. The concept of ‘Lekha pora kore je, gari ghora chore se (Those who study, ride carts and horses)’ has been instilled into the psyche of the common people in the 19th century, after the introduction of the colonial education policy in undivided India. The colonial education policy encourages us just to mimic the western education system without assessing our own context. For this reason, we just import education//technology from the developed world but fail to assimilate these assessing our socio-economic needs. For the same reason, we neglect many of our indigenous knowledge which could have been used for our development in different fields.

However, there is a misconception that incorporation of colonial education policy has initiated the era of renaissance and civilisation in India. In fact, this is merely a propaganda originated from the British Raj which, in turn, has submerged most of the educated people of the sub-continent people in a sort of inferiority complex. Litterateur Bankim Chandra

(1838-94) was the first Bengali who graduated from the Calcutta University. But before him, there were so many Bengali scholars around for instance, Raja Ram Mohon Roy (1774 – 1833), Iswar Chandar Bidya Sagar (1820-1891), were not educated under the colonial education policy. In fact, education system prevailing in India before the advent of the British regime was at high standard intermingled with secular, religious and moral education. Broadly, at that time education addressed on the following domains: a) Religious and moral education regarding life values b) Education relating to skills, crafts and agriculture c) Education relating to philosophy, science and technology and mathematics d) Education relating to arts e) Education relating to politics and military arts f) Medical education. The level of knowledge was higher and, definitely not lower than that prevalent in Europe. In this context Naresh Kumar, a contemporary researcher of Lucknow University has argued that, "Definitely this education encompassed all aspects of life. It could have been strengthened and developed into a modern education system." Unlike the present time, during the pre-British India, education was not considered merely a job oriented mechanism. Rather at that time people thrived for knowledge to enlighten themselves. Another thing is worthy to mention that in every branch of knowledge at that time had special ethics to follow with a view to promoting morality and honesty of the learner.

Mediaeval India witnessed a very strong, progressive and pro-people movement, popularly known as Bhakti/Sufi (800-1700) movement. A salient feature of this movement was to prepare the context of a new education. The main principles of Bhakti movement were : (1) God is one, (2) To worship God man should serve humanity, (3) All men are equal, (4) Worshipping God with devotion is better than performing religious ceremonies and going on pilgrimages, and (5) Caste distinctions and superstitious practices are to be given up. This movement had tremendous impact on both the formal and informal education. The Bhaktibad/Sufies stressed on universal education explicitly stating that education should not be limited to the Brahmin class only. Intermingled with the principles of Bhakti/sufi educated people at that time preserved honesty, morality and sense of social responsibility.

In Bangladesh, we are still following the colonial legacy of education. Though after independence, in 1974 a commission headed by Dr. Kudrat e Khuda chalked out a scientific and pro-people education policy. Unfortunately it never could have been implemented due to reestablishment of the reactionary groups after the brutal demise of Bangabandhu. In true sense, ongoing education system of the country is in jargon lacking of specific objectives, vision and mission. Besides colonial legacy, the so-called free market economy has further contaminated our education systems. Complying with the free market economy, Education has become a commodity. Market is guiding many aspects of education. Nowadays to acquire knowledge is not a passion; rather materialistic value of the education has become the first priority. For this reason, students select their subject assessing its market orientation and demand. For the same reason university teachers do not take interest in research without materialistic gains. In this context, if a survey could have been carried out then definitely it would be revealed that a few faculty members of the Dhaka University, the apex and the oldest university of the country, nowadays take further interest in research after they have fulfilled the required number of publications for the post of professorship.

As our education system has lost its vision, it leads most of the educated people towards corruption. Especially, in the country of low literacy rate like ours, society puts the educated people in a privileged class. Being members of this privileged class, the many of the educated persons do not hesitate to exploit the 'uneducated' poor class for their materialistic gain.

In conclusion, it may be stated that if we want to minimize the corruption in the society, we must set the objectivity of our education in a right direction. For this, we must reformulate our education policy. This new education policy should be pro-people in the context of this soil so that it encourages ethics and morality blended with modern scientific and secular outlook. Of course the new education policy will emphasize on the materialistic development of both individuals and the society but it should not be the sole objective.

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